Document of
The World Bank

Report No: ICR00003870

IMPLEMENTATION COMPLETION AND RESULTS REPORT
(TF-096152)

ON A GRANT FROM

THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY

IN THE AMOUNT OF US$9.0 MILLION

TO THE

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

FOR A

DEVELOPMENT, EMPOWERMENT AND CONSERVATION IN THE iSIMANGALISO

WETLAND PARK AND SURROUNDING REGION PROJECT

August 25, 2017

Environment and Natural Resources Global Practice
Africa Region

CURRENCY EQUIVALENTS

(Exchange Rate Effective August 23, 2017)

Currency Unit = South African Rand (ZAR)
US$l = ZAR l3

FISCAL YEAR
January 1 – December 31

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CAPE	Cape Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development Project
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
DMP	Dune Management Plan
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EKZNW	Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife
EMI	Environmental Management Inspector
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GEO	Global Environmental Objective
GIS	Geographical Information System
ICR	Implementation Completion and Results Report
IFR	Interim Financial Report
ISR	Implementation Status and Results Report
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MTR	Midterm Review
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NH	Natural Habitats
PAD	Project Appraisal Document
PCR	Physical Cultural Resources
PDO	Project Development Objective
PFDA	Prawn Fisheries and Development Association
PIM	Project Implementation Manual
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PPG	Project Preparation Grant
REAP	Rural Education Access Program
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDR	Safeguards Diagnostic Review
SEED	Socio-Economic Environment Development
SMME	Small, Medium, and Microenterprises
UCOSP	Umfolozi Cooperative Sugar Producers

UCS	Use of Country Systems

Vice President:	Makhtar Diop
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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Development. Empowerment and Conservation in the iSimangaliso Wetland Park and Surrounding Region Project

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A. Basic Information

Country:	Republic of South Africa	Project Name:	Development. Empowerment and Conservation in the iSimangaliso Wetland Park and Surrounding Region Project
Project ID:	P086528	L/C/TF Number(s):	TF-096152
ICR Date:	08/23/2017	ICR Type:	Core ICR
Lending Instrument:	Specific Investment Loan	Borrower:	REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
Original Total Commitment:	US$9 million	Disbursed Amount:	US$9 million
Revised Amount:			
Environmental Category: B-partial assessment		**Global Focal Area:** Biodiversity	
RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY: iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority, KwaZulu-Natal			
Cofinanciers and Other External Partners:			

B. Key Dates

Process	Date	Process	Original Date	Revised / Actual Date(s)
Concept Review:	08/15/2005	Effectiveness:	03/01/2010	03/24/2010
Appraisal:	05/04/2009	Restructuring(s):	10/21/2013	10/21/2013
Approval:	12/03/2009	Mid-term Review:	05/10/2012	02/18/2013
		Closing:	11/30/2014	02/28/2017

C. Ratings Summary

C.1 Performance Rating by ICR

Outcomes:	Satisfactory
Risk to Global Environment Outcome	Substantial
Bank Performance:	Satisfactory
Borrower Performance:	Satisfactory

C.2 Detailed Ratings of Bank and Borrower Performance

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

Performance:		**Performance:**	

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

D. Sector and Theme Codes		
	Original	**Actual**
Sector Code (as % of total Bank financing)		
General agriculture, fishing and forestry sector	100	100
Theme Code (as % of total Bank financing)		
Biodiversity	30	30
Forestry	30	30
Fresh water	40	40

E. Bank Staff		
Positions	**At ICR**	**At Approval**
Vice President:	Makhtar Diop	Obiageli K. Ezekwesili
Country Director:	Paul Noumba Um	Ruth Kagia
Practice Manager:	Magda Lovei	Idah Pswarayi-Riddihough
Project Team Leader:	Claudia Sobrevila	Paola Agostini
ICR Team Leader:	Claudia Sobrevila	
ICR Primary Author:	Claudia Sobrevila	

F. Results Framework Analysis

Project Environment Objectives (PDO) and Key Indicators (as approved)

The Project Development Objective (PDO) is to improve access to information needed to select the best feasible option for maintaining the availability of fresh water of adequate quality to the Lake St. Lucia System, a wetland of global biodiversity importance, and to increase access among local communities to conservation-compatible economic opportunities. The project was financed by GEF and required, at that time, a Global Environment Objective (GEO). The GEO of the project is to protect the exceptional biodiversity of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park through conservation, sustainable resources use, rational land use planning, and local economic development.

(a) PDO Indicator(s) (including GEO indicators)

Indicator	Baseline Value	Original Target Values (from approval documents)	Formally Revised Target Values	Actual Value Achieved at Completion or Target Years
Indicator 1:	Follow-up actions and investments contributing to the agreed hydrological solutions have been implemented (yes/no)			
Value	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Date achieved	24-Mar-2010	24-Mar-2010	15-Jul-2015	07-Feb-2017
This indicator measures objective 1 of the PDO. It was verified through the reports, photos and site visits.	The project aimed to improve the environmental and ecological functioning of the St. Lucia Estuary. Various studies were carried to identify a long-term solution to the complex hydrological problems of the Lake St. Lucia System and indicated that the preferred solution for improved ecological functioning was the re-linking of uMfolozi River with the Lake St. Lucia System. The actions included the removal of 624,212m^3 of dredge spoil obstructing the natural course of the uMfolozi River. In addition, the project enabled iSimangaliso to leverage further funding for the removal of the dredge spoil. By the end of July, five months after the project ended iSimangaliso had removed a total of 1,384,413 m^3 and was also implementing smaller measures, such as removal of levees blocking water flow and non-native trees in the mouth area.			
Indicator 2:	The iSimangaliso Wetland Park Management effectiveness, as measured by the GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) has improved from 71 to 80.			
Value	71	80	80	80
Date achieved	24-Mar-2010	24-Mar-2010	1-Apr-2014	07-Feb-2017
This indicator measures the single objective of the GEO. This was measured through final report, visit sites, photos and the tracking tool filled out	Target met. The project supported training of park staff, studies and management plans, infrastructure support for some visitor centers, removal of invasive species (Casuarina plants from dunes), reintroducing wildlife, and labeling indigenous trees. These actions increased the management effectiveness of the park.			
Indicator 3:	Percentage of conservation-compatible small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) supported under the target that achieves commercial viability has increased to 50% (total 75 SMME).			

Value	30%	50%	50%	76%
Date achieved	24-Mar-2010	24-Mar-2010	1-Apr-2014	07-Feb-2017
This indicator measures objective 2 of the PDO. This indicators was measured through project progress reports, aide memoires and ISRs, documents shared by the client.	Percentage of the 104 SMMEs that received grants that were rated by the Authority as 'showing steady growth and improved operational ability' or 'stable' (81 SMMEs of 106 grant recipients)			

(b) Intermediate Outcome Indicator(s)

Indicator	**Implementation Status and Results Report**				**Evaluator estimate**
	Baseline	**Actual (Previous)**	**Actual (Current)**	**End Target**	**Current**
Date	24-Mar-2010	15-Jul-2015	12-Feb-2016	30-Sep-2016	6-Feb-2017
Component 1 Indicators:					
Intermediate result 1: Knowledge of ecosystem functioning improved and long-term solution agreed					
Result indicator: Wetlands Restoration Options study and EIA completed	No	Initiated	Initiated	—	Completed
Comments: Scoping reports finalized. Alternatives reports, the socioeconomic and synthesis report were all finalized.					
Intermediate result 2: Stakeholder concerns are considered in the Options study undertaken to support the decision-making process					
Result indicator: Proposed solution for wetland restoration is broadly consulted with stakeholders (yes/no)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Comments: Peer reviewers provided technical feedback on draft Alternatives report. More than 62 meetings, workshops, open days, and conferences: Formal, scientific meetings (10 meetings), the general public (7 meetings), farmers (that is, UCOSP: 9 meetings), ratepayers (7 meetings), traditional leaders (4 meetings), land claimants (9 meetings), the conservation NGO, WESSA (3 meetings), Prawn Fisheries and Development Association (PFDA) (1 meeting) and the Department of Water Affairs (4 meetings), and additional informal meetings. Electronic newsletter distributed to 14,000 people every two weeks.					
Intermediate result 3: Knowledge of ecosystem functioning improved and long-term solution agreed					
Result indicator:	No	Yes	Yes	**Yes**	Yes

Indicator	Implementation Status and Results Report				Evaluator estimate
	Baseline	**Actual (Previous)**	**Actual (Current)**	**End Target**	**Current**
Date	24-Mar-2010	15-Jul-2015	12-Feb-2016	30-Sep-2016	6-Feb-2017
Ecological monitoring system, including physical and biological indicators, defined and used (yes/no)					
Defined	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Used	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Comments: Live monitoring system designed, tested and installed, and operating.					
Component 2 Indicators:					
Intermediate result 1: Improved access to business development services					
Result indicator: Number of target SMMEs reached by business support services	48	175	175	150	185
Result indicator: Number of targeted enterprises with access to sub-grants	0	57	57	50	104
Comments: Of the 185 SMMEs participating, 137 completed the program, and 48 dropped out for various reasons, including other studies.					
Intermediate result 2: Improved access to knowledge in conservation and tourism for local youth, in nearby communities and land restitution beneficiaries					
Result indicator: Number of youth attending courses at the tertiary level	0	77	77	30	77
Comments: Of the 77 bursary recipients, 50 of these students had graduated; 16 were still studying; and 11 had left the program due to failure, receipt of another bursary, change of course of study and other reasons, by early 2016.					
Intermediate result 3: Improved capacity of local/community leaders in effective implementation of co-management agreements					
Result indicator: Number of local leaders applying skills acquired from the training and mentoring program to improve co-management	0	195	195	**200**	393
Comments: The total number of local leaders participating in 29 co-management workshops for trusts					

Indicator	Implementation Status and Results Report				Evaluator estimate
	Baseline	**Actual (Previous)**	**Actual (Current)**	**End Target**	**Current**
Date	24-Mar-2010	15-Jul-2015	12-Feb-2016	30-Sep-2016	6-Feb-2017
was 393 people (note that there were also another 4 workshops for youth, where another 94 people participated).					
Component 3 Indicators:					
Intermediate result 1: Improved capacity of the iSimangaliso Authority and other relevant stakeholders for biodiversity conservation					
Result indicator: Satisfactory rating of project implementation	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Comments: Aide Memoires indicate Satisfactory ratings throughout the project.					
Result indicator: Unqualified financial audits of the iSimangaliso Authority	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Comments: Annual financial audits, approved by the Auditor General, sent to the World Bank's financial specialist and the task team leader in accordance with the Grant Agreement.					
Result indicator: Number of training events for iSimangaliso Authority and other relevant personnel	0	15	15	25	59

Indicator	Implementation Status and Results Report				Evaluator estimate
	Baseline	Actual (Previous)	Actual (Current)	End Target	Current
Date	24-Mar-2010	15-Jul-2015	12-Feb-2016	30-Sep-2016	6-Feb-2017
Comments: Training events for 511 people (comprising iSimangaliso staff, community members, and journalists) included environmental management inspector (EMI) training (15 people: 5 events), an internship program (13 participants: 7 mentoring workshops), training (2 participants: 1 course), conference attendance (7 participants: 2 conference events), photography (21 people: 2 training events), masters of the chief executive officer (CEO) (1 beneficiary: 1 course), legal training (313 beneficiaries: 21 workshops), geographic information system (GIS) training (3 beneficiaries: 4 training events), Wilderness Trails (48 participants: 4 trails), mobile workshops for community leaders (88 participants: 6 events), and awareness raising events (997 registered participants: 6 events).					

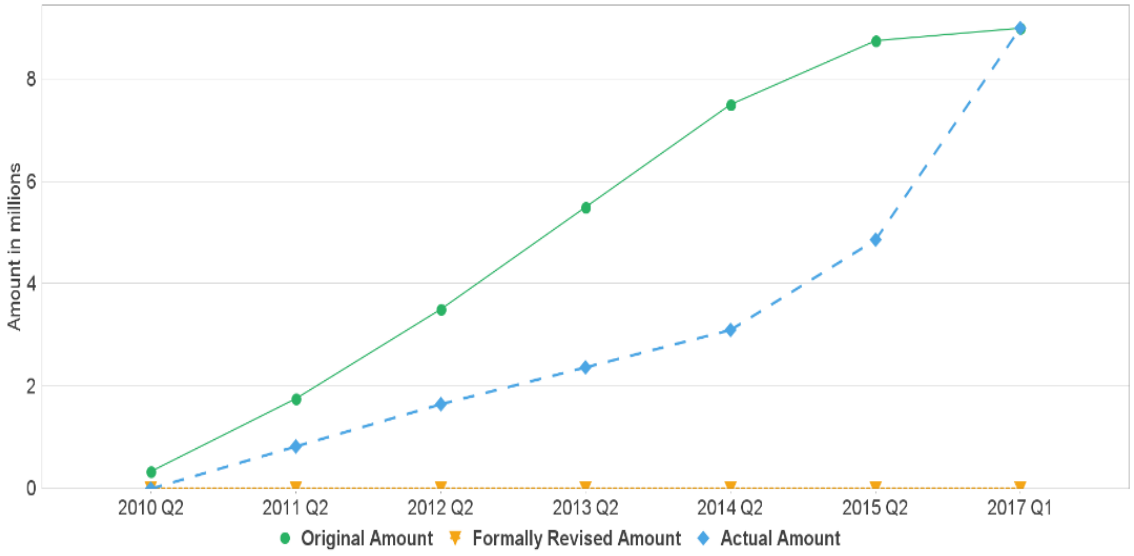
G. Ratings of Project Performance in ISRs

No.	Date ISR Archived	DO Rating	IP Rating	Actual Disbursements (US$, millions)
1	21-Jun-2010	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	0
2	27-Mar-2011	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	.82
3	17-Dec-2011	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	1.65
4	26-May-2012	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	1.65
5	06-Feb-2013	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	2.36
6	24-Sep-2013	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	3.10
7	06-Jul-2014	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	3.85
8	12-Jan-2015	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	4.87
9	24-Jul-2015	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	6.88
10	25-Feb-2016	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	7.76
11	17-Aug-2016	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	9.00
12	08-Feb-2017	Moderately Satisfactory	Satisfactory	9.00

H. Restructuring

Restructuring Date(s)	Board Approved PDO Change	ISR Ratings at Restructuring		Amount Disbursed at Restructuring in US$, millions	Reason for Restructuring and Key Changes Made
		PDO	IP		
21-Oct-2013	N	S	S	3.10	Closing date extension
05-Nov-2015	N	S	S	6.88	Closing date extension
28-Sep-2016	N	S	S	9.00	Closing date extension

I. Disbursement Profile



1. Project Context, Global Environment Objectives and Design

1.1. Context at Appraisal

1. **The iSimangaliso Wetland Park is the third largest protected area in South Africa**, and was proclaimed a World Heritage Site in 2000. It covers 328,000 ha and extends 192 km between the Mozambique border to the north and the Maphelane Game Reserve to the south. iSimangaliso means 'a miracle or wonder' in Zulu. The St. Lucia estuary is a dominant feature of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park and is the most extensive and biologically important estuary in the country. The park forms the core of the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative,[1] which is a strategy to stimulate economic development in the severely impoverished zones of northern KwaZulu-Natal, southern Mozambique, and eastern Swaziland. The park has substantial nature-based tourism potential, due to its terrestrial and aquatic natural attractions and diverse cultures, languages, and customs of the Swazi, Zulu, and Thonga people.

2. **Two key threats were identified.** First, the wetland systems of the park, and particularly the Lake St. Lucia Estuary, were under considerable threat from the hydrological imbalance established by human activities, such as sugarcane farming and forestry plantations. Since 1952, measures were taken to partially separate the uMfolozi River from the St. Lucia Estuary by depositing dredge spoil between them and artificially breaching the uMfolozi River into the sea, at the south near Maphelane, in the belief that it would protect the estuary from silt inflows. This significantly reduced freshwater to Lake St. Lucia from the uMfolozi River, the largest of the five rivers entering the system and increased salinity and deterioration of ecological conditions. It also interfered with nature's ability to regulate the opening and the closing of the estuary mouth. If these conditions continued unabated, the long-term survival of numerous endemic species would be at risk.

3. Second, the park is situated in the uMkhanyakude District Municipality, one of the poorest and most underdeveloped local authorities in South Africa. Over 80 percent of households live below the poverty line and only about 16.5 percent of the population is formally employed. In addition, the health of the St Lucia eco-system is directly linked to the livelihoods of some 80,000 people live in 15,000 households within 15 km of the Lake St. Lucia estuarine system and use the system extensively. Harvests of raw materials, particularly estuarine sedges, are estimated to be worth around US$0.5 million a year. Tourism related to the Lake St. Lucia Estuary area employs an estimated 1,291 direct full-time equivalent jobs and 6,924 indirect jobs. There are about 510,000 visitors to the study area per year, of whom 42 percent are foreign visitors, who spend US$3.4 million on an estimated 157,000 tourism activities from local operators. The risks of incompatible

[1] One element in the national and regional growth strategy of the immediate post-Apartheid government in South Africa was a kind of geographically defined economic growth strategy that was called Spatial Development Initiatives. The Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative was one of a number of Spatial Development Initiatives implemented by the South African government that aimed to generate investment projects in key economic sectors in specific areas of the country thereby increasing employment in these sectors and area. The Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative included investment in the construction of a road network linking Mozambique, Swaziland and South Africa; transnational protocols and multinational programs, improved border posts, anti-malaria programme, and TFCAs. The iSimangaliso Wetland Park was the anchor project for the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative in South Africa.

land use such as mining and nonnative forestry plantations, coupled with the harvesting of natural resources by communities living in and around the park, needed to be brought in line with conserving the park´s rich biodiversity.

4. **South Africa's eligibility for Global Environmental Facility (GEF) Funding** included its ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity and related conventions: Ramsar, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the World Heritage Convention and the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention to Combat Desertification, and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The project was consistent with the GEF Biodiversity Strategy and supportive of Strategic Objective 1: SO-1 'Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Area Systems', Strategic Program 3: 'Strengthening Terrestrial Protected Area Networks', and Strategic Program 2 'Increasing Representation of Effectively Managed Marine Protected Areas in Protected Area Systems'.

5. **The rationale for World Bank assistance** related to the potential to bring technical and international best practices and up-to-date knowledge on wetlands park management, biodiversity conservation, water management, hydrology, and community livelihoods to South Africa. The design of Component 1 was based on experience and recommendations from the World Bank's Hydrology Expert Facility, which continued to provide technical advice during implementation. Previously, the World Bank had supported wetland conservation initiatives in Argentina, Belize, Colombia, Bulgaria, Vietnam, Trinidad and Tobago, the Gulf of Mexico, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, and the Gambia.

6. **The project's higher-level objective was aligned with South Africa's development objectives**, including the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa, the Country Partnership Strategy (2008–2012) (Report No. 38156-ZA) with respect to strengthening the capacity of state institutions to deliver services, conserve and sustainably manage natural resources, and adapt to climate change, the 2005 National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan, and more recently with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

1.2. Original Project Development Objective (GEO) and Key Indicators

7. **The Project Development Objective (PDO)** is to improve access to information needed to select the best feasible option for maintaining the availability of fresh water of adequate quality to the Lake St. Lucia System, a wetland of global biodiversity importance, and to increase access among local communities to conservation-compatible economic opportunities. The project was financed by GEF and required, at that time, a long-term biodiversity objective, the GEO. The GEO of the project is to protect the exceptional biodiversity of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park through conservation, sustainable resources use, rational land use planning, and local economic development.

8. The key performance indicators were the following:

   (a) Follow-up actions and investments contributing to the agreed hydrological solutions have been implemented.

   (b) The iSimangaliso Wetland Park Management effectiveness, as measured by the GEF

Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT)[2] has improved from 71 to 80.

(c) Percentage of conservation-compatible small, medium, and microenterprises (SMMEs) supported under the target that achieves commercial viability has increased to 50% (total 75 SMME).

1.3. Revised PDO and Key Indicators, and Reasons/Justification

9. The PDO and key indicators were not revised.

1.4. Main Beneficiaries

10. The direct beneficiaries of the project, identified at appraisal, included the small and medium enterprise (SMME) recipients (150), the youth attending courses at the tertiary level (30), local leaders such as community leaders, and land restitution beneficiaries participating in the training and mentoring program to improve co-management with the iSimangaliso Wetland Park (200). The indirect beneficiaries included people living in the neighboring communities (approximately 15,000) and land restitution beneficiaries (approximately 10,000), visitors and tourists to the park, and national and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) involved in conservation in South Africa.

1.5 Original Components

11. The project consisted of three components.

Component 1: **Hydrology and Ecosystem Functioning of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park**

12. This component will ensure the restoration of the Lake St. Lucia System to a state of improved ecological functioning (though not necessarily to its original condition). This component included the following three subcomponents:

(a) **Subcomponent 1.1**: **Analysis of Alternatives.** Carrying out studies to enable the recipient to select the most ecologically feasible solutions, taking into consideration social, financial, political, and economic considerations. Such studies included the Analysis of Alternatives solutions with an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment that included analysis of sediment load, hydrology, ecological systems, socioeconomics, and resource economics to determine the most feasible solution to the hydrological issues of the Lake St. Lucia System.

(b) **Subcomponent 1.2: Implementation of Selected Solution.** Carrying out investments and other activities required to implement the solutions selected.

(c) **Subcomponent 1.3**: **Conservation Management.** Carrying out of a program to manage the iSimangaliso Wetland Park's physical assets, including environmental management, rehabilitation, infrastructure maintenance, and community-based

[2] The METT is a tracking tool required by GEF for projects funded by them to measure the improved management of protected areas. This tool is standardized to all protected areas around the world and can be used to compare performance of different parks based on the investments made.

natural resource management.

Component 2: Promoting Conservation-Compatible Local Economic and Cultural Development

13. This component will create a stronger constituency among local residents for supporting conservation of iSimangaliso. This component comprised the following subcomponents:

(a) **Subcomponent 2.1:** Implementation of a Conservation-compatible Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprise Program

(b) **Subcomponent 2.2:** Development of an Education and Academic Support Program, designed to improve access by local youth to tertiary education in the fields of conservation and tourism so that they can take up employment in those sectors

(c) **Subcomponent 2.3:** Establishment of a Capacity-building Program for nearby communities around the park to build the skills and capacity of their residents (including land restitution beneficiaries) to participate in the iSimangaliso Wetland Park's co-management processes

(d) **Subcomponent 2.4:** Socio-Economic Environment Development (SEED) Program (fully funded by the recipient)

Component 3: Institutional Capacity Building for Biodiversity Conservation

14. This component will build institutional capacity for biodiversity conservation by implementing a range of capacity-building programs with the iSimangaliso Authority and other relevant stakeholders.

(a) **Subcomponent 3.1**: Institutional Capacity Building

(b) **Subcomponent 3.2**: Support for the Administration of iSimangaliso Authority

1.6. Revised Components

15. The project components and subcomponents remained unchanged during implementation.

1.7 Other Significant Changes

16. The project had three extensions of the closing dates, totaling two years and three months. At the midterm review (MTR), the executing agency requested an extension of the closing date by 18 months from November 30, 2014, to May 30, 2016. The reasons for this request are the following:

(a) To help ensure complete implementation of the analysis of alternative study for restoration of the Lake St. Lucia System

(b) To enable more complete monitoring of the Lake St. Lucia System's response to the restoration measures implemented

(c) To enable the additional funds that would become available to Component 2 (based on anticipated reallocation from Components 1 and 3) to be fully disbursed, thereby maximizing the benefits to targeted communities

(d) To provide adequate time for effective support to the land claims trust participants and enable full disbursements of sub-grants to rural enterprise beneficiaries.

17. Two additional extensions of the closing date were required as the implementation of the preferred solution that resulted from the analysis of alternative study took longer than expected. The second extension was granted from May 30, 2016, to September 30, 2016, by six months, and the third one from September 30, 2016, to February 28, 2017, by three months. The last extension was because the restoration of Lake St. Lucia was delayed due to the severe drought experienced in the area that year.

2. Key Factors Affecting Implementation and Outcomes

2.1. Project Preparation, Design, and Quality at Entry

18. A request for a Project Preparation Grant (PPG)[3] in the amount of US$74,985 was submitted by the St. Lucia Wetland Park Authority in May 2007, under the GEF focal areas of biodiversity and its Strategic Objectives: SO-1: Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Area Systems, SO-2: Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Production Landscapes/Seascapes and Sectors, SO-3: Safeguarding Biodiversity, and SO-4: Capacity Building on Access and Benefit Sharing. The PPG was requested to undertake key preparatory tasks, including an analysis of the baseline situation (that is, ecological, institution, and socioeconomic), and refine the concept, components, and implementation strategy, along with public consultation.

(a) Soundness of the Background Analysis

19. **Several background studies were conducted during this preparation phase.** These include the project process framework; the development of TORS for technical studies to identify threats to biodiversity from the buffer zone; the scoping study of the lower Umfolozi River and Umfolozi/St Lucia estuary (including TORS for analysis of alternatives study); low emissions development support and funding feasibility study; feasibility study for the education access program; development of a communication and consultation strategy for the project; an integrated management plan for the park, as well as baseline studies for the environmental, social and economic components.

20. **Extensive consultations were also undertaken to inform project design.** The PPG phase included a series of consultative meetings that began in 2008. Stakeholders participating at the first consultative meeting in April 2008 included 36 participants from organized agriculture, provincial and local government, NGOs, tourism operators, land claimants, traditional authorities, and representatives of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority and the World Bank. Examples were given of other wetland systems that were restored through carefully planned interventions. A

[3] A PPG is available to the GEF projects that require initial funding to carry out technical studies and consultations to design the full-size project. It is not the same as a project preparation advance that is used for World Bank lending operations.

second stakeholder workshop was convened in June 2008 with 16 representatives of organized agriculture, NGOs, land claimants, traditional authorities, and representatives of the Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife (EKZNW), the World Bank, and the iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority. A safeguards workshop was held in November 2008, with 43 representatives of organized agriculture; forestry; mining; national, provincial, and local governments; NGOs; tourism operators; consultants; land claimants; traditional authorities; and representatives of the EKZNW, the iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority, and the World Bank.

21. **The project built upon the results and experience of previous projects.** Lessons from other relevant projects were adequately incorporated into the project design and the projects identified in the Project Appraisal Document (PAD) were also incorporated, including the Cape Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development Project (CAPE) (US$9 million, GEF) and Greater Addo Elephant National Park Project (US$11 million, GEF), both of which used a similar approach to iSimangaliso, by combining conservation and socioeconomic development activities. These included the following (a) involving all relevant stakeholders at each stage of project preparation and implementation is key to success; (b) integrate community income improvement activities with conservation to reduce the pressure of local communities on natural resources and increase their incentive to sustainably manage natural resources; (c) working within the existing structure of an accountable organization is preferable to creating a separate project coordination unit; and (d) international experience has shown that salinization, drying up, and sediment issues cannot be managed only by tackling the hydrological issues in the lower part of the watershed. The management of the upper watershed can have a major impact on the drying up of the watershed.

(b) Assessment of the Project Design

22. **Overall, the project design was adequate.** Overall, the objectives and components were clear and feasible within the time frame and implementation context. The objectives and components were comprehensively translated into annual work plans and in turn were into clearly articulated in the terms of reference for consultants and service providers. All the project activities were completed. However, there was an issue with the results framework design. The PDO was rather vague ‘access to information needed’ and ‘access to economic opportunities’ whereas the indicators reflect the conservation-oriented GEO.

23. **The capacities of the executing institution were clearly considered** when the project was designed. The Authority was actively involved in the design phase of the project and thus, was committed to delivering the project outcomes.

(c) Adequacy of the Government’s Commitment

24. **The Government’s commitment was relatively high**, as demonstrated by the solid project preparation that included frequent consultations with its stakeholders. These consultations helped build consensus among the project stakeholders on the identified issues and priorities and the proposed project design and institutional arrangements. A project participation and communication plan was also prepared to engage all stakeholders in the process of developing the activities promoted by the project.

(d) Assessment of Risks

25. **The assessment of risks and mitigation measures at appraisal was adequate.** The key risks were identified and the related mitigation measures were implemented. One of the risks was that different opinions exist related to finding a solution to the restoration and conservation of ecological processes, and this can jeopardize the process of taking an informed decision to solve the hydrology issue of the wetland. In addition, the likelihood of not finding a solution was identified as a high risk, given that the problem is 50 years old. This risk was mitigated by carrying out sound ecological and social studies of the watershed and analyzing different solutions to restore the ecological function of Lake St. Lucia. The studies and consultations with various stakeholders allowed the iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority to find and implement a solution successfully.

2.2. Implementation

26. **Initial stages of implementation.** The implementation of the project lasted seven years between 2010 and 2017. Effectiveness was declared three months after the Board approved the project. The selection of firms to carry out some of the studies under Components 1 and 2 took time as the Authority wanted to ensure that the best firms were on board, implying that disbursement was slow for the 18-month implementation period. This improved quickly as the firms performed well, and over the years, their contracts were renewed, facilitating project execution and disbursement.

27. **Overall project implementation** was rated Satisfactory throughout the seven years. The development objective was rated Satisfactory, except for the last Implementation Status and Results Report (ISR) that was rated Moderately Satisfactory. The World Bank team was concerned that the works under Component 1 would not be finalized by project closure and thus one of the key development objectives would not be met. This concern did not materialize. Despite the extensions of the closing date, the Authority demonstrated high levels of capacity, thoroughness, and attention to detail, particularly to minimize the likelihood of any unintended consequences of contracts.

28. **Project coordination.** One of the success factors of the Authority's implementation capacity was that their objectives were clear and that they felt ownership of the project. The approach of fully integrating a project into the mechanics of a conservation institution (rather than convening a separate Project Implementation Unit [PIU]) contributed to the efficiency and effectiveness of project implementation and to the sustainability of the outputs. The appointment of an existing senior management staff as project coordinator and the highly experienced and competent technical officers appointed to coordinate Components 1 and 2 over the course of the project ensured the project's success. They provided substantial support to the Authority, the service providers, and beneficiaries of the project. The low turnover of staff during the project period, and their commitment to the project, contributed toward this success.

29. **MTR.** An MTR was conducted in May 2012, two years after project effectiveness and concluded that the overall project implementation was satisfactory and met the project's objective. The MTR confirmed that the project design, in terms of the PPG phase and PAD, remained relevant and included the appropriate combination of components, addressing conservation, local economic development, and capacity building. The subcomponents were not changed during the MTR. Some

minor outputs, which improved the project's efficiency, were dropped from the project as they could (a) be funded by other sources, (b) were being addressed through interventions with alternative funding, or (c) were no longer considered priorities.

30. The mission found no need to restructure the project in terms of changing any of the key performance indicators or the legal provisions of the Grant Agreement. However, it noted the need to extend the closing date, as explained in paragraph 17 of this Implementation Completion and Results Report (ICR).

31. **Factors for successful implementation**. Factors contributing toward the success of the project were numerous. Notable successes from Component 1 included the comprehensive and detailed scientific studies and peer review process that led to the identification and broad support for an initiative to restore the ecology of the St. Lucia Estuary. In Component 2, a rigorous and inclusive candidate selection process was used and strong technical assistance to beneficiaries of SMMEs that included ongoing monitoring and supervision was provided.

32. **Challenges during implementation**. Factors outside the project's control gave rise to challenges during project implementation. In Component 1, a lack of hydrological data from (a) sparsely distributed gauging stations within the catchment and (b) the faulty Department of Water Affairs gauging stations did not provide accurate or calibrated readings. Remedying these challenges and running several iterations of the hydrological and hydrodynamic models caused a one-year delay in the final output. In Component 2, there were some delays in approving grant applications as the Authority was doing due diligence and interviews of potential candidates to ensure that the best candidates were selected. The generally poor schooling in the district around the park meant that it was difficult to identify enough candidates who met the application criteria each year. The service provider, Rural Education Access Program (REAP), had a high turnover of managers, which increased the Authority's workload.

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

33. **Monitoring and evaluation design.** The initial design of the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) was outlined in the Project Implementation Manual (PIM) that included an organizational and institutional framework for implementation and an M&E action plan that addressed both project performance and impact through defined methodologies and reporting forms. It also included M&E activities and timelines for the project's lifetime; key outcome indicators, including midterm and end-term targets and results indicators per component; and responsibilities for data collection.

34. The Results Framework comprised three PDO-level results indicators and ten intermediate results indicators. Although not explained in the PAD, there was an issue with the way the Results Framework was designed. The PDO-level results indicators measured the PDO but were rather vague 'access to information needed' and 'access to economic opportunities' whereas the indicators reflect the conservation-oriented GEO. The intermediate results were adequate except for Component 3 where the choice of indicators did not directly measure the expected increased capacity of the Authority. The baseline data and target values were good.

35. The project evaluation framework consisted of the following different elements. All these

were carried out, except for the midterm evaluation that did not have an external evaluation.

- Internal annual self-assessment—review of stakeholders' performance over the year against their work plans.

- Assessment of the environmental and social impact, including the environmental safeguard requirements of the preferred option for implementation under Component 1.

- The protected area management effectiveness evaluation was done at baseline, mid-term and at the end of the project. The project complied with the GEF requirement to use the METT to track and monitor progress toward protected area management effectiveness.

- External midterm evaluation—to take place in the third year of the project.

- External implementation completion review—to take place toward the end of the project.

- Annual internal and external audits—to cover all the GEF funds at all levels of project execution, including procurement of sub-grants.

- World Bank supervision missions—linked to the project implementation schedule.

36. **M&E implementation.** The GEF project coordinator supervised data collection by iSimangaliso staff, contracted service providers with the responsibility for monitoring specific subcomponents of the project, and others as required. The Authority held biannual strategic planning meetings and produced quarterly business plan reports. The PIM outlined the reporting arrangements for results monitoring for each outcome and intermediate outcome indicator. This included baseline and target values for each year of the project, frequency of data collection, instruments for data collection, and who would be responsible. The indicators specified in the Results Framework were clear and easy to monitor and report on. However, the Authority realized that the project had far more developmental impacts than those required by the project and so collected more quantitative and qualitative data than required.

37. **M&E utilization.** The M&E was largely integrated into the broader management, planning and monitoring frameworks of the Authority. Overall, the M&E system was successful in monitoring progress toward the project indicators in the Results Framework. The M&E system was also used as a source of information sharing and best practice among stakeholders on project and cross-sectoral issues relevant to the iSimangaliso Wetland Park.

2.4. Safeguard and Fiduciary Compliance

Safeguards

38. South Africa was selected to participate in the Pilot Program for Use of Country Systems (UCS) under OP 4.00 because it has an established legal and regulatory system and a favorable

reputation for effective implementation of its systems governing EA, protection of natural habitats (NH), protected areas, and physical cultural resources (PCR). This was the first project in South Africa and the second project in the Africa Region to be undertaken under the UCS pilot program. It is also the first UCS pilot that is a GEF operation. The project was categorized as a Category B project - partial assessment. A Safeguards Diagnostic Review (SDR) was developed in May 2009 and was finalized during the preparation phase before project appraisal. This was the first SDR for South Africa and provided a mechanism to review relevant legislation for this and other World Bank projects. The SDR highlighted three of the four safeguards triggered by the project that were proposed under the recipient's safeguard system. These were EA, NH, and PCR. Actions relating to these were outlined in the PIM. The safeguard documents were included on the park's website.

39. In 2013, a report was compiled with an overview of 'Compliance with Safeguard Policies'. The report described how the project was complying with environmental safeguard provisions in the Grant Agreement, in relation to the Country Systems approach for the project. The report demonstrated compliance in relation to all the safeguard provisions identified. Throughout the project period, compliance with environmental and social safeguards was satisfactory.

Financial Management

40. During project preparation, a Financial Management Assessment was carried out by the World Bank to determine whether the implementing agency, iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority, met the minimum financial management arrangements, to ensure that (a) the funds were used only for the intended purposes, in an efficient and economical way, (b) reliable and timely interim financial information was provided to form the basis for management decisions, (c) internal controls existed which allowed early detection of errors and unusual practices as a deterrent to fraud and corruption, and that (d) the Authority's assets were safeguarded. The overall conclusion of the Financial Management Assessment of the iSimangaliso Authority was that the GEF project's financial management risk was moderate and that the financial management arrangements satisfied the World Bank's OP/BP 10.02 minimum requirements.

41. The first disbursement of US$820,183 was made to the project on August 3, 2010 and by December 2010 'appropriate processes' were in place to facilitate the flow of funds to the project. The delay in the first disbursement was not considered unusual and related to the time taken to set up the disbursement system between the World Bank and the Authority.

42. The MTR highlighted that interim financial reports (IFRs) and audited financial statements had been submitted regularly by the iSimangaliso Authority to the World Bank, as required under the Grant Agreement. All audits of the financial statements were unqualified. Financial management of the project, by the time of the MTR, complied with the World Bank requirements and was considered satisfactory. By the MTR, project disbursement slowed slightly due to (a) delays in attracting qualified staff who were willing and able to live in the project area and (b) health issues (resolved) of key project staff. Soon after this was remedied the project disbursement increased again and remained satisfactory until the end of the project.

43. The Authority indicated a few challenges in the financial management process. These included the relatively high turnover of World Bank staff working with them on financial management and obtaining financial clearance for IFRs on the World Bank system when a

disbursement was requested. The report would be loaded electronically, but after approval by the task team leader, it would be 'stuck' for two to three weeks before clearing.

Procurement

44. Given the iSimangaliso Authority's status as a public entity, procurement by iSimangaliso Authority was done in accordance with the South African Public Finance Management Act of 1999. Procurement within iSimangaliso complies with the Government's policy on Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act, which conflicts with the World Bank policies that disallow the application of any form of price preference in National Competitive Bidding procedures, except under International Competitive Bidding, where a preference could be applied to encourage the development of domestic contractors/manufactures.

45. The Authority followed the World Bank's procurement processes, which included 'Guidelines: Procurement under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits', dated May 2004 and revised on October 2006; 'Guidelines: Selection and Employment of Consultants by World Bank Borrowers', dated May 2004 and revised October 2006; and the provisions stipulated in the Legal Agreement. The Procurement Plan was updated at least annually or as required to reflect the actual project implementation needs and improvements in institutional capacity.

46. The World Bank Aide Memoires throughout the project period rated the procurement of the project as satisfactory. In 2010, a procurement consultant provided procurement training for members of the Authority team. In September 2011, a Post Procurement Review was undertaken and the processes met the World Bank's requirements. The MTR found that the procurement arrangements were sufficient for the remainder of the project. At the very beginning, the tender process for the first contracts was slow. Representatives of the Authority suggested that six months on a first failed tender process for the implementation of the preferred solution under component 1 could have been saved if they had disclosed the budget and allowed bidders to compete on the volume of spoil to remove, rather than the price. There were also some administrative challenges in procuring equipment needed by the supported small enterprises.

2.5. Post-completion Operation/Next Phase

47. The project finalized all its activities. There is enough political commitment to raise additional resources to deal with recurrent costs (for example, staff expenditures, project activities) after project closing. Consistent integration of activities into the broader institutional framework and management of the Authority throughout the project period (rather than having a stand-alone PIU and staff) meant that most of the project's activities were fully aligned and internalized within the organization's broader strategies.

48. Some of the suggestions for post-completion activities and for any possible subsequent phase include (a) continuing the live-capture monitoring in the estuary for at least five years to monitor the impact of rejoining the uMfolozi River and St. Lucia Estuary, (b) implementing stronger conservation measures to regulate recreational and subsistence fishing in the lake, (c) securing alternative funding sources, (d) increasing the market visibility of program businesses, (e) including a 'Bridge to Employment' component for the internship program, and (f) accessing resources to continue staff development around co-management. Finally, the World Bank

representatives suggested that a follow-on of the GEF project working on tourism and communities would be of interest, if the potential project was to work with community leadership and trusts to strengthen their capacity.

49. The client presented the results of the project and future work at a workshop held in Johannesburg in November 2016. This was attended by officials from the Department of Environment Affairs, South African National Park, the iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority, and the World Bank. They all agreed that the project brought many positive results to protect the exceptional biodiversity of South Africa and the region and secure the ecological integrity and sustainability of the national protected area systems through promoting sustainable resource use, local economic development, and ecological restoration in areas adjacent to them. The Government indicated that it would be particularly interested in expanding the approaches used in the iSimangaliso Wetland Park to engage communities and provide them with economic opportunities to other national parks in South Africa and in the region.

3. Assessment of Outcomes

3.1. Relevance of Objectives, Design, and Implementation is rated substantial.

50. **The relevance of objectives is rated high.** The project objective remains very relevant at project closing. Conservation of the St. Lucia Estuary contributes toward the Biodiversity Act (2004), the World Heritage Act (1999), the National Water Act (1998), and the call from the South African National Biodiversity Institute to protect biodiversity to achieve national biodiversity objectives. The St. Lucia Estuary is the largest estuary in the country, covers 40 percent of the country's estuarine area, and is a unique system. The country is about to start developing a new National Biodiversity Assessment and St. Lucia will be a critical element of this report. The Plan for Monitoring and Control of Alien Invasive Species addresses requirements of the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (Act 10 of 2004) which requires that the Protected Area Management Authorities draw up an "invasive species monitoring, control and eradication plan for land under their control." These plans must cover all listed invasive species according to Section 70(1) of this act.

51. As a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity, as well as several multilateral environmental agreements, including CITES, the World Heritage Convention, and the Ramsar Convention, South Africa has the responsibility of maintaining the health and biodiversity of the St. Lucia System. When the park was listed, the hydrological concern was recognized as one of the issues that needed to be addressed in the management of the World Heritage Site, to establish what supplies of freshwater were adequate for the lake and had prompted the need to consider various options for rehabilitating the system.

52. **The relevance of design is rated substantial.** The design of the project proved very relevant too, allowing for the flexibility and reactivity necessary for the implementation of component one that ensured the restoration of the Lake St. Lucia System to a state of improved ecological functioning and component two that created a stronger constituency among local residents for supporting conservation of iSimangaliso. The project design was of high quality, building on thorough background analyses and lessons learned from other projects. With hindsight, the project design could have anticipated the long process of collecting the data to identify the best

solution to restore the ecological integrity of the Lake St. Lucia System.c.1

3.2 Achievement of Project Development Objective

53. Overall, the project has been successful in meeting its objectives. The long-term goal or GEO was to protect the exceptional biodiversity of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park through conservation, sustainable resource use, rational land use planning, and local economic activity. The shorter-term goal or PDO was twofold. It aimed to (a) improve access to information needed to select the best feasible option for maintaining the availability of fresh water of adequate quality to the Lake St. Lucia System and (b) increase access among neighboring communities to conservation-compatible economic opportunities. The project either met or exceeded two of the three GEO/PDO indicators. The only GEO that was not met was the percentage of female beneficiaries of the whole project of 32 percent compared with the target of 50 percent by the end of the project. The project also met or exceeded all 10 intermediate results indicators.

54. The following are the contributions of each objective to the GEO/PDO.

Objective 1: Improve access to information needed to select the best feasible option for maintaining the availability of fresh water of adequate quality to the Lake St. Lucia System.

Related PDO-level results indicators to measure this objective are:

(a) Follow-up actions and investments contributing to the agreed hydrological solutions have been implemented.

(b) The iSimangaliso Wetland Park management effectiveness, as measured by the GEF METT, has improved from 71 to 80.

55. The achievement of this objective is rated Substantial.

56. (a) The project financed the development of several studies to support the best solutions to restore the ecological integrity of the St. Lucia Lake system.

57. A series of management plans for dunes, estuaries, and zonation that have provided information to support land use planning (for example, setback lines, buffer zones). One key study was the Dune Management Plan (DMP) that was developed to clarify recent biophysical processes along the park's shoreline and dune cordon and identify how the processes may affect the nature of the coastline under changing climatic conditions. The DMP also described key management interventions to address historical anthropogenically induced anomalies on the coast and future management approaches. The plan provided an introduction to coastal dune processes; specifics relating to the iSimangaliso dunes; management regimen (that is, guidelines for infrastructure siting, rectification of stabilization initiatives, and a review of development notes and setback lines for nine locations). The DMP provided useful general and specific guidance for iSimangaliso on management interventions for dunes in the park that was clear and straightforward to implement.

58. The Analysis of Alternatives collated detailed data, simulated models, and consulted with scientific peers in order to assess the potential costs and benefits that would result from three potential scenarios for the restoration of the ecological integrity of the Lake St. Lucia Estuary. The

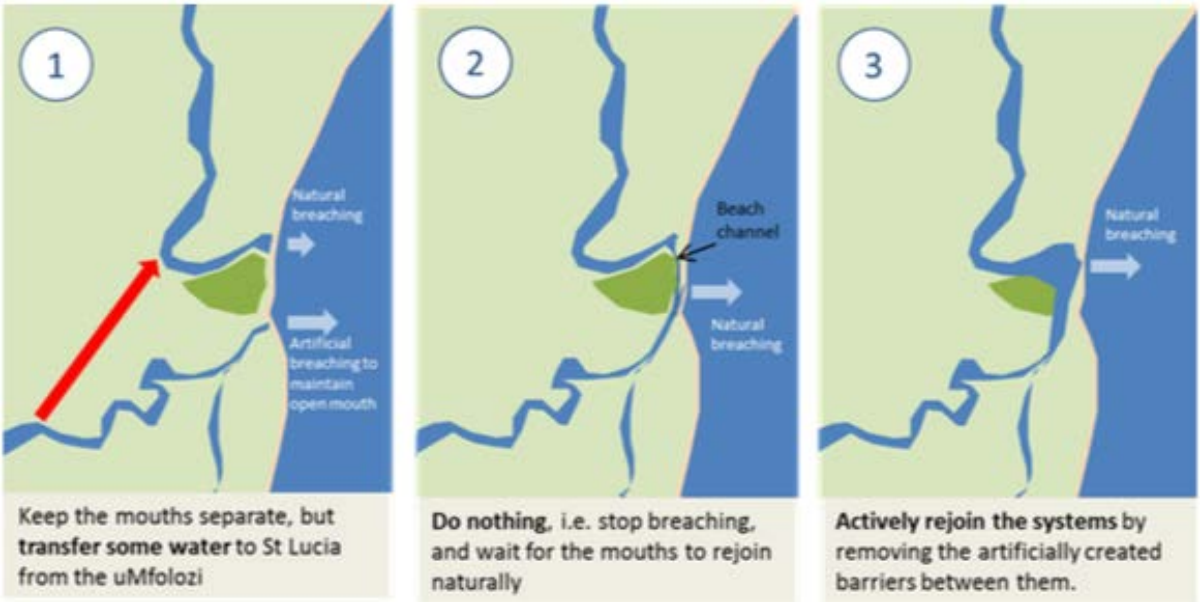
study was completed, with some delay. The scenarios identified in the scoping study included:

(a) Maintaining artificially separated mouths but transferring water from the uMfolozi River to the lakes to restore some of the historical inflows

(b) A 'do nothing' scenario, in which the system would be left to rectify itself over time

(c) Actively facilitating the restoration of a single estuary mouth

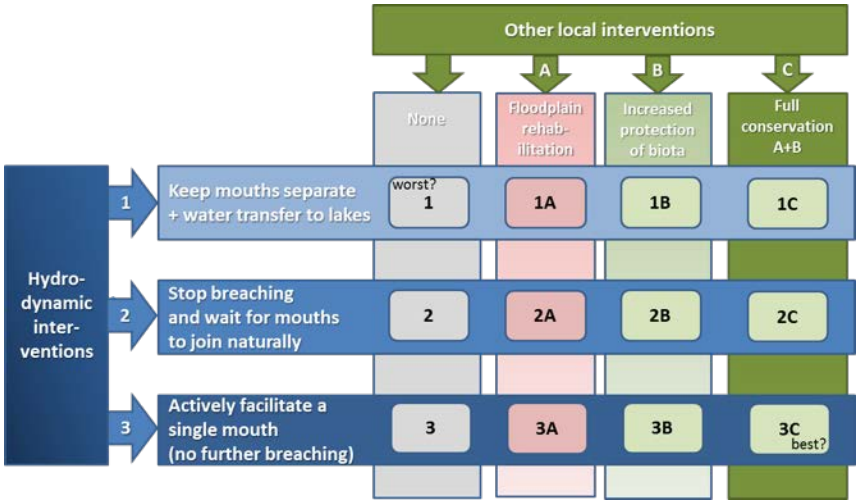
Figure 1. Schematic of the Three Options Considered to Restore the Hydrodynamic Functioning



Source: Clark et al. 2014a: Figure 1.3.

59. The three scenarios were examined with and without the implementation of management measures to protect estuarine resources from excessive utilization and were also tested under climate change and catchment management scenarios. A schematic diagram of the range of management options considered is illustrated in figure 2.

Figure 2. Schematic Diagram of the Management Options Considered



Source: Clark et al. 2014b: Figure 2.1.

60. The final analysis summarized each of the future scenarios that was explored, and the overall conclusion of each is outlined as follows:

- **'Separate mouths + transfers'.** This option did not fulfill the objective of improving the health status of the estuary, and the overall net benefit had a high probability of being negative.

- **'Do nothing'**. The net benefits of this option were higher than for 'Separate mouths + transfers' but were negative under three out of four scenarios that projected catchment and climate changes into the future.

- **'Joined mouth'.** The net benefits of this option were positive under all scenarios.

61. The studies and analysis described above culminated in a broadly agreed solution to protect the exceptional biodiversity of the St. Lucia Estuary by removing dredge spoil. This recommendation was implemented and the works where funded by the project and counterpart funds to help restore and conserve the ecosystem functioning. Following two tender processes, a contract was awarded to Cyclone Engineering projects to hydraulically mine the dredge spoil island. A six-month delay in the work led to completion in December 2016. A final project extension was granted at the end of February 2017, and with this, the Authority decided to re-tender the work. Two new companies were appointed and the iSimangaliso funds were used until the end of June. By the time this ICR was completed, the works had been concluded and the mouth of the St. Lucia Estuary was reconnected to the uMfolozi River.

Figure 3. Picture of the nMfolozi river mouth showing the connection with the St. Lucia Estuary

62. The Analysis of Alternatives provided a comprehensive overview of the socioeconomic importance of restoring Lake St Lucia as it supports economic activity such as fisheries and tourism, as well as natural resource use by communities in the iSimangaliso area. With the restoration of the St. Lucia Estuary the tourism and fishing economy that depends on, it is predicted to improve.

63. (b) Management effectiveness of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park increased from a score of 70 to 80. The project supported different activities and led to the increased management effectiveness reported. These included, among others, training of park staff, studies and management plans, infrastructure support for some visitor centers, removal of invasive species, reintroducing wildlife, and labeling indigenous trees. Specifically, the project supported the review and update of the management plan to reestablish indigenous wildlife**.** This activity was undertaken by the Authority but not using the GEF funds. A Game Management Policy and an Elephant Management Plan (2016–2021) were developed for the park, using alternate funds. Studies on various aspects of the park's ecosystem functioning were completed**.** The Authority focused these studies on establishing estuarine management plans, a hydrological assessment and buffer zone delineation, alien plant control strategy and a tree-labeling program.

64. **Objective 2:** Increased access among neighboring communities to conservation-compatible economic opportunities.

Related PDO-level results indicators

- Percentage of conservation-compatible small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) supported under the target that achieves commercial viability has increased to 50 percent (total 75 SMME).

65. The achievement of this objective is rated Substantial, particularly in relation to local economic development, but also with indirect impacts on conservation and sustainable resource use.

66. **The SMME program** (Subcomponent 2.1) identified promising entrepreneurs and SMMEs in the Umkhanyakaude district and provided them with business training and grants for specific equipment they needed. Although it has been difficult to quantitatively measure the impact of these interventions on SMMEs (because of the challenges in gathering financial information from them), a qualitative rating system was used to establish the number that was financially

viable). This process calculated that 81 of the 106 SMMEs supported were commercially viable by the end of the program (that is, 76 percent). Furthermore, the beneficiaries and community leaders consistently acknowledged their value in building the local economy. Reports from the beneficiaries indicate an improved understanding of the importance of conserving the iSimangaliso Wetland Park and using its resources sustainably.

67. **The Higher Education Access Program** (Subcomponent 2.2) contributed to local economic development potential, by providing bursaries to 77 youths from the Umkhanyakaude district, to study at universities and universities of technology, on courses relating to conservation, development, and tourism. By early 2016, 50 of these students had graduated, 16 were still studying, and 11 had left the program due to failure, receipt of another bursary, changes to courses not supported by iSimangaliso, and other reasons. Out of the 40 graduates, 22 were traced early in 2016 (Lewis and Rubin 2016). Of these, 13 had some form of employment (59 percent) and 3 were engaged in postgraduate studies (see table 1). Furthermore, seven graduates of the program were employed on an internship program that iSimangaliso introduced in 2014. By December 2016, all of them had permanent jobs.

Figure 4. Picture of the graduate students from the Capacity Building Program

Source: (left) iSmangaliso; (right) iSmangaliso Wetland Park Authority, 2014.

68. The Establishment of a Capacity-building Program (Subcomponent 2.3) contributed to conservation, sustainable resources use, and rational land use planning by developing and refining co-management capacity-building materials and deploying these to raise the capacity of the members of 7 trusts and the attendance of 487 people at 43 co-management workshops. The program raised their understanding of the iSimangaliso World Heritage Site, their co-management agreement and benefits, and their engagement in the annual co-management plans. The program also built the internal capacity of the Authority to deliver the capacity-building program to trusts and also the confidence to adapt them for other audiences (for example, youth and contractors in the park).

69. One important outcome delivered was not captured in the PDO/GEO but is worth mentioning.

Objective 3: Improved capacity of the iSimangaliso Authority and other relevant stakeholders for biodiversity conservation.

Related PDO-level results indicators

- Number of training events for iSimangaliso Authority and other relevant personnel

70. The achievement of this objective is rated Substantial, especially with regard to building capacity of the Authority in conservation (environmental management inspector [EMI] training, internships, legal training, mobile workshops, and awareness events); sustainable resources use (masters of the Chief Executive Officer [CEO]); and rational land use planning (Geographical Information System [GIS] training and databases). Through their assignments, interns also provided support to the SMME and Higher Education Access Program, thereby supporting the local economic development processes.

71. The forms of capacity building that took place during the course of the project for the iSimangaliso Authority and local community beneficiaries under this component are summarized in table 1.

Table 1. Institutional Capacity Building

Training	Description	Number of Participants	Number of Events
EMI training	Environmental enforcement officials for government departments who work with prosecutors to ensure successful prosecution of offenders	15	5 training events
Internship program	Community liaison officers, on EIAs, research assistants, environmental education, databases, permits, infrastructure maintenance, GIS, finance, and enterprise development	13	7 mentoring workshops
World heritage training	Capacity building for World Heritage Site visitor information centers	2	1 course
Conference attendance	Society for Ecological Restoration conference attended, World Parks Congress attended	5	2 conferences
Photography and related computer software use training	(1) SLR camera training and light-room	6	1 course
	(2) Compact camera training	15	1 course
Masters for CEO	Sustainability masters	1	1 course
Legal training	Training workshops to build the capacity of law enforcement stakeholders in the park, including iSimangaliso and EKZNW staff, and also magistrates, public prosecutors, members of the South African Police Services, local government officials, and traditional authorities.	313	21 workshops
GIS training	ArcGIS training (basic and standard)	3	4 events
Wilderness trails	Wilderness leadership trails run in the park near Cape Vidal for local opinion leaders, iSimangaliso Board and staff, and young journalists	48	4
Mobile workshops	3-day workshops run with community leaders from 13 communities; used to disseminate information about the Authority's mandate and raise environmental awareness	88	6
Awareness events	Celebratory environmental events to build awareness in 8 communities of the World Heritage Site values, strategy, and mandate	997 registered	6
Total		**1,516**	**59**

Source: iSimangaliso data.

72. In addition, the following activities were completed on time: (a) support for the development of an information base, including mapping and survey data collection, databases, and GIS; (b) establishment of an M&E system to monitor project performance and outcomes and adapt project activities to enhance results; (c) exchange visits with relevant programs and participation in international seminars and conferences; and (d) implementation of a project communication strategy and website development for the iSimangaliso Authority.

3.3. Efficiency

73. **The efficiency is rated Substantial.** In light of this, efficiency is assessed by (a) the total counterpart funds at closure was higher than required at appraisal; (b) the results at project closure of the incremental cost analysis proposed in the PAD, (c) the results of an independent economic assessment conducted at the end of the original grant, and (d) efficiency in project design and management. An analysis of each component justifies areas of efficiency in project design and management.

74. The total counterpart funding at project closure was estimated at US$46 million compared to US$12.7 at appraisal. The project delivered 385% more funding than expected. The studies financed by the GEF to assess the best option to re-establish the ecological integrity of the St. Lucia Lake System identified and recommended the need for significant infrastructure work to remove the dredge spoil. This level of counterpart funding achieved is seen as an efficiency because the Authority was able to raise significantly more funds to finance this infrastructure works required to reach the PDO. Counterpart funds came from their own funding, as well as from private donor and government funds, especially over the last 2 financial years.

75. The areas of efficiency in Component 1 included contracting a highly qualified technical officer, coupled with outsourcing specific studies to highly experienced scientists and consultants. Some greater efficiencies could have been achieved if (a) the scoping studies had been cancelled at the start of the project, in favor of the Analysis of Alternatives studies and (b) there had only been one tender process for the removal of dredge spoil from the estuary. The component produced high-quality deliverables with the available budget.

76. Component 2 was executed under budget and with results above those initially estimated. It is important to highlight that the scholarship program funded 2.2 times the target number of youth through the partnership with REAP, which gave it access to government student financial aid, for the most part in the form of non-repayable bursaries. The production of graduates who have no debt is the key measure of effectiveness.

77. Efficiencies in Component 3 relating to capacity-building interventions for the Authority were established in their planning—by using internal human resources training plan processes to inform the types of training that would be prioritized. Regular interactions with the EKZNW by the GEF project coordinator also ensured that training needs were integrated into the training program. Stakeholder interactions were rated efficient. Finally, the development and implementation of the communications strategy was outsourced to an experienced consultant, who was able to efficiently and effectively undertake budgeted activities.

3.4 Justification of Overall Outcome and Global Environment Outcome Rating

Rating: Satisfactory

78. The overall outcome rating is Satisfactory, based on substantial relevance of objectives, design and implementation, substantial efficacy, and substantial efficiency. Overall, the project has been successful in meetings its objectives. Aside from the indicators, the Authority and its service providers have created substantial knowledge and tools to support future conservation and livelihood management actions.

79. The World Bank's project ratings of implementation, procurement, and financial management have been Satisfactory throughout the project. A representative of the Department of Environment said that the success of the project had been its approach to looking at conservation that was compatible with sustainable local economic development, combined with an 'organic' approach to institutional capacity building of a protected area authority. One scientist said, "Think it is a very important project, and am glad that the GEF supported it. It could provide a global model about how to managing systems like this. I strongly support the whole project, and feel privileged to have been part of it."

4. Assessment of Risk to Development Outcome
Rating: Substantial

80. The risk to development outcome is **substantial** for the following reasons.

81. **Different opinions existed related to finding a solution to the restoration and conservation of ecological processes.** One of the PPG scoping studies provided a comprehensive list of different options for the restoration solution and evaluated whether they would achieve a series of objectives for the lake ecosystem functioning and the management of risks. Having prioritized options that could do so, the Analysis of Alternatives study provided a mechanism to rigorously test those options. The Analysis of Alternatives study provided forums and processes for technical peer review and stakeholder contributions to discuss the options and build consensus on the most appropriate approach. This risk was handled well as by the end of the project, technical experts, conservation partners, NGOs, and farmers interviewed by the independent consultant that carried out the final project evaluation were in agreement with the proposed solution to rejoin the uMfolozi and St. Lucia systems by removing the dredge spoil and that the Authority had used a good process to arrive at that solution.

82. **Alternative economic activities do not contribute sufficiently to prevent incompatible land uses.** The PAD noted that mitigation measures for this risk included requesting business plans before financing alternative economic activities, to ensure that they were financially, socially, and environmentally sound. During the application process for the SMME program's training and grants, applicants were requested to indicate the nature of their business, and only those that were deemed 'not environmentally damaging' could be considered. While the majority of businesses benefiting from the SMME program were not directly related to tourism or the environment, the program played a notable role in raising the level of awareness among its SMME participants and indirectly within the broader local community about the importance of environmental conservation. Therefore, it seems clear that the GEF project activities relating to planning frameworks, stakeholder consultation, and building conservation ambassadors were useful in addressing this risk. During the evaluation, no other major land uses relating to new economic

activities were noted that were incompatible with the park's conservation.

83. **Insufficient inter-institutional cooperation.** In general, the project had sufficient inter-institutional cooperation. The only institution indicated in the PAD that was not involved during implementation was Tourism KwaZulu-Natal, as their tourism promotion activities were not ultimately relevant to the project components. There were 45 meetings with stakeholders that specifically related to Component 1, 11 meetings with land claimants and local community leadership relating to Component 2, 17 other meetings with stakeholders that related to all components of the project, and interaction with a wide range of institutions providing training support under Component 3.

5. Assessment of Bank and Borrower Performance

5.1. Bank Performance

(a) Bank Performance in Ensuring Quality at Entry

Rating: Moderately Satisfactory

84. The World Bank participated actively and constructively in the design phase, ensuring that the project took into account sufficient and high-quality data. The World Bank also ensured that the project incorporated results and lessons learned from other relevant projects, CAPE (US$9 million GEF) and Greater Addo Elephant National Park Project (US$11 million GEF), both of which use a similar approach to iSimangaliso, in combining conservation and socioeconomic development activities. However, there was an issue with the results framework design. The PDO was rather vague 'access to information needed' and 'access to economic opportunities' whereas the indicators reflect the conservation-oriented GEO. For this reason the rating is MD.

(b) Quality of Supervision

Rating: Satisfactory

85. The World Bank team provided useful training on all fiduciary aspects to the PIU during implementation. The only difficulties encountered were a high turnover of World Bank staff working on financial management and the lengthy processes of obtaining financial clearance for IFRs when a disbursement was requested. The World Bank staff supported the PIU to ensure that procurement was done according to the World Bank's rules. The World Bank implementation support missions were regular and constructive and actively contributed to improve project performance. The World Bank team was able to identify issues readily, extract lessons from practice, and propose solutions to challenges proactively, including on technical, fiduciary, and safeguard matters. A total of 11 follow-up supervision missions were conducted during the life of the project, averaging one to three missions per year from effectiveness to closing. Aide Memoires and internal reporting through ISRs were used regularly. The World Bank team included most of the expertise needed to supervise the project. The MTR identified the need to extend the project closing date and the restructuring procedures were followed on time. By the MTR, the performance of the project was on track and the World Bank supervision was Satisfactory.

(c) Justification of Rating for Overall Bank Performance

Rating: Satisfactory

86. The overall World Bank performance is rated Satisfactory, consistent with the evaluation of each section earlier.

5.2 Borrower Performance

(a) Government Performance
Rating: Satisfactory

87. The Government of South Africa supported the project throughout its implementation. The iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority has the mandate to enter into 'cooperative governance agreements' with a range of institutions across all spheres of government, including local government, to fulfill its core functions. Before implementing the project, arrangements that included rights and duties were established between the iSimangaliso Authority, EKZNW, and the KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority with respect to the management and development of the park. These arrangements have been regulated through legislation and have been further elaborated through a management agreement signed by the parties in August 2001. In particular, the agreement specifies that the parties will assist each other in achieving the required regulatory processes and approvals necessary for the general enhancement of the park, and to achieve the objectives of the iSimangaliso Authority. These agreements were effective for the duration of project implementation.

(b) Implementing Agency or Agencies Performance
Rating: Satisfactory

88. Preparation by the Authority was characterized by highly levels of capacity, thoroughness, and attention to detail, particularly to minimize the likelihood of any unintended consequences of contracts. Stakeholders reported that the Authority were well-prepared and sometimes 'demanding clients'. One of the success factors of the Authority's preparation was that their objectives were clear and that they 'owned' the project.

89. One of the indications of the Authority's commitment to the GEF project was demonstrated by their initiative to secure alternative funds for Subcomponents 2.1 and 2.2 while waiting for the GEF disbursements to commence. The Authority used counterpart funds to carry out part of Subcomponent 2.1 between 2008 and 2011 with 98 rural enterprises, before the GEF project work began under Raizcorp in July 2012. Counterpart funds were also used in Subcomponent 2.2 to fund higher education bursaries for 10 students in 2010. Also, 2.1 and 2.2 have continued after the GEF project with funds raised by the Authority. Component 1 – also used the project to leverage further funding (GEF project removed 624,212 m^3 and further iSimangaliso funds moved additional 760,201 m^3 – total of 1,384,413 m^3).

90. The Authority prepared annual work plans with corresponding annual reports, indicating the subcomponent and activities, inputs, responsibility, GEF Financing in South African rands and U.S. dollars, and expenditure in South African rands.

91. The capacity of the Authority to implement the GEF project improved over the course of implementation, in part due to the recruitment of two technical officers to support Components 1 and 2 and by the capacity-building and training activities included in Component 3. Within

Component 3, the recruitment of 13 interns, and the eventual employment of 9 of them by the Authority, has contributed to the Authority's succession plan and its plans for growing the organization. Furthermore, the Authority focused on contracting the 'right' consultants and contractors to implement the project activities, which included contacting known specialists and encouraging them to apply for assignments through the open tender processes.

(c) Justification of Rating for Overall Borrower Performance
Rating: Satisfactory

92. The overall borrower performance is rated Satisfactory, consistent with the evaluation of each section earlier.

6. Lessons Learned

93. The lessons learned can be divided into operational and technical issues.

Operational Issues

(a) **Integrated implementation arrangements.** In this case, the GEF project was implemented by a highly competent and hardworking team within the Authority. The approach of fully integrating a project into the mechanics of a conservation institution (rather than convening a separate PIU) contributed to the efficiency and effectiveness, and also sustainability of the outputs. Institutional silos have not been created and the project integration is complete. This is illustrated by the integration of the DMP, Zonation Plan, and Estuarine Management Plans into the park's broader Integrated Management Plan.

(b) **The quality of project design was directly related to outcomes.** The project design was appropriate and only minor changes were made at the MTR that addressed use of the remaining funds for ecosystem restoration. This was required because the Authority was still in the process of studying the potential solution, which had not yet been decided. During the PPG there were some questions raised by GEF as to whether the project was a high priority and whether supporting communities could be linked to a global environmental benefit. However, it was clearly explained, in the PAD, that the project's emphasis related to addressing major long-term threats to iSimangaliso: the restoration of the estuary and attaining sufficient community support to defend the park against future threats. A clear lesson from the design was that the Authority had worked with the World Bank and consultants to design a project that met their objectives and applied indicators that were meaningful and largely straightforward to monitor.

(c) **The importance of communication.** The experience, to date, has proved that sufficiently shared values and effective, ongoing communication are key success factors in this kind of partnership, where partners are actively involved in delivering the program and both are close to the students. Being flexible, adaptable, mutually supportive, and making time to collaborate at the interface with students as well as in the 'back room' were essential factors. Maintaining mutual understanding and

familiarity with each other's mandate, context, and way of working through ongoing formal and informal communications at multiple levels between the two organizations was essential for ensuring consistent alignment.

Technical Issues

(a) **The importance of sound scientific research and data.** A World Bank representative indicated that they had "not seen another project with this quality of science behind it." However, delays in implementing PPG studies (for example, scoping studies) and their continuation during the main project caused further delays in the initiation of the Alternatives study. If the Analysis of Alternatives studies could have begun earlier, then the delays in the hydrodynamic modeling, faced during implementation, would not have been so serious, and, potentially, a year could have been saved.

(b) **Bringing long-term technical specialists into the team.** Rather than relying on existing (and sometimes overstretched) human resources or solely on short-term consultants, new specialists raised the capacity and responsiveness of the Authority to implement the project. Technical officers provided invaluable support throughout the project and left behind tools and capacity that will be used by the Authority in the future.

(c) **Influencing policies.** The project has also helped reshape how the country deals with conservation and the environment and, in particular, how to use the environment to create economic opportunities for people who were historically disadvantaged under the apartheid regime. The project has looked at how conservation areas interface with human activity, to explore mutually beneficial options that contribute to sustainable development, and how to build the capacity of a protected area authority to do so. The project has influenced policy on community-based natural resource management and approaches to tourism in relation to the transformation of society.

(d) **Cost effectiveness in implementing local community initiatives.** The bursary program's use of the GEF funds to build capacity for conservation within youth from local communities has been cost-effective. Not only has it provided training to 77 young community members, but it has simultaneously built a network of park 'ambassadors' who can communicate conservation and sustainable development messages within their communities. The program implementation reflected the design very well. No significant elements were left out altogether and although it was discontinued, postgraduate support occurred in three years. Elements evolved in relation to changing circumstances, possibilities, and developments in REAP and iSimangaliso— student recruitment, the scope of the partial bursary, developments in workshops and experiential learning possibilities—and REAP's access to the National Skills Fund for bursaries rather than loans was a major benefit for iSimangaliso's students.

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

(a) Borrower/implementing agencies

(b) Cofinanciers

(c) Other partners and stakeholders

Annex 1. Project Costs and Financing

(a) Project Cost by Component (in US$, Million equivalent)

Components	Appraisal Estimate (US$, millions)	Actual/Latest Estimate (US$, millions)	Percentage of Appraisal
Component 1	3.2	—	—
Component 2	4.3	—	—
Component 3	1.5	—	—
Total Baseline Cost	**9.0**	**9.0**	**95.6**
Physical Contingencies	0.0	0.0	—
Price Contingencies	0.0	0.0	—
Total Project Costs	**9.0**	**9.0**	**100.0**
Project Preparation Facility (PPF)	0.0	0.0	—
Front-end fee IBRD	0.0	0.0	—
Total Financing Required	**9.0**	**9.0**	**100.0**

(b) Financing

Source of Funds	Type of Cofinancing	Appraisal Estimate (US$, millions)	Actual/Latest Estimate (US$, millions)	Percentage of Appraisal
Global Environment Facility (GEF)	Grant	9.0	9.0	100.0
iSimingaliso Park Authority	Counterpart	12.7	49.0	385.0

Annex 2. Outputs by Component

Component 1: Hydrology and Ecosystem Functioning of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park	
Description: Component 1 will aim at restoring the Lake St. Lucia System to a state of improved ecological functioning (though not necessarily to its original condition). The project will finance (i) Analysis of Alternatives to determine the most feasible solution to the hydrological issues of the Lake St. Lucia System; (ii) Support to follow-up actions and investments to implement the selected alternatives (contingent upon finding a feasible solution) and (iii) Support for Park Conservation Management.	*Outputs:* 1. **Wetlands Restoration Options study and EIA completed**. • Scoping reports finalized. Alternatives reports all complete, aside from final revisions to socioeconomic and synthesis report anticipated before project closure. 2. **Proposed solution for wetland restoration is broadly consulted with stakeholders (yes/no).** • Peer reviewers provided technical feedback on draft Alternatives report. • More than 62 meetings, workshops, open days, and conferences: Formal, scientific meetings (10 meetings), the general public (7 meetings), farmers (that is, UCOSP: 9 meetings), ratepayers (7 meetings), traditional leaders (4 meetings), land claimants (9 meetings), the conservation NGO, WESSA (3 meetings), Prawn Fisheries and Development Association (PFDA) (1 meeting) and the Department of Water Affairs (4 meetings), and additional informal meetings. • Electronic newsletter distributed to 14,000 people every two weeks. 3. **Ecological monitoring system, including physical and biological indicators, defined and used (yes/no)** • Live monitoring system designed, tested and installed, and operating
Component 2: Promoting Conservation-Compatible Local Economic and Cultural Development	
Description: Component 2 would help create a stronger constituency among local residents for supporting conservation of iSimangaliso Park. The project will finance (i) implementation of a Conservation-Compatible Small, Medium and Micro Enterprise Program; (ii) Development of an Education and Academic Support Program; (iii) Establishment of a Capacity-building Program for nearby communities; and (iv) A Socio-Economic Environment Development (SEED) Program.	*Outputs:* 1. **Number of target SMMEs reached by business support services and number of targeted enterprises with access to sub-grants** • 185 SMMEs participated, 137 completed the program, and 48 dropped out for various reasons, including other studies. • 106 sub-grants with total value of ZAR 7,875 million. 2. **Number of youth attending courses at the tertiary level** • 77 bursary recipients: 50 of these students had graduated; 16 were still studying; and 11 had left the program due to failure, receipt of another bursary, and other reasons, by early 2016. 3. **Improved capacity of local/community leaders in effective implementation of co-management agreements** • 393 leaders participated in the project. • 29 co-management workshops for trusts. • 4 workshops for youth, where another 94 people participated.
Component 3: Institutional Capacity Building for Biodiversity Conservation	
The project will finance (i) Institutional capacity building for the iSimangaliso Wetland Authority and other stakeholders; and	*Outputs:* 1. **Satisfactory rating of project implementation** • Aide Memoires indicate Satisfactory ratings throughout the project. 2. **Unqualified financial audits of the iSimangaliso Authority** • Annual financial audits, approved by the Auditor General, sent

(ii) Support for the Administrative of iSimangaliso Authority.	to the World Bank's financial manager and the task team leader in accordance with the Grant Agreement. 3. **Number of training events for iSimangaliso Authority and other relevant personnel** • Training events for 511 people—comprising iSimangaliso staff, community members, and journalists • Included EMI training (15 people: 5 events), an internship program (13 participants: 7 mentoring workshops), World Heritage training (2 participants: 1 course), conference attendance (7 participants: 2 conference events), photography (21 people: 2 training events), masters for the CEO (1 beneficiary: 1 course), legal training (313 beneficiaries: 21 workshops), GIS training (3 beneficiaries: 4 training events), Wilderness Trails (48 participants: 4 trails), mobile workshops for community leaders (88 participants: 6 events), and awareness raising events (997 registered participants: 6 events)

Note: UCOSP = Umfolozi Cooperative Sugar Producers.

Annex 3. Bank Lending and Implementation Support/Supervision Processes

(a) Task Team members

Name	Role	Unit	Phone Number	Location
Claudia Sobrevila	Team Leader	GEN01	473-5004	Washington, DC
Chitambala John Sikazwe	Procurement Specialist	GGO01	5369+3128	Pretoria, South Africa
Tandile Gugu Zizile Msiwa	Financial Management Specialist	GGO26	5369+3166/	Pretoria, South Africa
Catherine Signe Tovey	Team Member	AFCS1	5369+3119/	Pretoria, South Africa
Christopher James Warner	Team Member	GCCIA	458-1735	Washington, DC
Gayatri Kanungo	Team Member	GEN01	522-0703	Washington, DC
George Campos Ledec	Team Member	GEN01	473-9267	Washington, DC
Ivan Velev	Team Member	AFCZA	473-0814	Washington, DC
Jayne Angela Kwengwere	Team Member	GEN07	473-6217	Washington, DC
Jemima Harlley	Team Member	AFCS1	5369+3113/	Pretoria, South Africa
Kisa Mfalila	Safeguards Specialist	GEN01	5369+3137/	Pretoria, South Africa
Nomalungisa Yoko Papu	Team Member	AFCS1	5369+3105/	Pretoria, South Africa
Sandra M Kuwaza	Team Member	WFALA	5327+6126/	Nairobi, Kenya
Simon Robertson	Team Member	INTOP	458-0525	Washington, DC
Sophia Elizabetha Fredrika Prinsloo	Team Member	AFCS1	5369+3105/	Pretoria, South Africa

(b) Staff Time and Cost

Stage of Project Cycle	Staff Time and Cost	
	No. of Staff Weeks	US$ (including travel and consultant costs)
Preparation		
FY10	0.000	15,225.80
Total	**0.000**	**15,225.80**
Supervision/ICR		
FY10	0.000	39,125.25
FY11	0.000	47,570.44
FY12	0.000	48,922.70
FY13	0.000	59,553.39
FY14	**8.255**	40,321.79
FY15	3.425	27,122.16
FY16	7.425	48,509.21
FY17	10.550	75,599.97

Annex 4: Summary of Borrower's ICR and/or Comments on Draft ICR

Project objectives:

1) The project's development objective was to improve access to information needed to select the best feasible option for maintaining the availability of fresh water of adequate quality to the Lake St. Lucia System, a wetland of global biodiversity importance, and to increase access among local communities to conservation-compatible economic opportunities.

2) The project had three components:

a) Restoration of the Lake St Lucia System to a state of improved hydrological and ecological functioning, through an analysis of alternatives to determine the most feasible solution, and the implementation of the solution.

b) Promotion of conservation compatible local economic and cultural development that would create a stronger constituency among local residents. This included three parts:

i. implementation of a Conservation-Compatible Small, Medium and Micro Enterprise Program.

ii. establishment a bursary and academic support program for talented local youths, to help pay their University fees on courses relating to conservation and tourism.

iii. Capacity building among land-claimant communities to understand and participate in co-management with the Park.

c) Building skills and capacity for biodiversity conservation within iSimangaliso Authority and other relevant stakeholder groups.

Overall outcome:

3) The project either met or exceeded its development objective and outcome indicators.

4) The project has made a significant contribution to the restoration of the of the Lake St Lucia system, which is recognized globally as a Ramsar site and a core part of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park, a World Heritage site. The analysis of alternatives study and the scientific inputs from the estuarine ecologist funded through the project saw empirical and evidence based science brought to bear on a complex management problem. On the basis of scientific knowledge, the iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority changed a 60 year old management strategy, allowing the uMfolozi River to rejoin the St Lucia estuarine system. Although the restoration has only just begun, there are signs of improvement to the estuary, with signs that fish and invertebrates populations are recovering. The dry season (winter) following the removal of the dredge spoil saw water levels of 1-1.2 msl throughout the system, which scientists attribute to the water flowing into the system from the uMfolozi River.

5) Consulting stakeholders was an important part of the project as it overturned long held management practices, scientific opinion and public perception. More than 62 meetings and workshops were held with a range of stakeholders including scientists, environmentalists, communities and sugar cane farmers.

6) The socio-economic development component of the project delivered significant benefits to people living in and around the Park, supporting iSimangaliso to achieve its dual mandate of conservation and rural development. The partnerships that iSimangaliso established with service providers to implement the enterprise, bursary and co-management capacity building programmes were key to their successful implementation. Capacity within iSimangaliso has been built for the continued implementation of these programmes, and programme level lessons and insights have been integrated into practice.

Challenges that affected implementation of the project:

7) The challenges encountered during the project related primarily to Component 1. The hydrological data on the rivers flowing into the Lake St Lucia system is managed and made available to researchers by the Department of Water Affairs. This data was necessary for the analysis of alternatives study but, was found to be patchy and unreliable. With input from relevant scientists, the research team agreed to make adjustments to the hydrological modelling to account for the inadequacies of data available. This caused the delay of the study by one year as certain scenarios had to be re-run.

8) Delays in the removal of the dredge spoil were experienced for a number of reasons, including losing time during the procurement of a contractor. The first bid process failed, and it was necessary to re-tender the work. Support from the World Bank procurement specialist during this time was especially helpful and a contractor was appointed through the second bid process. Furthermore, the project was being implemented during a drought, and the technical methods used had to be adapted to deal with the lack of water. Eventually three contractors were appointed and effectively removed 1,384,413 m3 of dredge spoil, of which 624,212m3 was removed with project funds, and the target was exceeded.

Support from the World Bank:

9) The iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority values the financial support received from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the technical input from the World Bank for the duration of the project.

10) Support from the World Bank to the project from design to implementation was consistent and professional. iSimangaliso worked closely with the following World Bank team members who are especially thanked for their professional input, guidance and observations: Claudia Sobrevila (TTL), George Ledec (Biodiversity specialist), John Chitambala Sikazwe (Procurement specialist) and Tandile Msiwa (Financial management specialist).

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