



MIDDLE ATLAS FOREST INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT PROJECT (GIFMA)

Final evaluation mission

Project Final Evaluation Report

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*Espace Fréjorgues Ouest, 60 rue Henri Fabre,
34130 Mauguio Gd Montpellier, France
Tel. +33 4 67 20 08 09
Email: frm@frm-france.com
www.frm-france.com*



*83, Rue Patrice Lumumba n°6, Hassan,
RABAT 10 000 - MAROC
Tél/Fax : 05 37 70 23 35
www.betaf.ma*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROJECT OUTLINE	3
1 INTRODUCTION	18
1.1 EVALUATION OBJECTIVE.....	18
1.2 SCOPE AND MÉTHODOLOGY	18
1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE EVALUATION REPORT	19
2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND.....	20
2.1 PROJECT START UP AND DURATION	20
2.2 THE ISSUES THE PROJECT WAS EXPECTED TO ADDRESS.....	20
2.3 PROJECT IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVES AND DEVELOPMENT	20
2.4 BASIC INDICATORS ESTABLISHED	20
2.5 MAIN STAKEHOLDERS	21
2.6 EXPECTED OUTCOMES	21
3 CONCLUSIONS.....	22
3.1 PROJECT DESIGN/FORMULATION	22
3.2 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	33
3.3 PROJECT OUTCOMES.....	42
4 CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED	64
4.1 CORRECTIVE MEASURES RELATED TO PTOJECT DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION	64
4.2 MEASURES TO MONITOR OR STRENGTHEN THE PROJECT INITIAL BENEFITS.....	66
4.3 PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE ON THE WAY TO PROMOTE THE MAIN OBJECTIVES.....	68
4.4 PROJECT SUCCESSES AND WEAKNESSES.....	70

iii. List of Acronyms

ACED	Association de coopération pour l'environnement et le développement
ADS	Agence de développement social
AGR	Activités génératrices de revenus
CBTHA	Projet Conservation de la biodiversité par la transhumance dans le versant sud du Haut Atlas
CCA	Centre de conseil agricole
CDDRF	Centre de conservation et de développement des ressources forestières
CNP	Comité national de pilotage
CPP	Comité de pilotage provincial
CR	Commune rurale
CTR	Conseiller technique régional PNUD
DGCL	Direction générale des collectivités locales
DLCDPN	Direction de la lutte contre la désertification et la protection de la nature
DPA	Direction provinciale de l'agriculture
DREF FB	Direction régionale des eaux et forêts de Fès Boulmane
DREF MA	Direction régionale des eaux et forêts du Moyen Atlas
ENFI	Ecole nationale forestière d'ingénieurs
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FB	Fès Boulmane
FEM	Fonds pour l'environnement mondial
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
GC	Groupement communautaire
GIEF	Gestion intégrée des écosystèmes forestiers
GIFMA	Projet Gestion intégrée des forêts du Moyen Atlas
GPF	Gestion participative des forêts
HCEFLCD	Haut-Commissariat aux eaux et forêts et à la lutte contre la désertification
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
NSCE	North South Consulting Exchange
MA	Moyen Atlas
MAPM	Ministère de l'agriculture et de la pêche maritime
PAL-PDS	Programme d'appui à la lutte contre la pauvreté rurale, la désertification et les effets de la sécheresse
PAM	Plante aromatique et médicinale
PNUD	Programme des Nations Unies pour le développement
ONG	Organisation non gouvernementale
RN	Ressources naturelle
PCV	US Peace Corps Volunteers
S&E	Suivi et évaluation
SIG	Système d'information Géographique
SK	Skoura
TdR	Termes de références
TND	Tanourdi
UGP	Unité de gestion du projet
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework

UOP	Unité opérationnelle du projet
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

PROJECT OUTLINE

I. PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

i.1 Title of the project funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and supported by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Middle Atlas Forests Integrated Management Project (GIFMA)

i.2 UNDP and GEF project identification numbers

GEF Project ID: PIMS 2983
 UNDP Project ID: 00054049

i.3 Calendrier de l'évaluation et date du rapport d'évaluation

Stage	Deliverable	Activity	Duration	Completion date
Preparation	Initial report (Methodology and planning)	- document research interviews with project national and regional officials - presentation of initial report	5 days	22-5-2014
Evaluation mission	Initial conclusions	- Interviews with project operators and beneficiaries at the national, regional, and local level - visit of project achievements discussion of preliminary results with project leaders	20 days in the project area (in 2 visits)	22 -6-2014
First feedback	Oral discussions	- meetings between experts and le Responsable du projet au PNUD presentation of first conclusions from field visits	2 days	4 et 22 June 2014
Development of draft evaluation report	Draft report and annexes	- Drafting by evaluation team - submission of draft report to UNDP	20 days	8-10-2014
Comments on the draft report	Summary of comments	-Transmission by UNDP of draft report to officials involved for feedback ransmission by UNDP of summary of expert feedback	1 week	15-10-2014
Completion of evaluation report	Final report	Feedback analysis/integration in the draft report - submission of final report to UNDP	1 week	31 October 2014*
Final workshop de restitution	Workshop report	- Workshop preparation - presentation of final conclusions - drafting workshop report	3 days	4/11/2014
Translation of evaluation report into English	Evaluation report (English version)	- translation of evaluation report by UNDP	4 weeks	1/12/2014

- *Subject to the timely receipt of UNDP feedback on draft report.*

i.4 Region and country included in the project

Morocco

i.5 GEF operational/strategic programme

GEF Focal Area: Multiple Focal Area – Biodiversity and Land Degradation

GEF Operational Programme: OP 12

GEF Strategic Priority: EM-1

i.6 Implementation partner and other project partners

Executing Agency: Haut-Commissariat aux Eaux et Forêts et à la Lutte contre la Désertification (HCEFLCD)

Other participating partners: Agence de développement social (ADS), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Peace Corps

i.7 Members of the evaluation team

André Simon, Forest Engineer, FRM Ingénierie (FRMi)

Majid Benabdellah, Socio-economist, BETAF Consulting

i.8 Acknowledgements

1. The evaluators acknowledges all the people met both at the institutional level and as beneficiaries for their availability; the warm welcome they received and frankness of the interviews. The evaluators acknowledge especially the Project Coordination Unit, the UNDP Project Officer and his main staff involved, HCEFLCD officers at the central level and in both project intervention areas (Middle Atlas and Fes-Boulemane), ADS regional coordinators in Meknes and Fes, municipal officials and community groups of both project target municipalities (Tanourdi and Skoura), professors and researchers from the National Forestry Engineering School (ENFI) and Forest Research Centre who collaborated with the project, as well as the experts who contributed to the project-supported thematic studies.

II. SUMMARY

ii.1 Table 1: Project Summary

Project Title	Middle Atlas Forests Integrated Management Project (GIFMA)			
GEF Project ID	PIMS 2983	Project Funding	<i>Forecast (in US\$)</i>	<i>Actual (in US\$)</i>
UNDP Project ID	00054049	GEF (donation)	965 345,00	965 345,00
Country	Morocco	HCEFLCD (²):	500 000,00	500 000,00
Region	-	ADS (cash):	1 000 000,00	615 964,00
Focal Area	Biodiversity	UNDP	360 000,00	611 264,00
FA Outputs (OP/SP) :	-	WWF	52 800,00	52 800,00
		US Peace Corps	200 000,00	0
		Total co-funding	2 112 800,00	1 780 028,82
Executing Agency	Haut Commissariat aux Eaux et Forêts et à la Lutte contre la Désertification	Project Total Cost	3 078 145, 00	2 745 373,82
Other participating partners	ADS, UNDP, WWF	Signature of Project Document (Starting date): Nov. 2006 Proposed operational closure date: 31 December 2014		

ii.2 Project description (based on project document)

- The forests of the Middle Atlas are of critical global importance but their ecological integrity and their survival are threatened by overgrazing and overcutting of timber products and by conversion to agriculture. GEF assistance is needed to develop models and build capacity, for participatory, multi-functional integrated forest ecosystem management.
- The GIFMA objective was to develop participatory models and in the forests of two representative municipalities in the Tazekka/ Kroucheen corridor, participatory and multi-functional forest and rangeland management models, that ensure forest ecosystem integrity and biodiversity conservation, that improve range productivity, improve rangeland productivity and combat erosion, and build capacities to replicate/adapt models in the entire corridor and Middle Atlas priority watersheds.
- One of the GIFMA global benefits included the development and replication of sustainable land management models and ecosystem-level biodiversity conservation. National/local benefits will include reduced sedimentation of reservoirs, poverty alleviation/increased incomes, sustainable livelihoods and improved governance.
- One of the GIFMA key strategic aspects is the involvement of local communities in the management and commercial exploitation of forest areas. The main challenge is to develop sufficient incentives for the adoption of forest and grazing sustainable management practices. All or part of the commercial operations will be assigned to community groups (CGs) based on objectives and forest grazing sustainable management indicators set by mutual agreement. The communities and HCEFLCD will be clearly defined under signed joint management agreements. Village-based groups will be allowed to harvest, process and market forest products in accordance with current management plans under the control of the Waters and Forests department.

6. The project expected outcomes are: (a) development of new participatory management systems; b) development of the capacities needed for replicating/adapting these systems; (c) knowledge management to support forest ecosystems integrated management; and (d) achievement of adaptive management is achieved through integration of lessons learnt into project strategies and approaches.

ii.3 Evaluation ratings

Table 2: Evaluation scores

1 Monitoring & Evaluation	Rating	2 Implementing/Executing Agencies	Rating
M&E design at onset	S	Quality of implementation by UNDP	S
Implementation of M&E plan	MS	Quality of execution by executing agency	S
Overall quality of M&E	MS	Overall quality of implementation and execution	S
3 Évaluation of achievements	Rating	4 Sustainability	Rating
Relevance	P	Financial resources	MP
Effectiveness	S	Socioeconomic	MU
Efficiency	S	Institutional framework and Governance:	MU
Impact	S	Environmental	MP
Overall rating of project achievement	S	Overall likelihood of sustainability	MP

ii.4 Summary of conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned

a) DESIGN/FORMULATION

7. The GIFMA development goal and immediate objective were logically defined on the basis of the identification of the major issue to be addressed, the Middle Atlas forest ecosystem degradation, and the strategic choice of two of the main causes of that issue: 1) the overexploitation of forest resources by a poor and disadvantaged population; and 2) the lack of policies and practices for forest regeneration. The definition of the four outcomes also follows the logical step linking the selected strategy with the outcomes in order to achieve the objective.
8. Among the main weaknesses, the GIFAM Project document and logical framework have reserved only a minor role to cross-sector partnerships. This aspect has yet proved decisive in achieving the expected outcomes. In fact, the project strategy aimed primarily the organized involvement of local populations in the forest ecosystems management, with the support and collaboration of local institutions and projects. However, the project formulation was mainly focused on the needs assessment and HCEFLCD capacities without assessing adequately other stakeholders, i.e. the local population and other institutional stakeholders. Therefore, the necessary time and resources have been underestimated to develop community structures and legal and institutional conditions required to sustainably manage and harvest forest resources, with and for the benefit of local populations. This ²has led to certain overly

optimistic assumptions and outcome indicators. The value and nature of the indicators were revised in the third year of the project, but without adjusting the assumptions formulation and defining the matrix outputs.

9. The basic postulate and originality of the GIFMA strategic foundation envisaged that the involvement of local populations in the commercial exploitation of forest products is an effective leverage to make them participate and engage in self-financed sustainable co-management forest and grazing systems. Given the time needed to set priorities for action and put in place the appropriate structures and partnerships, it was difficult to maintain the interest of the poor populations only with the soft project before the first incomes were drawn from the resource exploitation almost at the end of the project.
10. In accordance with the project document, GIFMA developed three main strategies to facilitate experience replication: (i) a substantial training program that addressed all project partners; (ii) an operational knowledge management system at the two target regional directorates of Water and Forests (DREFs) level and nationally; and (iii) a thematic study to adapt forest legislation to the new integrated participatory approach for forest and rangeland management. On this basis, the revision Decree of 29/09/1976 is a short-term priority of HCEFLCD.

b) IMPLEMENTATION

11. The project has demonstrated a good adaptive management capacity to solve implementation problems through the following changes to the project design: (i) three successive extensions were requested and granted until end of 2014, a duration which jumped from five to eight years to overcome the significant delays in the GIFMA implementation at startup (2 years) and in achieving expected outcomes; (ii) the stiffness of the HCEFLCD planning and decision-making process and its over-centralized management made it difficult to practice adaptive management through projects. However, the PMU pressures as well as national and UNDP support have accelerated and unlocked, case by case, several mainly administrative issues that hindered the smooth running of the project; (iii) review of performance indicators in the third year of the project to make them smarter and adapted to local conditions. The activities planned in the original plan were also adjusted and modified from 2010 and target annual outcome indicators refer to the new indicators; (iv) the project assessed the risks and mitigation measures described in the Project document and adapted them to the running reality; and (v) the initiation and promotion of institutional partnerships for forest ecosystems integrated management to finance micro-projects and compensate for the lack of incentives for people's participation (soft project).
12. The executing agency, HCEFLCD, maintained very good relations with a large number of project institutional partners, particularly UNDP, ADS, MAPM, national education and research institutions, local authorities and donors mobilized by UNDP (GEF, WWF, Peace Corps at project start). Such relationships were implemented in the field by the conclusion of several agreements, including partnership agreements with these institutions and projects.
13. In terms of budget, financial achievements compared to forecasts are satisfactory since they were around 90% on September 30, 2014, i.e. \$2,779,520 spent out of a total of \$3,110,745 of the Project document forecast budget. They could even reach 95% by the end of the project (31 December 2014). By donor, on 30 September 2014, 74% of the GEF initial budget were spent, 170% of UNDP's, 71% of ADS's, 125% of HCEFLCD's, 100% of WWF's and 20% of Peace Corps. The most important achievements by product are those of Output 1 (195% of forecast), Output 4 (165% of forecast), and Output 3 (81% of forecast). However, the lowest completion rate is Output 2 (12%), given that ADS has

made an important in-kind contribution at the provincial level for CGs training that has not been accounted for and that reduced the need for funding for this activity.

14. With regard to M&E, evaluation indicators were adapted in the third year of the project, but the difficulties of measuring them, the lack of means of verification clearly defined in the new logical framework and the lack of regular indicator measures have affected the quality of the results. Information on impact monitoring of various activities supported by the project are not available. In addition, an update of the overall work plan instead of by annual targets would have allowed monitoring and a more realistic assessment of project progress and PMU performance. Continued support by a M&E expert would have been necessary to implement and operate the system. The delays in the completion of the mid-term mission one year and a half before the end of the project did not allow to implement the recommendations for a period long enough to have a tangible impact on project outcomes.
15. Project collaboration with UNDP has been steady. UNDP has always been available and provided professional support to the project to help overcome management difficulties. From the onset, the project benefitted from ongoing support of HCEFLCD, the executing agency, and ADS both centrally and in the two target regions, and thus despite their workload. The means of the two DREFs in the project target areas have been strengthened (mobilization of personnel and vehicles) and both DREFs have progressively integrated some of the project activities in their programs to ensure implementation under the PMU coordination. The technical support provided by WWF catalyzed and initiated the development of standards and innovative technical tools and very useful in improving the governance of forest ecosystems.
16. The delay in the implementation of the PMU and national management procedures consistent with UNDP's (NEX modality), the complexity of the issue and participatory process, the lack of national reference and the multiplicity of stakeholders and challenges contributed to the difficult start and impacted achievements. The delay of nearly 2 years in starting was subsequently partly reduced by an increased partner commitment and compensated by the three extensions of the project. PMU operations were also hampered by the lack of clarity regarding the hierarchical and administrative relations between officials and contract staff as members of a single operational unit.

c) PROJECT OUTCOMES

17. Project interventions were in line with the original objectives and the four main expected results: (1) the development of new participatory management systems; (2) building the capacity to replicate/adapt these systems; (3) knowledge management to support forest ecosystems integrated management; and (4) the implementation of adaptive management through the integration of acquired strategies and project approaches. The main activities and achievements are described by expected outcome of the project.
18. **Expected Outcome 1.** The project adaptively and implicitly developed an integrated participatory management model for "agro-forest-grazing" areas based on the three following management types: (i) organization (creation, training, coaching) of the populations in 10 community groups, on an ethno-spatial and territorial base; the CGs are constituted by economic activity which ensures the participation of all forest users and their involvement in the forest resource co-management; (ii) institutional partnership with HCEFLCD involving institutions such as the agriculture department, ADS and the community which was first informally constituted before becoming formal to put in place and develop community structures; and (iii) the definition and implementation of support tools for forest ecosystems

management such as knowledge management, forest restoration, forest certification and a geographic information system (GIS).

19. The project provided concrete solutions to ensure an integrated and concerted management of target forest resources through the following deliverables: participatory diagnosis and thematic studies, management plans for rangelands and firewood, agro-forest-grazing development plans of the two target rural municipalities, Skoura and Tanourdi. The formation of 8 GCs and 2 federations and the strengthening of 15 GCs, agreements on deferred lands (1800 ha) and harvest of herbs and medicinal plants (25000 ha rosemary, 1300 ha lichens), the certification audits and improved management plans of Guigou and Skoura forests, ecological restoration techniques and the development of support tools for sustainable forest management (GIS, knowledge management) and partnership agreements with other agencies and programs in order to finance income-generating activities (IGA) for the benefit of the populations neighboring target forests. Most activities have been defined on the basis of thematic studies conducted in close collaboration with local populations and specialized institutions (universities, research institutes, regional and local forest departments). The activities were initiated in the field, but they still require significant support to be consolidated and fully operational and to ensure sustainability.
20. **Expected Outcome 2.** The GIFMA capacity building program benefited all project partners at local, provincial, regional and national levels (community groups, municipal and local authorities, technical departments and administration). It enabled the participants to acquire the necessary skills according to their missions, roles and responsibilities in order to develop, adapt and replicate integrated forest management models of the two pilot rural communes (Tanourdi and Skoura). A capacity-building plan was developed on the basis of studies conducted by the GIFMA project on participatory diagnosis with GCs and forest managers. Capacity-building activities included classroom training, field study tours and experience sharing, and presentation and validation workshops of GIFMA results. CGs' trainings aimed their upgrade, empowerment and involvement in participatory management of forest ecosystems. The objectives of the trainings of the DCEFLCD technical staff were to strengthen their monitoring and oversight capacity for forest management by familiarizing them with innovative standards and tools developed for the governance of forest ecosystems.
21. **Expected Outcome 3.** A knowledge management system was developed by GIFMA for the two project target DREFs and at the national level. This knowledge management system is a space for consultation and a platform for knowledge and information sharing at local, national and international levels for all matters relating to the integrated management of forest ecosystems. Synergies provided by national and international expertise in the implementation offered great opportunities for collective learning, and experience sharing and transfer. The project was a very rich and diverse set of documentation all issues and aspects of community forest management. One of the most important project deliverable is the development of a core of expertise in the area of forest ecosystems integrated management (GIEF).
22. **Expected Outcome 4.** The reflection on the review of the indicators matrix by objective and product enabled partners to master the approach, objectives and project organizational and operational strategy and clarify roles and responsibilities. Some targets considered unachievable during the project implementation period were abandoned. Other targets have been adjusted. Besides the reflection on the revision of the monitoring-evaluation system, the major effort of project adaptive management resulted in the initiation and promotion of institutional partnerships for forest ecosystems integrated management. Deprived of the opportunity to fund incentives for populations to participate and demonstrating responsiveness to the social environment reluctance messages, the project (PMU) has been able to forge partnerships with several regional institutional actors and mobilize additional

resources in order to implement the joint development plans activities. CGs made several major proposals to readjust the studies conducted by the project in order to better adapt management plans to the actual environment. Project monitoring, annual audits and annual reviews results on the project's status by the national coordination committee allowed repositioning and guiding the project activities during implementation.

23. **With respect to relevance**, the GIFM strategic goal addresses the priorities of the Forest National Programme (PFN), the National Strategy for Environmental Protection (SNPE) and more particularly the National Strategy for Sustainable Development (SNDD) including the Morocco Green Plant (PMV), the Energy Strategy, the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH), and advanced decentralization. The GIFMA objectives and expected outcomes are perfectly in line with the goals of the 2007-2011 and 2012-2016 cooperation frameworks of UNDAF and UNDP
24. **In terms of effectiveness**, the project performance regarding process management has received a satisfactory score as despite a rather theoretical initial implementation framework, the PMU and all partners have been able to manage institutional challenges and the situation in the field to ensure pragmatic foundations for project achievement. In fact, in accordance with its development goal, immediate objective and four expected outcomes, the project designed a self-financed and multifunctional forest and rangeland management model which is operational in two representative municipalities (Skoura and Tanourdi) within the Tazekka-Krouchen corridor. The main capacities of the community groups and support and control community structures were built to help them develop the model in both municipalities. A knowledge management system to support the dissemination of the management system developed was put in place and the project adaptive management allowed to address the main implementation difficulties and to adapt activities to local conditions in order to achieve satisfactory performance. The average outcomes implementation rate is 81%.
25. **With regard to efficiency**, the project collaboration with UNDP, HCEFLCD and ADS were regular both for their support and to mobilize the human and material resources necessary for its implementation. The project built on GEF and WWF recognized technical expertise in the field of natural resource sustainable management and built formal and informal partnerships with several regional institutional actors in order to mobilize additional expertise and resources to achieve its goals.
26. **With regard to ownership**, the GIFMA approach was adopted at the national level (participatory and cross-sectoral approach, territorial culture, policy convergence and harmonization). The advanced decentralization project will put in place a regional Council which will play a predominant role in the implementation of the cross-sectoral approach developed by GIFMA. The Guigou and Itzer forests were integrated in the forest certification process (FSC) with the support of the new UE-funded sector policy support program for forests (PAPF), the formulation of which totally complies with GIFMA approaches, objectives and strategies. The GIFMA knowledge management system is integrated in the HCEFLCD within the DIPSIC. The extension of improved ovens is included in the DREFs annual contracts-programs with the HCEFLCD, in the same way as deferring and fruit tree seedlings distribution. The community groups are no longer isolated and learnt to discuss with the forest managers as well as with the public institutions representatives to consult them and discuss with the forest administration about the forest heritage and improve their socio-economic conditions. The incorporation of the rangeland and livestock development integrated management plans (PGIPDE) - achieved with the project support - in the communal development plans (PCD) of both project pilot municipalities is an indication of ownership of the results. ADS made a long-term commitment to the populations living in forest areas, especially in the Middle Atlas.

27. **Concerning integration**, the GIFMA objectives and expected outcomes perfectly fit the objectives of the UNDAF and UNDP 2007-2011 and 2012-2016 cooperation plans and is complementary to the actions led by UNDP Morocco in the area of poverty reduction and natural resource sustainable management.
28. **With regard to gender**, the project underestimated the importance of the gender 'approach. The groups were accepted as they stood without improving women's representation. Women account only for about 15% of those participating to the various training activities. The thematic studies have not sufficiently distinguished the responsibilities between women and men in activities to identify training priorities and specific support related to gender. However, various agreements/partnerships focused on women have been signed or are being negotiated such as the development of collective ovens and rosemary harvest.
29. **In the context of South-South cooperation**, the project outcomes with regard to certification and forest joint management approach may be subject to exchange of experience between Morocco and the countries similar social and environmental conditions. However, most project activities are still at an early stage and are not mature enough to be considered a success to be disseminated in the sub-region (CGs sustainability after the project, the forest certification processes have just started, the GIS database and knowledge management system are just being set up). The GIFMA project has obtained gains, but has not defined a forest integrated management comprehensive methodology that can already be cited as examples.
30. **In terms of sustainability**, the GIFMA ecosystem integrated and participatory management models are potentially sustainable, replicable and durable in the Middle Atlas ecosystem context in particular, and in the Moroccan context in general, but they still need to be consolidated as follows: (i) strengthening the GCs autonomy and governance by value chain and level of territorial structures (federation); (ii) strengthening the capacities and powers of the HCEFLCD regional departments to accompany GCs (hiring facilitators) and allow them to be sufficiently responsive and flexible to meet the priorities of the populations; (iii) reviewing and implementing of legislation which must be both an incentive for legal groups and deterrent to illegal operators; and (iv) the gradual spread of forest management tools (certification, GIS, knowledge management) at the regional, provincial and municipal level.
31. The fact that the project was playing primarily a role of catalyst and facilitator through partnership agreements with existing institutions and community groups allowed proper ownership of the results. The HCEFLCD services have most of the required technical capacities and a favorable institutional environment (extended participation, partnership, territorial integration) to adapt and replicate the approaches and models developed by the GIFMA project.
32. The DREFs already took ownership of the management support tools such as environmental restoration, knowledge management and GIS developed by GIFMA; such tools will be included in their short-term programs to build forest managers' capacities. With regard to rural communes, the project sustainability is illustrated by the inclusion of project priorities within the municipal development plans (PCD), which are the development tool/strategy at local level. Achieving self-funded participatory management systems through partnership contracts (harvest of herbs and medicinal plants, compensation for deferred grazing, forest works, etc.) is considered a sustainability factor for the new management systems. The last six-month extension of the project until the end of December 2014 was primarily intended to complete the gradual withdrawal process of the GIFMA project and handover of the various activities and facilities to CGs and key institutions to ensure their continuation and sustainability.

33. **With regard to impact**, the project had positive effects on the planning process, as well as on the operations and stakeholders decision-making process. The project contributed to build a climate of trust conducive to dialogue among stakeholders, appeased and cooperative relationships, and internalization of the interest and effectiveness to associate forest ecosystems integrated management and populations' self-development. The forest ecosystems integrated management approach was adopted at the national level (participatory approach, cross-sectoral, territorial culture, convergence, and policy, tools and standards harmonization).
34. In the project area, in addition to the project direct benefits related to the benefits and revenues drawn from the forest ecosystems integrated co-management (IGA, WFP operation, compensation for deferred grazing, restoration, etc.), there have been changes in the behavior of the populations towards human resources and the Forest Administration, and growing interest for community groups, natural resources sustainable management models (forest and rangeland management plans, energy plan), improved ovens and income generating activities (farming activities, deferred herbs and medicinal plants). The populations, who were suspicious at the beginning, progressively became real project partners. CGs trainings strengthened their upgrade and empowerment and their involvement in the forest ecosystem participatory management.
35. The project main immediate environmental impact on the intervention area are related to the profit target neighboring populations for forest and grazing resource protection and proper management through organized and trained community groups and concrete actions for deferring, creation of forest regeneration plots and sustainable harvest of herbs and medicinal plants through contracts and training ensuring resource sustainable management. In order to support and sustain forest ecosystems integrated and sustainable management, the project developed and implemented tools and standards including FSC certification, a geographic information system and an ecological restoration and biodiversity for the Middle Atlas forests ecosystem, the development of which is part of the Government current priorities.

d) CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Corrective measures related to project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

In terms of design, the multiplicity of agencies involved and the types of responsibilities at each administrative level should be better defined at least on an overall level in the project formulation report. A specific activity to develop the communications system should be included in the launching activities of new projects to clarify early the roles and improve managing relations among the various stakeholders. Given the delay to set up administrative and financial management systems consistent with national requirements and those of donors, it is recommended for the future, that such issues would be better addressed during the formulation of the project.

36. **With regard to implementation**, the operational structure could be more efficient with: (i) greater project financial and logistical autonomy while maintaining an effective control system to prevent skidding; (ii) more flexible communication and approval procedures that would allow a better use of new technologies and a faster collection and dissemination of information; (iii) a formalization and clarification of operational relationships among different actors (institutions, technical committees/communes, development officers/sector managers, etc.).

37. It is difficult to maintain the interest of the poor with a soft project during the long initial period of reflection, approach defining and structures development until the first incomes from resource exploitation were made almost at the end of the project. To facilitate trust building and interest of the people at project onset, it may be advisable to provide funding for a minimum of anchorage activities related in this case mainly to the restoration of forest resources and grazing. All these activities related to natural resource protection fall within GEF funding possibilities.
38. An inadequate control of timeframe, the lack of an integrating framework and clear guideline for the conduct of thematic analysis have resulted in significant areas of redundancy, difficulties to summarize and consolidate results and proliferation of differing and proposals and barely synergistic. Therefore, *it is recommended to replace when possible cumbersome thematic studies* by accelerated methods for participatory research of diagnosis and focus on a few more in-depth analysis to address very specific issues. It is appropriate to assess the usefulness and importance of studies based on information really needed for the forest resource co-management approach.
39. The gender approach was underestimated and requires specific support to identify tools to be foreseen for a project.
40. Not identified during the project preparation, some legal barriers related to GCs economic operations in the forest have been a barrier to operationalize income-generating activities. They have been therefore refused as they would be contrary to the law. To promote new practices, it is appropriate for the future to request prior waiver for testing and pilot experimenting. Once the approach is developed, a new law is developed and enacted.
41. **With regard to monitoring-evaluation**, the project planned for a specific expertise to develop the project monitoring and evaluation system. The difficulties encountered by the PMU to put the system in practice were rapidly obvious. It would have been preferable to provide a M&E expert permanently within the PMU to support both the system development and implementation.

Measures to monitor or strengthen the project benefits

42. The measures to be taken in the short term to consolidate the project gains mainly relate to the ecosystems management approach, institutional partnerships, community groups and ecosystems management tools.
43. **Approach.** Based on the project results analysis and in order to facilitate its implementation in other areas, it is important to refine the ecosystems management approach and methodology and develop a summary of the approach with a guide defining very accurately the stages, objectives and content of the different studies to be carried out and the roles of the various stakeholders. This conceptualization effort of the multi-partner participatory management model will also help the HCEFLCD to better master its integration in its 10-year program and its annual work plans at the national and regional level.
44. **Strategic partnerships** could be mobilized through the reactivation of the programs and projects' coordination and steering bodies contributing to combating desertification within the preparation for the implementation of advanced decentralization.
45. **Community groups:** Stabilization and sustainability of CGs social cohesion of groups and their effective and responsible commitment to GIEF require sustained local support over a long period. CGs coaching must help people to organize themselves not only for sustainable resource management and AMP in particular, but also to facilitate market access (processing, packaging). The creation of federations

should be encouraged to promote better integration into local structures (municipalities). The recruitment of contractual development workers in the sectors is envisaged by HCEFLCD. In addition, it is necessary to quickly implement AMP operating contracts with the CGs to bring them the benefits of forest ecosystems management, maintain their interest and improve their sustainability beyond the project.

46. **Ecosystem management support tools** such as FSC certification, GIS, ecological restoration and knowledge management are operational, and have been already integrated by the DREFs. The short-term priority is to focus on participatory evaluation of such tools at the pilot municipalities and on their extension and dissemination to neighboring cities to gradually cover the entire target Tazekka-Krouchen corridor. HCEFLCD officials have confirmed that the two GIFMA target forests will be integrated into the priorities of the Sector Policy Support Programme for the Forest Sector (PAPF) to achieve certification. With regard to GIS, the short-term priority is to make it fully operational within two DREFs so that it actually becomes a management tool for the forest administration. The two experimental ecological restoration and biodiversity plots are new and need to be monitored regularly by the Forest Research Centre in order to get maximum results. With regard to the knowledge management system, the priority is to build its capacities within HCEFLCD.

Proposals for the future on the way to promote the main objectives

47. The proposals for the future are related to the development of the integrated forest management approach defined by GIFMA, the adaptation of regulations to co-management, and the development of ecosystem management tools.
48. **Development of the GIFMA approach:** The sustainability of GIFMA achievements, extension activities, ownership and replication of results and approaches are related to the project inclusion in the DREF 2014–2024 ten-year plan, the Sector Policy Support Programme for the Forest Sector (PAPF) for activities related to certification of both forests and advanced decentralization.
49. The priority is to expand the integrated approach initiated by GIFMA to gradually cover all the neighboring municipalities of the two target forests (Itzer and Guigou) and Tazekka-Krouchen corridor with the certification goal. Priority will be given to the ecosystems located in the GIFMA project municipalities and their neighborhood to benefit from the GIFM implementation positive impact, from existing NGOs and informed groups that can act as examples, witnesses and relay (centrifugal extension process).
50. **With regard to regulation**, the priority is to revise the Forestry Law to adapt it to the new co-management approach (participatory and cross-sectoral forest management mechanisms and tools, roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders and partnerships, contractual procedures). This is included in the HCEFLCD short term priorities. Given that deferring should generate environmental benefits, The possibility that such compensations may in the future be integrated into payment for environmental services schemes should be considered.
51. **With regard to the management tools** developed by the GIFMA project, the long term priority is to gradually develop these tools in all Morocco regions as well as at the national level to facilitate close monitoring and improve transparency in forest resource management. In addition to the forest sector, the GIS should progressively integrate all new environmental programs (REDD+, biomass monitoring, etc.) and all other sectors directly or indirectly related to forest ecosystems management and their surroundings. The knowledge management system development priorities are the expansion of

contributors to other regions and projects and the system ownership by the decentralized authorities while facilitating access at the provincial and communal level.

Project successes and weaknesses

52. The key successes of the project included the forest resource co-management, promotion of partnerships with various institutions to increase the response capacities and impact and the set-up of a knowledge management system to share and exchange experiences and information at the local and national level. The main weaknesses included the performance monitoring and evaluation system, the lack of consideration for gender issues, the lack of post-training evaluation, and the heavy administrative procedures.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 EVALUATION OBJECTIVE

53. The final evaluation was conducted in accordance with UNDP and GEF guidelines, rules and procedures as indicated in the UNDP evaluation guidelines for the GEF-funded projects.
54. The objectives of the final evaluation are to assess the achievement of project expected outcomes and draw lessons that can improve the sustainability of the GIFMA project gains and promote the overall improvement of UNDP programs.
55. In accordance with the Terms of Reference and project document, the final evaluation should determine to what extent the project objectives and expected results were achieved and identify key lessons learned for future programming. The final evaluation should include a section on lessons learned for wide dissemination in countries conducting similar projects in integrated forest management. It should include all aspects already covered by the mid-term evaluation, and particularly focus on the broader impact stemming from the activities carried out under the project. The sustainability of results is assessed, including the contribution to capacity-development and achievement of global environmental goals. The final evaluation should conclude with recommendations for follow-up activities.

1.2 SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

56. **Evaluation Subject:** In accordance with UNDP guidelines for or achieving the final evaluations of UNDP-supported and GEF-funded projects, the mission assessed the expected results and the performance of the project activities on the basis of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, consistency, sustainability and impact of project achievements, especially in terms of equitable access to natural resources (gender approach). The evaluators also drew lessons for the benefit of institutional partners involved, and made useful recommendations to contribute to the consolidation of the project results.

The assessment focused in particular on the following points: (i) progress made to achieve the objectives of the project document; (ii) project achievements and their preliminary impact against the project strategic and immediate objectives; (iii) GIFMA role in mobilizing partners and the extent of their involvement in the implementation of project activities; (iv) project organizational and institutional set-up, its management and its monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system to assess project effectiveness and degree of adaptability to the project's specificities, and its institutional environment; and (v) the project financial management with a view to detecting bottlenecks and necessary measures to better match the implementation of activities and financial procedures required to this end.

57. The elements of the GIFMA logical framework were the subject of a detailed analysis by the evaluation mission in terms of: (i) consistency between the objectives, outcomes and outputs and activities (vertical logic); (ii) adequacy of indicators; and (iii) level of achievement of physical and financial forecasts.
58. The analysis of outcomes includes the analysis of outputs and activities listed in the logical framework of the project document. The GIFMA four expected outcomes have been analyzed.
59. The evaluators also assessed the achievements, gains and lessons learned against the following topics: (i) the institutional set-up, efficiency and the adequacy of the project management and implementation structures at the national, provincial and local levels; (ii) the project physical and financial

implementation, effectiveness and efficiency; (iii) the adequacy and consistency of project interventions; (iv) M&E and the rationality of the changes made to project initial indicators; (v) gender approach; and (vi) relevance of the identified risks and mitigation. In addition, special attention was paid to sustainability, synergies with other projects/programs, project exit strategy, involvement of project institutional partners and opportunity offered by the project in terms of South-South cooperation.

60. **Procedures for conducting the evaluation:** The evaluators followed a participatory and consultative approach to assess the GIFMA project performance and impact and analyze the data provided by the literature review and gleaned from actors and beneficiaries interviews, including farming, forest and grazing activity groups; users; PMU; local NGOs; rural municipalities' representatives; members of national and provincial committees (UNDP/GEF, Project national manager (HCEFLCD), ADS, WWF, ENFI, DGCL, DREFs, CCDRFs, DPAs, etc.), and national or international experts directly or indirectly involved in the project (see Annex 3: list of persons interviewed).
61. With regard to documentation, the evaluators reviewed all relevant information sources, such as the project description, project activity reports, physical and financial implementation reviews of the project, project thematic studies, capacity building plan, monitoring and evaluation, and knowledge management system documents, mid-term evaluation report, GEF focal area tracking tools and national strategic and legal documents (see Annex 5: List of documents reviewed).
62. In addition to discussions with the various actors in the field, the interviews included surveys of stakeholders and beneficiaries on the basis of starting points and specific objectives and goals of the different activities. Interviews and focus groups discussions were held with various stakeholders representing areas of intervention, activities, thematic, partners, and direct and indirect project stakeholders. The main evaluation questions and a summary of the results are described in Annex 7.
63. Ratings were assigned to the following evaluation criteria according to the on the grid used by UNDP: (i) monitoring and evaluation: monitoring and evaluation design during project set up, implementation of monitoring and evaluation plan, monitoring and evaluation overall quality; (ii) Implementing/executing agency: quality of UNDP implementation, quality of execution by HCEFLCD, overall quality of implementation and execution; (iii) outcomes: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and overall score of project outcomes; and (iv) sustainability: financial resources, socioeconomic, institutional and governance framework, environmental, sustainability overall likelihood (see table of evaluation ratings in Project 3 summary).

1.3 EVALUATION REPORT STRUCTURE

64. In accordance with the terms of reference of the final evaluation mission (see Annex 1), this report analyzes more particularly the following elements:
1. Objective and approach of the final evaluation mission
 2. Description and project development background
 3. Conclusions of the final evaluation mission (descriptive appreciation and criteria rating)
 - 3.1. Project design/formulation: results framework, assumptions and risks, replication, management, etc.
 - 3.2. Project implementation: management, partnerships, monitoring and evaluation, financing, etc.
 - 3.3. Project outcomes: achievement of objectives, relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, country ownership, integration, sustainability and impact
 4. Conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned: corrective measures, measures to ensure gains sustainability, proposals for the future, best and worst practices with regard to relevance, performance and success.
 5. - Annexes

2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 PROJECT START-UP AND DURATION

65. To implement the Project, a partnership agreement was signed in November 2006 between UNDP and the national executing agency, HCEFLCD. The GIFMA initial duration was 60 months, i.e. November 2011, and had been postponed until December 2014 because of the significant delay in the start of the project.

2.2 THE ISSUES THE PROJECT WAS EXPECTED TO ADDRESS

66. In accordance with project document, the GIFMA project was expected to address the root causes of soil degradation and loss of biodiversity in the Middle Atlas forest ecosystems. The Middle Atlas forest ecosystems have been severely degraded by uncontrolled overgrazing, over-exploitation of firewood and timber and deforestation due to converting to farming. Overgrazing, which was identified as the main threat to Middle Atlas forest ecosystems, eliminate almost any forest natural regeneration and resulted in a significant simplification of the forest ecosystem. Overgrazing contributed to the reduction of forest productivity for animal production needs/complementarities and dramatically decreased the protection role of the forest watersheds. Unsustainable overexploitation of the forest by local populations for their needs for firewood and timber wood is another widespread cause of soil degradation in the Middle Atlas. Previous forest management has suffered from a predominantly sectoral approach based on the production of high-value forest products. Local communities and breeders have neither been significantly involved in the forest and rangeland management plans, nor in the cost-sharing and forest management benefits. No functional mechanism exists to directly reinvest a portion of incomes derived from logging in forest management costs.

2.3 IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVES AND PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

67. In accordance with the project document, the GIFMA long term development objective was to put in place an integrated management system for the Middle Atlas forest ecosystem able to restore the ecosystem integrity and contribute to the sustainable socioeconomic development of downstream rural populations and users.

68. The project immediate objective is to develop representative and priority forest watersheds in the two communes of the Tazekka-Kroucheen corridor, forest and rangeland participatory management models that preserve the forest ecosystem integrity and biodiversity conservation, improve forest and grazing productivity, control erosion, and build capacities to replicate/adapt such models in the corridor and the most vulnerable watersheds.

2.4 BASIC INDICATORS ESTABLISHED

69. The project document logical framework matrix includes verifiable performance and impact indicators and criteria. These impact indicators were carefully defined to measure the project overall impact on sustainable land management and biodiversity conservation. This is the basis on which the project monitoring and evaluation was to be implemented.

2.5 MAIN STAKEHOLDERS

70. In accordance with the project document, the most important stakeholders are the forest communities living in the pilot municipalities. The project will make special efforts to ensure that women are included into the approach of income-generating activities and other project initiatives. HCEFLCD is the other stakeholder most affected by the project as executing agency. The project was designed to help them to move quickly towards the decentralized and participatory forest management approach provided in their National Forestry Programme (PFN) and their 10-year plans. The basic forest structures (SPEF, CDF, SCDF) will be directly involved in the project implementation (field) under the PMU control and oversight.
71. Other national and local stakeholders include the government, the Social Development Agency (ADS), the provincial and regional authorities, rural municipalities, public services (agriculture, land planning...), private firms focused on forest products, local NGOs, the National Forest Engineering School and research institutes. International partners include UNDP, GEF, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and US Peace Corps.

2.6 EXPECTED OUTCOMES

72. The project objective will be reached once the four outcomes are achieved. Each outcome is linked to a certain number of activities to achieve. The four expected outcomes and activities to achieve as described in the project document are summarized in the table below.

Table 3: Expected Outcomes

Outcome 1	Forest and rangeland self-financed and multifunctional restoration and management models are developed and operational in the two representative communes within the Tazekka/Kroucheen corridor are put in place.
Activities	
1.1	Selection of two representative communes in the corridor
1.2	Putting in place the representative empowered community management structures for the implementation of the management plans developed in a concerted manner with the Water and Forest department
1.3	Development of forest and rangeland integrated management technical systems (based on integrated land use planning and management)
1.4	Development of self-financed systems
1.5	Development of community-based forest groups in charge of implementing forest management and harvest plans, under the oversight of community management structures and Forestry Services
1.6	Ensuring certification of pilot forests for forest sustainable management
1.7	Development of M&E systems to support participatory management
1.8	Testing by pilot communes of the royalty payment mechanism based on forest groups revenues
Outcome 2	The main capacities of key institutional and human resources necessary to implement, adapt and replicate forest and grazing integrated restoration and management models are built within community groups, and support and oversight structures, and used to replicate the models in other communes.
Activities	
2.1	Completion of the overall building-capacity plan
2.2	Building-capacity of local NGOs and other institutions in order to support the community level

2.3	Building the capacities of communes and community management structures (operational adaptation and replication from pilot sites)
2.4	Building forest group capacities (operational replication from pilot sites)
Outcome 3 Activities	A knowledge management system is put in place to support the development and adaptation of sustainable land management models to be used for legislative and policy reform.
3.1	Knowledge generation for the restoration of the forest integrity and forest ecosystem integrated management
3.2	Knowledge-sharing for the forest ecosystem integrated management
3.3	Strengthening the legal and policy framework for a better forest participatory management
Outcome 4	The Project objectives achievement is improved through project adaptive management, based on the identification and integration of the lessons drawn from the project strategies and approaches.

3 CONCLUSIONS

3.1 PROJECT DESIGN/FORMULATION

3.1.1 Analysis of the results framework (project rationale/strategy; indicators)

73. **Logical framework.** The GIFMA Project development objective and immediate objective were logically defined based on the identification of the main issue to deal with, i.e. the Middle Atlas forest ecosystem degradation, and on the strategic choice of two of the root causes of the problem: 1) over-exploitation of forest resources by poor and disadvantaged populations; and 2) lack of policy and practice for forest regeneration. As part of the pilot intervention to address the two root causes of the main problem, the strategic approach focused on the following: building the HCEFLCD forest ecosystem management capacities, participation of the forest users to forest ecosystem efficient management and improvement of incomes drawn from the forest. This strategic approach is clearly stated in the project immediate objective with the development of an integrated participatory management model on one hand, and "capacity-building for model replication.

74. The definition of the four outcomes also follows the logical step to link the selected strategy and outcomes to achieve the objective. Outcome 1 ensures public participation and self-funded systems, Outcome 2 ensures HCEFLCD institutional capacity-building, Outcome 3 ensures effective knowledge management and lessons learned from the pilot project for replication, and Outcome 4 ensures an effective and appropriate management of project inputs to achieve the project outcomes and goals. On this basis, the GIFMA logical framework is built with four outcomes and 18 outputs drawn from the project objectives.

The mid-term evaluators reviewed the links between outputs and outcomes, identified some lack of consistency between outcomes and related outputs and proposed to rearrange the logical framework (see Table 1 in the mid-term evaluation report). The mid-term review evaluators also found that the GIFMA project document and logical framework have left a minor role to cross-sector partnerships. The Project formulation was mainly focused on needs assessment and HCEFLCD capacities in forest ecosystem participatory and integrated management, without sufficiently assessing other stakeholders, i.e. the local populations and other stakeholders such as the agriculture and livestock services. However, this aspect was vital in achieving the expected outcomes. Therefore the mid-term review evaluators

proposed to add to the initial logical framework an incremental outcome related to partnership management at the grassroots level to take into account the coordination and participatory management development with relevant institutions such as ADS, CRs, Agriculture provincial departments, etc. One year before the end of the project that was planned for 30 June 2014, at the time of the mid-term review, it was too late to add another incremental outcome to the logical framework, although partnership management had already been considered in the 2013 and 2014 annual plans.

75. The strategy adopted by the project is based on a broadly shared conclusion, i.e. the government inability to ensure by itself forest heritage sustainable management. The Project considers that the organized involvement of local populations in the commercial exploitation of forest products is a powerful and effective incentive to secure their participation, mobilization and commitment into forest ecosystem sustainable management models. However the project formulation underestimated the time needed to set up community structures and legal and institutional conditions to manage and harvest forest resources sustainably and for the benefit of local populations.
76. **Indicators.** The review of the cross-cutting rationale between the GIFMA definition of objectives, outcomes and their respective indicators on one hand, and the project inputs, and implementation assumptions on the other hand, underlines serious imbalances between the size of indicator values, the project timeframe and resources, and the relevance of the assumptions necessary to achieve the targeted changes. For example, according to the project completion indicator, after 60 months “At least 60% natural forests in the two pilot municipalities are subject to multifunctional and self-funded collaborative management systems”. To that is added the accuracy of the end-of-project Output 1.4 indicator, which states that “At least 30% adults in the pilot communities are affected by an increase of 50% of their incomes drawn from groups”.
77. Achieving these indicators values is linked to the implementation of the following assumptions: 1) the Government delegates and controls part of the management and commercial exploitation rights to communities; and 2) the communities are able to develop the internal self-checking systems required to implement rangeland and forest management systems. These oversized assumptions are mainly related to a lack of knowledge of the Moroccan forest legislation during project formulation and the absence of initial assessment of socio-economic conditions. The difficulty of the negotiations to establish licensing contracts to community groups (CG) by HCEFLCD to harvest rosemary is a good illustration of the problems encountered.
78. The finding of the mismatch between the project expected outcomes indicators and the reality on the ground led the project to hire an expert in 2009 to review and adjust the indicators values and define a related measuring and monitoring system. Although the new set of indicators also includes some weaknesses like its sometimes complex measurement system, it was approved by the National Steering Committee (NSC) and replaced the 2006 indicator system in the annual planning and progress reports. The development of the new monitoring system in 2010 was only focused on the indicators value and did not adjust the assumptions formulation or the definition of the outputs matrix.
79. The performance indicators provided in the project document and the logical framework are hardly SMART. Qualitative or post-activity monitoring indicators are missing in the initial set of indicators. Those defined in the 2010 review have not been applied, particularly the monitoring indicators of the users groups empowerment and development status. The dynamic underlying the evolution of groups capacities has not been adequately documented.

3.1.2 Assumptions and risks

80. **Assumptions.** The efforts and time required to understand the institutional and social context, and raise target population awareness have been underestimated in the formulation given the lack of data in the project document on the complexity of the livelihoods of the rural populations and economic operators involved in forest harvesting in Morocco. The project is targeting remote and isolated populations, living in marginal and precarious conditions, hardly used to be consulted. Build the population trust, and secure their support and mobilization in the integrated ecosystem management participatory process require much more time, effort and perseverance than expected.
81. The basic premise and originality of the GIFMA strategic foundation consider that the involvement of local populations in the commercial harvesting of forest products is an effective tool to engage them in sustainable and self-funded forest and rangeland co-management systems. Such involvement will be ensured under a concerted management plan, included in an agreement between the government (HCEFLCD) and community-based structures. Incomes drawn from forest product operations and sales will be used to self-finance the implementation of the concerted management plan, under the supervision of HCEFLCD. Given the time required to start the project, define the approach, create groups, conduct thematic studies, set priorities for action, look for technical and financial partners, sign and start partnership agreements, it was difficult to maintain the interest of the disadvantaged populations only with soft as the first incomes from forest resource harvesting practically arrived at the end of the project (some contracts, such as the one related to rosemary harvesting, are still being negotiated).
82. The feasibility of incorporating the national execution rules and procedures of UNDP projects in the HCEFLCD administrative and financial processes was undervalued. Seeking a solution for the difficulties in replicating the procedures established on different legal bases has led to a delay in implementation of more than a year. This difficulty was ultimately overcome only through greater involvement of UNDP and the expansion of its responsibilities.
83. The synergy between the international and national expertise in the project formulation has not been sufficiently exploited for a greater understanding of the legal, institutional, and social context and a realistic assessment of working assumptions. The ambition to change the legal basis for forest products harvesting as part of a local project, and within a reasonable timeframe, reflects excessive optimism about the influential capacity of HCEFLCD influence and its partners. This working assumption has reduced the opportunity to design and provide for transitional incentives for the organization of populations.
84. The project logical framework included assumptions to achieve the immediate objective and four expected outcomes. The table below summarizes and comments these assumptions as compared to project implementation.

Table 4: Assumptions analysis

Objectives/Outcomes	Assumptions	Comments
Immediate objective Forest and rangeland integrated, participatory and sustainable management models,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The government delegates and controls some management and harvesting rights to communities · The government supports the adoption of forest sustainable 	- Under service agreements, HCEFLCD transferred forest product management and harvesting (rosemary, lichen) to local communities (Idourar and Taghaghat forest cooperatives).

Objectives/Outcomes	Assumptions	Comments
<p>replicable in the Tazekka-Kroucheen corridor are developed in the two representative municipalities.</p>	<p>management and forest main ecological restoration principles by their managers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The communities are able to develop the internal control systems required to implement the forest and rangeland management systems · The government defends the rights of the community management structures in case of conflict with groups from outside the community · The project target partially degraded forests will generate enough benefits for communities to incite them to adopt sustainable management systems, including sustainable practices for grazing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With the GIFMA support, Guigou and Itzer forests current management has been evaluated in order to assess current management systems against forest resource sustainable management standards. HCEFLCD developed an action plan to reduce reported discrepancies. The action plan is currently being implemented by the forest managers. The latter builds on experimental gains of ecological restoration. - The local communities comply with deferring and forest-rangeland NGOs receive compensation to fund their projects. The sheep and goat fattening unit built in Enjil (Boulemane province) and the one planned for 2015 under the Morocco Green Plan, Pillar II, in Tanourdi commune, will reduce the pressure on forest rangeland and regulate the livestock load on natural grazing. The model developed will help moving from a livestock extensive livestock system to a semi-intensive system on the mid-term
<p>Outcome 1</p> <p>Self-funded and multifunctional forest and rangeland restoration and management models are developed and operational</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The incentives for the adoption of new rangeland management systems are appropriate. · The communities are able to develop the governance systems required to implement forest and rangeland management systems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The organization model of user populations in consistent community groups (based on ethno-spatial criteria) and upgrading their capacities through a sustained capacity-building programme qualify local communities to further follow a governance approach based on forest and rangeland efficient and sustainable management <p>The compensations for deferring, and the construction of sheep fattening units motivate local communities and incite them to test and adopt the livestock and rangeland participatory management models developed under the Project.</p>
<p>Outcome 2</p> <p>The main capacities implement forest and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Local NGOs, firms and consultants are quite motivated to invest capacity-building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The community groups and supporting and control structures benefitted from a consistent

Objectives/Outcomes	Assumptions	Comments
<p>rangeland integrated restoration and management models are developed within the community groups, support and oversight structures, and used to replicate the models in other communes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · HCEFLCD and other authorities encourage, through national policies, civil society to play a supporting role · Public authorities grants harvesting rights to empowered community structures 	<p>capacity-building programme in view to test the new models.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HCEFLCD transferred the harvesting rights (rosemary and lichens) to community groups. - One of the project most important deliverable is the development of a core body of expertise in the area of forest ecosystem integrated management (GIEF).

Objectives/Outcomes	Assumptions	Comments
<p>Outcome 3</p> <p>A knowledge management system to support the development and adaptation of sustainable land management models to be used for legislative and policy reform is put in place</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Key actors in forest and rangeland management are motivated · Delays beyond the project control will not preclude the entry into force of the forest management measures before the end of the project · The forest and rangeland participatory management approach is proven to be viable · HCEFLCD is convinced of the relevance of the proposed models and supports their adoption at the national scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HCEFLCD, Ministry of Agriculture, UNDP, ADS, rural communes, and local communities are motivated to develop and implement the selected models. - The forest and rangeland participatory management approach can be replicated in other communes of the Middle Atlas corridor. - The continuity of the certification process is ensured by HCEFLCD at the level of the Guigou and Itzer forests. To improve forest management, the FSC certification scheme will be widespread by HCEFLCD at the national level for 10 forest starting from 2014. - HCEFLCD is convinced of the relevance of the ecological restoration concept. CRF will take over before GIFMA closure to continue to experiment and expand it to other ecosystems at the national level (suberaie, argan forest, tétraclinis...)
<p>Outcome 4</p> <p>An adaptive management based on the identification and integration of the lessons drawn from the project strategies and approaches is implemented</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The government technical agencies continue to support the flexible adaptive management approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - By its approach based on flexibility and result-based adaptive management, the project was able to transmit to its institutional partners, a new management style more focused on efficiency, effectiveness and optimized interventions -The approach adopted was well supported by the different stakeholders and there is even a kind of ownership and internalization

85. **Risks.** The project document (paragraph 147, p 33 to 36) identified 12 risks related to the project implementation five of which were considered as medium and the others low to low-medium. No high or medium risk had been identified. Each risk is associated with mitigation measures.

86. The Project assessed the risks and mitigation measures described in the Project document and adapted them to the field on-going reality. The main feedback drawn from this analysis are the following: (i) the measures proposed by the Project document are general and rather related to goals to be attained and are not concrete measures; (ii) some of the measures proposed by the Project document are beyond

the project intervention framework and the project team prerogatives and skills, such as: the equitable sharing of costs and incomes/profits, the establishment of a tax system, the mobilization of the political will needed to curb organized crime; (iii) during its execution, the project adopted the risk matrix as a reference platform before the project started to identify and assess existing real risks and propose appropriate measures to mitigate them or remove them. Through the project adaptive management, these measures have been implemented based on the specificities and socio-economic and cultural context of each pilot municipality; and (iv) the mobilization ongoing role of institutional actors and especially the HCEFLCD services mandated to the project team, was the cardinal point of the project intervention and the most difficult task.

87. The table below shows the risks encountered during the project implementation, as well as the mitigation measures actually taken to reduce them and eliminate them.

3.1.3 Lessons learned from other relevant projects incorporated in the project design

88. Following the success achieved in UNDP-funded projects and advocating biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction through an approach that combines natural resource participatory management and rational harvesting, HCEFLCD requested UNDP to support the integration of participatory approaches and environmental and local development dimensions in the Middle Atlas forest ecosystems management. Reference projects include the Program of Support on Rural Poverty Reduction, Desertification and Drought Impact (PAL-PDS: 2004-2008), the Biodiversity Conservation Project through Transhumance in the High Atlas Southern Side (CBTHA: 2001/2009 GEF) and the Oasis Project (20010/2013 UNDP).
89. Other Middle Atlas project also inspired the GIFMA project formulation, such as the Participatory Rural Development rural in the Central Middle Atlas Mountains (called MEDA Khenifra Project) (EU), the Forests and Hinterland Participatory Development of Chefchaouen province (called Chefchaouen Project) (EU), the Ifrane Province Project (AFD), the WWF Sustainable Eco-management Project and the Taffert Forest Project (FAO).
90. In most cases, the NGOs (AGAT, AGAM) created with the MEDA Khénifra Project (2002/2005) support showed a good grounding in the social fabric. They became development catalysts in rural communities, ensuring increasingly the relationship between the population and the authorities, which were often difficult in the past. Despite their limited financial sustainability, AGATs generated in certain value chains, interest groups and promising self-funding mechanisms (cooperatives, working capital), but they still require ongoing support and diversification of funding sources.
91. The main lessons learned from the Chefchaouen Project (2001/2009) that influenced the GIFMA project approach are: (i) participatory and partnership approach developed by the project on large scales; (ii) the change in the forest technical services relationship with local institutions and beneficiaries as shown by the achievements made in partnership with INDH, rural communes and the community-based organizations; and (iii) the opening of new directions in agricultural intervention in mountain areas through the modernization and enhancement of new value chains (olive growing, beekeeping and goat breeding) through local capacity-building and introduction of new concepts of intervention by value chain.
92. The Ifrane Province Project (2002-2007) developed a specific community participatory strategy for forest management. The project helped the communities to develop institutional community structures and developed agreements with the structures for a range of forest management functions such as production of nursery seeds and plantation of the seeds. Les structures communautaires rempliront certaines de ces fonctions qui auraient été sinon attribuées sur base d'appels d'offre compétitifs. The forest management plans were directly implemented by HCEFLCD officers. The project did not particularly focus on overgrazing and did not develop significant incentives to address this issue.
93. The WWF Sustainable Eco-management Project sought to identify best practices for natural resource management in forests and rangelands and best agricultural practices in cultivated land. It also sought to develop activities that generate alternative incomes and build community organizations capacities for natural resource management and harvesting.
94. The first component of the Taffert Forest Project concerned the use of forest resources based on communities and sought to optimize the use of natural resources from a wide variety of products and forest-related activities such as honey production, livestock, tourism and environmental education. The

second component focused on capacity building for forest restoration and planned to test ecological restoration techniques, including the development of nursery production techniques of local species, equipment, training and income-generating activities to reduce pressure on natural resources.

3.1.4 Expected stakeholder participation

95. The project most important stakeholders are the forests communities who live in the pilot municipalities. The communities include breeders, community male and female members who collect various wood and forest products, and almost all the community members who get firewood. The project will undertake special efforts to ensure that women are included in the income generating approach and other project initiatives.
96. As the GIFMA executing agency, HCEFLCD is the other most involved stakeholder. The Project was designed to help HCEFLD move rapidly towards the decentralized and participatory forest management approach provided in their National Forestry Program (PFN) and 10-year plans. The basic forest structures (SPEF, CDF, SCDF) will be directly involved in the project implementation (field) under the PMU control and supervision.
97. Other stakeholders include the Government, provincial and regional authorities, rural communes, public services (agriculture, land planning...), private companies focused on forest products, local NGOs, the National Agency for Social Development (ADS), the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the National Forestry School and research institutes.
98. All the above institutions have been effectively associated in the GIFMA Project development and implementation.

3.1.5 Replication approach

99. The GIFMA Project aimed to develop, in representative and priority forest watersheds and priority on the scale of two communes Tazekka-Kroucheen corridor, forest and rangeland participatory management models that maintain the forest ecosystem integrity and promote biodiversity conservation, improve forest rangeland productivity, control erosion and enhance the models replicability/adaptation in the corridor and the most vulnerable watersheds. The ultimate goal is that the project models can be replicated in all the corridor communes and in other Moroccan regions du taking account of their socio-economic and forest specificity. The Skoura and Tanourdi rural communes located in the Guigou and Itzer target corridor forest ecosystems were selected just after the start of the project as they represent the ecological, social and economic diversity of the Middle Atlas forests.

In accordance with the project document, GIFMA developed three main strategies to facilitate replication: (i) the first strategy is linked to the capacity development to replicate/adapt new restoration and management models. The expected outcome 2 is almost entirely dedicated to institutional capacity building and use to replicate and adapt participatory management systems in new geographic areas with new communities; (ii) the second strategy involves the knowledge management. The project third expected outcome is dedicated to this activity. Knowledge management specially includes the establishment of a field-based expert network to review past and current experiences in forest ecosystem integrated management, identify best practices, seek to fill gaps in knowledge and share knowledge (study tours, exchange visits, conferences, workshops reflections, etc.). Knowledge management must also play a specific role in the "marketing" of lessons learned and project success

stories and partners to facilitate the search for financial partners interested, for replication elsewhere; and (iii) the third strategy is the adaptation of the legislation regulating the forest sector to put in place the appropriate framework for a genuine forest and rangeland participatory management.

100. The three replication strategies were developed by the GIFMA Project. A consistent training programme was provided to all project partners both locally, provincially, regionally and nationally (community groups, cities and local authorities, technical services and administrations) including classroom training and field trips, and workshops for experience-sharing and validation of the GIFMA results validation. A knowledge management system was designed and implemented at both regional Departments of Water and Forests (DREF) and national levels. A thematic study, conducted on forest legislation, proposed the revocation of the 20/09/1976 Decree to adapt the forest legislation to the new forest and rangeland integrated and participatory approach, as with other laws regulating local affairs. Following the GIFMA results and lobbying, forest authorities are now convinced of the need for such legislative review which is a HCEFLCD priority task in the short term HCEFLCD.

3.1.6 UNDP comparative advantage

101. UNDP is a key partner of the Government of Morocco in the development and implementation of environmental policies and sustainable development. For nearly twenty years, UNDP has actively supported Morocco in its participation in the first Earth Summit (1992) and for the development and implementation of national strategies for environmental protection and sustainable development. In addition, UNDP has established a solid background on biodiversity local participatory management in Morocco with the PAL-PDS program, which the participatory approach, scale of intervention (rural communes, villages, individuals) and size of activities gained an experimental and demonstrative value at the national level and tend to show the effectiveness and efficiency of such rural intervention methodology. Therefore, UNDP was a partner of choice to pilot an innovative project as GIFMA whose purpose is to contribute to the HCEFLCD policy development in forest ecosystems participatory management of forest ecosystems in Morocco.

102. . Given its mission, UNDP is working on climate change, biodiversity, energy, organic pollutants and medicinal and aromatic plants. UNDP is active in the forestry sector through biodiversity, climate change and medicinal plants.

103. The GIFMAA project formulation and implementation process was a didactic exercise in the area of project planning by objective, project cycle management, performance-based management, evaluation of results and accountability. The HCEFLCD services which pay special attention to these methodological tools could not choose better partners than UNDP and GEF whose international reputation in this field is established.

3.1.7 Links between the Project and other forestry sector interventions

104. Le document de projet avait identifié les possibilités de coopération de GIFMA avec les projets suivants : le projet du PNUD/FEM sur la Conservation de la Biodiversité par la Transhumance dans le versant sud du Haut Atlas (gestion des parcours), l'Initiative Globale pour un Pastoralisme Durable du PNUD/FEM (gestion des parcours), le Projet DRI- Forêts du FEM (réformes légales), le Programme de Micro-financement (PMF) du FEM (financement de microprojets, reproduction/adaptation des éléments réussis du Projet Moyen Atlas à d'autres parties du pays).

105. The GIFMA project effectively collaborated with ongoing projects related to forest and rangeland participatory management through experience-sharing visits (Khenifra Project, Chefchaouen Project, Ifrane Project) and partnership agreements, intervention synergy with the Rural Development Project in the Eastern Middle Atlas - PDRMO (FIDA) and the Allal El Fassi River Watersheds Management Project (JICA) under the implementation of communal development plans. Moreover, GIFMA concluded several partnership agreements with various institutions and programs working at the local level, such as regional, provincial and local Water and Forest Directorates to disseminate collective improved ovens bought by the Project and fund additional collective or individual improved ovens under the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH), compensations for deferring and medicinal plants harvesting, and as the regional coordination offices of the Agency for Social Development with regard to trainings, and the agriculture regional delegations to fund farming micro-projects under the Morocco Green Plan.

3.1.8 Management procedures

106. In accordance with the project document, the GIFMA project was implemented for an initial term of five years starting from 2006, and was extended for three years. The overall responsibility for the project implementation and governance lies with UNDP who is directly responsible to GEF for the project outcomes. As executing agency, HCEFLCD is in charge of the project execution and implementation co-management in collaboration with UNDP. A National Project Steering Committee was formed to coordinate and monitor project implementation. In the field, the project is executed by a Project Management Unit (PMU) located in Fes and supported by the HCEFLCD and ADS decentralized structures, WWF experts, and business units at the CRs level. An ad hoc committee was created at each commune to supervise project activities. This mechanism is supported by technical committees at the national and regional levels, consisting of the focal points designated by the project institutional partners.

107. The PMU is responsible for the project execution. It consists of a coordinator team leader, with management skills and field experience, a HCEFLCD forest officer (the second initially planned has been assigned to the PMU only from 2008 to 2012), two development officers, and an administrative assistant (until end 2013). Apart from the forest officer, the PMU other members were contractual. The facilitation work with the communes and target populations was mainly provided by the development agents in collaboration with industry leaders and other local partners, with virtually the technical support of two Peace Corps Volunteers, as provided in the project document (the two Volunteers have been assigned only in the project first year, from 2007 to 2008 and were subsequently withdrawn given their unsuitable profiles).

108. The Project document is evasive on the communication relationships among the different organizational units. Thus, the role and responsibilities of ADS representatives, which is the main partner at the different administrative levels as the project main financial contributor and also as social development agency, are not described. The PMU includes civil servants and contractors and their hierarchical and administrative relationships are not clearly specified in the operational unit. Moreover, the multiplicity of organizations involved at the national, regional, provincial and local levels and types of responsibilities at each administrative level should have been better defined in the project document.

3.2 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

3.2.1 Adaptive management (changes to Project design and outcomes during implementation)

109. The delays in GIFMA start up implementation (2 years) and outcomes achievement are recognized and underscores in several project annual reports, as well as by the UNDP-GEF regional technical advisers. The project start up had to face difficulties related to the project formulation and logical framework in terms of assumptions analysis, and outcomes optimization as compared to mobilized resources, and the innovating nature of this strongly institutional and cultural initiative. The time and resources allocated to the project formulation did not adequately identify and analyzed the stakeholder component in the project implementation and the institutional, legal and socio-economic background. Taking into account local needs was not sufficiently developed while designing the local interest groups and communities component. These include security of tenure in forest areas and hinterland, land tenure issues, grazing rights and usage, and national resources customary management structures. From the operational point of view, the complexity of the project management structure, the HCEFLCD institutional capacity to integrate UNDP national execution procedures in its own internal administrative and financial management system, the unexpected change of project coordinator, the time taken in selecting two pilot municipalities out of the 32 municipalities in the Middle Atlas corridor, the absence of all-terrain vehicles for the PMU members due to the slow procurement procedures of equipment, operational deficiencies in the monitoring and evaluation system, the project limited resources, and the lack of incentives for the participation of local populations are frequently cited as important causes of project delays. The impact of this delay was partially filled by three successive project extensions of the project until the end of 2014, i.e. from five to eight years.
110. During its execution, the project adopted the PRODOC matrix of risks as a reference platform before project start up to identify and assess the real existing risks and further propose the measures need to mitigate or overcome the risks. Through the project adaptive management, those measures were implemented on the basis of specificities and socioeconomic and cultural context of each pilot commune.
111. Despite the PRODOC that stated that "the PMU will benefit from any financial, administrative and decision-making autonomy required for the project," the PMU lacked logistics (vehicles managed by DREFs) and financial autonomy (lack of petty cash advance within the PMU), which this delayed some pending authorizations. The PMU insistence, and national and UNDP support accelerated and unlocked piecemeal some issues that hindered the project smooth running.
112. In terms of monitoring and evaluation, the finding of the inadequacy between the project expected outcomes indicators and the reality on the ground led the project to hire an expert in 2009 to review and adjust the indicators values and define a related measuring and monitoring system. The quality of the activity adaptation and outcomes targeted, and their respective indicators show a reasonable level of adaptive management by the PMU, consistent with results-based project management tools.
113. In addition to the reflection on the monitoring and evaluation system revision, the project adaptive management major effort resulted in the initiation and promotion of institutional partnerships for forest ecosystems integrated management. Deprived of incentives for the participating populations and demonstrating responsiveness to the social environment reluctant

reactions, the PMU has been able to partner with a number of regional institutional actors and mobilize additional resources for the implementation of concerted development plans activities through excellent cooperative relations among between them.

This includes mostly informal partnerships, developed with the DREFLCD (herbs and medicinal plants harvesting, compensations for deferring, improved ovens), the Agriculture provincial directorates (DPA) of Boulemane and Midelt (Morocco Green Plan, technical assistance), ADS regional coordination offices (trainings TAKWA, communal development plans, etc.), education and research institutions (thematic studies, ecological restoration), and more recently with the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH). Partnership management with regional and local institutions had not been explicitly planned in the project logical framework and work plan. These initiatives allowed improving the project implementation process qualitatively.

114. The increased partner involvement and adaptive management implementation helped to overcome difficulties and achieve satisfactory quantitative performance and induce qualitative impact beyond what was expected. The project implementation adaptive management has successfully developed a scale model for operational implementation of priority programs for forest-policy reorientation with their three main pillars, i.e.: 1) an integrated holistic technical system, focused on the different aspects of forest ecosystems integrated management, and including standards, and innovating supporting tools for decision-making, governance and monitoring-evaluation on progress towards sustainability; 2) design and building of a participatory model for local populations; and 3) territorial convergence of sectoral and synergetic programs and action plans.

3.2.2 Partnership agreements (with the relevant stakeholders involved in the country / region)

115. The executive agency, HCEFLCD, maintained very good relations with a good number of project institutional partners, especially UNDP, ADS, MAPM, national education and research institutes, local collectivities and the funders mobilized by UNDP (GEF, WWF, Peace Corps at project start up). These relations were concretized in the field by the conclusion of several partnership agreements.

116. The main support received by GIFMA from different institutional partners was as follows:

- **ADS:** In addition to its financial contribution, ADS, through a strong involvement of its regional offices, became a key actor in the Project activity implementation, particularly in the area of coaching and capacity-building for the newly created community groups. The project approach helped ADS to operationalize the link between forest ecosystem integrated management and development of communal development plans (PDCs). All CGs activities under GIFMA are included in the PDCs.
- **MAPM:** The Ministry of Agriculture and Maritime Fishing proved to be a key partner in the development of economic activities and technical advice to rural populations. The project has greatly benefited from the expertise of MAPM executives in coaching and raising awareness of local populations, and the studies on agricultural development opportunities and livestock in the forest areas of two rural municipalities. Once CGs are formally constituted and their capacities built, the Ministry provincial services intervene to develop farming activities (irrigation, livestock and agriculture) to improve local forest communities' social and economic conditions.
- **DPA:** The Agriculture Provincial Directorates actively participated in all project activities. They established the link between forest ecosystems integrated participatory management and their own programs and projects identified in the Green Plan Morocco, Pillar II. Bottom-up participatory projects were included in the regular programs of both DPA and Midelt Boulemane. Driven by the

"agriculture and livestock" groups supported by GIFMA, these projects mainly include hydro-agricultural development, arboriculture (apple, cherry, almond, and olive trees) and the creation of a fattening unit.

- **HCEFLCD:** The DREFs concluded agreements with the CGs on herbs and aromatic plants harvesting, and the granting of compensations for deferring. They secured funding from the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH) to develop improved ovens based on GIFMA experience.
- **ENFI:** The GIFMA project document envisaged that ENFI participates in thematic studies and monitoring system for measuring ecosystem changes. ENFI contributions proved relatively small and did not allow full use of their expertise in the project. This was a significant weakness in the project partnership management that could not be corrected given the project end close to the project, although it had been mentioned by the mid-term evaluation review.
- **Rural communes:** the rural communes (CRs) which have expressed an explicit initial reluctance to the project approach, gradually positioned as open and increasingly favorable partners. The project activity outcomes are capitalized and valued in the development process of their municipal development plans (CDP). The CRs have an increasingly positive perception of local development catalyzed and induced by the Project. Communal elected representatives outside from the pilot area expressed a desire to expand the Project activities to their own municipalities.
- **ANOC:** The national organization of sheep and goat breeders coaches breeders' groups with a view to improving breeds (technical assistance, breeders' supervision, vehicles, improved breeds). After 4 years, the Government provides grants based on the improved livestock size. An ANOC group was formed in Skoura with the GIFMA support.
- **Higher education and research:** In the area of environmental expertise, the Project was able to mobilize additional resources for research and higher education institutions, such as the National Center for Forestry Research (NWRC), the Dhar El Mahraz Faculty of Science of Fez, the Ibn Toufail Faculty of Sciences of Kenitra, to accompany scientific activities such as ecological restoration, GIS, and knowledge management.

117. The two following projects working in the Project target area supported activities complementary to GIFMAs:

- **PDERMO (FIDA):** A partnership agreement was signed between GIFMA and PDERMO to ensure action-complementarity in the two target municipalities. GIFMA focuses on anything related to forests and rangelands, and PDERMO on the development of income generating agricultural activities (irrigation, fruit-tree plantation) to reduce pressure on forest resources and rangelands (training and formation of organizations of users of agricultural areas, improving access to production areas in partnership with the CRs which ensure maintenance). GIFMA also participated in the development and participatory validation of the 2010 PDCs supported by PDRMO which identify development priorities. GIFMA took over the PDCs activities related to forest and rangeland, coaching cooperatives related to medicinal plants harvesting, and oven distribution.
- **The Allel El Fassi River Watershed Management Project (JICA):** following GIFMA advocacy, this project started to intervene in Skoura since the end of 2013. An annual intervention program including the PDC priority activities was discussed with the commune.

118. The main funding agreements for GIFMA-supported community groups are the following:

Table 6: Funding agreements

Tanourdi CR

Institutional Actors	Location	Agreement	Date of first agreement	Subject and total Outcomes	Other stakeholders
HCEFLCD: - DREF Middle Atlas - DPEF - CCDERF - Forestry Sector	Fes Midelt Itzer Tanourdi	Agreement on ovens	27/03/2014	Distribution of 7 GEFRIF improved collective ovens	-DPA, -Rural commune -Association Atgal pour la Conservation des Ressources Energétiques avec l'appui - GIFMA
		Agreement on deferring	1 April 2011	Compensation on deferred rangeland (900 ha in 2 agreements)	Association Adrar
		Agreement on lichen collecting	1 April 2014	Agreement on lichen harvesting (1300 ha)	Cooperative Taghaghate des PAM
<u>Agriculture</u> - DRA Meknes Tafilalet - DPA Midelt - Centre des Travaux de Boumia/ ONCA(Agriculture)	Meknes Midelt Boumia	Agreement being developed	Funding expected for early 2015 (Morocco Green Plan, Pillar II)	Putting in place a fattening unit (1500 sheep and goat)	Association Adrar pour la gestion des parcours et la conservation des ressources naturelles

Skoura CR

Institutional Actors	Location	Agreement	Date of first agreement	Subject and total outcomes	Other stakeholders
HCEFLCD: - DREF Fes-Boulemane - DPEF Boulemane - CCDRF - Forestry Sector	Fès Missour Boulemane Skoura	Agreement on improved ovens	April 2014	Distribution of 7 GEFRIF collective improved ovens	- DPA, - Rural Commune -- Association Skoura Mdaz pour la conservation des ressources énergétiques - GIFMA

		Agreement on deferring	1 April 2011	Compensation on deferred rangelands (900 ha in two agreements)	- Association Elharche
		Agreement on rosemary harvesting	2011	Agreement on rosemary harvesting (25000 ha in 3 agreements)	-Coopérative challal et Idourar

3.2.3 Feedback on monitoring and evaluation activities used under adaptive management

119. A performing monitoring and evaluation system and the valuation of its function in project adaptive management would be a useful contribution for the Moroccan administration of Water and Forests. However, it is difficult to put in place an effective adaptive management in this context marked by the rigidity of the planning process and decision, and management excessive centralization.

120. The use of daily management books (log problems, risks) is a good practice traditionally known in the HCEFLCD services which fell into disuse by omission. Management books give access to reliable, traceable and verifiable data recorded in real time that feed monitoring and evaluation system. This should be meditated by the HCEFLCD services which abandoned their routine document daily management.

121. Approval of the documents and reports submitted to partners for feedback has often been slow. Easing communication procedures between key project partners and simplified validation and approval procedures would have allowed a better use of new technologies for dissemination and faster collection of information.

3.2.4 Project funding

1. The Project total initial cost is US\$ 2,325,345, i.e. approximately MAD 20 million. The partners financial contributions planned in the GIFMA funding plan are: UNDP (US\$ 360,000); GEF (US\$ 965,345), and ADS (US\$ 1,000,000).

The Project executing agency, HCEFLCD, contribute in kind to the project by the allocation of technical and administrative staff. This contribution was planned for around \$US500,000 and concerns Tafilalet Meknes and Fez Boulmane DREFLCDs staff, the executives mobilized as project focal points, HCEFLCD engineers and drivers assigned to the PMU in Fes, the Project operational unit (POU), as well as the PMU and POU premises in Itzar and related operating costs (water, electricity, rent ..) .

2. This rough estimate concerned Project Outputs 1, 2, and 4 as shown in Table 7. These Outputs are as follows: i) Output 1: The participatory management models are developed; ii) Output 2: Capacities are built and used to adapt/replicate management models; iii) Output 3: Knowledge management to support forest and ecosystem integrated management systems iv) Output 4: Adaptive management through integrating lessons drawn in the Project strategies and approaches.

Table 7: Estimate of the HCEFLCD in-kind contribution (in US\$)

Type of HCEFLCD in-kind contribution	Cumulative financial estimate	
	Estimate at end 2013	Cumulative estimate (including forecasts end December 2014)
HCEFLCD engineers assigned to the PMU in Fes	225 000	262 500
Project focal points (mobilized executives)	80 000	93 300
Drivers assigned to the PMU and POU	75 000	87 500
DREFLCD DU MA and Fes Boulemane staff (CCDRF, sectors...)	85 000	99 150
Premises for PMU in Fes or POU in Itzar (rent, water, electricity), and nursery for ecological restoration	35000	40 800
TOTAL	500 000	624 050

Source: PMU, 2014

3. At the end of September 2014, the Project actual cost by partner is given in Table 8. This table shows that the financial achievements are satisfactory since they are around 90% at 30 September 2014 and could even reach 95% at the end of the project. Similarly, the Peace Corps projected contribution was in kind and amounted to \$US 200,000.
4. The Peace Corps achievement rate was only 20%, i.e. a discrepancy of \$US 160,000 against PRODOC forecasts. The lowest achievement rate is ADS, yet the Project main partner. The non-conclusion of the partnership between ADS and the Project did not allow filling this gap in order to engage ADS at the technical, financial, administrative levels, and mobilize its regional expert network for setting up micro-projects and income generating activities, weak point of Project achievements (see Annex 7). However, the 29% of ADS unspent budget, were largely filled by in-kind contribution to CGs training which has not been accounted for while it represents a significant part of the implementation cost of Outcomes 1 and 2 (capacity-building) to which was allocated most of ADS co-financing.

Table 8: Forecasts and achievements by partner (in US\$)

Partner	Forecasts (PRODOC)	Expenditures incurred by end of September	% of achievements against forecasts
GEF	997 945	741 761	74%
UNDP	360 000	611 264	170%
ADS	1 000 000	709 645	71%

HCEFLCD	500 000	624 050	125%
WWF	52 800	52800	100%
Peace Corps	200 000	40 000	20%
Total	\$ 3 110 745	\$2 779 520	89%

- 5.
6. The GEF contribution includes the MSP¹ Project contribution (forecast: US\$ 965,345) and PDF contribution (forecast: US\$ 326,00 advance before the Project start up effective date). With a \$US 741,761 effective contribution, the achievement rate was close to 74% as of end September 2014, including GEF-MSP and GEF-PDF. This rate remains relatively satisfactory considering the innovating and complex aspects of the components before the GIFMA project closure. The rate should increase and reach over 80% by 31 December 2014 (Project closure).
7. The forecasts by Output are important for Output 2 (US\$ 1,095,750), followed by Output 4 (US\$ 853,470), Output 3 (\$US 208,250) and Output 1 (\$US 167,875). Major achievements by output are those of Output 1 (195%), Output 2 (165%), and Output 3 (81%).
8. Notwithstanding the budget provided by Output, the evaluators found that the highest completion rate for Output 1 is made by GEF (226%). However, this rate is only 71% for ADS. The achievement rate is particularly low for Output 2, with respectively 14% for ADS and 5% for GEF. This rate increases significantly for Output 3 (39% for GEF). Finally, Output 4 has the highest completion rate, 477% for ADS, 145% for UNDP, and 85% for GEF respectively. Overall, these achievement rates are higher for UNDP (170%), followed by GEF (74%), and ADS (71%).
9. In other words, forecasts achievement rates are satisfactory (Table 9) and reflect the fact that all forecasted activities were achieved in accordance with the (revised) annual work plan, and that the execution deadlines and estimated costs were relatively met.

¹ Medium scale project

Table 9: GIFMA achievement rate of forecasts by output

	Project Forecasts				Total expenditures since 2007 (as of 30 September 2014)				Achievement Rate of Forecasts			
	ADS	UNDP	GEF	Total	ADS	UNDP	GEF	Total	ADS	UNDP	GEF	Total
P1	35 250		132 625	167 875	25 083	1 933	299 940	326 956	71%		226%	195%
P2	845 750		250 000	1 095 750	115 668	0	11 740	127 406	14%		5%	12%
P3			208 250	208 250	784	87 656	80 823	169 264			39%	81%
P4	119 000	360 000	374 470	853 470	568 110	521 675	317 319	1 407 106	477%	145%	85%	165%
Total	1 000 000	360 000	965 345	2 325 345	709 645	611 264	709 822	2 030 731	71%	170%	74%	87%

3.2.5 Monitoring and evaluation: initial design and implementation (*)

122. The implementation operational approach was based on the logical framework that was the major reference tool in managing the Project throughout its life cycle. The logical framework has determined the Project implementation plan development, in accordance with UNDP and GEF results-based planning. The annual work plans adopted the same format, by output and reference to the baseline situation and logical framework performance indicators. The annual progress reports follow the same principles with reference to planned activities and completion percentage compared to the annual target by Outcome and Output. The description of the logical framework results has not changed, except result 1.7 on the forest tax system change, which did not prove feasible during the entire course of the Project.
123. The project document included a review and adjustment of indicators and monitoring system during the start-up workshop, followed by a work plans and the overall project plan review. The difficult circumstances of project start did not allow to conduct this activity which is critical to establish an operational M & E system
124. The definition of objectives and expected outcomes during the Project five-year period was too ambitious as it unanimously agreed by the parties. Thus, the content of the Project logical framework, which is the reference tool for annual planning, and the monitoring and evaluation system included too ambitious outcomes, indicators difficult to measure, a too optimistic activity achievement plan, and undersized human and budgetary resources. Given these difficulties, adjustments were made in the formulation of indicators of the 2010 plan (see Mid-Term Evaluation Report: Annex 1, Table 4.1: Logical Framework - 2006 and 2010 indicators comparison). The activities planned in the original plan were also adjusted and changed in 2010 and indicators of target annual results refer to the new indicators. However, it would have been useful to request a review or update of the Project original logical framework and overall plan starting from 2010 after the M&E expert mission to harmonize the Project logical framework and implementation plan content with the new set of updated indicators. The latter, however, was subsequently reflected in the annual work plans and annual project reports targets. An update of the overall work plan would have allowed a more realistic monitoring and assessment of Project progress and PMU performance.

125. The Project formulation planned specific expertise to develop the Project monitoring and evaluation system. The fact that this expertise had not been used since the beginning of the project has greatly hampered the development of a performing and efficient monitoring and performance evaluation and effective. The operationalization of indicators measures has not progressed far enough to allow an illustration of the logical framework overall results. The evaluation indicators have been adapted during the Project fourth year, but the difficulties to measure them, the lack of verification means clearly defined in the new logical framework and regular measures impacted the results quality. Information on monitoring of the Project-supported activity impact is not available. These are the main weaknesses of the M&E system. Continuous support by a M&E expert was necessary to implement and operate the system, provide training and coaching, collect information and insert the data into the system, monitor indicators and draft project reports.
126. Two evaluations were included in the plan, a mid-term review in 2010 and a final evaluation. The Project mid-term review was postponed several times by the PCU, in particular to wait for the completion of the thematic studies in order to obtain more significant results. The conduction of the review a year before the Project end (over half a year added in June 2014) has failed to implement the recommendations for a period long enough to have a tangible impact on the Project results. A better understanding of the role of the mid-term review could have helped the Project to make better use of UNDP-GEF project cycle management tools.

3.2.6 Coordination in implementation and execution with UNDP and executing agency, and operational issues

127. The Project collaboration with UNDP was regular for mid-term review and annual reviews, financial statements quarterly Atlas update, development of annual Project Implementation Report (PIR) for the GEF, support provided to the PMU for official contacts and bottlenecks removing, and organization of training sessions on result-based management, communication, development, monitoring and evaluation and gender. UNDP has always been available and provided professional support to the Project to help overcome management difficulties (transfer of responsibilities for financial management, purchase of all-terrain vehicles, hiring the Project coordinator and national and international consultants). UNDP intervened several times to challenge institutional partners that were slow to give their feedback or approval and were not pro-active.
128. From the beginning, the Project received ongoing support from the executive agency, HCEFLCD, and ADS despite their workload. They both mobilized human and material resources necessary for the Project implementation. The resources of the DREFs in the Project target areas were strengthened to enable them to assist and support Project activities in the field, through staff and vehicles mobilization. The DREFs then integrated some of the Project activities in their programs to execute them under the PMU coordination. This is particularly the case of FSC forest certification, ecological restoration, and GIS. The HCEFLCD regional directorates and ADS investment in the greatly facilitated Project implementation and allowed an effective inter-governmental coordination at the regional level.
129. Under the UNDP-HCEFLCD partnership, the GIFMA Project had access to GEF and WWF technical expertise internationally recognized in the area of natural resource sustainable management in general, and sustainable forest management in particular. The WWF technical assistance catalyzed and initiated the development of standards and innovating and valuable tools for improved forest ecosystem governance.

130. The organizational and relational structure for project implementation is actually very complex because of the large number of organizations involved. These include government structures, elected authorities, NGOs and cooperatives, informal community groups created by the Project or traditional, international organizations such as UNDP and WWF, and private service providers for studies and training. In order to execute the Project, the PMU developed, in close cooperation with HCEFLCD regional management, informal operational relationships that facilitated the Project implementation. The coordination structures at regional and provincial level initially planned in the project document have not been implemented. However, an ad hoc technical committee was established in each rural community to help solve problems at the local level. The committee meets according to PMU request.

3.3 PROJECT RESULTS

3.3.1 Overall Results (implementation of objectives)

131. The Project provided concrete solutions to ensure an integrated and concerted forest resource management through the following deliverables: thematic assessments and studies, rangeland and firewood management plans, agro, forest and grazing development plans of two target rural communes, the creation and strengthening of 10 CGs, deferred grazing and medicinal plants harvesting contracts, certification audit and improving management plans for Guigou and Skoura forests, ecological restoration techniques and the development of tools to support sustainable forest management (GIS, knowledge management), and partnership agreements with other agencies and programs for the financing of income generating actions for the benefit of neighboring populations of target forests. Most actions have been defined on the basis of thematic studies carried out in close collaboration with local communities and specialized institutions (universities, research, regional and local forest services). They were initiated in the field, but still require significant support to be consolidated and fully operational and ensure their sustainability.

132. The main Project achievements and PMU comments by expected result are listed in Annex 9 in the table: "Outcomes, state of project implementation." The main comments from the final evaluation mission on the results achieved by the project are listed below.

133. **Outcome 1. Forest Management Models.** The institutional assessment of the project implementation is very satisfactory. The Project provided the opportunity to conduct a holistic reflection on the underlying causes of ecosystem degradation (global policy, standards and regulations, technical approaches and models, economy and subsisting conditions of the people and various external influences), and raise the problem in its general framework to rebuild new integrated management systems based on: 1) participatory processes based on local realities; 2) integrated and comprehensive technical systems for forest ecosystems management; 3) standard and support tools that support and enhance governance conditions; and 4) centrifugal cross-sectoral integration models. Local populations, supported by the PMU, have formed groups around economic interests (streams). The participatory process is based on the combination and meeting of ethno-spatial realities with the underlying causes of vectors streams leading to forest ecosystem degradation. The confrontational climate that prevailed at the beginning of the project between the people and local ecosystems managers has progressively shifted into a climate of dialogue and collaboration. Groups have formed a platform that attracted local public partners and facilitated the mobilization of partnerships around the implementation of development plans concerted and defended by the groups. The GIFMA approaches were

tested and adapted to the poor context. GIFMA demonstrated that one can succeed in difficult areas and in partnership with other institutions and projects.

134. GIFMA is an institutional project and not an intervention project, which made its start difficult. It began with a form of reluctance to start the project in the absence of income generating actions, of investments in infrastructure and social amenities before creating the organizational conditions for a partnership contract to carry concrete activities of forestry and agricultural development. It has however managed to win people's trust, little by little, and tackled the real problems of forest management (rangeland management, firewood and PAM exploitation, rights of usage, involvement of local actors such as the population, communes and decentralized services of the State). The perseverance of development officers in convincing these people paid off through organizing the populations into community groups. Rural communes' (RC) elected officials who are members of associations as users of forest resources and the establishment of federations of CGs at municipal level have facilitated the partnership between the RC and CGs. GIFMA provides innovative solutions for integrated and concerted management of forest resources. The stakes are both social and technical.
135. The project developed, in an adaptive and implicit manner, an integrated model of participatory management of the "agro-forestry-pastoral" space based on the following three management types:
- (i) The organization (creation, training, supervision) of people in community groups (8 CGs and 2 federations created and 15 reinforced CGs, associations and cooperatives) on an ethno-spatial and territorial basis and organized by economic activity, which guarantees the participation of all forest users and their involvement in co-managing forest resources. Groups of users of forest ecosystems have been formally constituted in 2012. Various conventions between CGs and HCEFLCD have been signed or are being finalized for dissemination of improved ovens that consume less wood, the exploitation of AMP (rosemary, lichens, tar, etc.) and offsets on course for deferred grazing. The CGs members and beneficiaries of the conventions are required to participate in training sessions on sustainable exploitation of resources. The adjustment of areas under agreement is among the necessary conditions for their responsible use. Labor provided by CGs for work is paid by HCEFLCD thus creating additional opportunities for direct benefits to community groups. These fees are paid either directly or deducted from the sale of royalties and taxes to be paid in particular to the exploitation of AMP (payment in kind);
 - (ii) Institutional partnership with the HCEFLCD involving institutions such as the department of agriculture, ADS and the commune which was formed informally at first and was subsequently formalized to ensure the establishment and operationalization of community structures, mainly around agricultural and farming income-generating activities to draw people's interest and reduce pressure on forests. Managing partnerships with regional institutions was not explicitly planned in the logical framework and the project initial work plan, and developed throughout its implementation by identifying new resources at the regional level that met the needs ;
 - (ii) The definition and implementation of forest ecosystem management tools such as knowledge management, forest restoration, forest certification and a geographic information system (GIS).
136. The development of income generating activities outside the forest aims to reduce pressure on forest and pastoral resources (fattening unit, ovens, improved animal breeds, etc.). The PAM operating contracts (25000 ha rosemary and 1300 ha of lichens) and deferred grazing

compensations (1800 ha) provide income to people and increase their interest to protect and sustainably manage resources.

137. The model of ecosystems participatory management was based on the results from a participatory diagnosis in the two communes of Skoura and Tanourdi, fractions of sectors or user groups, and a series of thematic studies, and the establishment of an array of standards and tools to improve governance.
138. The main outputs of the diagnosis are: 1) an analysis of the territory, its users and its various uses; 2) a communal synthesis map showing the boundaries of forest ecosystems and livestock farms courses of each fraction; 3) identification and characterization of user groups by activity in each commune; 4) list and characterization of modern and traditional organizational structures existing per commune; 5) an organizational action plan in favor of the identified structures; and 6) constitution, empowerment of 12 user groups and their involvement in the project activities.
139. The results of the technical analysis and debate they created have provided the data and principles that should guide the development of participatory models of integrated ecosystem management. The themes addressed by the study are: (i) forest ecosystems management systems and techniques; (ii) rangeland management; (iii) forest economic potential; (iv) the system of forest revenues in force and its legal basis; (v) the geographic information system (SIG°; (vi) monitoring and evaluation (S&E); (vii) data summary and conclusions of the various thematic studies. Studies have been validated in a workshop in 2012. They were supplemented by a phyto-sociological study and phyto-dynamics of the two target forests in order to guide ecological restoration, biomass assessment and management techniques for rosemary growths. The results of thematic studies have a thorough understanding of ecosystems and their environment, a better understanding of the driving forces behind their dynamics. They located the ecosystems in their multi-dimensional context.
140. Based on participation structures, the results of participatory assessments and thematic studies, the project has achieved the following operational participatory programs: (i) the plans of agro-forestry-pastoral development of skoura and Tanourdi rural communes which allowed having a collaborative commitment platform for cross-sectoral partnerships with the decentralized services of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in the Green Morocco Plan (GMP) pillar II; (ii) the examination of the problems inherent to the various plots with deferred grazing, their impact on using populations and follow up of compensation for deferred grazing plots in Tanourdi; (iii) the study of collaborative energy plans for the two communes of Skoura and Tanourdi supported by wood energy groups; and (iv) deployment of a joint strategy between the PMU and groups formed, to explore and forge partnerships for the implementation of actions included in the concerted action plans.
141. To support the integrated management of forest ecosystems, the project has initiated, developed and implemented tools and standards among which the FSC certification, a system of geographic information and prospective program of ecological restoration.
142. GIFMA initiated the certification process for the two forests: Guigou and Itzer: awareness, training of foresters services, impact assessment of management operations and assessment of environmental and social costs, pre-assessment mission / pre-audit in both forests (April 2011) and a workshop for results validation (September 2012), development of an action plan to reduce the gaps validated by the HCFLCD (1 year) and monitoring its implementation,

preparing and achieving the main audit and risks assessment linked to the various forestry work. The review of existing management plans for both forests and additional studies requested by the audit (impact studies, biodiversity and socio-economic monitoring and evaluation) are listed in the annual work programs of the two DREFs. The certification application files were prepared by an international consulting firm hired for that purpose and submitted to HCEFLCD's administration for action.

143. GIFMA developed a geographic information system (GIS) in three DREFs to monitor forest resources management across the target Tazekka-Krouchen corridor (both GIFMA plus North East). HCEFLCD's services have been trained and have good experience in the use and operation of GIS. Currently it is internal to the forest sector. The system needs to develop into a real forest management system.
144. In the context of ecological restoration, GIFMA laid the first foundations for the development of a model for an ecological restoration and biodiversity of the ecosystem of the Middle Atlas forests and outlined the steps necessary to move from research / study to experimentation, and ultimately to the creation of a feasible and reliable model that can be replicated on a large scale. It concretely carried out the following actions: 1) selection and deferred grazing of 1,800 ha in total, located in the pilot communes forests; 2) collection of local seeds and plant production in two nurseries; 3) the creation of a monitoring committee, and partnership agreements with all stakeholders and contracts managements with CGs; 4) planting and seeding of selected species in a fenced one hectare plot in each range; and 5) tending to and monitoring plots. Management contracts have been established with local CGs and finalized in late 2012. GIFMA especially negotiated between the HCEFLCD and CGs the economic compensation measures for people willing to participate in the co-management of deferred grazing areas for which they enjoy the right of use and grazing (1500) and a paid caretaking convention of fenced plots in deferred grazing areas (300 ha). The CGs also have paid contracts with the HCEFLCD to participate in development works and rehabilitation of degraded sites. Partnership agreements monitor ecological restoration by the regional universities.
145. **Outcome 2: Capacity building:** GIFMA's capacity-building program benefited to all stakeholders. Its main objective was to enable participants to acquire the necessary skills to their missions, roles and responsibilities for the development of integrated forest management models of the two pilot rural communes (Tanourdi and Skoura) and to adapt and reproduce them. A capacity building plan was developed based on the studies conducted by the GIFMA project, and the participatory diagnosis with CGs and forest managers. Capacity building actions targeted all project partners both locally, provincially, regionally and nationally (community groups, cities and local authorities, technical services and administrations). They have included classroom and field trainings, study tours, experience-sharing, and workshops for the presentation and validation of the results obtained by GIFMA. The capacity building program has benefited 1,150 people.
146. The implementation of the assessment of CGs' training needs and organizing capacity building sessions were conducted in cooperation with the beneficiaries. They also actively participated to the realization of field studies and recent feedback workshops especially for rosemary management plans, energy resources and the forest and grazing management plans.
147. The CGs trainings' main objectives were to upgrade and empower the community groups organized by the project and their involvement in participatory management of the forest

ecosystem. Specific training topics and areas for CGs covered the participatory approach to natural resources management, local governance, administrative and financial management of associations and cooperatives, gender approach, project implementation, working capital, strategic communication, communication for social change, communication for advocacy and partners mobilization, conflict management etc... (see Annex 10: Summary of GIFMA trainings). The training of DCEFLCD technical staff targeted strengthening their monitoring and forest management oversight capacities by familiarizing them with innovative standards and tools developed for ecosystems governance. It is primarily the FSC certification process and prospective ecological restoration program.

148. These trainings were facilitated by resources mobilized through partnerships with public institutions such as ADS regional coordination and specialized NGOs. For the establishment and implementation of the capacity building plan, WWF has been selected as a major partner, given its experience and its skills network. ADS' participation with TAKWIA program for building capacities of CGs allowed the completion of a large part of the training sessions on governance. Unfortunately, the lack of practice opportunity of these new skills and knowledge did not allow an internalization of the theory into practice, also, the information on the effectiveness and impact of various trainings supported by the project is not available (lack of post-training evaluation). This is a major weakness of the M&E system.

149. **Outcome 3. Knowledge Management System.** A knowledge management system was developed by GIFMA in both DREFs targeted by the project at the national level. It is a space for consultation and a platform for knowledge sharing, and exchange of information at the local, national and international levels. It addresses one of the major shortcomings of public and private institutions that penalize the performance of policies, plans and programs, namely the excessive compartmentalization of services, monopoly and retention of information, and insufficient capitalization and lessons learned from experiences.

150. The system implementation was carried out to address the multiple issues related to the generation, management, capitalization and knowledge sharing on integrated management of forest ecosystems. Placed on a web content management base / blog, it includes all the data and technical, legislative, institutional, economic, social and environmental information. It is structured in four thematic: planning, activities/projects, state of natural resources (biodiversity, climate, water resources, soil), and sustainable land management. It also comprises two distinct areas: i) a consultation area allowing easy access to all the GIEF related information; and ii) a space for participation that encourages learning through experience, promoting knowledge exchange and collaboration among practitioners. It is used for two ecosystems and designed for all of HCEFLCD activities. The IT department head at the DIPSIC is the administrator of the information management system. A technical committee has been established. All members involved in the system in both DREFs targeted by GIFMA and DIPSIC were trained and received an access code.

151. Reflection on the co-management modes that could be adopted was preceded by the presentation of an inventory of a wide range of experiences of countries in the field of co-management of forest ecosystems. The people mobilized by the partners presented the diversity of co-management models under different legislative, institutional and forest ecosystems property rights contexts. The junction and synergy of national and international expertise during the implementation offered great opportunities for collective learning, exchange and transfer of experiences. The WWF Technical assistance has enabled national experts to

learn new concepts, new approaches and new action methods. Quality documents, building on the experience and the international knowledge in a wide range of areas related to the integrated management of forest ecosystems (GIEF) were made available to the PMU and the services involved. Others were presented and discussed during the multiple thematic workshops. It constituted a very significant contribution to the promotion of integrated management of forest resources.

152. The project constituted a very rich and diverse background covering all issues and aspects of community forest management. All products, intermediate and final results were shared and validated during the many workshops and seminars which brought together representatives of all institutional stakeholders. These events were an opportunity for exchange, learning and broad dissemination of knowledge.
153. One of the most important project deliverables is the development of a core of expertise in the field of integrated management of forest ecosystems (GIEF). It is important for HCEFLCD to take it into consideration, extend it and develop its expertise and skills. This core is a network project involving PMU members and its POU, project's focal points near partner institutions, research firms, educational and research institutions, NGOs involved.
154. **Outcome 4. Adaptive management.** The reflection on reviewing the indicators matrix by objectives and products, allowed the partners to appropriate the approach, objectives and the project's organizational and operational strategy, and to clarify roles and responsibilities. Some targets considered unachievable during the project implementation period were abandoned. Other objectives were adjusted.
155. CGs have been a source of proposals for the readjustment of the studies conducted by the project to better adapt management plans to the real environment. Their representatives were often invited to meetings organized by the PMU to learn more about the project activities and inquire about problems that may hinder the project. GC gained awareness of the importance of forest resources, their conservation and optimization. They also understood the GIFMA project approach which mainly aims to make them true partners in forest managers, not antagonists.
156. The results of monitoring, annual audits and project's annual progress reviews made by the national coordination committee allowed to adjust and guide project activities during its implementation.
157. In addition to thinking the monitoring and evaluation system revision, the project's adaptive management shows in the initiation and promotion of institutional partnerships for integrated management of forest ecosystems. Deprived of the possibility to finance participation incentives to populations and demonstrating reactivity towards the social environment's reluctant messages, the project (PMU) was able to forge partnerships with several regional institutional actors and mobilize additional resources to implement the concerted development plans actions. These include non-formalized partnerships developed with DREFLCD, the Provincial Departments of Agriculture (DPA) of Boulemane and Midelt, ADS regional coordination, teaching and research institutions, and more recently with the National Initiative for Human Development program (INDH).

3.3.2 Relevance)

158. The National Forestry Program (PFN) was developed in 1998 and still constitutes the Forestry Administration's roadmap, places a strong emphasis on participative forest management with user populations. It provides for a gradual overhaul of forest legislation favoring a new agreement with the local population using the forest. Since 2003 when HCEFLCD was created, the Forestry Administration is seeking participative management models of forest ecosystems that meet the double challenges which are preserving and conserving the forests and the socio-economic emancipation of the populations using the forest resources. This corresponds to GIFMA's strategic objective.
159. The National Environmental Protection Strategy (SNPE), developed in 1992, was broken down into a series of sectorial strategies including the National Strategy for Sustainable Development (SNDD), a transversal strategy linked to the sectoral strategies among which the Green Morocco Plan (GMP) for a sustainable agricultural development in rural areas, the energy strategy which includes reducing greenhouse gas emissions and firewood substitution, and National Human Development Initiative (INDH) and its objectives to reduce poverty and improve farmers' life conditions, to limit pressure on natural resources. The GIFMA project activities meet these strategic priorities.
160. The convergence of public policies for the protection of natural resources and fighting poverty and their implementation via actions in the same territory is highly sought after for the harmonious development of environmentally conscious territories. GIFMA perfectly fits in the context of these public policies in charge of sustainable development, especially the protection of forest ecosystem policies and the ongoing advanced regionalization for greater autonomy of the regions, which will have a significant impact on environmental activities / forests.
161. The introduction of advanced regionalization is focused on sustainable development and is based on the principles of participation, cross-sectorial integration, devolution and decentralization, empowerment of local communities and decentralized services. It provides an institutional environment enabling the promotion of integrated management of forest ecosystems as it was designed by the GIFMA project.
162. GIFMA's objectives and expected results are perfectly in harmony with the objectives of UNDAF and UNDP 2007-2011 and 2012-2016 plans; both focused on strengthening national institutional capacities for the protection and enhancement of the cultural and natural heritage of Morocco (UNDP Framework Plan 2007-2011, Result A.1) and support for the implementation of the "National Charter the environment for sustainable development " (UNDAF Framework Plan 2012 -2016, Outcome 5).
163. The GIFMA project is considered relevant by the CGs surveyed because it considered exploitation in its approach as an integrated Agro, forest and grazing system. Thus, the agricultural activity is associated with the diversification of revenue sources and sustainable management of NR.

3.3.3 Effectiveness and Efficiency

164. Efficiency: In line with its development objective, its immediate objective and the four expected results, the project has developed a self-financing and multifunctional model for forest

and rangeland management which is operational in two representative communes (Skoura and Tanourdi) in the Tazekka Krouchen corridor. The main capacities of the community groups and the support and monitoring structures of community control to develop the model in the two communes were strengthened. A knowledge management system to support the dissemination of the developed management model was implemented and an adaptive management of the project solved the main problems related to the implementation and activities adaptation to local conditions to achieve satisfactory performance.

165. The main achievements and completion rates by outcome/s are described in Table 10 below.

Table 10. Achievements and Completion Rates

	Expected Outcomes	Achievements	Completion rates	Comments
Outcome 1/ Outputs	Self-funded and multifunctional restoration, forests and rangelands management models are developed and operational in two representative communes within the Tazekka / Krouchen Corridor are set up. Completion rate: 84%			
1.1	Two "representative" communes in the Corridor were selected:	Choice of Skoura and Tanourdi rural communes as representative of two forest ecosystems of the corridor	95 %	The choice of Skoura did not take into consideration land issues (lack of land titles, conflicts between rights holders, issues of collective lands) that prevented the quick implementation of agriculture agreements (irrigation)
1.2	Establishment of representative and empowered community management structures to implement land use plans established in consultation with the E & F	8 CGs and 2 federations created and 15 CGs strengthened. 5 functional CGs based on economic activities related to the two targeted forests and their surrounding were created and / or strengthened in each targeted RC	90%	CGs are still fragile and require technical support and management to become autonomous.
1.3	Multifunctional systems and tools for integrated forests and rangelands management are developed	2 Agricultural, forest and grazing plans and 2 wood energy plans were developed at the CR drivers	80%	Plans implementation has only been initiated: contracts being negotiated with RDA for support to agricultural activities, promotion of improved stoves

1.4	Multifunctional systems and tools for integrated pastures and forests management are developed	The first compensation contracts for deferred grazing and PAM exploitation have been signed and have generated revenues	85%	Contracts to obtain support for agricultural IGA being negotiated with RDA
1.5	Forestry groups in charge of management / forestry activities under the supervision of community structures and E & F were set up.	Three CGs out of five per commune have signed contracts related to forests management and exploitation: CGs related to rangeland management and conservation of natural resources (deferred grazing), conservation of energy resources (ovens) and PAM exploitation (lichens, rosemary). CGs have contributed to the setting of small plots for testing ecosystem protection and restoration. They also signed some paid contracts with HCEFLCD to participate in the development and rehabilitation of degraded sites	85 %	85% There is no community forestry groups specifically to perform forestry work as the legislation is not adapted to the specificities of these CGs. Forestry work is normally awarded to private companies.
1.6	Pilot forests have been certified for sustainable forest management	The certification process for the two target forests was initiated with a pre-audit mission and developing an action plan.	85%	The review of existing management plans for both forests and additional studies requested by the audit are included in the annual work programs of the two DREFs.
1.7	The monitoring system to support restoration and participative management is operational	GIS was developed in the three regions of the corridor. HCEFLCD's departments have been trained and have good hands on experience in the SIG use and exploitation	85%	GIS is currently mainly limited to the sites and activities location, it should develop into a real forest management system.
1.8	A new tax system is implemented for pilot communes	A thematic study on forest revenue system in force and its legal basis was conducted in 2010 and validated during a national workshop. This study focused on the analysis of the royalty debit on forest products and the allocation of forest revenues.	70%	The introduction of a new tax regime requires long-term and sensitive actions that exceed the project's competence.
1.9	Experiments on ecological restoration have been implemented (s /: results added in 2010)	Two test plots of one hectare each were created in 2013 in the two target forests. 2400 ha on deferred grazing	85%	The plots are fresh. Partnership agreements shall monitor ecological restoration by specialists

				of the Forestry Research (NWRC, ENFI)
Outcome 2/ Outputs	The key capacities in institutional and human resources required to implement, adapt and replicate models of restoration and integrated management of forests and pastures are developed within community structures, community support structures and monitoring Community structures and are used to replicate the models in the two communes. Completion rate: 80%			
2.1	The overall capacity building plan is completed	A capacity Building Plan was developed. The capacity building actions targeted all project partners locally, provincially, regionally and nationally. Trainings include classroom training, field study tours, exchange of experience, presentation workshops and validation of the results obtained by GIFMA.	90%	No post-training evaluation assesses the effectiveness and impact of such training on the beneficiaries' activities. The project's extension until the end of December 2014 has filled much of the delays in the training program which did not begin before 2011.
2.2	Local NGOs and other institutions' capacities are strengthened to support, at the community level, capacity building and multifunctional forest management	NGOs and other local institutions have been associated to the technical training and CGs management.	80%	No specific training to local NGOs and other CGs support institutions
2.3	The capacities of communes and community management structures have been strengthened	CGs have mainly received administrative, financial and technical management trainings related to their core business activity. In addition, they have been trained on the participative approach and local governance in forest management, gender approach, advocacy and project identification. Communes' representatives were involved in these trainings.	85%	ADS and TAKWIA program have supported numerous CGs training sessions on governance No program has specifically targeted communes while they receive 80% of forest revenues
2.4	CGs (operational reproduction from the pilot sites) are reinforced in the new communes.	No activity outside the two target communes have been performed.	Not applicable	According to its immediate objective, the project has only been activated in the two target commune representative of Skoura and Tanourdi.

2.5	HCEFLCD's capacities in monitoring and control of viability and governance of integrated and participative management systems are strengthened	Specific training of HCEFLCD's technical staff included GIS, knowledge management system, ecological certification and restoration. Local forest services have also been associated in the CGs training, in particular those related to the management of forest resources.	95%	-
2.6	University training in planning participative management of forests and pastures	ENFI professors and researchers have supported training modules and internship and workshops related to ecological restoration and forest certification	65%	No university trainings have been performed.
2.7	The ability to implement environmental economics to natural resources is strengthened.	participation in joint seminars and meetings on environmental themes Organizing workshops on the social and solidarity economy linked to the integrated forest management ecosystems.	65%	No specific training in environmental economics has been supported by the project
Outcome 3/ Outputs	Implementation of a knowledge management system supporting the development and adaptation of sustainable land management models and is used in the legislative reform. Completion rate: 80%			
3.1	Generating knowledge for integrated forest ecosystem management	The project was a rich and diverse information source covering all issues and aspects of community forest management. 1. One of the project's most important deliverables is the development of a core expertise in the field of integrated management of forest ecosystems (GIEF)	95%	The expertise's core is a network project including PMU members and its UOP, project focal points with partner institutions' central and decentralized services, research firms, educational and research institutions, and NGOs involved.

3.2	Sharing knowledge for integrated forest ecosystem management is effective in the zone	<p>A knowledge management system was developed by GIFMA at both DREFs target projects at the national level.</p> <p>Interaction and synergy of national and international experts in the reflection workshops to define co-management models offered great opportunities for collective learning, exchange and transfer of experience</p>	85%	<p>The knowledge management system implemented by the project is a space for consultation and a platform for sharing knowledge, sharing and exchange of information at local, national and international levels.</p> <p>The short-term priority is to strengthen the system's management and operational capacities to ensure its sustainability and development</p>
3.3	The legal framework and policies for better participative forest management has been reinforced	<p>Legal thematic study made by the project concluded with the need to review the 1996 Decree and adapt it to new participative forest management approaches. The forest administration is convinced of the need to review this decree, further to GIFMA's experiences and advocacy.</p>	60%	<p>The revision of the legal framework is beyond the skills and expertise of a regional project such as GIFMA.</p> <p>This revision is part of HCEFLCD's priority programs.</p>
Outcome 4	Project goals' achievement has increased with adaptive project management, based on the identification and integration of lessons learned in the strategies and approaches of the project. Completion rate: 80%			
4.1	An effective project monitoring and evaluation system is developed	<p>The project developed an M&E system to measure GIFMA's performances. Physical outcomes and budget monitoring were satisfactory. M&E has regularly produced annual achievements reports, but without a cumulative assessment of the project progress in achieving its overall objectives. Indicators have not been subject to measured monitoring and the information related to impact monitoring and effects of various activities are not available.</p>	65%	<p>Evaluation indicators were adjusted in the fourth year of the project to be more easily measured, but the lack of clearly defined verification means in the new logical framework and regular measurements of these indicators have affected results quality.</p>
4.2	Effective project implementation through adaptive management	<p>Throughout its development, the project has demonstrated genuine capacity to adapt.</p> <p>The delays in the project's first two years were partially filled by an extension of his term from 5 to 8 years.</p>	95%	<p>PMU overcome its lack of logistical and financial autonomy thanks to its dynamism, insistence and support solicited and received nationally and from UNDP to help with the issues.</p>

		Monitoring and evaluation indicators were revised in 2010 to make them more measurable and adapted to project specificities.		
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166. Despite a difficult start, the efforts made by the PMU to adapt project activities to field conditions and mobilize all stakeholders have helped to contribute effectively to the achievement of the pilot project's objective by providing valuable lessons for the planning of a future development and extension of participative and integrated restoration approaches of the forest ecosystem in Morocco. The average results achievement rate is 81%. The project performance in process management receives a satisfactory score because, despite a rather theoretical initial implementation framework, the PMU and all partners were able to manage the institutional challenges and realities on the ground to ensure pragmatic foundations to achieve the project goals (see table 2: Evaluation Notes).

167. Efficiency: The project collaboration with UNDP has been steady through the mid and end of the year reviews, updating quarterly the financial statements on Atlas, developing the annual "Project Implementation Report" (PIR) for the GEF, support PMU for official contacts and lifting blockages, and organizing management training sessions focused on results, communication, development, monitoring and evaluation and gender.

168. Since the beginning, the project has received ongoing support from the implementing agency HCEFLCD and from ADS at the central level despite their workload. They mobilized human and material resources necessary for its implementation.

169. Through UNDP-HCEFLCD partnership, the GIFMA project took advantage of the internationally acknowledged expertise of the GEF and WWF Network in the field of sustainable management of natural resources in general and the sustainable management of forests in particular.

170. Deprived of the possibility to finance participation incentives to populations and demonstrating reactivity towards the social environment's reluctant messages, the project (PMU) was able to forge partnerships with several regional institutional actors and mobilize additional resources to implement the actions of the concerted development plans.

171. The almost two years delay to establish the PMU, the problem complexity, the participative process, lack of a national repository, stakeholders and issues multiplicity, and the difficulty to establish management procedures that are compatible both with HCEFLCD's and UNDP's have contributed to the difficult start and have penalized achievements' performance. It was however partially reduced by greater involvement of partners later on.

172. The client, which is HCEFLCD, maintained very good relations with a large number of project partner institutions, particularly UNDP, ADS, MAF, national institutions of education and research, local communes and donors mobilized by UNDP (GEF, WWF, Peace Corps at the beginning of the project). These relations were implemented in the field by the execution of several agreements / partnership agreements with institutions and projects which increased its capacity for action and its impact.

3.3.4 Country Ownership

173. The GIFMA approach was adopted at the national level (participatory, cross-sectoral approach, territorial culture, policies convergence and harmonization). This is not new in the political discourse, but the GIFMA project operationalizes this speech. Compliance of the GIFMA results with the political discourse is a guarantee of continuity / use of results.
174. The advanced regionalization project will set a regional council that will play a leading role in the implementation of the cross-sectoral approach (partnership, participation of all stakeholders, private and public sector) developed by GIFMA. Advanced regionalization is provided in the new July 2012 Constitution.
175. The emergence and development of good forest governance tools have taken an important step through the declaration of HCEFLCD's official commitment to FSC forest certification process especially in the two Guigou and Itzer forests supported by project.
176. HCEFLCD officials have confirmed that the two GIFMA forests are integrated into the new program priorities to support the Forest Sector Policy Program (PAPF) funded by the EU to achieve certification. The PAPF is a capitalized GIFMA. Its formulation is fully consistent with the approaches, objectives and strategies developed by GIFMA (collaborative planning, promoting development of resources with the population, land tenure and demarcation with the populations, links between the forest PAPF and the agriculture PAPF). The PAPF goes even further by incorporating the revitalization of regional councils and the national council on forests. PAPF's support to forest certification is based on the experience of GIFMA. It will also support the revision of the legislation on people's participation based notably on GIFMA's experience and other projects. Its logical framework is similar to GIFMA's. Participative management experience initiated by GIFMA is extended to other sites. The GIFMA project will serve as reference for the implementation of the PAPF from the perspective of participative forest management.
177. The certification auditors found a dynamic at both forests supported by GIFMA and recommended organizing the population in an equivalent manner in the other communes.
178. Given the advantages that the system of knowledge management implemented by the GIFMA project might have, HCEFLCD's services have supported it and established a committee of managers trained at central level and who are decentralized to operate and enhance its possibilities. The IT department head in DIPSIC is the system administrator. This form of ownership is a step towards the system sustainability.
179. The extension of collective ovens in villages with grouped habitats initiated on a pilot basis by GIFMA and individual ovens for areas with scattered settlements is part of the DREF annual contracts programs signed with HCEFLCD, as well as the grazing and distribution of fruit trees.
180. The mobilization and effective participation of community groups in the various project activities provide information on the degree of ownership and involvement of such groups. CGs supported by the project have changed behaviors, attitudes and practices vis-à-vis natural resources. They ask the Administration to enable the partnership agreements for the exploitation of forest resources. They begin to play the advocacy role in defense of their interest in the development of their territory. The forest is no longer perceived by the Community institutions as a resource of fodder and wood but as a multifunctional space for economic

activities and a heritage that belongs to them. Community groups came out of their isolation and learned to talk with forest managers and public institutions representatives to improve their socio-economic conditions. Consulting and sitting with the Forest Service to negotiate and discuss the forest heritage is an unprecedented gain. This is seen as a change in the manager's behavior from the repressive mode to a developer mode.

181. The integration of integrated management plans for rangeland and livestock development (PGIPDE) realized with the project's support in the municipal development plans (PCD) of the two CR pilots project is a proof of results ownership. Four other cooperatives in the region Skoura want to rely on the experience of the project to make new rosemary operating contracts on high production plots to start with.

182. As an institution for the fight against poverty and for community development, ADS is committed in the long term to the populations living in forested areas, especially those of the Middle Atlas. It plans to replicate the GIFMA approach in other regions of Morocco.

3.3.5 Integration

183. **Compliance of project objectives with UNDP country program and action plan:** GIFMA's objectives and expected results are in perfect harmony with UNDAF and UNDP 2007-2011 and 2012-2016 frameworks' objectives; both centered on strengthening national institutional capacities for the protection and enhancement of the cultural and natural heritage of Morocco (UNDP Framework Plan 2007-2011, Outcome A.1) and support for the implementation of the "National Environment Charter for sustainable development" (2012 -2016 UNDAF Framework Plan, Outcome 5).

184. This project is complementary to actions undertaken by UNDP Morocco in the fight against poverty and desertification, development of renewable energy, climate change and operationalization of the clean development mechanism, as well as biodiversity.

185. **Gender:** The groups supported by GIFMA are mainly composed of heads of households. The participation of rural women is mainly limited to widows or single, heads of households. Married women are represented by their husbands. Women are underrepresented or absent although they are often associated with livestock activities, rosemary gathering, and collecting firewood. Women account for only about 15% of participants in various training activities. As for youth, they are not associated with the project. The project has not addressed this issue and has changed little as far as gender approach is concerned. It took groups as they existed without changing women's representation. Thematic studies have not sufficiently distinguished the responsibilities between women and men in activities to identify training priorities and specific support related to gender.

186. Various agreements/partnerships of interest to women have been signed or are being negotiated thanks to project facilitation with the development of collective ovens and rosemary exploitation. Two women were trained in each commune to demonstrate and collect information on ovens from households.

187. **South-South Cooperation:** The project outcomes in terms of certification and joint forest management approach can be subject to exchanges of experience between Morocco and countries with similar ecological and social conditions. These include project experiences in organizing populations by CGs linked to the development of a sector industry (rangeland

management and natural resources conservation, conservation of energy resources, PAM exploitation, developing agriculture), raising awareness and changing population perception on sustainable use of forests, populations' access to forest resources by signing contracts defined by mutual agreement between the Forestry Administration and the populations, compensation for deferred grazing, results of thematic studies, forest certification approach, complementarity between development workers and forest services and the mobilization of other institutional and financial partners to support activities complementary to those funded by the project.

188. However, most project activities are at an early stage and are not mature enough to be considered as a success to broadcast in the sub-region. Sustainability and self-management of community groups post project have yet to be demonstrated, the certification process of the two forest project is underway, but is not completed, the geographic information system (GIS) and knowledge management system have been set up in the two project target areas and the databases are being created. The GIFMA project has achieved results in its activities, but has not defined a comprehensive methodology for forests integrated management that can be cited as an example in the South-South cooperation framework.

3.3.6 Sustainability

189. The first steps for the implementation of self-funding and multifunctional systems have been taken with the creation of CGs and their contracting for responsible and sustainable exploitation. This outcome highlights the merits of such an approach which offers a good services exchange agreement between forest users and managers based on sharing forest ecosystem management responsibilities. This trial period also highlighted the major obstacles of system sustainability, mainly linked to: (a) creation of economic structures which is advanced but not yet operational and their subsequent integration at the territorial level; and (b) legal issues related to the awarding of farming contracts with the constraints of the tax system and the unconditional allocation of most of forest revenues to the commune without conditions related to its participation in forest management and / or maintenance. Models of ecosystems integrated participative management developed by GIFMA are potentially sustainable, replicable and sustainable in the Middle Atlas ecosystems context in particular and in Morocco in general, with the following adaptations and reinforcements: (i) strengthening groups' autonomy and governance by sector and at the territorial structures (Federation) level; (ii) strengthening the capacity and powers of HCEFLCD's decentralized services to accompany GC (recruiting facilitators) and allowing them to be sufficiently responsive and flexible to meet people's priorities; (iii) reviewing and implementing legislation must be incentive to legal groups and dissuasive to illegal operators; and (iv) gradually spreading forest management tools (certification, GIS, knowledge management) in regions, provinces and communes.

190. The fact that the project was primarily intervening as a catalyst and facilitator through partnership agreements with existing institutions and community groups allowed good results ownership at the local, provincial and national levels and constitutes a guarantee of sustainability. Visited CGs indicate that a GIFMA has strengthened civil society mainly by operating via soft actions, unlike when associations are created to capture the benefits and advantages because they often have no executive board (CA) and are monopolized by some influential members of the village or community and therefore are unsustainable. CGs supported by the project have indeed elected bodies (CA) and regulations (internal and basic).

191. Both the institutional environment of the forest sector and the fight against desertification and the country's general environment (including advanced regionalization) are suitable for broad participation, partnership and territorial integration of sectoral development programs. HCEFLCD's departments have most of the technical capacity to adapt and replicate the approaches and models developed by the GIFMA project. All conditions are met to initiate the change. Integrated participative management of forest and range ecosystems is now much more than an alternative. It is a political and institutional requirement.
192. The management support tools such as ecological restoration, knowledge management, certification and GIS have been appropriated by DREFs and will be included in their short-term programs to strengthen forest managers' capacity. DREF's effective participation in project activities allowed them to accumulate learning through focal points mobilized to monitor implementation. Apart from development agents' position, the rest of the staff is in HCEFLCD structures. The facilitation position is recognized as a priority by the Forest Service for CGs' sustainability and can be contracted with specialized consulting firms. The FPAP will continue to support the certification process underway at both GIFMA forests. The knowledge management system is already hosted in the DIPSIC. GIS was established with the support of the project in the two target regions for monitoring massifs and forestry activities by the Forest Administration. PMU, DREF, LCD FB and MA's staffs were trained in remote sensing and in GIS ARC software.
193. The establishment of mechanisms to maintain the results of actions made by the project on the ground related to the dynamism created and organization of user populations is a guarantee of sustainability.
194. For rural communities, project sustainability is illustrated by the inclusion of project priorities within the communal development plans (PCD), which are the development / strategy tool at the local level.
195. Achieving self-funded participative management systems through partnership contracts (PAM operations, compensation for deferred grazing, forestry works, etc.) is considered a sustainability factor of management systems in place. However, the legal and fiscal constraints related to forest ecosystems management appear as major obstacles hindering the growth of these contracts and may compromise the management systems durability. HCEFLCD is already convinced of the need to adapt the new Decree to the integrated approach to ecosystem management developed by GIFMA and this review is within the short-term priorities.
196. The last six-month extension of the project until the end of December 2014 is primarily intended to complete the process of phasing GIFMA project and transfer of responsibility of the various activities and facilities for the benefit of CGs and key institutions to ensure continuation and sustainability. The transfer diagram is as follows:

Table 11: Transfer diagram

Site	Replacing Entity	Nature / Sustainability
Knowledge management system GIEF	DPSIC/HCEFLCD and DREFLCD	Hosting- updating and operation

GIS	Cells/DREFLCD F-B and MA	Continuity and operationalization
Forest Certification	DDF/ forest managers	Certification and sustainable management
Ecologic Restoration	CRF/Work Group and ENFI Salé	Process continuation on the 4 experimental plots
Management plans rangeland, rosemary and energy	DREFLCD-Agriculture-GC and Communes	Contracting: Program contract and integration PCD
Integration in PCD	Commune/Province and technical department E&F DPA	Supported by INDH et PMV-II
Integrated management plan for agro rangeland and grazing system	DRELCD –DPA – Communes/Province	Supported by Morocco Green Plan, Pillar II Forest Program

3.3.7 Impacts

197. Overall, the project contributed to achieving its overall objective in terms of sustainable development based on participative management of Guigou and Itzar forest ecosystems (pilot communes of Tanourdi and Skoura). This contribution was made possible by the development of multifunctional models of natural resource management (RN), development and building capacity of local people in the context of CGs, awareness raising, training and knowledge management.

198. **Institutional:** Beyond the project activities quantitative assessment, the project implementation had a positive impact on the planning and action processes, and operating and decision making processes of the different stakeholders. These effects have converged to induce a new local dynamic which echo goes beyond the limits of the pilot areas. This means in practice the creation of a climate of trust conducive to dialogue between the protagonists, peaceful and cooperative relationships and beginning of understanding the interest and effectiveness of involving the integrated management of forest ecosystems and self-development of people.

199. The key success factors for the "capacity building" aspect have been possible thanks to the mobilization of financial, scientific and technical competences of several partners such as ENFI, ADS, Agriculture services, WWF, the National Center of Forest Research, Fès and Kenitra's Faculties of Sciences. These institutions were put to work thanks to the key role played by the PMU and the Regional Directorate of Water and Forests (DGEF). The PMU was able to build on ADS resources at regional and local level, particularly in the area of training and capacity building of community structures and NGOs.

200. Some GIFMA project actions will be supported by other structures such as INDH (Midelt province) for the purchase of new collective ovens, co-funding fattening units by the Green Morocco Plan-Pillar II (PMV) and INDH. The same goes for the construction of an irrigated perimeter of 280 ha on a drip irrigation system on tree plantations.

201. GIFMA created a dynamic of participative forest management in Morocco that will grow and spread through the whole country. There are different results, but are not yet assembled to define a global concept. In the project area, we observe populations behavioral changes vis-à-vis natural resources and forestry administration and a growing interest in community groups, sustainable business models of natural resources (management plans, forests and rangelands, energy plan), improved stoves and income-generating activities (agricultural activities, PAM, deferred grazing). Following the project, some groups have developed new interests, increased their area of intervention at the level of a commune or a forest and grazing wide area encompassing several villages, increased the number of members after the start of some concrete actions, and developed the leadership of newly graduates who have surpassed the project to build professional relationships with other partners. The constitution allows cooperatives to benefit from preferential prices.
202. The GIFMA approach of forest ecosystem integrated management was adopted at the national level (participative approach, cross-sectoral, territorial culture, policies convergence and harmonization). In order to support and sustain the integrated management of forest ecosystems, the project has initiated, developed and implemented tools and standards, including FSC certification, a geographic information system, a prospective program of ecological restoration and management system knowledge, all of which were adopted by the HCEFLCD and their development is included in the DREFs annual programs. HCEFLCD's departments have most required technical skills to adapt and replicate approaches and management models developed by the GIFMA project and develop the tools.
203. **Socio-economic:** The project's contribution to the joint management of forest ecosystems and the capacity building in institutions and individuals is substantial. The impact is noticeable in CGs initiation to the challenges of sustainable development, integrating both social issues (basic needs such as housing, food), economic issues (diversification of income sources, development of local medicinal plants productions such as wormwood, rosemary, lichens, and cedar wood tar, improving agricultural productivity forest and grazing systems) but also the ecological and environmental issues such as the preservation of plant species diversity, diversification of natural sources forest as well as pastoral, and diversification of energy sources, which reduces in the long term the pressure on forest areas (collective and individual gas ovens....).
204. In June 2014, the project initiated the creation of two CGs federations in both pilot communes: the *Tamount* network in the commune of Tanourdi (nine CGs) and the "network Skoura Mdaz cascades for associative action and cooperation "in the commune of Skoura (six CGs). These networks have been created to capitalize on project activities and CGs, be the interface with government and civil society, benefit from the opportunities offered to local people at the level of investments, and capacity building actions that fulfill the specific needs of these networks members.
205. The user populations of Skoura and Tanourdi's forest ecosystems which are organized in community groups (CGs) according to their economic activity showed their growing interest in project activities since the selection process. These populations' participation in project implementation has gradually happened with time. From suspicious at first, they have gradually become true partners of the project. They have been associated in the participative diagnostic phase and actively participated in the diagnosis of CGs' training needs and capacity building sessions, in the thematic field studies and in recent restoration workshops, in addition to the

preparation of management plans for rosemary and energy resources, and agro-forest and grazing management plans. CGs were a source of proposals for the readjustment of studies to better adapt management plans to the real environment.

206. The main objectives for the CGs' training were to upgrade and empower community groups organized by the project and their involvement in participative management of the forest ecosystem. Specific topics and areas for CGs training covered the participative approach in natural resource management, local governance, administrative and financial management of associations and cooperatives, gender approach, project installation, AGR and microbusinesses, working capital, strategic communication, communication for social change, communication for advocacy and partners mobilization, conflict management, etc. CGs showed particular interest in training related to the administrative and financial management, litigation management and projects building.
207. The training helped improve members' technical knowledge of the different areas in which CGs have been created (introduction to good agricultural practices, forestry and livestock). These trainings associated with PMU supporting work improved negotiation skills, advocacy and mediation between populations using the resources and the local and regional institutional structures (Tanourdi and Skoura communes, PMU, DREF of Meknes and Fès, HCEFLCD, ADS, INDH, Province). Similarly, the constitution of CGs allowed some groups to benefit from structuring programs and state aid (PMV, INDH ADS program...) including to receive compensation contracts for deferred grazing and PAM exploitation (lichen, rosemary) that generate income for CGs. The training also helped develop project ideas and a broader view of the natural resource management issue.
208. Given the weak monitoring and evaluation, information on the impacts of various activities are mainly based on assessments rather than on formal surveys conducted during the project. In general, and after discussions and interactive and participative workshops held by the project with CGs and forest managers who benefited of capacity building programs, it appears that the impacts and benefits are very apparent and positive. They allowed: (i) upgrading beneficiaries' technical knowledge and skills; (ii) the provision of an added value in terms of governance structures for forest management activities (AGR) and self-development projects for community groups; (iii) meeting the priority needs of the target groups; (iv) internalization by forest managers of the approach and tools related to good forest governance (ecological restoration, forest certification, knowledge management to support GIEF, etc.); (v) initiating the practical tools, skills and knowledge acquired by the beneficiaries including target groups in projects and daily management of their activities; and (vi) the consideration of the predominant role of participation and involvement of user populations in the management plans and management of forest ecosystems.
209. In addition to the project's direct benefits related to the benefits and revenues from integrated co-management of forest ecosystems (income generating activities, medicinal plants harvesting, compensation for deferred grazing, restoration, etc.), organized local populations are also motivated by the following considerations: (i) the irreversible recognition of their rights to use forest ecosystems and resources, even if the property is still state-owned; (ii) the recognition of their role as responsible partners in the integrated co-management of forest ecosystems and their aspirations to development; (iii) capacity building program that provides them with new information, enabling them to discover their own strengths, gives them trust, shows them other ways to improve their conditions and encourages them to interact positively

with their economic and institutional environment to promote their self-development. Some trainings allowed making contracts related to forests management and use, thanks to the knowledge acquired (preparing and defending issues, technical skills); and (iv) the creation of a climate of trust and dialogue with ecosystems managers and their collaboration in the management of forests and rangelands that lead them to protect and sustainably use the resources for their long-term survival. Some trainings have helped mitigate the potential conflicts and found among CGs members particularly in NR use and management in the commune (conflicts over the use of water points, grazing in the Douars rangelands, forest and grazing, the type of use of woods and undergrowth in autumn but also snow period).

210. Although the training was very useful, it is not among CGs priorities compared to actions to improve the population's income. CGs interviewees regret that long term facilitation actions² (AF), as modest as they are, have not accompanied GIFMA's soft actions. A change of strategy and a procedure which would offer CGs technological packages where soft actions are combined with a manageable, cost effective, sustainable and socially acceptable investment model would make project start easier and improve its socio-economic impact. At first, we give priority to the integration of agriculture with livestock through intensification of production systems and CGs institutional strengthening. Then we would work on income, and during the third period, we would promote sustainable management of forest resources and the search for external funding and partnerships with other operators.

211. CGs also regretted: (i) lack of business training teams (waste collection, local entrepreneurs, size of fruit and forest trees, phytosanitary treatment, drip irrigation ...) (ii) the short duration of some training; (iii) the fact that the trainings did not always suit producers' work schedules; and (iv) the absence of certificates to give a higher value to training and trainees.

212. Surveys of the main beneficiaries and other project stakeholders were used to assess their understanding and interest in the project activities.

Table 12: General appreciation of GIFMA project activities by interviewed CGs.

Project activities \ Rural Commune (CR)	Tanourdi RC				Skoura RC			
	Livestock	Wood-Energy	PAM	Agriculture	Livestock	Wood-Energy	PAM	Agriculture
▪ Participation in project building	VS	VS	S	VS	VS	VS	S	MS
▪ GCs constitution	VS	VS	S	S	VS	VS	S	S
▪ Training	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS
▪ Other project activities	VS	MS	MS	MS	S	MS	MS	MS
▪ Project participative approach	VS	VS	S	S	VS	VS	S	S

²AF such as RGA, small energy projects, beekeeping, ecotourism, manufacturing pomace lighters from olive waste from trituration units, PAM transformation.

▪ Project adhesion level	VS	S	MS	S	S	S	MS	MS
▪ Young male participation	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS	VS	S	S
▪ Women's participation	NS	S	NS	NS	NS	S	NS	NS

VS: Very satisfactory ; S : satisfactory; MS : moderately satisfactory;

Source: Cross checking field mission surveys and mid-term review findings (2012)

213. **Environmental:** The project's main immediate environmental impact on the target area are related to the target local populations' interest in the protection and proper management of forest and pastoral resources through community groups organized and trained by the project and concrete deferred grazing actions, creation of forest regeneration plots and sustainable use of herbs and medicinal plants through contracts and trainings to ensure resources sustainable management.

214. In order to support and sustain forest ecosystems integrated and sustainable management, the project initiated, developed and implemented tools and standards such as FSC certification, a geographic information system and a model for ecological restoration and biodiversity ecosystem of the Middle Atlas forests, which development is part of the Government's current priorities. The gradual implementation of these large-scale tools will improve forest resources' management not only in the Middle Atlas, but throughout Morocco and will be an important indirect environmental impact in the medium and long term.

215. One of the main strategic aspects of GEF's response strategy is the involvement of local communities in the management and commercial exploitation of forest areas. The main challenge of this project was to develop sufficient interest and incentives for the adoption of sustainable forest and grazing management practices. Commercial exploitation activities were entrusted to community groups on the basis of objective and indicators of forest and grazing sustainable management set by mutual agreement and based on specific management plans for areas and targeted speculation. The communities and HCEFLCD's rights and obligations are clearly defined in the joint management signed contracts.

216. The three main threats to the ecological sustainability of the Middle Atlas forest ecosystems are overgrazing, over-exploitation and conversion to agriculture. Sustainable rangeland management is key to forest function restoration and ecological integrity. Ecological restoration models developed by the project are based on sustainable forest and grazing systems allowing natural regeneration of wood species and other species primarily through deferred grazing and are complemented by enrichment planting and replanting of biodiversity previously lost. The goal is to restore a maximum of endemic species that existed in the region through direct seeding and, in addition, if necessary, by planting seedlings produced in nurseries. The Project developed restoration techniques applicable in two representative forests moderately degraded of the Middle Atlas and with moderate economic potential that can still provide financial incentives for sustainable management.

217. Interviewed CGs however felt that the project (late) start did not make sufficient effort on communication and awareness at the local level with the public on the GRN issue, which arises

differently for local residents (or not) of forests. Although aware of the environmental issues, the population's priority is more focused on improving their living conditions.

4 CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

4.1 CORRECTIVE MEASURES FOR PROJECT DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

218. **Design.** The multiplicity of organizations involved and the types of responsibilities at each administrative level should be better defined at least on a global level in the Project formulation report. A specific activity to develop a communication system should be included in new project start up activities to clarify the roles and responsibilities of different partners and contributors and improve the efficiency relationship and responsibility management between the various stakeholders.
219. HCEFLCD tried to integrate UNDP national implementation procedures in its own administrative and financial management system without attracting the attention of the Project formulation team; thus it took over a year to develop an acceptable solution. Considerable efforts have to be made while formulating externally funded projects in the area of reconciliation and harmonization between partners' strategic and operational requirements, and the requirements of the national and local project implementation context. This reconciliation process must be sought through a thorough background analysis, verification of the working assumptions, potential risks and prior solution of the implications of the duplicity of procedures based on different legal systems. Such analysis should be focused on removing barriers, constraints and prepare favorable conditions for project implementation.
220. **Implementation.** The PMU simultaneously manages a Project formal operations and an informal structure based on the need to involve key stakeholders in achieving the GIFMA objectives. The final operational system established functions satisfactorily at the regional and local levels. However, some aspects need attention in the future to strengthen the operational aspect: (i) the activities planned by the Project have sometimes recorded delays due to the Project cumbersome vertical communication system. A greater flexibility of the communication and approval procedures would allow a better use of new technologies and a faster data collection and dissemination. Once the annual work plan is approved by the NPC, the Project national management should delegate operational control to the PMU to achieve the annual work plan activities and exercise a priori control; (ii) the structure of informal operational relationships should be documented and formalized to facilitate the model consolidation and also to better build on stakeholder potential synergy; (iii) likewise, even at the local level, operational relations with ad hoc technical committees and the municipalities should be discussed and clarified; and (iv) the operational relationship between the development agents and the sector manager at the POU's should also be clarified.
221. The institutional arrangements in place for the new medicinal plants project funded by UNDP/GEF with an existing advance account and rented vehicles (long-term lease) solves the problems of lack of financial and logistical autonomy experienced by the GIFMA. However, it is necessary to ensure that renting is better than buying vehicles due to its lease high costs. A control system must also be put in place to prevent misuse of vehicles for purposes other than the Project.

The time allotted for the Project to define, test, implement and operate a CG participatory management model of community groups was insufficient. Added to the delay recorded (nearly 2 years) at startup, this was quite long. It also took several years to define the approach and priorities of intervention, thematic studies, and assessments, create or strengthen CGs, and search for technical and financial

partners. The first partnership agreements with GCs (compensation for deferred grazing, herbs and medicinal plants) have only been concluded in the last years of the Project. In order to build the trust and interest of the population at the beginning of the Project, it would have been desirable to provide funding for a minimum of anchor activities including anchors related to forest resource and rangeland restoration. Natural resource protection activities are part of GEF funding opportunities.

222. The efficiency of the iterative and cognitive processes needed to identify solutions could be accelerated with a better definition of the approaches based on past experiences. The insufficient mastery of timing, the lack of integration framework and clear guidelines to conduct thematic analysis weakened coordination resulting in significant redundancies, consolidation of analysis results, and proliferation of differing and non-synergistic proposals. In addition, analyzes were focused on common value chains, without addressing those related to local resources potential, such as beekeeping in Skoura rosemary mats of Skoura, hunting sector, etc. Such analyzes are cumbersome, and demanding in terms of time and resources. The time required for their planning and implementation have been the cause of delay in the launch of the participatory process. It is recommended to replace the cumbersome thematic studies by PRA processes and conduct only a few more sophisticated analyzes to address very specific issues. It is appropriate to evaluate the usefulness and importance of education on the basis of information necessary to truly implement the forest resource co-management approach in other cities and regions. Priority should be given to the renovation of management plans with participatory simple tools.
223. The gender approach has been under-estimated and requires specific support to define project tools. Thematic studies should be gender-sensitive and take into account men and women roles and responsibilities in each activity to identify and define development and training priorities. Women's representation within CGs should also be improved.
224. Several legal barriers not identified during the preparation of the Project and related to forest economic exploitation was a barrier to operate CG and cooperative income generating activities. Resource exploitation, which was meant to support reflection, has been considerably delayed since the agreements with the groups were introduced without specifying that it was a project test, and were rejected as they were contrary to the law (forest product contracts are based on tenders, except in specific cases where direct contracting was accepted). Since it is intended to promote other practices, it is therefore appropriate in the future to seek a waiver prior to testing. Once the approach is developed, a new law should be developed and adopted.
225. **Monitoring-Evaluation.** Cooperation projects objectives and targets must be realistic and measurable by SMART indicators. This guideline is especially critical for institutional projects with a strong cultural content. The Project had planned specific expertise to develop the Project monitoring and evaluation system. The evaluators soon realized the difficulties encountered by the PMU to operationalize the system. It would have been suitable to hire a full time M&E expert for the PMU to support implementation. The short-term experts can define and develop the system. The Project M&E expert implements and operates the system, he conducts training and coaching of Project national executives, data collection and integration, monitors indicators and Project report drafting. In addition, the expert could also support GIS and knowledge management system operations.

4.2 MEASURES TO MONITOR OR STRENGTHEN THE PROJECT INITIAL BENEFITS

226. The measures to be taken over the short term to strengthen Project achievements relate mainly to forest ecosystem management approaches, institutional partnerships, community groups and ecosystem management tools
227. **Ecosystem Management Approach.** GIFMA has defined an integrated to forest ecosystem management approach, based on the collaboration among the populations and forestry services in two communes. The approach is based on a range of activities which require being clearly defined, organized and sequenced to facilitate enforcement and dissemination. There are different results, but not yet analyzed to define a global concept. Based on the analysis of project results and to facilitate its enforcement in other areas, it is important to refine the methodology and develop a summary of the approach through a guide defining accurately the steps, goal and content of the different studies to be conducted as well as the role of the different stakeholders.
228. **Institutional partnership.** The forest ecosystem participatory integrated management requires the mobilization of partnerships with institutions, departments, and key programs such as the Departments of Agriculture and Livestock, Water and Environment, Energy, ADS, INDH, etc. For example, the Midelt province informed Forest Services that INDH funds the development of improved ovens launched by GIFMA in other villages. Such strategic partnerships could be mobilized through the reactivation of the coordinating and steering bodies and control of programs and projects aimed to combat desertification, or as part of the preparation for the enforcement of advanced decentralization.
229. The implementation of GIFMA Project is based on an institutional arrangement involving several partners from different sectors and expertise areas. The overall responsibility for the Project rests with the HCEFLCD that ensures the Project national coordination and management. The establishment of participatory management model evolved and ended with an integrated model comprising three levels of participatory management models related to the roles of community groups, institutional partners and forest ecosystem "technical" management. Partnership management with regional institutions is informal. The Project thus presents an integrated participatory management more complex than the one originally anticipated in the Project document. It is therefore appropriate to create a clear platform for cooperation based on common objectives for the emerging management model through documentation or a specific handbook that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, and communication and decision-making protocols and procedures. An effort of analysis and conceptualization of this tripartite model form should be undertaken to help HCEFLCD to better control its integration into its ten-year program and annual business plans at the national and regional levels.
230. **Community Groups.** Stabilization and sustainability of the social cohesion of groups and their effective and responsible commitment to GIEF require close sustained support over a long period which shall cover the technical, organizational, institutional, legal and financial aspects, to ensure their autonomy vis-à-vis political cleavages, lobbies, and local and external elites. The most urgent supporting measure to ensure CGs sustainability after the end of the Project is related to the credibility to the Project initial speech on the involvement of user groups in forest product exploitation and forest benefits. Hence the need to rapidly implement the agreements on herbs and medicinal plants harvesting with the CGs to make them benefit from forest ecosystem management, maintain their interest and improve their sustainability beyond the project. Royalties and taxes related to agreements on herbs and medicinal plants cutting are an important part of the cost of operating and, in accordance with the law, they must

be paid before the harvesting process because they are not calculated on the net operating revenues. The agreements do not take into account the poverty conditions CGs capacities, and the fact that they will protect the resource if their rights of use and access to these resources are secured. The DRF is currently in discussion with the CGs rosemary operators to adapt the transfer price, taxes and payment terms accordingly (reduced price, payment in installments, possibility to partly contribute in-kind through forestry works). This experience should serve as a basis for reflection to redefine and adapt the rules and conditions of future operating contracts/agreements on medicinal plants and forest resource co-management to CGs specificities.

231. The supervision of GCs must help the populations to organize themselves not only for sustainable resource management, but also to facilitate product sales and market access by improving product storage and transportation and promoting small processing (better quality product, labeling, distillation, etc.). Partnerships with ADS and INDH such as the ones developed by GIFMA will be encouraged to support the medicinal plants upstream.
232. Some associations were created because of the Project and benefitted from diverse support, including training, study tours, awareness workshops. But most of their activities are partnered with ANOC. However, ANOC strategy could stand the risk to be in contradiction with the GIFMA-initiated strategy as ANOC encourages in fine livestock increase in forest and rangeland areas. It is thus important that this overgrazing risk is well analyzed and that mitigation measures are included in partnership agreements with ANOC.
233. The two federations officially created in June 2014 still require support to become fully operational and promote a better integration in the territorial structures (communes) which will help including CGs concerns in communal priorities (communal development plans), and will secure a common development vision in line with forest ecosystem integrated management.
234. . The presence of two development agents at the municipal level has played a key role in the establishment of CGs and their cooperative relations with HCEFLCD local offices. The transfer of their responsibilities and skills to the forest sector leaders does not seem reasonable given the workload of the latter and its sovereign role. The creation of an additional position (HCEFLCD or ADS community workers, or another local formula), is required and must be negotiated quickly. Several HCEFLCD and DREF officials are convinced of the need for outsourcing to implement the participatory process by hiring development workers (firms, specialized NGOs, specialized facilitators) at the sector level to address the lack of expertise and resources needed in decentralized services and mention the need to include this activity in the 2014-2024 ten-year plan and 2014 annual programs.
235. **Ecosystem management tools.** Support tools to ecosystem management such as FSC certification, GIS, ecological restoration, and knowledge management are operational and have already been appropriated by the DREFs which started to incorporate them in their programs. The HCEFLCD has the technical skills provided by the Project and is committed to develop and integrate them at the national scale. The short term priority is to focus on participatory evaluation of these tools in the pilot communes and on their extension and dissemination to neighboring communes to cover the entire Tazekka-Krouchen target corridor by including simplified documentation, training and experience sharing among the different decentralized services.
236. HCEFLCD officials confirmed that the two GIFMA target forests will be integrated under the Forest Sector Policy Support Programme (PAPF) priorities to secure certification. The review of existing planning plans of both forests and the further studies requested by the auditors (impact studies, biodiversity and socioeconomics, monitoring-evaluation) have already been integrated in the annual

activity programs of the two DREFs. The certification application forms have already been prepared by an international consulting firm hired for this purpose and submitted to CEFLCD management for action. The PAPF will also support the forest national and regional committees operations, as well as the deferring and forest activities undertaken by the cooperatives to diversify the activities of the population in order to motivate the latter to protect forests.

237. The GIS must develop to become a genuine forest management system. The GIS must provide information not only on massifs location (mapping) as it currently does, but also on any activities that are carried out (10-year program, annual contract-programs) related to conservation, regeneration, restoration, les plantations, planning, erosion, combating forest fires, and resource exploitation (monitoring of contracts, implementation of management plans, certification, infractions, etc.). The priority is that the GIS become fully operational in both DREFs to be effectively used as a management tool for the Forestry administration.
238. The two experimental plots for ecological restoration and biodiversity are recent and must be periodically monitored to benefit from a maximum of results. Since the Rabat Forest Research Center and INF have been associated to their design (attendance to follow up workshops), it is recommended to include the plots monitoring in the 10-year plan and in future annual programs of both institutions (framework agreement between HC and the Forest Research Center about to be signed).
239. In accordance with the action plan defined by the study on the knowledge management system carried out by GIFMA, the priority over the short term is to build the system management and operations capacities through: (i) the allocation of human resources specifically dedicated to its implementation; (ii) management and coordination to ensure good governance; (iii) monitoring-evaluation of the use of the system through a statistical tool accessible to management; and (iv) finalization of the conditions and mechanisms regulating the system operations and sharing among the HCEFLCD staff and beyond. It is also necessary to impulse the management technical committee at the national level.
240. In addition, the number of contributors of the knowledge management system should be gradually expanded to all les regional directorates and different officials and impulse the platform technical committee and the knowledge management committee. It is important to expand the forum for consultation and coordination to share experiences on forestry, data on user populations, forest management tools such as the GIS, certification, etc.
241. To be useful to users, it is also critical that information are better structured and classified not only by project, but also by topic. The main technical documents could also be reproduced on hardcopy and disseminated in regional and local libraries to be consulted by individuals who do not have access to Internet.

4.3 PROPOSALS RELATED TO FUTURE DIRECTIONS TO PROMOTE THE MAIN OBJECTIVES

242. The proposals for the future are related to the development of the forest integrated management approach defined by GIFMA, the adaptation of the regulation and partner agreements to co-management, and the development of ecosystem management tools.
243. **GIFMA approach development.** The sustainability of the gains, extension of the activities, ownership and replication of the GIFMA results and approaches are related to their incorporation in the DREFs 2014–2024 10-year plan, the Forest Policy-Support Program (PAPF) for the activities on the certification of both forests and advanced decentralization. The review of the HCEFLCD 10-year programs is on-going. This is an exceptional opportunity that is not to be missed to defend the gains of

the Project and integrate its sustainability and activity development. The interest of the enhancement of the GIFMA results in the on-going ten-year programming was underlined by several HCEFLCD central and regional officials, as well as by executives directly involved in the Project. Within the cooperation with the European Union, the PAPF includes a broad structural reform program of the Water and Forests and Combating Desertification sector, whose goals converge or merge with those of the GIFMA Project. The GIFMA strategic and operational approaches, methods and results found a prime position. HCEFLCD central and regional officials confirmed that the two forests supported by GIFMA will be included again among the Project targets, given the co-management structures and the progress already made towards certification. The enforcement of advanced decentralization is focused on sustainable development and based on the principles of participation, cross-sectoral integration, devolution and decentralization, empowerment of local communities and decentralized services. Advanced decentralization provides an institutional enabling environment for the promotion of forest ecosystem integrated management as designed by GIFMA.

244. GIFMA defined a forest integrated management approach based on the collaboration among the populations and forest services in a limited territory, i.e. two communes. Priority should be given to expanding this experience in order to progressively cover all communes living near the two target forests (Itzer and Guigou) and the Tazekka-Krouchen corridor for the purpose of certification. Priority will also be given to the ecosystems located in the GIFMA Project pilot communes and their nurseries to take advantage of the positive impact induced by the implementation of the Project, the existence of NGOs, and informed groups which can be models, witnesses, and relays. This extension approach centrifuge will also provide for a critical territorial scale to adapt the models, assess the impact, and draw relevant lessons for other areas.
245. **Regulation and partnership agreements.** The realization of self-funded participatory management systems is one of the Project assumptions to ensure a sustainable the participation of community groups in the forest ecosystem sustainable management systems. However, the legal and fiscal constraints to forest areas management and operations are seen as major obstacles in view of the existing legislation. They slowed the proliferation of partnership agreements (medicinal plants harvesting, compensation for deferred grazing, forestry works, etc.) with community groups. The law is not adapted to co-management. The thematic study conducted by GIFMA on the current forest legislation proposed to amend overall the 09/20/1976 Decree to adapt it to the new forest and rangeland integrated and participatory management approach, like the other laws governing local affairs. The provisions of the new law should in particular institutionalize the mechanisms and tools for forest participatory and cross-sectoral management. The role and responsibilities of the various stakeholders and partnerships should also be clearly defined (CGs, rural municipalities, institutions at the central and decentralized levels, private sector). The new regulations should be based on the following general principles: participatory approach as a management system, sustainability as an overall objective for forest management, social welfare (poverty reduction) in addition to the natural resources preservation as a specific principle, and the direct involvement of local groups in forest management as a goal. Following the GIFMA results and lobbying, forest authorities are now convinced of the need for a legislative review and this is a HCEFLCD short-term priority.
246. National procedures to develop and sign CGs contracts/agreements with different technical and financial institutional partners are often unclear, cumbersome, lengthy (sometimes more than a year), centralized and unsuited to CGs. Current procedures have delayed the Project activities related to contracting. It is therefore recommended that the Forestry Administration review its procedures to simplify and speed up the awarding of contracts with the CGs and other institutions.

247. The contracts on medicinal plants gathering by local CGs should not be considered as commercial agreements (tenders), but rather as a mean to sustainably protect and manage forests (agreement, partnership). The contracts on medicinal plants gathering with community organizations are not comparable with tenders with private individuals. A private operator harvests all available resource while forest populations have rights to use such resources. The latter have a vested interest in protecting and sustainably manage the resources to harvest them over the long-term. The contractual terms should reflect the populations' poverty conditions, and the fact that they will protect the resource if their access and user right are secured (reduced monitoring fee, relief for forest rangers, forest operations reduced costs, local recovery of forest by-products). Transfer pricing, taxes and payment terms must be adapted to CGs capacities and characteristics (rebates, payment in installments, possibility to partly contribute in-kind through forestry works). Despite these differences, there are no specific regulations for cooperatives which harvest medicinal plants.

248. Using cooperatives and associations to perform forestry work should be encouraged with regard to the forest conservation concern (populations will protect forests if they find their interest) and the sustainability of co-management structures in place (financial resources). This requires to adapt regulations to the CGs specificities and to clearly define the contractual and collaboration procedures. Cooperatives must be supported to ensure proper management by people from the area. They must become true small businesses for forestry work and monitoring. This has been tested under GIFMA.

249. The compensation system for deferring is a vital tool to for forest resource preservation. An annual commission evaluates the respect des zones deferring, and on the basis of the minutes, compensations are calculated and paid to CGs. Given that deferring should generate environmental benefits, the possibility that such compensations could be incorporated for the future in programs of payment for environmental services should be explored.

250. **Ecosystem management tools.** HCEFLCD officials are aware of the necessity to progressively develop the GIS in all regions and at the national scale in order to facilitate close follow-up and improve transparency in forest resource management. The advantage of the GIFMA Project approach lies in the possibility for using and operating a multi-sectoral GIS to cover and monitor all sectors directly or indirectly related to forest ecosystem management. This will also include new environmental programs such as REDD + and carbon biomass monitoring. It is appropriate to standardize existing software and create a central unit to make of it a national GIS. INFI has been associated with the GIS development. INFI has experts who can continue to support the system development, students who could contribute to the collection of data.

251. The knowledge management system is well designed, but currently limited to two regions and GIFMA data. Only the Project focal point at each target region has the access code. Information sharing is a necessity for the GIS certification and operation. Priority should be given to broadening the base of contributors to other regions and projects, and the ownership of the system by the decentralized administration through access facilitation to provinces and municipalities (officials should be trained and given an access code).

4.4 PROJECT SUCCESSES AND WEAKNESSES

252. The Project main successes are related to the forest resource co-management, the promotion of partnerships with various institutions to increase the system capacities for intervention and its impact,

and the knowledge management system put in place to share and exchange experiences and information locally and nationally. The main weaknesses are related to the Project performance monitoring-evaluation system, the lack of consideration for management issues, the lack of post-training evaluation to assess training effectiveness and impact, and the heavy administrative procedures.

Successes

253. **Forest resource co-management.** The local populations supported by the PMU include groups around economic interests (value chains). The participatory process is based on the combination of ethno-spatial realities with value chains that are vectors of underlying causes of forest ecosystem degradation. The confrontational climate that prevailed at the beginning of the Project between the people and local managers of ecosystems has become progressively climate of dialogue and collaboration. The groups have formed a platform that has attracted local public partners and facilitates the mobilization of partnerships around the implementation of agreed development plans, supported and defended by the groups.
254. **Partnerships.** The major effort of the Project adaptive management resulted in the initiation and promotion of institutional partnerships for forest ecosystems integrated management. Deprived of the opportunity to fund incentives to the participating population and demonstrating responsiveness to social environment reluctance, the GIFMA PMU was able to establish formal and informal partnerships with several regional institutional actors and mobilize additional resources to implement concerted development plans. Partnership management with regional institutions was not explicitly planned in the Project logical framework and initial work plan and developed throughout its implementation by identifying new resources at the regional level that met the needs through Project managers' impulse and HCEFLCD support.
255. **Knowledge sharing.** A knowledge management system was developed by GIFMA at the two Project target DREFs and at the national level. The system is a consultation forum and a platform for knowledge and information sharing at the local, national and international levels. It addresses one of the major shortcomings of public and private institutions that penalize political performance, plans and programs, namely the excessive compartmentalization of services, monopoly and retention of information, insufficient capitalization and enhancement of gains, and lessons learned from experiences. In addition, the Project developed a core expertise in the field of forest ecosystem integrated management with all partners and experts involved in the activities. The project was also a collection of documents covering all community forest management issues and aspects.

Weaknesses

256. **Monitoring-Evaluation System.** The Project developed a M&E system to measure GIFMA performance. Physical outputs and budget monitoring was satisfactory. The Project regularly reported annual achievements, but without a cumulative assessment of the progress to achieve its overall objectives. The indicators have not been measured and the information on the monitoring of the impact and effects of various activities are not available. Having completed the mid-term review a year before the end of the Project (plus half a year added in June 2014) has failed to implement the recommendations for a sufficiently long period to get a tangible impact on the Project results. A better understanding of the role of a mid-term evaluation could have helped the Project to make better use of UNDP-GEF project cycle management tools.
257. **Gender.** The groups supported by the GIFMA Project consist mainly of heads of households, i.e. men. Women are thus poorly represented, even absent within CGs although they are often

associated to livestock activities, rosemary harvesting, fuel wood collecting. The Project did not address this issue and made little progress in the gender approach. GIFMA took the groups as they existed without changing the representation of women. The Project was confined to a few contracts that more specifically concern women, such as the adoption of improved ovens and rosemary collecting. Thematic studies have not distinguished the responsibilities between women and men by activity to identify training priorities and specific support related to gender.

258. **Post-training evaluation.** Building actions aimed all Project partners both locally, provincially, regionally and nationally. But no formal post training evaluation assesses the effectiveness and impact of such training on the activities of the beneficiaries.

259. **Administrative procedures.** 'The PMU was not logistically (vehicles managed by DREFs) and financially independent (absence of petty cash advance within PMU), and this has delayed some activities pending approvals. HCEFLCD national procedures to draft and sign CGs contracts/agreements with different technical and financial partner institutions, and to hire experts often little known, too cumbersome, and lengthy (sometimes over a year, centralized and inappropriate to co-management and to CGs more particularly. They also delayed the activities related to these contracts.