



FINAL EVALUATION
of the UNDP/GEF Project
“Capacity Building for Sustainable Land Management in Bulgaria”

(Project 00043507 - PIMS 3189)

Final Report



Submitted by:
Jean-Joseph Bellamy and EcoLogic Consultancy Ltd.

May 29, 2008

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	II
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	IV
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	V
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT	1
3. DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATION	2
3.1. OBJECTIVES	2
3.2. SCOPE	2
3.3. METHODOLOGY	3
3.3.1. <i>Overall Approach</i>	3
3.3.2. <i>Evaluation Instruments</i>	4
3.4. EVALUATION USERS	5
3.5. LIMITATIONS AND CONSTRAINTS	5
4. EVALUATION FINDINGS	6
4.1. PROJECT RELEVANCE	6
4.1.1. <i>UNCCD and GEF Objectives</i>	6
4.1.2. <i>Development and Environment Objectives of Bulgaria</i>	7
4.1.3. <i>UNDP Objectives in Bulgaria</i>	9
4.1.4. <i>Needs of End-Users Beneficiaries</i>	10
4.1.5. <i>Synergies with Donor Programs/Projects in Bulgaria and in Region</i>	11
4.1.6. <i>Internal Project Concept/Design</i>	12
4.2. PROJECT EFFECTIVENESS	13
4.2.1. <i>Achievements of Project Expected Outcomes</i>	13
4.2.2. <i>Contribution to Capacity Development</i>	16
4.2.3. <i>Unexpected Project Achievements</i>	18
4.2.4. <i>Risk and Assumptions / Risk Mitigation Management</i>	18
4.3. PROJECT EFFICIENCY	19
4.3.1. <i>Project Management Approach and Tools / Adaptive Management</i>	20
4.3.2. <i>Financial Planning and Management</i>	20
4.3.3. <i>Fund Leveraging / Co-financing</i>	21
4.3.4. <i>Quality of Technical Assistance / Use of National Capacity</i>	22
4.3.5. <i>Project Delivery Mechanisms / Partnerships</i>	22
4.3.6. <i>Roles, Capacity and Efficiency of UNDP-CO</i>	23
4.3.7. <i>Country Ownership / Stakeholder Participation</i>	23
4.3.8. <i>Monitoring Approach and Progress Reporting</i>	24
4.4. PROJECT IMPACTS	26
4.4.1. <i>Potential to Achieve Long Term Project Goal and Objectives</i>	26
4.4.2. <i>Potential to Achieve Global Environmental Benefits</i>	27
4.4.3. <i>Potential Impacts on Local Environment, Poverty and Other Socio-Economic Issues</i>	27
4.5. SUSTAINABILITY AND REPLICABILITY	28
4.5.1. <i>Sustainability Strategy and Project Exit Strategy</i>	28
4.5.2. <i>Sustainability of Results Achieved by the Project</i>	28
4.5.3. <i>Financial and Human Resources Sustainability</i>	29
4.5.4. <i>Enabling Environment – Policy, Legislation and Institutions</i>	29
4.5.5. <i>Ecological Sustainability</i>	30
4.5.6. <i>Replication and Scaling-Up</i>	30
5. CONCLUSION / RATINGS SUMMARY	31
6. LESSONS LEARNED	33
7. RECOMMENDATIONS	35
ANNEX 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE	37
ANNEX 2: EVALUATION MATRIX	53
ANNEX 3: LIST OF DOCUMENTS REVIEWED	60
ANNEX 4: EVALUATION MISSION AGENDA	63
ANNEX 5: INTERVIEW GUIDE	67
ANNEX 6: LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED	70
ANNEX 7: STATUS OF RESULTS	72
ANNEX 8: NATIONAL SLM CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT SCORECARD	77

List of Tables

Table 1:	Steps Used to Conduct the Evaluation	4
Table 2:	Relevance of the Project to the UNCCD	7
Table 3:	Set of Project Expected Results	12
Table 4:	List of Project Risks	18
Table 5:	UNDP/GEF Fund Disbursement Status	20
Table 6:	Co-financing from Project Partners	20
Table 7:	List of Performance Indicators	24
Table 8:	Ratings Summary	30

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADR	Assessment of Development Results
CCF	Country Cooperation Framework
CD	Capacity Development
CO	Country Office
EAFRD	European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development
EU	European Union
ExEA	Executing Environmental Agency
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GOB	Government Of Bulgaria
LDC	Least Developed Countries
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MDP	Municipal Development Plan
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOAFS	Ministry Of Agriculture and Food Supply
MOEW	Ministry Of Environment and Water
MORDPW	Ministry Of Regional Development and Public Works
MOU	Memorandum Of Understanding
NAAS	National Agricultural Advisory Service
NAEP	National Agri-Environmental Programme
NAP	National Action Plan
NCSA	National Capacity Self-Assessment
NEX	National Execution
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPD	National Project Director
NSEAP	National Strategy for the Environment and Action Plan
OP	Operational Programme
PIMS	Project Information Management System
PIR	Project Implementation Review
PMU	Project Management Unit
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RBM	Result-Based Management
RDP	Rural Development Programme
RIEW	Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water
RTA	Regional Technical Advisor
SAPARD	Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SFA	State Forest Agency
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNCBD	United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USD	United States Dollar

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by Mr. Jean-Joseph Bellamy, Consultant – Team Leader and Ms. Svetlana Aladjem and Ms. Dimitrina Boteva from EcoLogic Consultancy Ltd. The Evaluation Team would like to express its gratitude and appreciation to all the stakeholders it interviewed. Their contributions were most appreciated, and the facts and opinions they shared played a critical part in the conduct of this evaluation.

The Evaluation Team would also like to extend special thanks to the personnel of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and of the Project who supplied key information and key contacts. A special thank you to Ms. Ivanka Todorova SLM Project Manager who organised the mission in Bulgaria.

DISCLAIMER

This report is the work of independent consultants and does not necessarily represent the views, or policy, or intentions of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The project “*Capacity Building for Sustainable Land Management (SLM) in Bulgaria*” is a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the government of Bulgaria. The Ministry of Environment and Water (MOEW) is the project executing agency and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Supply (MOAFS) acts as an official project partners. The project has a total budget of USD 13,185,502 that are financed by the GEF USD 978,102 and by co-financing commitments of about USD 12,207,400. The project was signed in May 2005, started in January 2006 and the revised planned closing date is May 2008.

The long-term goal of the project is to enhance the enabling environment and capacity for arresting land degradation and establishing sustainable land management (SLM) practices in order to contribute to enhancing ecosystem health, integrity, functions and services while promoting sustainable livelihoods in Bulgaria. The project objective is to build capacity for development and implementation of a coherent land policy. It will focus on mainstreaming, institutional and technical capacity building, and establishing financial mechanisms and resource mobilization for sustainable land management.

This final project evaluation - a requirement of UNDP/GEF procedures – was initiated by UNDP Bulgaria as the GEF Implementing Agency. It provides an in-depth reflection of project progress and priority actions for future UNDP/GEF projects. It is to provide managers (Administration of the SLM project, UNDP Bulgaria Country Office and UNDP/GEF levels) with complete and convincing evidence in determining the success of the project and – based on the project achievements - in providing guidance to future UNDP and UNDP/GEF projects in the fields of Sustainable Land Management

This evaluation is based on a desk review of project documents and on interviews with project staffs and key project informants. The methodology included the development of an evaluation matrix to guide the entire data gathering and analysis process. The findings were triangulated with the use of multiple sources of information when possible. The evaluation report is structured around the GEF five evaluation criteria: *Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Results/Impacts and Sustainability*.

The main findings of this final evaluation are:

Overall the progress of the project is highly satisfactory. The project successfully reached its expected results by meeting – and sometimes by exceeding – its expected targets. Bulgaria has now the necessary policy, legislation and institutional instruments to comply with its obligations under the UNCCD and also to implement this revised land policy and SLM measures at the local level with landowners and land users. This improved enabling environment should have a positive long-term impact on SLM in Bulgaria. The prospect for long-term sustainability of project achievements is excellent. The pieces of legislation developed with the support of the project are approved, the mobilization of financial resources for follow up capacity building activities after the project end are secured and the risk of government agency staff-turnover is limited.

The focus on capacity development and the participatory approach contributed to a strong ownership of the project achievements; these are all institutionalized within the key Stakeholders. The replication of these achievements throughout Bulgaria should be secured through the implementation of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) and the erosion control programme from the State Forest Agency (SFA). These two programmes will carry-out the project achievements by supporting actions on the ground that are associated with the development of agricultural methods consistent with the protection and preservation of the environment, and on compensating the producers in the mountainous and other less favoured areas for keeping their land in good condition, and preventing the abandonment of land in these areas.

The project was managed by a highly effective small management team; including a Project Manager who was a Senior Public Officer from the ExEA and who took unpaid sabbatical time to manage the project. Under the excellent leadership of the project manager, there was a high participation level of Stakeholders, which translated into numerous implementation partnerships and the development of a strong ownership by these Stakeholders of the implementation of the project and its cost-effective achievements.

The main lessons learned are:

- A project design that is the product of a strong participatory process facilitates the implementation of the project and ensures a greater potential for long-term impact and long-term sustainability;

- The strong ownership of the project by stakeholders leads to cost-effective project achievements;
- A comprehensive CD approach addressing the capacity gaps through the systemic development of key elements of a system necessitates the sharing of project decision-making and project control among Stakeholders;
- Addressing a national issue such as land degradation is a complex process involving many sectors of the economy;
- The flexibility of the implementation of a project is a key ingredient for the success of this project;
- The choice of an excellent Senior Project Manager with an extended technical knowledge, a good network of “Champions” among key stakeholder organizations and accompanied by an approach emphasizing knowledge, transparency, tenacity, openness, firm and networking are also key ingredients for a project to succeed;
- This type of project emphasizing capacity development requires a longer timeframe to ensure greater results; a 5-year duration minimum should be required for this type of initiative;
- The use of a broad approach to systematically develop/improve the capacity throughout the system including intervention at the policy, legal, institutional, process and individual levels is complex but the only way to enhance an enabling environment for a particular sector or area;
- Within the context of a project focusing on policy, legislation and institution development, the implementation of demonstration projects is vital. It “connects” the project with the end-users and feeds back the policy, legislation and institutional development processes; bettering the decision-making process
- There are still a lot of capacity development needs of all SLM actors to be done in the future.

Recommendations to End the Project:

1. It is recommended that the SLM project achievements be fully incorporated into the UNDP/GEF project “*Integrating Global Environmental Issues into Bulgaria’s Regional Development Process*” (2006-2010). The project strategy is to promote a proactive integration of global environmental issues into the process of regional and local development, as well as spatial planning. The SLM project focused mostly on the agriculture and forestry sectors and this project is a good opportunity to introduce SLM principles and measures into spatial and development planning.
2. It is recommended that the project management team (UNDP and the Project Manager) writes a memorandum and/or organizes a meeting with the Minister of Environment (and possibly with the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers) regarding the creation of the SLM unit. It is part of the expected results of the UNDP Country Programme 2006-2009 and it is a critical point for ensuring the continuity of the SLM project achievements without major disruptions.
3. Despite the short remaining timeframe remaining, it is recommended to organize an end of project workshop (with the members of the project advisory board or of the UNCCD Advisory Committee) to highlight the project achievements and the way forward. It will be an opportunity to set the future and reinforce the need for the approval of the NAP and the setting up of the SLM unit. This workshop would be an opportunity to present the requirements to go forward and also to “*pass the baton*” from the project management team to Stakeholders.

Opportunities for GOB, UNDP and GEF

4. It is recommended that a case study be done on this project. It is an excellent model of a capacity development initiative. The main characteristics and the success of this project could be used as a model to be replicated worldwide under the implementation of the UNCCD and of GEF OP15. It was identified as one priority during the NCSA process, designed by stakeholders and the implementation was well integrated within the national processes and responded well to the needs of stakeholders.
5. It is recommended to explore the possibility of posting and exchanging information with the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD¹. It is a subsidiary body of the UNCCD promoting sustainable development through land management in the context of UNCCD. The SLM project accumulated information and knowledge and it would be very valuable to make this information accessible through a network such as the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD.

¹ www.global-mechanism.org

1. INTRODUCTION

1. This report presents the findings of the Final Evaluation of the UNDP/GEF Project “*Capacity Building for Sustainable Land Management (SLM) in Bulgaria*” (PIMS 3189). This final evaluation was performed by three independent Consultants Mr. Jean-Joseph Bellamy (Team Leader) and Ms. Svetlana Aladjem and Ms. Dimitrina Boteva, both from EcoLogic Consultancy Ltd. on behalf of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

2. The Republic of Bulgaria is located in the north-eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula. The territory covers 110,912 km² and its location results in a great diversity of habitats. The climate varies from moderate continental in the north to continental Mediterranean in the south. The country’s terrain is diverse and uneven with an abundance of mountains crossed by deep valleys. The total arable land is 52.1% of its territory. Bulgaria’s bioclimatic conditions have formed three soil geographic areas: the North-Bulgarian Forest Steppe, the South-Bulgarian xerothermal and the Mountain Forest. These three zones show a diversity of 31 types of soils and two soil provinces separated by the Stara Planina mountain. Chernozems and gray forest soils prevail in the northern part, while smolnitz and cinnamon forest soils prevail in the South. For agriculture purposes, all soils are classified into 11 groups (categories based on their fertility).

3. Bulgaria presents one of the poorest water balances in the Balkans and Europe. The average annual quantity per capita is about 2,300-2,500m³ (Greece: 5,340m³, Former Yugoslavia: 10,670m³, Albania: 15,380m³). Forests occupy 33% of the country’s total area. The prevalent forests are located in the mountains (52%). The combination of anthropogenic factors and insufficient water availability has contributed to the degradation of forest ecosystems.

4. The National Strategy for the Environment and Action Plan (NSEAP) - stating priorities for investments in the area of environment and natural resources in Bulgaria - clearly states that there is a need for an overall strategy and policy for the protection and preservation of soils in Bulgaria. Furthermore, the assessment conducted under the National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA) concluded on the need for a more active participation of the UNCCD focal point and the need to build capacity in the area of SLM in Bulgaria.

5. The project was to create an enabling environment and build the necessary capacities to facilitate long-term investments in the promotion of sustainable land management. The project targeted capacity building for sustainable land management at both national and local levels, removal of barriers and facilitation of a policy dialogue on sustainable land management.

6. This evaluation report includes seven sections. Chapter 2 presents an overview of the project; chapter 3 briefly describes the objective, scope, methodology, evaluation users and limitations of the evaluation; chapter 4 presents the findings of the evaluation. Conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations are presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 respectively and relevant annexes are found at the back end of the report.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

7. The project “*Capacity Building for Sustainable Land Management (SLM) in Bulgaria*” is a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Ministry of Environment and Water (MOEW) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Supply (MOAFS). The project is executed with standard UNDP national execution (NEX) modalities. The MOEW is the project executing agency and the MOAFS acts as an official project partners. The project has a total budget of USD 13,185,502 that are financed by the GEF USD 978,102 and by co-financing commitments of about USD 12,207,400. The project was signed in May 2005, started in January 2006 and the revised planned closing date is May 2008.

8. Land degradation in Bulgaria is widespread and is mostly manifested through water, wind and irrigation erosion, and through soil acidification and salinization. A conservative estimate of land degradation in Bulgaria is that 50-60% of the country’s land base is affected by some form of land degradation. Three main sectors were identified as causing this land degradation: (i) farming where arable lands are severely exploited; (ii) intensive livestock with widespread practice of dumping livestock wastes

polluting land and water; and, (iii) forestry with forest exploitation including a striving wood exporting industry.

9. However, five main barriers to the application of SLM principles in Bulgaria are preventing measures to combat the land degradation process. There are: (1) the concept of SLM is relatively new in Bulgaria and no incentives for environmentally sustainable land management exist at the national level; (2) there is a lack of cross-institutional coordination and inter-sectoral dialogue, resulting in weak transmission mechanisms between knowledge in specialized institutes and the application of this knowledge in the field; (3) while land degradation is a problem acknowledged by the scientific community and technical staff at the MOEW and MOAFS, it is not well known by forest owners, farmers, and cattle ranchers; (4) many policy and legal instruments are either uncoordinated, or do not incorporate principles of sustainable land management; and, (5) there is a lack of economic incentives for farmers and resource users to follow principles of sustainable land and resource management.

10. To address these barriers, the project was to address gaps related to capacity development, policy harmonization, inter-agency coordination, mainstreaming of SLM, and development of sustainable financial mechanisms for implementation of SLM practices as enshrined in the NAP. The long-term goal of the project is to enhance the enabling environment and capacity for arresting land degradation and establishing sustainable land management (SLM) practices in order to contribute to enhancing ecosystem health, integrity, functions and services while promoting sustainable livelihoods in Bulgaria.

11. The project objective is to build capacity for development and implementation of a coherent land policy. It will focus on mainstreaming, institutional and technical capacity building, and establishing financial mechanisms and resource mobilization for sustainable land management. The project has four expected outcomes:

- Sound land policy and a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework for sustainable land management;
- Institutional and technical capacity for sustainable land management and combating desertification strengthened;
- Local capacity for land planning and participatory decision-making strengthened;
- Resources mobilized for NAP implementation as well as innovative financial mechanisms and economic incentives explored and agreed with farmers and other land users and the key Ministries.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATION

12. This final project evaluation (a requirement of UNDP/GEF procedures) was initiated by UNDP Bulgaria as the GEF Implementing Agency. This evaluation provides an in-depth reflection of project progress and priority actions for future UNDP/GEF projects.

3.1. Objectives

13. The objective of this final evaluation is to provide managers (Administration of the SLM project, UNDP Bulgaria Country Office and UNDP/GEF levels) with complete and convincing evidence in determining the success of the project and – based on the project achievements - in providing guidance to future UNDP and UNDP/GEF projects in the fields of Sustainable Land Management by providing suggestions to how:

- The adaptive management and monitoring function in future projects can be strengthened;
- To ensure adequate accountability for the achievement of the GEF objective;
- To enhance organizational and development learning in future projects;
- To enable informed decision – making in future projects.

3.2. Scope

14. Below is presented a summary of the elements that are covered by this evaluation. There are based on the terms of reference (*see Annex I*):

- Project Formulation
 - Conceptualization/Design

- Country Ownership/Drivenness
- Stakeholder Participation
- Replication Approach
- Project Implementation
 - Implementation Approach
 - Monitoring and evaluation
 - Stakeholder Participation
 - Financial Planning
 - Sustainability
 - UNDP Contribution
- Project Results
 - Attainment of Outcomes/Achievement of Objectives
- Recommendations / Lessons Learned

3.3. Methodology

15. The following methodology is compliant with international criteria and professional norms and standards; including the norms and standards adopted by the UN Evaluation Group. The Evaluators uses methodologies that promote a shared understanding of environmental management procedures and priorities. These techniques stress the search for, and application of simple and effective solutions aimed at improving environmental management practices, at both local and global levels.

3.3.1. Overall Approach

16. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the “*GEF Monitoring & Evaluation Policy*” as well as the “*UNDP Monitoring and Evaluation Policy*”. It was undertaken in-line with the GEF principles: independence, impartiality, transparency, disclosure, ethical, partnership, competencies/capacities, credibility and utility. It considered the two GEF evaluation objectives at the project level: (i) promote accountability for the achievement of GEF objectives; including the global environmental benefits; and (ii) promote learning, feedback and knowledge sharing on results and lessons learned among the GEF and its partners.

17. The evaluation team developed and used tools in accordance with the GEF policy to ensure an effective project evaluation. The evaluation provides evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful and it is easily understood by project partners. As mentioned in the TOR, the evaluation was conducted and the findings were structured around the GEF five major evaluation criteria; which are also the five internationally accepted evaluation criteria set out by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development:

- *Relevance* relates to an overall assessment of whether the project is in keeping with its design and in addressing the key priorities to ensure that the obligations under the UNCCD are met and in keeping with the donors and partner policies, as well as with local needs and priorities.
- *Effectiveness* is a measure of the extent to which formally agreed end of project results (outcomes) have been achieved, or can be expected to be achieved.
- *Efficiency* is a measure of the productivity of the project intervention process, i.e. to what degree the outcomes achieved derive from efficient use of financial, human and material resources. In principle, it means comparing outcomes and outputs against inputs.
- *Impacts* are the long-term results of the project and include both positive and negative consequences, whether these are foreseen and expected, or not.
- *Sustainability* is an indication of whether the outcomes (end of project results) and the positive impacts (long term results) are likely to continue after the project ends.

18. In addition to the GEF guiding principles described in the TOR, the Evaluation Team also applied the following methodological principles to conduct the evaluation: (i) *Participatory Consultancy*; (ii) *Applied Knowledge*: the Team’s working knowledge of evaluation theories and approaches and its particular expertise in environmental issues were applied to this mandate; (iii) *Results-Based Management*; (iv) *Validity of information*: multiple measures and sources were sought out to ensure that the results are accurate and valid; (v) *Integrity*: Any issue with respect to conflict of interest, lack of professional conduct or

misrepresentation were immediately referred to the client; and (vi) *Respect and anonymity*: All participants had the right to provide information in confidence.

19. The evaluation was conducted following a set of steps presented in the table below:

Table 1: Steps Used to Conduct the Evaluation

<u>I. Review Documents and Prepare Mission</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start-up teleconference/finalize assignment WP Collected and reviewed project documents Elaborated and submitted <u>evaluation work plan</u> Prepared mission: agenda and logistic
<u>II. Collect Information</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mission to Bulgaria for the Team Leader Interviewed key-Stakeholders and conducted field visits Further collected project related documents Mission debriefings / <u>Mission report summary</u>
<u>III. Analyse Information</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-depth analysis and interpretation of data collected Followed-up interviews (if necessary) Elaborated and submitted <u>draft evaluation report</u>
<u>IV. Finalize Evaluation Report</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circulated draft report to UNDP/relevant stakeholders Integrated comments and submitted <u>final report</u>

20. Finally, the evaluation team also applied the “*Ethical Code of Conduct for UNDP Evaluation*”. The evaluation team conducted evaluation activities, which were independent, impartial and rigorous. The final evaluation clearly contributes to learning and accountability. The evaluation team had personal and professional integrity and was guided by propriety in the conduct of their business.

3.3.2. Evaluation Instruments

21. The evaluation provides evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The findings were triangulated through the concept of “multiple lines of evidence” using several evaluation tools and gathering information from different types of stakeholders and different levels of management. In order to conduct this final evaluation, the following evaluation instruments were used:

Evaluation Matrix: As part of the initiation phase, the evaluation team developed an evaluation matrix based on the evaluation scope presented in the TOR, the project log-frame and the review of the key project documents (*see Annex 2*). This matrix is structured along the five GEF evaluation criteria and includes all evaluation questions. It provided overall directions for the evaluation, used as a basis for interviewing people and reviewing project documents and provided a basis for structuring the evaluation report. This matrix was assembled with an overview of the project, the evaluation scope and the proposed methodology to complete the evaluation work plan. [*This evaluation work plan was presented to UNDP-Bulgaria and the SLM Project Administration for their review before proceeding into the data-gathering phase*].

Documentation Review: It was conducted in Bulgaria and in Canada by the evaluation team. In addition to being a main source of information, all documentation was used as preparation for the mission of the Team Leader. A list of documents was provided in the TOR and the evaluation team searches other relevant documents through the web and contacts (*see Annex 3*). [*The list of documents was reviewed at the start-up of the mission*].

Mission Agenda: An agenda for the 7 working day mission to Bulgaria was developed during the preparatory phase (*see Annex 4*). The process reviewed the list of Stakeholders to be interviewed; ensured they represent all project Stakeholders such as land owners/users, farmers, local elected community leaders, etc. Then, in collaboration with the SLM project team and the UNDP-CO, the evaluation team planned the interviews during the week prior to the mission. The objective was to have a well-organized and planned mission to ensure a broad scan of Stakeholders’ views during the

time allocated to the mission. [*The final agenda was coordinated with UNDP-Bulgaria and the SLM project Administration*].

Interview Guide: An interview guide was developed to solicit information from the stakeholders. It was composed of standard questions issued from the evaluation matrix (*see Annex 5*). As part of the participatory approach, the evaluation team ensured that all parties viewed this tool as balanced, unbiased, and structured. It was also used for interviews conducted by phone or email as needed.

Interviews: Stakeholders were interviewed as per the prepared mission agenda. It included UNDP Bulgaria Project Manager, UNDP/GEF RTA from Bratislava (by email), SLM Project Manager, Project Steering Committee members, Project Director and other Stakeholders (*see Annex 6*). The semi-structured interviews were conducted using the interview guide and adapted to each interview. All interviews were conducted in person with some follow up using emails if needed. Confidentiality was guaranteed to the interviewees and the findings were incorporated in the final report.

Field Visit: As per the TOR field visits were conducted during the mission of the Team Leader in Bulgaria (*see Annex 4*); it ensured that the team has direct primary sources of information from the field and project end-users. [*These field visits were coordinated with the SLM Project Manager*].

Achievement Rating: The evaluation team rated the project achievements according to the GEF project review criteria; using the ratings as Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Marginally Satisfactory (MS), Marginally Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U) and Not Applicable (NA). All evaluation criteria mentioned in the terms of reference were rated accordingly.

3.4. Evaluation Users

22. This final evaluation was initiated by UNDP as the GEF Implementing Agency for this project. The audience for this evaluation are the staff at the Administration of the SLM Project, UNDP Bulgaria Country Office, UNDP/GEF, and the members of the Project Steering Committee. The findings will provide these managers with complete and convincing evidence in determining the success of the project and – based on project achievements - in providing guidance to future UNDP and UNDP/GEF projects in the fields of SLM.

23. This final evaluation report will be disseminated for review to the executing and implementing agencies, and other partners. The Evaluation Team is fully responsible for this independent evaluation report; which may not necessarily reflect the views of MOEW, UNDP or the GEF. The circulation of the final report will be determined by UNDP.

3.5. Limitations and Constraints

24. The findings and conclusions contained in this report rely primarily on a desk review of project documents, a mission to Bulgaria – including field visits to the Municipalities of Suhindol and Ihtiman - and more than 20 interviews with project key informants. Within the given resources allocated to this final evaluation, the independent team of consultants conducted a detailed assessment of actual results against expected results.

25. Nevertheless, this final evaluation report successfully ascertains whether the project met its main objectives - as laid down in the project design document - and whether the project initiatives are, or are likely to be, sustainable after completion of the project. It also makes a number of recommendations that would be useful to reinforce the long term sustainability of the project achievements and also collates and analyzes lessons learned and best practices obtained during the implementation of the project which could be further taken into consideration during the development and implementation of other similar GEF projects in Bulgaria and elsewhere in the world.

4. EVALUATION FINDINGS

26. This section presents the findings of this final evaluation, which are based on a desk review of project documents and on interviews with key project informants and project staffs. As described in Section 3.3.1 they are structured around the GEF five major evaluation criteria: *Relevance*, *Effectiveness*, *Efficiency*, *Results/Impacts* and *Sustainability*.

4.1. Project Relevance

27. Within the context of the UNCCD implementation in Bulgaria, the project seeks to improve the enabling environment and capacity for arresting land degradation and establish SLM practices in Bulgaria. This section discussed the relevance of the project within its international and national context; as well as against its original design.

4.1.1. UNCCD and GEF Objectives

28. The SLM project with its strong focus on capacity development for SLM in Bulgaria is highly relevant to the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in Bulgaria and to the GEF Operational Programme (OP) 15 objective. The project provided a platform to develop the capacity of the key players in Bulgaria; intervening at three distinct levels: system, institutional and individual. It addressed the identified barriers preventing the implementation of the obligations under the UNCCD, which Bulgaria ratified on January 12, 2001 through the adoption of the Law (No 7/23/01/2001).

29. The project was fully in line with the objective of the GEF OP15 that is to mitigate the causes and negative impacts of land degradation on the structure and functional integrity of ecosystems through sustainable land management practices as a contribution to improving people's livelihoods and economic well being. Under this OP15, countries are expected to address land degradation issues, using integrated and cross-sectoral approaches, within the framework of sustainable development at the local, national, and/or trans-boundary levels. Finally, the SLM project contributed to the achievement of the OP15 three expected outcomes that are:

- (a) Institutional and human resource capacity is strengthened to improve sustainable land management planning and implementation to achieve global environment benefits within the context of sustainable development.
- (b) The policy, regulatory, and economic incentive framework is strengthened to facilitate wider adoption of sustainable land management practices across sectors as a country addresses multiple demands on land resources for economic activities, preservation of the structure and functional integrity of ecosystems, and other activities.
- (c) Improvement in the economic productivity of land under sustainable management and the preservation or restoration of the structure and functional integrity of ecosystems.

30. The project objective meets the objective of the Convention that is “... *undertaking of effective measures to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought at all levels within the framework of an integrated approach and in compliance with the arrangements for international cooperation and partnership in the process of sustainable development.*” The convention recommends that to achieve that objective it is necessary that countries develop overall long-term strategies aimed at increasing the land productivity as well as at restoration, preservation and sustainable management of the natural resources for improving the conditions of life of the local population.

31. The more specific relevance of the project against the implementation of the UNCCD is indicated in the table 2 below:

Table 2: Relevance of the Project to the UNCCD

UNCCD Articles	Article 2: Objectives	Article 4: General Obligations	Article 5: Obligations of Affected Country Parties	Article 8: Relationships with Other Conventions	Article 9: Basic Approach	Article 10: National Action Programmes	Article 11: Sub-regional and regional action programmes	Article 12: International Cooperation	Article 14: Coordination in the elaboration & implementation of action programmes	Article 16: Information collection, analysis and exchange	Article 17: Research & Development	Article 18: Transfer, acquisition, adaptation, & development of technology	Article 19: Capacity building, education & public awareness	Article 20: Financial resources
Project Outcomes														
1. Sound land policy and a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework for sustainable land management.	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X		X	
2. Institutional and technical capacity for sustainable land management and combating desertification strengthened.	X	X	X						X	X	X	X	X	
3. Local capacity for land planning and participatory decision-making strengthened.	X	X	X						X	X		X	X	
4. Resources mobilized for NAP implementation as well as innovative financial mechanisms and economic incentives explored and agreed with farmers and other land users and the key Ministries.	X	X	X					X				X		X

32. The table above indicates that the project is fully in line with the implementation of the convention and its obligations in Bulgaria. Through its design (four outcomes) it contributes to building the capacity in the critical areas for Bulgaria to fulfill these obligations. The first outcome of the project is particularly well in-line with the implementation of the Convention as it focuses on supporting the development of a national action programme; which is a major focus of the Convention and its obligations. However, the project is also ensuring that an adequate legal framework is in place and that the capacity of key institutions related to the implementation of SLM practices are developed.

33. From the table above, it is noted that the project is not really focusing on the relationship with other conventions (Article 8) such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD). It was not part of the design of this SLM project. This aspect of better coordination and mainstreaming the Conventions in Bulgaria is the main purpose of another UNDP/GEF funded project called “*Integrating Global Environmental Issues into Bulgaria’s Regional Development Process*” (see Section 4.1.5).

4.1.2. Development and Environment Objectives of Bulgaria

34. The project is highly relevant to the development objectives of Bulgaria; particularly to the rural development governance framework that is being developed by the GOB. The project aims to enhance the enabling environment and capacity for arresting land degradation and establishing sustainable land management (SLM) practices in Bulgaria. Benefiting from the support of the SLM project, SLM principles and measures are now part of the medium-term government strategies and programmes. They include several key national strategies and programmes related to SLM:

National Agri-Environmental Program (NAEP) 2007-2013

35. The NAEP is a policy instrument developed by the GOB to define the framework within which the agri-environmental payments should be made to support the sustainable development of rural areas and to respond to the growing demand for environmental services. This is the national policy to guide the

implementation of the measures aimed at the sustainable use of agriculture lands, which is part of axis #2 of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) (80%) and by the GOB (20%). It has six objectives:

1. Promote the introduction and continued use of more environmentally-friendly agricultural production methods that protect or improve the natural environment and contribute towards a) achieving a sustainable pattern of land management; b) preserving the rich natural heritage of Bulgaria, and; c) improving the quality of life for its people
2. Contribute towards the protection and restoration of important habitats and natural systems in accordance with national objectives and the European Union (EU) goal of halting biodiversity loss by 2010
3. Contribute towards the protection of soil and water resources in accordance with national objectives and EU environmental obligations, including the Nitrate and Water Framework Directives
4. Provide competitive compensatory payments for farmers and other land managers who voluntarily manage their land in a manner that is beneficial for the environment
5. Support diversification of the rural economy, including the creation of new employment opportunities in rural areas
6. Stimulate the creation and maintenance of new markets for a) quality products (e.g. organic products) that are produced in an environmentally-friendly way and are good for human health, and; b) other environmental goods and services, including the development of rural tourism and associated recreational activities

36. In order to achieve these objectives, this plan is structured into 5 programme schemes: (1) organic farming; (2) management of high nature value farmland; (3) creation and maintenance of landscape features; (4) soil and water protection; and (5) traditional livestock breeding. Each of these schemes has a rationale, an operational objective, management requirements, potential beneficiaries, expected impact and payment rates. SLM is part of this programme and benefited from the support of the SLM project to integrate SLM principles and measures and the payment methodology into the Axis #2 package of the RDP.

National Strategy Plan for Rural Development (2007-2013) & Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007-2013

37. Following the “*National Agriculture and Rural Development Plan 2000-2006*” supported by the Special EU Accession Program for Agriculture and Rural Development (SAPARD), the GOB prepared a national strategy plan for rural development and the rural development programme for the period 2007-2013. They have three objectives:

- To develop a competitive and innovation based agriculture, forestry and food processing industry.
- To protect the natural resources and environment of rural areas.
- To improve the quality of life and diversify job opportunities in rural areas.

38. The RDP has 4 axis of intervention:

- *Axis 1* aims at increasing the competitiveness of agriculture, forestry and the food processing industry;
- *Axis 2* is associated with the development of agricultural methods consistent with the protection and preservation of the environment, and on compensating the producers in the mountainous and other less favoured areas for keeping their land in good condition, and preventing the abandonment of land in these areas. Sustainable development of the forests will be addressed mainly through improvement of forest resources and restoration of forest potential;
- *Axis 3* aims at improving the quality of life and diversification of job opportunities in the rural areas of Bulgaria;
- *Axis 4* is an instrument for decentralized governance and integrated local development in rural areas.

39. Axis 2 includes a series of 5 implementation measures: (1) Natural handicap payments to farmers in mountain areas; (2) Payments to farmers in areas with handicaps, other than mountain areas; (3) Agri-environmental payments; (4) First afforestation of non-agricultural land; (5) Restoring forestry potential and introducing prevention actions.

40. The total financial plan for the period 2007-2013 is estimated at 3.2B euros of which 80% is to be funded by the EAFRD programme and 20% by the Government of Bulgaria. Axis 2 has an indicative budget of 777M euros that includes 637M euros from the EAFRD programme. More than 56% of this budget is to be spent on the agri-environmental payments measure and a further 30% to be spent on “natural handicap payments to farmers in mountain areas. This is viewed as the major programme to mainstream the SLM project achievements over the medium and long-term.

National Plan for Development of Organic Farming in Bulgaria 2006-2013

41. One of the reason cited in the document for the elaboration of this plan was that “.....organic farming as well as other integrated agri-environmental practices directly contribute to sustainability of the rural development in Bulgaria. They might lead to stabilization of ecosystems, preservation and restoration of natural resources, and prevention of land abandonment”. The plan has five main strategic goals: (1) development of the market of organic produce; (2) 8% of the cultivated agricultural land to be managed in organic way till 2013; (3) efficient legislation and normative base for the development of organic farming in 2007; (4) applied scientific research, education, training and extension service in the field of organic farming till 2010; and (5) development of efficient system for control and certification.

National Strategy for the Environment and Action Plan 2000-2006

42. Based on a comprehensive environmental strategy study conducted in 1991-92 with the support of the World Bank, the GOB implemented the first environmental action plan until the year 2000. It had two main objectives: (1) to introduce new approaches and create a modern and stable environmental management, and (2) to implement activities for solving some pressing environmental problems; which were achieved during the period 1992-2000. This second national strategy for the environment and action plan for the period 2000-2006 was approved by the government resolution #455 of June 20, 2001.

43. This strategy and action plan includes specific actions that target soil protection and better management of the land. It includes two specific actions: (3.2) the development and implementation of regional and local policies for the gradual increase of territories with good environmental quality and (4.3) the development of environment-friendly agriculture and stockbreeding. However, soil protection per se is not part of the main objectives of this strategy. The actions listed above are part of two objectives: “(3) Maintain and enlarge good environmental quality territories” and “(4) Closer integration of the environmental policy in the policies on development of industrial sectors”.

44. A good analysis on soils is provided. It described the key problems related to soils such as incomplete legislation on protection of soils, lack of overall strategy and policy for the protection and preservation of soils, erosion is a serious degradation process with large negative impact on land and soils, local problems exist with soils polluted with heavy metals and large territories are not re-cultivated due to damage caused by past extraction activities.

4.1.3. UNDP Objectives in Bulgaria

45. The project is also highly relevant to the objectives of UNDP and GEF in Bulgaria; which are part of the UNDP Country Programme for Bulgaria (2006-2009). This programme is based on Bulgaria’s development priorities and on 15 years of UNDP experience in the country. The development of this programme took into account recommendations made by the evaluation of the 2003 Assessment of Development Results (ADR) of the UNDP Bulgaria programme, the extensive analyses carried out by the Government and the EU in preparation for Bulgaria’s EU accession, and on consultations with partners. Due to the limited number of UN agencies in Bulgaria, no United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) was required.

46. During the second Country Cooperation Framework (CCF) – 2002-2005 – UNDP strengthened its position as an important development partner in Bulgaria. The ADR concluded that UNDP responded well to key national development challenges by contributing to changes to the national policy orientation and to the achievement of sustainable development results. The lessons learned from the cooperation under this second CCF are that the achievement of policy impact and sustainability require:

- (a) Continuity in programming and concentration in a tight thematic focus congruent with key national priorities and concerns;

- (b) The continuous forging of new partnerships and alliances with a variety of national and international partners;
- (c) Strong linkages between programme activities; and
- (d) Policy work and advocacy to be backed by concrete demonstration schemes.

The latter are initiated on a small scale with UNDP seed funding, then replicated on a larger scale with other donor resources, adopted as government policy, applied nationally with government resources and eventually mainstreamed within national public management practice by applying a carefully designed exit strategy.

47. The primary objective of the UNDP Country Programme (2006-2009) is to support Bulgaria to use the opportunity of EU membership to meet the 2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and to reach the 2010 Lisbon Agenda targets reflected in the Joint Inclusion Memorandum with the EU. This is achieved through programmes which build national institutional, operational and policy capacities and which reach the most disadvantaged segments of the population and the least developed regions.

48. The programme's interventions focuses on the following thematic areas: (a) social inclusion and local economic development for poverty reduction; (b) good governance for equitable local and regional development; (c) conserving energy and preserving the natural environment for sustainable development. The three thematic areas build on work being done under the second CCF but with greater emphasis on tying programmatic initiatives to the challenges of EU accession. Work focuses at the local and regional levels, particularly in areas with incomes below the national average and in rural areas.

49. The third thematic area supports sustainable management of natural resources, environmental protection and sustainable energy initiatives through interventions aimed at helping Bulgaria to meet its international commitments, thus generating global, national and local environment benefits. In particular, through collaboration with the GEF and other partners, the programme demonstrates environmentally sustainable field models, promotes policy shifts for better compliance with EU environmental standards and strengthens national institutional capacity to integrate the objectives of the three Rio conventions into the development planning process at all levels.

50. This third thematic area includes the promotion of SLM through the support of the establishment of multi-stakeholder mechanisms for the implementation of the National Action Programme under the UNCCD - including capacity building. SLM is also promoted through strengthening the policy and legislation frameworks as well as the institutions with the establishment of a SLM Unit with the MOEW. It is mostly accomplished through the implementation of the SLM project.

4.1.4. Needs of End-Users Beneficiaries

51. The end-users beneficiaries of this SLM project can be grouped into two groups: (1) the government ministries and agencies, which need to address the problem of land degradation as part of their respective mandates such as the MOEW, MOAFS, State Forest Agency (SFA), etc.; and (2) the landowners and land-users. Recognizing that land degradation is becoming a national issue (an estimated 50-60% of the country is affected by land degradation), the SLM project is addressing the main barriers for the sustainable management of the land. As it is assessed in Section 4.1.6, the design of this project is focusing on a "*building block*" approach that is to build the capacity of the critical points within the overall system to manage the land in a sustainable way. This is one of the reason why the SLM project is focusing mainly on putting in place some critical milestones such as the NAP, the Soil Act and the capacity of Government Officials as opposed to focus mostly on (some) landowners and land users; this approach is rated as highly relevant. It is assumed that by having a capacitated system to manage the land sustainably, the next phase should start seeing positive actions at the landowner and land user levels through government sponsored programmes such as the RDP.

52. As it is described in Section 2, land degradation in Bulgaria is due to three main causes: (i) farming were arable lands are severely exploited; (ii) intensive livestock with widespread practice of dumping livestock wastes polluting land and water; and, (iii) forestry with forest exploitation including a striving wood exporting industry. This is also to recognize that the agriculture and forestry sectors are the two main sectors affecting negatively the land. The analyses conducted under the NCSA project indicated also that the barriers to SLM are mostly due to a lack of information/knowledge about land degradation, weak SLM

related policy and legal instruments, limited knowledge about measures to undertake in order to prevent further degradation of the land and lack of economic incentives for landowners and land users to implement the principles of SLM.

53. Furthermore, the sustainable management of land is also negatively affected by the land ownership structure in Bulgaria. Following the land restitution to its original owners after the transition in 1989, there is now a significant fragmentation of land ownership in Bulgaria. The average size of the agricultural plots in the country is 0.6 ha with some differences by regions due to natural conditions and crop structure such as 0.3ha in the Smolyan region and 3.0ha in the Dobrich region. The land fragmentation and the lack of government support resulted in diverse forms of land abandonment. It was estimated in 2004 that 450,000ha of agricultural land were not used for more than three consecutive years (about 9% of the total agricultural land); mostly in mountainous regions due to the collapse of animal breeding and in regions with other natural barriers such as poor quality soils. This fragmentation is also a significant barrier to long-term investments in agriculture, land improvements and efficient use of agricultural machinery; there is a clear need for land consolidation actions.

4.1.5. Synergies with Donor Programs/Projects in Bulgaria and in Region

54. The objective of this project was to build capacity for development and implementation of a coherent land policy. It focused on mainstreaming, institutional and technical capacity building, and establishing financial mechanisms and resource mobilization for sustainable land management. As per the overall UNDP approach, this project provided critical seed funding to develop a better framework for SLM in Bulgaria. Within the context of other donor programmes and projects, the project is highly relevant for the strengthening of SLM in Bulgaria. UNDP brought seed funding to pilot initiatives to arrest land degradation in Bulgaria and to establish SLM practices for the agriculture and forestry sectors. As described in Section 4.1.2 and 4.2.1, the project achievements will now be further mainstreamed, developed and replicated on a larger scale; using other donor resources such as the EU structural adjustment funds and additional government of Bulgaria financial resources.

55. The key programmes and projects, which have (and will have) some synergies with the SLM project, are:

- *Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007-2013*: This programme includes 4 axis of intervention. Axis 2 is associated with the development of agricultural methods consistent with the protection and preservation of the environment, and on compensating the producers in the mountainous and other less favoured areas for keeping their land in good condition, and preventing the abandonment of land in these areas. Sustainable development of the forests will be addressed mainly through improvement of forest resources and restoration of forest potential. Axis 2 includes a series of 5 implementation measures: (1) Natural handicap payments to farmers in mountain areas; (2) Payments to farmers in areas with handicaps, other than mountain areas; (3) Agri-environmental payments; (4) First afforestation of non-agricultural land; (5) Restoring forestry potential and introducing prevention actions. Axis 2 has an indicative budget of 777M euros that includes 637M euros from the EAFRD programme. More than 56% of this budget is to be spent on the agri-environmental payments measure and a further 30% to be spent on “natural handicap payments to farmers in mountain areas. This is viewed as the major programme to mainstream the SLM project achievements (*see Section 4.1.2 for more information on RDP*).
- *Forest Erosion Control Programme*: A new erosion programme is being developed by the SFA and it should be funded by the forestry fund. It is being developed based on the agency’s own experience in forest management and erosion control and some activities conducted with the support of the SLM project such as training workshop on sustainable forest management and small projects to demonstrate adapted best practices for sustainable forest management in Bulgaria. This new programme will also take into consideration the measures included in the recently adopted Soil Act and also the measures indicated in the EU strategy for sustainable forest management. This programme will interface with the RDP (see above), which has an afforestation component (measure 4 of axis 2) and other measures such as forest fire prevention, forest management, and compensation scheme for N2000 sites. It is also viewed as the second best programme to mainstream the SLM project achievements.

- *UNDP/GEF project “Integrating Global Environmental Issues into Bulgaria’s Regional Development Process”*: This project – also implemented by UNDP – started in mid-2006, will terminate mid-2010 and has a total budget of USD 1.5M; including a GEF contribution of USD 0.5M. The project strategy is to promote a proactive integration of global environmental issues into the process of regional and local development, as well as spatial planning, both of which are managed by the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (MORDPW). This will be achieved by developing the capacity of MORDPW and MOEW to integrate global environmental objectives into the regional and local development policies and practices, as well as into spatial planning documents. This project will also be a channel to introduce SLM principles into spatial and development planning.

4.1.6. Internal Project Concept/Design

56. The project concept/design was highly relevant to the implementation of the project. The design elements of the project (project components, partners, project structure, delivery mechanisms, scope and budget) were coherent with the set of expected results (log-frame). The project was well designed and the project document was an excellent “*blue-print*” to implement the project. Based on the interviews, the project document reflected well the intention of the key stakeholders and the good design contributed to the effective implementation of the project (*see Section 4.2.1*).

57. As a consequence of this good design, no changes were made to the project strategic set of expected results (goal, objective and outcomes) over the lifetime of the project; only two minor changes were made to the expected outputs/activities. The table below shows the set of expected results of the SLM project:

Table 3: Set of Project Expected Results

GOAL: To enhance the enabling environment and capacity for arresting land degradation and establishing sustainable land management (SLM) practices in order to contribute to enhancing ecosystem health, integrity, functions and services while promoting sustainable livelihoods in Bulgaria.
PROJECT OBJECTIVE: To build capacity for development and implementation of a coherent land policy. It will focus on mainstreaming, institutional and technical capacity building, and establishing financial mechanisms and resource mobilization for sustainable land management.
OUTCOME 1. Sound land policy and a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework for sustainable land management.
OUTCOME 2. Institutional and technical capacity for sustainable land management and combating desertification strengthened.
OUTCOME 3. Local capacity for land planning and participatory decision-making strengthened.
OUTCOME 4. Resources mobilized for NAP implementation as well as innovative financial mechanisms and economic incentives explored and agreed with farmers and other land users and the key Ministries.

58. The design focussed on the systematic development of capacity for improving SLM in Bulgaria. The approach was that of a “*building block*” approach whereby the project would support the development and implementation of key elements to ensure the enhancement of the enabling environment for arresting land degradation in the country and establish SLM practices in the agriculture and forestry sectors. Through the NCSA process, the main causes for land degradation in Bulgaria were identified as well as the barriers to SLM. The proposed action plan of the NCSA listed a series of initiatives in the SLM area to be implemented as a priority. The SLM project was designed to specifically address these identified barriers and enhance the national enabling environment for SLM.

59. The origin of this project is also an indicator of a strong involvement of stakeholders and a strong ownership of the project by these stakeholders. The original idea of developing/designing a SLM project started in 2003 with the strong leadership of a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) called “*Borrowed Nature*”. This NGO has a strong track record in conducting environmental education with children and other NGOs and SLM became a major theme/focal point in their programme. In collaboration with UNDP, the first idea was to develop a small SLM project to help the government to implement its obligations under the recently ratified UNCCD (2001). The project idea grew in scope and in number of stakeholders involved. A

lot of consensus work (meetings and workshops) was conducted to harmonize views about SLM among the key institutions; often said to be lengthy and difficult. However, after two (2) years of participative work among key stakeholders, the project design was approved and the implementation began in late 2005/early 2006.

60. Over the two-year design phase, the project evolved from a series of practical activities to be implemented on the ground with farmers to a focus on building the important “*blocks*” to enhance the enabling environment for SLM in Bulgaria such as a National Action Plan (NAP) or a Soil Act to provide an adequate legal framework. It was also recognized early in the design to emphasize the mainstreaming of the project achievements within the national institutions; hence the focus on these “*building blocks*”. All key stakeholders agreed that the focus should be on improving the system in place; in order to provide a good platform for the immediate future to implement/mainstream SLM guidelines and practices throughout the country.

61. It was also reported in the approved project document that the design benefited from the SLM guidelines for LDC-SIDS countries. These guidelines, which are the result of lessons learned in different projects, were discussed and adapted to the local situation of Bulgaria.

62. In conclusion the project is highly relevant for Bulgaria to enhance the enabling environment and capacity for arresting land degradation and establishing SLM practices in order to contribute to enhancing ecosystem health, integrity, functions and services while promoting sustainable livelihoods in Bulgaria. It responds very well to the development objectives of Bulgaria and to those of UNDP and GEF in Bulgaria. It was very relevant to the environmental governance framework in place in Bulgaria and played a particularly key role in supporting the emergence of an enabling environment for SLM in the country. The project supported the development of key building blocks for SLM in Bulgaria. The design of the project was also highly relevant for the implementation; it is strongly rooted in the work done by key stakeholders for the development of SLM measures in Bulgaria. Finally, the project meets the objectives of the UNCCD and contributed greatly in helping the Government of Bulgaria to meet its obligations under this convention.

4.2. Project Effectiveness

63. This Section presents the findings on the effectiveness of the project in achieving its expected results; it compares the actual versus the expected results. An overview of the key results achieved by the project is presented, followed by the project contribution to capacity development, the review of any unexpected project achievements and the review of the management of risks and the mitigation measures related to the implementation of the project. These findings are based on a review of project documents and interviews with key informants.

4.2.1. Achievements of Project Expected Outcomes

64. The progress made by the project to achieve its expected outcomes is excellent and it is rated as highly satisfactory. The project enhanced the enabling environment and the capacity for arresting land degradation and establishing SLM practices in Bulgaria. It contributed to the development of a better capacity – particularly within the government of Bulgaria - for the development and implementation of a coherent land policy.

65. The overall review of project achievements versus expected targets (*see Annex 7*) presented in the PIR 2008 (as of February 2008) indicates that the project met – and sometimes exceeded - its set of expected project targets. In term of project outputs, the project delivered what it was supposed to deliver. Bulgaria is now better equipped to implement SLM measures and prevent further land degradation; it has:

- A better land policy and a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework.
- A strengthened institutional and technical capacity for SLM
- A strengthened local capacity for land planning and participatory decision-making
- Adequate resources for the implementation of the soon-to-be-signed NAP; including financial mechanisms and economic incentives promoting SLM to be implemented under the RDP and funded at 80% by the EU and 20% by GOB.

66. The main results of the project achievements can be summarized as follows:

Availability of information on land and SLM in Bulgaria

67. Initially, the project supported a stocktaking exercise to collect information on land quality in Bulgaria. It produced an inventory of the degradation processes of agricultural and forest land soils; and also the degradation of land due to industrial, mining, urban and other activities outside the farming and forestry sectors. It, then, identified options for SLM based on the basis of an integrated land-use planning and land functionality analysis; including the possible conflicts between individual sectors/stakeholders. This knowledge constituted the SLM baseline in Bulgaria and was, since, used by the MOEW and the Executing Environmental Agency (ExEA) to produce the yearly State of Environment Report.

A more cohesive land policy with the related implementation instruments

68. The project supported the development of the National Action Programme (NAP) and its validation. This action plan was completed in 2007 and the project supported the preparation work for the section on the financial resources to implement the plan. This action plan went through a consultative process throughout the relevant ministries; including the ministry of finance, which approved the planned financial resources. All ministries have now signed-off on the NAP and it is now pending for the final decision from the Council of Ministers to approve the plan; which is expected before the summer 2008.

69. In addition, the project reviewed the local planning process and the implementation of the SLM policy at the municipal level. Based on this review, the project produced the “*Practical Guidelines for the Integration of the SLM policy at the Local Level and Within the Municipal Development Plans 2007-2013*”. It also supported the 10 municipalities where the demonstration projects took place to strengthen their Municipal Development Planning (MDP) process; as a result, the 10 MDPs were revised to integrate the SLM policy.

70. A UNCCD National Advisory Committee was established in May 2006 to oversee the national implementation of the UNCCD in Bulgaria. It is functioning and it has met four times so far.

71. A Strategy for capacity building and communication strategy for SLM in Bulgaria was elaborated and utilized successfully. This strategy reviewed the current capacity level in Bulgaria to address land degradation issues, the obstacles and problems for implementing SLM and the strategy to address these capacity gaps and build the required capacity to implement SLM measures in Bulgaria

A comprehensive legal framework in Bulgaria to prevent further land degradation and promote SLM

72. The project supported the development of the Soil Act; which was adopted by the National Assembly and promulgated in the State Gazette on November 6, 2007. In addition to the Soil Act, three regulations related to land management were developed: regulation for reference values, regulation for contaminated sites management and regulation for biodiversity monitoring. These three regulations were developed with the support of the SLM project and were gazetted on February 6, 2007. Finally, following the Soil Act, the project supported the development of “*The 10 National Environment Standards related to Land Use*”; which were approved by the MOAFS. All farmers in Bulgaria need to comply with these standards; particularly by those that apply for specific payments under the RDP. These achievements were confirmed by the respondents to the survey’s perception where 92% said that it was “*entirely true*” or “*partially true*” that the capacity of their organization to develop and adopt legal and strategic documents has been improved.

Survey ²		
Better capacity to develop and adopt legal and strategic documents?		
ET ³	PT	NT
58%	34%	8%

Financial resources available for SLM measures to be implemented at the local level

73. A round table was organized to discuss the mobilization of resources for the implementation of the NAP; 42 representatives of ministries, NGOs and the science community participated to this round table. Two documents were elaborated for the purpose of this meeting: review of the possible financial sources and an inventory of programs and measures and their implementation feasibility. As a result, the NAP (pending

² Survey conducted as part of the Stakeholder Review of the UNDP/GEF project “*Capacity Building for Sustainable Land Management in Bulgaria*” (see Section 6, paragraph #155)

³ ET: Entirely True; PT: Partially True; NT: Not True

for approval) has currently a realistic financial plan approved by a directive from the Ministry of finance, ensuring the total financing of the implementation of the NAP.

74. As part of the mobilization of resources to implement SLM measures in Bulgaria, the project worked closely with the MOAFS to introduce the SLM principles and measures and the payment methodology into the Axis #2 package of the RDP that is financed at 80% by the EU and 20% by the GOB. As a result, SLM measures will be implemented and financed under the Axis #2 of the RDP for the period 2007-2013 (*see Section 4.1.2*).

A stronger institutional capacity and staff with better skills and knowledge about SLM

75. The project also supported the development capacity of staff in key institutions such as National Agricultural Advisory Service (NAAS), Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water (RIEW), SFA and other agencies related to MOEW and MOAFS. A total of 5 training modules were elaborated (overview of SLM, SLM of pastures and meadows, soil acidification, soil erosion in agricultural lands and combating soil erosion in the forestry sector). A total of 205 stakeholder representatives were trained on SLM; including 80 from MOAFS and SFA and 40 from MOEW.

Survey		
Better capacity of the organization to develop and upgrade plans and programs?		
ET	PT	NT
48%	50%	2%

The survey confirms these capacity gains; 48% of the respondents to the survey said that it is “*entirely true*” that their organization has a better capacity to develop and upgrade plans and programs and another 50% said it was “*partially true*”.

76. Five (5) info-packages on the topics of good agricultural practices, sustainable management of pastures and meadows, soil erosion and soil acidification, sustainable agriculture were elaborated and distributed to RAAS, RIEW, farmers and municipalities.

77. A Master’s Program in SLM was elaborated (in six months) and accredited by the Agrarian University of Plovdiv. It is a one-year programme with 60 credits (45 for courses and 15 for thesis) with 9 mandatory modules. So far 11 students obtained this new Master’s degree in SLM. An educational module on SLM was elaborated and integrated in 16 professional secondary schools of agriculture and forestry. A total of 33 teachers and 908 students were trained with the use of this module.

78. The project supported the establishment of an SLM unit within the MOEW. However, as of the date of this final evaluation, the unit was not created yet and its formal creation by the government is not as certain as the approval of the NAP (*see Section 4.2.4*). A process is on going; the Minister of Environment and Water approved an official memorandum; and the memorandum is now at the Prime Minister’s office for its final approval.

A greater awareness at the local level by farmers (land users) and demonstrated best practices

79. A total of 618 farmers were provided with advices from RAAS extension services on local SLM options and how to apply for available funding schemes; particularly under the current RDP.

80. In addition, the project supported the implementation of 10 demonstration projects in 10 municipalities to demonstrate the practical implementation of SLM options. Information on these best practices was disseminated through local settlements within the areas where the demonstrations took place. These demonstrations included:

- *Sustainable management of pastures and meadows through rising of productivity and improving of botanical contents and pasture quality in the Municipality of Ardino*: the objective was to raise the productivity, improve the botanical contents and pasture quality through applying surface agro-technical measures, which will not affect the existing bio-diversity.
- *Sustainable management of degraded lands through re-cultivation with organic waste compost in the Municipality of Boichinovtsi*: the objective was to utilize the livestock, farming and communal waste of plant origin for obtaining high-quality organic manure-compost from biomass waste and its further use for restoring degraded lands on the territory of the Municipality of Boichinovtsi.
- *Sustainable land management regarding livestock breeding through constructing environment-friendly common village dunghill (manure-heap) in the Municipality of Boliarovo*: the objective

was to build a regulated manure storage facility with a site for composting and storing manure. The manure storage facility was to serve the owners of livestock in the town of Bolyarovo.

- *Sustainable land management regarding livestock breeding through constructing environment-friendly common village dunghill (manure-heap) in the Municipality of Dalgopol*: the objective was to build a regulated manure storage facility with a site for composting and storing manure. The manure storage facility was to serve part of the farms having the highest concentration of livestock in the town of Dalgopol.
- *Sustainable land management through establishing and/or restoring field defence strips in the Municipality of General Toshevo*: the objective was to build and maintain protective belts on the territory of the municipality of General Toshevo as a means of decreasing the risk of wind erosion and meeting the needs of the local community for wood and other forest products.
- *Sustainable management of pastures and meadows through rising of productivity and improving of botanical contents and pasture quality in the Municipality of Ihtiman*: the objective was to increase productivity, improve the botanical contents and pasture quality through applying surface agro-technical measures, which will not affect the existing bio-diversity.
- *Sustainable management of eroded forest lands through conducting anti-erosion forestations on bare areas in the Municipality of Ivailovgrad*: the objective was to renew and extend traditions in forestry through afforestation of barren terrains (50 decares) aimed at limiting soil erosion in the village of Belopolyane, Municipality of Ivailovgrad.
- *Sustainable management of watered lands through establishing and/or restoring watering facilities in the Municipality of Knezha*: the objective was to reconstruct cell sluices 1 and 2 and construct a control observatory for monitoring the water level of the dam lake “Vurbitsa” in the town of Knezha with the purpose of restoring the facility.
- *Sustainable management of eroded agricultural lands through implementing agro-technical anti-erosion activities in the Municipality of Sungurlare*: the objective was to apply agro-technical and anti-erosion measures to grazing grounds of 340,000 m² with an inclination of 5 to 8% on the territory of the village of Tchernitsa; in order to decrease erosion processes and improve the existing biodiversity.
- *Sustainable management of low productive agricultural lands through forestation in the Municipality of Suhindol (agro-forestry)*: the objective was to afforest low-productive lands with high percentage of erosion.

81. It is to be noted that the project allocated less resources on outcome 4 than planned (*Resources mobilized for NAP implementation as well as innovative financial mechanisms and economic incentives explored and agreed with farmers and other land users and the key Ministries*). The identification of the RDP and its high level of resources did not necessitate the expected investment in this area by the project. The project ensured that SLM principles and measures were introduced in the RDP; and with the remaining budget it supported five additional demonstration projects.

4.2.2. Contribution to Capacity Development

82. The project contributed greatly to the capacity development of the SLM players. By design, capacity development was one of the major focuses of the SLM project and this contribution is rated as highly satisfactory. In 2006, the project developed a “*Focused and Result-Oriented Strategy on Capacity Building for SLM*”. This strategy defines capacity building as “*the actions for increasing the ability of people, institutions, organizations and systems to accept and implement decisions and to carry out activities (functions) in the most efficient, expedient and sustainable way*”. It recognizes three levels of capacity: individual, institutional and system where actions can/should be implemented. The strategy reviewed the current capacity level in Bulgaria to address land degradation issues, the obstacles and problems for implementing SLM and identified the result-oriented objectives to address these capacity gaps and build the required capacity to implement SLM measures in Bulgaria. Respondents to the survey confirmed the development of capacity; 88% said that the project raised their knowledge on SLM and 58% said that the project raised their skills on SLM.

Survey				
Obtained new knowledge on SLM?				
ET ⁴	MT	PT	ST	NT
36%	52%	12%	0%	0%
Obtained new skills on SLM?				
24%	34%	32%	10%	0%

⁴ ET: Entirely True; MT: Mostly True; PT: Partially True; ST: Slightly True; NT: Not True

83. The capacity development approach used by the project was holistic and the emphasis was placed on the importance of increasing the capacity of the entire system related to the development and implementation of SLM measures; in particular through policy and legislation reviews, institutional strengthening and training of staff; with interventions at local, regional and national levels. This approach was confirmed, for instance, by the respondents to the survey where 90% said that their organization has a better capacity now to ensure that financial and technical resources be allocated to SLM issues. As described in the Section 4.2.1 above, the project achievements included:

Survey		
Better capacity of the organization to ensure financial and technical resources to address SLM issues?		
ET	PT	NT
48%	42%	10%

- Greater availability of information on land and SLM in Bulgaria
- A more cohesive land policy with the related implementation instruments
- A comprehensive legal framework in Bulgaria to prevent further land degradation and promote SLM
- Financial resources available for SLM measures to be implemented at the local level
- A stronger institutional capacity and staff with better skills and knowledge about SLM
- A greater awareness at the local level by farmers (land users) and demonstrated best practices

84. This holistic approach to develop the capacity of a system is very much in line with the global acceptance that capacity development encompasses the acquisition of skills and knowledge for individuals, the improvements of institutional structures, mechanisms and procedures and finally the strengthening of an enabling environment with adequate policies and laws. It is recognized that capacity is an aggregate outcome of a series of conditions, intangible assets and relationships that are part of an organisation or system and that are distributed at various levels⁵:

- Individuals have personal abilities and attributes or competencies that contribute to the performance of the system;
- Organisations and broader systems have a broad range of collective attributes, skills, abilities and expertise called capabilities which can be both 'technical' (e.g. policy analysis, natural resource assessment, financial resource management) and 'social-relational' (e.g. mobilising and engaging actors to collaborate towards a shared purpose across organisational boundaries, creating collective meaning and identity, managing the tensions between collaboration and competition);
- Capacity refers to the overall ability of a system to perform and sustain itself.

85. The national capacity for implementing SLM measures in Bulgaria was reviewed by the Evaluators; using the recently developed UNDP/UNEP/GEF Capacity Development (CD) Scorecard (*see Annex 8*). This scorecard was developed within the context of the GEF Strategic Approach to Enhance Capacity Building and the new GEF Results-based Management Framework. This framework includes five capacity results needed in a particular area for a functional/operational managerial system; it includes a set of 15 indicators to monitor the progress of capacity development. As a monitoring and evaluation instrument, the main value of this tool would be in comparing the ratings obtained at project inception, mid-course and project end. It would allow an assessment of a project contribution(s) toward the development of the related national capacity.

86. Nevertheless, at project end the review of these five capacity results and the 15 indicators provided a national score of 39 out of a maximum of 45 (*see Annex 8*). It indicates that at project end there is a good capacity in place for a managerial system to develop and implement SLM measures in Bulgaria. The score of each capacity results is as follows:

- Capacities for engagement: 7 out of 9
- Capacities to generate, access and use information and knowledge: 12 out of 15
- Capacities for policy and legislation development: 8 out of 9
- Capacities for management and implementation: 6 out of 6
- Capacities to monitor and evaluate: 6 out of 6

87. These national scores cannot be compared with earlier scores since it is the first time this instrument is

⁵ See the study on “Capacity, Change and Performance” conducted by the European Center for Development Policy Management (ECDPM); which explored the notion of capacity and capacity development (<http://www.ecdpm.org/>).

used (this scorecard was developed by UNDP and UNEP in 2007-2008). Therefore, measuring national progress through the comparison of national scores taken at different points in time cannot be done and measuring the contribution of the SLM project toward the development of this national capacity is limited. Nonetheless, the review indicated that project activities targeted the three main sectors identified as causing land degradation in Bulgaria and addressed the main barriers to the application of SLM principles in Bulgaria (*see Section 4.1.4*). Through its activities, the project contributed mainly to the development of four capacity results: engagement; generate, access and use information and knowledge; policy and legislation development; and, management and implementation. The focus on these four capacity areas contributed to the development of the capacity of the management system related to the development and implementation of SLM measures in Bulgaria. The main “*building blocks*” are now in place for GOB to implement SLM measures nationally.

4.2.3. Unexpected Project Achievements

88. As described in Section 4.2.1, the project delivered the project outcomes that was expected and described in the project document. The SLM project was effective in delivering what it was supposed to deliver and there are not really any unexpected achievements worth noting. Not all activities and outputs were specifically planned in the project document but the activities implemented were all geared toward the achievements of the four expected outcomes as identified in the log-frame at the design phase.

4.2.4. Risk and Assumptions / Risk Mitigation Management

89. The management of risks and their mitigation measures is rated as satisfactory. An initial list of project assumptions and the associated risks was identified at the design phase and was part of the project document; there are:

- The land degradation measures added to development plans present not only global but also clear national benefits thus attracting the interest of local authorities. The risk of this assumption not holding is low, because of the strong emphasis of the project on capacity building and awareness raising.
- The possibility of delays in the formal endorsement of the NAP if major changes in high level staff at the MOEW and MOAFS take place after the parliamentary elections of mid 2005. However, it is expected that the final draft of the NAP will be completed in time to meet the Bonn Declaration Deadline of 2005.
- A key assumption is that the GOB commitment to the implementation of the NAP for SLM continues after project termination date.
- The MOEW and the MOAFS collaborate to ensure SLM principles are an integral part of the Act and the Code; the risk of this assumption not holding is considered to be low, as the project will work with both ministries to build their capacities.
- The introduction of new mechanisms to EU policies are feasible and the Government is willing to incorporate global environment concerns into EU policies.

90. These assumptions/risks were reviewed and refined during the inception phase and then adequately monitored during the implementation phase. Each Project Implementation Review (PIR) report includes a review of these risks as well as a rating of their critical status.

Table 4: List of Project Risks

Risk	Critical Status
1. The NAP for SLM does not presents a clear set of feasible actions with realistic budgets and defined responsibilities for implementation.	N
2. Local authorities do not maintain the increased human and capital capacities after project termination date.	N
3. The increased capacity of the extension services has not benefited local stakeholders (farmers) by the end of the project	N
4. The land degradation measures added to development plans do not present global nor clear national benefits attracting the interest of local authorities.	N
5. The GOB commitment to the implementation of the NAP for SLM does not continues after project termination	N

Risk	Critical Status
date	
6. By the end of the project MOEW has not institutionalized an SLM unit as part of its structure.	Y
7. Adoption of the Soil Act and promulgating in the State Gazette is not achieved by the end of the project	N
8. The MOEW and the MOAFS does not collaborate to ensure SLM principles are an integral part of the Soil Conservation Act, NAEP and the Code.	N
9. The elections for local authorities and the changed local administration in the end of 2007 rejects/does not approve the improved MDP with the integrated SLM options	N
10. The achieved results (of activities/ initiatives) are not sustainable after the project termination	N

N = No; Y = Yes

91. Two comments are to be made from this list (1) despite listed originally, the risk of the NAP not being approved was not kept as a risk subsequently in the PIRs; and, (2) the risk of not having an SLM unit within MOEW by the end of the project was assessed as critical; the only critical risk associated with the implementation of the SLM project.

92. Based on the review, the risk of the NAP not being approved is rated as low. This action plan was completed in 2007 and the project supported the preparation work for the section on the financial resources to implement the plan. This action plan went through a consultative process throughout the relevant ministries; including the ministry of finance, which approved the planned financial resources. All ministries have now signed-off on the NAP and it is now waiting for a final decision from the Council of Ministers to approve the plan. According to most interviews, there seem to be no technical issues for the government to approve this plan; it is just a matter of time before it is approved at the political level. It is anticipated to be approved before the summer 2008. However, the name, structure and process of this NAP is slightly different from the recommendations described in the Soil Act – particularly Article 21, 22, 23 and 24. This is not viewed by key MOEW Officers as a potential bottleneck but somehow, these differences will have to be bridged at one point in time for the GOB to be in line with the proper implementation of the Soil Act.

93. Regarding the establishment of an SLM unit within MOEW – which is also an expected output of the UNDP Country Programme 2006-09 – the chance of this unit to be created in the near future is not as certain as the final approval of the NAP. A process has been under way within the MOEW to create this SLM unit. The current Minister of Environment and Water fully supports the establishment of this SLM unit and there is political will within the MOEW to concretize this unit. The justification of this unit is within the Environmental Protection Law, which stipulates the job classifications for all environmental sectors; including soil protection. However, after being part of the first draft Soil Act, the need for an SLM unit to coordinate SLM activities within the MOEW was removed from the final Soil Act. The creation of the unit was said to be an internal administrative procedure to the MOEW and not a legal procedure. Nevertheless, a process has been engaged to create this unit. An official memo from the Directorate of Underground Resources (from MOEW) was sent to the Minister of Environment and Water for his signature before it was sent to the Prime Minister for his approval. This memo describes the SLM unit (2 Ministry staffs) and its functions as the national coordination point for SLM in Bulgaria. Once the Prime Minister approves this unit it can be implemented/established by the MOEW. Considering the government changes underway during the evaluation mission to Bulgaria, no future timetable was possible for the establishment of this unit. If this unit is not established soon, there is a risk of creating a vacuum after May 2008 and potentially lose some momentum if no coordination alternative is put in place. The existing “Champions” in the various key institutions may not be enough to ensure the continuity of the project achievements and the need for this enhanced enabling environment to be scaled up through the implementation of SLM measures at the local level.

4.3. Project Efficiency

94. This Section presents the findings on the efficiency of the project in utilizing/mobilizing its resources. It reviews the overall management approach and the use of adaptive management, the financial management and its financial status, the technical assistance, the delivery mechanisms, the stakeholders’ participation and

the monitoring approach to measure the progress of the project.

4.3.1. Project Management Approach and Tools / Adaptive Management

95. The project has been well managed and the project management team used an adaptive management approach extensively to secure project outcomes while maintaining adherence to the overall project design; it is rated as highly satisfactory. The review demonstrated that the excellent project document was much used as a “blue print” by the implementing team and the log frame has been the basic strategy for guiding the implementation. The interviews also indicated that the management approach and the use of the project document as a guiding implementation strategy has been greatly helped by the fact that this document reflects well the intention of the key Stakeholders (see Section 4.1.6). Due to their early involvement, there was a strong ownership of the design of the project and its implementation (see Section 4.3.7).

96. The project was implemented using a Results-Based-Management (RBM) approach. The project document included a results-based log-frame, the project management team implemented the project on the basis of results to be achieved and the progress reporting was focusing on the set of expected and achieved results.

97. The management procedures to procure the few project assets and equipment and to recruit short-term consultants followed the existing UNDP rules and procedures to be applied to project using the NEX mode. All project transactions were promptly recorded and properly classified; showing good internal controls mechanisms to manage and control project resources. Financial resources were also used prudently and overall the project has been very cost-effective.

98. The adaptability and flexibility of the project were viewed by most interviewees as key ingredients in the success of the project. The project management team constantly adapted its work plan in function of the realities of Stakeholders and their availability and also taking into consideration the overall administrative and political agendas before “pushing” a particular piece of legislation or a policy through the system. Flexibility was said by few interviewees to be one of the key elements (if not the major one) explaining the success of the project. This flexibility was described as the ability of the project management team to adapt to Stakeholders’ processes, timing and types of initiatives to be supported.

4.3.2. Financial Planning and Management

99. The accounting and financial system used by the project management team is rated as satisfactory. The project was executed using the NEX modality. All payments were processed through UNDP corporate account. Request for direct payments were certified by the Project Manager and approved by UNDP and recorded in the corporate UNDP ERP system.

100. The project used the UN ATLAS system as its accounting and financial system. It produced accurate and timely financial information for the project team. The system was set-up by Activity (which can be aggregated at the outcome level (4)) and each Activity was sub-divided into line items such as local consultant fees, travel tickets, printing and publications, utilities, etc.

101. Based on the information reviewed by the evaluation team, as of the end of the project (end of May 2008) it is estimated that 100% of the UNDP-GEF budget of USD 1,003,112 will be spent. The breakdown of the project expenditures is presented in the table below.

Table 5: UNDP/GEF Fund Disbursement Status ^(*)

Item	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	Total	% of Total	Budget	% Spent
Outcome 1	2,806	62,639	7,444	2,865	75,754	8	95,128	80
Outcome 2	81,686	189,331	241,066	8,917	521,000	52	583,820	89
Outcome 3		2,546	142,623	10,400	155,569	16	101,852	153

Item	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	Total	% of Total	Budget	% Spent
Outcome 4			1,748		1,748	0	14,890	12
PMU	41,951	65,571	81,779	59,740	249,041	25	207,422	120
Total	126,444	320,087	474,660	81,922	1,003,112	100	1,003,112	100

(*) Source: Data obtained from the SLM Project Team

102. The figures presented above indicate some variances between the actual project expenditures and the original budget presented in the project document. The main explanation is a shift of financial resources from outcome 1, 2 and 4 to outcome 3 and to the cost of the PMU. This latter had a budget for monitoring and evaluation, which underestimated the actual costs of both - mid-term and final - evaluations. Outcome 3 includes the (10) demonstration projects, which cost more than the anticipated 5 planned demonstration projects. Finally, less project resources were used for outcome 1, 2 and 4 due mostly to some related legislation work that started prior to the start of the project (which was delayed) and the change of focus of outcome 4; which instead of focusing on identifying new financial schemes it was decided to focus on how assisting stakeholders better accessing Bulgarian funding initiatives under the EU structural funds.

103. The project has been audited annually and the last audit covered the year 2006 – the 2007 audit will be completed later in 2008. The auditor's reports stated that the financial schedules of the project presented fairly the expenditures of the project – including the cash position; in accordance with the accounting instructions of UNDP. The audit also reviewed the recruitment procedures (from UNDP) and the procurement process of assets and equipment; and both were said to be adhering to the UNDP procedures.

4.3.3. Fund Leveraging / Co-financing

104. The capacity of the project to leverage funds to co-finance project activities is rated as satisfactory. The total amount of co-financing pledged at the design phase was USD 12.2M. The breakdown amounts were supported by co-financing letters from the MOEW, MOAFS and UNDP. It is reported in the PIR 2008 (end of February 2008) that all the pledged co-financing amounts (USD 12.2M) will be disbursed (100%) by the end of the project (May 31, 2008). The table below indicates the breakdown of this co-financing:

Table 6: Co-financing from Project Partners (*)

Partner	Initial Budget (US\$)	Actual(*) (US\$)	% Spent
NAAS	1,536,000	1,536,000	100
MOEW Cash	5,724,200	5,724,200	100
MOEW In-kind	307,200	307,200	100
EU-SAPARD (through MOAFS)	4,270,000	4,270,000	100
UNDP TRAC (cash)	370,000	370,000	100
Total (US\$)	12,207,400	12,207,400	100

(*) Source: Project Document and UNDP-PIR 2008 (As of the end of February 2008).

105. The main contributions represent the strong commitment of MOEW and MOAFS to the SLM project. It also demonstrates the strong integration of the project within the mechanisms and procedures of both ministries; whereby the project achievements are integrated within the mandate and work plan of each ministry. The project achievements contributed to the development of major ministry programmes such as the RDP by integrating SLM principles and guidelines; hence this strong collaboration with these two ministries and the reflection of this cooperation into the total co-financing amount.

4.3.4. Quality of Technical Assistance / Use of National Capacity

106. A highly successful small project team composed of two staffs implemented the project: a Project Manager and a Project Assistant. The Project also provided short-term consultants using a mix of international consultants and national consultants. Overall, the quality of technical assistance used by the project is rated as highly satisfactory.

107. Out of 65 different short-term assignments supported by the project, only one was contracted internationally (11% of the total short-term consulting budget), all the other assignments were conducted by national consultants. Each short-term assignment was carefully prepared with Stakeholders and timed to maximize its effectiveness.

108. The two permanent positions were paid by the UNDP/GEF budget as regular project staff hired to manage the project. However, the case of the SLM Project Manager is somehow unique to this project. At the beginning of the project, a normal recruitment process managed by the key Stakeholders started to recruit a Project Manager for the SLM project. Faced with limited skill sets of all potential candidates, the recruitment process was reviewed and restarted. This time around, a Senior Public Officer from the ExEA applied for the position and was selected and hired as the SLM Project Manager. Therefore, following the open recruitment process, the project was finally managed by the Head of the Monitoring of Land, Biodiversity and Protected Area Department from the ExEA; who took un-paid sabbatical time from her agency to manage the SLM project. Moreover, as of June 1, 2008 (end of project), the Project Manager (Ms. Todorova) will return to her same position as Head of the Department at ExEA; a key stakeholder position related to SLM implementation.

109. This set-up has been highly successful for the SLM project and will contribute greatly to its long-term impact (*see Section 4.4.1*). The review indicates that the high achievements of the project are due in a large part to the quality and seniority of the Project Manager in place. Moreover, the fact that the Project Manager will return to her key position within the ExEA is also providing additional guarantees for the long-term sustainability of the project achievements (*see Section 4.5*). It is also worth noting that this Senior position (Head of Department) within ExEA is reporting to the Director of the Monitoring Directorate of the ExEA, which reports to the Executive Director of the Environmental Agency.

4.3.5. Project Delivery Mechanisms / Partnerships

110. The project delivery mechanisms were well defined in the project document and were implemented as planned; it is rated as highly satisfactory. UNDP was the GEF implementing agency, MOEW was the national implementing partner and MOAFS (including NAAS) was an official project partner. MOEW appointed a National Project Director (NPD) to oversee the implementation of the project and represent the ministry for day-to-day project decision-making. A PMU – headed by the Project Manager – was set up at MOEW to carry day-to-day project activities and ensure that the implementation is done in compliance with the approved project document and work plans. The Project Manager regularly consulted the NPD and reported to UNDP.

111. Two management bodies were created to oversee project progress: a Project Steering Committee (PSC) and an Advisory Board. The PSC included representatives from MOEW (Chairperson), MOAFS, NAAS, SFA and UNDP and the Project Manager acted as the Secretary to the PSC. The PSC was the project decision-making body; it met on average twice a year to assess project progress and endorsed the project annual work plans. The Advisory Board was set up as a consultative body to serve as a platform for information dissemination to a broad array of SLM Stakeholders such as government ministries and agencies, research institutions, NGOs, landowners, land users and representatives from the UNCCD National Coordination Committee. It met only once (January 2007) with the participation of more than 100 Stakeholders.

112. Most of the project activities were delivered through partnerships with relevant institutions; the project did not conduct project activities but supported activities conducted by project partners. Each partnership was the object of an agreement between the project and the partners (MOU or contracts) detailing the purpose of the agreement, the roles and responsibilities of each party and the resources to be mobilized for

each particular activity. For instance, the development of the Master programme on SLM at the University of Plovdiv was done by university staff with the support of the project; the same is true for the erosion maps produced by the Soil Institute investigating the potential risks from wind and water erosion. Through these partnerships, numerous activities were supported by a small project team (2 people). It used the project resources and the partnership approach as levers to multiply the impact of the project and achieve an excellent cost effectiveness of project resources. The support provided to partners included the provision of technical assistance, the payment of some discreet activity costs and/or the hiring of short-term consultants to provide particular expertise.

4.3.6. Roles, Capacity and Efficiency of UNDP-CO

113. As the GEF implementing agency of the project, the efficiency of the UNDP-CO in supporting the implementation of the SLM project is rated as satisfactory. It provided project management support to the project implementation team including financial management and overseeing of expenditures to ensure proper use of GEF resources, project evaluation, reporting and results-based project monitoring. UNDP CO provided support in disbursing efficiently the project resources, as well as support for applying the UNDP procedures for procurement and recruitment. Most interviewees recognized UNDP's comparative advantage in delivering technical assistance, in emphasizing participatory decision-making, in addressing environmental issues, and in securing environmental financing as key factors contributing to an effective project management support.

114. As part of UNDP corporate project management method, it is worth noting the emphasis of UNDP-CO to support the approach with a strong focus on capacity development and the sharing of project control with other PSC members. UNDP/GEF provided the necessary key project resources to be spent in accordance with the standard UNDP national execution guidelines but shared the decision-making process with the Bulgarian partners for the use of these resources. The sharing of project control provided a certain level of flexibility - controlled within the UNDP national execution guidelines - which in turn resulted in a very cost-effective project responding to critical needs to implement SLM principles and practices in Bulgaria. The result of this approach contributed to effective and sustainable initiatives.

4.3.7. Country Ownership / Stakeholder Participation

115. The stakeholder participation and their ownership of the project are excellent. Based on the interviews and observations, the project achievements are "owned" by the relevant Stakeholders. They benefited from the project support but they also put some of their own resources. The results are shared with UNDP but this strong ownership by the custodians of each project achievement should lead to long-term positive impacts and sustainability of these achievements for SLM in Bulgaria. This country ownership is rated as highly satisfactory.

Survey		
Contributed to the formation of a professional SLM community in Bulgaria?		
ET	PT	NT
66%	34%	0%
Active coordination among national and local institutions?		
62%	36%	2%

116. The involvement of Stakeholders started early in the design of the project. Initially, this project emerged from ideas promoted by an NGO "Borrowed Nature" in collaboration with UNDP (see Section 4.1.6). Through a comprehensive participation process, the project design evolved toward a strong focus on building capacity of key SLM players and the support of the development and implementation of key policy and legal instruments. The design phase was also a major consensus-building phase contributing to the strong country ownership. The key SLM Stakeholders in Bulgaria are implementing project activities that are responding to identified critical needs.

117. To illustrate this consensus building, we can take the example of questions asked at the project Advisory Board meeting. In order to probe the views and provide feedback on the best focus and approach for the project, four questions were asked to the participants: Was the approach successfully selected? Was the approach appropriately followed? Was enough attention paid to the important/key elements? Were the national specifics taken into consideration? The discussions that followed contributed to this consensus building and the harmonization of views about SLM in Bulgaria. It also contributed to a strong participation of Stakeholders throughout the implementation of the project. This is also confirmed by the survey where 66% of respondents said that it is "entirely true" that the project contributed to the formation of a

professional SLM community in Bulgaria and another 34% said that it was “*partially true*”. The same survey indicates that 98% of respondents said that it was “*entirely true*” or “*partially true*” that there is now a more active coordination among national and local institutions.

118. Participation of Stakeholders was also a key element in the design of the project. The approved project document includes a Section on Stakeholder Involvement, supplemented by an annex. It explains how the Stakeholders and beneficiaries were identified during the design phase and what the mechanisms are to maintain the Stakeholder involvement during the implementation of the project. The identification of Stakeholders were conducted using the set of criteria presented below:

This project brought us together!
Senior Researcher/Lecturer

- Vulnerability to problems stemming from unsustainable land management (especially for local level entities),
- Capacity for input into resolving issues of unsustainable land management (at all levels),
- Existing and proved experience in the subject matter (for those who might participate in making land policy more sustainable),
- Experience in past and present projects linked to SLM,
- Need for wide sectoral representation (scientific sector, decision makers, land-users, farmers) in identification of threats and problem-solving opportunities.

119. Finally, the review indicates that in addition to the strong involvement of Stakeholders during the design and implementation phases, the project was implemented by a “*team of Champions*”. Over time the project developed a network of key Stakeholders (*the Champions*), that were highly motivated and dedicated to the SLM objectives in Bulgaria; often going beyond the call of duty to get the job done. They championed the project initiatives in their respective organizations and this group of Stakeholders - as an informal network - should continue to have an impact on SLM in Bulgaria over the long-term.

4.3.8. Monitoring Approach and Progress Reporting

120. The monitoring of the project and the progress reporting was done according to UNDP and GEF procedures; it is rated as satisfactory. The project document includes a Section on monitoring and evaluation as well as an annex listing the M&E instruments to be used to monitor project progress. The Project Manager had the responsibility to monitor project progress and reported to the PSC and UNDP; including any potential variances in the progress of implementing the project.

121. The project was well monitored and included a multi-layer reporting system that is summarized below:

- An ***Inception report*** was produced at the end of the inception phase and discussed with Stakeholders in October 2005. It summarized the project start-up phase (August to December 2005), reviewed the key issues and some related recommendations and detailed the project work plan and budget for the first year (2005-2006).
- ***Annual Work Plans*** were produced once a year with the corresponding budget for the year. They were presented to UNDP-CO and MOEW before being endorsed by the PSC.
- Brief ***Operational monthly and quarterly reports*** were produced regularly, stating the major accomplishments of the past period and the plan for the next period.
- The Project Manager produced ***Annual Reports*** and in collaboration with UNDP-CO completed ***Project Implementation Review (PIR)*** reports (3 PIRs). These reports followed the UNDP/GEF guidelines and are a good instrument to review the implementation of the project, the risks and the progress against the set of performance indicators. These reports also included a section “IX - *Project Contribution to GEF Strategic Targets in OP 15*”, which is a technical review of the project assessing the project contribution toward the GEF strategic targets in the SLM area.

122. The project progress is monitored/measured against a comprehensive set of indicators, which were identified during the design phase and revised during the inception phase. There are:

Table 7: List of Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator	
Objective:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By the end of the project at least 30 staff in the MOEW with in-house capacities to provide policy advice on SLM and on monitoring of policy implementation.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By the end of project, at least 35 staff in the MOAFS with in-house capacities to provide satisfactory policy advice on soil degradation/SLM issues at the municipal level.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 3 pieces of legislation on soil conservation and agricultural practices that minimize soil losses passed and approved before the end of the project
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources committed for implementation of NAP covering at least 90% of resources needed for the first 3 years of NAP implementation.
Outcome 1:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A comprehensive and technically high quality stocktaking Baseline Report elaborated including also options for sustainable land management and combat desertification
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A NAP completed by the 10th month of the project and formal adoption of the NAP by the government before the end of project
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Soil Conservation Act developed and approved by the 12th month of the project
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Code of Good Farming Practices developed and approved by month 12th of the project
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NAEP approved by end of project
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 2 brochures published before enforcing of the two documents
Outcome 2:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 35% of the 28 regional extension services of the MOAFS and 15 RIEWs with capacity to provide informed advice on sustainable land management to target municipalities by the 12th month of the project.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 70 staff from the MOEW, MRDPW and MOAFS trained on sustainable land management, application of economic instruments and other agri-environmental schemes, by the end of the project.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The improved model of water erosion and results used by ExEA for reporting to MOEW, included in the Integrated River Basin Management Plans by the 18th month of the project
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised "National Annual Report on the State of Environment" by the end of project
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Advisory Committee for UNCCD established by the 10th month of the project
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training and Education for SLM strengthened through design and implementation of education components in secondary schools and master program
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate extension messages and packages, incorporating SLM implementation and monitoring principles developed, through a participatory approach to farmers and land users
Outcome 3:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 4 river basin management plans contain measures for ensuring sustainable land management by 18th month of the project
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 5 instances of public hearings or similar participatory discussions of municipal land use plans by the end of the project
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 5 municipal plans revised by the end of the project.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participatory mechanisms and procedures for the land planning in the framework of municipal development plans are adopted by at least 10 municipalities by the end of project
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 600 farmers and land users benefit from the newly capacitated extension services and RIEW by the end of the project
Outcome 4:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources committed for implementation of the NAP cover at least 90% of resources needed for the first 3 years of implementation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposals/recommendations developed for introduction of at least two new finance schemes/support models in landscapes where local farming/livestock and other types of economic activity are beneficial for the preservation of landscape integrity ecosystem health

123. These indicators were reviewed by the mid-term Evaluation (July 2007) and assessed as being weak. *"The objective level indicators are not clearly linked to the project's framework. It is not always clear*

“why” the project is pursuing particular activities and what the intended result is or how the activities undertaken will specifically result in the achievement of the project’s development and/or immediate objectives”. Despite understanding the comments from the mid-term assessment, we also need to take into account the focus of this project on capacity development – including its related implementation principles such as partnerships, participatory process, shared decision-making, etc. – and the well-known complexity to monitor this capacity development initiatives.

124. A worldwide *“Study on Capacity, Change and Performance”* conducted by the European Center for Development Policy Management⁶ (based in Maastricht, Netherlands), demonstrated the difficulty in defining what is capacity and capacity development and how to monitor and evaluate these initiatives. *“.... Monitoring systems tended to focus on a wide variety of issues such as performance or general management but to be uncertain about what the monitoring of capacity development would actually entail. ... Most participants in the field were also uncertain about what data gathering techniques would work best for such a task given the operational constraints within which they work. And national participants were frequently unconvinced about the added value of such work”*⁷.

125. Nevertheless, despite some difficulties to understand why the project supported some activities and what was the link with the overall project strategy, it seems evident that these distinct activities were all part of the overall project strategy that delivered very cost-effective results, which enhanced the enabling environment and capacity for arresting land degradation and establishing SLM practices in Bulgaria. The critical building blocks for the implementation of SLM practices in Bulgaria are now being put in place.

126. One project performance indicator that is not part of the list above is the creation of the SLM unit. Considering that it is also an output of the UNDP country programme, it should be part of the list. However, despite not being an indicator of project performance, the creation of the SLM unit was identified as a critical risk (see Section 4.2.4) and was constantly monitored and reported by the Project Manager.

4.4. Project Impacts

127. This section discussed the progress made so far toward the achievement of the objective of the project and the likelihood that the project achievements will have a long-term impact on SLM strategies in Bulgaria.

4.4.1. Potential to Achieve Long Term Project Goal and Objectives

128. There is a good potential for the project to achieve its long-term goal and objective; it is rated as highly satisfactory. The goal of the project is to enhance the enabling environment and capacity for arresting land degradation and establishing sustainable land management practices so as to contribute to enhancing ecosystem health, integrity, functions and services while promoting sustainable livelihoods in Bulgaria. Its objective is to build the capacity for development and implementation of a coherent land policy. The project was to focus on mainstreaming, capacity building and mobilization of resources and financial mechanisms for SLM. As discussed in Section 4.2.1, the achievements of the project met its expected targets. Bulgaria is now better equipped to implement SLM measures; the capacity of key stakeholders were developed and the government has now a more coherent land policy with the necessary implementation instruments such as the Soil Act and the rural development programme.

129. The project was designed using a *“building block”* approach, whereby the project resources were used to support the development of key elements to ensure the enhancement of the enabling environment for arresting land degradation and establish SLM practices in the agriculture and forestry sectors. The achievements included:

- Availability of information on land and SLM in Bulgaria
- A more cohesive land policy with the related implementation instruments
- A comprehensive legal framework in Bulgaria to prevent further land degradation and promote SLM
- Financial resources available for SLM measures to be implemented at the local level

⁶ www.ecdpm.org

⁷ [http://www.ecdpm.org/Web_ECDPM/Web/Content/Download.nsf/0/1563AC78AEF20D91C125709F002FE75D/\\$FILE/Morgan.%20Land.%20Base.r.%20Interim%20report.%202005.pdf](http://www.ecdpm.org/Web_ECDPM/Web/Content/Download.nsf/0/1563AC78AEF20D91C125709F002FE75D/$FILE/Morgan.%20Land.%20Base.r.%20Interim%20report.%202005.pdf) - page 23

- A stronger institutional capacity and staff with better skills and knowledge about SLM
- A greater awareness at the local level by farmers (land users) and demonstrated best practices

130. As a result, the enabling environment for the implementation of SLM measures has been strengthened. Bulgaria has now the necessary instruments to comply with its obligations under the UNCCD and also to focus on the implementation of this revised land policy at the local level with landowners and land users (farmers). In the medium-term, there is a great potential for this enabling environment to lead the implementation of SLM practices with farmers and forest owners. The existence of the RDP that is fully funded through the EU support and the GOB and the soon-coming forest erosion control programme from the SFA are the main instruments that will carry-out the achievements of this project in the agriculture and forestry sectors and will impact the management of the land in Bulgaria. Additionally, the SLM principles and measures have been incorporated into the UNDP/GEF project “*Integrating Global Environmental Issues into Bulgaria’s Regional Development Process*”, to cover the land use planning sector and ensure that SLM is taken into consideration when land use planning decisions are made.

131. However, this potential for achieving the long-term goal of the project may be hampered or delayed by the non-approval of the NAP and the creation of a SLM unit within MOEW (see Section 4.2.4). These two elements are part of an enabling environment for the implementation of SLM measures in Bulgaria. The risk is low to medium but any delay should diminish or reduce the potential impact of the project achievements on the implementation of SLM measures/practices at the local level in Bulgaria.

4.4.2. Potential to Achieve Global Environmental Benefits

132. The potential for global environmental benefits in the project document was done through an analysis using the concept of the “*GEF Incremental Cost*”. A good analysis of the baseline activities (scenario without the GEF contribution) was provided as well as the “GEF alternative” to complement the baseline. The basic idea of this analysis was that without the GEF contribution, Bulgaria would carry on with basic activities to promote SLM but with limited technical inputs and with limited focus on improving the cross-sectoral and inter-agency coordination issues. Additionally, most development plans - such as the MDPs and the RDP - would not be promoting SLM as strongly as the alternative with the SLM project support. Therefore, the “GEF alternative” was to complement the baseline by addressing gaps related to capacity development, policy harmonization, inter-agency coordination, mainstreaming of SLM into policies, programmes, projects and plans and development of sustainable financial mechanisms for the promotion and implementation of SLM measures.

133. The review confirms the validity of this analysis and the potential for the project to contribute to global environmental benefits over the long-term; it is rated as highly satisfactory. Though project activities may not have a direct short-term impact on the global environment, the capacity development approach, which can also be called “*the building blocks*” approach, provides the key elements for promoting and implementing SLM measures over the next few years. This long-term approach should then have an impact on the global environment. Various measures to improve SLM locally and to be implemented through the RDP should, for instance, contribute to the conservation of fragile topsoil in mountain areas that are being affected by erosion, provide better habitats for species of global significance, reduce pollution of water bodies – including those that discharge into the Black Sea, preserve important landscapes important for biodiversity, and diminish the emission of greenhouse gases from deforestation and desertification processes.

4.4.3. Potential Impacts on Local Environment, Poverty and Other Socio-Economic Issues

134. There is a good potential for the project to impact on the local environment, poverty and other local socio-economic issues; it is rated as satisfactory. Based on the interviews, the primary impact of the project is viewed as impacting positively the local environment through the implementation of SLM practices over the medium and long-term. All supporting instruments are now in place to promote these better practices; including a code of good agriculture practices to prevent pollution of waters by nitrates from agricultural sources, guidelines for the integration of the SLM policies at the local level and within the municipal development plans and more importantly the RDP 2007-2013 that integrates SLM principles and measures to improve land management in rural areas of Bulgaria.

135. Additionally, the project supported 10 SLM demonstration projects in 10 different municipalities across Bulgaria (*see Section 4.2.1*). The objective of these demonstrations was to demonstrate locally some SLM best practices emphasizing local Stakeholders involvement; particularly land users (farmers), landowners and Municipal Officials. As a result, SLM principles and measures were integrated into the 10 respective Municipal Development Plans (MDPs) for the period 2007-2013.

136. The potential long-term impacts of the project at the local level, therefore, is viewed through the implementation of these MDPs but also the implementation of the RDP; particularly the Axis #2 that is to promote the development of agricultural methods consistent with the protection and preservation of the environment in order to improve the sustainable management of agricultural land. The sustainable development of the forests will be addressed mainly through improvement of forest resources and restoration of forest potential.

137. In addition to the potential impact on the environment, the integration of the project achievements in the local development plans (MDPs and RDP), should also impact indirectly the local socio-economic conditions by improving the living conditions of people in rural areas. The overall objective of the RDP programme is a three-prong objective: (1) to develop a competitive and innovation based agriculture, forestry and food processing industry; (2) to protect the natural resources and environment of rural areas; and, (3) to improve the quality of life and diversify job opportunities in rural areas. Therefore, it is expected that through better agricultural practices, the living conditions of local land users should improve over time and have a positive on the local socio-economic situation.

4.5. Sustainability and Replicability

4.5.1. Sustainability Strategy and Project Exit Strategy

138. The project long-term sustainability strategy described in the project document is rated as satisfactory. It is based on three factors described as follows:

- *Approval of regulations, codes and acts*: By the end of project, the Code of Good Farming Practices, NAEP and the Soil Conservation Act are expected to integrate SLM principles, approved and implemented.
- *Financial resources for follow-up capacity building programs after project termination date*: Despite some capacity development supported by the project, there will be a need for more training and capacity building (funded by financial resources) as the Bulgarian economy grow and sectors expand.
- *Staff turnover*: An important issue is the capacity of government agencies to retain their staff – that benefited from project-supported training - after project termination date.

139. On the basis of these three factors - the implementation approach focusing on capacity development for SLM and the strong ownership of the project achievements by the Stakeholders - there is an assurance that a strategy to ensure the long-term sustainability of project achievements is in place.

4.5.2. Sustainability of Results Achieved by the Project

140. The potential for the long-term sustainability of the project achievements is excellent; it is rated as highly satisfactory. As described in the previous Section, the strategy for the long-term sustainability of the project achievements was viewed as depending on three factors: the approval of the pieces of legislation developed with the support of the project, the mobilization of financial resources for follow up capacity building activities after the project end and the retaining of staff by government agencies. These conditions are met and will contribute to the long-term sustainability of the project achievements.

141. However, there are also other factors that will contribute to the long-term sustainability of this project. The capacity development and the participatory approach used to implement the project were translated into a strong ownership of the implementation of the project by the Stakeholders. All project achievements are now with their respective custodians to be used for the implementation of SLM measures. The project has no “*transfer and buy-in process*” to do before it ends. The achievements are already institutionalized within the

key Stakeholders; and, therefore, should be sustainable over the long-term.

142. Additionally, the existence of the fully funded RDP and the erosion control programme of the SFA will contribute also to the long-term sustainability of the project achievements. The project enhanced the enabling environment for SLM in Bulgaria. The elements of this environment (policy, legislation and institutional capacity) will now be used by these programmes to implement SLM measures at the local level with landowners and land users; ensuring the long-term sustainability of this enabling environment.

143. Finally, the long-term sustainability of the project achievements may be hampered by the slow approval of the NAP and the creation of a SLM unit within MOEW. As discussed in Section 4.2.4, these two elements are still pending for approval by the GOB. The risk of the NAP not be approved is low but the risk of the SLM unit not created is medium. In case of any delays regarding these two elements, the sustainability of the project achievements should not be much altered; however, these delays may diminish or delay the potential impact of the project achievements on the implementation of SLM measures/practices at the local level in Bulgaria.

4.5.3. Financial and Human Resources Sustainability

144. The financial and human resources sustainability of the project do not present any particular issues. On the contrary, the project management arrangement will ensure a smooth transition of project achievements and no recurrent cost will emerge from the closure of the project; it is rated as highly satisfactory. Most of project achievements are already owned by their respective custodian organizations. The few pieces of equipment such as computers will be transferred to the national executing agency as per UNDP guidelines.

145. As for the project staff, most of the technical assistance provided by the project was short-term consultants, which have terminated their respective contracts. The small project team of two full time staff will have their project contracts terminated at the end of the project (May 2008) following UNDP and GOB guidelines. However, the highly respected Project Manager will return to her position as Head of the Monitoring of Land, Biodiversity and Protected Area Department at the ExEA. As it is analyzed in Section 4.3.4, this Senior Official took an unpaid sabbatical time from her Agency to manage the SLM project. Her return to a key position in ExEA will contribute greatly to the long-term sustainability of the project achievements and the long-term implementation of SLM measures.

4.5.4. Enabling Environment – Policy, Legislation and Institutions

146. The project contributed greatly to enhance the enabling environment for the SLM in Bulgaria; it is rated as highly satisfactory. Enhancing the enabling environment for arresting land degradation and establish sustainable land management practices was/is the long-term goal of the SLM project. As it is described in other Sections the project strategy was that of a “*building block*” approach whereby the project supported the development and implementation of key elements of a SLM enabling environment.

147. Therefore, the main focus of the project was to enhance this policy, legislation and institution environment. Outcome 1 was about enhancing the land policy and the legal/regulatory framework; outcome 2 was about strengthening the capacity of the key institutions and their related personnel related to the management of the land in Bulgaria; outcome 3 was to develop this same capacity at the local level; and, finally outcome 4 was about the mobilization of the necessary resources and the development of economic incentives for landowners and land users to improve their practices to manage their land.

148. As a result of the project support, Bulgaria is now better equipped to arrest land degradation and implement sustainable land management measures. The necessary policy and legal environment and the related capacities to implement SLM practices are now in place. Bulgaria has now a National Action Programme (which should soon be approved) to guide actions to be implemented, a Soil Act to provide the necessary legislation to protect the soils and ensure the sustainable use of the land, a Code of Good Farming Practices to promote better SLM practices used by farmers, a UNCCD National Advisory Committee to coordinate and review the implementation of SLM measures in Bulgaria and an overall higher capacity of key stakeholders to analyse and implement SLM measures. Moreover, the collaboration with NAAS and

SFA led to the integration of SLM measures in the RDP and in the erosion control programme of the forest agency that are both the main instruments for the implementation of SLM measures in Bulgaria during the next few years.

4.5.5. Ecological Sustainability

149. The ecological sustainability of the project is rated as highly satisfactory. There are no particular environmental risks due to the implementation of the project. No project activities pose a threat to the environment, which can undermine the future flow of project environmental benefits. On the contrary, over the long-term most of the activities should contribute to improving the ecological sustainability in Bulgaria. The development of better policies, programmes and legislation related to the implementation of SLM principles and strategies will provide a better platform for promoting better SLM practices to be used by landowners and land users.

150. The implementation of the project, which supported the establishment of “*building blocks*” for adequate policy and legislation frameworks, should provide the Stakeholders with the necessary instruments to implement these better SLM practices and ensure a stronger ecological sustainability. There are now a Soil Act, few SLM related regulations, a national action plan for SLM and few guidelines indicating how to integrate SLM principles in projects and programmes. The Rural Development Programme (RDP) to be implemented by NAAS is the main programme that will benefit from the SLM project. It includes several lines of action and SLM guidelines, which will have a positive impact on the sustainable management of the land in rural areas throughout Bulgaria.

4.5.6. Replication and Scaling-Up

151. Replicability was described in a Section in the project document. The strategy was to organize technical workshops with authorities and the public to exchange information on SLM and present the project progress; to promote a specific section on land degradation in the National Annual Report on the State of the Environment; to develop and maintain a web site on the project; and, to establish a learning link with the LDC-SIDS portfolio on SLM projects.

152. Considering the project current results, the review indicates that the potential for the scaling-up of these project achievements is excellent; it is rated as highly satisfactory. The enabling environment for the sustainable management of the land in Bulgaria has been upgraded and it provides now a good platform for implementing SLM measures. The project supported the development of the policy and legislation frameworks and supported 10 SLM demonstration projects ranging from sustainable management of pastures and meadows to afforestation, restoration of degraded land and sustainable management of land used for livestock breeding to demonstrate sustainable land management practices. The project also supported the development of a series of guidelines such as the *10 National Standards* related to land use (approved by Order of the MOAFS) and the “*Practical Guidelines: Integration of the SLM Policies at the Local Level and within the Municipal Development Plans 2007-2013*”. Finally, the capacity of key individuals were raised through training programmes; including the development of a new Master programme at the University of Plovdiv in sustainable land management, which will ensure the provision of national experts in the future.

153. In addition to these achievements, the project collaborated closely with the MOAFS. Together, they incorporated the SLM strategies and measures into the *National Agri-Environment Programme for Bulgaria 2007-2013 (NAEP)*. The project specifically supported the methodology to calculate the payments for agri-environment measures. This programme is now part of the RDP to be implemented in the years to come under the Axis #2. Therefore, this instrument should be central for the scaling-up of project achievements.

5. CONCLUSION / RATINGS SUMMARY

154. In conclusion, a summary of the ratings is given in the table below for each evaluation criteria.

Table 8: Ratings Summary

Evaluation Criterion	Summary Comments	Rating
Relevance	The project was highly relevant for Bulgaria to enhance the enabling environment and capacity for arresting land degradation and establishing sustainable land management (SLM) practices in order to contribute to enhancing ecosystem health, integrity, functions and services while promoting sustainable livelihoods in Bulgaria. It responded very well to the development objectives of Bulgaria and to those of UNDP and GEF in Bulgaria. It was very relevant to the environmental governance framework in place in Bulgaria and played a particularly key role in supporting the emergence of an enabling environment for SLM in the country. The project supported the development of key building blocks for SLM in Bulgaria. The design of the project was also highly relevant for the implementation; it is strongly rooted in the work done by key stakeholders for the development of SLM measures in Bulgaria. Finally, the project met the objectives of the UNCCD and contributed greatly in helping the Government of Bulgaria to meet its obligations under this convention.	Highly Satisfactory
Effectiveness	The achievements of the project are highly satisfactory. It met – and sometimes exceeded - its expected targets. The project contributed to the development of a better capacity – particularly within the government of Bulgaria - for the development and implementation of a coherent land policy. The project delivered what it was supposed to deliver and Bulgaria is now better equipped to implement SLM measures and prevent further land degradation. The strong capacity development focus contributed to the success of the project and its long-term sustainability. This approach was very much in line with the global acceptance that capacity development encompasses the acquisition of skills and knowledge for individuals, the improvements of institutional structures, mechanisms and procedures and finally the strengthening of an enabling environment with adequate policies and laws. The review of the project risks indicates that two risks exist and may hamper the long-term impact and sustainability. The NAP is not approved by the Council of Ministers but should be in the weeks to come. The Minister of MOEW approved the creation of the SLM unit – as a coordination mechanism within the MOEW – but the Prime Minister's final approval is less certain in the short-term future.	Highly Satisfactory
Efficiency	The project efficiency was highly satisfactory. It was well managed and the resources were utilized efficiently. It used adaptive management extensively to secure project outcomes while maintaining adherence to the overall project design. The log-frame is one of the main management tools used to guide the implementation of the project. The project was cost-effective and its disbursements are in line with the budget – including the co-financing – and adequately managed by the UNDP-Atlas system. A highly successful small project team - funded by the project - implemented the project. They used short-term consultants extensively; mostly-national consultants. The Project Manager was a Senior Public Officer from the ExEA who took unpaid sabbatical time to manage the project. It contributed greatly to the success of the project and will contribute to the long-term impact and sustainability of the project achievements. The stakeholder	Highly Satisfactory

Evaluation Criterion	Summary Comments	Rating
	participation and their ownership of the project were excellent. A network of “champions” distributed within the key institutions led the implementation of the project. Finally, the project was monitored as per the UNDP procedures.	
Impact	The potential for the project to achieve its long-term goal and objective is highly satisfactory. The effectiveness of the project contributed to the enhancement of the enabling environment for SLM in Bulgaria and increased the capacity for arresting land degradation and establishing SLM practices. Bulgaria has now the necessary instruments to comply with its obligations under the UNCCD and also to focus on the implementation of this revised land policy at the local level with landowners and land users. The project achievements have been integrated into the Rural Development Programme and the erosion control programme of the SFA; which should be the main channel for the long-term impact of the project achievements. It is particularly true for the implementation of the RDP Axis #2 that is associated with the development of agricultural methods consistent with the protection and preservation of the environment, and on compensating the producers in the mountainous and other less favoured areas for keeping their land in good condition, and preventing the abandonment of land in these areas.	Highly Satisfactory
Sustainability	The prospect for the long-term sustainability of the project achievements is highly satisfactory. Three factors were considered as critical for the long-term sustainability: the approval of the pieces of legislation developed with the support of the project, the mobilization of financial resources for follow up capacity building activities after the project end and the retaining of staff by government agencies. These conditions are met but the sustainability is also reinforced by the capacity development focus of the project and the participatory approach; which both contributed to a strong ownership of the implementation and of the achievements. The project has no transfer and buy-in process to do; all project achievements are already institutionalized within the key Stakeholders. The sustainability is also reinforced by the existence of the RDP and the erosion control programme from the SFA. These two programmes will carry-out the project achievements by supporting actions on the ground that are associated with the development of agricultural methods consistent with the protection and preservation of the environment, and on compensating the producers in the mountainous and other less favoured areas for keeping their land in good condition, and preventing the abandonment of land in these areas.	Highly Satisfactory
Specific Evaluation Criterion to be Rated (from TORs)		
Conceptualization/ Design	See Section 4.1.6	Highly Satisfactory
Implementation Approach	See Section 4.3	Highly Satisfactory
Country Ownership/Drivers	See Section 4.3.7	Highly Satisfactory
Outcome/ Achievements of Objectives	See Section 4.2.1 and 4.4.1	Highly Satisfactory

Evaluation Criterion	Summary Comments	Rating
Stakeholders Participation/Public Involvement	See Section 4.3.7	Highly Satisfactory
Sustainability	See Section 4.5	Highly Satisfactory
Replication Approach	See Section 4.5.6	Highly Satisfactory
Monitoring and Evaluation	See Section 4.3.8	Satisfactory
Overall Rating	Overall the progress of the project is highly satisfactory. The project successfully reached its expected results by meeting – and sometimes by exceeding – its expected targets. Bulgaria has now the necessary policy, legislation and institutional instruments to comply with its obligations under the UNCCD and also to implement this revised land policy and SLM measures at the local level with landowners and land users. This improved enabling environment should have a positive long-term impact on SLM in Bulgaria. The prospect for long-term sustainability of project achievements is excellent. The pieces of legislation developed with the support of the project are approved, the mobilization of financial resources for follow up capacity building activities after the project end are secured and the risk of government agency staff-turnover is limited. Additionally, the focus on capacity development and the participatory approach contributed to a strong ownership of the project achievements; these are all institutionalized within the key Stakeholders. The replication of these achievements throughout Bulgaria should be secured through the implementation of the RDP and the erosion control programme from the SFA. These two programmes will carry-out the project achievements by supporting actions on the ground that are associated with the development of agricultural methods consistent with the protection and preservation of the environment, and on compensating the producers in the mountainous and other less favoured areas for keeping their land in good condition, and preventing the abandonment of land in these areas. The project was managed by a highly effective small management team; including a Project Manager who was a Senior Public Officer from the ExEA and who took unpaid sabbatical time to manage the project. Under the excellent leadership of the project manager, there was a high participation level of Stakeholders, which translated into numerous implementation partnerships and the development of a strong ownership by these Stakeholders of the implementation of the project and its cost-effective achievements.	Highly Satisfactory

6. LESSONS LEARNED

155. In order to support this final evaluation, the SLM project management team recruited a national consultant to detail the project achievements and identify the lessons learned by the project. A focus group to validate the initial findings of this assignment was organized during the mission of the Evaluation Team Leader in Bulgaria. The findings are being compiled into a report⁸ that is part of the final evaluation process; detailing the project achievements and the lessons learned.

156. Nevertheless, a summary of these findings/lessons learned is presented below. There are based on the

⁸ EcoLogic Consultancy Ltd., 2008, *Stakeholder Review of the UNDP/GEF project “Capacity Building for Sustainable Land Management in Bulgaria”*

review of project documents, interviews and meetings with key informants, and analysis of the information collected:

- A project design that is the product of a strong participatory process facilitates the implementation of the project and ensures a greater potential for long-term impact and long-term sustainability. The project design becomes “*their*” design and the result is a strong ownership of the project by Stakeholders and often by extension a good country ownership; starting at the start of the project. The implementation is strongly supported by its “designers” and partnerships are easier to set-up.
- The strong ownership of the project by stakeholders leads to cost-effective project achievements. The strong involvement of stakeholders from the initial stage where ideas start to emerge as a potential project leads to a strong ownership of project implementation by key stakeholders. As a result, the project develops strong partnership for implementing and supporting project activities led by these stakeholders. These partnerships produce very cost effective results that are owned by the Stakeholders and institutionalized within these partner organizations.
- A comprehensive CD approach addressing the capacity gaps through the systemic development of key elements of a system necessitates the sharing of project decision-making and project control with Stakeholders. Furthermore, the sharing of control over the project ensures strong ownership of project implementation and project results by Stakeholders. This approach provides a good base for a cost effective project and a better guarantee for long-term sustainability and long-term impact of project results.
- Addressing a national issue such as land degradation is a complex process involving many sectors of the economy. It necessitates an interdisciplinary approach whereby the capacity of all relevant Stakeholders needs to be developed at all three (3) levels: system, organization and individual levels; at national, regional and local levels; and also at cross-sectoral levels.
- The flexibility of the implementation of a project is a key ingredient for the success of the project. The management of the project needs to be flexible enough to adapt and respond to existing needs of stakeholders and also to time properly the activities to be conducted. The agenda of a project needs to be flexible enough to be adapted to the agendas of the various project partners.
- The choice of an excellent Senior Project Manager with an extended technical knowledge, a good network of “*Champions*” among key stakeholder organizations and accompanied by an approach emphasizing knowledge, transparency, tenacity, openness, firm and networking are also key ingredients for a project to succeed. It allows the project to keep a small management team and establish a network of “*Champions*” implementing activities in their respective organizations.
- Despite the success of this project, this type of project emphasizing capacity development requires a longer timeframe to ensure greater results. Usually the time required to change or create any new legislation or policy is far greater than two years. A 5-year duration minimum should be required for any capacity development initiative of this amplitude if we want to maximize the cost-effectiveness, the impact and the long-term sustainability.
- The use of a broad approach to systematically develop/improve the capacity throughout the system including intervention at the policy, legal, institutional, process and individual levels is complex but the only way to enhance an enabling environment for a particular sector or area. Furthermore, the “connection” between the project activities and the priorities of the Stakeholders gives stakeholder ownership and ensures a better success over the long-term. Project activities should always try to build on or reinforce existing structures and mechanisms; the closer the project activities are from the existing system, the better.
- Within the context of a project focusing on policy, legislation and institution development, the implementation of demonstration projects is vital. In the case of the SLM project it provided good examples of SLM in varied settings testing different SLM practices. It “connects” the project with the end-users and feeds back the policy, legislation and institutional development process with the reality on the ground; bettering the decision-making process. It also provides practical examples of implementing specific actions; which should be part of the following scaling-up phase of the long-term project impact.
- Despite the success of the project in building the capacity of key stakeholders, there are still a lot of capacity development needs of all development actors to be done in the future. The project

contributed to enhancing the enabling environment. However, the next phase will include more practical actions to be implemented throughout Bulgaria and more capacity will be needed to ensure the good implementation of this phase. It will include all local development actors: municipalities, NAAS, RIEW, NGOs, farmer associations, farmers, landowners, etc.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

157. Based on the findings of this final evaluation, the following recommendations are made:

Recommendations to End the Project

1. It is recommended that the SLM project achievements be fully incorporated into the UNDP/GEF project “*Integrating Global Environmental Issues into Bulgaria’s Regional Development Process*”. This project – also implemented by UNDP – started in mid-2006 and will terminate mid-2010. It has a GEF contribution of USD 0.5M. The project strategy is to promote a proactive integration of global environmental issues into the process of regional and local development, as well as spatial planning, both of which are managed by the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (MORDPW). This will be achieved by developing the capacity of MORDPW and MOEW to integrate global environmental objectives into the regional and local development policies and practices, as well as into spatial planning documents. The SLM project focused mostly on the agriculture and forestry sectors and this project is a good opportunity to introduce SLM principles and measures into spatial and development planning. The SLM project already supported the development of the “*Practical Guidelines for the Integration of the SLM policy at the Local Level and Within the Municipal Development Plans 2007-2013*”; it is critical that the body of knowledge of the SLM project be transferred to this new project to ensure that SLM is integrated into the strengthening process of the regional development process supported by this UNDP/GEF project.
2. It is recommended that the project management team (UNDP and the Project Manager) writes a memorandum and/or organizes a meeting with the Minister of Environment (and possibly with the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers) regarding the creation of the SLM unit. It is part of the expected results of the UNDP Country Programme 2006-2009 and it is a critical point for ensuring the continuity of the SLM project achievements without major disruptions. Due mostly to its success, the SLM project became de facto the national coordination unit on SLM in Bulgaria; however, the project ends at the end of May 2008 and this small coordination unit will be closed. The project is ending, however, the coordination needs still exist; hence the strategy for the project to support the creation of a SLM unit within MOEW.

The rationale for this SLM unit is:

- A UNCCD National Coordination Committee was established in March 2006 (Order No. RD-176 of 29 March 2006) with the support of the SLM project to coordinate the national implementation of the UNCCD in Bulgaria. The secretariat function to this committee is the SLM sector within MOEW.
 - The project supported the process to create a SLM unit within the MOEW. However, the final approval to create this unit is not certain in the near future. The main tasks of this unit would be to monitor the implementation of the NAP (which should be soon approved); coordinate the national land policy – including the activities to be implemented by the various institutions with a SLM mandate – and the application of the Soil Act and its related regulations; fulfill the role of Secretariat to the UNCCD National Advisory Committee; support the soil monitoring function as part of the national environment monitoring system and the preparation of annual reports on state of soils in Bulgaria for the annual state of environment report; and, support the development of SLM related projects.
 - Under the project support and coordination, a successful national SLM strategy has been so far implemented. However, this process may be a victim of its own success. A coordination mechanism needs to be in place after the end of the project; to guarantee the continuity of a successful development and implementation of a SLM strategy for Bulgaria.
3. Despite the short remaining timeframe remaining, it is recommended to organize an end of project workshop (with the members of the project advisory board or of the UNCCD Advisory Committee) to highlight the project achievements and the way forward. It will be an opportunity to set the future

and reinforce the need for the approval of the NAP and the setting up of the SLM unit. Despite the success of the project in building the capacity of key stakeholders, there are still a lot of capacity development needs of all development actors to be done in the future. The next phase will include more practical actions to be implemented throughout Bulgaria and more capacity development will be needed. This workshop would be an opportunity to present the requirements to go forward and also to “*pass the baton*” from the project management team to Stakeholders.

Opportunities for GOB, UNDP and GEF

4. It is recommended that a case study be done on this project. It is an excellent model of a capacity development initiative. The main characteristics and the success of this project could be used as a model to be replicated worldwide under the implementation of the UNCCD and GEF OP15. This project was a follow up action identified as one priority during the NCSA process, designed by stakeholders and implemented using a strong capacity development approach. The implementation was well integrated within the national processes and responded well to the needs of stakeholders. Some of these valued characteristics are:
 - Responded well to national priorities (technically and timely);
 - A project strategy focuses on the systematic development of capacity addressing SLM capacity gaps to enhance the enabling environment; equipping Bulgaria with the necessary instruments (policy, legislation and institutions) for the full implementation of SLM activities through existing programmes such as the RDP
 - Strong participation of stakeholders that led to strong ownership of the project and its achievements;
 - The management of the project demonstrated a good flexibility in its implementation that was recognized as one of the critical success factors by key interviewees;
 - Good institutionalization of project achievements leading to the prospect for a good L.T. sustainability of these achievements and the potential for L.T. positive impact on SLM;
5. It is recommended to explore the possibility of posting and exchanging information with the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD⁹. It is a subsidiary body of the UNCCD promoting sustainable development through land management in the context of UNCCD. It is an innovative entity responding to country parties to the UNCCD in mobilizing financial resources to address the nexus between land and natural resource degradation, rural development and poverty reduction. The SLM project accumulated information and knowledge and despite the existing project web site, it would be very valuable to make this information more accessible through a network such as the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD. It would facilitate the exchange of information but also the possibility for sharing experiences through study tours such as the example of the SLM Project Manager who went to Latvia to meet her counterparts implementing a similar project (UNDP/GEF Project “*Building Sustainable Capacity and Ownership to Implement UNCCD objectives in Latvia*”). It was an occasion to share experiences and discuss different implementation mechanisms, problems faced by the implementation of such projects and critical success factors for this type of projects.

⁹ www.global-mechanism.org

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference

for

Final Evaluation of the Project

Capacity Building for Sustainable Land Management in Bulgaria

Project 00043507

PIMS 3189

I. INTRODUCTION

a) UNDP/GEF Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) policy

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) policy at the project level in UNDP/GEF has four objectives: i) to monitor and evaluate results and impacts; ii) to provide a basis for decision making on necessary amendments and improvements; iii) to promote accountability for resource use; and iii) to document, provide feedback on, and disseminate lessons learned. A mix of tools is used to ensure effective project M&E. These might be applied continuously throughout the lifetime of the project – e.g. periodic monitoring of indicators - or as specific time-bound exercises such as mid-term reviews, audit reports and final evaluations.

In accordance with UNDP/GEF M&E policies and procedures, all regular and medium-sized projects supported by the GEF should undergo a final evaluation upon completion of implementation. Final evaluations are intended to assess the relevance, performance and success of the project. It looks at early signs of potential impact and sustainability of results, including the contribution to capacity development and the achievement of global environmental goals. It will also identify/document lessons learned and make recommendations that might improve design and implementation of other UNDP/GEF projects.

b) The project objectives and its context within the program country

The project Capacity Building for Sustainable Land Management (SLM Project) is a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Ministry of Environment and Water (MOEW) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Supply (MOAFS), financially supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The project will be realized in support of the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Bulgaria which is ratified by law of the Parliament of Bulgaria, promulgated in the State Gazette and operates since 22 May 2001. The project will contribute to the programmatic target set for OP 15, by promoting and measuring success in capacity building ultimately helping to improve sustainability of land management in the country.

The project's long-term goal is to enhance the enabling environment and capacity for arresting land degradation and establishing sustainable land management (SLM) practice so as to contribute to enhancing ecosystem health, integrity, functions and services while promoting sustainable livelihoods in Bulgaria.

The project's objective is to build capacity for development and implementation of a coherent land policy. It will focus on mainstreaming, institutional and technical capacity building at and financial mechanisms and resource mobilization for sustainable land management. In support of this the project has four outcomes:

- Sound land policy and a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework for sustainable land management;
- Institutional and technical capacity for sustainable land management and combating desertification strengthened;
- Local capacity strengthened for land planning and participatory decision-making;
- Resources mobilized for NSAP implementation as well as innovative financial mechanisms and economic incentives explored and agreed with farmers and other land users and the key Ministries.

The project is part of the UNDP Bulgaria's energy and environment portfolio and is one of five ongoing UNDP/GEF project. The UNDP/GEF portfolio is an integrated part of the overall UNDP intervention in Bulgaria where GEF and Core programme projects play an equally important role.

The SLM Project is implemented in close cooperation with all relevant UNDP projects focusing on agriculture and the sustainable use of land, and the SLM project has through its work increased the baseline support which is being enjoyed by other related UNDP projects.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

This evaluation is to be undertaken taking into consideration the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation policy (<http://thegef.org/MonitoringandEvaluation/MEPoliciesProcedures/mepoliciesprocedures.html>) and the

UNDP/GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy (<http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html>).

This final evaluation is initiated by the UNDP Bulgaria as the Implementation Agency for this project and it aims to provide managers (at the SLM Project Administration, UNDP Bulgaria Country Office and UNDP/GEF levels) with strategy and policy options for more effectively and efficiently achieving the project's outcomes and for replicating the results. It also provides the basis for learning and accountability for managers and stakeholders.

The objective of this final evaluation is to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of project activities in relation to the stated objective so far, and to produce possible recommendations on how to improve the management of similar future projects.

The report will play a critical role in determining the success of the project and provide guidance to future UNDP and UNDP/GEF projects in the fields of Sustainable Land Management by providing suggestions to:

- Based on the project achievements how the adaptive management and monitoring function in future projects can be strengthened;
- Based on the project achievements how to ensure adequate accountability for the achievement of the GEF objective;
- Based on the project achievements how to enhance organizational and development learning in future projects;
- Based on the project achievements how to enable informed decision – making in future projects.

The report will have to provide to the GEF Secretariat complete and convincing evidence to support its findings/ratings. The consultant should prepare specific ratings on seven aspects of the project, as described in the 'Reporting' section of this Terms of Reference. Particular emphasis should be put on the current project results and the possibility of achieving all objectives in the established timeframe, taking into consideration the speed, at which the project is proceeding.

III. PRODUCTS EXPECTED FROM THE EVALUATION

The key product expected from this final evaluation is a comprehensive analytical report in English that should, at least, include the following contents:

1. Executive summary
2. Introduction
3. The project(s) and its development context
4. Findings and Conclusions
 - Project formulation
 - Implementation
 - Results
5. Recommendations
6. Lessons learned
7. Annexes

The length of the final -term evaluation report shall not exceed 30 pages in total (not including annexes).

The first draft of the report should be submitted within two weeks of completion of the in-country part of the mission and should be submitted to the UNDP Bulgaria Country office. The draft document will be circulated to the UNDP/GEF Regional technical Adviser in Bratislava, relevant Government Counterparts and relevant UNDP Bulgaria staff. In case there are discrepancies between the impressions and findings of the evaluation team and the aforementioned parties these should be explained in footnotes or in an annex attached to the final report.

IV. METHODOLOGY OR EVALUATION APPROACH

An outline of an evaluation approach is provided below however it should be made clear that the evaluation

team is responsible for revising the approach as necessary. Any changes should be in-line with international criteria and professional norms and standards (as adopted by the UN Evaluation Group¹⁰). They must be also cleared by UNDP before being applied by the evaluation team.

The evaluation must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. It must be easily understood by project partners. The methodology to be used by the evaluation team should be presented in the report in detail. It shall include information on:

- Documentation review (desk study) - the list of documentation to be reviewed is included in the Appendix B to this Terms of Reference;
- Interviews will be held with the following organizations and individuals at minimum: UNDP Bulgaria, SLM Project Administration, Project Steering Committee members, National Project Director;
- Field visits (Appendix C);
- Questionnaires;
- Participatory techniques and other approaches for the gathering and analysis of data.

The consultant should also provide **ratings** of Project achievements according to GEF Project Review Criteria. Aspects of the Project to be rated are

1	Conceptualization/Design
2	Implementation approach;
3	Country ownership/drivers
4	Outcome/Achievement of objectives (meaning the extent to which the project's environmental and development objectives were achieved).
5	Stakeholder participation/public involvement
6	Sustainability;
7	Replication approach;
9	Monitoring and evaluation

The ratings to be used are:

HS	Highly Satisfactory
S	Satisfactory
MS	Marginally Satisfactory
U	Unsatisfactory
NA	Not applicable

V. EVALUATION TEAM

A team of independent experts will conduct the evaluation. The evaluators selected should not have participated in the project preparation and/or implementation and should not have conflict of interest with project related activities.

The evaluation team will be composed of one Team Leader and one National Consultant. The consultants shall have prior experience in evaluating similar projects. Former cooperation with GEF is an advantage.

The selection of consultants will be aimed at maximizing the overall “team” qualities in the following areas:

- (i) Recent experience with result-based management evaluation methodologies;
- (ii) Experience applying participatory monitoring approaches;
- (iii) Experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios;
- (iv) Recent knowledge of the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy;
- (v) Recent knowledge of UNDP’s results-based evaluation policies and procedures

¹⁰ See <http://www.uneval.org/>

- (vi) Competence in Adaptive Management, as applied to conservation or natural resource management projects;
- (vii) Recognized expertise in sustainable land management and sustainable use of natural resources;
- (viii) Demonstrable analytical skills;
- (ix) Work experience in relevant areas for at least 10 years;
- (x) Experience with multilateral or bilateral supported projects;
- (xi) Project evaluation experiences within United Nations system will be considered an asset;
- (xii) Excellent English communication skills.

Specifically, the Team Leader will perform the following tasks:

- Lead and manage the evaluation mission;
- Design the detailed evaluation scope and methodology (including the methods for data collection and analysis);
- Assist in drafting terms of reference of the National Consultant(s)
- Decide the division of labor within the evaluation team;
- Conduct an analysis of the outcome, outputs and partnership strategy (as per the scope of the evaluation described above);
- Draft related parts of the evaluation report; and
- Finalize the whole evaluation report.

The National Consultant will provide input in reviewing all project documentation and will provide the Team Leader with a compilation of information prior to the evaluation mission. Specifically, the National Consultant will perform tasks with a focus on:

- Review documents;
- Prepare a list of the outputs achieved under project;
- Organize the mission programme and provide translation/interpretation when necessary;
- Participate in the design of the evaluation methodology;
- Conduct an analysis of the outcome, outputs and partnership strategy (as per the scope of the evaluation described above);
- Draft related parts of the evaluation report;
- Assist Team Leader in finalizing document through incorporating suggestions received on draft related to his/her assigned sections.

The evaluation will be undertaken in-line with GEF principles¹¹:

- Independence
- Impartiality
- Transparency
- Disclosure
- Ethical
- Partnership
- Competencies and Capacities
- Credibility
- Utility

The evaluators must be independent from both the policy-making process and the delivery and management of assistance. Therefore applications will not be considered from evaluators who have had any direct involvement with the design or implementation of the project. This may apply equally to evaluators who are associated with organizations, universities or entities that are, or have been, involved in the SLM Project's policy-making process and/or delivery of the project. Any previous association with the project, the SLM Project Administration, the Ministry of Environment and Waters, UNDP Bulgaria or other partners/stakeholders must be disclosed in the application. This applies equally to firms submitting proposals as it does to individual evaluators.

¹¹ See p.16 of the GEF's Monitoring and Evaluation Policy

If selected, failure to make the above disclosures will be considered just grounds for immediate contract termination, without recompense. In such circumstances, all notes, reports and other documentation produced by the evaluator will be retained by UNDP.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

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

The Country Office is usually the main operational point for the evaluation. It will be responsible for liaising with the project team to set up the stakeholder interviews, arrange the field visits, co-ordinate with the Government the hiring of national consultants and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the evaluation team.

Timeframe for submission of the final report: 7 weeks upon signing the contract. The evaluation should be completed by XXXXX. The report shall be submitted to the UNDP Bulgaria office.

The activity and timeframe are broken down as follows:

Activity	Timeframe and responsible party
Desk review	7 days by the Team Leader and Additional Consultant
Briefings for evaluators	1/2 day by the SLM Project Administration/ UNDP
Field visits, interviews, questionnaires, de-briefings	6 1/2 days by the Team Leader and Additional Consultant
Preparation of first draft report	7 days by the Team Leader and Additional Consultant
Validation of preliminary findings with stakeholders through circulation of draft reports for comments, meetings and other types of feedback mechanisms	7 days Bulgarian stakeholders
Incorporation of comments from Bulgarian stakeholders	2 days by the Team Leader and Additional Consultant
Review and preparation of comments of second draft	14 days SLM Project, UNDP, Government Counterparts and UNDP/GEF Bratislava
Finalization of the evaluation report (incorporating comments received on first draft)	3 days by the Team Leader and Additional Consultant

Working Days:

Team Leader – 26 working days

Additional Consultant – 26 working days (the selection of an additional national consultant is subject to a separate procedure)

The proposed dates for the in-country mission to Bulgaria are 21-27 April 2008. The assignment is to commence no later than 1 April 2008.

APPLICATION: Please send your applications and a brief concept paper (no more than 3 pages outlining the approach and methodology you will apply to achieve the assignment) to:

Ivanka Todorova, SLM Project Manager
Capacity Building for Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Project

22 Maria Louisa Blvd, floor 3, room 304
1000 Sofia, BULGARIA
Re: Application for Final Evaluation of SLM Project

or to:

Ivanka Todorova, SLM Project Manager: slm@moew.government.bg

Carsten Germer, UNDP Programme Analyst: carsten.germer@undp.org

Deadline for applications is **22nd February 2008**.

VII. SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION- SPECIFIC ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED.

With regard to the formulation of the final evaluation document the evaluators has to pay particular attention to the categories outline included in section III. The following highlights specific issues to be addressed under each broad category. These categories are the minimum required by UNDP and GEF. In this connection, an annex providing more detailed guidance on terminology and the GEF Project review Criteria should be an integral part of this TORs (please include Annex 1 in the TORs).

The evaluators should note that some of the categories in the findings and conclusions need to be rated in conformity with the GEF guidelines for final evaluations.

1. Executive summary

- Brief description of project
- Context and purpose of the evaluation
- Main conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned

2. Introduction

- Purpose of the evaluation
- Key issues addressed
- Methodology of the evaluation
- Structure of the evaluation

3. The project(s) and its development context

- Project start and its duration
- Problems that the project seek to address
- Immediate and development objectives of the project
- Main stakeholders
- Results expected

4. Findings and Conclusions

In addition to a descriptive assessment, all criteria marked with (R) should be rated using the following divisions: Highly Satisfactory, Satisfactory, Marginally Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory

4.1. Project Formulation

Conceptualization/Design (R). The evaluators should assess the approach used in design and an appreciation of the appropriateness of problem conceptualization and whether the selected intervention strategy addressed the root causes and principal threats in the project area. They should also include an assessment of the logical framework and whether the different project components and activities proposed to achieve the objective were appropriate, viable and responded to contextual institutional, legal and regulatory settings of the project. They should also assess the indicators defined for guiding implementation and measurement of achievement and whether lessons from other relevant projects (e.g., same focal area) were incorporated into project design.

Country-ownership/Driveness (R). The evaluators should assess the extent to which the project idea/conceptualization had its origin within national, sectoral and development plans and focuses on national environment and development interests.

Stakeholder participation (R) The evaluators should assess information dissemination, consultation, and “stakeholder” participation in design stages.

Replication approach (R). The evaluators should determine the ways in which lessons and experiences coming out of the project were/are to be replicated or scaled up in the design and implementation of other projects (this also related to actual practices undertaken during implementation).

Other aspects The evaluators should assess what UNDP comparative advantage as IA for this project was; the consideration of linkages between projects and other interventions within the sector and the definition of clear and appropriate management arrangements at the design stage.

4.2. Project Implementation

Implementation Approach (R). The evaluators should assess the following aspects:

- (i) The use of the logical framework as a management tool during implementation and any changes made to this as a response to changing conditions and/or feedback from M and E activities if required.
- (ii) Other elements that indicate adaptive management such as comprehensive and realistic work plans routinely developed that reflect adaptive management and/or; changes in management arrangements to enhance implementation.
- (iii) The project's use/establishment of electronic information technologies to support implementation, participation and monitoring, as well as other project activities.
- (iv) The general operational relationships between the institutions involved and others and how these relationships have contributed to effective implementation and achievement of project objectives.
- (v) Technical capacities associated with the project and their role in project development, management and achievements.
- (vi) The evaluators should assess the Risk Management system focusing on validating whether the risks identified in the project document and PIR are the most important and whether the risk ratings applied are appropriate as well as evaluate how UNDP/GEF Risk Management System can be used to strengthen project management?
- (vii) The evaluators should assess how efficient project reporting has been and how adaptive management changes have been reported by the project management and assess how lessons derived from the adaptive management process have been documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners.

Monitoring and evaluation (R). The evaluators should include an assessment as to whether there has been adequate periodic oversight of activities during implementation to establish the extent to which inputs, work schedules, other required actions and outputs are proceeding according to plan; whether formal evaluations have been held and whether action has been taken on the results of this monitoring oversight and evaluation reports.

Stakeholder participation (R). The evaluators should include an assessment of the mechanisms for information dissemination in project implementation and the extent of stakeholder participation in management, emphasizing the following:

- (i) The production and dissemination of information generated by the project.

- (ii) Local resource users and NGOs participation in project implementation and decision making and an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the approach adopted by the project in this arena.
- (iii) The establishment of partnerships and collaborative relationships developed by the project with local, national and international entities and the effects they have had on project implementation.
- (iv) Involvement of governmental institutions in project implementation, the extent of governmental support of the project.

Financial Planning: Including an assessment of:

- (i) The actual project cost by objectives, outputs, activities
- (ii) The cost-effectiveness of achievements
- (iii) Financial management (including disbursement issues)
- (iv) Co-financing¹²

- Sustainability (R). The evaluators should assess the extent to which the benefits of the project will continue, within or outside the project domain, after it has come to an end. Relevant factors include for example: development of a sustainability strategy, establishment of financial and economic instruments and mechanisms, mainstreaming project objectives into the economy or community production activities.
- Execution and implementation modalities. The evaluators should consider the effectiveness of the UNDP counterpart and Project Co-ordination Unit participation in selection, recruitment, assignment of experts, consultants and national counterpart staff members and in the definition of tasks and responsibilities; quantity, quality and timeliness of inputs for the project with respect to execution responsibilities, enactment of necessary legislation and budgetary provisions and extent to which these may have affected implementation and sustainability of the Project; quality and timeliness of inputs by UNDP and GoC and other parties responsible for providing inputs to the project, and the extent to which this may have affected the smooth implementation of the project.

Further more the evaluators should assess the role of UNDP against the requirements set out in the UNDP Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results. Paying particular attention to the contribution to the project from UNDP “soft” assistance (i.e. policy advice & dialogue, advocacy, and coordination) as well as support provided in form of field visits; Steering Committee/TOR follow-up and analysis; PIR preparation and follow-up and GEF guidance

4.3. Results

Attainment of Outcomes/ Achievement of objectives (R): The evaluators should assess the outputs, outcomes and impact achieved by the project as well as evaluate the sustainability of project results. This should encompass an assessment of the achievement of the outcomes and the contribution to attaining the overall objective of the project. The evaluators should also assess the extent to which the implementation of the project has been inclusive of relevant stakeholders and to which it has been able to create collaboration between different partners. The evaluators should in addition examine if the project has had significant unexpected effects, whether of beneficial or detrimental character.

- Furthermore, The evaluators should assess the sustainability including an appreciation of the extent to which benefits continue, within or outside the project domain after GEF assistance/external assistance in this phase has come to an end. Finally the evaluators should assess the projects contribution towards upgrading the skills of national staff

¹² Please see guidelines at the end of Annex 1 of these TORs for reporting of co-financing

5. Recommendations

The evaluators should provide recommendations, based on the project, as to how design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation measures could strengthen similar future projects. The evaluators should also propose actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the project and in this connection make proposals for future directions underlining the main objective

6. Lessons learned

The evaluators should highlight the best and worst practices in addressing issues relating to relevance, performance and success.

7. Evaluation report Annexes

- Evaluation TORs

- Itinerary

- List of persons interviewed

- Summary of field visits

- List of documents reviewed

- Questionnaire used and summary of results

- Comments by stakeholders (only in case of discrepancies with evaluation findings and conclusions)

VIII. TERMS OF REFERENCE ANNEXES

- Annex 1: Terminology in the GEF Guidelines to Terminal Evaluations

- Annex 2: List of Documents to be reviewed by the evaluators

- Annex 3: Proposed field mission schedule

Annex 1. Explanation on Terminology Provided in the GEF Guidelines to Terminal Evaluations

Implementation Approach includes an analysis of the project's logical framework, adaptation to changing conditions (adaptive management), partnerships in implementation arrangements, changes in project design, and overall project management.

Some elements of an effective implementation approach may include:

- The logical framework used during implementation as a management and M&E tool
- Effective partnerships arrangements established for implementation of the project with relevant stakeholders involved in the country/region
- Lessons from other relevant projects (e.g., same focal area) incorporated into project implementation
- Feedback from M&E activities used for adaptive management.

Country Ownership/Drivenness is the relevance of the project to national development and environmental agendas, recipient country commitment, and regional and international agreements where applicable. Project Concept has its origin within the national sectoral and development plans

Some elements of effective country ownership/drivenness may include:

- Project Concept has its origin within the national sectoral and development plans
- Outcomes (or potential outcomes) from the project have been incorporated into the national sectoral and development plans
- Relevant country representatives (e.g., governmental official, civil society, etc.) are actively involved in project identification, planning and/or implementation
- The recipient government has maintained financial commitment to the project
- The government has approved policies and/or modified regulatory frameworks in line with the project's objectives

For projects whose main focus and actors are in the private-sector rather than public-sector (e.g., IFC projects), elements of effective country ownership/drivenness that demonstrate the interest and commitment of the local private sector to the project may include:

- The number of companies that participated in the project by: receiving technical assistance, applying for financing, attending dissemination events, adopting environmental standards promoted by the project, etc.
- Amount contributed by participating companies to achieve the environmental benefits promoted by the project, including: equity invested, guarantees provided, co-funding of project activities, in-kind contributions, etc.
- Project's collaboration with industry associations

Stakeholder Participation/Public Involvement consist of three related, and often overlapping processes: information dissemination, consultation, and "stakeholder" participation. Stakeholders are the individuals, groups, institutions, or other bodies that have an interest or stake in the outcome of the GEF-financed project. The term also applies to those potentially adversely affected by a project.

Examples of effective public involvement include:

Information dissemination

- Implementation of appropriate outreach/public awareness campaigns

Consultation and stakeholder participation

- Consulting and making use of the skills, experiences and knowledge of NGOs, community and local groups, the private and public sectors, and academic institutions in the design, implementation, and evaluation of project activities

Stakeholder participation

- Project institutional networks well placed within the overall national or community organizational structures, for example, by building on the local decision making structures, incorporating local

knowledge, and devolving project management responsibilities to the local organizations or communities as the project approaches closure

- Building partnerships among different project stakeholders
- Fulfillment of commitments to local stakeholders and stakeholders considered to be adequately involved.

Sustainability measures the extent to which benefits continue, within or outside the project domain, from a particular project or program after GEF assistance/external assistance has come to an end. Relevant factors to improve the sustainability of project outcomes include:

- Development and implementation of a sustainability strategy.
- Establishment of the financial and economic instruments and mechanisms to ensure the ongoing flow of benefits once the GEF assistance ends (from the public and private sectors, income generating activities, and market transformations to promote the project's objectives).
- Development of suitable organizational arrangements by public and/or private sector.
- Development of policy and regulatory frameworks that further the project objectives.
- Incorporation of environmental and ecological factors affecting future flow of benefits.
- Development of appropriate institutional capacity (systems, structures, staff, expertise, etc.) .
- Identification and involvement of champions (i.e. individuals in government and civil society who can promote sustainability of project outcomes).
- Achieving social sustainability, for example, by mainstreaming project activities into the economy or community production activities.
- Achieving stakeholders consensus regarding courses of action on project activities.

Replication approach, in the context of GEF projects, is defined as lessons and experiences coming out of the project that are replicated or scaled up in the design and implementation of other projects. Replication can have two aspects, replication proper (lessons and experiences are replicated in different geographic area) or scaling up (lessons and experiences are replicated within the same geographic area but funded by other sources). Examples of replication approaches include:

- Knowledge transfer (i.e., dissemination of lessons through project result documents, training workshops, information exchange, a national and regional forum, etc).
- Expansion of demonstration projects.
- Capacity building and training of individuals, and institutions to expand the project's achievements in the country or other regions.
- Use of project-trained individuals, institutions or companies to replicate the project's outcomes in other regions.

Financial Planning includes actual project cost by activity, financial management (including disbursement issues), and co-financing. If a financial audit has been conducted the major findings should be presented in the TE.

Effective financial plans include:

- Identification of potential sources of co-financing as well as leveraged and associated financing¹³.
- Strong financial controls, including reporting, and planning that allow the project management to make informed decisions regarding the budget at any time, allows for a proper and timely flow of funds, and for the payment of satisfactory project deliverables
- Due diligence due diligence in the management of funds and financial audits.

Co financing includes: Grants, Loans/Concessional (compared to market rate), Credits, Equity investments, In-kind support, Other contributions mobilized for the project from other multilateral agencies, bilateral development cooperation agencies, NGOs, the private sector and beneficiaries. Please refer to Council documents on co-financing for definitions, such as GEF/C.20/6.

Leveraged resources are additional resources—beyond those committed to the project itself at the time of

¹³ Please refer to Council documents on co-financing for definitions, such as GEF/C.20/6. The following page presents a table to be used for reporting co-financing.

approval—that are mobilized later as a direct result of the project. Leveraged resources can be financial or in-kind and they may be from other donors, NGO's, foundations, governments, communities or the private sector. Please briefly describe the resources the project has leveraged since inception and indicate how these resources are contributing to the project's ultimate objective.

Cost-effectiveness assesses the achievement of the environmental and developmental objectives as well as the project's outputs in relation to the inputs, costs, and implementing time. It also examines the project's compliance with the application of the incremental cost concept. Cost-effective factors include:

- Compliance with the incremental cost criteria (e.g. GEF funds are used to finance a component of a project that would not have taken place without GEF funding.) and securing co-funding and associated funding.
- The project completed the planned activities and met or exceeded the expected outcomes in terms of achievement of Global Environmental and Development Objectives according to schedule, and as cost-effective as initially planned.
- The project used either a benchmark approach or a comparison approach (did not exceed the costs levels of similar projects in similar contexts)

Monitoring & Evaluation. Monitoring is the periodic oversight of a process, or the implementation of an activity, which seeks to establish the extent to which inputs, work schedules, other required actions and outputs are proceeding according to plan, so that timely action can be taken to correct the deficiencies detected. Evaluation is a process by which program inputs, activities and results are analyzed and judged explicitly against benchmarks or baseline conditions using performance indicators. This will allow project managers and planners to make decisions based on the evidence of information on the project implementation stage, performance indicators, level of funding still available, etc, building on the project's logical framework.

Monitoring and Evaluation includes activities to measure the project's achievements such as identification of performance indicators, measurement procedures, and determination of baseline conditions. Projects are required to implement plans for monitoring and evaluation with adequate funding and appropriate staff and include activities such as description of data sources and methods for data collection, collection of baseline data, and stakeholder participation. Given the long-term nature of many GEF projects, projects are also encouraged to include long-term monitoring plans that are sustainable after project completion.

Financial Planning Co-financing

Co-financing (Type/Source)	IA own Financing (mill US\$)		Government (mill US\$)		Other* (mill US\$)		Total (mill US\$)		Total Disbursement (mill US\$)	
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
- Grants										
- Loans/ Concessional (compared to market rate)										
- Credits										
- Equity investments										
- In-kind support										
- Other (*)										
Totals										

* Other is referred to contributions mobilized for the project from other multilateral agencies, bilateral development cooperation agencies, NGOs, the private sector and beneficiaries.

Leveraged Resources

Leveraged resources are additional resources—beyond those committed to the project itself at the time of approval—that are mobilized later as a direct result of the project. Leveraged resources can be financial or in-kind and they may be from other donors, NGO's, foundations, governments, communities or the private sector. Please briefly describe the resources the project has leveraged since inception and indicate how these resources are contributing to the project's ultimate objective.

Annex 2 - List of documents to be reviewed by the Evaluators

General documentation

UNDP Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluation for Results

UNDP-GEF Risk Management Strategy resource kit

Project documentation

Latest version of the project document and project budget.

Mid-term Evaluation Report

Management Response and Tracking

SLM Benchmark document

Project Survey by Independent National Consultancy Company/ Independent Project Evaluation by a National Consultancy Company

Project Inception Report

Annual Reports

Project Implementation Reviews

Quarterly Reports

Examples of Monthly Reports

Steering Committee Meeting minutes

Minutes Advisory Board meeting

Examples of documentation produced by the project

Key reports on soil droughts, soil degradation, option on SLM

Training modules elaborated including training material packages

Information materials produced by the project activities

Annex 3 - Proposed field mission schedule

Day 1 Sofia

Briefing with the project team

Meeting with the United Nations Development Programme-Bulgaria (UNDP-Bulgaria)

Meetings with the Ministry of Environment and Waters (MOEW) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) national focal point

Meetings with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Supply (MOAFS) and the State Forestry Agency (SFA)

Day 2 Sofia

Meetings with the National Agricultural Advisory Service (NAAS), Regional Agricultural Advisory Service (RAAS) mobile teams located in Gabrovo, Sliven, Veliko Tarnovo

Meetings with research institutes – Soil Institute “Nikola Pushkarov”, Forest Research Institute, etc.

Meetings with NGOs – Borrowed Nature, Foundation for Local Governance Reform, etc.

Day 3 Field visit

Meetings with schools and universities - Plovdiv University of Agriculture, etc.

Meetings with Regional Administrations, Municipality Administrations

Day 4 Field visit

Meetings with Regional Administrations, Municipality Administrations (continued) and meeting with farmers and other recipients of the services provided under the SLM Project

Day 5 Field visit

Meeting with farmers and other recipients of the services provided under the SLM Project (continued)

Day 6 Sofia

Follow up meetings with NGOs, Government and other stakeholders to discuss field mission impressions

Day 7 Sofia

Briefing with the Project Team and ad hoc meeting as required

Annex 2: Evaluation Matrix

The evaluation matrix below served as a general guide for the evaluation. It provided directions for the evaluation; particularly for the collect of relevant data. It was used as a basis for interviewing people and reviewing project documents. It also provided a basis for structuring the evaluation report as a whole.

Evaluated component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
Evaluation criteria: Relevance - <i>How does the Project relate to the main objectives of the UNCCD, GEF and to the development challenges faced by the Government of Bulgaria for mitigating land degradation?</i>				
<i>Is the Project relevant to UNCCD and GEF objectives?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the Project support the objectives of the UNCCD How does the Project support the objectives of the GEF for OP15? Does the Project participate in the implementation of the UNCCD in Bulgaria? Is the GEF incremental cost principle being respected? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of coherence between project objectives and those of the UNCCD Convention Degree of coherence between the project and national priorities, policies and strategies in the area of SLM Level of coherence between the project and EU specific legislation (Directives) UNCCD Convention status in Bulgaria Extent to which the project is actually implemented in line with incremental cost argument 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents National policies and strategies to implement the UNCCD Convention or related to environment more generally Key government officials and other partners UNCCD web site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents analyses Interviews with government officials and other partners
<i>Is the Project relevant to UNDP objectives?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the Project support the objectives of UNDP in this sector? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of a clear relationship between the project objectives and sustainable development objectives of UNDP. Existence of a clear relationship between the project objectives and UNDP Strategic Results Framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents UNDP strategies and programmes National policies and strategies to implement the UNCCD Convention or related to environment more generally Key government officials and other partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents analyses Interviews with government officials and other partners
<i>Is the Project relevant to Bulgaria development objectives?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the Project support the objectives of the development of Bulgaria? How country-driven is the Project? Does the Project adequately take into account the national realities, both in terms of institutional framework and programming, in its design and its implementation? To what extent were national partners involved in the design of the Project? Were the GEF criteria for Project identification adequate in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree to which the project support national environmental objectives Degree of coherence between the project and national priorities, policies and strategies Appreciation from national stakeholders with respect to adequacy of project design and implementation to national realities and existing capacities? Level of involvement of Government officials and other partners into the project Coherence between needs expressed by national stakeholders and UNDP-GEF criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents National policies and strategies (PRSP and NEP) Key government officials and other partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents analyses Interviews with government officials and other partners

Evaluated component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
	view of actual needs?			
<i>Is the Project addressing the needs of target beneficiaries?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the Project support the needs of target beneficiaries; including the landowners, farmers? Is the implementation of the Project been inclusive of all relevant Stakeholders? Are local beneficiaries and stakeholders adequately involved in Project design and implementation? Is the project implementation and objectives realistic related to the specificity of a transitions state and the status of new EU member? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strength of the link between expected results from the Project and the needs of target beneficiaries Degree of involvement and inclusiveness of beneficiaries and stakeholders in Project design and implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficiaries and stakeholders Needs assessment studies Project documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews with beneficiaries and stakeholders
<i>Is the Project internally coherent in its design?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there a direct and strong link between expected results of the Project (log frame) and the Project design (in terms of Project components, choice of partners, structure, delivery mechanism, scope, budget, use of resources etc)? Is the length of the Project conducting to achieve Project outcomes? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of coherence between Project expected results and Project design internal logic Level of coherence between project design and project implementation approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program and Project documents Key project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Key Interviews
<i>How is the Project relevant in light of other donors?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With regards to Bulgaria as an EU funding eligible country, does the Project remain relevant in terms of areas of focus and targeting of key activities? How do GEF-funds help to fill gaps (or give additional stimulus) that are crucial but are not covered by other donors? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree to which program was coherent and complementary to other donor programming in Bulgaria and regionally List of programs and funds in which the future developments, ideas and partnerships of the project are eligible? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other Donors' policies and programming documents Other Donor representatives Project documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents analyses Interviews with other Donors
Future directions for similar Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What lessons have been learnt and what changes could have been made to the Project in order to strengthen the alignment between the Project and the Partners' priorities and areas of focus? How could the Project better target and address the priorities and development challenges of targeted beneficiaries? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collected throughout evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis
Evaluation criteria: Effectiveness – To what extent are the expected outcomes of the Project being achieved?				
<i>How is the Project effective in achieving its expected outcomes?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the Project being effective in building capacity and removing barriers for SLM in Bulgaria through the achievement of its expected outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sound land policy and a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework for sustainable land management; Institutional and technical capacity for sustainable land management and combating desertification strengthened; Local capacity for land planning and participatory decision-making strengthened; Resources mobilized for NSAP implementation as well as innovative financial mechanisms and economic incentives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combat land degradation through alternatives economic development activities Change in SLM practices Change in capacity for information management: Knowledge acquisition and sharing; Effective data gathering, methods and procedures for reporting on biodiversity Change in capacity for awareness raising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder involvement and government awareness Change in local stakeholder behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Key stakeholders Research findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents analysis Meetings with main Project Partners including UNDP, Project Team, Gov. of Bulgaria and other Partners Interviews with project beneficiaries

Evaluated component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
<p><i>How is risk and risk mitigation being managed?</i></p> <p>Future directions for similar Projects</p>	<p>explored and agreed with farmers and other land users and the key Ministries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Change in capacity in policy making and planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policy reform to combat land degradation ○ Legislation/regulation change to improve SLM ○ Development of national and local strategies and plans supporting SLM ▪ Change in capacity in implementation and enforcement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Design and implementation of risk assessments ○ Implementation of national and local strategies and action plans through adequate institutional frameworks and their maintenance ○ Monitoring, evaluation and promotion of pilots ▪ Change in capacity in mobilizing resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Leverage of resources ○ human resources ○ appropriate practices ○ mobilization of advisory services 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How well are risks and assumptions being managed? ▪ What was the quality of risk mitigation strategies developed? Were these sufficient? ▪ Are there clear strategies for risk mitigation related with long term sustainability of the project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completeness of risk identification and assumptions during Project planning ▪ Quality of existing information systems in place to identify emerging risks and other issues? ▪ Quality of risk mitigations strategies developed and followed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documents and evaluations ▪ UNDP and project staff and Project Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document analysis ▪ Interviews
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What lessons have been learnt for the Project to achieve its outcomes? ▪ What changes could have been made (if any) to the design of the Project in order to improve the achievement of the Project' expected results? ▪ How could the Project be more effective in achieving its results? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data collected throughout evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data analysis
<p>Evaluation criteria: <i>Efficiency</i> - How efficiently is the Project implemented?</p>				
<p><i>Is Project support channeled in an efficient way?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Was adaptive management used or needed to ensure efficient resource use? ▪ Did the Project logical framework and work plans and any changes made to them use as management tools during implementation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Availability and quality of financial and progress reports ▪ Timeliness and adequacy of reporting provided ▪ Level of discrepancy between planned and utilized financial expenditures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documents and evaluations ▪ UNDP, Gov. of Bulgaria and Project personnel ▪ Beneficiaries and Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document analysis ▪ Key Interviews

Evaluated component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
<p><i>How efficient are partnership arrangements for the Project?</i></p> <p><i>Does the Project efficiently utilize local capacity in implementation?</i></p> <p>Future directions for similar Projects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were the accounting and financial systems in place adequate for Project management and producing accurate and timely financial information? Were progress reports produced accurately, timely and responded to reporting requirements including adaptive management changes? Was Project implementation as cost effective as originally proposed (planned vs. actual) Was the leveraging of funds (co-financing) happened as planned? Were financial resources utilized efficiently? Could financial resources have been used more efficiently? How was RBM used during program and Project implementation? Were there an institutionalized or informal feedback or dissemination mechanisms to ensure that findings, lessons learned and recommendations pertaining to Project design and implementation effectiveness were shared among Project stakeholders, UNDP and GEF Staff and other relevant organizations for ongoing Project adjustment and improvement? Did the Project mainstream gender considerations into its implementation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planned vs. actual funds leveraged Cost in view of results achieved compared to costs of similar projects from other organizations Adequacy of project choices in view of existing context, infrastructure and cost Quality of RBM reporting (progress reporting, monitoring and evaluation) Occurrence of change in project design/ implementation approach (ie restructuring) when needed to improve project efficiency Existence, quality and use of M&E, feedback and dissemination mechanism to share findings, lessons learned and recommendation on effectiveness of project design. Cost associated with delivery mechanism and management structure compare to alternatives Gender disaggregated data in project documents 	partners	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent partnerships/linkages between institutions/ organizations were encouraged and supported? Which partnerships/linkages were facilitated? Which one can be considered sustainable? What was the level of efficiency of cooperation and collaboration arrangements? (between local actors, UNDP/GEF and the Government of Bulgaria) Which methods were successful or not and why? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific activities conducted to support the development of cooperative arrangements between partners, Examples of supported partnerships Evidence that particular partnerships/linkages will be sustained Types/quality of partnership cooperation methods utilized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations Project Partners Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was an appropriate balance struck between utilization of international expertise as well as local capacity? Did the Project take into account local capacity in design and implementation of the Project? Was there an effective collaboration with scientific institutions with competence in sustainable land management? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of total expertise utilized taken from Bulgaria Number/quality of analyses done to assess local capacity potential and absorptive capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNDP, Project Team and Project partners Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What lessons can be learnt from the Project on efficiency? How could the Project have more efficiently addressed its key priorities (in terms of management structures and procedures, partnerships arrangements etc...)? What changes could have been made (if any) to the Project in order to improve its efficiency? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collected throughout evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis

Evaluated component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
Evaluation criteria: <i>Impacts</i> - What are the potential and realized impacts of activities carried out in the context of the Project?				
<i>How is the Project effective in achieving its long term objective?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will the project achieve its long-term goal that is to enhance the enabling environment and capacity for arresting land degradation and establishing SLM practices in order to contribute to enhancing ecosystem health, integrity, functions and services while promoting sustainable livelihoods in Bulgaria? Will the project achieve its objective that is to build capacity for development and implementation of a coherent land policy? Will it focus on mainstreaming, institutional and technical capacity building, and establishing financial mechanisms and resource mobilization for sustainable land management? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in use and implementation of sustainable alternatives Change in capacity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To pool/mobilize resources For related policy making and strategic planning, For implementation of related laws and strategies through adequate institutional frameworks and their maintenance, Change to the quantity and strength of barriers such as change in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge about SLM and national incentives for SLM Cross-institutional coordination and inter-sectoral dialogue Knowledge of SLM practices by end users Coordination of policy and legal instruments incorporating SM SLM Economic incentives for farmers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Key Stakeholders Research findings; if available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents analysis Meetings with UNDP, Project Team and Project Partners Interviews with project beneficiaries and other stakeholders
<i>How is the Project effective in achieving the objectives of the UNCCD?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the impacts or likely impacts of the Project? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On the local environment; particularly land degradation; On poverty; and, On other socio-economic issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide specific examples of impacts at those three levels, as relevant List of potential structural funds (specific development funds for EU regions) to be used to assure long term sustainability of UNCCD objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents UNCCD Convention's documents Key Stakeholders Research findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis Interviews with key stakeholders
Future directions for the Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How could the Project build on its apparent successes and learn from its weaknesses in order to enhance the potential for impact of ongoing and future initiatives? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collected throughout evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis
Evaluation criteria: <i>Sustainability</i> - Are the initiatives and results of the Project allowing for continued benefits?				
<i>Are sustainability issues adequately integrated in Project design?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were sustainability issues integrated into the design and implementation of the Project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence/Quality of sustainability strategy Evidence/Quality of steps taken to address sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNDP personnel and Project Partners Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews
<i>Financial Sustainability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the Project adequately address financial and economic sustainability issues? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level and source of future financial support to be provided to relevant sectors and activities in Bulgaria after Project end? Evidence of commitments from government or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNDP and project personnel and Project Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews

Evaluated component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
<i>Organizations arrangements and continuation of activities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the recurrent costs after Project completion sustainable? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> other stakeholder to financially support relevant sectors of activities after Project end Level of recurrent costs after completion of Project and funding sources for those recurrent costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficiaries 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were the results of efforts made during the Project implementation period well assimilated by organizations and their internal systems and procedures? Is there evidence that Project partners will continue their activities beyond Project support? What degree is there of local ownership of initiatives and results? Were appropriate ‘champions’ being identified and/or supported? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree to which Project activities and results have been taken over by local counterparts or institutions/organizations Level of financial support to be provided to relevant sectors and activities by in-country actors after Project end Number/quality of champions identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNDP and project personnel and Project Partners Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews
<i>Enabling Environment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were laws, policies and frameworks addressed through the Project, in order to address sustainability of key initiatives and reforms? Were the necessary related capacities for lawmaking and enforcement built? What is the level of political commitment to build on the results of the project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efforts to support the development of relevant laws and policies State of enforcement and law making capacity Evidences of commitment by the political class through speeches, enactment of laws and resource allocation to priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNDP and project personnel and Project Partners Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews
<i>Institutional and individual capacity building</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the capacity in place at the national and local levels adequate to ensure sustainability of the results achieved to date? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elements in place in those different management functions, at the appropriate levels (national, district and municipal) in terms of adequate structures, strategies, systems, skills, incentives and interrelationships with other key actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNDP and project personnel and Project Partners Beneficiaries Capacity assessments available, if any 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Documentation review
<i>Social and political sustainability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the Project contribute to key building blocks for social and political sustainability? Did the Project contribute to landowners and farmers’ acceptance of the new practices? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example of contributions to sustainable political and social change in support of the convention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNDP and project personnel and Project Partners Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Documentation review
<i>Replication</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were Project activities and results replicated elsewhere and/or scaled up? What was the Project contribution to replication or scaling up of innovative practices or mechanisms that support the UNCCD objectives? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number/quality of replicated initiatives Number/quality of replicated innovative initiatives Volume of additional investment leveraged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other donor programming documents Beneficiaries UNDP and project personnel and Project Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews
<i>Challenges to sustainability of the</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the main challenges that may hinder sustainability of efforts? Have any of these been addressed through Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges in view of building blocks of sustainability as presented above Recent changes which may present new 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews

Evaluated component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
<i>Project</i> Future directions for the Project	management? ■ What could be the possible measures to further contribute to the sustainability of efforts achieved with the Project?	challenges to the Project ■ Education strategy and partnership with school, education institutions etc.	■ UNDP and project personnel and Project Partners	
	■ Which areas/arrangements under the Project show the strongest potential for lasting long-term results? ■ What are the key challenges and obstacles to the sustainability of results of the Project initiatives that must be directly and quickly addressed? ■ How can the experience and good accumulated project practices influence the strategies for SLM in Bulgaria? ■ Are the Bulgarian decision making institutions (Parliament, Government etc.) ready to improve their strategy for SLM?		■ Data collected throughout evaluation	■ Data analysis

Annex 3: List of Documents Reviewed

- Council of Ministers, 2001, *National Strategy for the Environment and Action Plan 2000-2006*
- EcoLogic Consultancy Ltd., 2008, *Stakeholder Review of the UNDP/GEF project “Capacity Building for Sustainable Land Management in Bulgaria”*
- European Environment Agency, *Europe’s Environment – The Fourth Assessment – Executive Summary*
- GOB, *Law on Soils*
- KPMG, April 2006, *UNDP SLM – Audit Report Financial Year Ended 31 December 2005*
- KPMG, April 2007, *UNDP SLM – Audit Report Financial Year Ended 31 December 2006*
- Mark Johnstad and Rossen Vassilev, July 20, 2007, *Capacity Building for SLM in Bulgaria – Mid-Term Evaluation*
- MOAFS, *The 10 National Environment Standards related to Land Use - Minister of MOAFS Order*
- MOEW, April 2002, *First National Report of the Republic of Bulgaria on the Implementation of the UNCCD*
- MOEW, GEF, UNDP, 2004, *NCSA: Capacity Building Strategy and Plan for Bulgaria’s Implementation of the Obligations Under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification*
- MOEW, GEF, UNDP, 2004, *NCSA: Thematic Assessment Report: Combating Desertification and Land Degradation - Summary*
- MOEW, *SLM Unit – Descriptions of Functions*
- Outkine Mikhail, December 8-9, 2005, *Introduction to NAPs and Relevance to UNCCD and SD*
- Republic of Bulgaria, September 2006, *National Strategy Plan for Rural Development (2007-2013)*
- Republic of Bulgaria, December 27, 2006, *National Agriculture and Rural Development Plan over the Period 2000-2006 under the EU Special Accession Program for Agriculture and Rural Development (SAPARD)*
- SLM Project, 2006, *NAP 2007-2013 on SLM and Combating Desertification in Bulgaria*
- SLM Project, March 2006, *Quarterly Progress Report – UNDP/GEF-GOB SLM – January to March 2006*
- SLM Project, June 2006, *Quarterly Progress Report – UNDP/GEF-GOB SLM – April to June 2006*
- SLM Project, September 2006, *Quarterly Progress Report – UNDP/GEF-GOB SLM – July-September 2006*
- SLM Project, December 2006, *Quarterly Progress Report – UNDP/GEF-GOB SLM – October-Dec. 2006*
- SLM Project, March 2007, *Quarterly Progress Report – UNDP/GEF-GOB SLM – January to March 2007*
- SLM Project, June 2007, *Quarterly Progress Report – UNDP/GEF-GOB SLM – April to June 2007*
- SLM Project, September 2007, *Quarterly Progress Report – UNDP/GEF-GOB SLM – July-September 2007*
- SLM Project, December 2007, *Quarterly Progress Report – UNDP/GEF-GOB SLM – October-Dec. 2007*
- SLM Project, March 2008, *Monthly Report (Mar. 2008) and Proposed WP (Apr. 2008) for the SLM Project*
- SLM Project, *Inception Report*
- SLM Project, *Progress towards Achievement of the Planned Project Outputs – Review Document*
- SLM Project, January 10, 2007, *Advisory Board First Meeting – Minutes of Meeting*
- SLM Project, 2006, *Focused and Result-Oriented Strategy on Capacity Building for SLM*
- The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, December 2007, *Republic of Bulgaria – Rural Development Programme (2007-2013)*
- TTZ Bremerhaven, 2005, *Capacity Building for SLM in Bulgaria - SLM Practices*
- TTZ Bremerhaven, 2005, *Capacity Building for SLM in Bulgaria – Implementation Strategies*

TTZ Bremerhaven, 2005, *Capacity Building for SLM in Bulgaria – Suggestions for an Incorporation Strategy of SLM Principles in the NAP*

UNDP, 2006, *Annual Project Report*

UNDP, 2007, *Annual Project Report*

UNDP, 2005, *Annual Work Plan*

UNDP, Jan-Dec. 2005, *Combined Delivery Report by Activity with Encumbrance*

UNDP, Jan-Dec. 2006, *Combined Delivery Report by Activity with Encumbrance*

UNDP, Jan-Dec. 2007, *Combined Delivery Report by Activity with Encumbrance*

UNDP, December 2007, *Project Factsheet: SLM in Bulgaria*

UNDP, November 16, 2005, *UNDP Country Programme for Bulgaria (2006-2009)*

UNDP, 2006, *UNDP GEF APR/PIR 2006 – OP15 (1 July 2005 to 30 June 2006)*

UNDP, 2007, *UNDP GEF APR/PIR 2007 – OP15 (1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007)*

UNDP, 2008, *UNDP GEF APR/PIR 2008 – OP15 (1 September 2007 to 29 February 2008)*

UNDP/GEF, GOB, *Capacity Building for SLM in Bulgaria Project (brochure)*

UNDP/GEF, GOB, *Project: Capacity Building for SLM in Bulgaria (information sheet)*

UNDP/GEF, GOB, *Project: Capacity Building for SLM in Bulgaria (detailed information sheet)*

UNDP/GEF, GOB, May 22, 2006, *NAP for SLM and Combat Desertification – National Forum*

UNDP/GEF, GOB, *Medium Size Project Document: Capacity Building for SLM in Bulgaria*

United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), April 29, 2005, *Standards for Evaluation in the UN System*

UNDP/GEF, GOB, *Medium Size Project Document: Integrating Global Environmental Issues into Bulgaria's Regional Development Process*

UNDP/GEF, 2007, *PIR 2007 Bulgaria – Integrating Global Environmental Issues into Bulgaria's Regional Development Process*

UNDP/GEF, GOB, January 2007, *SLM Policy in Bulgaria and its Implementation at Municipal Level*

UNDP/GEF, GOB, 2006, *Soil Degradation Processes and Options for SLM in Bulgaria – Baseline Report*

UNDP/GEF, GOB, September 2007, *Practical Guidelines: Integration of the SLM Policies at the Local Level and within the Municipal Development Plans 2007-2013*

UNDP/GEF, GOB, December 21, 2005, *Capacity Building for SLM in Bulgaria – Steering Committee First Meeting – Minutes of Meeting*

UNDP/GEF, GOB, June 26, 2006, *Capacity Building for SLM in Bulgaria – Steering Committee Second Meeting – Minutes of Meeting*

UNDP/GEF, GOB, December 12, 2006, *Capacity Building for SLM in Bulgaria – Steering Committee Third Meeting – Minutes of Meeting*

UNDP/GEF, GOB, July 13, 2007, *Capacity Building for SLM in Bulgaria – Steering Committee Fourth Meeting – Minutes of Meeting*

UNDP/GEF, GOB, December 4, 2007, *Capacity Building for SLM in Bulgaria – Steering Committee Fifth Meeting – Minutes of Meeting*

_____, *Code of Good Agricultural Practice to Prevent Pollution of Waters by Nitrates from Agricultural Sources*

_____, May 2006, *National Agri-Environment Programme (NAEP) for Bulgaria (2007-2013)*

_____, 2006, *National Plan for Development of Organic Farming in Bulgaria 2006-2013*

Main Web Sites Consulted:

Bulgarian NCSA: <http://chm.moew.government.bg/ncsa/indexEn.htm>

GEF: <http://www.gefweb.org>

GEF Evaluation Office: <http://gefweb.org/MonitoringandEvaluation/MEAbout/meabout.html>

Global Mechanism for UNCCD: <http://www.global-mechanism.org/>

MOAFS: http://www.mzp.government.bg/MZ_eng/Default.asp

MOEW: http://www.moew.government.bg/index_e.html

SLM Project: http://www.unccd-slm.org/item_en.php?lang=en&id=1

UNCCD: <http://www.unccd.int/main.php>

UNDP-GEF M&E: <http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html>

Annex 4: Evaluation Mission Agenda

April 16 to 26, 2008

16 April 2008 (Wednesday) Ottawa

16:15: Departure of Mr. Bellamy - Ottawa

17 April 2008 (Thursday) Sofia

14:05: Arrival of Mr. Bellamy - Sofia

16:30 - 17:30: Introductory meeting with EcoLogic Consultancy @ SLM Project office (room 304, MOEW)

18 April 2008 (Friday) Sofia

10:00 - 11:00: Meeting with Mr. Carsten Germer, UNDP Programme Analyst. @ SLM Project office (room 304, MOEW)

11:00 - 12:00: Meeting with Ms. Ivanka Todorova, SLM Project Manager @ SLM Project office (room 304, MOEW)

14:00- 14:30: *travel*

14:30 - 15:30: Meetings with research institutes @Soil Institute N. Phushkarov

Soil Institute

Prof. Dr. Eng. Nikola Kolev- Director, Dr. Sci.

Assoc. Prof. Nikolay Dinev- Deputy Director, Ph.D.

Prof. Ekaterina Filcheva, Ph.D.- Scientific Secretary

Assoc. Prof. Asen Lazarov- Head of Soil Erosion Department

Assoc. Prof. Elka Tsvetkova- Soil Erosion Department

16:00 - 17:00:

Soil Agency

Meeting with the Soil Agency

Damyan Mihalev- Director of Agency

Ivan Meshkov- Director of GIS Directorate

Aleksander Kulikov- expert

Travel to Veliko Tarnovo

19 April 2008 (Saturday), Veliko Tarnovo

Field visit

10:30-12:00: Meeting with representatives of the Municipality of Suhindol, visit to a demonstration project object (in the village of Suhindol) and discussion with local farmers on spot (if possible)

Plamen Chernev- Mayor of Suhindol Municipality

Hristo Bodurov- Head of the Municipality Company, implement the demo project

20:00-22:00: Veliko Tarnovo – Dinner with representatives from Regional Inspectorate (RI)-Veliko Tarnovo and Regional Agricultural Advisory Service (RAAS)-Veliko Tarnovo

RAAS- Veliko Tarnovo

Dean Donchev

Daniela Ivanova
Bonka Cholakova
Evgeny Ivanov

RI- V. Tarnovo
Serafim Dimitrov

20 April 2008 (Sunday), Veliko Tarnovo

free

21 April 2008 (Monday) Sofia

10:00 - 11:00: place: MOAFS

Meeting with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Supply (MOAFS)
Viara Stefanova- head of department Agroecology, Rural Region Directorate
Veselka Ignatova- expert, department Agroecology- PSC member
Aleksander Atanasov- expert, department Agroecology

11:00 - 12:00: place: SFA

Meeting with the State Forestry Agency (SFA)
Eng Stoycho Byalkov- Director of Forestry Directorate
Nikolay Yonov- Director of Strategy, Programs, Research and Education Directorate
George Tinchev- Heads of department, PSC member
Maria Belovarska- expert (erosion)
Dimitar Bardarov- head of department (erosion)

13:30- 14:00: travel

14:00 - 17:00: place: NAAS

Meeting with the National Agricultural Advisory Service (NAAS), Regional Agricultural Advisory Services (RAAS), farmers
Georgy Gramenov- General Secretary, NAAS
Vasilka Stoyanova- Director of Extension Service Directorate, NAAS
Stefka Damianova- head of department, NAAS
Lyubomir Marinov- expert, NAAS, PSC member
Tanya Encheva- expert, NAAS
Valentina Radulova- RAAS- Sofia city
Krasimir Doychev- RAAS- Sofia region

Kristina Petrova – farmer
Tsvetanka Stoeva – farmer
Tanya Koleva – farmer
Lyubomir Dimitrov – farmer
Boyko Georgiev - farmer

22 April 2008 (Tuesday) Sofia

9:30-10:45: MOEW

Meeting with the Ministry of Environment and Waters (MOEW)
Tatyana Dimitrova- Project Director, NFP on UNCCD, expert on soil, PSC member
Yulia Makedoncheva- Head of department

11:00 - 12:00: place: SLM Project office (room 304, MOEW)

Meeting with NGOs: Borrowed Nature
Petar Radev, Borrowed Nature

14:00- 14:30: travel

14:30 - 15:30: place: ExEA, conference hall ground floor
Meeting with the Executive Environment Agency (ExEA)
Krasimira Avramova- Director of Monitoring Directorate
Nevena Ivanova- expert (biodiversity)
Radoslav Ivanov- expert (IT)
Gergana Georgieva- expert (pollution)
Borisslava Borissova- expert (erosion)

15:45- 16:30: travel

16:30 - 17:30: place: WWF
Meeting with NGO: WWF
Givko Bogdanov- WWF
Yanka Kazakova- WWF

23 April 2008 (Wednesday)

Field visit

10:00-12:00: Ihtiman municipality (Sofia - Ihtiman: 1 hour)
Meeting with representatives of the Municipality of Ihtiman, visit to a demonstration project object (in the village of Givkovo) and discussion with local farmers on spot
Margarita Petkova- mayor
Mr. Patarov- deputy mayor
Nadia Velkova- expert, municipality

Boiko Patarov- local company, implement the demo project

14:15- 15:30: travel

16:00-17:00: Plovdiv, University of Agriculture-Plovdiv
Meeting with the University of Agriculture-Plovdiv
Dimitar Grekov – Rector of the University of Agriculture
Hristina Yancheva – Deputy Rector of the University of Agriculture

24 April 2008 (Thursday) Sofia

9:30-13:00: MOEW, conference hall ground floor- 67 Gladston Str.

Focus group meeting with representatives from all stakeholders (approx. 20 experts) on Lessons Learned topic
Nikola Kolev, Director, Soils sciences institute “Pushkarov”
Ekaterina Filcheva, Scientific secretary, Soils sciences institute “Pushkarov”
Elka Tsvetkova Researcher, Soils sciences institute “Pushkarov”
Aleksander Atanasov, Expert, Agri-environment and LFA Department, Rural Development Directorate, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Supply
Gergana Georgieva, Expert, Environmental Executive Agency
Lyubomir Marinov, Expert, NAAS
Ivan Marinov, Researcher and lecturer, Forestry University, Sofia
Prof. Ivan Atanasov, Institute for sustainable development, NGO

Viara Gancheva, Chairman, Forum for sustainable development Focus, NGO
Carsten Germer, UNDP
Ivanka Todorova, SLM Project Manager
Svetlana Aladjem, EcoLogic Consultancy Ltd.
Dimitrina Boteva, EcoLogic Consultancy Ltd.
Jean-Joseph Bellamy, International Management Consultant

14:30 - 15:30: MOEW, conference hall ground floor- 67 Gladston Str.
Meeting with representatives of the Forest University, Forest Institute, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, the National Institute of Agricultural Economics, Agrolink

Scientific Institutes

Margarita Mondeshka- University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy
Ivanka Yanakieva- National Institute of Agricultural Economics
Yordanka Stancheva- Forestry University
Ivan Marinov- Forestry Institute

Milena Yordanova - AGROLINK Association for sustainable environmental solutions

16:00-17:00: MRDPW (Ministry of Regional Development)
Nayden Naydenov - State Expert

25 April 2008 (Friday) Sofia

10:00-12:00: Wrap-up meeting with UNDP @UNDP
Maria Zlatareva - Assistant RR (Programme)
Carsten Germer – Programme Analyst

11:30-12:30: Debriefing meeting @SLM Project Office
Svetlana Aladjem, EcoLogic Consultancy
Dimitrina Boteva, EcoLogic Consultancy
Ivanka Todorova, SLM Project Manager
Carsten Germer, UNDP Programme Analyst

Annex 5: Interview Guide

I. RELEVANCE - *How does the Project relate to the main objectives of the UNCCD, GEF and to the development challenges faced by the Government of Bulgaria for mitigating land degradation?*

- I.1. Is the Project relevant to United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and GEF objectives?
- I.2. Is the Project relevant to UNDP objectives?
- I.3. Is the Project relevant to Bulgaria development objectives?
- I.4. Does the Project address the needs of target beneficiaries?
- I.5. Is the Project internally coherent in its design?
- I.6. How is the Project relevant in light of other donors?

Future directions for similar projects

- I.7. What lessons have been learnt and what changes could have been made to the Project in order to strengthen the alignment between the Project and the Partners' priorities and areas of focus?
- I.8. How could the Project better target and address the priorities and development challenges of targeted beneficiaries?

II. EFFECTIVENESS – *To what extent are the expected outcomes of the Project being achieved?*

- II.1. How is the Project effective in achieving its expected outcomes?
 - Sound land policy and a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework for sustainable land management;
 - Institutional and technical capacity for sustainable land management and combating desertification strengthened;
 - Local capacity for land planning and participatory decision-making strengthened;
 - Resources mobilized for NSAP implementation as well as innovative financial mechanisms and economic incentives explored and agreed with farmers and other land users and the key Ministries.
- II.2. How is risk and risk mitigation being managed?

Future directions for similar projects

- II.3. What lessons have been learnt for the Project to achieve its outcomes?
- II.4. What changes could have been made (if any) to the design of the Project in order to improve the achievement of the Project' expected results?
- II.5. How could the Project be more effective in achieving its results?

III. EFFICIENCY - *How efficiently is the Project implemented?*

- III.1. Was adaptive management used or needed to ensure efficient resource use?
- III.2. Did the Project logical framework and work plans and any changes made to them use as management tools during implementation?

- III.3. Were the accounting and financial systems in place adequate for Project management and producing accurate and timely financial information?
- III.4. Were progress reports produced accurately, timely and respond to reporting requirements including adaptive management changes?
- III.5. Was Project implementation as cost effective as originally proposed (planned vs. actual)
- III.6. Was the leveraging of funds (co-financing) happening as planned?
- III.7. Were financial resources utilized efficiently? Could financial resources have been used more efficiently?
- III.8. How was RBM used during program and Project implementation?
- III.9. Were there an institutionalized or informal feedback or dissemination mechanism to ensure that findings, lessons learned and recommendations pertaining to Project design and implementation effectiveness were shared among Project stakeholders, UNDP and GEF Staff and other relevant organizations for ongoing Project adjustment and improvement?
- III.10. Did the Project mainstream gender considerations into its implementation?
- III.11. To what extent were partnerships/ linkages between institutions/ organizations encouraged and supported?
- III.12. Which partnerships/linkages were facilitated? Which one can be considered sustainable?
- III.13. What was the level of efficiency of cooperation and collaboration arrangements? (between local actors, UNDP/GEF and the Government of Bulgaria)
- III.14. Was an appropriate balance struck between utilization of international expertise as well as local capacity?
- III.15. Did the Project take into account local capacity in design and implementation of the Project?

Future directions for the Project

- III.16. What lessons can be learnt from the Project on efficiency?
- III.17. How could the Project have more efficiently addressed its key priorities (in terms of management structures and procedures, partnerships arrangements etc...)?

IV. IMPACTS - *What are the potential and realized impacts of activities carried out in the context of the Project?*

- IV.1. Will the project achieve its long-term goal that is to enhance the enabling environment and capacity for arresting land degradation and establishing SLM practices in order to contribute to enhancing ecosystem health, integrity, functions and services while promoting sustainable livelihoods in Bulgaria?
- IV.2. Will the project achieve its objective that is to build capacity for development and implementation of a coherent land policy? Will it focus on mainstreaming, institutional and technical capacity building, and establishing financial mechanisms and resource mobilization for sustainable land management?
- IV.3. How is the Project effective in achieving the objectives of the UNCCD such as impacts or likely impacts on the local environment; on poverty; and, on other socio-economic issues?

Future directions for the Project

- IV.4. How could the Project build on its apparent successes and learn from its weaknesses in order to enhance the potential for impact of ongoing and future initiatives?

V. SUSTAINABILITY - *Are the initiatives and results of the Project allowing for continued benefits?*

- V.1. Are sustainability issues adequately integrated in Project design?
- V.2. Did the Project adequately address financial and economic sustainability issues?
- V.3. Is there evidence that Project partners will continue their activities beyond Project support?
- V.4. Are laws, policies and frameworks being addressed through the Project, in order to address sustainability of key initiatives and reforms?
- V.5. Is the capacity in place at the national and local levels adequate to ensure sustainability of the results achieved to date?
- V.6. Did the Project contribute to key building blocks for social and political sustainability?
- V.7. Are Project activities and results being replicated elsewhere and/or scaled up?
- V.8. What are the main challenges that may hinder sustainability of efforts?

Future directions for the Project

- V.9. Which areas/arrangements under the Project show the strongest potential for lasting long-term results?
- V.10. What are the key challenges and obstacles to the sustainability of results of the Project initiatives that must be directly and quickly addressed?

VI. ANY OTHER COMMENTS ON THE PROJECT?

Thank you very much for your input.

Annex 6: List of People Interviewed

Name	Position / Contact	Organization
Atanasov Aleksander	Expert, Agri-environment and LFA Department, Rural Development Directorate	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Supply
Atanasov Ivan		Institute for sustainable development
Avramova Krasimira	Director of Monitoring Directorate	ExEA
Bardarov Dimitar	Head of department (erosion)	SFA
Belovarska Maria	Expert (erosion)	SFA
Bodurov Hristo	Head of the Municipality Company, implemented the demo project	Suhindol Municipality
Bogdanov Givko		WWF
Borissova Borisslava	Expert (erosion)	ExEA
Byalkov Stoycho	Director of Forestry Directorate	SFA
Chernev Plamen	Mayor	Suhindol Municipality
Cholakova Bonka		RAAS - Veliko Tarnovo
Damianova Stefka	Head of department	NAAS
Dimitrov Lyubomir		Farmer
Dimitrov Serafim		RI - V. Tarnovo
Dimitrova Tatyana	Project Director, NFP on UNCCD, expert on soil, PSC member	MOEW
Dinev Nikolay	Deputy Director, Ph.D.	Soil Institute
Donchev Dean		RAAS - Veliko Tarnovo
Doychev Krasimir		RAAS- Sofia region
Encheva Tanya	Expert	NAAS
Filcheva Ekaterina	Scientific secretary	Soils sciences institute "Pushkarov"
Gancheva Viara	Chairman	Forum for SD Focus
Georgiev Boyko		Farmer
Georgieva Gergana	Expert	ExEA
Germer Carsten	Programme Analyst	UNDP
Gramenov Georgy	General Secretary	NAAS
Grekov Dimitar	Rector	University of Agriculture – Plovdiv
Ignatova Veselka	Expert and PSC member	Department Agroecology, MOAFS
Ivanov Evgeny		RAAS - Veliko Tarnovo
Ivanov Radoslav	Expert (IT)	ExEA
Ivanova Daniela		RAAS - Veliko Tarnovo
Ivanova Nevena	Expert (biodiversity)	ExEA
Kazakova Yanka		WWF

Name	Position / Contact	Organization
Kolev Nikola	Director	Soils sciences institute "Pushkarov"
Koleva Tanya		Farmer
Kulikov Aleksander	Expert	Soil Agency
Lazarov Asen	Head of Department	Soil Erosion Department
Makedoncheva Yulia	Head of department	MOEW
Mamaev Vladimir	GEF Regional Technical Advisor	UNDP – Europe and the CIS
Marinov Ivan	Researcher and lecturer	Forestry University, Sofia
Marinov Lyubomir	Expert, PSC member	NAAS
Mihalev Damyan	Director	Soil Agency
Meshkov Ivan	Director of GIS Directorate	Soil Agency
Mondeshka Margarita		University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy
Naydenov Nayden	State Expert	MRDPW
Patarov	Deputy Mayor	Ihtiman
Patarov Boiko		Local company, implemented the demo project, Village of Givkovo
Petkova Margarita	Mayor	Ihtiman
Petrova Kristina		Farmer
Radev Petar		Borrowed Nature
Radulova Valentina		RAAS- Sofia city
Stancheva Yordanka		Forestry University
Stefanova Viara	Head of Department Agroecology	Rural Region Directorate, MOAFS
Stoeva Tsvetanka		Farmer
Stoyanova Vasilka	Director of Extension Service Directorate	NAAS
Tinchev George	Heads of department, PSC member	SFA
Todorova Ivanka	Manager	SLM Project
Tsvetkova Elka	Researcher	Soils sciences institute "Pushkarov"
Velkova Nadia	Expert	Municipality of Ihtiman
Yanakieva Ivanka		National Institute of Agricultural Economics
Yancheva Hristina	Deputy Rector	University of Agriculture - Plovdiv
Yonov Nikolay	Director of Strategy, Programs, Research and Education Directorate	SFA
Yordanova Milena		AGROLINK Association for sustainable environmental solutions
Zlatareva Maria	Assistant RR (Programme)	UNDP Bulgaria

Annex 7: Status of Results

(from PIR2008 – Feb. 2008)

Project Strategy	Targets	Status As of February 2008
Long-term Goal: is to enhance the enabling environment and capacity for arresting land degradation and establishing sustainable land management practice so as to contribute to enhancing ecosystem health, integrity, functions and services while promoting sustainable livelihoods in Bulgaria.		
Objective: To build capacity for development and implementation of a coherent land policy. It will focus on mainstreaming, institutional and technical capacity building at and financial mechanisms and resource mobilisation for sustainable land management.	By the end of the project at least 30 staff in the MOEW with in-house capacities to provide policy advice on SLM and on monitoring of policy implementation.	The capacity of the MOEW staff strengthened through 4 scientific and practical papers, 5 normative documents, training of 34 staff ¹⁴ , printed materials, key documents, etc.
	By the end of project, at least 35 staff in the MOAFS with in-house capacities to provide satisfactory policy advice on soil degradation/SLM issues at the municipal level.	The capacity of the SFA ¹⁵ staff strengthened through trainings (58 Staff ¹⁶), printed materials, procurement of technical equipment.
	At least 3 ¹⁷ pieces of legislation on soil conservation and agricultural practices that minimize soil losses passed and approved before the end of the project	Soil Act adopted by the National Assembly and promulgated in the State Gazette on 6 November 2007. 3 Regulations were approved by MOEW: Council Soil promulgated in the State Gazette on 6 February 2007– Regulation for reference values, Regulation for contaminated sites management and Regulation of biodiversity monitoring (including NAEP indicators). The draft of the National Action Program approved by MOEW (19 February) and submitted for approval by the Council of Ministers. It still cannot be regarded as officially approved ¹⁸
	Resources committed for implementation of NAP covering at least 90% of resources needed for the first 3 years of NAP implementation.	The NAP is now being accompanied with a realistic financial plan as per Ministry of Finance directive this means that with the adoption of the NAP 100 % financing would be secured. The common opinion is the NAP is well balanced and financially secured. However as mentioned above the NAP still awaits official by the Council of Ministers.
Outcome 1 Sound land policy and a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework.	A comprehensive and technically high quality stocktaking Baseline Report elaborated including also options for sustainable land management and combat desertification	The “Soils Degradation Processes and options for SLM in Bulgaria” Baseline Report elaborated and validated by stakeholders and international consultants (TTZ Bremerhaven/ IEES). It was elaborated on the basis of 12 thematic reports by highly qualified experts and using the available information from MOEW, MOAFS, ExEA, the National Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology, Soil Institute “N. Pushkarov”, Agricultural University-Plovdiv. The Baseline Report, as well as the thematic reports, are available on the project’s website. The Baseline Report was printed and disseminated.

¹⁴ 34 staff includes 10 ExEA experts, 4 of MOEW and one expert from each of the 4 RBD and the 16 RIEWs

¹⁵ By a decree of the Council of Ministers in 2007 MOAFS was divided into MASF and SFA

¹⁶ 58 staff includes 5 experts of MOAFS, 5 of SFA, 10 experts of the Central Office of NAAS one expert from each of the 28 RAAS and 10 RFBs

¹⁷ The 3 pieces in accordance with the Project Document are as follows: the Soil Protection Act, NAP and NAEP with Good agricultural practices code. As the last has been already elaborated at the project beginning, it was replaced with 3 Regulations.

¹⁸ NAP has not yet been approved by the Council of Ministers (it was approved by MOEW on 19 February and submitted to the Council of Ministers)

Project Strategy	Targets	Status As of February 2008
	A NAP completed by the 10th month of the project	<p>The NAP elaborated by a team of national consultants with the cooperation of international consultants (TTZ Bremerhaven/ IEES) and consulted by the UNCCD Secretariat. In May 2006 validated at 4 regional working meetings and a national policy forum.</p> <p>The NAP is a key strategic document for implementing SLM policies at national level, also including plans for the national and local level, for education, science and NGO networks.</p> <p>Currently NAP awaits official by the Council of Ministers.</p>
	Formal adoption of the NAP by the government before the end of project	The draft of the National Action Program approved by MOEW (19 February) and submitted for approval by the Council of Ministers. It still cannot be regarded as officially approved.
	Soil Conservation Act developed and approved by the 12 th month of the project	<p>Soil Act adopted by the National Assembly and promulgated in the State Gazette on 6 November 2007. Key issues of the Soil Act are soil protection and its sustainable usage, and the major coordinating role of MOEW in the SLM process.</p> <p>Three Regulations approved by MOEW Council Soil and promulgated in the State Gazette on 6 February 2007 - Regulation for reference values, Regulation for contaminated sites management and Regulation of biodiversity monitoring (including NAEP indicators).</p>
	Code of Good Farming Practices developed and approved by month 12th of the project; NAEP approved by end of project ¹⁹	The two documents elaborated and approved by the MOAFS before project start due to which tasks were revised together with MOAFS (see below).
	At least 1 scheme of NAEP practically validated and implemented ²⁰	<p>Measure Soil Erosion Control of the National Agri-environmental Program validated, aimed at sustainable management of agricultural lands. 20 farmers trained in its implementation and the related benefits and losses.</p> <p>NAEP supported through additional elaborations, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HNVFL – criteria for defining and mapping - land erosion assessment model, identifying areas with high erosion risk - specifying vulnerable areas and programs of measures on SLM - organic carbon storage and SLM measures calculating compensatory payments and their rationale
	At least 2 brochures published before enforcing of the two documents	Good Agricultural Practices, National Plan for organic farming and SAPARD documentation Brochures on environmental measures printed.
Outcome 2 Institutional and technical capacity for sustainable land management and combating	At least 35% of the 28 regional extension services of the MOAFS and 15- RIEWs ²¹ with capacity to provide informed advice on sustainable land management to target municipalities by the 12th	80 MOAFS (NAAS) staff and 40 MOEW (ExEA, RIEW) staff trained (theoretical and practical training on spot) on sustainable management of pastures and meadows, acid, salted, eroded lands, good agricultural practices, for implementation of economic instruments, including payments to farmers for introducing agri-environmental practices, Soil Act

¹⁹ Indicators revised compared to the Project Document as the 2 documents were elaborated at the project beginning

²⁰ The NAEP is a part of the National Strategic Plan for Rural Regions Development by which the Common Agricultural Policy of EU will be implemented. Practical validation of the included schemes will be extremely useful for gaining experience, specifying the activities included in the support schemes as well as regarding the indicators for control and efficiency.

²¹ RIEWs have control function and do not provide extension services.

Project Strategy	Targets	Status As of February 2008
desertification strengthened	month of the project.	<p>implementation.</p> <p>Also 140 experts from 7 RFBs²² trained on Implementation of Regulation 1 for Combating Erosion in Forestry Sector.</p> <p>In addition, technical capacity of NAAS strengthened through the procurement of laboratory equipment and the establishment and support of 3 mobile teams.</p> <p>139²³ NAAS staff and 38 RIEW staff trained on SLM (basic approaches, principles and options).</p>
	70 ²⁴ staff from the MOEW, MRDPW and MOAFS trained on sustainable land management, application of economic instruments and other agri-environmental schemes, by the end of the project.	<p>See above,</p> <p>In addition, 20 experts trained for forest certification auditors in connection with the successful forest certification on FSC standard of Aitos, Staro Oriahovo and Gramatikovo.</p>
	The improved model of water erosion and results used by ExEA for reporting to MOEW as well as by WBD, included in the Integrated River Basin Management Plans by the 18 th month of the project	<p>Water erosion assessment and prognoses model improved, tested, introduced in the ExEA and the 4 River Basin Directorates. In addition staff trained to work with it.</p> <p>Methodological approach and Guidelines for investigations of contaminated sites elaborated Training held for MOEW and RIEW experts.</p> <p>The following monitoring activities supported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HNVFL – criteria for defining and mapping - land erosion assessment model, identifying areas with high erosion risk - contaminated sites investigation methodology - specifying vulnerable areas and programs of measures - organic carbon stock mapping
	Revised “National Annual Report on the State of Environment” by the end of project	The Project team supported MOEW and ExEA in the preparation of National Annual Report on the State of Environment 2004, 2005, 2006 ²⁵ by providing the results of the research used in the Baseline Report elaboration.
	The National Advisory Committee for UNCCD established by the 10 th month of the project	The National Advisory Committee for UNCCD established in May 2006 - 4 meetings held so far.
	Training and Education for SLM strengthened through design and implementation of education components in secondary schools and master program	The educational module for the needs of the professional secondary schools elaborated and coordinated with the MOAFS and MES. 33 teachers trained. Tested and introduced in 16 schools/908 students. Master’s Program in SLM in the Agricultural University in Plovdiv elaborated and accredited. 11 students obtained Master’s degree. Reference book for SLM students published. The results and good practices were discussed at the National Forum Education in support of SLM with the participation of 61 representatives of professional schools, universities and state institutions.

²² SFA has 16 RFBs

²³ The Project has in the initial phase providing general training to a broad number of staff to create an interest in, and understanding of, SLM within the relevant governmental institutions. Later the project will focus the more specific training on a smaller number of trainees. However, the project will, if possible, train more people than the 70 people originally planned.

²⁴ 70 staff includes 35 experts from MOAFS (NAAS), 30 from MOEW (including staff from RIEW) and 5 from MRDPW.

²⁵ The reports are prepared for the previous year

Project Strategy	Targets	Status As of February 2008
	Appropriate extension messages and packages, incorporating SLM implementation and monitoring principles developed, through a participatory approach to farmers and land users	Set of documents elaborated and distributed.
Outcome 3 Local capacity strengthened for land planning and participatory decision-making.	Four river basin management plans contain measures for ensuring sustainable land management by 18 th month of the project	Specifying planned of vulnerable areas and detailed Programs of measures for restricting water pollution with nitrates (SLM practices) elaborated and sent to 4-RB. Management plans have to be finalized in 2009 and the developed Programs of measures will be included.
	At least 5 instances of public hearings or similar participatory discussions of municipal land use plans by the end of the project	In connection with the revision of 10 Municipality Development plans the planning process relied upon broad participation of local stakeholders including min 1 public hearing in each municipality.
	At least 5 municipal plans revised by the end of the project.	A Background Report was elaborated <i>SLM Policy in Bulgaria and its implementation on municipal level</i> , information campaign of 6 seminars was held with the participation of 102 municipality representatives. Supporting Integration of SLM options in the Municipal Development Plans finished successfully. MDP revised in 10 municipalities with broad participation of local stakeholders. 10 MDPs officially approved by the municipal councils. Practical guidelines for integrating SLM options in the MDP 2007-2013 elaborated. The results and good practices presented at a National Forum with the participation of 59 representatives of 44 municipalities.
	Participatory mechanisms and procedures for the land planning in the framework of municipal development plans are adopted by at least 10 municipalities by the end of project	Participatory mechanisms and procedures for the land planning is part of the process for the development of the 10 municipal development plans. Based on the pilot work on the 10 municipality plans general participatory mechanisms and procedures identified and suggested as guidelines which municipalities are to adopt ²⁶ .
	At least 600 farmers and land users benefit from the newly capacitated extension services and RIEW by the end of the project	The RAAS established close relationship with 1000 farmers in 600 settlements ²⁷ . Farmers provided with valuable advice and help on implementing SLM options. 618 ²⁸ farmers trained in SLM practices implementation consistent with the specifics of their farms, skills, finances and possible financial schemes for their realization. 10 financed projects for practical implementation of SLM options at local level. Information activities for good practices dissemination as result of the practical implementation of SLM options done.
Outcome 4 Resources mobilized for NSAP implementation as well as Innovative	Resources committed for implementation of the NSAP cover at least 90% of resources needed for the first 3 years of implementation	Then the NAP is now being accompanied with a realistic financial plan as per Ministry of finance directive this means that with the adoption of the NAP 100 % financing would be secured. Currently NAP awaits official by the Council of Ministers.

²⁶ They are part of Practical guidelines for integrating SLM options in the MDP 2007-2013.

²⁷ 600 settlements cover 2,000,000 ha of agricultural land.

²⁸ 618 farmers from 506 settlements/ 188 municipalities

Project Strategy	Targets	Status As of February 2008
financial mechanisms and economic incentives explored and agreed with farmers and other land users and the key Ministries		<p>Round table organized for resources mobilization for NAP implementation with the participation of 42 representatives of ministries, NGOs, science community.</p> <p>2 documents elaborated for the purpose of the meeting: Review of the possible financial sources and a Table of programs and measures with identified programs and measures and the possibilities for their implementation. The common opinion is that no further activities are needed to be undertaken as the NAP is well balanced and financially secured.</p>
	Proposals/recommendations developed for introduction of at least two new finance schemes/support models in landscapes where local farming/livestock and other types of economic activity are beneficial for the preservation of landscape integrity ecosystem health	<p>The project was implemented at a time when the country became a full member of the EU and the European funds and programs became accessible. It was assessed that these programs were sufficient for securing SLM implementation (PDRA, Operational Programmes- Environment and Regional development, etc.)</p> <p>Based on a Steering Committee meeting decision in December 2006 the project was asked to instead of focusing on identifying <i>new</i> financial schemes it should focus on how assisting stakeholders <i>better accessing</i> Bulgarian funding initiatives that would come into place after the Bulgarian EU accession (2007). The reason for this decision was that it is believed that Bulgarian stakeholders are ill prepared for absorbing the large funding sources becoming available.</p>

Annex 8: National SLM Capacity Development Scorecard

Project/Programme Name: **SLM Project – Bulgaria**

Project/Programme Cycle Phase: **Final Evaluation**

Date: **May 2008**

Capacity Result / Indicator	Staged Indicators	Rating	Score	Contribution from project Outcome #
CR 1: Capacities for engagement				
Indicator 1.1 – Degree of legitimacy/mandate of lead environmental organizations	Institutional responsibilities for SLM are not clearly defined	0	3	2, 3
	Institutional responsibilities for SLM are identified	1		
	Authority and legitimacy of all lead organizations responsible for SLM are partially recognized by stakeholders	2		
	Authority and legitimacy of all lead organizations responsible for SLM recognized by stakeholders	3		
Indicator 1.2 – Existence of operational co-management mechanisms	No co-management mechanisms are in place	0	2	3
	Some co-management mechanisms are in place and operational	1		
	Some co-management mechanisms are formally established through agreements, MOUs, etc.	2		
	Comprehensive co-management mechanisms are formally established and are operational/functional	3		
Indicator 1.3 – Existence of cooperation with stakeholder groups	Identification of stakeholders and their participation/involvement in decision-making is poor	0	2	3
	Stakeholders are identified but their participation in decision-making is limited	1		
	Stakeholders are identified and regular consultations mechanisms are established	2		
	Stakeholders are identified and they actively contribute to established participative decision-making processes	3		
.... Add your own indicator(s)				
CR 2: Capacities to generate, access and use information and knowledge				
Indicator 2.1 – Degree of SLM awareness of stakeholders	Stakeholders are not aware about global environmental issues and their related possible solutions (MEAs)	0	2	2
	Stakeholders are aware about global environmental issues but not about the possible solutions (MEAs)	1		
	Stakeholders are aware about global environmental issues and the possible solutions but do not know how to participate	2		
	Stakeholders are aware about global environmental issues and are actively participating in the implementation of related solutions	3		
Indicator 2.2 – Access and sharing of SLM information by stakeholders	The SLM information needs are not identified and the information management infrastructure is inadequate	0	2	1
	The SLM information needs are identified but the information management infrastructure is inadequate	1		
	The SLM information is partially available and shared among stakeholders but is not covering all focal areas and/or the information management infrastructure to manage and give information access to the public is limited	2		
	Comprehensive SLM information is available and shared through an adequate information management infrastructure	3		
Indicator 2.3 – Existence of	No environmental education programmes are in	0	3	2

Capacity Result / Indicator	Staged Indicators	Rating	Score	Contribution from project Outcome #
environmental education programmes	place			
	Environmental education programmes are partially developed and partially delivered	1		
	Environmental education programmes are fully developed but partially delivered	2		
	Comprehensive environmental education programmes exist and are being delivered	3		
Indicator 2.4 – Extend of the linkage between environmental research/science and policy development	No linkage exist between environmental policy development and science/research strategies and programmes	0	3	1
	Research needs for environmental policy development are identified but are not translated into relevant research strategies and programmes	1		
	Relevant research strategies and programmes for environmental policy development exist but the research information is not responding fully to the policy research needs	2		
	Relevant research results are available for environmental policy development	3		
Indicator 2.5 – Extend of inclusion/use of traditional knowledge in environmental decision-making	Traditional knowledge is ignored and not taken into account into relevant participative decision-making processes	0	2	1
	Traditional knowledge is identified and recognized as important but is not collected and used in relevant participative decision-making processes	1		
	Traditional knowledge is collected but is not used systematically into relevant participative decision-making processes	2		
	Traditional knowledge is collected, used and shared for effective participative decision-making processes	3		
.... Add your own indicator(s)				
CR 3: Capacities for strategy, policy and legislation development				
Indicator 3.1 – Extend of the environmental planning and strategy development process	The environmental planning and strategy development process is not coordinated and does not produce adequate environmental plans and strategies	0	3	1, 3
	The environmental planning and strategy development process does produce adequate environmental plans and strategies but there are not implemented/used	1		
	Adequate environmental plans and strategies are produced but there are only partially implemented because of funding constraints and/or other problems	2		
	The environmental planning and strategy development process is well coordinated by the lead environmental organizations and produces the required environmental plans and strategies; which are being implemented	3		
Indicator 3.2 – Existence of an adequate environmental policy and regulatory frameworks	The environmental policy and regulatory frameworks are insufficient; they do not provide an enabling environment	0	2	1
	Some relevant environmental policies and laws exist but few are implemented and enforced	1		
	Adequate environmental policy and legislation frameworks exist but there are problems in implementing and enforcing them	2		
	Adequate policy and legislation frameworks are	3		

Capacity Result / Indicator	Staged Indicators	Rating	Score	Contribution from project Outcome #
	implemented and provide an adequate enabling environment; a compliance and enforcement mechanism is established and functions			
Indicator 3.3 – Adequacy of the environmental information available for decision-making	The availability of environmental information for decision-making is lacking	0	3	1
	Some environmental information exists but it is not sufficient to support environmental decision-making processes	1		
	Relevant environmental information is made available to environmental decision-makers but the process to update this information is not functioning properly	2		
	Political and administrative decision-makers obtain and use updated environmental information to make environmental decisions	3		
.... Add your own indicator(s)				
CR 4: Capacities for management and implementation				
Indicator 4.1 – Existence and mobilization of resources	The environmental organizations don't have adequate resources for their programmes and projects and the requirements have not been assessed	0	3	4
	The resource requirements are known but are not being addressed	1		
	The funding sources for these resource requirements are partially identified and the resource requirements are partially addressed	2		
	Adequate resources are mobilized and available for the functioning of the lead environmental organizations	3		
Indicator 4.2 – Availability of required technical skills and technology transfer	The necessary required skills and technology are not available and the needs are not identified	0	3	2, 3
	The required skills and technologies needs are identified as well as their sources	1		
	The required skills and technologies are obtained but their access depend on foreign sources	2		
	The required skills and technologies are available and there is a national-based mechanism for updating the required skills and for upgrading the technologies	3		
.... Add your own indicator(s)				
CR 5: Capacities to monitor and evaluate				
Indicator 5.1 – Adequacy of the project/programme monitoring process	Irregular project monitoring is being done without an adequate monitoring framework detailing what and how to monitor the particular project or programme	0	3	
	An adequate resourced monitoring framework is in place but project monitoring is irregularly conducted	1		
	Regular participative monitoring of results in being conducted but this information is only partially used by the project/programme implementation team	2		
	Monitoring information is produced timely and accurately and is used by the implementation team to learn and possibly to change the course of action	3		
Indicator 5.2 – Adequacy of the project/programme evaluation process	None or ineffective evaluations are being conducted without an adequate evaluation plan; including the necessary resources	0	3	
	An adequate evaluation plan is in place but evaluation activities are irregularly conducted	1		

Capacity Result / Indicator	Staged Indicators	Rating	Score	Contribution from project Outcome #
	Evaluations are being conducted as per an adequate evaluation plan but the evaluation results are only partially used by the project/programme implementation team	2		
	Effective evaluations are conducted timely and accurately and are used by the implementation team and the Agencies and GEF Staff to correct the course of action if needed and to learn for further planning activities	3		
.... Add your own indicator(s)				
	Total Score:		39	