

Final Evaluation

Development of Wildlife Conservation and Protected Area Management

(SRL/92/G31)

A UNDP Project

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Executive Summary

This project comes to an end in five months. During the past seven years, the project catalyzed the addition of a large number of cadre (260) to the severely understaffed Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWLC), prepared excellent management plans for the country's most important protected areas (PAs), and trained most (90%) of the Department staff to enable them to implement these plans. Nevertheless, the management of protected areas has not improved much over the life of this seven year, US\$ 8 million project. Likewise, although the project developed a sound strategy and policy for conserving the globally endangered Asian elephant in the country, the management of elephants and, in particular, the management of conflicts between elephants and people, remains basically unchanged from the pre-project situation. The project has achieved a tremendous amount, but the impact is not yet felt.

The main reasons for this lack of impact are: 1) a dearth of interest, direction and leadership at the highest levels in the DWLC (this is in contrast to the interest demonstrated in the field), 2) the inappropriate and highly centralized structure of the DWLC, 3) deficiencies in process mechanisms which preclude proper planning and budgeting, thus preventing disbursement of much needed funds to the field, and finally, 4) the negative influence exerted by a small number of individuals in the DWLC.

Last year, the DWLC returned 18% of the funds allocated to it back to the national treasury. Meanwhile, many Wildlife Guards sleep without beds, and often go without batteries, field knives or lanterns for patrolling. One reason why funds are returned unspent is the highly centralized nature of the DWLC. For example, expenditures greater than Rs. 500 (approximately US\$ 7) must be approved by the Director himself. Another constraint preventing greater disbursement to the PAs of much needed funds is budget formats which severely curtail the types of activities that can be undertaken. Park Directors can, using the budget request forms available, only request two types of funds, i.e., funds for "permanent infrastructure development", and "capital assets maintenance". Thus, even though comprehensive park management plans now exist which include habitat management, community ecodevelopment, and other routine park management activities, Park Directors cannot implement these plans because they have no way of requesting funds to undertake any activities other than infrastructure development.

The Administrative Rules (AR) and Financial Rules (FR) have been cited by the DWLC as one of the most important constraints preventing them from spending funds allocated to them, yet the Forest Department, working under the same rules, has found mechanisms, such as regional tender boards, for working effectively with the AR and FR. It is lack of leadership, rather than the AR or FR, which prevents the DWLC from being more effective.

The problems, cited above, which have prevented successes from having their full impact are *not* insurmountable. Solutions for addressing these problems are, in fact, readily available.

In an attempt to decentralize the DWLC and to make its structure more relevant to modern parks and wildlife management, the GEF project proposed a sound institutional structure for the DWLC back in 1995. Unfortunately, it was rejected by the DWLC, apparently because a few individuals did not stand to benefit from that structure as much as they would have liked.

Meanwhile, very recently (July 15) the DWLC adopted a new institutional structure which is *not* an improvement over the existing structure, and may be worse. Unfortunately, the institutional structure adopted on July 15, although developed by a GEF National consultant, was never reviewed by the GEF project Chief Technical Advisor (CTA), or by any outside authority with technical competence in wildlife management, before being adopted by the DWLC. This new structure appears to be primarily driven by the desire to empower a small number of individuals. Under the new structure, a new division, i.e., “Wildlife Health and Veterinary Research” is to be created. The person in charge of this division would have the responsibility of supervising the most important parks in the country and also addressing human-elephant conflicts (HEC). Certainly there is a need for translocating elephants now and then, and it is not unreasonable to have one person qualified to undertake this work in the Department, but in Sri Lanka, where serious wildlife health issues simply do not exist, it is unnecessary, and indeed inappropriate, to have an entire wildlife health division. Furthermore, it would be inappropriate to have a unit concerned with mitigating HEC under a wildlife health division. HEC mitigation is, after all, not merely a matter of translocating elephants, but also involves working with people to resolve conflicts and, addressing socio-economic concerns. Finally, it is inappropriate to have a wildlife health division supervising the management of PAs.

The evaluation team strongly recommends discarding the institutional structure adopted by the DWLC on July 15, and adopting the institutional structure previously rejected by the DWLC.

Clearly, the structure of an institution is critical to its success. But, even a vastly improved institutional structure will fail without good leadership. A new Director, one with strong management capabilities, is sorely needed. The DWLC has suffered from poor leadership and lack of continuity in leadership. Turnover of Directors has been high, the DWLC having had seven Directors over the past seven years. One more turnover, however, would be helpful.

The global community has recognized the great significance of Sri Lanka’s biodiversity. Because of this recognition, the GEF was willing to provide funds to help Sri Lanka conserve its nature by strengthening the government institution responsible for this, the DWLC. Although much was accomplished in the GEF project, much remains to be done to derive the full impact from the many project successes. Further donor support is needed. Tentative interest has already been expressed by several donors including the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank/ GEF. Follow on assistance will simply not be cost-effective, however, unless the obstacles to achieving impact are removed. Moreover, it may not be reasonable for Sri Lanka to seek donor assistance when the DWLC is returning almost 20% of its budget to the treasury.

The question is now not what donors can do, but rather what the GOSL will do. Will Sri Lanka choose to let leadership in the DWLC continue to slumber, thereby sacrificing the great natural heritage with which the country has been bestowed, or will it choose instead to waken the Department with new leadership and a new structure that will allow it to step proudly into the 21st century?

Actions Which Should Be Taken Before Further GEF Support is Recommended:

9. Restructure the DWLC (according to the institutional structure recommended by the CTA).
10. Change the DWLC leadership.
11. Institute process mechanisms that allow for proper planning and budgeting, following the Forest Department model as appropriate.

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A More Detailed Summary

This government-executed US\$ 8 million project, initiated in 1992, was funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL). The project was to enhance the capacity of the government's Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWLC) to manage protected areas (PAs), and to enhance people's awareness of how these areas contribute to their socio-economic development; and secondly, to develop a strategy to conserve the Sri Lankan elephant and enhance the capacity of the DWLC to address conflicts between elephants and people.

Initially planned for five years, the project was extended to seven due to slow start up. The project is in the portfolio of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and is implemented by both the GOSL and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The GEF contributed US\$ 4,087,130 to the project, while funds allocated by the GOSL totaled Rs. 243,587,000 (approximately US\$ 4.3 million¹). With five months remaining until project end, 89 % of the GEF funds and 72% of the government contribution has been disbursed. Disbursement of the government contribution was minimal until these funds were brought under project control in 1997.

The project has generally achieved the stated objectives, and has brought about significant changes which are expected to lead eventually to the desired impact. The project:

1. Added 260 staff to the DWLC, a department which at the onset of the project was severely understaffed. This success is especially notable because addition of these staff was made during a time in which a freeze on new government positions was in effect.
2. Created much needed new posts in the DWLC, such as "Additional Director -- Technical", "Supra-Grade Ranger" and "Education and Training Officer". Nine additional posts of "Assistant Director" were also created, most of whom are now posted in PAs as Park Directors. In contrast to the pre-project situation, all new recruits to the DWLC now have some science education background and, in the case of the higher levels, professional training.
3. The project has not only catalyzed the addition of staff and created needed new posts, but has also trained almost 90% of the Wildlife Guards, Range Assistants, Rangers, and Assistant Directors in the DWLC. The project exceeded expectations in this regard, training a total of 477 DWLC staff, despite delays in their recruitment. This has created the necessary critical mass for transforming the DWLC from a highly centralized and

¹ Conversions from Sri Lankan Rupees (Rs) to United States dollars (US\$) are based on an exchange rate of 56 Rs/US\$, this being the simple average of the exchange rate at the beginning of the project and the current exchange rate (Rs 70/US\$ 1). Clearly, this is not precise, but provides the reader with a general indication of amounts allocated/spent.

non-technical department to one better able to implement modern wildlife management. (Although as noted later in this report, this transformation has yet to occur.)

4. Operationalized the National Wildlife Training Centre (NWTC), a facility built with USAID funds which was not being fully used at the onset of the project, and trained trainers overseas to work as trainers at the Center.
5. Formed important institutional links between the DWLC and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), and between the DWLC and several Sri Lankan universities.
6. Developed resource inventories for six PAs which served as critical inputs into the development of the PA management plans.
7. Developed PA management plans for Sri Lanka's most important PAs, covering 45% of the total area under the DWLC's jurisdiction.
8. Enhanced awareness within the DWLC of the need and desirability to work together with communities living around PAs. (This is perhaps one of the most profound changes the project has brought about.)
9. Developed an ecodevelopment plan for Udawalawe National Park, where severe conflicts between park management and the community existed in the past. The project, through the participatory elaboration of the park management plan, helped to dissipate the conflict. All PA management plans now include an ecodevelopment component.
10. Developed a national strategy for the long-term conservation of elephant and for human-elephant conflict (HEC) mitigation. The strategy has been adopted by the government, and a task force has been formed to pursue its implementation.
11. Established and equipped a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) unit staffed by capable individuals who trained themselves in these technologies during the project. The GIS unit produced all the maps for the PA plans.
12. Developed and improved infrastructure including roads, electric fences, visitor center, beat stations, park offices, and other buildings inside PAs. (In most cases, these were much needed works, however there were cases where funds could have been used to address higher priorities.)
13. Provided essential equipment. (Much more is, however, needed just to meet minimum needs for a functional field presence).
14. Funded wildlife research which will be helpful in making management decisions, and set up a sound and transparent procedure for identifying research priorities and sharing research results. As a result of the project, an annual workshop to share wildlife research results has been put into place.
15. Lifted morale of DWLC field staff. Until the project, most DWLC staff had received no

training whatsoever. For older staff, many of whom had served in the department for 20 years or more, the training provided under the project was greatly appreciated.

16. Developed some educational materials to enhance the awareness of the public on the importance of conservation. (As noted later in this report, this activity could have been even more successful, nevertheless, some good materials were produced.)
17. Provided critical inputs which should enable the soon-to-be established planning unit of the DWLC to effectively plan and budget. Until recently, the accounting division in the DWLC did defacto planning. Improvements to that highly inappropriate method of planning has been made as a result of the project, but, as pointed out in another section of this report, much more substantial change is still required for effective planning and budgeting based on PA management plans.
18. Leveraged a probable investment of \$350,000 from UNDP core resources to implement the ecodevelopment plan for Udawalawe, and catalyzed discussions related to a possible follow-on ADB investment to implement several of the PA management plans prepared by the GEF project.

As evidenced from the above cited successes of the project, the project has largely succeeded in achieving the stated objectives. Nevertheless, this achievement has not yet had the full desired *impact*. The capacity of the DWLC to manage protected areas has indeed been enhanced as a direct result of the project, but management of the PAs has not significantly improved. Many of the most important problems pertaining to PA management that existed at the beginning of the project still exist. And, although a strategy to conserve elephants has been developed by the project, and has been adopted by GOSL, on-the-ground management of wild elephants and the resolution of conflicts between elephants and people has not significantly improved.

For the most part, project inputs were both appropriate and of good quality. To what then can the failure to have a noticeable positive impact be attributed? The main reasons for this lack of noticeable impact are: 1) a dearth of interest, direction and leadership at the highest levels in the DWLC (this is in contrast to the interest demonstrated by DWLC staff in the field), 2) the inappropriate and highly centralized structure of the DWLC, 3) deficiencies in process mechanisms which preclude proper planning and budgeting, thus preventing disbursement of much needed funds to the field, and, finally, 4) the negative influence exerted by a small number of individuals in the DWLC. Other less important factors detracting from greater project impact include 1) lack of implementation of most aspects of PA management other than infrastructure development (due to both lopsided priorities and to the lack of process mechanisms noted above), which constrains those trained under the project from applying skills and knowledge they have gained, 2) some shortcomings in training which did not adequately equip trainees for certain tasks which need to be undertaken as part of PA management, and, 3) lack of a feeling of project ownership at the top levels of the DWLC (not true of DWLC staff in the field).

Some of the above-cited constraints might have been at least in part addressed by a project design which: 1) stipulated clear benchmarks throughout the project life, and identified clear consequences for not achieving these benchmarks, and, 2) identified tangible indicators of

success related to on-the-ground PA management, and closely monitored these indicators.

Although the project can be considered overall successful in terms of achievement of stated objectives, it has failed in certain respects:

- Most importantly, despite numerous project inputs of high quality, and the insistence, reiterated at each tri-partite review (TPR) throughout the life of the project, on the need to undertake institutional reforms, the project has failed to achieve institutional restructuring to decentralize the DWLC, a critical constraint to more effective management of both PAs and the Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC).
- Due mostly to lack of interest, and, in a small number of isolated cases, actual antagonism toward the project, from the top levels of the DWLC, the project has not been well integrated into the DWLC. This raises serious questions about whether the DWLC will, once the project ends, continue project-initiated activities, many of which are considered critical to conservation of biodiversity in the country.
- Some counterpart funds have been inappropriately used.
- Some record-keeping and financial management concerns exist regarding counterpart funds.
- Due to misuse of project counterpart funds, the GEF has been linked to the so-called “Elephant Transit Home”, a highly questionable initiative which has received substantial negative attention from the press and others.

This GEF project has created a critical mass of technically-qualified trained staff and has provided other important inputs which should enable the DWLC to make a transition from a highly centralized institution which has largely concentrated on only the infrastructure development of PAs, to a decentralized one which effectively protects biodiversity while considering the needs of people living in close proximity to PAs. To realize the full impact of these achievements, however, further support will be required from both the GOSL and donors.

Such support should be contingent upon restructuring the DWLC (both on paper and in actual fact), ensuring adequate leadership in the DWLC, and instituting process mechanisms that allow for proper planning, budgeting and implementation of PA management activities. Without these changes, further assistance will not have the desired impact. Further GEF assistance is therefore not recommended until these changes are made.

Once the above-cited constraints are addressed, priorities for follow-on assistance from donors include support to:

- Implement PA management plans.
- Implement the ecodevelopment plan for Udawalawe.
- Develop ecodevelopment plans for other PAs, using the ecodevelopment components of

existing PA plans, and implement these plans.

- Further equip field offices and beat stations (vehicles, beds, tables, cabinets, trunks, binoculars, field knives, weapons for patrolling, tents, sleeping bags).
- Further develop critical infrastructure within PAs (beat stations, offices, visitor centers, electric fencing).
- Train DWLC staff in practical aspects of PA management, and in decision making and problem solving, budget preparation and planning.
- Gather more information on elephant numbers, distribution, movements and conflicts with people, and refine HEC mitigation techniques.
- Implement the elephant conservation strategy.
- Establish a mechanism to allow the DWLC to retain revenues generated by the PAs.

Finally, special mention should be made of the project Chief Technical Advisor (CTA), an internationally renowned conservationist. His outstanding inputs and utter devotion are largely responsible for many of the project successes. Rarely is such an exceptionally talented and experienced individual made available through a project for such an extended period of time. Had the top levels of the DWLC placed greater importance on the project, his expertise could have been even more effectively utilized.

ACRONYMS

CBO	Community-Based Organization
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DD	Deputy Director
DWLC	Department of Wildlife Conservation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization, United Nations
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GOSL	Government of Sri Lanka
HEC	Human-Elephant Conflict
HQ	Headquarters
MFE	Ministry of Forestry and Environments
MPAHA&PI	Ministry of Public Administration, Home Affairs and Plantation Industries
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NP	National Park
NPC	National Project Coordinator
NWTC	National Wildlife Training College
PA	Protected Area
RS	Rupees
TPR	Tri-Partite Review
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WII	Wildlife Institute of India

1. Methodology

This evaluation is based on in-country interviews and in-country review of documentation conducted during a 21 day period in July/August 1999.

Interviews were conducted with DWLC staff (Assistant Directors, Rangers, Range Assistants and Wildlife Guards) in PAs, and with DWLC staff at HQ (Director, Additional Directors, Deputy Directors, Education and Training Officer, Publicity Officer). Interviews were also conducted with people living in areas bordering PAs, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/Colombo, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)/Colombo, the project CTA, the National Project Coordinator (NPC), several Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), one University, and staff of several other government departments, including the Forest Department and the Coast Conservation Department.

Field visits were made to six PAs, i.e., Udawalawe, Lunugamwehera, Bundala, Yala, Minneriya, and Wasgomuwa. The team also visited the National Wildlife Training Centre (NWTC) at Giritale.

Documentation reviewed include all PA management plans and resource inventories, the elephant conservation strategy, institutional restructuring reports, the ecodevelopment plan for Udawalawe, papers available on research studies, incidental reports, monthly meeting notes, the project mid-term evaluation (1996), tri-partite meeting notes, the UNDP Project Performance Evaluation Report (PPER) for 1997, the UNDP/GEF Project Implementation Review (PIR) for 1999, project files, financial reports, and the annual audit report for 1998.

It is not possible, and indeed not appropriate, for an evaluation mission to act as auditors or stock-takers. Because of poor and often incomplete record keeping regarding government counterpart funds, this evaluation team spent more time than normal trying to determine how funds had been spent and how goods had been distributed.

2. Project Concept and Design

2.1 *Project Concept*

The project concept is solid, i.e., try to conserve biodiversity within a network of protected areas that includes representative samples of the various ecosystems in the country, adding to this system as necessary to achieve full representation and adequate size, and, work to resolve the most intense conflict which exists between people and wildlife in the country (in the case of Sri Lanka, the conflict between humans and elephants).

This concept is solid for several reasons: 1) focus on the PAs makes sense because most of the globally significant biodiversity in the country exists within these areas, 2) adding to the PA network makes sense because areas currently outside the network will become degraded and lose much of their global biological values if they are not officially protected, and, 3) addressing the HEC makes sense because this wildlife-people conflict is between an endangered wildlife species of global significance and people whose support for wildlife is essential for the long-term existence of wildlife, and who themselves are living “on the edge”.

2.2 *Project Approach*

The approach adopted by the project was to enhance the technical capacity and the cadre of the relevant government agency, one which at the initiation of the project was very weak in terms of technical background and number of staff, and also to provide international inputs in areas where the internal capacity did not exist and could not be developed over the project period.

Given the severe understaffing in the DWLC at the onset of the project, and the severe shortage of technically qualified staff, the approach of building this institution was solid.

The project approach might have been even more solid if it had striven to: 1) enhance not only the capacity of government to conserve biodiversity, but also that of Sri Lankan conservation-oriented NGOs, and community-based organizations (CBOs), and, 2) enhance not only the technical capacity of the DWLC, but also its management capacity.

2.3 *Project Design*

Perhaps the biggest flaw in project design was that not enough emphasis was placed on mechanisms to promote sustainability of project-initiated and project-supported activities after project end. Especially in cases where project funds exceed the government budget for the department they are intended to assist (as is the case in this project), sustainability should be a critical consideration in project design.

A few examples of how sustainability considerations could have been worked into the design of the project follow. 1) Even today, with only five months left until project end, there is no line in the government budget for training. Thus, the DWLC is totally dependent on outside resources to fund training of their staff. Benchmarks, with time targets, could have been defined to ensure that government created a budget line for training in the government budget (allocating more funds to this new budget line over the project life). This would promote continuation of training

after project end. 2) At present, DWLC spends almost all its funds allocated to PAs on infrastructure development. Benchmarks, with time targets, could have been defined to ensure that government spending in PAs was more proportionate to actual PA management needs, with an increasing proportion of government funds going to wildlife, habitat and ecodevelopment activities, and a decreasing proportion to infrastructure over the life of the project. 3) Last year, the DWLC returned 18% of funds allocated to it back to the treasury. Once the problem preventing greater disbursement was identified, time targets for decentralizing the DWLC and for adopting new budget formats could have been set, and clear consequences for not doing so, including possible project shut down, outlined.

Prospects for sustainability, even in the absence of specific mechanisms such as benchmarks put into place to enhance sustainability, would have been greatly improved if the project had been fully adopted and integrated into the institution it was intended to assist. In the case of this project, integration into the DWLC was poor, but, admittedly extremely difficult to achieve under the existing conditions of almost total lack of interest at the highest levels of the DWLC, and in a small number of cases (also at HQ), actual antagonism toward the project. About the only change in project design that could have addressed this unfortunate situation is flexibility in the project to change partners, i.e., drop the DWLC and adopt a different approach such as working directly with CBOs. In reality, this would have required ending the project and negotiating a totally new one.

Another weakness in design is that no impact-oriented indicators for gauging project success were stipulated. Refer to the section in this report on impact-oriented indicators for further detail.

2.4 Project Document

As eluded to above, benchmarks throughout the life of the project should be clearly defined in the project document to enable monitoring progress in achieving impact-oriented indicators. The lack of both impact-oriented indicators and benchmarks to monitor them is a weakness in the design of this project, reflected in the project document itself.

Due to time constraints, evaluation of the project document is limited to the “immediate objectives”. The objective pertaining to capacity building should have included emphasis on raising management capabilities in the DWLC, not merely scientific and technical capabilities. It should have also included some emphasis on building capacity of CBOs in the vicinity of Pas.

The second immediate objective could have been improved as follows: “Develop a capacity for the systematic assessment AND RESOLUTION of human/elephant conflicts, and formulate AND ADOPT a strategy AND A POLICY for the EX-SITU conservation of the Sri Lankan elephant. (Suggested changes are in capital letters.)

3. Project Activities and Products: Their Relevance, Quality & Impact

3.1 *Restructuring the DWLC*

Cost ² :	US\$ 42,500/Rs 2,380,000
Relevance ³ :	High
Appropriateness:	High
Quality:	High (With exception of the latest National Consultancy Input)
Impact:	Low
Cost Effectiveness ⁴ :	Medium

Despite numerous project inputs of high quality, and the insistence, reiterated at each TPR throughout the life of the project, on the need to undertake institutional reforms, the project has failed to achieve institutional restructuring to decentralize the DWLC, a critical constraint to more effective management of both PAs and the Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC).

The purpose of restructuring the DWLC was to remove the biggest obstacles preventing the DWLC from more effectively managing the PAs and HECs. These obstacles were, and continue to be: 1) an inefficient and inappropriate structure, 2) the lack of delegation of financial and administrative authority to the ADs and Park Directors based in the PAs, and, 3) the lack of process mechanisms which preclude the possibility of proper planning and budgeting. These obstacles have resulted in lack of implementation of most PA management and HEC mitigation activities, and enormous delays in the few activities that are implemented. Thus, although field activities are severely hampered due to non-availability of funds, a significant part of the budget allocated to the DWLC by the treasury is returned every year because the DWLC's structure, centralized nature, and inadequate process mechanisms makes it impossible to meaningfully and completely utilize these much needed funds. In 1998, for example, 18% of the budget allocated to the DWLC was returned to the treasury, while DWLC staff in beat stations slept on the floor, were issued only 3 batteries for the year, had no field knives for clearing brush while on patrols, etc.. Needless to say, activities such as habitat enhancement, regular wildlife censusing, and other routine PA management activities go mostly undone under these circumstances. Recently, the project recruited a national consultant to undertake an assignment intended to

² Indicated costs are estimates based on best, but incomplete, information available to the evaluation mission.

³ Relevance refers to the relevance of the type of activity, whereas appropriateness refers to the relevancy of the actual activities undertaken. For example, research, as a type of activity could be highly relevant to the needs, but the actual research projects undertaken could be ones that do not address research priorities and therefore are not highly relevant.

⁴ Cost-effectiveness does not refer to the impact of the activity, but rather to the cost-effectiveness of producing the product. Thus, it is possible to have a highly cost-effective activity that had little impact.

address the institutional weakness issue. The need for this consultancy was questionable as the project had previously already provided the DWLC with a sound institutional structure formulated by the CTA. The terms of reference he was given were also inappropriate as they suggest he should elaborate job descriptions based on the “approved” institutional structure, which itself was inappropriate, as the DWLC had rejected the inputs of the CTA and had adopted another institutional structure which was inappropriate. Furthermore, the choice of the consultant was inappropriate. Although the consultant had expertise in institutional issues, he had no background in wildlife or parks, making it very difficult for him to undertake this assignment. The most critical problems associated with the functioning of the DWLC have not been adequately addressed in the recent report of the national consultant, and the institutional structure described in that report is no improvement over the current structure, and may be worse.

The unfortunate outcome of this latest inappropriate project input on institutional restructuring is that the DWLC decided to adopt the structure described by the national consultant, announcing so in a DWLC unnumbered circular dated 14 July 1999. Fortunately, the newly adopted institutional structure is not yet operational, and, indeed may never become operational according to one senior staff in the DWLC who indicated it would not be adopted in practice but was merely adopted to meet a deadline imposed by the Secretary of the MPAHA&PI. The newly “adopted” structure and function is not an improvement over the old one, and will not solve the problems the restructuring was intended to address. Unfortunately, time was not allocated for adequate review of the consultancy report either internally by the project CTA, or by DWLC staff other than a few at HQ, before the DWLC adopted the report.

Because the organizational structure that the DWLC adopts is critical to its success as an institution, the DWLC should reconsider its latest move. (See recommendations section for further detail.)

GEF project inputs were limited to restructuring the DWLC to enable it to better address modern day parks and wildlife management and to decentralize it. No attention was given to making the DWLC more economically viable. Some of the PAs earn substantial revenue from entrance fees. Yala National Park earned more than Rs. 50 million last year, while Udawalawe National Park earned Rs. 23 million. Yet, their annual operating budgets are only Rs. 4.5 million and Rs. 2.5 million respectively. Clearly, once the constraint preventing greater disbursement of funds is addressed (something which the GEF project was intended to do), there will be a need for much larger operating budgets to implement PA management plans. One way of ensuring that these budgets are available is to find a mechanism for retaining at least some, if not all, of the revenues generated by the PAs.

There is discussion, and indeed a draft Act, on creating a “Wildlife Authority” in the country. There is also apparent confusion on the role of such an Authority. If the DWLC elects to adopt the institutional structure recommended by this evaluation mission (i.e., that proposed by the CTA), creation of such an authority should in no way annul or replace the new institutional structure, but should merely serve as a way of ensuring that revenues generated by the PAs are returned to the DWLC. If an Authority is established, a board of directors would probably need

to be appointed, and, in this case, the change in the institutional structure would be that the Director of the DWLC would be responsible to that board instead of only to the Ministry.

It is not the purpose of this evaluation mission to comment on the draft Act to establish a wildlife authority, but because the GEF project did place significant emphasis on the institutional issue, it would be appropriate and beneficial for any progress related to the establishment of such an Authority to be reviewed by the project CTA while he is still available during the next five months.

3.2 Training DWLC Staff

Cost:	US\$1,084,030/ Rs. 60,705,600
Relevance:	High
Appropriateness:	Medium
Quality:	Medium
Impact:	Low
Cost Effectiveness:	High

The training programmes were initiated in 1995. A total of 477 DWLC staff were trained, this despite delays in their recruitment into the DWLC. This achievement exceeded project expectations and is an indication of the perceived and actual need for training in the DWLC. Specially designed regular courses for Rangers, Range Assistants, and Wildlife Guards were held at both the National Wildlife Training Centre (NWTC) in Giritale, and at the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) in Dehra Dun, India.

The NWTC, an institution which was built with USAID funds but was not being used until the GEF project operationalized it, is now a good training facility, staffed with competent trainers many of whom themselves received training abroad under the project to become trainers. Early courses at NWTC were targeted to existing in-service staff having long-term field experience, but lacking in scientific knowledge and issues relating to concerns of local people. Training at that time did not emphasize field skills because the staff undergoing training already had good field experience. What they were lacking was scientific background and skills in working with local communities. Lately, new staff are being recruited into the DWLC who, although they have some scientific background, have little field experience. For example, many of them have no experience in patrolling or in the basics of first aid, survival in the wild, or in repair and maintenance of equipment and infrastructure, skills which are helpful, and in some cases, essential for DWLC staff. In recognition of the changing needs of their changing target audience, the staff at the NWTC is now engaged in revising the training syllabi to place greater emphasis on practical aspects of park protection and maintenance of infrastructure. The need for such revision was noted by the evaluation mission and is considered entirely appropriate.

At present, trainees at NWTC must go to the reservoir (or tank) for bathing, and drinking water must be obtained from the army camp. This water problem was identified during the mid-term

evaluation and has still not been resolved.

The Officer in Charge (OIC) at NWTC must seek permission from the Director of the DWLC in Colombo for any expenditure greater than Rs. 5000 (approximately US\$ 71). Clearly, greater financial authority must be delegated to the OIC if this Centre is to function efficiently.

Linkages for training purposes were formed with both WII (for higher grades), and with the University of Colombo. Training received by ADs and Rangers at WII was excellent, although greater proficiency in English (the language used at WII) before embarking on the course would have been helpful to course participants.

Due to internal administrative problems at the University of Colombo there were inadequate inputs into the third diploma course. Moreover, because of these problems, University lecturers had to act as consultants to NWTC. This substantially increased costs of the third diploma course. Although the linkage with the University of Colombo was fruitful, additional linkages with other universities in Sri Lanka should now be pursued.

3.3 Research Studies

Cost:	US\$ 144,203/ Rs 8,075,350
Relevance:	High
Appropriateness:	Medium
Quality:	Medium
Impact:	Premature to assess
Cost-Effectiveness:	Medium

A minimum of ten research studies on problems of importance to management in the PAs were to have been funded and completed during the project.

The project was successful in establishing a participatory process for identifying research priorities, a transparent process for selecting proposals for funding, and an appropriate forum for sharing of research findings.

Sixty research proposals were received from a wide variety of institutions and individuals. This very positive response to the request for proposals is a reflection of the effort put into seeking the best research proposals and making the selection process an open and transparent one. Nine studies were eventually funded⁵. Three universities (numerous departments in each), and one

⁵ Genome Analysis of Sri Lanka Elephant, Ecology of Butterflies in Horton Plains and Peak Wilderness, Impact of Crown Thorn Starfish on Corrals, Bibliography of Herpetofauna, Ranging Behaviour & Ecology of Elephants in Southern Region, Ranging Behaviour & Ecology of Elephants in Northern Region, Forest Die-back in Horton Plains, Impact Survey of Freshwater

NGO implemented these research studies. To date eight of the research studies have been completed, and one is due to be completed next month. One research report has been published thus far.

Although most of the research studies do address important management issues, several do not. For example, one of the studies funded, i.e., ecology of the butterflies of Horton Plains and the Peak Wilderness, does not address an urgent management problem. And, although it could be argued that genome analysis of elephants, another of the research studies funded, may be useful to the future management of elephants in Sri Lanka, it may be unrealistic to assume that this research will be applied anytime in the near future since even the most fundamental aspects of elephant management are not currently being applied. Both of these studies are, of course, important, but relative to other research studies, might not have been top priority at this point in time. Another research study, i.e., Forest Dieback in Horton Plains, was conducted in such a way as to limit its prospects for application. This was the second most expensive research project.

Important research with direct management implications that perhaps should have received higher priority than some of the research studies actually funded include: 1) Research on the impact of cattle and exotic buffalo on habitat in PAs and on other herbivores in these areas. 2) Research on the most cost-effective methods of eradicating important exotic plants, including uprooting, biological control and possibly other control methods⁶. 3) More research on distribution and home ranges of elephants, and on quantification of HEC.

and Estuarine Fish Collection, Conservation Strategy for Small Mammals.

⁶ Field trials were done at Udawalawe but were not maintained for long, making it difficult to judge results. Furthermore, no research was done on alternatives to the one method used in those trials, i.e., uprooting.

3.4 *Resource Inventories*

Cost:	US\$ 160,286/ Rs 8,976,050
Relevance:	High
Appropriateness:	High
Quality:	Medium
Impact:	High
Cost-Effectiveness:	High

Six resource inventories, describing biological, ecological, geological, climatological, socio-economic and other realities in six PA clusters were completed. The inventories also provided information on history of the areas, management, and existing threats.

One university (University of Peradeniya) and one private company (Agridev Consultants) were contracted to do the resource inventories. Excellent guidance, in the form of comprehensive terms of reference for carrying out the field studies and for the preparation of the reports, was provided to the contractors by the project. The quality of most of the resource inventories was good. Two exceptions were the resource inventory for the Kahalla-Pallakele Sanctuary, and the one for Peak Wilderness-Horton Plains, which were of rather poor quality. The resource inventory for Udawalawe also had shortcomings. For example, in the latter case, there is no mention of *Lantana* (an important exotic plant species which covers about 1/3 of the core area), no mention of uncontrolled fishing (a significant amount of which goes on in the PA), and, although poaching is cited as a big problem, no mention is made of what species are being poached and no data is presented.

Despite shortcomings in some of the resource inventories, these formed a critically important basis for the development of the PA plans.

3.5 *PA Management Plans*

Cost:	US\$ 265,000/ Rs. 14,840,000
Relevance:	High
Appropriateness:	High
Quality:	High
Impact:	Low
Cost-Effectiveness:	High

Good quality ten-year management plans were produced for six clusters of PAs. These six clusters include 22 PA units and cover about 45% of the total area managed by the DWLC. Although some PAs in the Mahaweli region had management plans, produced by the Mahaweli Environment Project in 1990, most PAs had no management plans until the GEF project. Plans for three of the PAs were developed by the CTA and a National Consultant on protected

areas. Thereafter, the remainder of the PA plans were developed by a team of two international consultants. Development of the plans was based on discussion with DWLC staff in the PAs and with local people. Although originally a DWLC staff was assigned full-time to work together with the consultants on this initiative, this arrangement was ended after a short time due to lack of his participation. This was, nevertheless, in principle, a good approach, and should be pursued in the development of any future PA plans. In future, when a team of consultants is used to help prepare PA plans, the team should be comprised of experts from different institutions and backgrounds so as to allow for a greater interchange of opinions and ideas. And, although the approach adopted by the consultants was participatory in nature, this participation, especially by local CBOs and provincial governments, should be formalized.

To ensure that a participatory approach to reviewing PA plans is continued in the future, a formal procedure for reviewing PA plans should be adopted. Plans should be reviewed by DWLC staff at HQ first, and then through workshops in the area of the PA involving the various stakeholders (provincial councils, livestock and fishers associations, women's groups, and other CBOs). It would be preferable to have separate workshops for each of the distinct stakeholders first, followed by a joint workshop in which representatives of each stakeholder group participate.

At present there is no formal procedure for adopting Pa plans. A time-bound procedure for formal approval of PA plans by GOSL, once they have undergone the formal review process outlined above, should be described and adopted. An approval process similar to that used by the Forest Department could be adopted by the DWLC. Implementation of the existing PA plans, which have already been informally adopted by GOSL, should not be delayed while awaiting formal approval.

Given that finance will always be a constraint to sustainability of PAs, future planning should explore whether PAs can be developed and managed so that they become economically viable without compromising their conservation objectives. Future PA plans should make recommendations to this regard.

In some cases, adjoining PAs are managed as individual units although they are contiguous habitat and form part of the same ecosystem. Possibilities for managing these as one PA, with one administrative structure, should be given consideration.

Copies of PA plans were not available in some of the PAs visited by the evaluation team. Several copies should be sent to each PA. These should be summarized, and the Executive Summary and the operational sections of each plan translated into Sinhala. These should be of manageable length to promote their use as working documents used in the field.

PA plans are detailed, including staffing and budgeting requirements for each PA and definition of TOR for the various staff in the PA. These plans are ready for presentation to prospective donors. The ADB has already expressed interest in financing the implementation of several of these PA plans.

3.6 Identification of New PAs to Add to the Existing PA Network

Cost:	US\$ 8,000/ Rs.448,000
Relevance:	High
Appropriateness:	High
Quality:	High
Impact:	Premature to gauge
Cost Effectiveness:	High

The purpose of this project activity was to add six PAs to the existing PA network to increase the representation of PAs in the coastal and wet zones, and to increase the overall area protected.

With 15% of the country already under PA status, the possibilities of adding a significant area to this network are limited. Important currently unprotected sites may exist in the Northern and Eastern regions, but due to security reasons it was not possible for the project to investigate these.

Seven potential new PAs were identified. None have yet been added to the PA network. Status reports describing the proposed PAs were available for two areas. Reports were of good quality. In addition to identifying important areas that should be added to the PA network, recommendations were also made on upgrading the legal status of several existing PAs, and enlarging one of them.

3.7 Ecodevelopment Plan

Cost:	US\$16,000
Relevance:	High
Appropriateness:	High
Quality:	High
Impact:	Premature to gauge, but indications are very positive
Cost-Effectiveness:	High

An ecodevelopment plan was produced for Udawalawe NP. This PA was a very appropriate choice due to the severity of conflicts between local people and the Park, and the extent of dependence of each on the other for ultimate success in achieving their own objectives.

During the relatively brief two month period allowed for the consultancy to develop the ecodevelopment plan, a tremendous amount of excellent work was done. The approach adopted was fully participatory. Many of the people with whom the evaluation mission met in the Udawalawe area had participated in the effort, and appeared to be genuinely interested in pursuing the ecodevelopment activities initiated by the GEF project. This was a very cost-effective project activity and is likely to have a very positive impact if it is followed up.

Two months is a very short time for any ecodevelopment activity, even if it is merely preparing a plan. In future, more time should be allocated for these activities.

3.8 GIS Unit

Cost:	US\$ 40,682/ Rs 2,278,235
Relevance:	High
Appropriateness:	High
Quality:	High
Impact:	High
Cost-Effectiveness:	High

Establishment of a GIS unit was not identified as a project output in the original project document, nevertheless, this was undertaken by the project and is a very successful initiative. A functional GIS, complete with all necessary equipment, materials, and capable staff, now exists. The unit has produced good quality maps for all of the PA plans. Maps show land use/land cover, administrative units, water drainages, vegetation, infrastructure, zonation, and other data critical to sound management decision making.

The GIS can be of great practical use to managers of PAs. Rangers and others in the field can, with the help of existing GIS maps, record wildlife sightings which can then be entered into the system. Seasonal wildlife movements and changes in populations can thus be noted. The GIS also provides important data for future research studies and will also be useful in identifying new PAs. In addition to the need to continually input data for monitoring purposes, data on wildlife distributions in and outside PAs, topographic data, turtle nesting sites, and much other valuable data still need to be collected and included in the GIS.

A tremendous amount of work has been completed in a short period due to the commitment of the capable individuals involved. The two individuals who operate the GIS unit (a cartographer and an aerial photo interpretation specialist) are now very proficient at GIS, after training themselves on-the-job.

Because the unit has thus far been exclusively devoted to producing maps used by the project, the DWLC itself may not realize the value of this resource, and funding for its continued operation after the project ends may therefore not be a priority for the DWLC — even though it should be. At present, GIS staff are only under contract to the project, they have not been recruited into the DWLC.

It is critical to the continued success of the GIS unit to immediately recruit the two trained staff into the DWLC, and, in addition, if possible, the one GIS technician who has already left due to job insecurity.

3.9 Public Awareness Materials & Activities

Cost:	US\$ 46,361/ Rs 2,596,200
Relevance:	High
Appropriateness:	Medium
Quality:	Medium
Impact:	Low
Cost Effectiveness:	Low

As a result of the project, three staff, including one Publicity Officer and two Education and Training Officers were added to the DWLC to enhance communication with the public and to educate the public on the importance of wildlife conservation. Although establishment of these posts was a positive initiative, the unit has not accomplished much.

During the nine months these individuals have been in the DWLC, only one of the two Education and Training Officers has visited a school. Altogether, only five schools have been visited, none in the immediate vicinity of a PA. The unit has produced no materials. The Publicity Officer is primarily occupied with issuing occasional press releases, cutting out newspaper articles related to wildlife, and preparing activities to celebrate the 50th year of the DWLC. There appears to be little need for a Publicity Officer and much greater use could be made of the Education Officers such as planning and creating exhibits in the PAs together with Park personnel, visiting schools in the vicinity of PAs, and producing public awareness materials.

The project produced educational materials including brochures for PAs, posters, film documentaries of PAs, and other materials. For the most part, these are not being used effectively by the DWLC, if they are being used at all. During the evaluation team's visit to six PAs, only one (Bundala) displayed the brochure for the PA, and none distributed them at the entrance gates.

Only brochures, some posters, and a bookmark were available at the GEF project office. These materials were reviewed by the evaluation team but other materials, such as film documentaries, were not available either in the project office or anywhere in the DWLC, and were therefore not reviewed by the team. The Education and Publicity unit of the DWLC was not aware of the existence of some of these materials (e.g. documentaries), and they do not have access to the other materials, which are kept under lock by the DD Research and Training. The Visitor Center which was built and fully equipped by the GEF project, had no materials whatsoever except for the brochure.

This activity might have been more successful if several NGOs had been contracted to produce materials and to undertake public awareness activities in the schools and communities around PAs.

The project provided a small amount of funds for DWLC staff in the PAs to visit schools, and for school children to make visits to the PAs. This particular activity was very helpful and should be

continued.

3.10 Elephant Conservation and HEC Mitigation Strategy

Cost:	US\$ 92,406
Relevance:	High
Appropriateness:	High
Quality:	High
Impact:	Low
Cost-Effectiveness:	High

A sound national strategy to conserve wild elephants and to mitigate the conflict between them and people was developed by an international consultant. The strategy was developed using some of the findings of the research on elephants also funded by the GEF project. The draft strategy was presented to DWLC staff and then in two national workshops held in Colombo which were attended by various DWLC staff, NGOs, a representative of the Asian Elephant Specialist Group of IUCN, universities, and several government departments. As a result of these workshops, a task force was formed to pursue action on this strategy. In addition to developing the strategy, the consultant drafted a national policy on elephant conservation which has been tentatively adopted by the DWLC.

Research Studies on Elephant

Research on elephants funded by the project was relevant and had direct management implications. This research was particularly helpful in the identification of the Elephant Conservation Areas proposed in the national elephant conservation strategy. For example, one of the major findings of this research was that there were no long distance annual migrations as previously believed and that animals had relatively small fixed home ranges.

The research projects were scheduled to have been completed by 1999. Summaries of the projects were presented at the July 1999 workshop, but the final reports are still awaited. On the basis of the presentations at the research workshop, however, the quality of the elephant research projects was moderate. Given the equipment and time available, more data could have been collected. Furthermore, some of the conclusions drawn appear to be subjective.

For example, in the Yala study, without substantiating evidence, an assumption was made that the elephants were at carrying capacity. No mention was made of the hundreds of cattle and several thousand feral and domestic buffalo in the PA, or the impact of their removal on increasing elephant carrying capacity in the PA. The researchers should have reviewed the PA plan for Yala which does address these issues.

Research was also done on techniques for the rapid assessment of HEC. The evaluation team was unable to evaluate this because only a verbal presentation in Sinhala was made, and no report is available. Indications from one knowledgeable source are that more work needs to be done on this important aspect of HEC mitigation.

Successes related to this project component include the production of the national elephant conservation and HEC mitigation strategy, the preparation and adoption of a national policy, and the creation of a Task Force to implement the policy (although the Task Force is not now functional). Some staff have gained experience in immobilization, radio collaring and tracking of elephants, and research into elephant ecology and HEC has been started by the Universities. That Sri Lankan scientists gained experience in working on elephants, is in itself valuable for what will be a long term program of monitoring and adaptive management.

Research findings suggesting that increased human settlement results in increased elephant home ranges will be useful in anticipating doomed populations for planning purposes. These “doomed” populations, as defined by the international consultant, which have to be removed from their present habitat, could be used for ecotourism and by the DWLC itself for patrolling and for HEC mitigation. This could help generate revenues and pay for some of the costs associated with PA and HEC management.

Elephant Transit Home

Although the mid-term evaluation recommended that no GEF funds should be spent on the Elephant Transit Home (ETH), it continues to receive GEF counterpart funding, to the value of Rs. 1 million per annum since 1996. Due to lack of cooperation from the DWLC, it was not possible for the evaluation team to determine how these funds have been used, although it is known that funds were used to purchase four radio collars and tracking equipment. Despite the fact that the project funded the radio collars and tracking equipment, a request by the evaluation team to see the results of tracking the elephants released from the ETH was denied. There continues to be criticism of the ETH in the media, and its elevated status in the DWLC is out of proportion to the insignificant role it plays in biodiversity and elephant conservation.

The evaluation team noted that there is an apparent exceptionally high mortality rate of elephants captured and taken to the ETH. It is widely reported that up to 70 elephants have died thus far. Inspection of the records kept at the ETH suggests that of the 55 elephants that have gone through the ETH since October 1995, 16 have died. The fate of numerous elephants is unaccounted for. Only one of the 19 elephants at the transit home had any apparent injury or illness. Although information on the fate of all elephants that have gone through the ETH since the time that GEF

funds were inadvisably used to fund the ETH was requested, it was not provided by the DWLC.

An alternative type of ETH was proposed by the project, and is described in the Udawalawe management plan. In contrast to the existing ETH, the proposed ETH would be larger and would not promote human contact. Herd integration and reintroduction to the wild would be promoted instead.

In the rare instances in which baby elephants are separated from their maternal groups, or when elephants require medical attention, they could be taken to the ETH. This model would be a big improvement over the existing ETH.

It is recommended that an independent investigation look into why elephants, one of the most social creatures on the planet, reportedly routinely abandon their young in Sri Lanka, whereas this very rarely happens elsewhere. Such an investigation is especially warranted because numerous persons interviewed by this evaluation team indicated that baby elephants are purposefully being taken from their family groups to the ETH and are subsequently illegally gifted.

The fact that the GEF has now been linked to the ETH in the newspapers and other media is indeed unfortunate.

3.11 National Inventory and Status Report of the Captive Elephant Population

This activity was not undertaken because the DWLC stated that such data was readily available from registry information, and because the project considered that the captive elephant population is not critical to elephant conservation. The evaluation team agrees with this assessment, although it recommends that guidelines for the humane keeping of elephants in captivity be drafted and widely publicized. A recent report on Asian elephants in captivity (Lair, 1998) cites Sri Lanka as having some of the worst kept elephants in Asia.

4. Project Implementation

4.1 GOSL (Use, Disbursement and Accounting of Government Counterpart Funds)

Use of Counterpart Funds

A total government contribution of Rs. 243,587,000 was allocated to the project, of which Rs. 175,098,000 (72%) had been disbursed as of June 1999. Seventy percent of the government counterpart contribution was targeted for infrastructure development.

Although counterpart funds were well used in many cases, i.e., for rehabilitation of some beat stations, fixing of roads, construction of a visitor center, etc., some counterpart funds were inappropriately used. For example, while critical water supply problems persist at the NWTC (since at least the time of the mid-term evaluation when a recommendation was made to fix this problem),

and many beat stations are in a state of severe disrepair, counterpart funds were used to construct new circuit bungalows, mostly used by a small number of people with political clout, and to construct a very luxurious “resource persons” house at NWTC. A house for resource persons should not have received priority over fixing the NWTC water problem. Moreover, if such a house was indeed a priority, a much less expensive building could have been constructed. The new house is far removed from the rest of the campus, overlooks a lake and has more of the appearance of a circuit bungalow than a working residence for resource persons.

The disproportionate emphasis on infrastructure development has several negative consequences: It does not compel the DWLC to expand its horizons, i.e., engage in other much needed PA management activities other than infrastructure development, and does not catalyze planning and budgeting reforms.

Government counterpart contributions should have been more proportionately distributed amongst the project activities and should have been used to undertake complimentary activities to those undertaken with GEF funds to enhance the impact of the project.

Disbursement of Counterpart Funds

Disbursement of counterpart funds was minimal until these funds came under the control of the project in 1997. No documents for the years prior to this were made available to the evaluation team to verify whether the counterpart funds were utilized for the purposes envisaged under the project.

Accounting for Use of Counterpart Funds

The government audit report for 1998, the only one made available to the evaluation team, points out unsatisfactory utilization of government counterpart funds. The report highlights certain problems such as non-compliance with government financial regulations, accounting deficiencies, and lack of proper evidence such as vouchers for purchases. The report also indicates that some equipment is lying idle at the Head office and at various PA offices, and that this has been pointed out in previous audits with no action taken by the DWLC to address this concern.

4.2 FAO

FAO was responsible for recruiting all international consultants and for purchasing some equipment. FAO recruited fourteen international consultants over the course of the project, most of whom were well qualified for the tasks they undertook. Although most international consultants were recruited on time, there were delays with at least four. Furthermore, several consultants have experienced unreasonable delays in payment. Although the present CTA recruited by FAO is excellent, the first CTA recruited was not up to the job, and partly because of him, significant delays were experienced

5. Project Monitoring

5.1 Financial Monitoring

The only audits conducted were those done by the Auditor General's Office of Sri Lanka. Given that the project is nationally executed, it is appropriate that the Government's accounting office conduct these audits. Nevertheless, there are shortcomings in those audits. The government audits deal exclusively with expenditure statements prepared by the project, and whether expenditures have been incurred according to government financial regulations. These audits do not address whether funds allocated were utilized for the intended purpose. Given the realization that certain problems existed in the disbursement and use of counterpart funds, and that record keeping needed improvement, the shortcoming associated with government audits should have been addressed at the regularly held TPRs, and suggestions made to compliment government audits with regular external ones.

5.2 Backstopping by UNDP, FAO and GOSL

5.2.1 UNDP

Backstopping provided by UNDP was excellent. The Program Assistant, now ARR, responsible for this project showed great interest in the project from its onset, and provided valuable insights through her regular participation in monthly meetings and TPRs throughout the life of the project. She also made visits to the field as permitted. In a system with high staff turnover, her continual association with the project, from its very inception to its end, was very beneficial to the project. Not only did UNDP provide backstopping, it actually acted in at least one case to rectify a failure of the implementing agency, FAO, when it was unable because of administrative constraints to recruit the CTA in time for his essential participation in the final project evaluation.

5.2.2 FAO

As a specialized agency of the UN, FAO is responsible for providing technical backstopping for the projects it is involved in. In the case of this project, technical backstopping provided by FAO fell far short of expectations. Very little or no feedback has been received from FAO on technical reports, progress reports or management plans, even though FAO itself has insisted that they review all such reports. In fact, only two comments on technical reports were made by FAO, both from FAO/Rome, and there were time delays associated with these. Nine PA plans and numerous technical reports submitted long ago remain to be reviewed by FAO.

5.2.3 GOSL

Backstopping by the Ministry

Initially, the Ministry's contribution was very positive. Unfortunately, with a change in high officials, this situation has changed and there is now little backstopping provided by the Ministry. The frequent turnover in high level positions has had a negative effect on effective backstopping.

Backstopping by the DWLC

During the seven year period of the project, there have been seven Directors of the DWLC. Clearly, since the Director of the DWLC also serves as the National Project Director, this extremely high turnover has been detrimental to not only the DWLC, but also to the project. The interest of the top levels in the DWLC in the project has been minimal, and there has been practically no backstopping of the project. Indeed, negative attitudes and concomitant lack of cooperation by a small number of senior officials at the Head Office has been experienced by the project.

5.3 Use of Impact-Oriented Indicators

As indicated in the section of this report on project design, the lack of use of impact-oriented indicators was a flaw in the project design. For example, even though this project strove to define techniques for reducing HEC and was supposed to field test these techniques, no impact-oriented indicators were stipulated. One example of an impact-oriented indicator to gauge the success of project activities intended to address HECs could have been “number of reported conflicts between humans and elephants” (with a decreasing number being, of course, positive). Some other impact-oriented indicators relevant to this project could have included “number of DWLC staff able to recognize exotic plants and know how to eradicate them”, or “number of domestic livestock in PAs” (with a decreasing number being positive).

Use of impact-oriented indicators involves good record keeping, something which itself should have been included in the project design as a project activity to be undertaken with both DWLC and CBOs.

6. Successes of the Project

1. Added 260 staff to the DWLC, a department which at the onset of the project was severely understaffed. This success is especially notable because addition of these staff was made during a time in which a freeze on new government positions was in effect.
2. Created much needed new posts in the DWLC, such as “Additional Director -- Technical”, “Supra-Grade Ranger” and “Education and Training Officer”. Nine additional posts of “Assistant Director” were also created, most of whom are now posted in PAs as Park Directors. In contrast to the pre-project situation, all new recruits to the DWLC now have some science education background and, in the case of the higher levels, professional training.
3. The project has not only catalyzed the addition of staff and created needed new posts, but has also trained almost 90% of the Wildlife Guards, Range Assistants, Rangers, and Assistant Directors in the DWLC. The project exceeded expectations in this regard, training a total of 477 DWLC staff, despite delays in their recruitment. This has created the necessary critical mass for transforming the DWLC from a highly centralized and non-technical department to one better able to implement modern wildlife management.
4. Operationalized the National Wildlife Training Centre (NWTC), a facility built with USAID funds which was not being fully used at the onset of the project, and trained trainers overseas

to work as trainers at the Center.

5. Formed important institutional links between the DWLC and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), and between the DWLC and several Sri Lankan universities.
6. Developed resource inventories for six PAs which served as critical inputs into the development of the PA management plans.
7. Developed PA management plans for Sri Lanka's most important PAs, covering 45% of the total area under the DWLC's jurisdiction.
8. Enhanced awareness within the DWLC of the need and desirability to work together with communities living around PAs. (This is perhaps one of the most profound changes the project has brought about.)
9. Developed an ecodevelopment plan for Udawalawe National Park, where severe conflicts between park management and the community existed in the past. The project, through the participatory elaboration of the park management plan, helped to dissipate the conflict. All PA management plans now include an ecodevelopment component.
10. Developed a national strategy for the long-term conservation of elephant and for human-elephant conflict (HEC) mitigation. The strategy has been adopted by the government, and a task force has been formed to pursue its implementation.
11. Established and equipped a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) unit staffed by capable individuals who trained themselves in these technologies during the project. The GIS unit produced all the maps for the PA plans.
12. Developed and improved infrastructure including roads, electric fences, visitor center, beat stations, park offices, and other buildings inside PAs. (In most cases, these were much needed works, however there were cases where funds could have been used to address higher priorities.)
13. Provided essential equipment. (Much more is, however, needed just to meet minimum needs for a functional field presence).
14. Funded wildlife research which will be helpful in making management decisions, and set up a sound and transparent procedure for identifying research priorities and sharing research results. As a result of the project, an annual workshop to share wildlife research results has been put into place.

15. Lifted morale of DWLC field staff. Until the project, most DWLC staff had received no training whatsoever. For older staff, many of whom had served in the department for 20 years or more, the training provided under the project was greatly appreciated.
16. Developed some educational materials to enhance the awareness of the public on the importance of conservation. (As noted later in this report, this activity could have been even more successful, nevertheless, some good materials were produced.)
17. Provided critical inputs which should enable the soon-to-be established planning unit of the DWLC to effectively plan and budget. Until recently, the accounting division in the DWLC did defacto planning. Improvements to that highly inappropriate method of planning has been made as a result of the project, but, as pointed out in another section of this report, much more substantial change is still required for effective planning and budgeting based on PA management plans.
18. Leveraged a probable investment of \$350,000 from UNDP core resources to implement the ecodevelopment plan for Udawalawe, and catalyzed discussions related to a possible follow-on ADB investment to implement several of the PA management plans prepared by the GEF project.

7. Recommendations

7.1 Recommendations Prioritized

- Discard the institutional structure adopted by the DWLC on July 15, 1999 and adopt instead the institutional structure described by the CTA. (Responsible party = MPAHA&PI)
- Adopt mechanisms used by the Forest Department to overcome obstacles presented by the AR and FR. (Responsible party = DWLC)
- Create new budget lines in DWLC budget request forms (completed by Park Directors) to correspond to PA management plan budget lines as per L. Saunder's report. (Responsible party = DWLC)
- Assist the DWLC to prepare its budget request for next year. (Responsible party = GEF project)
- Immediately re-assign the GEF project vehicle currently assigned to the Director of the DWLC to a PA, and immediately re-assign two of the three vehicles currently being used by the GEF project office in Colombo to PAs . Ensure that all project vehicles are used exclusively for project related purposes. (Responsible party = FAO)
- Immediately recruit into the DWLC the two qualified and trained individuals who currently operate the GIS. Place the GIS unit within the Planning Division. (Responsible party = MPAHA&PI)
- Request FAO to provide within three weeks its technical comments on any project outputs it has indicated it wishes to review. If these comments cannot be made available within the next few weeks, FAO should desist from insisting on reviewing outputs before they are considered final products. (Responsible party = UNDP)
- Summarize the Executive Summary and the operational sections of each PA plan, translate

- these into Sinhala, and distribute copies to all Pas. (Responsible party = GEF project)
- Establish a budget line for training in the government budget. (Responsible party = Treasury)
- Immediately provide donor assistance to allow for full implementation of the ecodevelopment plan for Udawalawe. (Responsible party = UNDP)
- Immediately attend to the water supply problem at NWTC. (Responsible party = GEF project)
- Construct electric fences where most needed using the materials provided by the project. (Responsible party = DWLC)

7.2 *Institutional Structure of the DWLC*

1. Discard the institutional structure adopted by the DWLC on July 15, 1999 and adopt instead the institutional structure described by the CTA. (Note: Recommendations underlined should receive priority.)
2. Shift the DWLC to a Ministry with technical relativity, such as the MFE. Location of the DWLC in the MPAHA&PI enabled significant increase to the cadre during a time when this would have been impossible if the Department had been located elsewhere. While the DWLC clearly benefitted from this otherwise illogical location, addition of staff accomplished, it would now be prudent to shift the DWLC to the MFE. This recommendation is in keeping with that of the high level government committee appointed by HE The President.
3. Investigate and implement mechanisms for the DWLC to retain revenues generated by the PAs. If a Wildlife Authority is to be established, its sole function should be to facilitate the return of revenues generated by the PAs back to the DWLC.

7.3 *DWLC Planning and Budgeting*

1. Create new budget lines in DWLC budget request forms (completed by Park Directors) to correspond to PA management plan budget lines (as per L. Saunder's report).
2. Establish a planning unit in the DWLC (according to the institutional structure described by the CTA) and provide the unit with technical assistance as required.

7.4 *Equipment*

1. Immediately re-assign the GEF project vehicle currently assigned to the Director of the DWLC to a PA.
2. Immediately re-assign two of the three vehicles currently being used by the GEF project office in Colombo to PAs and ensure that the one vehicle remaining in Colombo is used exclusively for project related purposes.
3. Construct electric fences where most needed using the materials provided by the project. These materials have been lying idle for several years because posts have not been purchased by the DWLC.

7.5 *Project Monitoring and Backstopping*

1. Request FAO to provide its technical comments on any project outputs it has indicated it wishes to review. These comments should be made available within the next few weeks, or FAO should refrain from insisting on reviewing outputs before they are considered final products.

7.6 *PA Plans*

1. Summarize the Executive Summary and the operational sections of each PA plan, translate these into Sinhala, and distribute copies to all PAs.
2. Outline a formal procedure for reviewing PA plans. Plans should be reviewed by DWLC staff at HQ first, and then through organized workshops in the area of the PA involving the various stakeholders (provincial councils, livestock and fishers associations, women's groups, other CBOs).
3. Outline a time-bound procedure for formal approval of PA plans by GOSL. A process similar to that used by the Forest Department should be adopted by the DWLC.

7.7 *Ecodevelopment Activities*

1. Immediately provide donor assistance to allow for full implementation of the ecodevelopment plan for Udawalawe. It is especially important with ecodevelopment activities, once communities have been engaged in dialogues, as they have in this case, for immediate follow-on activities to begin.
2. Provide funds for development of ecodevelopment plans in several other PAs, especially Bundala and Lunumgawehera and other areas with HEC that will not be included in the possible ADB project. The ecodevelopment components of the existing PA plans should form the basis for further developing these plans.

7.8 *GIS*

1. Immediately recruit into the DWLC the two qualified and trained individuals who currently operate the GIS. The GIS unit should be placed within the Planning Division.

7.9 *Training*

Training at NWTC

1. Immediately attend to the water supply problem at NWTC.
2. Delegate financial authority commensurate with his responsibilities to the Officer in Charge of NWTC.
3. Establish a budget line for training in the government budget.
4. Immediately following completion of the new "resource persons" house at NWTC, establish an exhibition hall in the downstairs area to teach trainees how to make and present public awareness materials and exhibits at visitor centers. The upstairs bedrooms should be reserved for the exclusive use of resource persons at NWTC.

5. Provide binoculars, compasses and field knives, which should have been provided when the course began one month ago, to the trainees at NWTC.
6. Utilize those staff at NWTC who were given specialized training to become trainers as trainers.
7. Place greater emphasis on teaching practical skills and knowledge (patrols, first aid, maintenance and repair of roads, buildings and equipment, intelligence gathering), and less on scientific knowledge, especially at the Wildlife Guard and Range Assistant levels. Confine training at these levels to “must know” aspects of conservation.
8. Provide leadership training to Assistant Directors and other top level staff.
9. Instill in trainees an approach of doing what you can with the little you have, instead of doing nothing because you don’t have enough.
10. Adopt a discipline-inculcating approach to training Wildlife Guards and others, e.g. more physical exercise, greater emphasis on tidiness, discipline.
11. Seek proper recognition for certificates given by the NWTC from competent authorities so that trainees are eligible for induction into the Sri Lanka Technical Service.
12. As the training syllabus for Wildlife Guards and Rangers becomes more oriented toward practical knowledge, include persons who have such first-hand knowledge as trainers.
13. Establish a new post of “Trainer” in the DWLC.
14. Acquire more books, journals and research papers for the NWTC library. Some excellent local journals such as “Nature” were not in the library. Staff of NWTC should make an effort to obtain more of the locally available journals before project funds are committed for more resource materials.
15. Provide basic furniture such as trunks for the trainees.
16. Open an Internet account at NWTC.
17. Provide three months of English language training for Rangers at the NWTC before they begin their wildlife training. The emphasis should be on conversational skills, very little on grammar.
18. Obtain a copy of “The Wilderness Guardian” and translate it into Sinhala. Distribute a copy to each PA.
19. Affiliate the diploma course taught at the NWTC with a university and negotiate a firm agreement with that university to provide selected course work and certification.

Training at WII & Other Institutions

1. Maintain institutional links with WII, and establish new ones with other institutions, especially in-country institutions such as the University of Perediniya. The OIC and the Course Coordinator of NWTC, DD Research and Training, and Additional Director--Technical should undertake a brief study tour to one or two key PAs in South Africa, and should visit the Southern African Wildlife College training facility for Wildlife Guards, the degree course in Wildlife Management at the University of Natal, and the M. Sc. Course in Biodiversity Conservation at University of Capetown. The South African High Commission should be approached to facilitate such a visit.

In-Service Training in DWLC

1. Institute a system of ‘mentor’ training within the DWLC at all levels from Park Director to Wildlife Guard. Such mentors would be short-term appointments. At junior levels this role could be filled by personnel within the DWLC. At more senior levels, mentors should be persons with long-term on-the-ground experience in PAs preferably from elsewhere in the region.
2. Offer special courses in wildlife capture and translocation, taking advantage of the African experience in catching large numbers of large animals. These would be useful not only for HEC resolution, but also in controlling numbers of feral buffalo.
3. Offer degree-level training in Wildlife and Protected Area Management to a small number of promising candidates. Training within the region or in Southern Africa would be preferable to training in Europe or North America.

7.10 *Elephant Conservation and Human-Elephant Conflict Mitigation*

1. Require a comprehensive report which provides: 1) full details on the situation of each elephant at the transit home since the time GEF funds were used to support it, 2) a full description of how the GEF funds were used. Secondly, an external audit should be conducted by a qualified specialist in Asian elephants in captivity and the results of his/her audit should be presented at the next meeting of the IUCN Asian Elephant Specialist Group. The mid-term project evaluation recommended that no project funds (either core resources or government counterpart funds) should be used for the so-called “elephant transit home”. This recommendation was ignored and, in fact, GEF project funds have financed almost 100% of the elephant transit home budget since late 1995. Given this unfortunate situation, the two actions described above should now be taken. UNDP should either provide funding itself or seek funding from the newly established “Biodiversity and Elephant Trust” for the recruitment of the international expert.
2. Invest HEC mitigation activities in a unit of the DWLC whose head is a Wildlife Biologist, with competency in conflict resolution, decision making and problem solving. It is inappropriate for a Veterinary Surgeon to address HEC issues.
3. Adopt a proactive, rather than a reactive, approach to HEC resolution.
4. Examine the option of culling (including live removal and killing) “doomed” elephant populations. Such an examination should include understanding perceptions of all stakeholders.
5. Conduct regular censuses of both wild elephants and those in captivity.
6. Prepare a manual on care and management of captive elephants, and incorporate adherence to this into DWLC regulations on keeping captive elephants.
7. Prepare a resolution to CITES to allow translocation of elephants from “doomed” populations to approved foreign facilities.
8. Conduct an independent investigation of the exceptionally high mortality associated with elephant capture and translocation operations in Sri Lanka, as well as the disproportionately high incidence of tuskers amongst young male elephants at the “Elephant Transit Home”.
9. Develop action plans to implement the elephant conservation and HEC mitigation strategy, and implement these action plans.

7.11 *Public Awareness*

1. Involve “Education and Training Officers” in planning and creating exhibits in the PAs together with Park personnel, visiting schools in the vicinity of PAs, and producing public awareness materials.
2. Distribute park brochures to the relevant PAs to be handed out to visitors at the entrance gates (If desired, PAs can request visitors to return these on their way out of the PA)

7.12 Resource Inventories

1. Distribute copies of Resource Inventories to each of the PAs for which these were prepared.
2. Engage DWLC field staff in monitoring biological and socio-economic data collected in the resource inventories.

7.13 Recommendations Pertaining to Objectives Common to all GEF Projects

Involving the Private Sector

1. Given existing constraints associated with the DWLC, management of one PA (perhaps one of the new PAs) should be entrusted to a private entity on a trial basis. This experiment should be closely monitored, audited by government auditors, and independently evaluated.
2. Sri Lanka has a vibrant private sector. Before project end, UNDP should assist the DWLC to seek follow-on funding from the private sector, including hotels, tea estates, etc.. UNDP involvement in this should be contingent upon the GOSL taking actions to address constraints highlighted in the Executive Summary of this report.

Enhancing Sustainability

1. The DWLC’s annual budget is only approximately one-third of the core GEF funds provided annually to the project. Therefore, once the project comes to an end, just to maintain the current level of activity, the government must increase its funding level for the DWLC three-fold. The project should assist the DWLC to prepare its budget request for next year to allow for the continuation of project supported activities.
2. A mechanism for retaining some or all of the revenues generated by PAs should be sought.

Sharing Lessons Learned

1. All GEF projects should share lessons learned during the project with a wide community including government, NGOs, other donors, and the international community at large. In this regard, some project funds should be reserved to facilitate the visit of media representatives (T.V., newspapers, journals) to the PAs and to the NWTC for them to see first hand what the project has accomplished, and, where it has failed, and, of course, to report on this.
2. Lessons outlined in the section of this report entitled “Lessons Learned” should be shared with the GEF Secretariat for publication in their quarterly bulletin “GEF Lessons Notes”.
3. Lessons learned related to elephant conservation and the ETH should be presented at the next meeting of the Asian Elephant Specialist Group of IUCN.

4. This evaluation report should be shared with all interested donors, NGOs, and interested government departments.

8. Lessons Learned

Note: Some background is provided for certain lessons learned to help the reader better understand the lesson. No background is provided for some of the more self-explanatory lessons.

Background: In the case of the Sri Lanka project, a large number of staff were recruited to what had been a severely understaffed Wildlife Department, almost 90% of the Department staff were trained in aspects of protected areas management, and excellent protected area management plans were developed. In sum, a tremendous amount was accomplished. Nevertheless, the actual management of protected areas remained relatively unchanged from the pre-project situation. Although the project objectives were achieved, the impact of the project was not felt “on-the-ground”. Use of impact-oriented objectives and indicators would have been helpful.

Lesson: Project objectives (i.e., “immediate” objectives) should be impact-oriented rather than task-oriented to ensure the project works toward having an impact, not merely undertaking project activities. For example, instead of the task-oriented objective “development of human-elephant conflict resolution techniques”, have an impact-oriented objective such as “fewer cases of human-elephant conflicts in buffer zones of protected areas”.

Lesson: Impact-oriented indicators and time-bound benchmarks for monitoring their progress throughout the project life should be defined in the project document. Clear consequences for not achieving these benchmarks, including reallocation of resources, should also be outlined. Unless impact-oriented indicators, linked to benchmarks, are defined and pursued, a project may not achieve its objectives, or may achieve its stated objectives, but have no real impact.

Background: One subtle purpose of externally-supported projects may be to shift priorities of the institution they are intended to assist, or at least enlarge on these. In the case of the Sri Lanka project, more than 70% of the government counterpart funds were targeted to infrastructure development, an activity that the Wildlife Department was already, and indeed almost exclusively, engaged in. If the project purpose is in part to enlarge the scope of the Department’s work to include other protected area management activities, such as wildlife management and ecodevelopment, than counterpart funds should be designated for all these activities, not just the “favorite” ones which will almost certainly continue on after project end anyway.

Lesson: To promote sustainability and to encourage a broadening of scope of work to more innovative and less conventional activities, government counterpart funds should be allocated proportionately across all project-supported activities that are expected to continue after project end. Disproportionate or lopsided investment of government counterpart funds detracts from sustainability.

Background: Physical location of project staff and resources is an important consideration that is often overlooked. For the sake of convenience and efficiency, a project office is normally established which houses all project staff as well as the equipment provided by the project. Although this may make production of project outputs more convenient and efficient, it also has negative consequences that sometimes outweigh the positive. Physical separation and obvious distinctions in available resources, detract from a feeling of ownership by the institution the project is intended to assist. It may sometimes be more beneficial, although perhaps less convenient, to disperse project staff throughout the institution and to place project equipment such as fax machines in central locations in the department, even though this means such equipment will not always be readily available to project staff. The trade-off is that the project is better integrated into the institution.

Lesson: Attempts should be made to have no physical separation between project staff and institutional staff. No “project office” should exist, and project provided office equipment should be placed wherever the greatest access to such equipment can be expected.

Background: The government entity responsible for securing external resources for a country is often an overlooked stakeholder that should be kept informed, and can be approached for advice and assistance in the event of insurmountable roadblocks that may occasionally be encountered by projects. In the case of the Sri Lanka project, great interest was shown in the project by the “External Resources Division” of the Ministry of Finance. This interest was peaked because the Asian Development Bank was seriously considering a follow-on investment to finance the implementation of some of the protected area management plans which had been developed by the GEF project. The ADB had highlighted certain pre-conditions which were to be met by the Government before such an investment could be realized. When it became clear to the External Resources Division that the evaluation team for the GEF project and the ADB formulation team had similar concerns, they lost no time in taking action to rectify these. Their participation in TPRs over the life of the project surely helped give them a sense of ownership of the project.

Lesson: At the end of an evaluation mission, the evaluation team should debrief with the government entity responsible for securing external resources to inform them of project successes and failures, and to highlight priorities, as they see them, for follow-on assistance, and conditions that should be associated with follow-on assistance to enhance prospects of success in future projects. The external resources division of government should be invited to participate in all project TPRs.

Lesson: Sharing results of project evaluations with donors is helpful. This is most effectively done at the end of the evaluation mission by the evaluation team itself in a workshop forum.

Lesson: Ecodevelopment activities, even the development of an eco-development plan, take more time than many other types of activities because of the participatory nature of these activities. There are no short-cuts. If a participatory approach is desired, adequate time must be allocated for it.

Lesson: Once an eco-development plan has been developed for an area, immediate follow-on action is important so as to retain the confidence of the local people involved. Because of this need for immediate follow-on action, donors who support the development of the plan should either be prepared to fund its implementation or should contact other donors early on in the planning process to secure their commitment.

Lesson: Project funds should not normally represent 100% or more of the operating budget of the government agency the project is intended to assist, as this leads to dependence, and reduces prospects for sustainability of project funded activities.

Lesson: In cases where project funds exceed the core budgets of the institutions they are intended to assist, sustainability must be a primary consideration, built into project design. A phased approach to project funding, decreasing project funds, while increasing government and other contributions over the life of the project, should be adopted to promote sustainable funding for project-initiated or project-supported activities that require continuation after project end. This ensures government commitment and makes it easier to request funds from treasury.

Lesson: If private sector participation is a hoped-for result, this should be an actual project activity. Make a tangible plan, not merely a loose objective, for obtaining funds or other forms of assistance from the private sector, and initiate these contacts well before the end of the project. UNDP participation in initial meetings is helpful.

Background: In the case of the Sri Lanka project, an excellent GIS unit was established with project funds. It was located in the project office and the salaries of the individuals who operated the unit were paid for entirely by the project. With five months left until project end, one of the three highly competent staff who had been trained on-the-job left due to job insecurity. Loss of trained staff in a country where few people have GIS skills jeopardizes continuity of the GIS unit. The GIS unit had been used exclusively to produce maps for project products, the Department itself had never used the GIS unit, and therefore may not have been aware of its usefulness.

Lesson: To promote sustainability, all units established with the assistance of a project should be physically located within the institution (not in a separate project office area), and staff for these units should be recruited by the institution, or, if this is not possible at the onset of the project, at least some government counterpart funds should be used to pay the person's salary until such a time as she/he can be officially recruited into the institution.

Background: In the case of the Sri Lanka project, there were apparent feelings of jealousy and even antagonism from some Wildlife Department staff toward the National Project Coordinator, who was viewed as an outsider who had, in essence, taken over some of their previous responsibilities.

Lesson: To enhance integration of projects into the institutions they are intended to assist, the National Project Coordinator (NPC) should be a staff of the institution and should be paid in part by the institution and in part by the project counterpart funds.

Background: In the case of the Sri Lanka project, despite a recommendation made in the mid-term evaluation to stop providing project funds to the so-called Elephant Transit Home (ETH), considered a highly questionable activity, funds continued to be allocated to the ETH. The media, especially newspapers, reported on high elephant mortalities at the ETH and raised questions about the real purpose of the facility and the fate of the elephants taken to this establishment. Although the project was unsuccessful in dissuading the Wildlife Department from continuing this questionable establishment, the media may end up being successful.

Lesson: The influence of the media is often greater than that exerted by any project. Reserve a small amount of project funds to allow for a group of media representatives to tour project areas both at the mid-term and toward the end of the project, and report on the good and the bad. This is a good way of keeping a project on track, sharing lessons learned, and, finally, provides an additional incentive for people to strive for impact, not just achievement of project activities.

Lesson: It is helpful to have as the government representative on an evaluation team, a person from a relevant but different government institution than the one the project is intended to assist, especially if that institution has relevant experience and is considered to be more advanced.

Background: In the case of the Sri Lanka project, FAO was the implementing agency responsible for recruiting international experts. It's comparative advantage over an entity such as, for example, UNOPS is that as a specialized agency of the U.N., it is supposed to not only be able to identify the best experts, but also provide technical backstopping for the projects it is involved in. In the case of this project, although FAO insisted on technically reviewing all reports produced by the international consultants they hired, the in-country capacity to do so was nil. Thus, all reports were forwarded on to FAO/Rome where there is only one staff who is responsible for providing these comments. Because he is very busy, comments on only two reports were ever received, all others are still awaited. In this case, FAO has not added technical value, and has indeed caused problems due to significant delays in reviewing reports before they can be officially released.

Lesson: Unless specialized agencies provide technical backstopping, and do so in a timely fashion, there is no comparative advantage to using them over UNOPS. Indeed, there may be disadvantages as overhead costs are higher and bureaucracy more cumbersome.

Lesson: Government counterpart funds are project funds just as are GEF core funds. Both should be monitored with equal vigilance.

Lesson: Having a CTA from the region is helpful.

Lesson: Given that finance will always be a constraint to sustainability of PAs, planning should explore whether they can be developed and managed so that they become economically viable without compromising their conservation objectives. PA plans should make recommendations to this effect.

{END}