FINAL EVALUATION

OF THE PROJECT

MEDWETCOAST: CONSERVATION OF WETLAND AND COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION

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List of Acronyms

AFD	Agence Français pour le Développement
APAL	Coastal Protection and Management Agency (the Tunisian MWC implementing agency)
APR/PIR	The Annual Performance Review/Project Implementation Review (required by UNDP)
ATEN	Ateliers Techniques des Espaces Naturelles
CBO	Community Based Organisations
CdL	Conservatoire du Littoral
CO	UNDP Country Office
EU	European Union
LSC	Local Steering Committee
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MAP	Mediterranean Action Programme
MATEE	Ministry of Land, Water and Environment (the Moroccan implementing agency
MBI	Market-based instruments
MEFWM	Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Water Management (the Albanian implementing agency)
METT	Management effectiveness tracking tool
MP	Management Plan
MPPR	Management Plan Peer Review
MTR	Mid-Term Review
MWC	MedWetCoast Project
NSC	National Steering Committee
NWS	National wetlands strategy
PA	Protected area(s)
PES	Payments for ecological services
RAC	Regional Advisory Council
RAC/PAP	The Regional Activity Centre for the Priority Actions Programme, under the Mediterranean Action Plan
RAC/SPA	The Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas, under the Mediterranean Action Plan
RC	Regional Coordinator
RCU	Regional Coordination Unit, of the MWC Project
RFU	Regional Facilitation Unit, of the MWC Project
RSC	Regional Steering Committee
TdV	Tour du Valat
TOR	Terms of Reference
TPR	Tri-Partite Review (TPR)

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

1. The Mediterranean coastline is an area of high biodiversity and high endemism, with over half of the region's 25,000 plant species being endemic to the region. In addition, the wetlands in the region provide an essential flyway and stepping stone for migratory birds on the Africa-Palaearctic flyway. The globally significant biodiversity of these wetland and coastal ecosystems is seriously threatened by the growing scale and intensity of complex human activities.

2. In response to these threats, the MedWetCoast Project was launched in September 1999. The overall development objective of the Project was '*to conserve globally endangered species and their habitats, recognising wildlife conservation as an integral part of sustainable human development while improving capacity of government and non-government agencies to address biodiversity conservation issues'*. The initial project duration was five years. As set out in the approved Project Brief, the project was designed with three specific objectives, as follows:

- Promotion and capacity building for the development of national policies and tools to address the policy-related root causes of loss of wetland and coastal biodiversity;
- Protection and removal of root causes in key demonstration sites;
- Contributing to the "closing of the Mediterranean circle" in terms of biodiversity protection and sustainable management of wetlands and coastal zones through cost-effective regional networking for transfer of lessons, interchange and training.

3. The principal aim of this evaluation, in line with GEF procedures and methodologies, was to determine and assess the project's impact, sustainability, participatory nature, approach to monitoring, approach to implementation and cost-effectiveness. The evaluation was undertaken during the final stages of the project by an independent team of eight experts over a three-month period. This included a six-week mission to most of the project sites.

Findings

4. Impact, sustainability and implementation approach The evaluation determined that, at the *national* level in the participating countries, the project contributed to legislative development and policy development. It also helped to advance the process to preparing national wetland's strategies. In some countries, several management and/or conservation tools were developed which may be used by similar projects in the future, including in other countries. One of the project's major achievements at the national level was the wide-scale development of individual capacity, and the related institutional strengthening of the agencies responsible for implementing the project.

5. At the *site* level, the project's activities were focussed into two strategies: (i) developing site management capacity and site infrastructure, and; (ii) demonstrating how to change the decisions and behaviour of local institutions and resource users in order to be more biodiversity friendly.

6. With regards to the former, the project supported the development of management plans at all sites, many of which were of good quality. Moreover, the project helped to establish many local site coordination and management mechanisms. These were generally inclusive and participative, with several effective communication mechanisms. At most sites, by the end of the project, the management plans were under implementation. These activities related to site protection were an important capacity building exercise at both national and local levels.

7. In terms of the latter (i.e. changing local decision-making and behaviour), the Evaluation Team considers that this was ambitious and innovative for the region at the outset. The project was successful in supporting a range of activities that demonstrated how wetland and biodiversity conservation can be

integrated into local decision-making. Although being limited in scope, these activities were, to an extent, groundbreaking at some sites.

8. At the *regional* level, with regards to "closing of the Mediterranean circle", activities led to many advantages for the project teams. These included easier access to knowledge and expertise, information exchange, a constructive peer pressure and peer support, and a good documenting of "lessons learned" in the later stages of the project. The project also supported networking and the development of regional tools and infrastructure.

9. More generally, the evaluation finds that the large number of biodiversity-focussed actions supported by the project have contributed to changes of attitudes and modified approaches to resource management in coastal and wetland areas in the participating countries, particularly at the project sites. Through this, the project has contributed to a momentum towards improved natural resource management in the region.

10. Despite the advances and results described above, the overall project impact was considerably limited by several factors, in particular by the approach to project implementation. Specifically, the project design documents were too ambitious in parts and insufficiently detailed in others. Also, the multi-layered project structure was too complex, and the roles and responsibilities were not sufficiently clear. The regional and national mechanisms for managerial and technical guidance were ineffective. They provided inadequate support and oversight to the national project teams - they focused mostly on site protection. Too often, the national teams did not have the right balance of skills and expertise. Finally, the choice of sites was questionable. The above points are all elaborated in the main body of this report, and examples are provided.

11. The above inadequacies led to many practical problems that hindered the national projects and the national project teams. These include:

- Long delays in the initial project phases. In some cases this led to a lack of time for field work;
- Institutional conflicts;
- Poor problem analysis at each level and at each stage;
- Weak strategic and action planning – although, where it existed, a stronger and more appropriate national management did make some difference;
- An inability to efficiently deal with the interactions between local development and conservation.

12. The weakness in the approach to implementation listed above led to many limitations in the project's impacts. These are described in detail in the main body of this report. Typical of these are:

- At the national level, there was little mainstreaming of wetlands or biodiversity into natural resources sectors, such as fisheries, agriculture, water, tourism;
- The site management approaches did not adequately combine the need for hardware (e.g., in terms of fences, signs or trails) with software (i.e. site management capacity) and with the implementation of conservation actions;
- The actions aiming at changing decision-making and behaviour of local institutions and resource users were too limited in number and in range to have a broad impact, in spite of their useful demonstrative value;
- There is little evidence of models, best practices and lessons being transferred across the countries. Beyond the project teams, there is little evidence of the 'circle' having been closed.

13. The evaluation found significant differences in impact across the countries. Lebanon and Tunisia succeeded in protecting several sites and have a reasonable chance of being institutionally sustainable. In Albania, rapid impacts on lagoons were achieved, but sustainability is less assured. Egypt did some quite good work linking biodiversity and local development. Morocco managed some small scale site protection and pilot work on eco-tourism. On the whole, sustainability is least assured in Egypt and Morocco, where it proved difficult to overcome major institutional constraints.

14. Participation The project undertook notable efforts to ensure effective participation of stakeholders at all levels. Participants include local resources users, local governments, local elected bodies, NGOs and CBOs, a number of regional technical institutions and the national scientific and technical community. In some countries, this work was innovative. Notable weaknesses with participation were: low involvement of the national agencies responsible for sectors other than biodiversity and wetlands, an insufficient range of international expertise and, in several countries, the participation of local resource users was limited to *consultation*.

15. Monitoring and Evaluation The project's monitoring and reporting was weak. Despite the major efforts the national teams put into monitoring, it was rarely sufficiently structured or systematic. Throughout the project, monitoring was confused with reporting, and monitoring did not feed adequately into planning or decision-making – hence there was little true *adaptive management*. This combined with the poor indicators and weak management mechanisms to cause difficulties in identifying challenges, in forging solutions and in taking difficult decisions. The efforts of the RCU to improve this situation were appreciated, but insufficient.

Conclusion

16. This was an ambitious project, particularly if one considers the challenging institutional, socio-economic and ecological context. The project documents, which were prepared almost a decade ago, did not provide a clear logical framework or adequate indicators and targets. The various project planning and design documents provide an array of possible objectives, targets and indicators – yet taken collectively these did not provide a clear path for project implementation. This lack of agreed, clear targets was also a major constraint to evaluating project impact. Accordingly, the evaluation team carefully considered the project starting point and established, retrospectively, a series of *reasonable* targets which it felt that the project should have reached.

17. Taking into consideration the above factors and constraints, the evaluation delivered the following ratings for the MedWetCoast Project: *Impact* - Moderately Satisfactory; *Sustainability* - Moderately Unsatisfactory; *Implementation Approach* - Moderately Unsatisfactory; *Monitoring and Evaluation* - Moderately Unsatisfactory/Moderately Satisfactory, and; *Stakeholder participation* - Moderately Satisfactory.

18. Finally, it is noted that the rich nature of the project, particularly at the local level, led to a wealth of experience and to the generation of a great number of lessons learnt. It is hoped that the project actors can draw from these lessons in the follow up to the project and that the related recommendations be used in order to strengthen other future projects.

Français

Introduction

1. La zone côtière méditerranéenne est caractérisée par une grande biodiversité et un degré élevé d'endémisme ; plus de la moitié des 25.000 espèces végétales de la région y sont endémiques. Par ailleurs, les zones humides de la région constituent un couloir de vol et des points de départ essentiels pour les oiseaux migrateurs sur leur parcours de l'Afrique vers le nord. La biodiversité globalement significative des écosystèmes de ces zones humides et côtières est gravement menacée par l'échelle et l'intensité croissantes d'activités humaines complexes.

2. En réponse à ces menaces, le projet MedWetCoast a été lancé en septembre 1999. L'objectif global de développement du projet était « de conserver des espèces globalement menacées et leurs habitats, en reconnaissant la conservation de la nature comme une partie intégrante du développement humain durable, tout en renforçant la capacité des instances gouvernementales et non-gouvernementales de prendre en charge les questions ayant trait à la conservation de la biodiversité ». La durée initiale du

projet était de 5 années. Comme il était précisé dans le document de projet[1], celui-ci avait les 3 objectifs spécifiques suivants :

- La promotion du développement de politiques nationales et d'outils visant la prise en charge des causes profondes de la perte de la biodiversité des zones humides et côtières, ainsi que le renforcement de compétences en la matière;
- La protection de la biodiversité et la suppression des causes profondes qui la menacent, sur des sites pilotes clefs ;
- La « fermeture du cercle méditerranéen » en termes de protection de la biodiversité et de gestion durable des zones humides et côtières, par un réseautage régional efficient permettant la communication, l'échange d'expériences et la formation.

3. Le but principal de la présente évaluation, en conformité avec les procédures et méthodologies du FEM, était de déterminer et d'évaluer l'impact du projet, sa durabilité, son approche de mise en œuvre, de participation et de suivi, ainsi que son efficience. L'évaluation a été menée par une équipe indépendante de 8 experts, pendant le stade final du projet, sur une période de 3 mois, y compris une mission de terrain de 6 semaines sur la plupart des sites de projet.

Constats

4. Impact, durabilité et approche de mise en oeuvre. L'évaluation a constaté qu'au niveau national des pays concernés, le projet a contribué à des progrès sur les plans législatifs et des politiques. Il a également contribué à faire progresser le processus de préparation des stratégies nationales pour les zones humides. Dans certains pays, plusieurs outils de gestion et/ou de conservation ont été développés qui sont susceptibles d'être utilisés à l'avenir par des projets similaires, y compris dans d'autres pays. Un des acquis majeurs du projet au niveau national est un développement important des capacités individuelles, ainsi que le renforcement institutionnel concomitant des instances responsables de la mise en œuvre du projet.

5. Au niveau des sites, les activités du projet ont visé: (i) le développement de la capacité de gestion des sites et de leurs infrastructures et (ii) la démonstration qu'il est possible de rendre les décisions et les comportements des institutions locales et des utilisateurs des ressources naturelles plus compatibles avec la biodiversité.

6. En vue d'atteindre le premier de ces objectifs, le projet a appuyé l'élaboration de plans de gestion pour tous les sites, dont beaucoup étaient de qualité. En plus, le projet a aidé à mettre en place beaucoup de mécanismes locaux de coordination et de gestion au niveau de ces sites. Ces mécanismes étaient généralement compréhensifs et participatifs, et incluaient plusieurs mécanismes opérationnels de communication. Vers la fin du projet, les plans de gestion étaient en cours de mise en oeuvre sur la plupart des sites. Ces activités liées à la protection des sites ont constitué un exercice important de renforcement de compétences aux niveaux national et local.

7. Pour ce qui est du deuxième objectif (modifier les prises de décision et les comportements locaux), l'équipe d'évaluation estime qu'il était, au moment du démarrage du projet, assez ambitieux et novateur pour la région. Le projet a réussi à appuyer un ensemble d'activités qui démontrent comment la conservation des zones humides et de la biodiversité peut être intégrée dans le processus local de prise de décision. Bien qu'elles furent limitées, ces activités ont dans une certaine mesure été novatrices pour certains sites.

8. Au niveau régional, la « fermeture du cercle méditerranéen », a permis beaucoup d'apports bénéfiques aux équipes de projet. Ceux-ci incluent un accès plus facile à des connaissances et à de l'expertise, l'échange d'informations, une émulation et un soutien constructifs entre équipes nationales,

[1] « Project Brief »

et une bonne capitalisation des enseignements du projet au cours de ses derniers stades. Le projet a également soutenu le réseautage et le développement d'outils et infrastructures régionaux.

9. De façon plus globale, l'évaluation constate que le nombre considérable d'actions ciblant la biodiversité, que le projet a appuyé, a contribué à changer des attitudes et les approches de gestion des ressources naturelles dans les zones humides et côtières dans les pays concernés, notamment au niveau des sites du projet. Par ce biais, le projet a renforcé le processus d'amélioration de la gestion des ressources naturelles dans la région.

10. En dépit des progrès et résultats cités ci-dessus, l'impact global du projet a été considérablement limité par plusieurs facteurs, notamment par son approche de mise en œuvre. Plus précisément, les documents de base du projet étaient en partie trop ambitieux et en partie trop peu détaillés. La structure « à couches multiples » du projet était trop compliquée et les rôles et responsabilités n'étaient pas assez définie. Les mécanismes régionaux et nationaux d'appui à la gestion et d'appui technique n'étaient pas efficaces. Ils n'ont pas fourni d'appui et de vision d'ensemble adéquats aux équipes nationales – ils ont surtout ciblé la protection des sites. Trop souvent, les équipes nationales n'étaient pas bien équilibrées en termes de compétences et d'expertise. Enfin, le choix des sites était discutable. Tous ces points sont détaillés dans le corps de ce rapport, exemples à l'appui.

11. Les défauts ci-dessus ont entraîné beaucoup de problèmes pratiques qui ont gêné les équipes nationales et les composantes nationales du projet. Ces problèmes incluent :

- Une trop longue durée des phases initiales du projet. Dans certains cas, cela a entraîné un manque de temps pour le travail de terrain ;
- Des conflits institutionnels ;
- Une analyse insuffisante des problèmes aux divers niveaux et stades du projet ;
- Des faiblesses au niveau de la programmation stratégique et des actions – bien qu'une gestion nationale plus forte et plus pertinente, là où elle existait, a parfois permis de faire mieux ;
- Une incapacité de traiter de façon efficace les interactions entre développement local et conservation.

12. Les faiblesses de l'approche de mise en œuvre listées ci-dessus ont considérablement limité les impacts du projet. Ceci est expliqué en détail dans le corps du présent rapport. Voici quelques exemples typiques :

- Au niveau national, il y a eu peu d'intégration des considérations ayant trait à la conservation des zones humides ou de la biodiversité dans les secteurs dont l'activité est liée aux ressources naturelles, comme la pêche, l'agriculture, le secteur de l'eau, et le tourisme ;
- Les approches de gestion des sites n'ont pas combiné de façon appropriée le « hard » (par exemple clôtures, signalisation, sentiers, …), d'une part, et le « soft » (la capacité de gestion des sites) et la réalisation des actions de conservation, d'autre part ;
- Les actions visant à changer les prises de décision et les comportements des institutions locales et des utilisateurs des ressources naturelles ont – en dépit de leur valeur démonstrative - été trop peu nombreuses et ont couvert un éventail trop réduit de types d'action ;
- Il y a peu d'exemples de modèles, bonnes pratiques et enseignements échangés à travers les pays. Au-delà des équipes de projet, il y a peu d'indications que le « cercle » a été fermé.

13. L'évaluation a observé des différences significatives d'impacts entre les pays. Le Liban et la Tunisie ont réussi à protéger plusieurs sites et ont une probabilité raisonnable de durabilité institutionnelle. En Albanie, des impacts rapides ont été obtenus au niveau des lagunes, mais la durabilité est moins certaine. L'Egypte a fait un assez bon travail d'établissement de liens entre biodiversité et développement local. Le Maroc a réussi la protection à petite échelle et du travail novateur sur l'écotourisme. Globalement, la durabilité est le moins garantie en Egypte et au Maroc, où il a été difficile de surmonter d'importantes contraintes institutionnelles.

14. Participation. Le projet a fait des efforts considérables en vue d'assurer la participation effective des acteurs concernés à tous les niveaux. Ces acteurs incluent les utilisateurs locaux des ressources naturelles, institutions gouvernementales et corps élus locaux, ONGs et organisations communautaires de base, certaines agences techniques régionales et la communauté scientifique et technique nationale. Dans certains pays, ceci était novateur. Des faiblesses notables en matière de participation étaient : la faible implication des agences nationales responsables de secteurs autres que biodiversité et zones humides, un éventail insuffisant d'expertise internationale et, dans plusieurs pays, une participation des utilisateurs locaux des ressources naturelles restée limitée à la consultation.

15. Suivi et évaluation. Le suivi et le rapportage du projet étaient faibles. En dépit des efforts importants que les équipes nationales ont consacrés au suivi, celui-ci était rarement structuré ou systématique. Tout au long du projet, suivi et rapportage étaient confondus, et le suivi n'a pas été convenablement traduit en programmation ou prise de décision – il y avait, par conséquent, peu de réelle gestion adaptative. Ceci, ajouté aux indicateurs médiocres et aux mécanismes de gestion faibles, a rendu difficile l'identification des problèmes majeurs à résoudre, l'élaboration des solutions et la prise de décisions difficiles. Les tentatives du RCU d'améliorer la situation sont appréciés, mais n'ont pas suffi.

Conclusion.

16. Le projet était ambitieux, surtout si on tient compte du contexte institutionnel, socio-économique et écologique difficile. Les documents de projet préparés il y a près d'une décennie ne fournissaient pas de cadre logique clair ou des résultats escomptés et indicateurs appropriés. Les différents plans et programmes fournissent un large éventail d'objectifs, résultats et indicateurs possibles – mais ceux-ci n'ont dans leur ensemble pas tracé un chemin clair pour la mise en œuvre du projet. Ce manque de résultats escomptés clairs et partagés par tous a également constitué une contrainte importante par rapport à l'évaluation du projet. Par conséquent, l'équipe d'évaluation a attentivement analysé le point de départ du projet et établi, a posteriori, une série de résultats escomptés raisonnables dont elle estime que le projet aurait du les atteindre.

17. En prenant en considération les facteurs et contraintes ci-dessus, l'évaluation a attribué les notations suivantes aux Projet MedWetCoast : Impact – Moyennement satisfaisant ; Durabilité - Moyennement non satisfaisant ; Approche de mise en œuvre - Moyennement non satisfaisant ; Suivi et Evaluation - Moyennement non satisfaisant/Moyennement satisfaisant ; Participation - Moyennement satisfaisant.

18. Enfin, il convient de noter que la richesse du projet, particulièrement au niveau local, a donné lieu à une précieuse expérience et a généré de nombreux enseignements. On espère que les acteurs du projet soient en mesure de capitaliser ces enseignements au niveau des suites au projet et que les recommandations concomitantes soient utilisées afin de renforcer d'autres projets à venir.

Arabic
See separate file

2. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the evaluation

1. In accordance with UNDP/GEF Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) policies and procedures, all regular and medium-sized projects supported by the GEF should undergo a final evaluation upon completion of activities.

2. The M&E policy at the project level in UNDP/GEF has four objectives: i) to monitor and evaluate results and impacts; ii) to provide a basis for decision making on necessary amendments and improvements; iii) to promote accountability for resource use; and iii) to document, provide feedback on, and disseminate lessons learned. A mix of tools is used to ensure effective project M&E. Some of these

are applied continuously throughout the lifetime of the project – e.g. periodic monitoring of indicators, others are specific time-bound exercises such as mid-term reviews, audit reports and final evaluations.

3. Accordingly, the principal purpose of this evaluation was to assess the relevance, performance and success of the project. A secondary purpose was to identify and document lessons learned and make recommendations that might improve the design and implementation of other initiatives, including future UNDP/GEF projects.

4. Although the MedWetCoast (MWC) project was co-financed by FFEM, standard UNDP/GEF evaluation methodology and requirements were respected.

Key issues addressed

5. As per UNDF/GEF guidelines for final evaluations, this evaluation addressed the following issues:

- Achievements of the projects, notably in terms of impacts;
- Sustainability of the project's actions and impact, including replicability;
- The approach to and usefulness of monitoring and evaluation within the project;
- The approach to implementing the project, notably the execution, implementation, coordination and technical support arrangements;
- Cost-effectiveness, notably with regards to the overall allocation of funding and respect of the incremental cost principle;
- The approach to participation and stakeholder involvement;
- The main gaps, findings and lessons learnt through the project.

6. As requested by UNDP/GEF guidelines, where possible, the evaluation focused on: impact; effectiveness; efficiency; relevance and sustainability.

Methodology of the evaluation

7. A detailed description of the methodology (along with the data collection questionnaire) is included in Annex 5. The list of people met and the list of documentation reviewed are in Annex 3 and Annex 4 respectively.

8. The project covered six Mediterranean countries/authorities: Albania, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Authorities and Tunisia. For logistical and security reasons, it was not possible to field an evaluation team and prepare a report for the Palestinian Authorities. Accordingly, this report does not cover project actions in the Palestinian Authorities. For similar reasons, the international Evaluation Team members were unable to visit Lebanon; the evaluation of the Lebanon project was undertaken by a national expert.

9. The Evaluation Team consisted of three international specialists who were required to cover all technical aspects of the project. It also consisted of one national expert from each country, who, in addition to an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the national situation, had specific expertise related to the project. The three international team members visited Albania, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, and held a series of meetings with regional stakeholders in France. Seven of the eight team members live in the project region and work mostly on similar projects.

10. The steps to undertaking the methodology consisted of: preparation and conceptualisation; data collection and validation; setting the baseline and the targets; country reporting and initial consultation; regional reporting, and; submission, consultation and finalisation.

Preparation and conceptualisation

11. The initial preparation and conceptualisation was undertaken at the 2005 Annual meeting of the project Regional Advisory Council (RAC), with the support of the Regional Coordinator (RC). The next step was to hire the Evaluation Team leader, who further developed the plans for the evaluation, and developed detailed Terms of Reference (ToR) for all Team members. The RC and Team Leader planned the details of the evaluation, and oversaw the identification of all other team members.

12. The conceptualisation included a restructuring and re-wording of the project objectives[2], in order to ensure that the evaluation was coherent across all countries, was fully in accordance with GEF requirements and was consistent with latest GEF terminology (see Chapter 3 for more details). Next, in line with the Objectives and Outcomes, a detailed series of substantive questions was prepared by the Evaluation Team (included in Annex 5). These questions guided the evaluators in their data collection and analysis throughout the evaluation; however, it was never the intention to use the questions as a formal questionnaire. Given the complex nature of the project and its achievements, this conceptualisation continued throughout the evaluation.

Data collection and validation

13. The Itinerary is provided in Annex 2. The international team members had approximately 6 working days in each country, and the national team members 10-15.

14. Data and information on the project was collected through the following processes:

- The preparation of a 'self-evaluation' report, to a format designed by the evaluation team, by each national project team and by the RC;
- The review of all background documentation, planning documentation, activity and meeting reports, monitoring reports, technical reports and project outputs;
- Bilateral interviews with all key project stakeholders and concerned bodies, both regionally and nationally;
- In each country, one evaluation workshop with diverse local stakeholders;
- Direct observations of the project sites, the threats and the 'physical' actions of the projects[3].

15. Triangulation and Sampling Given the vast number of documents and stakeholders, it is recognized that it is not possible to review every document, nor meet every stakeholder, nor pose every question to those stakeholders met. The Evaluation Team ensured that significant and representative data was collected on each subject, before reaching any conclusions. In addition, the Team used the triangulation technique, that is, always ensuring at least two sources of information, and always checking, cross-referring and counter-checking before reaching any conclusions. In all cases, *evidence* of impact was required – conclusions were never based simply on verbal reports.

Setting the baseline and the targets

16. The Evaluation Team felt that the project documents did not clearly define the baseline[4] nor the targets to be achieved by the project. Nor did they provide effective indicators of success. Hence, in line with UNDP/GEF evaluation guidelines, the Evaluation Team had to determine this baseline and determine what would be reasonable achievements of the project. This was very challenging. Notably, for the impact related to each project Outcome, the Evaluation Team determined retrospectively what it considered to be a 'reasonable target' for the project to have achieved. These 'reasonable target' were a key tool used by the Team to assess impact and hence are critical to the overall evaluation process. Annex 5a provides more information on how these targets were determined and validated. Then, the

[2] Without modifying the substance of the objectives.
[3] The Evaluation team visited at least one sub-site of all of the sites with activities ongoing at the project end. The sites where project activities had stopped (e.g. Nador in Morocco) were not visited. The Palestinian sites were not visited.
[4] Either in terms of the situation at the project outset, or in terms of the situation that there would have been in 2006 if there had been no project.

Team assessed progress relative to these reasonable targets. The Team also had to assess how much of the progress was attributable to the project. More details are provided under each relevant section in Chapter 4.

Country reporting

17. In each country, the Evaluation Team (i.e. the concerned national expert and the three international experts) prepared a concise draft evaluation report, which was presented and introduced to the key national stakeholders. In two countries (Albania and Tunisia), it was possible for the Team to have a detailed discussion with the key national stakeholders of all the major issues in the draft report. This helped clarify certain points. In Egypt and Morocco the discussion on the draft report was constrained by time, but was still helpful in terms of (i) clarifying points (ii) providing initial reaction and feedback.

18. Subsequently, each national team (and the RC) provided detailed comments in writing on the draft country evaluation reports. The Team responded to the comments appropriately and corrected all factual errors. The final draft country reports are available as attachments to this report. It is noted that the Evaluation Team retains responsibility for the Evaluation report, and it is not always possible or appropriate to address the comments and concerns of the project stakeholders.

19. Given that the international team did not visit Lebanon, the process was somewhat different. First, the national consultant prepared a draft report. The International team members commented on this. A review workshop was held with key stakeholders, before the report was finalised by the national consultant. This report is submitted separately.

Regional reporting

20. Based on the national reports and the data collected, the three international team members prepared a first draft of this regional report. This Draft report was then reviewed at a two-day evaluation workshop, with participation by all evaluators. The finalised draft report was submitted to the 2006 RAC (Marrakech, November 2006).

Submission, consultation and finalisation

21. The draft report was reviewed and discussed at the 2006 RAC meeting. Where appropriate, the evaluators incorporated the comments received (and those received through follow-up correspondence). In other cases, the evaluators clarified the report and the description of the methodology.

Structure of the Evaluation

22. Following the Executive Summary, Introduction and brief description of the Project and its Development Context in Chapters 1, 2 and 3, the main Findings of the Evaluation Team are presented in Chapter 4.

23. The first sub-Chapter, 4.1, provides detailed information on the findings with regards to sustainability and impact with regards to each Outcome. The Evaluation Team felt that impact and sustainability are closely inter-related and should be treated together. Under each Outcome, this report structures the information as follows:

- Situation at the outset. A brief description of the overall situation across the region and in the participating countries with regards to the specific Outcome, at the time the project started;
- Project aims. A summary of the aims of the project with regards to this Outcome, drawing in part from the description in the Project Brief and from the Project Documents;
- Reasonable expectations. This section sets out, according to the Evaluators, what it would have been reasonable to expect the project to achieve, with regards to the given Outcome;

- Planning, achievements, impacts and sustainability. This section provides a detailed assessment of the project actions and impacts;
- Conclusion, including a review of progress compared to the 'reasonable expectations'.

24. Next, sub-Chapters 4.2 – 4.5 provide the findings of the Evaluation Team with regards to the implementation approach, the participation in the project, the monitoring and evaluation, and the cost-effectiveness. Chapters 5 and 6 provide, respectively, the overall Conclusions and Recommendations of the evaluation, and finally Chapter 7 summarise and Lessons Learnt under this project.

25. Throughout the report, the Evaluation provides a series of boxes describing achievements of the MWC that constitute a foundation for future success.

Ratings

26. In accordance with UNDP/GEF requirements, the evaluation should provide a *rating* for the following factors: sustainability; impact; implementation approach; stakeholder participation and monitoring.

27. First, in each country, based on the overall findings and on the experience and personal judgement, each member of the Evaluation Team (i.e. the three internationals and concerned national evaluator) independently determined a rating for each factor in each country. The international team members then each independently determined a rating for the regional component. All ratings were weighted equally, and combined into an overall rating. This is provided in sub-Chapter 4.6. It is accepted that, ultimately, there is an element of subjectivity in the ratings. However, it is noted that, in each case, there was a very close consensus across the four concerned experts on the ratings. That is, all evaluators gave very similar ratings, without previously comparing notes.

Constraints

28. There were several major constraints to undertaking this evaluation. These were the lack of a clear logical framework, the variance across the countries, the lack of clear targets at each level, the lack of a clear baseline and the complicated, multi-level implementation arrangements, without clear allocation of roles and responsibilities. These posed a challenge to providing a quantity-based evaluation.

29. In addition to the above-mentioned problems, the evaluation faced some difficulties in gathering data and analysis, notably:

- Restricted missions to Lebanon and Palestine;
- The time available for the international experts in each country was too limited to provide a detailed evaluation in each country;
- It was not possible to collect structured data on project expenditures in line with the project outcomes;
- The fact that the project activities were continuing during and after the evaluation. For example, following the evaluation, there may have been some progress with regards to sustainable financing in Albania and with regards to the NWS is Tunisia;
- It was not possible to meet all stakeholders, notably the Team was unable to meet most national level stakeholders outside the implementing ministry in every country visited.

30. Finally, the aim of this evaluation was to focus on *impacts* and *results*. Accordingly the ability of the evaluation to assess individual activities is greatly limited. Hence, in many cases, it may be that the project team undertook many activities – the evaluation team is unable to list and applaud the activities within this report – it can only look at the impact of these activities.

3. THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

Project start and its duration

19. The Project started operations in September 1999 for an initial period of 5 years. With the exception of Lebanon (which initiated activities in mid/late 2001), all national components started in late 1999 or early 2000. The Palestine component completed activities in late 2003. Lebanon completed its activities in early 2006. The national components for Albania, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia were extended until the end of 2006. Accordingly, the regional support component was extended until end-2006, albeit with a downscaling of activities.

20. The main financers of the project were: GEF, FFEM and the participating governments. As of mid-2005, the relative contributions were: GEF - US$12,974,497; FFEM - US$1,726,489 and; participating governments - US$1,595,146[5]. This is distributed as follow:

PROJECT BUDGET AT PROJECT OUTSET							
	Albania	**Egypt**	**Lebanon**	**Morocco**	**Palestine**	**Tunisia**	**RCU**
Total Budget with co-financing	1,901,000	4,329,146	392,489	3,537,825	540,000	3,242,000	
GEF	1,751,000	2,884,000		2,880,926	540,000	2,575,000	2,649,497
FFEM			392,489	664,125		667,000	

Problems that the project sought to address

21. The Mediterranean coastline (26,000 km) is an area of high biodiversity, where more than 50% of the 25,000 plant species are endemic to the region. It is also a critical area for migratory birds in the Africa-Palaearctic flyway as wetlands in the region provide an essential flyway and stepping stone on either side of the Mediterranean Sea and between the sea and the vast expanse of the Sahara desert to the south.

22. The biodiversity of these wetland and coastal ecosystems is threatened by a significant number of human activities such as uncontrolled development, urbanization, expansion of agricultural land, increasing national and international tourism, land-based pollution, and unplanned or over-exploitation of natural resources, in particular freshwater. These threats are compounded by factors inducing loss of coastal and wetland ecosystems including inadequate intersectoral planning; population migration to the coastal strip, and; inadequate response to pollution (brown issues).

23. For example, as stated in the Project Brief "*Tunisia has lost 28 percent of its wetlands in the last 100 years. In Albania more than a third of the country's wetlands have been drained since the 1940s. Lebanon's coastline is 95% developed, and only three small natural areas remain. In Egypt, secondary housing and tourism developments are spreading rapidly outwards from coastal agglomerations, while the Palestinian Authority is obliged to address severe environmental problems against great odds, yet parts of its coastline remain of value for globally threatened biodiversity*."

Immediate and development objectives of the project

24. The Project was approved by GEF as a single project covering six countries with a regional support component. At the time of approval, there was no requirement for a project logical framework matrix. For implementation, the project was separated into seven projects: one in each country and one regional support project. In each country, there was a Development Objective and 3 Immediate Objectives. These Objectives are broadly consistent across the countries. The regional component also had a separate, related set of Immediate Objectives. In each country, each Immediate Objective was to be achieved through a detailed list of Outputs and Activities – these vary across the countries. This 'six plus one' nature of the project means there is no single set of objectives/outcomes/outputs/activities covering all the geographical areas of the project.

[5] Source: ToR, see Annex 1.

25. The overall general project logical framework differs slightly across the project planning and reporting documents, although remaining essentially constant. Moreover, in each country, the logical framework *evolved* during project implementation, particularly with regards to the Outputs. Indeed, at the end of the project, at least one country was using more than one logframe: one for reporting, one for planning.

26. No clear targets and indicators were established at the project outset. The implementation teams efforts to develop targets and indicators met, in the opinion of the Evaluation Team, with limited success.

27. In order to coherently evaluate the entire project, it is essential to have a *single* logical framework that applies to all countries. Ideally, the evaluation should be undertaken with reference to a unique, fixed, clear, agreed and measurable set of targets. This makes it possible to aggregate the findings across the countries and to compare across the countries. For the reasons set out above, this was not possible for the MWC final Evaluation. When planning the evaluation, the Evaluation Team reviewed the various logframes in use, and determined the following single logframe pertaining to the overall project (encompassing the 6 national and 1 regional components):

28. The Project's overall development objective is 'to conserve globally endangered species and their habitats, recognising wildlife conservation as an integral part of sustainable human development while improving capacity of government and non-government agencies to address biodiversity conservation issues'.

29. The project three immediate objectives were:

1. Promotion and capacity building for the development of national policies and tools to address policy-related root causes of the loss of wetland and coastal biodiversity.
2. Root causes of biodiversity loss in key demonstration sites are removed, and sites are protected. This focussed on 16 sites in the five countries.
3. "Closing of the Mediterranean circle" in terms of biodiversity protection and sustainable management of wetlands and coastal zones through cost-effective networking for transfer of lessons, interchange and training.

30. Using latest UNDP/GEF terminology, immediate objectives are now referred to as *Outcomes.*

31. In addition, it is observed that the second Objective (or Outcome) includes two inter-related components (i) protection of sites (ii) removing root causes of biodiversity loss from sites. Although it is not possible to fully untangle these two components, both of these merit analysis and assessment. Hence, for the sake of this Evaluation, the second Objective (or Outcome) is separated into two components. Accordingly, the following Outcomes (or Objectives) were evaluated:

1. National policies and tools to address policy related root causes of the loss of wetland and coastal biodiversity are promoted and capacity is developed.

2.1 Important biodiversity sites are managed for biodiversity conservation and are protected, including related capacity building and sustainability.

2.2 At important biodiversity sites and surrounding areas, biodiversity conservation is adequately integrated into local economic and political decision-making, including related capacity building.

3. The 'Mediterranean Circle' is closed - knowledge has been transferred and sustainable knowledge-sharing mechanisms are effective.

32. This is the logframe used for this evaluation. It was prepared in advance of the evaluation, and it was approved by the principal project stakeholders (including UNDP/GEF and FFEM).

33. More generally speaking, it is noted that all four outcomes relate to removing root causes, by actions at the national, local and regional level.

Main stakeholders

34. A complex and large project of this nature involved and concerned many stakeholders. The main groups are set out below:

35. NGOs In most of the participating countries, the environmental sector is the one with the most active NGOs. These include national, local and community based organisations. This includes 'active' NGOs and NGOs consisting principally of academics/experts.

36. Local resource users These include fishermen, shepherds, farmers, tourists, and local small and medium scale industry. These are mostly private sector, some of them organised into groups or cooperatives.

37. Local elected institutions and local government From communes to counties, cities and provinces. This includes local decision-makers, mayors or governors

38. Local technical departments of national ministries The local technical arms of the national resource management agencies.

39. The national implementing agency Typically, this was the Ministry or Department responsible for Environment. In Tunisia it was the Agency for protecting and managing the coast.

40. Other national agencies Those agencies responsible for the natural resource sector, notably water, agriculture, forestry, fisheries and tourism, but transport, energy and others to a lesser extent.

41. Regional stakeholders This includes the project sponsors and managers (GEF, FFEM and UNDP). The also includes the project's principal regional technical support partners, i.e.: Tour du Valat (TdV), Conservatoire du Littoral (CdL) and Ateliers Techniques des Espaces Naturelles (ATEN). Other agencies active in this domain at the regional level include the MedWet Initiative, WWF, IUCN and the Regional Activity Centres under the Mediterranean Action Plan.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. ACHIEVEMENTS, IMPACTS AND SUSTAINABILITY

4.1.1. OUTCOME 1: National policies and tools to address policy related root causes of the loss of wetland and coastal biodiversity are promoted and related capacity is developed

Situation at the Outset of the Project and Aims under this Outcome

1. The project documents do not provide a clear description of the status with regards to this Outcome at the outset of the Project. The situation undoubtedly varied significantly from country to country. For example:

- Albania and Lebanon had recently come out of periods of instability, and were considered to be developing their legal and institutional frameworks. Individual capacity in Lebanon was strong, but weaker in Albania;
- Egypt and Morocco had both benefited from previous support to the natural resources and environmental sectors, but environmental agencies and policy were still relatively weak. Capacity to implement policy and laws was weaker still;

- Tunisia had a relatively developed institutional and general legal framework, and had recently established an agency for protection of coastal areas (the Coastal Protection and Management Agency, APAL).

2. Generally speaking, the participating countries had little experience related to biodiversity conservation and even less related to innovative ways to manage natural resources. Moreover, across the region, environment was not an over-riding priority, and all countries lacked inter-sectoral (or multi-sectoral) coordination mechanisms.

3. The Project Brief was vague but not very ambitious with regards to this Outcome. It focussed more on 'promoting' and 'supporting' rather than achieving. However, the national Project Documents were both more clear and more ambitious. For example, the forecasted end of project situation in Egypt included:

- *"legal, regulatory and institutional instruments and tools will have been established for the protection and conservation of threatened biodiversity ;*
- *Improved capacity at the local and national levels to address biodiversity issues in lateral and integrated planning levels;*
- *A solid legal framework for the protected/conservation areas will have been established;*
- *A general public awareness campaign for stressing the importance of natural environment resources protection will have been undertaken;*
- *Cross-sectoral structures and policies for the effective management of biodiversity and wetland and coastal resources will have been developed."*

4. The rather general nature of these aims, and the fact they (or something very similar) are found in the Project Document for most countries, suggest that they are not tailored to the country needs, and that there was no systematic approach to designing this Outcome in each country prior to the project start-up.

5. The different baselines in the participating countries (both in terms of the general institutional-legal situation in the country, and in terms of progress with regards to natural resources management) made it difficult to implement a standard approach to this Outcome. However, one approach common to each country (except Lebanon) was the promotion of a national wetlands strategy (NWS). This was eventually attempted by all countries. In addition, all countries set out to strengthen legislation related to the protection of the *selected project sites* (this is dealt with in Section 4.1.2 below). Otherwise, the approach in Tunisia and Morocco notably included the establishing/strengthening of coastal protection agencies.

What could reasonably have been expected under this Outcome

6. In terms of both *impact* and *sustainability*, the Evaluation Team determined that it would be reasonable[6] to expect the project to have significantly contributed to all or most of the following:

- The preparation of, or significant contribution to, at least one law related to either wetlands, or coastal zone management, or biodiversity in at least four countries (site specific laws are *excluded* , as they are covered under Section 4.1.2 below);
- Ensuring that an NWS is approved and under basic implementation in at least 2 countries;
- Institutional strengthening of the agency responsible for implementing the Project in four countries, so that it is better able to implement its mandate;
- Modifying the approach to wetland or coastal zones management in at least one other sector (e.g. fisheries, tourism, agriculture) in at least two countries;
- Establishing, in at least two countries, an effective multi-sectoral mechanism to plan or to resolve conflicts;
- Developing, in at least three countries, new tools, models, or a policy interventions; and

[6] See Annex 5a for explanation as to how these 'reasonable' targets were set.

- Building, in at least three countries, a broad group of experienced, competent professionals, who continue to work mostly in the coastal biodiversity or wetlands sectors.

7. Although the above list is rather lengthy, it is noted that the above do not require large investments. Instead, they require an ongoing support and interest from the project backed-up by small studies and consultancies. Moreover, there is a lot inter-linking across the items. For example, preparing an NWS should contribute to both sectoral and inter-sectoral strengthening, and a likely bi-product of this process would be new tools or policy, and capacity.

Project Planning under this Outcome

8. The Evaluation Team did not assess the planning that took place prior to the project being approved. It is as assumed that whatever analysis and planning that took place in the project pre-approval phase was incorporated into the actions listed in the project documents. However, it is noted that, in many cases, the actions listed in the project documents were not implemented. Hence, the planning prior to project start-up was not very useful.

9. There is no evidence that, after project start-up, the project team in any country undertook a systematic or logical process to plan actions under this Outcome. Hence, many actions were undertaken, but the analysis or justification for these actions is unclear. Moreover, in Albania, an analysis of legal needs was undertaken, but this was not used to select or design project activities.

10. It is noted that the draft NWS is now available in most countries. These identify a set of needs related to this Outcome. These NWS were prepared too late to guide actions of the Project. However, in many cases (e.g. Tunisia) the actions identified in NWS *are very similar to those originally set* out in the project documents – suggesting that those actions are relevant now, and so were probably relevant at the project outset.

Achievements and Impacts under this Outcome

11. Legal and legislative framework strengthening Overall there was not a lot of progress in this field. It was not addressed as a priority[7] in the project. This may have been appropriate in some countries. There are some examples of the Project contributing to legislative development[8], but these are scarce. The best example is Lebanon, where the project contributed to drafting the 'Framework Law for Nature Reserves'. The Project also contributed to developing the 'Coastal Law' in Morocco. It is noted that neither of these laws has been approved as of yet, hence the project has not been able to help directly build capacity to implement these laws.

12. The Evaluation Team did feel there were many 'missed opportunities', i.e. laws that should have been developed that were not, and relevant laws that were developed during the project implementation period but that the project did not contribute to. For example, in Albania, the project document stated that approving a 'Coastal Zone Management Law' was a priority, but no work seems to have been done on this, and this remains an agreed priority in the country. Likewise, during the project implementation period (in 2003), the EIA Law was passed in Albania, with relevance to both biodiversity and wetlands. The project could have contributed to this. Finally, in Morocco, it was not considered a priority for the project to provide direct support to the development of the Protected Area Law and the Water Law – both ongoing national priorities.

13. Institutional strengthening In many countries, the project contributed to significant strengthening of the implementing agency, notably in Tunisia and Albania and to a lesser extent Lebanon. In Tunisia, the

[7] This is an example of the projects not addressing difficult issues. Other examples will be seen later. Although it is appropriate to focus, and to some extent to focus on 'low hanging fruit', somehow countries in the region have to be able to take on the difficult issues, and to do so with GEF support.

[8] In this section we deal with national laws. Laws pertaining to specific sites addressed by this project are dealt with under Sections 4.1.3 and 4.1.4.

project supported the growth of the APAL from a small, fledgling actor to a competent, reputed actor on coastal areas, at least for the Cap Bon region of Tunisia (see Box 1). The project also strengthened APAL internally. In Albania, the project contributed to strengthening the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Water Management (MEFWM), to improving its capacity to address biodiversity and wetlands, and to raising its status on related issues. This complemented the Ministry's evolution from Agency, to environmental Ministry, to Ministry for natural resources.

Box 1: MWC – Building Foundations for Future Conservation
Institutional Partnership-Building in Tunisia

In 1995, Tunisia created a governmental organization dedicated to protecting coastal areas and developing related infrastructure - APAL. At the project start-up, as a young organisation, APAL did not have real expertise in establishing, managing and implementing protected areas. The MWC gave it a first opportunity to be involved as a leading agency, and to practice protected area management. As the project comes to an end, APAL is now largely recognised across Tunisia as an agency that manages coastal zones and wetlands. Moreover, it has developed working arrangements with local communities, relationships with environmental NGOs and private companies, and is able to make good use of international expertise.

How was APAL able to do develop in this way? The fact that it was an appointed government agency ensured that its efforts would have long-term sustainability. This also gave it power and credibility, as well resources and a working budget. Importantly, despite the fact that the project objective is directly in APAL's mandate, APAL recognised early on that it could not do the on-the-ground work, and it would have to cooperate with other organisations to succeed, for example to undertake the on-the-ground science, local communication, awareness raising and infrastructure design. This, and the project design, obliged a partnership approach. APAL made the most of this opportunity to develop its capacity to enter into and benefit from partnerships. This led to on-the-job learning, and to signed agreements and contracts with NGOs, private partners, other agencies, local governmental agencies and local communities. APAL now recognises the role these partners can play, and considers them essential partners for future operations. APAL ongoing institutional relationship with CdL, partly supported by the MWC, was also a contributing factor.

The key thing was to integrate the objectives and approaches within the APAL mechanisms. This included adapting the APAL Steering Committee to steer the project and assuring a governmental financial allocation to future action. Overall the project structure ensured its success, and the successful partnership approach became mainstreamed into the Tunisian governmental framework.

14. However, the implementing agencies in Morocco and Egypt do not seem to have significantly benefited from the project. In both cases, the project activities seem to have been somewhat at arms-length from the agency itself, thereby limiting on-the-job training. This might be considered a missed opportunity. In Morocco, the project supported the establishment of a 'Coastal Unit', but this Unit does not seem to have been integrated into the other project activities (and was not involved in the project's coastal demonstration sites). However, even in Morocco, the project did help clarify the role of the Ministry of Land, Water and Environment (MATEE) and build its capacity to enter into relationships.

15. Beyond the actual project implementing agency, in each country the project's attempts to strengthen multi-sectoral institutional capacity were weaker. In Albania the project National Steering Committee (NSC) functioned quite well. In Tunisia, the Steering Committee was incorporated into the existing APAL Committee. In other countries, the NSCs functioned poorly. Beyond this, in general, the project did little to establish or strengthen inter-sectoral committees or Wetlands committees. Some support to this was given in Egypt, but it did not lead far. In Morocco, the project did support the useful initiative to build a Coastal Unit, but this remains part of MATEE and did not become truly inter-sectoral. The process to preparing the draft NWS generally involved actors from each sectors, but generally not government agencies or decision-makers. In addition, there were missed opportunities, for example in Morocco a National Commission for Wetlands and a National Centre for Wetlands were both established during the project period, but the project played no role in this.

16. Another weakness was direct mainstreaming of project objectives into other sectors and national agencies beyond the implementing agency. There were some impressive successes in this domain (e.g.

Egypt), but they were site specific and difficult to replicate. There was little national level mainstreaming. Many efforts were devoted to this in Lebanon, but there is little evidence of their success.

17. Policy development – including the NWS All the countries (except Lebanon) were expected to prepare a National Wetland Strategy. Typically, this should have been done in a participatory, inter-sectoral manner. Ideally, and as planned, it would have started early in the project, to allow time to ensure legal approval and to start implementation. However, in practice, all countries started developing the NWS rather late in the project, and none have been approved as of yet.

18. The draft NWS in Morocco and Albania are comprehensive, and a rapid review suggests they are of good quality, whereas in Egypt and Tunisia they are preliminary documents – although nicely prepared. They are not very strategic, providing mostly general guidance or lists of actions. Now these steps have been taken to preparing the NWS, the next steps will be to increase buy-in, strengthen the strategic nature of the NWS, and to cost-out activities. One possible weakness is that the NWS were generally seen by the project teams as being part of the 'environment' or even 'biodiversity' sector. This may be a necessary, practical starting point. Ultimately, in order to sustainably conserve wetlands, the actions in other sectors (agriculture, fisheries, water, and possibly energy and tourism) are more relevant.

19. More broadly speaking, the Evaluation Team feels that more could have been done with regards to policy. From early stages, the national projects could have initiated a policy debate on issues such as biodiversity and tourism, sustainable conservation financing and other issues specific to each country or site. At little cost, key questions related to these issues could have been raised in the country in an inter-sectoral manner, and this may have led to a national debate and eventually fed policy.

20. On the positive side, it is reported from all countries that, as a consequence of the project actions, wetlands and coastal biodiversity are better understood and have a far more important place on the national agenda than at the outset. The Evaluation Team feels confident that this is the case, and that it is in part a result of the project's awareness raising, data collection and lobbying. Although difficult to measure, this is undoubtedly an achievement of the project.

21. Development of Tools and Models Tools or models are generally taken in this report to include innovative approaches or practices, developed and tested by the project, that are ready to be repeated at other sites or in other countries.

22. There *are* examples of tools or models being developed by the project. For example, most countries went through a rather thorough Management Planning exercise, and many related lessons have been learnt. In Egypt, the project's work with community involvement and integrating biodiversity and conservation was rather unique, and this builds a foundation for future work across the country. In Tunisia, the project test-ran an approach to conservation at several sites, thus far successful, and many lessons have been learnt. In general, the Project did not do enough to formalise and document these models/tools, which is demonstrated by the fact that no country was adequately aware of the work done in other countries.

23. A contrasting example is in Lebanon, where the project's work on protected areas on privately owned land is a model, and was formalised into training/guidelines (the 'EcoGuidelines'). These latter are being used at other sites in the Lebanon.

24. . A weakness was the lack of quality communication tools – with the notable exceptions of the Lebanon project and the Moulouya site in Morocco. It is also noted that there were some cases of 're-inventing the wheel', i.e., 'developing' tools that may have already been developed and tested internationally.

25. In general, the project broadly retained a standard approach to conservation. The project did little to experiment with or develop innovative tools or alternative approaches to conservation or sustainable conservation financing. This could have included more work on market-based instruments (MBIs), payments for ecological services (PES), biodiversity friendly tourism, valuation, taxes, private

sector/NGO management, entrance fees, etc. These are issues that, internationally, have advanced considerably during the approval and implementation period of the project, and one could have expected this to have had more influence on the Project. It is noted that, in its final year, the Albanian MWC took some steps in this direction.

26. Strengthening Capacity of Individuals Overall, this is probably the strongest component under Outcome 1. Significant capacity was built from on-the-job training on the activities under Outcomes 2.1 and 2.2. Through the project stages, in almost all countries, capacity was built, amongst local and national scientists, experts, officials and practitioners, and this will undoubtedly be put to good use in the countries in the coming years. Likewise, the project made a contribution to developing a valuable network of partners at the national levels (amongst institutes, NGOs, projects, individual experts etc). These could have been more structured or formal.

27. Albania was a particularly good example of this. Also, in Egypt, a large number of national scientists[9] were involved in the project, and they benefited from this on-the-job training. In Morocco, the quality of the training was appreciated by all those involved, and was considered to be pertinent.

28. There were some weak points associated with capacity building, notably:

- in many cases the on-the-job capacity building was amongst experts and academics, and notably not many people from the implementing agency benefited from the capacity development;
- although on-the-job training was a success, formal training events seem to have had less impact. It is noted that a large number of formal training events were regional, and hence too few participants could attend from each country. Despite the undoubted success of training events such as Zaranik (Management Planning) and Jordan, overall there was little evidence that those attending regional training were able to fully hand-over the experience in their country;
- A related issue is the weak databases prepared by the project. Although Tunisia and Albania had reasonable databases, the data collected under Morocco and Egypt seems poorly stored and managed and not easily accessible (in some cases, even to the project team).

29. Formal training for individual capacity building probably most aptly illustrates the great efforts undertaken by many of the project teams and the distinction between project *actions* and project *impacts*. Regionally, and in each country, a structured needs assessment was undertaken, a national training focal point was empowered, and this was followed by the development of logical training strategies, and by the design of training programmes and the implementation of individual training events. In some countries, several hundred people were trained through this process[10], illustrating the high level of activities. In terms of impact, this should have translated into many individuals implementing new functions, and contributed to the transformation of their organisation/department. Beyond the project team, the Evaluation team saw little evidence of the latter – although it is accepted that this may take more time.

Sustainability

30. In general, under this Outcome, sustainability is assured if the initiatives reach a point where they have acquired sufficient momentum to continue without project support.

31. With regards to the individual capacity, the achievements can be considered sustainable. The project contributed to developing the capacity of large numbers of people, notably with regards to management planning, undertaking diagnosis, negotiation and participation, and developing socio-economic actions. It is reasonable to expect that the majority of these people will remain in the country in a related sector.

[9] Possibly at the expense of more managers, decision-makers and practitioners.
[10] It is noted that the training did not always strictly follow the programme.

32. Also, the institutional impacts of the project, although limited, are most likely to be sustainable, as the concerned agencies will continue to be active in similar projects, and address similar issues.

33. However, with regards to policy and legal developments, in many cases the project did not carry the initiatives through to fruition. Hence, if the law or strategy is not yet approved, there is a danger that it will not be approved in the future without the project. Also, without the project to support the initial implementation years, there is a danger that the laws/policies will not be suitably implemented. The NWS are a good example of this, if the project could have overseen approval *and* the first year of operations, this would have contributed greatly to sustainability.

34. Tunisia has surely made the most overall progress with regards to sustainability, by anchoring the project approach and activities into the government administration, and securing a medium-term budget to follow. The Tunisia MWC project has been incorporated into the forthcoming five year National Plan for Economic and Social Development, and approximately $6 million have been allocated to this. Moreover, the NSC was firmly within the APAL Committee, thereby giving it institutional sustainability.

35. Generally speaking, there are two additional factors that could affect sustainability:

36. First, the project had a great opportunity to introduce or facilitate a more 'bottom-up' approach to policy and law development in the participating countries. Across the many sites, the project activities generated many lessons, and allowed many resource users and grass-roots stakeholders to raise issues. The project's policy work could have been in *response* to this grass-roots experience, it could have been partly driven from the bottom. However, there is no evidence that this was the case, at least directly. It seems the project's policy and legal initiatives were mostly in response to national and international thinking – e.g. the NWS were written largely by national and/or international experts, without a detailed consideration of the lessons and issues emanating from the project own demonstration sites. These project sites should be treated as 'learning' sites for policy makers.

37. Second, in at least two countries (Egypt and Morocco, and possibly Lebanon), the project activities were not sufficiently anchored into the government administration. Hence, the actions were actions of the project, rather than actions of the government. This lack of anchoring tends to undermine sustainability.

Conclusion

38. This Outcome is vaguely worded in the project brief and few details are provided. However, the project documents are more precise, and many project activities rightly focussed on this. Following project approval, no thorough analysis or systematic planning was done to determine which activities should be implemented under this Outcome. Hence, project interventions under this Outcome seemed mostly activity-driven or opportunistic.

39. Overall, progress was made, but many opportunities were missed. The following table compares what happened with 'w*hat could reasonably have been expected*'.

OUTCOME 1: National policies and tools to address policy related root causes of the loss of wetland and coastal biodiversity are promoted and related capacity is developed		
Reasonably Expected Result	**Finding**	**Achieved?**
The preparation of, or significant contribution to, at least one law (excluding site specific laws) in at least four countries	Some contributions to some laws were made, but this is below the expected target.	Almost
Ensuring that an NWS is approved and under basic implementation in at least 2 countries.	Good quality drafts were prepared in some countries (Morocco and Albania), but these are not under implementation; they are not yet approved.	No
Institutional strengthening of the agency responsible for implementing the Project in four countries	This was achieved Tunisia and Albania, much less so in Morocco	Almost

Modifying the approach to wetlands or coastal zones (and related biodiversity) of at least one other sector in at least two countries	This was not the case. There are isolated examples of change, but not systematic, national level changes. Most progress was with the Forestry sector in Albania and Morocco.	No
Establishing, in at least two countries, an effective multi-sectoral mechanism to plan or to resolve conflicts.	It is recognised that this is challenging. The APAL Steering Committee is close to this. Otherwise, there was little or no progress.	Progress was made.
Developing, in at least three countries, new tools, models, or a policy interventions.	Many lessons were learnt. Some tools were certainly developed (e.g. Management Planning tools for Lebanon and Albania). However, these were not adequately formalised, and there were many missed opportunities.	Almost
Building, in at least three countries, a broad group of experienced, competent professionals, who continue to work mostly in the coastal/wetlands or biodiversity areas.	This was broadly the case in all countries.	Yes

4.1.2. OUCTOME 2.1: Important biodiversity sites are managed for biodiversity conservation and are protected, including related capacity building and sustainability

Situation at the Outset of the Project

1. The MedWetCoast project emerged as one of a number of programs and initiatives at the national and regional levels aiming to conserve the exceptionally important biodiversity of the Mediterranean region. The need for projects of this nature emerged as the countries of the region (mainly southern countries, with the exception of Albania that joined the project shortly after a long period of isolation) wanted to scale up their responses to the major factors threatening the region's biodiversity.

2. Globally and regionally, the development and maintenance of a representative network of effectively managed protected areas (PAs) had always been a key pillar to conserving biodiversity and overcoming threats. Hence, the project strategy depended heavily on the adoption, establishment and management of PAs. PA management was to be a main tool for in-situ biodiversity conservation at the selected pilot sites.

3. Within this context, there are some key questions that the project documents did not answer, including: Was this project purely about 'protected areas', or broader in scope? And did the national and regional partners share this understanding? And did they all have the same understanding of the concept of protected areas (in line with global understanding)?

Aims under this Outcome

4. The Project Brief was overly ambitious in parts, and too vague in others. The project was designed to define and undertake urgent actions at threatened sites containing globally significant species diversity. These areas were meant to serve as pilots: piloting the protection of key sites and building necessary capacities and experiences in wetlands and coastal biodiversity management.

5. The Project Brief sets out the process to protecting the sites to be followed through the project. The first step was to develop enforceable site Management Plans for the sixteen (including Palestinian Authority) pilot sites. A management committee was also to be established at each site to overlook site development and ensure the optimal level of participation of relevant stakeholders in all project levels and phases. This was to be done through the preparation and diffusion of guidelines, national workshops and in-country site placements. Next, the site management needed to be legally enshrined, supported by an effective participatory process and to include all the main elements of sound site management. This includes the development of a site management process, demarcation and zoning, proposals for an inter-

sectoral management structure, identification of comprehensive sets of management actions to address specific local threats, implementation of activities to reinforce populations of threatened species, implementing effective system for environmental monitoring and a program for public awareness supported by training activities.

6. Finally the project was expected, after ensuring the sound management of pilot sites, to serve as a basis for extension to cover all the national coastal and wetland areas of biodiversity importance. It was foreseen that the lessons learned would be distilled and summarized to benefit other sites of the country/authority or even other countries. The project was to facilitate this exchange between local, national and regional levels.

What could reasonably have been expected

7. The Project Brief and documentation are weak on targets and impact indicators. In response, the Evaluation Team attempted to retroactively establish the baseline and then define the final impacts to be delivered by the project. The Evaluation team also set out to clarify those impacts which resulted directly or indirectly from project intervention. The Evaluation notes that this Outcome was a major focus of the project. Based on these considerations, the evaluation team believes that it was reasonable, under this Outcome, to expect the project to have successfully achieved the following eight results[11]:

- Establish the legal status of the site and declaring the area to be protected for at least ten sites;
- Develop quality Management Plans (MP) for at least ten sites, with adequate focus on biodiversity;
- Establish effective site based teams for at least five sites, with adequate technical competences, to implement the MP and facilitate local participation and support. At least one in each country;
- Develop capacity, particularly at the local level, for sound and effective management of the sites, including inter-sectoral, local institutional management arrangements to ensure strong involvement and participation of all local stakeholders. This for at least five sites, one in each country;
- Develop and implement environmental and socio-economic monitoring programs to support decisions and assess impacts. This for at least five sites, one in each country;
- Ensure the sites and their MP are anchored into local and/or national institutions;
- Attain some degree of financial sustainability. This for at least five sites, one in each country;
- Ensure the MP are under implementation, including a focus on activities directly conserving biodiversity. This for at least five sites, one in each country.

The Overall Approach towards Site Management

8. Prior to the project, the general tendency in the region within nature conservation agencies was largely influenced by the post-Rio Summit trend to increase the area declared under protection, with less emphasis on the effectiveness and sound management of sites. Later (and after the MWC project started) the world conservation community started talking about the need to establish *effective* networks of protected areas. This was due to the publishing of major reports on the status of PA systems across the world, and the frequency of "paper parks", particularly in developing countries.

9. Through the project, the countries adopted different approaches to site development and management. One approach focused more on establishing the on-the-ground physical status of the site as a first priority. This approach was mainly adopted in Tunisia and, to a lesser extent, Morocco. Accordingly, many site-based actions were undertaken in order to increase site visibility, control access and facilitate site interpretation. This also contributed to establishing basic awareness of the importance of the sites. Main actions under this approach included the construction of fences around sensitive areas, the development of basic infrastructure such as gates and signs and the construction of monitoring stations to control and manage visitors. In addition, this approach was typically complemented by building alliances with strategic partners and supporters, mostly local government near to the site.

[11] Drawing from the Management Effective Tracking Tool, METT.

10. Typically, this approach also included urgent conservation and rehabilitation actions to remove the *symptoms* of the main threats facing the site, for example by conducting intensive site clean-up campaigns. This directly stopped some major threats to the site and helped to set aside some significant biodiversity, as well as aesthetic landscapes. These actions also helped to establish the site's 'presence' and draw the attention of local and central decision makers towards the site's attributes and problems.

11. This approach was instrumental in increasing the profile of the site and the site management authority. Accordingly, one result of this approach was to help shift national and local perceptions of the sites, and of wetlands/water bodies in general. This perception changed from 'useless and rather harmful dump sites' to 'areas of significance for biodiversity conservation and local development'.

12. There are several examples where, through this approach, the project established a strong foundation for effective site management and was instrumental in setting aside pristine areas and staking biodiversity territories.

13. There were some drawbacks with this approach. First, particularly in the project's early years, less focus was given to pure biodiversity interventions. Many actions were at least equally focused on tourism or the local environment. This was seen as an acceptable compromise as it was foreseen to re-gain biodiversity focus over the long term. Second, and probably more importantly, with this approach, within the MedWetCoast project, there was less focus on building the technical and administrative capacities to manage sites, or broad local ownership. The projects did not invest enough in establishing effective site management teams, they did not ensure an optimal involvement of local stakeholders in daily site management, they did not focus on sustainability in terms of maintenance and administration, and they failed to develop and utilize tools and mechanisms for income generation and benefit sharing. It is also not always clear how this approached addressed the root causes of biodiversity loss.

14. The second approach to site conservation focused more on developing human capacities, rather than just the physical presence. This also included partnership and alliance building with local actors. This approach was evident mainly in Albania, and Egypt. In this approach, more project activities focused on ensuring local participation, building the technical capacities of local and national teams and fostering a sense of ownership amongst stakeholders locally and nationally. More activities also focused on socio-economic benefits for stakeholders near the site, with related attempts to increase the level of local awareness and support for the site.

15. This approach empowered project partners from NGOs and the private sector. Also, significant authority was delegated to institutions other than the main implementing agency. This also helped accelerate project progress (with some exceptions) and widen benefit sharing and the exchange of experience.

16. Although focusing on building capacities and stakeholder involvement, this approach missed several important opportunities to establish strong institutional and managerial presence on the sites. In many cases, the capacities developed remained mainly at the national level. In others cases, the project failed to sufficiently address many major threats facing the site. It also came short in ensuring effectiveness and sustainability in terms of institutional, technical and financial tools and mechanisms.

17. Each of these approaches has merit, and they are not mutually exclusive. The Evaluation Team feels it would have been interesting to see a combination of these two approaches. It would have also have been useful to have had more critical analysis, within the project, of the various approaches in terms of strengths and weaknesses in order to come up with consolidated guidelines on how to tailor the combined approaches to the local and national needs and contexts. The Team believes that such knowledge and experience sharing would have been instrumental in increasing impacts and possibilities of sustainability.

18. Two additional comments relevant under this section include: (i) the nature of the approach adopted by the different countries was largely influenced by the type and background of the project's technical and administrative leaderships. It reflected the nature and quality of the technical support and

backstopping received from national and regional partners – rather than coming out of the problem analysis; (ii) In all countries, the sites management planning processes were considered as an exercise limited to national boundaries and context. The processes were not seen as part of a comprehensive and strategic regional initiative.

Site Diagnosis Phase

19. Overall, this was a strong component of the project in all countries, although the depth and quality of the exercise did vary considerably. In most cases it was a thorough and elaborate exercise. There is evidence that on some issues it was too detailed, whereas other issues were not covered adequately – notably socio-economic issues. Also, they were not sufficiently focused on management priorities. The diagnoses took time to complete, leaving too little project time for the (more important) management planning and implementation components. There is a consensus among project partners that this phase should have been much shorter, more focused on quality and understanding of the information, rather than the quantity of data collected. There should also have been more prioritisation, focussing and fewer research activities.

20. This phase also contributed to significant technical capacity building in the various ecological, biophysical and socio-economic research fields, particularly at the national level.

21. The process however, was usually too scientific and research oriented. There should have been more emphasis on planning and on managerial needs and priorities. This is one reason why the project developed poor quality environmental and socio-economic monitoring programs.

22. The site diagnosis was often delegated to private sector companies through conventional bidding processes. In other cases (in Egypt, and Albania to a lesser extent), the whole site diagnostic process was developed, implemented and coordinated under the direct supervision of the project team (by hired consultants). In this latter case, a large number of experts were involved and a high level of national capacity was built. Further, the project team had a lot of ownership of the results and was very aware of its technical and logistical details.

23. The sustainability of much of the capacity built under the diagnosis phase cannot be confirmed. This is due to the fact that most of the experts involved were not part of the institutional arrangements for the site management, nor did they continue to be involved in the management plan preparation (with few exceptions). However, most capacity will remain within national boundaries and should continue to contribute, directly or indirectly, to biodiversity conservation.

24. Site diagnosis was generally inclusive and participative, with variation across countries. In some cases, all stakeholders were included whereas other cases were quite selective and rather opportunistic, avoiding the more complex and less accessible and less supportive stakeholders. In the case when the private companies led the diagnosis, the optimal level of stakeholders' involvement was not always ensured. The same applies to the level of local and national capacity building.

25. The process generated a great deal of site specific knowledge and information. This is a valuable legacy of the project. This was a good documentation initiative and a reference for future initiatives. In Egypt, the results of the diagnostic process were synthesised into two large scientific publications. Nevertheless, in other countries, much of the knowledge generated was not properly linked to the overall management planning process or anchored within local or national institutions. Hence, the usefulness of such products for future programs is questionable.

26. In another case (Albania), the process was interrupted for a long period as the project was suspended. This affected momentum and led to the need to update much of the data collected, an unnecessary extra effort which could have been avoided.

27. Despite generally being a good project component, the site diagnosis phase failed to identify the manageability of some of the sites[12] (see later section on Monitoring). It did not always allow for effective identification and/or revision of the site's threats and priorities as it generally remained more focused on scientific research.

Management Plan Development Phase

28. The development of the management plans for the sites was, in most cases, a major capacity building exercise and learning process for all counties. Project teams, national and local experts, private companies and many stakeholders were heavily involved in the preparation of the management plans. This phase was so important that it was characterised by many project partners (and even donors) as a *goal* in itself, rather than the means for ensuring the effective management of the sites. The process was generally conducted in partnerships, with the occasional exclusion of some main local stakeholders such as some direct resource users. The quality of the process was very much influenced by the background and experience of the involved experts and institutions.

29. As with the diagnosis, there were several approaches to developing the MP. In some cases, the process was delegated to private sector companies, in other cases it was contracted to national NGOs and other partner institutions, and in a third approach, the whole process was lead and managed by the project team themselves. There are advantages and disadvantages to all options, and there is no clear preferred approach.

30. In brief, the first approach gave more flexibility to the process, worked easily with local stakeholders, developed technical capacities but was not well anchored or supported institutionally. The second approach was led by local or provincial government institutions, it was strongly institutionalized, supported by legal and enforcement powers but had less technical inputs and more bureaucratic limitations. The third approach was technically the strongest, most motivated and efficient with lots of consultation and information sharing. However, it didn't invest enough in promoting local ownership, was weakly anchored institutionally and failed to build the technical capacities of site teams.

31. The process was utilized in several cases to harness links and partnerships between the project team, the related government agencies, the private sector and NGOs. Generally speaking, the phase was conducted professionally and seriously, with few exceptions (e.g. Burullus in Egypt, Moulouya in Morocco) where the ownership of the exercise was not well anchored, even within the project partners.

32. There is also evidence that, in a few cases, the innovative aspects of the process led to some significant shifts in the institutional thinking paradigm with regards to site management planning. In Albania, it was the first time to use a participatory approach for management planning; in Lebanon the idea of privately owned PAs was advanced through this project; and in Tunisia, APAL knew very little about PA management at the project outset.

33. The process included threat analysis and the development of objectives. On many occasions, the threats to the sites were not adequately analysed, leading to the development of somewhat generic and not site specific management objectives. On other occasions, the threats that had been identified early in the planning process were not adequately covered by the final management plans. That is, the process of threat analysis did not inform decision making and was not able to help the project management adapt more feasible and better prioritized interventions.

34. The management plan development process was quite lengthy and used a major proportion of the project time and effort, at the expense of the subsequent (and more important) consolidation and implementation phases. The projects did not consider undertaking a more rapid planning exercise; such

[12] Typically, following diagnosis, the first and foremost question is 'is it possible and worthwhile to establish a protected area'? If this question had been seriously asked in the project, for some sites the answer would have been 'no'.

an exercise would probably have had the same or at least similar quality, and would probably have led to more enforceable and more feasible management plans[13].

35. It is worth noting here that some major adjustments took place in several countries during this phase. Namely, a shift towards more focus on socio-economic aspects of site management developed. In Egypt, the project introduced an innovative concept based on micro-credit schemes. In Morocco, two of the five sites covered by the project were dropped after reassessing the feasibility of their management. Although these may be considered examples of adaptive management at the 'project level', they did not stem from a systematic management planning process. The management planning process was occasionally too exhaustive, involving too much learning-by-doing and too much trial and error.

36. It should be mentioned that the legal status of most of the project sites did not advance during the project. The sites which had already been declared as official protected areas remained so during the project. On the other hand, many of the sites that did not have the necessary legal status at the project outset remained unchanged[14] (e.g. Orikumi in Albania, Ammiq in Lebanon), although many have gained a *status*, for example as Ramsar sites or Important Bird Areas. The principal exception is Narta Lagoon in Albania, which has been declared a legally protected area.

The Management Plans – Quality

37. At the project outset, no sites had management plans. Preparing these was a major project activity, and was seen as an objective in itself (together with related capacity building).

38. Most of the management plans were legally endorsed by national decrees but at varying levels. With the exception of one or two cases (e.g. Egypt, Beni Snassen[15], in Morocco), the management plans were of good quality and included a good analysis of site characteristics and threats and came up with an adequate set of objectives which were broken down into actions along with budgetary requirements. It should be noted here that the threat analysis was not consistent in all plans, and the transition from determining constraints to setting objectives was not clear in all cases. In at least one case (Albania – see Box 2), the quality of the management plan was impressive and could serve as a good model for the region.

Box 2: MWC – Building Foundations for Future Conservation
Effective Management Planning in Albania

In Albania, the MWC PA management process was impressive, constituting a capacity building exercise and resulting in a good foundation for PA management.

The site diagnosis was a thorough, participative process. Alone, it built significant capacity at local and national levels, and it generated lots of knowledge on the two sites. The subsequent management planning process was a major exercise, impressively done and participative, led by a group of national experts supported by sound and well appreciated international backstopping. It included an adequate analysis of the biodiversity significance, the threats and was successful in developing objectives and actions. It helped build capacity of the site management teams, particularly from the forestry department. The mapping exercise, zoning plans, communication and awareness raising tools were nicely elaborated and selected. This was the first time that a PA management planning exercise had been led by national experts.

The two Management Plans developed under the project were produced in English and Albanian, following international guidelines. The two plans were legally endorsed by the concerned Ministry, and are ready for implementation. The results are of rather high quality, and this model has been formalised and documented through training modules. Possible weaknesses include: in order to have achieve an impact, selected actions should be commensurate with resources, and therefore should focus on manageable sites; priority actions must focus mostly

[13] It is noted that this is recommended in the '*Management Plan Peer Review' (*MPPR), but this came too late for most countries.
[14] Although the process towards legal status is underway in some cases.
[15] The Beni Snassen Management Plan was presented to the Evaluation Team as a draft, although it was very incomplete.

on biodiversity, and; the need to consider long-term institutional and financial sustainability from the very beginning of the process.

In conclusion, the Project supported national expertise to develop an approach to Management Planning that produced quality products and is now considered a model approach, at least nationally.

39. In the case of Tunisia, the management plans included an innovative use of management scenarios. The decision makers were given more than one strategic option for plan implementation. However, this was not adequately utilized later on in the implementation phase. In some cases the management plans were not very user friendly (e.g. Morocco) and no real attempt was made to produce proper bilingual briefs to be used by a wider spectrum of interest groups and stakeholders.

40. Most of the plans included a good set of detailed maps, however there were some exceptions (e.g. Egypt, where no mapping was done for the protected areas). This negatively affected the ability to understand the site's context and adequately develop the necessary zoning plans. Wherever they were developed, the zoning plans were of acceptable quality. However, they generally lacked the necessary level of detail to define the various zones and provide sound support to decision making.

41. Notably in Lebanon, the entire management planning exercise was turned into an innovative training module and an elaborate management kit. This worked very well as a communication, promotion and capacity building initiative which is worthy of sharing across the region.

42. The management plans, despite being of varying qualities, all (except Lebanon) lacked proper business plans. A business plan can be instrumental to support the plan's sustainability and to help resource mobilization. Although not having a business plan as such, it is noteworthy that Tunisia was the only country to secure a significant budget for MP implementation, through direct government allocation. This special achievement is attributed to the work of the Tunisian team. This backs the belief of the Evaluation Team that all the management plans should have been 'completed' earlier, and then the Project could have supported their implementation for at least two years, thereby helping them towards a solid financial basis.

43. The Evaluation Team took note of the fact that many MP actions were implemented prior to the finalization and endorsement of the management plans, and most of these actions were somehow integrated into the management plans. After taking a closer look at the implemented actions, the Evaluation Team feels this was because the management planning process was too elaborate (and could have been made shorter as soon as the priority actions were identified). This supports the hypothesis that the project could have been more effective if it had adopted a more rapid planning exercise.

44. The fact that management plans were developed for all 15 sites is commendable. More importantly, they are mostly too ambitious to be implemented as there are no clear commitments from financing or implementing agencies.

Management Plan Implementation

45. It should be noted here that the project log-frame indicators prepared during the second year of the project required that 30 percent of the management plan actions be implemented within the project duration[16]. As stated above, the action plans within the Management Plans were generally too ambitious, especially taking into consideration that in most cases, the technical, human and financial resources were not secured by the project for the planned implementation. However, overall, the level of management plan implementation can be classed as moderately acceptable, due to the fact that some actions (urgent interventions) were undertaken at most of the sites. Nevertheless, the impact of those actions varied from one site to another. Countries varied in their priority actions. In Tunisia and Morocco, they focused on developing physical presence of the protected area and controlling access. The tendency in Egypt was to

[16] As will be discussed later in this report, the Evaluation Team do not consider this a useful indicator.

focus more on major conservation actions in addition to several socio-economic interventions. In Albania, more focus was given to the conservation activities and much less to socio-economic programs.

46. There were also differing approaches to implementing the Plans. Some project teams implemented the actions directly, whereas others delegated much of the plan implementation to partners from NGOs and government agencies, the latter helping to create alliances and foster partnerships. In Tunisia, most actions were sub-contracted to private contractors through tenders, this had shortfalls as it weakened the involvement of the local stakeholder and prevented lots of direct benefits to local communities.

47. Generally speaking, the project teams remained too small to create the needed critical mass of sound management. Further, most of the technical capacity was limited to the central project teams while the site teams were left with fewer skills and capacities. Additionally, very few of the site and central project teams were recruited permanently by the lead implementing agency and many of them may be left behind after the project closes, thus jeopardizing the technical sustainability of the site interventions.

48. In general, the sustainable implementation of activities under the plans ranges from 'not assured' to 'unlikely'. In some cases, such as Morocco and Albania, some of the management implementation was handed over to partner government agencies and this does raise the possibility of sustainability. At one of the Lebanese sites, the implementation became the responsibility of the Appointed Protected Area Committee - APAC. In Tunisia, the future is more positive, considering the substantial government allocation to the implementation. In all cases the level of government commitment was not very clear or assured, with the Tunisian case being by far the most promising.

49. As mentioned above, the management planning process was a strong component of the project with a strong element of capacity building on the local and national level. However, the management plan implementation was mainly limited to the central project teams and little delegation of authority was given to the technical site teams. This negatively affected the level of commitment and incentive given to the on-site teams and is also likely to be a factor negatively affecting the overall sustainability. Despite the various training and capacity building activities undertaken by the project, the project team lacked a significant number of skills and expertise regarding sound site planning and management, implementation and monitoring.

50. In Albania, the entire process to implement the Narta management plan is enshrined in a legal document. The document was endorsed in 2004 and will serve as a national model to draft national guidelines for management plan implementation. This was innovative and an achievement, however, it could have been better utilized if developed in a more user-friendly manner, for example into training modules and/or management kits.

51. Generally speaking, the law enforcement capacity in almost all sites is very limited. The central and local project teams remained unable to directly enforce regulations and/or issue fines against violations. This represents a major deficiency in the project planning and sustainability. Management plans do not provide clarity over the various codes of conduct, and this also limits enforceability.

52. Finally, the project teams in all countries devoted insufficient efforts to tourism development and visitor management. Considering the importance of tourism as a major threat and an opportunity, much more should have been done on this front.

Monitoring Programs and Monitoring MP Implementation

53. Monitoring should be undertaken to support future decision-making related to the implementation of the MP. However, as with the diagnosis phase, in general the monitoring programs were too scientifically focused. In most cases, a certain level of monitoring (mostly environmental) was designed and implemented, however, there is not one example from the project sites of monitoring being able to assess impacts of actions and inform MP decisions. None of the countries produced good examples of sound socio-economic monitoring programs. The same case applies to the monitoring of behaviour, attitude and practice change of stakeholders, interest groups and resource users.

54. Monitoring was carried out mainly by the project teams and sometimes delegated to project partners from scientific institutions and NGOs. Overall, the project did little to develop monitoring approaches, capacity and tools. It would have taken little effort to access and draw from related regional and international experience - a missed opportunity by the project teams. Hence, the effectiveness of these monitoring programs as well as their sustainability remains questionable. If well implemented, the project could have actually contributed to regional knowledge on monitoring.

55. In many cases, the monitoring programs remained ad-hoc and not systematic and the technical expertise for their implementation and analysis remained limited to a small group of experts and scientists. However, many of the monitoring programs do provide a basis for monitoring. They could be developed to establish a baseline for future assessment of impacts of management interventions and/or threats and constraints.

56. The RFU/RCU tried very hard to strengthen monitoring: sending out guidelines and case studies, proposing TORs and consultants for hands-on workshop to help develop a site specific monitoring program. However, there was always confusion between project monitoring and monitoring MP implementation. For MP monitoring, it was always assumed that the monitoring programme should be developed and implemented after the MP was adopted.

Conclusion

57. At the beginning of this Chapter, the Evaluation Team established eight results that it felt the project could have reasonably achieved. Overall, the project evaluation in regard to the site management component can be summarized by assessing the level of achievement in relation to those eight results. This is presented in the following table.

OUTCOME 1: Important biodiversity sites are managed for biodiversity conservation and are protected, including related capacity building and sustainability		
Reasonably Expected Result	**Finding**	**Achieved?**
Establish the legal status of the site and declaring the area to be protected for at least ten sites	At the project end, 12 sites had an established legal basis as areas for wetlands and coastal zone management.	Yes
Develop quality Management Plans (MP) for the sites, with adequate focus on biodiversity for at least ten sites	Management plans were developed for all sites, many of which were of good quality and adequately focused on biodiversity. However, the focus on biodiversity often weakened as the plans went into the implementation phase. The links with local development plans were not made.	Almost
Establish effective site based teams, with adequate technical competences, to implement the MP and facilitate local participation and support, for at least five sites, one in each country.	The project was a major capacity building exercise at both national and local levels. Site teams established under the project were always small in number, lacking in adequate delegation of authority and missing several important technical skills needed for sound on-site management. On the whole, the site teams have not been recruited permanently by the concerned national agencies, leaving behind a vacuum for MP implementation.	Medium
Develop capacity, particularly at the local level, for sound and effective management of the sites, including inter-sectoral, local institutional management arrangements to ensure strong involvement and participation of all local stakeholders, for at least five sites, one in each country	The local site coordination and management mechanisms were generally inclusive and participative, with several strong mechanisms for communication and coordination. This is an innovative component of the project implementation and a good learning exercise for local and national institutions and individuals. Nevertheless, not enough attention was	Almost

	given to working with and involving the direct resource users, although it is recognized this is a difficult task.	
Develop and implement environmental and socio-economic monitoring programs to support decisions and assess impacts, for at least five sites, one in each country	The monitoring programs were a weak point of the project in general. Some environmental monitoring started, but it was incomplete. Less was done on monitoring socio-economic aspects, behaviors and attitudes.	Barely
Ensure the sites and their MP are anchored into local and/or national institutions	Despite formal legal endorsement, only a few sites were meaningfully anchored within the national network of protected areas. This puts many of the project achievements at jeopardy.	Medium
Attain some degree of financial sustainability, for at least five sites, one in each country	With a few exceptions (e.g. the Tunisian sites and Beni Snassen in Morocco, and Tyr in Lebanon), the degree of financial sustainability of the sites and their management plans is very low. No revenue source was identified for most management actions in the plans. The MPs have not established sustainable financing mechanisms.	Medium
Ensure the MP are under implementation, including a focus on activities directly conserving biodiversity, for at least five sites, one in each country.	Finally, the level and quality of implementation was moderately acceptable. Several conservation and rehabilitation measures were undertaken at many of the sites. The targeted percentage of implemented actions in the project log-frame (i.e. indicator 1) was met in more than half of the sites. This does not apply to the socio-economic components of the plans.	Yes

58. It is recognized that the project faced some particular difficulties in addressing ambitious results, such as the long term effective management of the sites, the extension of experience to all sites on the national/authority level and to developing a model that addresses all local threats during the time span of the project. However, the Evaluation Team concludes that more could have been achieved with the given resources. The Lebanon experience (see Box 3) provides interesting lessons.

Box 3: MWC – Building Foundations for Future Conservation
Protected Area Business Planning and Private Ownership in the Lebanon

In Lebanon, thanks to the MWC Project, an innovative legislative framework for protected areas is being developed, that accounts for private ownership. This unprecedented work brought the state to consider a bill on natural reserves that integrates both private and public land ownership. This law, after several revisions, will shortly be submitted to legislators for vote. This legislation should lead to benefits for all land-owners. For example, it will increase the protected status of the core biodiversity rich land in the Aamiq region that belongs to Lebanese families. However, it also accounts for the needs of other land-owners - earlier versions of the Law were reviewed and corrected by other land-owners in the buffer zones. This approach will have an impact on the management of protected buffer areas.

The sustainability of nature reserves in Lebanon depends not only on biodiversity protection measures but also on the protected areas' sustainable financing. One way to achieve this is through socio-economic activities that take into consideration the site's biodiversity characteristics and the impacts of economic actions on local development. Consequently, with support of the MWC project, several innovative activities have been designed and implemented at the two sites: organic agriculture (including training farmers in and around the Tyr protected area); ecotourism training (using the MWC Ecoguide), not only for academics but also for tourism professionals, for the Site management committee and also the local population, and; developing bed and breakfast by local, resource-users. Those actions have helped to change the awareness and perception of the protected area by the local habitants and the local community.

59. Despite the fact that the overall management planning process was quite efficient in most countries, and represented for most countries an innovative exercise which contributed to building and enhancing national experiences, the overall process encountered several delays in delivery, continuous interruptions and lack of effective technical backstopping. These factors constrained the process and stopped it reaching its on-the-ground impacts through implementation.

60. The weakest element in the process was the lack of sustainability of impacts. Strong doubts remain as to the commitment of the various stakeholders to the Management Plans and project objectives. Accordingly, although 12 sites were established legally, none of the established sites can be described today as being effectively managed according to international standards[17] (with a possible exception of the main site in Tunisia). The sites remain somewhat paper parks, with modest capacity to serve as national or regional pilot initiatives.

4.1.3 OUTCOME 2.2: At important biodiversity sites and surrounding areas, biodiversity conservation is adequately integrated into local economic and political decision-making, including related capacity building.

Aims under this Outcome and Situation at the Outset of the Project

1. Under this Outcome, the project was expected to change the behaviour of resource users and integrate biodiversity into socio-economic and political decision-making in order to remove the root causes of biodiversity loss. Accordingly, under this Outcome, the project had two complementary strategies[18]:

- Directly targeting grass-root actors, essentially resource users and other actors whose actions directly impact the environment and biodiversity. Here, the project aimed to change behaviour and resource use by introducing new and modified technologies, practices, etc. This can be first done through demonstration;
- Targeting the administrative departments, the elected bodies and the NGOs at the intermediate and regional levels. These actors, through their decisions and actions, in turn, influence the behaviour of grass-root level actors.

2. Prior to this project, it is reasonable to assume that no or very few initiatives were underway to change behaviour or alter practices in order to conserve biodiversity or wetlands in the MWC countries. Almost all previous or ongoing initiatives adopted a stricter *protection* approach. The baseline would have been a continuation of this. Hence, this Outcome was a new and innovative field.

3. According to the Project Brief, in order to make progress at site level in terms of removing root causes, the Project was expected, to:

- "establish clear bonds between conservation of biodiversity and local economic activities" ;
- "support local economic development programs";
- "provide with adequate control of land-use and water management".

[17] For example, as set out in the WWF guidelines on management effectiveness - METT. These guidelines were used by the evaluation team as indicative benchmarks against which to measure the project impacts. The results and judgements, however, remain quite qualitative as the METT exercise was not fully applied during the evaluation. The METT guidelines state 6 areas of testing to assess the level of effectiveness: 1: Context: focusing on Significance, Threats, Vulnerability, National context and Partners; 2: Focusing on Protected area legislation and policy, Protected area system design, Reserve design and Management planning; 3: Inputs focusing on Resourcing of agency and Resourcing of the site; 4: Processes focusing on the Suitability of management processes; 5: Outputs focusing on Results of management actions and Services and products, and; 6: Outcomes focusing on Impacts and effects of management in relation to objectives.

[18] In fact, a third strategy, of influencing national laws, policies and tools is addressed under Outcome 1

- highlight the "economic value of biodiversity for local communities" and "include innovative activities providing economic benefits from conservation"; and,
- "promote the participatory process" , including negotiation and conflict resolution.

4. The Evaluation Team find this rather vague, particular for this innovative Outcome. This illustrates how the project was unclear at the outset with regards to this Outcome. The Project documents did not clearly identify targets or indicators related to this Outcome. This is not useful as a basis for evaluation. Given the innovative nature of this Outcome, it would have been essential to clarify the targets at the project outset.

What could reasonably have been expected

5. A strategic approach to this Outcome may have included the following steps[19]:

i.) Develop a full understanding of the main stakeholders;
ii.) Develop clear strategies to changing behaviour/removing root causes;
iii.) Demonstrate how to change practices/behaviour;
iv.) Build widespread capacities at local and national levels to change practices/behaviour;
v.) Sustainably change practices and/or behaviour of a significant number of stakeholders.

6. Given the innovative nature, the low baseline and the lack of operational guidelines at the outset as to how to achieve this Outcome, the Evaluation Team recognises that it was not possible to expect great changes related to this Outcome. Accordingly, expected *impact* under this Outcome is limited to steps (i) to (iii) above, up to and including 'demonstrate how to change practices/behaviour'. Accordingly, it is not reasonable to have expected the project to have built widespread capacities, or to have sustainably changed the behaviours of a large number of stakeholders. *In terms of impact indicators, it is considered adequate impact to demonstrate how to change practices and behaviour*. This is elaborated in the following paragraphs.

7. The project supported and financed various actions attempting to demonstrate root cause removal and behaviour change. These actions simultaneously targeted socio-economic development and biodiversity conservation. Henceforth, in this report, these actions are referred to as 'biodiversity-development' actions. For the sake of this evaluation, these biodiversity-development actions fall into four categories:

i). Demonstrating changing policy and practices at regional and interim levels; e.g. the policy, plans and practices of non-environment local government sectors (e.g. responsible for urbanism, water management, tourism and agriculture) or non-governmental organizations;
ii). Demonstrating the introduction of new, profitable livelihood activities that lead to benefits for biodiversity, environment and quality of landscapes;
iii). Demonstrating the modification of existing livelihood activities so that they become more biodiversity friendly;
iv). Demonstrating the formalization of 'biodiversity trade-offs': i.e. providing alternative resource use or compensation in order to stop anti-biodiversity practices or generate local support for project objectives. This fourth category would actually contribute to categories (i), (ii) or (iii).

8. The Evaluation Team deems that it was *reasonable* to expect, in terms of impact, the project to successfully *demonstrate,* in *each* country:

- At least eight (8) biodiversity-development actions from *any* of the above four categories, but clearly linked to and impacting biodiversity;
- At least one (1) biodiversity-development action from *each* of the above categories, but clearly linked to and impacting biodiversity.

[19] It is noted that this, typically, would be in the management planning process.

9. These two targets were used by the Evaluation Team as the principal means to assess the project's impact under this Outcome[20]. Although the following Sections discuss and assess the process to identify and design actions, and the quality and scale of the actions, ultimately this Outcome is considered successful simply if the above targets are met. The Evaluation Team assumes that if the targets are met, there will have been adequate 'demonstration' and therefore adequate impact.

10. It is also noted that the project supported many development actions that were not clearly linked to biodiversity and did not directly impact biodiversity, at least not in the short or medium term. Whereas these actions may have been (and often where) useful in terms of building alliances and partnership, they do not count towards the above targets. See Annex 5b for further explanation. These are referred to as 'pure development actions'.

11. Finally, it is also noted that the project supported many conservation actions, to directly improve or protect biodiversity. If these were not intended to change behaviour, they do not count towards the above targets. See Annex 5b for further explanation.

Planning under this Outcome

12. A full problem analysis is necessary in order to plan behaviour change and root cause removal. This analysis should lead to a full understanding of stakeholders. Further, the problem analysis should account for both the spatial and temporal nature of threats. That is, the root cause to the threats may originate at some distance from the location of the biodiversity. Also, present socio-economic activities may only impact biodiversity in the future.

13. Following the problem analysis, it is necessary to prioritise actions, notably taking into account: (i) the scale of the threat; (ii) the impact on biodiversity of the threat and its removal; and (iii) how difficult it is to remove the root cause. For example, it may be more efficient to implement easy actions initially, in order to build momentum and capacity, even if the initial impact on biodiversity is relatively minor.

14. With regards to changing behaviour or removing root causes, there is no evidence that this kind of planning or prioritisation took place *prior* to the project start-up.

15. After the project began, in the project initial years, the development and socio-economic aspects only figured marginally. After the project mid-point, these grew in prominence in most countries, in part due to the findings of the Mid-Term Review (MTR), due to the guidance provided by UNDP, and the guidance provided by the RCU/RFU.

16. At that later stage, generally, the process to *plan*[21] biodiversity-development actions was quite sound, although there are variations between countries, and sometimes between sites within countries. In some cases, initial weaknesses in the planning were overcome by complementary studies (e.g. Albania). Through this planning process, the main socio-economic and developmental aspects related to biodiversity were assessed in a rather thorough way, and a proposed programme of biodiversity-development actions developed. Accordingly, most management plans proposed a list of prioritized actions – some even presented alternative scenarios.

17. In some cases (e.g. Egypt, see Box 4) the links between the proposed biodiversity-development actions and biodiversity conservation were clearly explained. In other countries, the local population strongly requested many pure development actions: these had the potential to be used as part of a biodiversity trade-off scheme.

[20] Hence the Evaluation Team had to 'count' the number of biodiversity-development actions. The Team faced several challenges to *counting* in a fair and consistent manner. Annex 5b provides more information on the methodology to counting these actions used by the Team.

[21] I.e., identify and do initial design.

Box 4: MWC – Building Foundations for Future Conservation
Alternative Incomes for Biodiversity Conservation in Egypt

The MWC Egypt project was challenged to address the root causes of biodiversity degradation resulting from unsustainable land use by local communities'. The question was: How can we marry biodiversity conservation with improved living conditions of local communities'?

Egypt had the largest and most populated of all the MWC sites, and hence the biggest challenge to making this work. The level of dependency of the local communities on the natural resources was enormous. Projects of this size are not able to tackle such pressures without responding to related local socio economic needs. The Egypt team soon explored opportunities and methods to integrate local development with the aim to enhance local awareness of biodiversity and improve the benefits from its sustainable use.

The innovative use of revolving funds at the household level was a main tool. It aimed at improving fishing equipment and providing access to improved livestock fodder. The planning and implementation of activities was participative and made use of local knowledge, thereby improving the likelihood of effectiveness and sustainability. Local NGOs and tribal leaders played a role in managing the funds by utilizing their local experience and credibility. To date, the percentage of credit payback rate has always been above 95%.

Despite its inability to reach the majority of target beneficiaries; the project focused on developing replicable models for sound linkages between local development and biodiversity.

The experience was documented on the national and regional levels and is hoped to feed into the national knowledge and expertise. For Egypt, this was an important capacity building exercise and represented something of a breakthrough in national thinking paradigms towards more integrated approaches for effective protected areas management.

18. It also has to be noted that in Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco there were many differences between the findings of the diagnosis and the socio-economic actions adopted in the Management Plans.

19. However, the next stage in planning, i.e. the *selection* of biodiversity-development actions to actually be supported by the project, was poor. This may be partly due to the differences mentioned above. It may also be due to the lack of ownership of the planning process by the local project teams.

20. Despite the generally sound planning, many threats, related causes and problems, and potential actions were not adequately studied by the project. Also, the threats were not clearly prioritized (into, for example, the following classification: major; minor; possible critical; and also urgent and not urgent). Moreover, the technical feasibility of many of the proposed actions was not thoroughly assessed. For these latter, it was not possible to clarify their precise links with biodiversity, their cost-efficiency, their sustainability, or the likely level of impact. It is therefore difficult to assess their level or priority.

Actions Taken under this Outcome

21. Scope of implemented actions**.** The five national MWC projects implemented a range of actions at the local level. Many of these are clearly biodiversity-development actions, others may be more 'protection oriented', but still have an interaction with the local socio-economy. These actions have directly impacted or influenced the local socio-economy, and have had (or, are likely in the future to have) impacts on biodiversity. These were implemented by working with local actors at different levels - natural resource users, private sector and municipalities - and thus changing their practices. The most notable were:

- physically improving the hydrology and water quality in several lagoons (Egypt, Tunisia and Albania). In some cases, these contribute directly to fishery production;
- eliminating or considerably diminishing solid and liquid waste disposal in several protected areas in all 5 countries;

- in Tunisia, contributing to the formal revision of the local urban plan[22] in order to help guarantee the physical integrity of Korba lagoon;
- using fences and signs to eliminate uncontrolled access to several sites that face very high, seasonal tourist pressures (Morocco, Lebanon, Tunisia and Albania);
- Mitigating the planned spread of a tourist resort onto a biodiversity hotspot (Morocco);
- Promoting more environmentally and biodiversity friendly techniques of natural resource use in several sectors (e.g. better water-use and less pollution in agriculture, more sustainable fishing, eliminating fish mortality in salt pans, reducing use of fire wood);
- Developing or initiating private ecotourism activities that benefit from biodiversity. This was notably true in Lebanon, although some related work was done in Morocco;
- Supporting the development or improvement of some livelihood activities (dressmaking and embroidery and rangeland improvement);
- Undertaking numerous awareness raising activities on environment and biodiversity, for various targets (e.g. schools, tourists and general public). This was high quality in several countries;
- Initiating or giving support to other environmental projects in order to mitigate the negative impacts on biodiversity of new infrastructure, and to environmental lobbying. Although these actions did not require a financial contribution from the project, the project played a pivotal role in making them happen.

22. Despite the fact that most of these activities were of a modest scale, they created new, relevant models and demonstrated that good results can often be attained with little means.

23. Comparison between the 'planned' actions and the actions actually implemented On the whole, only a small subset of the biodiversity-development actions that had been identified in the planning process were implemented. There are considerable differences between countries (e.g. Lebanon implemented about half of all identified biodiversity-development actions, whereas Tunisia implemented less than 10%).

24. Egypt was a notable case. Not only were 35% of the actions identified through the planning implemented, in addition, three times as many other biodiversity-development actions were implemented - these had not been identified through the management planning process.

25. Gaps in the coverage**.** Despite the above list, on the whole, the *scope* of demonstration actions was narrow, and far narrower than what had been identified in the planning process. For example, at several sites, the project did not take any action to address threats that had been identified as important, even 'critical (e.g. over-abstraction of water at Ammiq, Lebanon; and the urban and tourist resort extensions in Tunisia and Morocco; and overgrazing in Tunisia and Albania). It has to be noted that, for each of these, the threats had been clearly identified, and in most cases recommendations for action had been formulated.

26. At other sites with important biodiversity, no action at all was undertaken. Moreover, generally, too little effort was put into strengthening the organizational and individual capacity of local stakeholders, especially the local resource-users.

27. The Evaluation Team feels that many of these issues could have been addressed at low cost. Examples of feasible biodiversity-development actions that were not taken include:

- The preparation of studies for subsequent action (e.g. of the hydrology at sites in Tunisia and Lebanon, and of tourist development in Tunisia and Albania);
- Action to reduce or mitigate the unsustainable resource use (e.g. sand extraction, water use and firewood cutting, solid waste and sewage disposal, land reclamation etc) at many sites.

[22] The 'Plan Urbain de Amenagement, PAU.

28. Ensuring that project activities impact positively on biodiversity and/or environment. Generally speaking, each local development action supported or financed by the project should have been clearly linked to biodiversity, either directly or indirectly. Otherwise the project focus is lost, and it becomes a standard development project.

29. In addition, to the biodiversity-development actions listed above, the project attempted several activities aiming at "alternative" livelihoods (e.g. on beekeeping, small husbandry, handicraft, and motor boats for fishing). However, these were not designed to have a significant impact on biodiversity and so are considered 'pure development' actions. The targeting of beneficiaries was weak. Importantly, no efforts were made to establish biodiversity tradeoffs. In some cases, only relatively minor changes of local livelihood practices would have been necessary to assure sustainability of conservation measures, for example with regards to grazing in Korba (Tunisia) and Albania. Some actions could have negative impacts on biodiversity.

30. Overall, in spite of numerous opportunities, many of which were identified during the planning process, far too few development activities were designed/implemented to provide locals with sustainable, pro-biodiversity incomes from existing resource uses (e.g. food processing, medicinal plants) or with new benefits from biodiversity conservation (e.g. ecotourism). The exception is the Lebanon Project which seems to have made good progress on this.

Results under this Outcome

Environmental and socio-economic impacts**.**

31. From the lists of actions above, the related impacts on the environment are rather clear: (e.g. better water quantity and quality in lagoons, less pollution, and improved aquatic fauna). Likewise, the impacts on livelihoods are clear (e.g. additional income from fishery, ecotourism and other livelihood activities). On the whole, due to the small number and small scale of local biodiversity-development actions in the project, the aggregate impact of the project on local development, on livelihoods and on biodiversity was modest.

Impacts on behaviour, root causes, and mainstreaming

32. From a qualitative point of view, several project biodiversity-development and awareness raising actions demonstrated that it is possible to change not only the local vision of environment and biodiversity, but also related behaviours. For example, the project actions had the following impacts on behaviour/root-causes:

- several local natural resource users (fishermen in Egypt; tourists; households) adopted more environmental friendly practices (fishing with legal nets) or stopped or significantly reduced their abusive practices (littering, tree cutting for firewood);
- some local private sector actors (tourist operators in Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon and Albania; salt-industry in Egypt; landowners in Lebanon) took, thanks to the project action, positive measures (better waste management, moving their activities away from vulnerable sites; protecting small fish and fry; developing private ecotourism; supporting improved agricultural techniques);
- in most countries, the capacities of some local stakeholders were significantly developed by training and by strengthening social organisations (cooperatives, associations);
- local NGOs became more actively involved in biodiversity and environment issues and their capacities were reinforced, in several countries (e.g. in Albania, Morocco and Tunisia);
- in Egypt and Albania, work was done with community based organisations (several fishermen and cattle-raisers cooperatives), some of them created with the support of the project;
- several local elected institutions (communes, municipalities) modified their vision of sites and of the importance of landscape and environmental quality. Specifically, at least one of them adopted both ad-hoc and long-term protective measures (Korba, Tunisia);
- local level operators of various ministries (e.g. forest and agriculture departments) somewhat changed the way they intervene in local environment and development. This includes partnerships

with NGOs and engaging in development and biodiversity related livelihood activities, e.g. in Egypt, Morocco and Albania;
- locally, the general public became more aware about environment and biodiversity (e.g. Tunisia and Morocco).

33. However, given the resources available to the project, the above list is less impressive. The overall approach lacked a strategic underlying. Accordingly, for many important aspects and many local actors, there is little evidence of changed behaviour/practices. These have to be seen as 'missed opportunities' for a project of this nature. Examples of missed opportunities to change practices and behaviour include[23]:

- in all countries, too many local resource users (shepherds, fishermen, households, collectors of medicinal plants, tourists and tourist operators, building companies, industrial units, farmers, hunters) did not change their practices on or near to protected sites (over-grazing and over-fishing, abusive firewood gathering and charcoal production, uncontrolled waste and sewage disposal, sand extraction, inadequate water use, reclaiming of land). The project did not even attempt to address these at some sites;
- the project did not succeed to effectively change the practices of most municipal governments with regards to urban development - including tourist resort development. It is noted that this is a critical threat at many sites;
- as for some technical departments (e.g. local and sometimes national forestry administration in Albania and Morocco), in spite of some positive changes, there is no observed general change in the overall approach to natural resources management or to biodiversity conservation;
- the project worked with fishermen Community Based Organisations (CBOs) in Egypt and Albania. At the level, the expected impact was limited. In order to be influential, it may have been possible to unify these very small cooperatives into bigger, more effective structures with more capacity for action (very useful in Egypt) or to extend membership of these CBOs to other fishermen;
- finally, in several countries, there are cases of overlapping mandates and multiple-use and/or unclear status of sites (e.g. in Morocco, on the Moulouya site, where responsibilities for the sea side and upstream river bed are not clear). This is a major factor against sustainable resource use that needs to be addressed. The project could probably have addressed this.

Sustainability

34. The main dimensions of sustainability are technical, financial and institutional. Due to the limited number of implemented actions, this discussion is brief.

35. The technical and/or financial sustainability of many livelihood actions supported by the project is rather weak. For example, there are no mechanisms for equitable and sustainable cost sharing between beneficiaries of the future maintenance of lagoon inlets in Albania. Also in Albania, the high cost of the technique used for improving rangeland productivity will almost surely preclude its adoption by locals after the project has finished. In Egypt, no clear effective mechanism is in place for assuring the long-term operation and financial sustainability of the revolving funds. Likewise, as there is not yet a sustainable market for female handicraft products, sustainability of support to this sector is not assured.

36. A main exception is ecotourism, particularly in Lebanon (but also Morocco, to a much lesser extent). In Lebanon, these seem adapted to demand and are likely to secure sustainable biodiversity–based incomes. This is a key finding.

37. Institutional sustainability seems more guaranteed for other project actions. In Tunisia, for example, the solid and liquid waste management seems reasonably well guaranteed by the municipal governments, at least for those parts of the lagoons that are protected. Likewise, the presence of the local government departments (APAL in Tunisia, and forestry in Morocco) guarantees medium term financing for the

[23] More details and more examples are provided in the country reports.

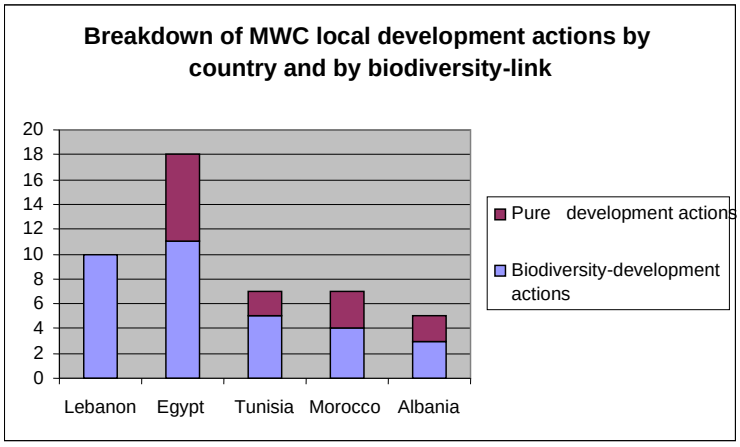
continuation of project activities, and is likely to guarantee the continuation of sufficient site management activities (e.g. maintenance of fencing and other means of access control).

38. Some project activities do not have a strong institutional basis and are likely to scale down or stop after the project. For example, although several countries developed good quality communication tools, the corresponding awareness raising activities, implemented by project teams and/or by project-supported NGOs, if they continue after the project, will most likely do so with much less intensity. Other activities financed by the project (e.g. those implemented by NGOs) are likely to stop at the end of the project, since the site management plans have not become operational, and there is no financing. For example, at Moulouya site in Morocco, there is no management plan approved and no sustainable financing plan. There are limited prospects of generating local financing from parking fees and payment for other services, but the participation of local communes is not secured. Finally, there is a danger that the local successes in halting urbanisation may, one-day, be reversed, since there are no major structural changes in local practices (e.g. through planning or through law enforcement procedures).

Conclusion

39. The earlier Section identified four categories of biodiversity-development action: changing policy and practices at regional and interim levels; introducing new livelihood activities; modifying existing livelihood activities; and, formalizing trade-offs. Using these, the Evaluation Team set two *reasonable* targets for the project impact, i.e.: (i) for each country, the project would successfully demonstrate at least eight biodiversity-development actions from *any* of the four categories; and, (ii) for each country, the project would successfully demonstrate at least one action from *each* of the categories. In order to be successful, a demonstration action should have a clear biodiversity link.

40. The first diagram below provides the total number of development actions implemented in each country - both biodiversity-development actions and pure development actions. Only Egypt and Lebanon met the first target. Given Lebanon's limited budget, this is quite an achievement, and shows what could have been done in all countries with improved planning and prioritisation of project activities. The other countries were below the expected level.



41. Overall, the following biodiversity-development actions were implemented[24]:

- Ten (10) actions changing practices at interim levels;
- Six (6) actions introducing new livelihood activities that benefit from biodiversity;
- Seventeen (17) actions modifying existing livelihoods so they become more biodiversity friendly;

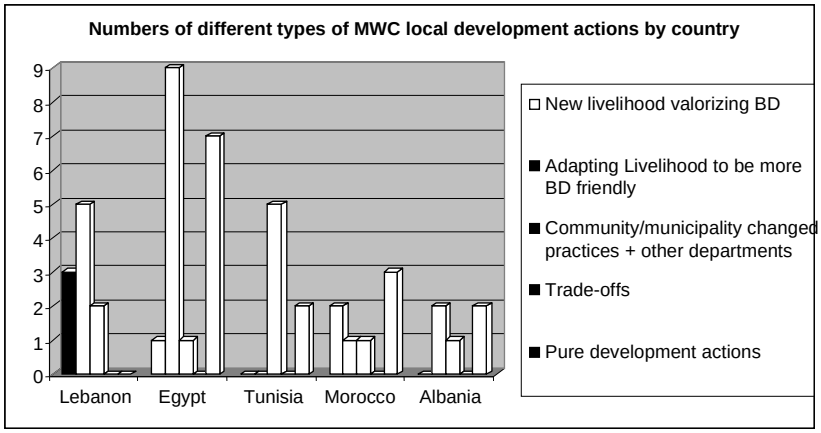
[24] There are difficulties associated with this categorization – see Annex 5b. Moreover, data was not always clearly provided in line with the categories, and the scale of the actions is not considered. However, these figures clearly *illustrate* the findings and conclusions of the Evaluation Team.

- Zero (0) actions to formalise trade-offs between local development and biodiversity;

42. In addition, the project implemented fourteen (14) pure development actions at the local level.

43. Hence, in total, the project implemented approximately thirty three (33) biodiversity-development actions. On average, this is considerably less than the 'eight for each country' that was reasonably expected. On the other hand, it is noted that the project implemented many pure development actions.

44. The second diagram displays how many actions were implemented for each category of biodiversity-development action for each country.



45. From the diagram, it can be seen:

- Egypt, Lebanon and Morocco implemented actions in three categories;
- Albania, implemented actions in two, and Tunisia in only one;
- No biodiversity trade-offs were implemented under the project.

Summary

46. The following table summarises the achievements under this Outcome with respect to the reasonably expected results.

OUTCOME 2.2: At important biodiversity sites and surrounding areas, biodiversity conservation is adequately integrated into local economic and political decision-making, including related capacity building.		
Reasonably Expected Result	**Finding**	**Achieved?**
In each country, the demonstration of at least eight actions from *any* of the four categories of biodiversity-development actions.	Egypt and Lebanon met the target.	No
In each country, the demonstration of at least one action from *each* of the four categories of biodiversity-development actions.	Egypt, Lebanon and Morocco implemented actions in three categories. Albania implemented actions in two. Tunisia in only one.	No

47. The Evaluation Team recognises that this Outcome was quite challenging and innovative for most countries at outset, and lowered the expectations accordingly. The Evaluation Team did not feel it reasonable to expect the project to have major achievements. The targets were to *demonstrate* the successful implementation of biodiversity-development actions. Against this target, the project did not meet success.

48. Moreover, it is noted, that the project missed many opportunities for linking, in a participatory manner, biodiversity and local economic development and thus improving livelihoods, impacting positively on biodiversity and building ownership and capacities. Finally, with regards to sustainability,

many of the impacts under this Outcome are unlikely to survive long after the end of the project. Often, the good practices developed stayed within the project circle, and may not be replicated.

49. At none of the sites, it can be said that biodiversity conservation has been fully integrated into local economic and political decision-making, and related capacity has been built.

50. At a small number of sites, it is possible to say that biodiversity conservation is adequately integrated into local economic and political decision-making, and related capacity has been built.

4.1.4 OUTCOME 3: The 'Mediterranean Circle' is closed - knowledge has been transferred and sustainable knowledge-sharing mechanisms are effective

Situation at the Outset of the Project and Aims under this Outcome

1. At the project outset, the gap between developed, European Union (EU) countries and developing, non-EU Mediterranean countries with regards to wetlands and coastal conservation and management was large and growing. The project set out to slow down or reverse this growing gap by 'closing the circle'. This meant ensuring that expertise, experience and lessons learnt are flowing across the countries, and are being adapted and adopted.

2. According to the Project Brief, at the outset, the participating countries were mutually supportive and linked to each other and to other Mediterranean countries through a series of Conventions, Treaties and regional action Plans. There were many organisations, networks and offices with objectives related to operationalising these agreements, including the MedWet Initiative, and agencies under the Mediterranean Action Programme (MAP). These constitute a main part of the baseline in terms of closing the circle. However, in truth, the resources and the capacity to operationalize these agreements were limited, especially in the non-EU countries.

3. According to the Project Brief, expected Outputs included the following:

- Transfer of lessons and experience from other Mediterranean countries;
- A network of 16 protected areas;
- Improved access to regional expertise;
- Participation in sustainable regional networks;
- Regional species lists and lists of wetlands;
- Documentation on best practices; and,
- Technical (three) publications.

4. However, it is noted that the Project Document diverged from the Project Brief in terms of what was expected under this Outcome. The Project Documents consider this Outcome to be mostly about using regional technical tools to provide support to each national component. The Evaluation Team feels that, if such support is effective, this would be seen in terms of impact in each country, and would therefore be considered under Sections 4.1.1, 4.1.2 and 4.1.3 of this report. This section deals generally with the issue of whether lessons and experience were transferred to and across the participating countries.

What could reasonably have been expected

5. The Evaluation Team feels that 'closing the circle' should go beyond providing support directly to each country. Given that the project planning documents do not present clear indicators, targets or expectations under this Outcome, the Evaluation Team used six of the seven above-listed Outputs to measure progress under this Outcome, and progress respective to each one is discussed in the following section

6. The Team did not consider the following useful: "Regional lists of species and lists of wetlands" The project made no attempt to do this, and other initiatives are working on this e.g the MedWet initiative.

Achievements and Impacts under this Outcome

7. It is noted that, in the original project documents, the regional unit and *each* country unit was expected to contribute to this Outcome. However, the regional unit was considered the driving force. It is also noted that during the project the regional unit transformed from a Regional Facilitation Unit (RFU) to a Regional Coordination Unit (RCU). It is also noted that the strategic thinking and planning behind this Outcome was not clear.

8. Transfer of lessons and experience from other Mediterranean countries Overall the training and the project's network did facilitate the transfer of lessons and experience. Notably the training at Zaranik and Jordan were appreciated, as was the 'Decision-Makers' study tour to Arles. These were costly activities, but as they were strategically planned, they were considered worthwhile. In addition, the technical guidance provided through the project's regional partners (e.g. to the diagnoses, to management planning, to socio-economics) was generally appreciated, although it was not always sufficiently timely.

9. To some extent, more could have been expected. Many countries, notably Egypt, struggled to address issues in isolation, whereas a body of related regional or international experience existed. Country teams often reported feeling alone to develop their own workplans and programme. In particular, the Evaluation Team noted a series of technical issues that more than one country struggled with, and in many cases all countries. It would have been appreciated if the project could have provided more timely regional expertise and experience on these[25]. Examples of these *include*:

- The integration of socio-economics into the Management Planning process;
- The need to clarify the conceptual links between biodiversity and development, and to help projects address this;
- The possibility of a broader, area-wide approach to conserving biodiversity and to conflict resolution;
- The potential of innovative tools, e.g. payment for ecological services, conservation financing, trade-offs.

10. A network of 16 protected areas This cannot be considered to have been achieved. Firstly (as discussed in section 4.1.2), the individual protected areas are not well established. Secondly, *even within countries*, there was, in general, little interaction amongst the stakeholders from the different protected areas. The 16 protected areas cannot be considered to constitute a network.

11. Improved access to regional expertise In general the access was increased, but more could have been done. The project's main technical partners (TdV, ATEN and CdL) have been accessed by the participating countries, and continue to be so. This is highly beneficial to the participating countries, who are now more able to utilise regional expertise. However, these partners do not represent the full range of expertise on Mediterranean wetlands and conservation. More efforts should have been made to improve access to other sources of expertise, e.g. WWF, IUCN and the regional activity centres under the MAP[26]. This would have led to a more balanced technical support to the sites, which may have led to more effective implementation strategies in each country.

12. With regards to the involvement of TdV, ATEN and CdL, the Evaluation Team notes that these agencies had little experience in the project region prior to the project. Their related capacity seems to

[25] It is difficult to assess if the problem was of 'supply' or 'demand' – yet the result is the same, the lessons were not transferred.

[26] Notably RAC/SPA and RAC/PAP, the regional activity centres for specially protected areas and for the priority action programmes respectively.

have evolved considerably in the past years, possibly benefiting from their involvement in MWC. Finally, CdL support focussed on Morocco and Tunisia.

13. Participation in sustainable regional networks The Project website, although developed late, is accessible and used – as shown by the number and diversity of hits. This surely contributes to closing the circle and to a network. As the project progressed, the RAC mechanism became more useful, as a tool to develop peer pressure and peer support. This led to a network amongst the project managers and the main stakeholders. However, it should be noted that language was generally a constraint to networks in the region. Also, Albania did not feel that it was fully at home in the project's region, which was dominated by Arabic speaking countries.

14. Moreover, the Evaluation Team feels that much more could have been done to build sustainable regional networks, despite the language barriers. Cost-effective examples could have included: establishing inter-country working groups on specific themes (e.g. on tourism, or on sustainable financing), with each participating country leading one group. Some belated efforts were made to establish such groups. If functioning, these could have continued after the project or constructing an accessible database of the project findings and outputs.

15. One important exception is the mini-network developing between Tunisia and Morocco, largely with the direct facilitation of CdL. There are several examples of mutual sharing and direct exchange between these two countries (and possibly with other countries in the growing CdL network, e.g. Algeria.).

16. Documentation on best practices The Project notably developed three knowledge management tools, addressing management planning, socio-economics and conservation and capacity building. The former two of these seem of high quality and useful. However,

17. The Management Plan Peer Review (MPPR) was prepared to assess overall experience with Management planning and ensure that the lessons learnt and experience were captured. Mostly, experts from the countries were involved in preparing this document. The Evaluation Team feels this is a well prepared document and covers most technical issues in an appropriate manner. However, it was not adopted by the project teams and as of yet, is not being widely used. This may require more marketing. Also, it only exists in English and this could be a barrier to their uptake. The same applies to the review of 'Socio-economics and conservation'.

18. There may also have been missed opportunities. Taken together, the five countries and sixteen sites have produced a wealth of information and lesson learnt. Has this been effectively documented? The Evaluation Team notes that the Project supported several alternative approaches or variations to conservation. The project could have documented these approaches and better captured the lessons. The project could have also developed a *position* and provided guidance on which approaches are most suitable, and when, and where.

19. Technical (three) publications At a regional level, the project produced many documents, CDs, etc. These mostly relate to knowledge management, more than 'technical publications' *per se*. Exception are the 2 MedWet Series Technical publications published by the MWC: one on Amphibians and one on 'Integrated Wetland Management'. Overall, the Evaluation Team feels this is commendable and appropriate.

Sustainability

20. It was the initial intention of the project to develop sustainable regional mechanisms. However, as can be seen above, very few of the achievements at the regional level actually seek sustainability. During implementation, most regional achievements were designed *to support project implementation*, and as such they should fade away after the project is completed. Hence, the lack of sustainability may not necessarily be considered a failure in many cases.

21. There are, however, some outputs that would benefit from sustainability. For example, the website and the database[27], and the continued flow of information across countries. Also, the informal networks that have grown amongst the project participants. It is understood that the website is to be transferred to an existing regional institution – this should ensure sustainability. As for the database, information flow and informal networks, it is not fully clear how these will be sustained.

22. Finally, as mentioned above, the mini-circle, involving stakeholders in Tunisia and Morocco, with support from CdL, and the involvement of other countries, does seem to be sustainable, at least over the medium term.

Conclusion : Was Outcome 3 Achieved ?

23. As can be seen from the previous section, the project did not meet all of the reasonably expected targets, as set by the Evaluation Team.

24. Overall, all project teams clearly gained from being part of a regional initiative. The counter-example – i.e. five national projects with no regional objective or regional support mechanism - would clearly have been far less effective. The advantages included easier access to knowledge and expertise, information exchange, and peer pressure and peer support.

25. Despite this, the Evaluation Team feels there were many missed opportunities with regards to closing the circle. These opportunities could have been met within the project budget, if planning had been more strategic and flexible, and perhaps more responsive. The regional component seems to have focussed on bilaterally supporting the national components, rather than trying to close circles between countries or across the region. The fact that there is no clear example of one MWC project changing its workplan or activity as a direct result of a lesson from another MWC project strongly suggests that more could have been done.

26. Also, the countries tended to see this Outcome as the responsibility of the RFU/RCU, rather than something they should actively contribute to this Outcome. There is little evidence of the national projects actively supporting this Outcome (e.g. with some minor exceptions from Tunisia).

27. Clearly, the crisis in the regional component for approximately 12 months undermined its ability to provide support to the countries and to close the circle. This, to some extent, undermined Outcome 3, as countries wisely got on with their own projects during that period. Curiously, the restructuring from an RFU to an RCU had mixed results. Lebanon and Albania greatly appreciated this change, and felt the service of the RCU was far more effective and pertinent. On the other hand, Morocco and Tunisia definitely preferred the stronger technical support provided in the early years by the RFU, although they acknowledged that budgetary constraints limited this in the later years.

28. Despite the above weaknesses, the Evaluation Team saw sufficient evidence to feel confident that future regional projects are essential to overall biodiversity conservation efforts, at least in this region.

4.1.5 OVERAL OBJECTIVE

1. The Overall Objective of the MWC Project is: '*To conserve globally endangered species and their habitat, recognising wildlife conservation as an integral part of sustainable human development, while improving capacity of government and non-government agencies to address biodiversity conservation issues'*.

2. This includes two aspects: (i) conservation, notably of habitats at 16 sites and (ii) building capacity to conserve biodiversity.

[27] This refers to the documents, CDs, DVDs, reports, lessons learnt etc. forthcoming from the six country projects..

Impact and Sustainability

3. To a great extent, one could say that the first aspect has been achieved. Overall, habitats at most of the sites addressed by the project have been maintained. Although specific indicators and monitoring are incomplete, a general observation by the Evaluation Team suggest that some have improved slightly, some have been maintained, and some have been slightly degraded. Although the project is not the only responsible party, it no doubt played a role in this. Another major factor was the presently low (but growing) scale of threats at some sites.

4. Changes in biodiversity are difficult to measure conclusively, and unlikely to be achieved within the time-frame of this project. Moreover, none of the sites were fully monitored. However, there are some indications of improvement: e.g. bird numbers (Ammiq) and water levels (Narta). However, some sites deteriorated (e.g. Omayed in Egypt, and Nador due to the pollution).

5. More importantly, whereas biodiversity may be maintained over 5 years, if the root causes are not addressed, the biodiversity is unlikely to be conserved in the future, as the threats grow, and GEF support is stopped. This is the danger, and this is why the second aspect of the Objective (building capacity) is the key to *sustainability*.

6. As can be seen from the findings under Outcomes, this second aspect (capacity built, including individual, institutional and systemic capacity) has not been achieved. At the national level, most countries have developed *individual* capacity and capacity to prepare diagnosis and management plans. However, only Tunisia (and to a lesser extent Albania) has anchored the project and so built significant institutional and financing capacity. Cross and inter-sectoral capacity to address conservation, wetlands management and conflict resolution remains weak. Other countries made little progress on this. Finally, none of the countries have adequately built legal capacity, policies, tools and models to be able to deal with similar problems in the future.

7. At the site level, a lot of information has been collected, data-bases established, and individual capacity strengthened. In some cases, political commitment has definitely improved, but not secured. However, in most cases, management and planning capacity remain inadequate, and financial capacity remains generally inadequate. Root causes still remain important at most, if not all, sites and in general the protected areas are not yet effectively managed.

8. More generally, the evaluation finds that the large number of biodiversity-focussed actions supported by the project have contributed to changes of attitudes and modified approaches to resource management in coastal and wetland areas in the participating countries, particularly at the project sites. Through this, the project has contributed to the creation of a momentum towards improved natural resource management in the region.

4.2 IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

1. This Chapter assesses the approach to implementation during the major phases of the project, and how the approach affected project success. This section notably looks at the project design and logical framework, the institutional and execution arrangements, the project guidance/steering mechanisms and the delivery of technical support to the project.

Project Development and Appraisal Process

2. The Project development process appears to have been lengthy, and more focussed on ‘getting the project approved’ than on improving the project design. This lengthy, approval-focussed process had several implications:

- The creation of many layers of complexity within the project objectives and implementation structure;

- A loss of momentum, including changes in personnel and in working conditions in some countries;
- Little attention was paid to ensuring the institutional arrangements for the projects were adequately designed or committed to (see later);
- Upon approval, there was a great desire to quickly 'get started', possibly encouraging the project teams to launch into activities without due attention to planning and strategic thinking.

Project Design and Logical Framework

3. The project design and Logical Framework, as set out in the Project Brief, are rather vague. A review of the project design suggests that the problem analysis was never undertaken thoroughly, neither at the national or regional levels. The project design in each country followed a regional template and was not adapted to the country, and even less adapted to the project sites. At the time of project approval the logical framework was not set out in the standardized matrix form, and no attempt had been made to develop an indicator framework for monitoring.

4. In *each country*, the project design covered four elements: managing protected sites; national capacity building; removing root causes and; closing the circle. However, only the first of these seems to have been clearly thought through, and not in every country. Notably, the project design did not set out the principles and strategic approach to removing root causes, to changing behaviour, to building capacity and closing the circle. Nor did it did not explicitly set out the required actions for these.

5. After 1-2 years of implementation, a first attempt was made to revise the project logical framework and develop indicators. Although technically useful, this was considered to be a top-down exercise. It seems to have been aimed at 'fitting' the project actions with expected GEF approaches rather than based on a full problem analysis. The resulting logframe, in the opinion of the Evaluation Team, was not significantly better in terms of logic or useful indicators.

6. During project implementation, most national components undertook efforts to improve the logframe, sometimes in isolation, sometimes with the support of the RCU. These generally contributed to improving the logic. However, in general, the logframe and indicators never became very useful as project management or monitoring tools; they were used primarily as a reporting tool. The logframe remained top-down and responded more to GEF requirements than to needs/requirements identified from the ground.

Overall Approach

7. The three layered approach to the project can be characterised as: (i) grass-roots demonstration and piloting at 15 sites across five countries (ii) national capacity building and institutionalising of success, and; (iii) regional coordination and dissemination.

8. The Evaluation Team feels that, overall, this approach is worthy and justified. It is appropriate for some GEF projects to adopt such an approach, in complement to the national and/or local approaches adopted by most GEF projects. At a regional level, this approach can add value by facilitating lesson learning, broad information and technical exchanges, and generating constructive peer pressure and peer support mechanisms. All of these advantages were evident in the MWC Project.

9. However, two major weaknesses were associated with this approach, and it may have been possible to mitigate these. First, this led to a large administrative structure for implementing the project, with a regional office/unit, six national offices/units, local offices/units and in some cases additional site offices. At each level there was a multi-sectoral management mechanism (Regional Steering Committee/RSC, RAC, NSC and Local Steering Committee/LSC). In almost all cases, the project created its own offices/units and management mechanisms, and in most cases their operation was mostly financed by the project, and in most cases these will not continue after the project has completed. The creation and operation of this three-level structure represents a huge investment in project time and resources – a point developed in the later Section 4.5, 'Cost Effectiveness'.

10. Second, in this project, inadequate thought was given (in the design phase) to the challenging issue of clarifying and explaining the roles and responsibilities of the levels. This led to overlaps, or confusion, or poor delegation between national and regional levels, and in some instances between the local and the national levels.

11. The Evaluation Team notes that, in GEF terms, the project combined a 'protected area approach' with a 'mainstreaming biodiversity into landscapes/sectors' approach. The Team feels that this combination was essential, although more could have been done to clarify the strategy and to logically determine priorities.

12. It is understood that the original intention of the project was to complete both Management Plans and NWS well *before* the project ended – including endorsement. This would have meant the project could have contributed to implementing these, thereby building capacity and momentum, and ensuring they were meaningful. The delays (or the limited duration of the project) meant that this could not happen. This probably undermines the usefulness of the MPs and NWS.

13. Another finding common across the project was the tendency to turn away from difficult challenges, to only work with easier problems, and with the more willing stakeholders.

14. Finally, although the Project Brief and Project Documents emphasise the importance of root cause removal and socio-economic issues, the Evaluation Team felt that in the beginning the emphasis was on protection and biodiversity management[28]. The initial project teams consisted mostly of scientists – with expertise in identifying biodiversity, but not necessarily in its conservation and sustainable use. As the project progressed, and in some countries (Egypt and Albania) became far more integrated and oriented to local development, the project teams did not evolve to the same extent. The team profiles remained too focused on science and biodiversity. In other countries (E.g. Tunisia), the project focus evolved to infrastructure development, reflecting the profile of the project team and implementing agency, rather than in response to an in-depth needs analysis.

The 'Regionality' of the Project

15. Regional[29] projects require a clear justification. Typically, they (i) generate economies of scale, or (ii) address threats or root causes that can only be addressed at a regional level, or (iii) have specific regional objectives – such as establishing coordination mechanisms. The justification for the regional nature of the MWC project was never clear (at least to the evaluators). The rational for a regional project seems to have evolved through the project identification and development process, in response to a variety of forces and ideas. Accordingly, the project design documents do not clarify the expected benefits from the project's regional nature.

16. From before the outset, the participating countries felt they were implementing national projects. This is enshrined in the fact that each country developed and signed its own legal project documents. The fact that there were seven different project documents inevitably meant that, to a considerable extent, there would be seven different projects. Accordingly, ensuring regionality was always going to be challenging, and required an effective mechanism and clear goal. Neither the regional unit nor the regional organs (RAC, RSC) provided a mechanism, and the goal was never fully clarified.

17. Through implementation, the roles of the regional partners in the national projects was never fully formalised or clarified. Moreover, in some cases, in the early years the regional partners were unable to provide adequate or timely technical support. The regional unit also suffered severe internal problems, and stopped functioning for a considerable time.

[28] This was a finding of the MTR.
[29] The term 'multi-country' seems more appropriate for the MWC project, as it does not address a defined region.

18. The above factors led to the national projects losing their trust in the regional support and mechanism. Pressure was growing for action in the countries, Accordingly, increasingly, the national projects felt obliged, or empowered, to 'go it alone'. As a result, the regionality of the project was increasingly limited to annual meetings and occasional training events. This declining regionality was reversed to some extent in the final two years, when the RCU became operational.

19. Despite this, the project teams in each of the participating countries, from the outset:

- Recognised and appreciated they were part of a regional initiative;
- Recognised their dependence on regional technical support, and;
- Were committed to following a standardised approach.

Managerial Guidance to Regional and National Components

20. It is the view of the Evaluation Team that regional managerial strategic guidance should have ensured:

- That the regional project activities were strategically planned and implemented;
- That national projects were strategically planned and managed;
- That mechanisms for resolving problems and technical challenges were in place at regional and national level; and,
- That regional and national monitoring was effective, and contributed to adaptive management.

21. At a regional level, managerial guidance could be provided by the project sponsors (GEF, UNDP, FFEM and its implementing agency, the Agence Francais pour le Developpement - AFD), or the project management mechanisms (the RSC and RAC) or the core regional technical partners (RFU/RCU, TdV and CdL).

22. In the absence of a clear authority structure, and without a clear allocation of roles and responsibilities, this large number of potential actors was an obstacle to providing clear support or supervision to the national projects.

23. Furthermore, the project also suffered from a complex and unclear management and guidance structure in each country. At national level, managerial guidance should have ensured strategic management, problem solving, coordination and effective monitoring. This guidance could have been provided by the NSC, or the Government, or UNDP/GEF or FFEM/AFD[30] or the core regional technical partners (RFU/RCU, TdV and CdL).

24. It is the view of the Evaluation Team that effective managerial guidance was not effectively provided at either the national or regional level. The complex and unclear managerial structure created a situation whereby major decisions could only be taken in a top-down manner, cutting through the layers. This 'management' by shock successfully overcame several of the challenges faced at a regional and national level, but was unable to provide an ongoing guidance mechanism or decision-making.

25. The Team felt this lack of effective managerial structure was a major factor limiting the project success. Hence, in this section, the Evaluation Report briefly assesses the potential roles of project organs and partners in providing this guidance.

26. At the regional level, the RSC was established in 2003, and was never fully operationalized to address key issues. It did not have country representation and only had authority over the regional budget. The RAC did have country representation, but it had only advisory power, not decision-making authority and no authority over budgets. Hence, the guidance powers of RSC and RAC were limited.

[30] Not applicable to Albania, Egypt and the Palestinian Authorities

27. At the national level, once the project was approved, all partners seemed happy to let the project team move ahead with implementation. In general, the NSC met rarely, and meetings were not well organised, and the meetings were not decision-oriented (on the occasions that NSCs did meet, it was mostly to exchange information, not to take decision). The NSC was not a clear, effective, decision-making or strategic thinking mechanism in the countries.

28. The FFEM/AFD played a strong, supportive role in at least one country (Morocco). However, resources to manage were limited.

29. In most countries, the national government implementing agency was unsuccessful in providing strategic advice. In some cases (Tunisia, Albania) strategic advice was given, but it was limited to a single sector and not strategic, nor comprehensive. In other countries (Egypt and Morocco) there was insufficient strategic interaction between the project team and the government implementing agency.

30. The GEF/UNDP was unable to provide regularly guidance at the national level. This responsibility fell somewhere between the UNDP/GEF Regional Coordination Unit and the UNDP Country Offices (CO), with both suggesting the other party is more responsible. Limited GEF/UNDP resources meant that monitoring was restricted to the review of the annual reports prepared by the project and rare, brief visits. In at least two cases, these short monitoring visits translated into shock management, whereby a monitoring mission led to many changes and action. There was no systematic oversight or effective monitoring.

31. During the project, GEF procedures and requirements changed frequently, meaning it became a major role of UNDP/GEF and UNDP CO to explain and request the new requirements. In addition, there was a significant turnover in UNDP/GEF staff. For their part, most COs seemed to focus on financial monitoring and providing procedural guidance.

32. The RFU/RCU lacked authority. Its role was unclear. It was effective at providing support on procedural and some technical issues, but had limited managerial involvement. Its role was more technical (see below). Has it had no authority, it had to earn credibility with the project teams before being able to support. Likewise, although the technical inputs of TdV and CdL were often appropriate, they did not have sufficiently broad technical and managerial experience to provide strategic support. Also, they had no authority.

33. Accordingly, the Evaluation Team feels that, despite the hard work of the project teams in many cases, the impact was undermined. After approval, the project teams were alone to take decisions and act. The project design documents provided little guidance. There were no other effective guidance mechanisms. Strategic direction was lost to some extent in many cases (e.g. spending too much time on management plans, and not starting the NWS). Important problems were not adequately identified or resolved (e.g. oil drilling in Vlora, coordination issues in Morocco, the poor appreciation of major threats such as urbanisation, the overwhelming pressure in Burullus.). Important opportunities were missed (e.g. to move more smoothly to socio-economic aspects, or to develop innovative tools or policy).

34. The lack of strategic guidance meant the project and the project activities, regionally and nationally, was mostly 'activity-driven'. Good ideas for good activities were considered and included into the workplan, without adequate reference to a strategic framework or strategic consideration. This is notwithstanding the fact that in each country a good range of activities were identified in the MP, which was, to some extent, a result of a strategic planning exercise.

35. Finally, in late 2003, it was realised that most national projects were far behind schedule on their implementation. At this stage, in most cases, there was heavy pressure to finish the project. This pressure led to an even less strategic approach to selecting and designing actions, and exacerbated the 'activity-driven' nature of the project approach[31]. In one case, Morocco, for over two years the project was under

[31] It is noted that this contradicts recent GEF recommendations that projects should have a longer implementation life – and many new GEF projects are now scheduled for 7 years or more.

constant threat of being immediately closed - strategic planning and activity design are not possible in such an environment. Moreover, it is also noted, that in at least one country (Morocco), even when key decisions were taken, there was not an effective mechanism to oversee follow-up of the decision.

Project Management

36. Each country established a project management unit. These ranged from being fully integrated into the administrative structure (e.g. Tunisia) to rather autonomous project units (Egypt, Morocco).

37. At the outset, the staffing of the Project Management units was small and often very reliant on government provided personnel. At project end, all were generally manned by 2-3 full-time staff, almost entirely financed by the Project. In most cases, the project management teams were hardworking and competent. Tunisia, Albania and Lebanon had generally appropriate professional profiles, which was not the case for other countries, and this is essential to project success.

38. In general, especially in the early and middle years, the Project Management units suffered the following weaknesses:

- Lack of project management skills, for example with regards to participatory planning, monitoring and adaptive management. Insufficient training or support was provided on these key issues;
- Over-centralised decision-making in the central project office. The projects should have had a stronger field presence; and,
- Incomplete permanent technical expertise (e.g. part or full-time officers on tourism, communications, root causes removal, even biodiversity were absent). It is noted that a large project team may require a larger commitment from government to absorb the team members after the project.

39. Overall, capacity inside the project to manage the project cycle was weak. That is, a more iterative approach where field action starts early, lessons are learnt quickly and then incorporated into MP and action plans, would have been beneficial in most countries. Instead, most project teams spent a lot of time on the processes of diagnosis and management planning, with much too little time for implementation of actions, learning and readjustment.

Local Management and Site Management

40. All countries had one (or more) local management office, and in all cases there was a LSC to oversee the local office. In some cases, the office/LSC were established for the project, in other cases they had existed for other purposes prior to the project. For example, in some cases the local office was also the protected area management office (Egypt, Tunisia). However, in other cases (e.g. Albania), separate offices were supported or established in the protected areas.

41. Mostly, the local project teams and local committees played strong roles, contributing to planning, implementing and overseeing project activities. In most cases, the local team also benefited greatly from capacity development, becoming stronger, more professional. However, at the project end, they still lacked important expertise (e.g. on sustainable financing, or on monitoring, or on integrating biodiversity and development). Overall, they lacked skills related to ‘root cause removal’ and behaviour change.

42. The local committees tended to be very active, both as individuals and groups. Generally, they provided a vehicle for clarifying the project objectives (and, therefore, biodiversity conservation) to local decision-makers. They also served as a vehicle for information flow amongst agencies and actors.

43. In general, understandably, local committee members had a ‘development’ focus - biodiversity or wetlands conservation was not their priority. This led to a fundamental problem of project planning. Whereas it is generally agreed that bottom-up approach is essential to planning a successful project, it was generally not possible to use bottom-up planning to produce plans and log-frames that would be

sufficiently oriented towards biodiversity conservation. Hence, although local committee members suggested most project activities, they did not contribute to actual project planning.

Technical Backstopping and Activity Implementation

44. International/Regional In general, the projects accessed international expertise on many issues. As discussed in previous sections, CdL provided strong support mainly from its staff members to Tunisia and Morocco, and TdV provided support directly from its staff members as well as through its networks.

45. The Evaluation Team, however, questions, whether through CdL and TdV, the project had access to a sufficiently broad full range of international expertise and experience. As noted in previous sections, the Team noted many technical issues that were not adequately addressed. These international partners played a strong role in forming the approach in some countries, notably Tunisia and Morocco, where the approach was very influenced by CdL. Overall, the Evaluation Team felt the solid support of CdL was valid and appropriate, although there were weaknesses as mentioned elsewhere in this report. However, the Project should have ensured that all countries had easy access to a broad range of international expertise/experience, including and beyond that available through CdL and TdV.

46. TdV and CdL seem to have been selected as service providers based on their involvement in project development and design. This waiver of the competitive process may have seemed an efficient step at the time, but it precluded any possibility to (i) find more competitive service providers (ii) clearly define the roles and services of TdV and CdL.

47. RCU/RFU played an important role in project technical support, by technical support missions, distance-based support, and identifying service providers when appropriate. The RCU/RFU was limited by the number of staff and budget[32], and was undermined by the crisis it suffered in mid-project. More innovative mechanisms may have been possible. Poor communications between the RCU/RFU and services providers (notably CdL) and some project offices also undermined the overall effectiveness of this unit.

48. National/local The projects, generally, made very good use of national and local experts, either as individuals or as consultants. This has contributed to ownership, and to capacity building, and is one of the strongest aspects of the project. In many countries, the project made big efforts to involve local NGOs and CBOs (e.g. when implementing Management Plan actions), which contributed to the pertinence and ownership of the project activities, and built capacity of local NGOs. Notably, the projects generally made a strong effort to involve local people (e.g. Moulouya – see Box 5) as either experts or contractors.

Box 5: MWC – Building Foundations for Future Conservation
Delegating Management to NGOs in Morocco

In recent years, Morocco has moved towards outsourcing many activities from government agencies and increasing the involvement of private sector and civil society in project management. These moves were consolidated in 2005 into the Government downsizing. At the same time, in its early years, the MWC Project was facing implementation delays and difficulties, especially with local activities, which necessitated a rethinking of the implementation modalities.

In response to these challenges and opportunities, project site level actions were delegated to a national NGO for the Moulouya site. This aimed for the following results: strengthen capacity inside the project team; improve information and awareness raising; increase autonomy; flexibility and increase efficiency; improve monitoring, and; more results at the sites within a shorter timeframe.

It was possible to innovate in this way in Morocco due to favourable national conditions and due to the flexibility in the MWC implementation procedures. At the same time, the successes were in some ways limited. For example, as the NGO was 'national', it was not able to ensure the full participation of some local actors, and this may limit

[32] This latter notably in the final two years.

future sustainability.

In conclusion, delegating project management to an NGO was a good example of adaptive management. It allowed the testing of alternative project management methods at the local level, and simultaneously led to improving management. However, more efforts to adapt to the local context were needed, as were more efforts to ensure the local participation essential for sustainability and optimal efficiency.

Training

49. Overall, the on-the-job training was effective. However, the formal training was less effective. There was no evidence that the programmatic approach developed at the regional level was followed. There was a series of stand alone training events, and although each individual training event may have been good, the overall impact is limited. In many cases, the national level training was too often 'delivered', rather than interactive.

50. The regional training events were very often appreciated. However, they were not always linked to the national training. Given the costs of regional training, more effort should have been invested in bringing back and disseminating capacity built from regional training meetings, for example through a 'training of trainers' approach.

Conclusion on the Implementation Approach

51. The implementation approach was a major factor limiting the success of the project. Notably the poor project design documents, the large project structure without clear roles and responsibilities, the lack of managerial and technical guidance mechanisms, and the constrained size of the national project teams all contributed to project delays, to loss of focus, to difficulties in overcoming problems and to missed opportunities. In this partial vacuum, most national projects proceeded as well as they could, sometimes over influenced by scientists and academics, sometimes over influenced by the development concerns of local actors. Where it existed, stronger and more appropriate national management made a difference.

52. Overall, the project suffered at each level from poor problem analysis, and weak strategic and action planning. The only element that was systematically thought through and planned was the management planning process.

4.3 PARTICIPATION

1. This section assesses the types and degree of participation by the various stakeholders in the project and the efforts undertaken by the project made to optimise participation. It is noted that many of these issues are partly covered in Chapter 4.1 above.

What is meant by 'Participation'

2. In this report, as in the project, the term 'participation' is used broadly and includes the participation of all stakeholders at all levels. This includes grass-root actors, resource users, all levels of organisation and government, experts, national government, other projects and international stakeholders. Accordingly, participation takes in the concept of 'partnerships' with institutional actors.

3. This report covers many forms and intensities of participation. The lowest levels of participation are 'informing' and 'consulting' relevant stakeholders. More thorough participation leads to the effective involvement of stakeholders in design and planning, in decision-making and in all stages of implementation (i.e. through investment, ongoing management, and maintenance). Participation is important for several reasons and at all stages of project cycle. Participation promotes ownership, and therefore sustainability. It also improves the quality and relevance of actions, by ensuring the project benefits from the expertise of all parties.

4. The importance of participation was clearly identified at the project design stage. The Project Brief and other design documents emphasise the participation of local resource users. They also highlight the crucial importance of negotiation, of conflict resolving and of mediation between interest groups.

5. At the outset, there were differences across the region. Morocco, Lebanon and Albania generally had a general culture conducive to participatory processes, and the former two had significant experience in participatory approaches to rural development. On the other hand, Egypt and Tunisia had more experience with top-down or scientist-led approaches. Hence, what would count as a major achievement in the latter two countries would be business as usual in the former three.

Findings

6. Local resource users In the context of the MWC project, they participated mostly in the first stages (i.e. the diagnosis and the management planning) – although not systematically at all sites. Participation was principally of the "informing" and "consulting" types. At later stages, i.e. selecting and designing action, participation was weaker. There was not a lot of joint decision-making. It has to be noted that Egypt and, to a lesser extent, Lebanon, were exceptions: in these countries participation was more elaborate. In the final stages (i.e. implementing actions), participation was stronger still. In most cases, local people or NGOs were involved in implementing actions, and were the direct beneficiaries of many actions. In Egypt, these are considerable achievements.

7. In some countries, the project attempted *directly* to involve resource users, with direct contacts through the project team or through project sub-contractors. However, given the limited project resources, this inevitably limited the number of participants. In other countries, the project worked through local or intermediary associations or NGOs. This enabled the project to reach more stakeholders, but it was difficult to ensure that the participation was representative. It would be interesting to assess the comparative values of these two approaches and how best to combine them – and so guide GEF on the optimal approaches to participation in projects of this nature.

8. The Evaluation Team recognises that it is not possible to involve all resource-users. However, the Team feels the project had the resources to ensure a more thorough participation of both individual resource users (at most sites) and some industries (e.g. Tunisia).

9. Private sector Apart from the above-mentioned local resource users (who were almost entirely private sector), the project involved few large-scale private sector operators. Tourist operators were involved in most countries, but to a limited extent. One good example was the joint action with the salt-industry in Egypt. The best example, and probably a lesson-learning experience, was the full involvement of some private landowners in Lebanon, and the efforts to involve other landowners.

10. NGOs In most of the participating countries, the environmental sector is the one with the most active NGOs. Hence, NGOs did participate actively in the MWC project compared to other projects in those countries. However, it is important to note the diversity of NGOs across the region. In some countries (e.g. Tunisia), NGOs mostly consist of academics and experts, often with close ties to governmental institutions. Their involvement does not mean the project is closer to the grass-roots - it is more likely to emphasise the project's scientific nature. In other countries (e.g. Albania), NGOs are often weak, localised but very active. These NGOs can both benefit from and support the project, and this was largely the case. Overall, the project was relatively successful in involving NGOs, but clearly, it was not possible to involve all relevant NGOs.

11. Elected institutions and local government In general, mid-level government agencies participated in the project thoroughly. This is the level where the LSC were established. This participation greatly contributed to project impact, and to the capacity building. However, with the exception of Tunisia, the project was much less successful in involving the lowest levels of government – communes or villages. This could have been beneficial. Moreover, the project had a tendency to turn away from difficult stakeholders – and this was most notable at this lowest level of government. For example, in many cases when a major threat to the integrity of the protected areas was identified in the MP, in general, if the

project considered it would be difficult to work with the local administration, it turned away and focussed efforts elsewhere (e.g. the case of urbanisation and/or bad waste disposal practices in Morocco and Tunisia).

12. Local technical departments of national ministries Beyond their involvement in the LSC, these participated mainly in the implementation of related field actions. Accordingly, temporary partnerships were built e.g. with the Ministry responsible for agriculture in Egypt and Lebanon and with agricultural and forestry departments in Albania[33][34].

13. Participation of the national implementing agency In Albania and Tunisia, the national implementing agency was closely involved in the project, and this surely helped develop capacity, and it was a positive factor in sustainability. This did not seem to be the case for Egypt and Morocco. In Lebanon, the implementing agency closely supported the project.

14. Participation of other national agencies This was a weak point of the project: the involvement of central government agencies was very poor. Given that, ultimately, the full involvement of several sectors is required to remove threats, this is a major factor undermining impact and sustainability. This low participation meant the project was unable to influence, for example, the tourism, fisheries, and agriculture sectors.

15. Regional participation As mentioned previously, more involvement could have been expected from regional players such as: RAC/SPA, RAC/PAP, WWF, IUCN, WI etc.. The participation of experts, TdV and CdL was good, however it was financed by the project.

Conclusions on the Participation of Stakeholders in the Project

16. Overall, the Evaluation Team recognises the efforts of the project team to ensure participation. The participation of local resource users at all stages can be considered quite a success in Egypt and Lebanon. However, in other countries, too often, where it existed, participation was mostly informing and consulting. It is also important to note that the project planning, and the overall approach facilitated by project financers, was generally too top-down: the elaboration of the initial logical framework, the design of the diagnosis and the management planning, the choice and design of field action, were mostly in response to top-down guidance.

17. It is felt that some strategic changes in the project could have led to a far more effective participation. First, the lack of strategic planning for participation. Apart from Albania, the stakeholder analyses were not well done. A thorough analysis and planning process is required to ensure optimum participation. Second, overall, inadequate project resources were allocated to this. The project teams had a lack of time, lack of specialized field level personnel and lack of participatory know-how (e.g. on communication techniques, on participatory action formulation, on negotiation and on conflict resolution[35]). Insufficient training or regional technical support was provided.

18. As a result, there are several key "gaps" related to participation and partnership. First, generally[36], there was no continuous involvement of local resource users to ensuring they could play an active role in decision-making and implementation. Second, the involvement of the lowest levels of

[33] The involvement of the forestry departments in Morocco and Tunisia was of different nature. In these countries they were part of the "project team".

[34] This also applies to national academics and other experts, involved as experts, even though their contribution and related capacity building must be mentioned.

[35] The misunderstanding that participation approach is synonymous of "doing whatever locals ask for" and of "only working with those who are from the start very willing to cooperate" - directly related to insufficient conflict resolving capacity - is part of this insufficient participatory know-how.

[36] Although there were some notable exceptions.

government/organisations was too low, at too many sites. Finally, the involvement of national sectors beyond the environment sector was too low. Some impacts of these gaps were:

- a tendency for the project to turn away from problems, rather than taking the time to build up an understanding with 'difficult' stakeholders and find a solution (hopefully a compromise, but if not, a form of enforcement) to challenges;
- the *de facto* exclusion of several important sites from the project action;
- insufficient impact on the attitudes of too many local stakeholders;
- a tendency in some countries for the project actions/achievements to remain exactly that, i.e. 'project achievements', and not anchored into institutions.

4.4 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Introduction

1. Effective monitoring, reporting and evaluation is essential to support project management and project communications. This section aims to determine the effectiveness of the project's monitoring and reporting.

Approach to monitoring

2. The main monitoring tools were: annual meeting of the RSC and RAC; occasional country visits by FFEM and UNDP/GEF; visits of RCU to countries; in-country annual review meetings of PSC or Tri-Partite Review (TPR); annual preparation and submission of APR/PIR report; quarterly workplanning and reporting to UNDP CO; regular visits to the project sites, and; the Mid-Term Review. The project logical framework and related indicators provided the basis for most of the monitoring actions. Following an overview, this Section briefly overviews each of these monitoring tools. It is also noted that, in addition, the project teams reported to their government implementing agencies (at local and national levels) – the evaluation did not review this.

Overview

3. It should be noted that, at the time of the Project outset, monitoring was not a priority for GEF or FFEM. Hence, it was not given priority in the implementation of the project, until possibly the final years. The project did not seem to have a systematic process for monitoring/reporting and planning. Little or no training and support was provided to the national project teams, and most monitoring tools were developed in an ad-hoc, top down manner, with little involvement of national teams and almost no involvement of other project stakeholders (e.g. the site teams – who were responsible for most actions). They were distributed by UNDP/GEF. The resulting lack of capacity or resources to monitor was accompanied, the evaluation team believes, by an understanding that the purpose of monitoring was to highlight all positive aspects of the project in order to facilitate its smooth continuation. Self-criticism was not very evident.

4. Overall, monitoring involved a lot of paperwork with little effectiveness. National projects were asked to produce reports in response to the different reporting requirements of the project partners, sponsors and supervisory authorities at national and regional levels. This included reporting to UNDP, FFEM, national government agencies, national and local steering committees, GEF/UNDP, the regional coordination unit and the regional advisory committee. All these reporting obligations left the project teams feeling somewhat overwhelmed by the reporting requirements.

5. More importantly, monitoring and reporting was not adequately linked to project decision making processes, nor was it a tool for adaptive management. There is little evidence that project decisions were taken based on the results of the formal monitoring or reporting activities.

6. The emphasis on 'reporting'[37], notably through the APR/PIR, may have contributed to "over reporting". The report format and indicators encouraged project teams to report a high level of satisfaction with project results and progress, and to understate constraints – the PIR contain far too many 'S' and 'HS'. The project's supervisory bodies, although asking for many reports, were not able to validate the findings in the reports, or to intervene effectively to propose corrections to the project.

Logical Frameworks and Related Indicators

7. The formal project logical framework matrix, with indicators, was first developed approximately two years after the project first started[38], and approved at the RAC in 2001. However, in the opinion of the Evaluation Team, this framework was flawed. It did not leave the project with clear guidance, or objectives, impacts and results that the project was to achieve, nor a clear strategy as to how achieve them. The logical frameworks did evolve with the project. Some countries developed additional indicators (e.g. Lebanon). At least one country (Tunisia) was using two logical frameworks at the project end: one for reporting and one for management. It is also noted that the indicators in the APR/PIR are different than those approved by the RAC in 2001.

8. Most of the project partners, particularly the national teams, felt that the project log-frame and indicators were not very useful to project planning and implementation. They were not adapted to the country, they were not sufficiently precise and they had some major design deficiencies. Most of the indicators[39] refer to activities undertaken, and do not indicate project progress or impact. An example is the first indictor of the Project *Objective* (*'percentage of recommended MP actions or processes that have been carried out sustainably'*). One cannot measure the final project impact on conserving globally important biodiversity through stating the percentage of activities implemented in a management plan.

RSC and RAC

9. As discussed elsewhere in this report, these were not effective monitoring mechanisms. One key reason for this was the weak logframe, indicators and APR/PIR format (see below).

Occasional Monitoring Missions from International FFEM and UNDP/GEF Offices

10. These certainly had an impact in terms of monitoring. For example, missions in 2004 and 2005 to Morocco and Tunisia were able to strongly re-activate project delivery. This had a good impact on project implementation in Tunisia, less so in Morocco. The problem with these visits was that they were too ad-hoc. There was no structured, regular monitoring of this nature, and no adequate reporting to facilitate the mission. Hence, in these missions, in a very short period of time, an external actor is expected to understand a complex project, and then make incisive recommendations and take tough decisions. Accordingly, the recommendations and decisions may be a bit 'hit and miss'. Also, in problem cases (e.g. Morocco), this became "management by shock".

Monitoring Missions from RFU/RCU to countries

11. These visits were more frequent than the FFEM or UNDP/GEF missions. They served several purposes, including monitoring, and were often in conjunction with the annual review meeting. Although these missions contributed positively to monitoring, they were insufficient to overcome the fundamental weaknesses in project monitoring. In some countries (Tunisia and Morocco), on occasions, these missions were associated with some friction. This friction resulted partly from the overall weak monitoring system and the unclear role of the RFU/RCU.

Annual review meetings in each country

[37] As opposed to 'monitoring'.
[38] it was not a requirement of GEF at the time of project approval.
[39] Referring, here, to the indicators used in the APR/PIR

12. This should have been the major monitoring tool in each country. The meetings should have been based on clear, structured monitoring reports. They should have made clear decisions and recommendations, including recommendations to 'higher level' – i.e. the project sponsors. Given the poor monitoring reports (see below), and the fact that these meetings were, generally, inadequately organised, this was not an effective monitoring tool.

Annual submission of APR/PIR report to sponsors

13. This was treated seriously. The APR/PIR reports were prepared in a comprehensive manner as required by UNDP/GEF. However, there are major questions as to the usefulness of this exercise. The report format is not conducive to criticism. The approach is bureaucratic, rather than constructive. Project teams do not see the links between the report contents and their daily decision-making. There was little useful interaction between project stakeholders as a result of the process to prepare the report. Finally, the reports were based on the logframe and indicators – thereby undermining its usefulness. As mentioned before, they seem conducive to 'over-reporting'- i.e. the project reporting a high level of achievement that cannot be verified independently.

Quarterly workplanning and reporting

14. This reporting from project office to UNDP CO was also treated seriously. This is essential in each country to ensure actions take place, and that payments are made. This was the most important planning and monitoring tool for the project team. However, the links between the quarterly plans (which is typically a list of activities) and the overall project design are weak. In most cases, the quarterly workplanning focussed on financial reporting and monitoring – and was not useful for substantive monitoring or strategic planning.

Regular Site Visits and Site Monitoring

15. In most countries, site level monitoring was far better than overall project monitoring. This included regular site visits by the project team, and main project partners (often including UNDP CO and AFD). However, in many cases it lacked a clear, structured approach, and a structured documentation of findings, results and decisions. The links with the overall project design are weak.

16. Given the central role of protected areas in some sites, the project also supported monitoring of some protected areas. This was an ideal opportunity to develop PA monitoring capacity. This opportunity to introduce the project teams to useful PA reporting and monitoring tools (such as the management effectiveness tracking tool - METT) was often missed. The METT tool was introduced late in the project, was not adopted or well undertaken by all national components. It was perceived by the project team as 'one more reporting exercise' and its usefulness not appreciated. A timely use of this tool could have helped the projects to assess their implementation strategies and identify alternative responses.

Adaptive management

17. Despite the above weakness in the overall project monitoring and reporting systems, the evaluation team took note of several good examples of adaptive management, even though they could not always be clearly attributed to the formal project monitoring and reporting systems. In addition to the changes instigated by the MTR (see below), these adaptations included:

- the introduction of the revolving fund program and the reallocation of project funds to community development activities in Egypt, and;
- the dropping of two of the four project sites in Morocco.

18. However, the use of such good adaptive measures was not consistent. For example, most indications are that, from the beginning, in Egypt, the project was not going to be successful in Burullus without a radical change in strategy. This information did not feed into project decisions, and the project pursued

its flawed strategy at the site. This illustrates that project monitoring did not introduce flexibility/adaptation – the projects were somehow trapped to the original project documents. Also, in Albania, a decision was taken to stop project implementation for approximately 15 months. The evaluation team feels this was a poor decision – a more adaptive management approach may have led to a better decision.

19. Special mention needs making of the decision in Albania to stop most project activities due to the start-up of drilling activities in one of the sites. This issue was never seriously discussed in Albania prior to a decision by UNDP/GEF to stop the project – taken without a mission to the country. This cannot be considered adaptive management. However, the project team adapted to this situation very well, learning from the experience and developing new skills. Notwithstanding, it remains the opinion of the Evaluation Team that the decision to stop most project activities was not the best one.

The Mid-Term Review (MTR)

20. Overall this seems to have been largely positive. The MTR process led to many recommendations, and although some were considered unrealistic, many were acted upon. It also led to a regional and national reflection, and helped the shift in the project strategy. Notably, the MTR review highlighted the need for the project to focus more on the socio-economic aspects of local resource users and their interaction with biodiversity. Although this change was already underway before the MTR, the MTR speeded up and consolidated this transition. Overall, this led to more focus when dealing with root causes. This also led to a shift away from a largely scientific diagnosis and planning exercise to a more action-oriented exercise involving more people.

Financial reporting

21. With regards to the evaluation, the format of information available was not user-friendly and not as comprehensive as requested. The data provided by most countries was not fully consistent. Overall, financial reporting was not adequate.

The Final Evaluation

22. The Final Evaluation was well organised, well resourced (for a regional project, although less so for 6 country projects), and treated very seriously. However, there was some confusion as to the exact role of the Final Evaluation, with many stakeholders feeling it should focus on ‘confidence-building’, rather than on objective reporting.

Conclusion on the Project’s Monitoring and Evaluation

23. Throughout the project, monitoring was confused with reporting, and did not feed adequately into decision-making. Monitoring was not sufficiently structured or systematic. Reporting requirements were large, but the connections with planning and management were not clear. These, and the poor indicators and weak management mechanisms, led to difficulties in identifying challenges, in forging solutions and taking difficult decisions.

24. The more formal, external monitoring (MTR, Final Evaluation) seem to have been taken very seriously. However, as external events, they are limited in their ability to forge change.

4.5 COST EFFECTIVENESS

1. This section briefly analyses several aspects of cost-effectiveness: co-financing; the distribution of the costs across outcomes and by types of input; the cost-effectiveness of individual activities; compliance with the incremental cost principle, and; financial management. However, it has to be noted that the budgetary information available was neither precise nor complete, and this did not facilitate a rigorous analysis.

Co-financing

2. The table presenting co-financing is in Annex 7.

3. Overall, even with incomplete data, the actual co-financing ($15.55 million) was higher than planned in the initial project design ($ 6.46 million)[40]. This was mainly due to important government infrastructure contributions in Egypt, for example, to the dredging of the seawater inlets at Burullus and Zaranik lagoons. Government in-kind contribution from Tunisia was also sizeable. This increase in co-financing testifies the individual efforts of national project team members.

Distribution of costs across outcomes and types of input

4. The data available makes this *very difficult* to assess. For the five national projects, the Evaluation Team collected data covering 87% of expenditure. However, in many cases, it was not fully clear what the expenditure was on, and the Evaluation Team had to estimate. Based on the data collected for the five countries, the chart below makes a best estimate of the distribution of project costs for the five national MWC projects. The subsequent table compares this estimated actual distribution with the distribution planned at the outset for Egypt and Tunisia[41].

5. From the chart, it can be seen that the majority of costs went to local level actions (Field actions, diagnosis, management planning etc.). This is commendable. However, it can also be seen that a large amount of costs were allocated to operational costs and project management. Although valid and essential, this highlights the costs of creating an implementation structure where none is available.

6. The table illustrates that the distribution of costs are broadly consistent with those planned at the project outset. In fact, the costs allocated to local level actions were slightly higher than initially planned, and those allocated to operations/project management were less than planned.

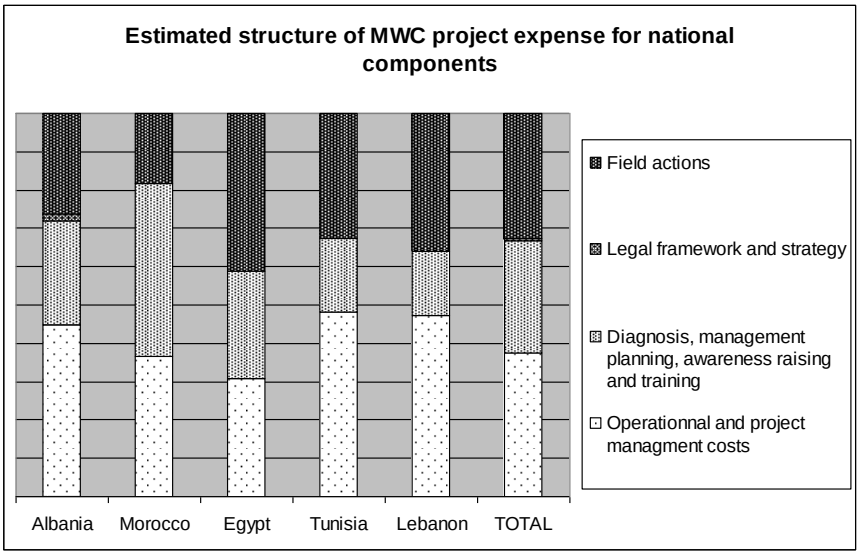


Table Comparing Estimated Actual and Planned Distribution of National of MWC Expenditures

[40] These are estimates, as the financial information available to the Evaluation team was incomplete, badly formatted and not coherent across the countries.
[41] The national Project Documents did not provide this data for the other countries.

	Planned[42]	Actual [43]
Operational and project management costs	40%	37%
Diagnosis, management planning, awareness raising and training	36%	29%
Legal framework and strategy	3%	<1%
Field actions	21%	33%

7. Some items to note from the chart

- the importance of field action costs in Egypt - due mostly to the costly dredging operations;
- the importance of "not field action expense" and the relatively high cost of diagnosis in Morocco;
- The low priority given to national capacity building activities.

8. The regional component had a budget of $2.75 million. The majority of this finance was allocated to the RFU/RCU and to TdV. This financed operations, technical support, managerial support, coordination and knowledge management activities. It is not possible to provide a clear breakdown into these categories.

Cost of individual actions and activities.

9. In general, the efforts of the project teams to wisely use funds for individual actions are appreciated. For example, the implementation of some actions by direct beneficiaries or local NGOs probably contributed to lowering costs of actions (e.g. ecotourism at Beni Snassen in Morocco). There are likely to be some exceptions, particularly in the later years, when the project deadlines became tighter. The teams also mobilized some resources (see co-financing) and built partnerships which led to joint activities, or the implementation of parallel activities (Lebanon and Albania). This was also a cost-effective way to meet project goals.

10. Particularly at the regional level, the project does not seem to have used competitive processes to allocate all large contracts. The cost-effectiveness and overall effectiveness of this method requires separate analysis.

Compliance with incremental cost

11. Despite the fact that the *direct* links with biodiversity for some socio-economic actions were not always clear and were rarely formalized, at a general level the project maintained a good focus on biodiversity, in all countries, and through the regional component. Most activities addressed conservation related issues, and most were at sites important for biodiversity.

12. Moreover, it is very probable, that without this GEF supported project, very few of the actions supported by the project would have been undertaken. Thus the project respected the '*additional*' principle.

Financial management (disbursement issues)

13. In some countries (specifically in Albania and Tunisia), delays in making disbursements were reported. However, no major problems were reported, and this was not seen to have had a major impact on the project.

[42] For Egypt and Tunisia.
[43] For all five countries.

14. At the regional level, UNOPS seems to have played an efficient role and added to accountability. However, many of its functions seem to have been strongly supported by the RCU/RFU and the UNDP COs, and the distribution of roles/responsibilities was not always clear.

Conclusion on the Project's Cost-Effectiveness.

15. On the whole, cost-effectiveness was acceptable. However, the availability of data in an accessible and useful format, and the systematic storage of available data by the project teams and UNDP COs, leave a lot to be desired.

4.6 OVERAL RATINGS

1. In line with GEF guidance, a six-value rating system is to be used: HS – Highly Satisfactory; S – Satisfactory; MS – Moderately Satisfactory; MU – Moderately Unsatisfactory; U – Unsatisfactory; HU – Highly Unsatisfactory.

2. In order to provide ratings, the Evaluation Team:

- Considered the extent to which the project had met the 'reasonably expected targets' for each Outcome. In general, the project did not meet these targets.
- Cross referred to other projects and stakeholders in the region and countries to determine what is feasible;
- Cross referred to the many projects that the team is familiar with to determine what is feasible for this scale of project, in countries at this level of development.

3. Ratings were first developed for each country and the regional component. These were combined into a composite of the ratings for each factor. The combined results are set out in the table below:

Impact	Sustainability	Implementation Approach	Monitoring and Evaluation	Stakeholder participation
Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Unsatisfactory	Moderately Unsatisfactory	Moderately Unsatisfactory/ Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory

4. Overall, the Evaluation Team finds the project to lie between moderately satisfactory and moderately unsatisfactory.

5. CONCLUSIONS

1. Most of the major conclusions have been reported in each of the above chapters and concerned sub-chapters.

2. With regards to Impact, sustainability and implementation approach, at the *national* level, the Evaluation has found that the project contributed to legislative and policy development. It also helped to advance the process to preparing national wetland's strategies. In some countries, several management and/or conservation tools were developed which may be used by similar projects in the future. One of the major achievements at the national level was the wide-scale development of individual capacity, and the related institutional strengthening of the agencies responsible for implementing the project.

3. At the *site* level, the project's activities were focussed into two strategies: (i) developing site management capacity and site infrastructure, and; (ii) demonstrating how to change the decisions and behaviour of local institutions and resource users in order to be more biodiversity friendly. With regards to the former, the project supported the development of management plans at all sites, many of which were of good quality. Moreover, the project helped to establish many local site coordination and management mechanisms. These were generally inclusive and participative. At most sites, by the end of the project, the management plans were under implementation. These activities related to site protection were an important capacity building exercise.

4. In terms of the latter (i.e. changing local decision-making and behaviour), the Evaluation Team considers that this was particularly ambitious and innovative for the region, at the time of the project outset. The project was successful in supporting a range of activities that demonstrated how wetland and biodiversity conservation can be integrated into local decision-making. Although being limited in scope, these activities were, to an extent, groundbreaking at some sites.

5. At the *regional* level, with regards to "closing of the Mediterranean circle", the activities led to many advantages for the project teams. These included easier access to knowledge and expertise, information exchange, a constructive peer pressure and peer support, and a good documenting of "lessons learned" in the later stages of the project. The project also supported networking and the development of regional tools and infrastructure.

6. More generally, the evaluation finds that the large number of biodiversity-focussed actions supported by the project have contributed to changes of attitudes and modified approaches to resource management in coastal and wetland areas in the participating countries, particularly at the project sites. Through this, the project has contributed to a momentum towards improved natural resource management in the region.

7. Despite these advances and results, the Evaluation finds that the overall project impact was considerably limited by several factors, in particular by the approach to project implementation. Specifically, the project design documents were too ambitious in parts and insufficiently detailed in others. Also, the multi-layered project structure was too complex, and the roles and responsibilities were not clear. The regional and national mechanisms for managerial and technical guidance provided ineffective support and oversight to the national project teams. Too often, the national project teams did not have the right balance of skills. Finally, the choice of sites was questionable.

8. The weakness in the approach to implementation listed above led to many limitations in the project's impacts. As can be seen in the previous sections, the project met few of the reasonably expected targets set retrospectively by this evaluation team.

9. As can be seen from the Country reports, the evaluation found significant differences in impact across the countries. Lebanon and Tunisia succeeded in protecting several sites and have a reasonable chance being institutionally sustainable. In Albania, rapid impacts on lagoons were achieved, but sustainability is less assured. Egypt did some quite good work linking biodiversity and local development. Morocco managed some small scale site protection and pilot work on eco-tourism. On the whole, sustainability is least assured in Egypt and Morocco, where it proved difficult to overcome major institutional constraints.

10. With regards to Participation, the project undertook notable efforts to ensure effective participation of stakeholders at all levels. Participants include local resources users, local governments, local elected bodies, NGOs and CBOs, a number of regional technical institutions and the national scientific and technical community. In some countries, this work was innovative and groundbreaking. Notable weaknesses with participation were: low involvement of the national agencies responsible for sectors other than biodiversity and wetlands, an insufficient range of international expertise and, in several countries, the participation of local resource users was limited to *consultation*.

11. With regards to Monitoring and Evaluation, the project was weaker. Despite the efforts the national teams put into monitoring, it was rarely sufficiently structured or systematic. Throughout the project, monitoring was confused with reporting, and monitoring did not feed adequately into planning or decision-making – hence there was little true *adaptive management*. This combined with the poor indicators and weak management mechanisms to cause difficulties in identifying challenges, in forging solutions and in taking difficult decisions.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Specific recommendations for each country are provided in the country reports. Those specific recommendations generally pertain to building on the project actions, and so increasing the impact and sustainability of the MWC project. The recommendations below pertain mostly to future projects of this nature, and so focus mostly on the project donors and high-level managers. The recommendations are based on the findings of the Evaluation Team, as set out in the previous Chapters.

GEF

2. In the future, where appropriate, continue to support regional biodiversity conservation projects. Ensure the justification for a regional approach is clear and agreed by all. Ensure the roles and responsibilities are clearly defined before the project commences.

3. During the period to prepare future projects, ensure that the focus is project *design*, not securing *approval*.

4. Ensure that future projects are realistic, whilst still ambitious.

UNDP and regionally-based technical agencies.

5. The project had diverse experiences with the participatory approach in diverse circumstances, and many lessons were learnt. Document these lessons into a knowledge management tool.

6. The project undertook different approaches to protected area management in diverse circumstances and many lessons were learnt. Document these lessons into a knowledge management tool – this would build on the Management Plan Peer Review.

7. In order to ensure that future projects are 'bottom-up', local stakeholders should lead the identification, design and planning of the strategy and actions, firmly within the overall objectives. External actors can provide appropriate guidance and technical support to this process.

8. For future projects, even regional, design the project to work as much as possible through existing structures and administrative frameworks.

9. Determine ways to monitor 'behaviour' and 'attitudes', within a project timeframe.

UNDP and National Agencies responsible for wetlands, biodiversity and coastal areas

10. Ensure that for future projects there is a system in place to check that the projects are accessing the appropriate and up-to-date international and regional knowledge and expertise.

11. Ensure future project documents clearly establish the implementation arrangements from the outset, and that these include clear, realistic, operational mechanisms for decision-taking, problem solving and providing strategic guidance. Ensure that future projects include a supervisory mechanism (e.g. PSC) that is adequately resourced and capable of supervising. This may include an active and substantive role for UNDP in ongoing project supervision.

12. Pay stronger attention to the selection of national project teams. The NPC/NPM must have adequate communication and management skills. The project team must have adequate and ongoing access to other expertise, including biodiversity, socio-economics, M&E, communication, and possibly tourism, legal affairs. If appropriate people cannot be selected, they must be trained.

13. Develop strong incentives to ensure future projects do not face long initial delays.

14. Ensure that future projects address long-term issues (e.g. policy revision, strategy development) from the early stages of the project, so that adequate progress can be made on these issues.

UNDP

15. Review monitoring procedures and monitoring formats. Develop procedures that are less burdensome, more management-oriented, and more able to provide UNDP with a realistic impression of project progress, and more useful for taking management decisions. Ensure that all future projects have an annual TPR, with participation of GEF/UNDP, and an effective mechanism to identify weaknesses. Ensure that all financial reporting is clear and comprehensive.

16. Clarify the distribution of administrative, technical and decision-making responsibilities between UNDP/GEF and UNDP/CO, and ensure each unit is sufficiently resourced to fulfil its responsibilities.

UNOPS

17. Review procedures for allowing waivers[44]. It is vital that the most appropriate and most competitive agency are contracted to provide technical services. This is also more cost efficient and more effective in the medium and long term.

National Agencies responsible for wetlands, biodiversity and coastal areas

18. Ensure that future projects do not turn away from difficult issues and difficult stakeholders. It is recognised that some issues/stakeholders are too difficult and these should not be addressed immediately present. However, projects of this nature should be used by national agencies to address the difficult issues that country teams cannot address without an international partner. Any decision to not address a key issue or stakeholder should be taken openly.

19. Ensure that there are mechanisms in place so that the lessons continuously generated from field demonstration projects are fed into and inform national policy and legislative development (so these latter are not simply driven by national and international thinking).

20. Develop strategies to work more interactively with other sectors and agencies on wetlands protection and biodiversity conservation, including the water, agriculture, fisheries and tourism sectors. Lobbying and targeted awareness raising of high-level decision-makers in these sectors is likely to be an appropriate tool

The MWC Country Teams

21. Ensure future projects and initiatives are driven by a thorough adaptive management process at all stages of the project cycle. The cycle (i.e. identification – diagnosis - analysis – design – implementation – monitoring – identification etc.) should be followed at all levels: at the site, for the project, and for each management plan action. This allows a combination of rapid action with a strategic approach, and continuous learning.

22. Obtain information on innovative tools, notably with relation to sustainable financing, and make this a central pillar of future biodiversity initiatives.

23. Consider carefully the duration and depth of future site diagnosis and management planning. Ensure an appropriate focus on socio-economic issues. Avoid (at least in the early cycles) detailed scientific or technical work that will not feed into the management plan actions. Ensure that proposed actions are subject to an adequate feasibility study.

24. When establishing protected areas or demonstration projects, choose sites that can be meaningfully addressed with available resources. During planning/implementation, use adaptive management to drop unsuitable sites.

[44] The Evaluation Team is not clear as to whether CdL or TdV were selected based on a formal waiver – however there does not seem to have been an open, competitive process leading to their selection.

25. Adopt the METT or a similar tool, and use it to build on ongoing monitoring of the protected areas. Additional training may be necessary.

26. Ensure the local site teams have ongoing access to adequate skills, resources and expertise. For example, they may need access to biodiversity, conflict resolution, participatory approaches, planning and law enforcement. This also includes the proper recruitment of the site teams, and delegating adequate authority to them. This may require proper training.

7. LESSONS LEARNT

Institutional

1. It took time to generate policy reform and legislative reform, and as these initiatives were not given priority in the project's early years, the overall success was very limited.

2. Certain outputs (e.g. NWS, MP) were not finalised, or were finalised very late. This meant the project could not help with their implementation, and so could not build the capacity to implement. This undermined sustainability.

3. The institutional anchoring in Tunisia (and to a lesser extent Albania) contributed to project impact and sustainability in those countries. This was a best practice, but there was a need to continually ensure the biodiversity focus. In other countries, the national agency was not as engaged, or only engaged at one level. Engagement is needed at senior decision-making, technical and administrative levels.

4. The long-term relationship between CdL and the Tunisian government (and the Moroccan to a lesser extent) was a good example of technical and institutional cooperation. The GEF project was not able to provide similar long term, flexible, institutional support.

5. Sustainable financing and business planning (except Lebanon) were not addressed, except in the very final stages. This undermines financial sustainability and therefore all sustainability. Amongst other impacts, this led to the national agency not being able to recruit the local teams working on the project. In some countries, the only form of financing considered was future GEF (or development) projects - this limited sustainability.

Project implementation

6. Being a regional project with major national and local components, a large administrative structure was required for implementation. This was costly to establish and maintain. Notably, the regional budget was used more quickly than the national budgets, but was not successful in kick-starting the national projects.

7. There were costs and benefits associated with the inter-country nature of the project. It was necessary, but difficult to balance cross-country coherence and flexibility (e.g. to ensure that the actions, timelines and toolkits/guidelines were coherent across the countries, but that countries were not limited or restrained by this). Better balancing could have maximised benefits and minimised costs.

8. The roles of the regional partners and managers were not clear and were not backed up with authority; this was probably one of the reasons that they were not fully effective.

9. At a strategic level, the project recognised the need to combine *protected area approaches* with *biodiversity mainstreaming approaches*. This seemed relevant at *each* site. Although not successfully implemented, this is a best practice. The need to combine these approaches is a lesson learnt.

10. The approaches to Outcome 1 (national capacity), Outcome 2.2 (root cause removal) and Outcome 3 (closing circle) were not based on a thorough problem analysis, nor within a good conceptual framework, and they were not strategic. Hence, the hard work under these Outcomes was destined to have limited impact. The weak strategic management/guidance mechanisms were unable to rectify this situation.

11. The project reporting requirements were very burdensome, often changing and not user-friendly. They were not very useful or conducive to constructive criticism. UNDP was unable to validate and properly use the reports. Together, this seemed to facilitate 'over-reporting'.

12. The strength of the national project team (in terms of effective management and planning skills) made a difference to project impact, notwithstanding the quality of the project document and the effectiveness of the strategic guidance mechanisms.

13. The different institutional approaches to diagnosis and to management planning (e.g. use of contractors or use of individual experts or use of NGOs) were very interesting, and many important lessons were learnt.

Site implementation

14. At least two countries included a strong focus on establishing presence, visibility and regulating access at their demonstration sites. This is clearly part of a successful approach. Future GEF projects should include this approach in their strategy, whilst not forgetting the associated critical needs: to develop capacity; to build local ownership, and; to integrate biodiversity into socio-economic development.

15. The diagnosis and management planning was well done in several countries (although with weaknesses). This is a best practice, to be documented and disseminated.

16. To some extent, for some participants, preparing the Management Plan became the project 'goal'. This was a bad practice.

17. Although NGOs provided some solutions, they could not provide a solution to everything. It was more useful to work with local CBOs in many cases.

18. Many of the areas that the project worked in have either a large tourism sector or a high potential for tourism. However, the project teams did not make sufficient links with the actors in these sectors. This was a missed opportunity.

19. The field teams did not have sufficient resources/expertise and so were unable to do some important tasks, e.g. ensure participation.

Partnerships and participation

20. The project demonstrated some good practices in working with municipalities and local agencies, and in building alliances and increasing commitment. It is noted that, in order to build important alliances, it may have been necessary in the early stages to weaken the focus on biodiversity. As long as this is part of a clear, long-term strategy to bring the alliance around to biodiversity, this is acceptable. However, it is not easy to get GEF support for such a shrewd approach.

21. The participatory approach yielded benefits in all countries in the region. Whenever the project team worked with local people, the results were better. This was equally true for private sector operators. However, despite the good work at some sites with local people and with CBOs, too few stakeholders were touched by the project. A possible solution to this is to work through socially organised structures.

22. Despite the above efforts, incomplete participation led to many gaps in the project impact and sustainability, suggesting more could have been done, or a more effective approach could have been adopted.

23. When supporting socio-economic actions, the links with biodiversity were not always substantively established nor formalised. This was true to a differing extent at every site. This meant that many actions had no positive biodiversity impact – they were pure development actions.

Knowledge management

24. The regional documents, websites and so forth were generally of good quality. More translation and dissemination would be appropriate.

ANNEXES

Evaluation Terms of Reference
Itinerary
Lists of Persons Interviewed
List of Documents Reviewed
Detailed Methodology and Questionnaire
Comments by Stakeholders
Table on Co-Financing

Annex 1: Evaluation Terms of Reference

See separate file

Annex 2: Itinerary

In summary:

Dates	Location	Comments
July, August		Preparations
28 – 31 August	Arles, France	Meetings with regional stakeholders, UNDP, FFEM and RCU
1 – 11 September	Egypt	Includes visit to field sites Includes separate meetings with stakeholders from Lebanon project
12 – 21 September	Tunisia	
22 – 30 September	Morocco	
1 – 7 October	Albania	
1 – 30 November	Lebanon	National consultant undertakes Lebanon evaluation
14 – 15 November	Tunis	Meeting of all evaluators from all countries
27- 28 November	Morocco	Presentation of Evaluation findings to the RAC
November, December		Finalisation

Detailed itineraries are available for each country visit.

Typically, in each country, the visits followed the following schema:

Day	**Item**
Day 1	Discussion of agenda Meeting with national consultant Documentation review
Day 2	Detailed discussion with UNDP and Project team Documentation review
Day 3	Visit to sites
Day 4	Visit to site Stakeholder meeting Meetings in capital city with ministries
Day 5	Meeting in capital city with stakeholders and experts Documentation review
Day 6	Final meetings Report drafting
Day 7	Report presentation Debrief

Annex 3: Lists of Persons Interviewed

I- France – Arles

No	Name – number	Organization – function
1	Fabrice Bernard	CDL - Director of international cooperation
2	Jean Jalbert	TDV - Director General
3	Marc Lutz	Biodiversity Consultant
4	Sylvie Goyet	Regional Coordinator
5	Lamia Mansour	Former Regional coordinator
6	Tim Clairs	Regional coordinator UNDP/GEF Beirut
7	Raphael Mathevet	Socio Economic expert
8	Nik Ridderford	Ecology expert
9	Christophe De Castel	AFD/FFEM
10	Naik Foacon	ATEN
11	Spyros Kouvelis	Med Wet
12	Andrew Menz	UNOPS

II- Egypt

No	Name – number	Organization
1-	Dr. Isam Al Badri	National project manager
2-	Dr. Majda Ghneim	Socio Economic
3-	Dr. Moh'd Kassas	Project Advisor
4-	Waheed Salamah	EEAA – PA department
5-	Dr. Shreif Baha Eddin	EEAA – PA Project
6-	Dr. Mustafa Fouda	Chairman – EEAA
7-	40 participants in the site workshop	Burullus PA
8-	Dina Sadek	Deputy project manager/assistant
9-	James Rowley	UNDP – RR
10-	Dr. Moh'd Bayyoumi	UNDP CO – Env. Specialist and Ass. Res. Rep
11-	Rania Hdaya	UNDP CO – governance and rural development
12-	15 Fishermen - Burullus	Local CBOs
13-	5 Fishermen representatives – Burullus	Local CBOs
14-	40 Local stakeholders – Burullus	Stakeholders workshop
15-	Hamdeen Sabahi	Parliament member Burullus
16-	22 Site team – Burullus	Burullus PA
17-	2 Visiting researchers – Poland	Volunteers
18-	Mohammad Qerzouni	Head of Department MoA – Burullus
19-	Local union representatives	Secretary
20-	7 Fishermen - Zaranik	Zaranik PA
21-	8 Local shepherds, fishermen - Zaranik	Zaranik PA
22-	9 Women group – Zaranik	Women handicraft cooperative
23-	4 Site team – Zaranik	Zaranik PA
24-	14 site team – Omayyed	Omayyed PA
25-	30 local stakeholders – Omayyed	Stakeholders meeting
26-	2 Site team – agriculture dept.	Ministry of agriculture

27-	Dhaher Ahmad	EEAA – IMS dept.
28-	Majdi Tawfeeq	Project Diagnosis coordinator

III- Tunisia

No	Name – number	Organization
1-	Habib Ben Mousa	Project manager
2-	Munji Amoori	Chairman - Birds lovers NGO Cap Bon
3-	Ali Hili	Chairman - Birds lovers NGO Tunis
4-	Maher Mahjoub	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development
5-	Dali Najeh	Ministry of environment
6-	Chadly Rais	Consultant – Natural Heritage conservation
7-	Nadia Bechraoui	UNDP – Res. Rep.
8-	Sami Bel Haj	Consultant
9-	Yves Rajat	AFD
10-	Mahmoud Shihawi	Site Manager
11-	30 participant in site workshop in Nabl	Nabl
12-	Zainab Ferabs	Flora monitoring expert
13-	Bu Athour	Flora monitoring expert
14-	M. Talib	Uram consulting company
15-	Samia el Haj	Project assistant and database manager
16-	Hawaria cave guard	Hawaria
17-	Dar Shisho station staff	Dar Shishu
18-	12 Qurba municipality group	Qurba municipality
19-	2 Takelsa municipality group	Takelsa municipality
20-	31 Haouria meeting	Haouria municipality
21-	2 Local shepherds	Haouria
22-	5 Site team	MWC Project

IV- Morocco

No	**Name – number**	**Organization**
1-	Brahim Zyani	MATEE
2-	Ghita	Project manager
3-	Jaafar Bouljiouch	Pilot project unit section head, EIA section head Ministry of land management and env.
4-	Abdellah Ait Tihyaty	Consultant
5-	Yousef Slawi	Ex project manager
6-	Amer Moh'd Amer	Secretary General – ministry of land management and environment - MATEE
7-	Moh'd Agbani	Consultant
8-	Moh'd Sadek	Local director beni
9-	Mukhtari Hasan	Environment focal point – Berkane governorate
10-	Moh'd Khaloufi	Regional forestry department – Berkane
11-	Around 25 participant in site workshop Berkane	Berkane governorate

12-	Moh'd Badrawi	Director of Parks service
13-	Moh'd Mastour	PA department director
14-	Eric Mahe	Consultant
15-	Magdi Ibraheem	ENDA director
16-	Hamid Chrifi	ENDA rural development officer
17-	Med Seddiq	ENDA
18-	M. Boutaleb	ENDA – site team
19-	M. Cherqaoui	ENDA – site team
20-	Stephane Simonet	ENDA – EX rural dev. off.
21-	M. Menioui	Rabat university
22-	Jamily Sana	Project assistant

V- Albania

No	**Name**	**Institution**
1-	Marieta Mima	Executive Director - ECAT Tirana
2-	Shpresa Leka	Institute for Urban Planning
3-	Mihallaq Qirjo	Qebdra Rajonale E Mjedisit
4-	Valdimir Bego	Senior Mp expert
5-	19 participants in site workshop	Vlora region
6-	3 county staff – Vlora	Vlora county
7-	Vlioleta Zuna	National project manager
8-	Beno	National project assistant
9-	Petrit Dervishi	Local site coordinator
10-	Llazar Gyonca	Local site expert
11-	Zamir Dedej	Government focal point
12-	Sotir Dhamo	Co-plan GTZ
13-	3 HQ team	ECAT
14-	3 Forestry department staff	Pish Poro forestry dept.
15-	5 forestry dept. staff	Narta lagoon
16-	Batkhuyag Baldangombo	Assistant RR
17-	Elzira Sagynbaeva	Deputy RR

VI- Lebanon

1-	Sharbel Rizq	EX Project manager
2-	Maya Abboud	Acting Project manager

Annex 4: List of Documents Reviewed

General.

- Terms of Reference for the MedWestCoast Evaluation.
- Regional Coordinator's briefing note for the final evaluation of the MWC project
- GEF evaluation guidelines for implementing agencies conducting of final evaluations
- Project brief
- 2001 Management Review.
- Independent Mid-Term Review
- Various APR/PIR
- Convention entre la Fondation Sansouire et le Conservatoire de l'espace Littoral et des rivages lacustres
- Top 60 des articles ou brèves les plus lus
- Socio-economics and the conservation of Mediterranean Coasts and Wetlands - Lessons from the MedWetCoast Project
- Integrated Management of Mediterranean Wetlands (MEDWET, Tour Du Valat, 2005)
- Management Peer Review
- Protection de la nature en Mediterrannée "Pourquoi cela ne marche pas?"
- Capacity building through training management, Lessons learned from the MWC project, 2000-2005 (ATEN, december 2005)
- IUCN Guidelines series (n° 2,4,8,10 and 11)
- Ramsar Guidelines on Management Planning
- MEDWETCOAST Guidelines for site diagnosis reports
- MEDWETCOAST Framework paper for conducting the management plans of the MedWetCoast project sites
- MWC Powerpoint on Management methodology
- MWC Powerpoint on participation of local communities

Tunisia

- Project document
- Diagnosis reports and Management plans for the 3 sites
- Various PIR/APR reports
- Self-evaluation report
- Various budget information documents
- Agenda 21 workshops minutes and results
- Various documents (conventions and agreements, minutes of team meetings, of National steering committee meetings, reports of GEF/UNDP/UNOPS and FFEM/AFD missions and of expert mission, marches, terms of reference …..)
- Rapport final de la mission d'expertise technique de Baastel de février 2006
- Draft de la Stratégie Nationale des Zones Humides en Tunisie (juillet 2006)
- Rapport « Projet MWC Tunisie 2000-2006 » (sept 2006)
- Aide mémoire de la Mission de supervision du projet MWC-Tunisie (juin 2005)
- Analyse de la mise en place de la gestion des espaces naturels littoraux en Tunisie (rapport de stage ; juillet 2006)

- Recueil de textes législatifs sur la protection de l'environnement et de la biodiversité en Tunisie
- Rapport Provisoire « Suivi scientifique des sites du projet MWC », APAL, septembre 2006
- Biodiversité des écosystèmes côtiers et des zones humides du Cap-Bon, Tunisie (APAL)
- Plan de Gestion : méthodologie et processus, , APAL, mai 2005
- Rapport de diagnostic des sites MWC, partie « Population, économie locale et utilisation de l'espace », août 2001
- Projet de valorisation des sites culturels (diagnostic et étude de faisablitié) novembre 2002
- Projet d'aménagement d'un écomusée à Korba, décembre 2004
- Etude des plans de gestion des sites MWC (une vingtaine de documents relatifs à chacune des phases I, II et III pour les sites suivants : « Ecosystèmes Lagunaires de Maamoura à Kelibiaz », « Forêt d'Oued Laabid et de Dar Chichou », « Site littoral de Jbel El Haouaria » et « Site insulaire de Zembra et Zembretta »).
- Various project conventions (with CRDA, NGOs, municipalities, …..)

Albania.

- Project document
- Diagnosis reports and Management plans for the 2 sites
- Various PIR/APR reports
- Self-evaluation report
- Various budget information documents
- Human activity and resources exploitation in the area : Nartas Lagoon, Orikum, Karaburun Peninsula, Kanal, Sazan Island, may 2001
- Study on the wetlands of the Vlora Bay, 2001
- Technical report on Hydrometeorologivcal Peculiarities and Water Quality
- Evaluation of alternatives on selection of disposal site for solid waste of novosela municipality 2005 (not project)
- Report on Stakeholder analyzes and governance aspects april 2004
- Site diagnosis reports (socio-economic, fauna, flora, herpeto….),
- Terms of reference for the establishment of the regional ECO development fund in Vlora region (genral ToR and experts ToR) (study itself not yet done)
- Albanian National Wetland Strategy December 2005
- Environmental situation and Monitoring report 2000-2006. june 2006.
- Monitoring program of ecosystems/areas of Medwetcoast project. 2005
- Terms of reference
- Defining of the strategies for a sustainable management concerning the trophic state in the Lagoon of Narta and lagoon of Orikum
- Minutes of TPR and PSC, LSC meetings 2001-2006
- Urban Planning and Territorial Governance November 2004
- Strategy and action plan for the development of the Albanian tourism sector based on cultural and environmental tourism

Morocco.

- Project document
- Diagnosis reports for 5 sites and Management plan drafts for 2 sites

- Diagnostic socio-economique du site de l'embouchure de la Moulouya.
- Nouveau cadre logique MWC-Maroc (2005)
- Various PIR/APR reports
- Self-evaluation report
- Various budget information documents and contractual documents "prestations de service"
- Etude de mise en valeur éducative et écotouristique de l'embouchure de la Moulouya
- Schéma de Développement Urbain des villes Périphériques des SIBE de la région de l'oriental
- Aide mémoire de la 2ème mission de supervision du projet MWC-Maroc (mars 2004)
- Draft of National Wetland Strategy

Egypt

- Project document
- Diagnosis reports and Management plans for the 3 sites
- Study on socio-economic characteristics of Omeyyed PA
- Various PIR/APR reports
- Various working documents of the rural development/participatory approach expert
- Self-evaluation report
- Various budget information documents
- Fauna Monitoring Plan for Omeyyed PA
- Omeyyed PA rangeland study
- Bird monitoring program for Lake Burullus site.
- Bird and herpeto-fauna monitoring in Omeyyed PA
- Monitoring of flora in Zaranik PA
- Draft of National Wetland Strategy

Lebanon.

- Project document
- Diagnosis reports and Management plans for the 2 sites
- Various PIR/APR reports
- Self-evaluation report
- Various budget information documents

Regional component.

- Project document
- Various PIR/APR reports
- Self-evaluation report
- Various budget information documents
- Various regional training support documents (presentations, exercises, case studies, ……).

Annex 5: Detailed Methodology, Including Comprehensive Questionnaire

I Introduction

This report outlines the overall approach to the evaluation of the MedWetCoast Project. This methodology was elaborated and finalised in consultation with the international evaluation team members, UNDP/GEF and RCU. It was further developed based on feedback from the national evaluation experts and the national project teams, during the evaluation itself.

Evaluation Team

The team consisted of an International team leader (ITL), an International local development specialist, (ILDS), an International protected area specialist (IPAS) and in each country a National Evaluation Expert (NEE).

II Overview of the Project and Challenges to Evaluation

The GEF (rightly) requires an *evidence*-based approach to the final evaluation. That is, the evaluation findings should **not** be based on the evaluator's impressions, but on hard evidence. Preferably, this should be quantifiable. In this connection, ideally, evaluation should be undertaken with reference to a unique, fixed, clear, agreed and measurable set of targets. As the following sections set out, the fact that this is not possible for the MedWetCoast Project complicates the evaluation.

The Project covers 6 countries. In each, it has 1 Development Objective and 3 Immediate Objectives. These Objectives are broadly consistent across the countries. Each Objective is to be achieved through a detailed list of Outputs and Activities – these vary across the countries. The Project also has a regional (or 'umbrella') component, with a separate project document, and a related set of Objectives. This 'six plus one' nature of the project means there is no single set of objectives/outcomes/outputs/activities covering all the geographical areas of the project. This is the first challenge to evaluation.

To some extent, the project's logical framework *evolved* during project implementation, particularly with regards to the Outputs at the national level. This is a second challenge to evaluation.

The Project Documents do not contain good indicators. Indicators were developed during the early years of project implementation. In general, although useful, these indicators are not of the quality required by GEF for new proposals in 2006. Moreover, there are some inconsistencies in the internal logic of the indicators. This lack of clear, measurable indicators is a challenge to evaluation.

As requested by UNDP/GEF and the Evaluation TOR, the final evaluation is to investigate the following six categories:

1. Achievements of the Project, in terms of Impact (*)[45];
2. Sustainability (*);
3. Monitoring and reporting (*);
4. Implementation approach - (institutional arrangements, financial arrangements, coordination arrangements, technical support (*);
5. Participation (*);
6. Cost-effectiveness.

[45] A ranking should be provided for each of the categories marked (*).

GEF had not established these categories at project start-up and their importance grew ***after*** the project started implementation. Hence, the project was not geared to manage or monitor explicitly with respect to these categories. Hence, there is little available data structured along the lines of these categories. This is a further challenge to the evaluation in line with GEF requirements.

Moreover, in recent years, UNDP/GEF has introduced new monitoring tools. Two of these apply in particular to this project:

- The Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) for protected areas;
- Annex 1 to the PIR ('Impacts and Strategies related to the Strategic Priorities'), which provides a series of assessment questions, for example with regards to Protected Areas.

At the project outset, and in the project initial years, no data was collected specifically with reference to these tools.

Probably to a large extent a result of the above-mentioned complications, project reporting has not been consistent or comprehensive. Generally, monitoring reports have evolved in content and format.

Finally, mention should be made of the diversity across the countries involved in the project, in economic, political, cultural and development terms. This may be particularly relevant with regards to Albania, as all the other countries share a similar Arab culture.

III Evaluation Logframe,

In order to coherently evaluate the entire project, it was necessary to establish a single logical framework that applied to all countries. This made it possible to aggregate the findings across the countries, and to compare across the countries. A quick review of the project's logframe[46] revealed there was general consistency over the log-frames in terms of the Development and Immediate Objectives. One possible inconsistency was as follows:

The project documents clearly state that biodiversity will be protected and the root causes[47] of biodiversity degradation will be removed. However, a more in-depth reading of the project documents suggests that the initial focus was more on *protection* of biodiversity, rather than *removing root causes of biodiversity loss.* Notably, the indicators mostly reflect a protected area approach, as opposed to an ICDP or mainstreaming approach. This 'tension' has remained throughout the project. However, the Mid-Term Review strongly recommended an increased focus on socio-economic issues, and in response the projects evolved more to the 'root cause removal' strategy from the 'biodiversity protection' strategy. One role of the Evaluation was to determine if the project was led by a protected area approach.

It is noted that the Protected Area and ICDP approaches are complementary, and they were addressed through this evaluation in an integrated manner.

Hence, and based on a consideration of the various logframes, this evaluation assessed the following single logframe pertaining to the overall project (including the 6 national and 1 regional components):

Objective

> 'To conserve globally endangered species and their habitat, recognising wildlife conservation as an integral part of sustainable human development, while improving capacity of government and non-government agencies to address biodiversity conservation issues'.

Outcomes

[46] From the 6 national and 1 regional project documents
[47] It is understood that these are largely socio-economic, although some may be political or cultural.

1. National policies and tools to address policy related root causes of the loss of wetland and coastal biodiversity are promoted and capacity is developed.

2.1 Important biodiversity sites are managed for biodiversity conservation and are protected, including related capacity building and sustainability.

2.2 At important biodiversity sites and surrounding areas, biodiversity conservation is adequately integrated into local economic and political decision-making, including related capacity building.

3. The 'Mediterranean Circle' is closed - knowledge has been transferred and sustainable knowledge-sharing mechanisms are effective.

The evaluation first assessed the project in each country with respect to this logframe. Then, an aggregate evaluation was prepared for the six-country initiative.

Outcome 2.2 may be a special case. A review of the project documents revealed that the related strategy, outputs and indicators were very weak at the time of project approval. This suggests that, possibly, not all stakeholders had a firm understanding or appreciation of this Outcome at the project outset. Possibly, this increasingly became part of the overall strategy to conserving biodiversity, as international experience was increasingly absorbed by the project team.

In line with GEF evaluation procedures, for **each[48] of the above Outcomes**, the following six categories were assessed:

1. Achievements of the Project, in terms of Impact;
2. Sustainability;
3. Monitoring and reporting;
4. Implementation approach - (institutional arrangements, financial arrangements, coordination arrangements, technical support);
5. Participation;
6. Cost-effectiveness.

Finally, GEF also provides five specific monitoring and evaluation criteria: impact, effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and sustainability. As appropriate, and in harmony with the other evaluation criteria, these were addressed appropriately in all sections of the report.

IV General Approach to the Evaluation in Each Country

Once all the experts reviewed documentation, and the International Experts had prepared the detailed list of questions and issues (see next Section and Annex) to be covered by the evaluation, the steps in each country were:

1. The National Project Team prepared a report discussing achievements and challenges of the project. A format for the report was prepared by the Evaluation Team.

2. Based on the list of issues/questions prepared with the support of the international experts (Annex), the National Evaluation Expert held structured interviews with national stakeholders. These interviews focussed mostly on the Project Objective – they did not get down to the details of Outcomes.

3. The National Evaluation Expert prepared a concise report outlining his/her findings.

4. After the arrival of the international experts in the country:

[48] Where applicable

- Initial meetings;
- ITL focused on Outcome 1. This was mainly through structured interviews with national level stakeholders;
- IPAS and IDLS focused respectively on Outcomes 2.1 and 2.2. This was partly through a stakeholder workshop to be held at one of the sites with participation from all sites. This stakeholder workshop was an important element in the evaluation. This workshop also helped ensure the *credibility* of the evaluation findings;
- Follow-up structured interviews and documentation reading by all experts

5. Prior to departure, the international experts provided a briefing to the Project Team on their initial findings, and when time permitted, there was an in-depth debate.

6. In the following days/weeks, the reports were finalised and submitted for comment and review.

V Factors to be Evaluated

This Section aims to answer:

- What questions should the evaluation ask? – see Attachment for details;
- How should the questions be asked, and to who? – see below;

Approach to Evaluating the Project Objective

'*to conserve globally endangered species and their habitat, recognising wildlife conservation as an integral part of sustainable human development, while improving capacity of government and non-government agencies to address biodiversity conservation issues'*.

Approach

In each country the Evaluation team worked on this together. The team developed a joint opinion, based to the extent possible on the following factors:

- The status of indicator species (if possible);
- Results of investigation into a series of key issues and questions – see Attachment;
- A consideration of progress overall with regards to Outcomes 1, 2.1 and 2.2 in the country[49].

Notably, the latter two focus on institutional, policy, legal and capacity aspects of the project performance.

At the regional level, the three international experts worked on this together. The team then gave a joint opinion, based on the aggregate of the national projects and on the findings for Outcome 3.

The International Team Leader was directly responsible for coordinating this, and for drafting the final reports.

Approach to Evaluating the Project Outcomes

Outcome 1. *National policies and tools to address policy related root causes of the loss of wetland and coastal biodiversity are promoted and capacity is devel*oped.

[49] That is, the *evidence* from the Outcomes helped justify the evaluation of progress towards the Objective (The rational for this is that the indicators for the Objective in the project documents are even weaker than the indicators for the Outcomes).

The International Team Leader directly coordinated this – i.e. he finalised the methodology, he oversaw the collection of data, and drafted the concerned sections of the report. All experts provided comments and support as appropriate.

Information was mainly collected through document review and structured interviews.

A detailed list of issues and questions was prepared – see Attachment.

Outcome 2.1 *Important biodiversity sites are managed for biodiversity conservation and are protected, including related capacity building and sustainability*.

The International Protected Area Specialist (IPAS) was directly responsible for this – i.e. for finalising the methodology, collecting the data, and drafting the concerned sections of the report. All experts provided comments and support as appropriate.

The stakeholder workshop was a key tool to collect data and analyse impact.

A detailed list of issues and questions has been prepared – see Attachment.

It is noted that the METT methodology was used to evaluate the support provided by the project to the protected area, not to evaluate the overall progress at the protected area.

Outcome 2.2 *At important biodiversity sites and surrounding areas, biodiversity conservation is adequately integrated into local economic and political decision-making, including related capacity building.*

The International Local Development Specialist (ILDS) was directly responsible for this – i.e. for finalising the methodology, collecting the data, and drafting the concerned sections of the report. All experts provided comments and support as appropriate.

The stakeholder workshop was a key tool to collect data and analyse impact.

A detailed list of issues and questions has been prepared – see Attachment.

Outcome 3 *The 'Mediterranean Circle' is closed - knowledge has been transferred and sustainable knowledge-sharing mechanisms are effective*.

This was considered from the perspective of Outcomes 1 and 2. E.g., with regards to managing/protecting important sites (Outcome 2.1), has knowledge been transferred, and have sustainable knowledge-sharing mechanisms been developed?

This is a 'regional outcome'. It cannot be achieved at a country level. However, data will be collected at both national level (hopefully, including countries not directly involved in the project) and regional level.

The International Experts shared responsibility for this, in line with their Outcome responsibilities. The International Team Leader was directly responsible for coordinating this, and for drafting the final report.

As mentioned above, for each of the Outcomes, success is to be determined in terms of the following *success criteria*:

- Achievements of the Project, in terms of Impact (*);
- Sustainability (*);
- Monitoring and reporting and adaptive management – was it useful? How did the Project react to findings, changing situations and new knowledge (*);

- Regionality – to what extent was the 'Mediterranean Circle closed'?, and to what extent were regional benefits generated (*);
- Implementation approach - (institutional arrangements and project governance, financial arrangements, coordination arrangements, technical support (*);
- Participation – were the appropriate, relevant people involved, and in the most appropriate manner(*)?;
- Cost-effectiveness

In addition, for each Outcome, the evaluation shall consider:

- Project design – was it appropriate?, and how could it have been improved?;
- Project appraisal period – was it appropriate and useful?.

For each Outcome, the Evaluation provided a focussed summary of gaps, results, findings and lessons learnt. As appropriate, it also suggested or proposed next steps or follow up actions to be adopted by the various stakeholders and institutions responsible for the project mandate.

In line with GEF Evaluation requirements, rankings were provided for each item marked (*). Initially, individual country ranking were also provided, but these were not considered useful in the final report.

VI What could reasonably be expected from the project?

Ideally an evaluation should evaluate against either:

- Agreed, measurable targets at the project outset. No targets were set at the beginning of this project. Some targets were established for some of the Outcomes in some countries as the project progressed. However, there is no a systematic set of measurable targets against which project success can be clearly assessed; Or,
- The counter-factual cases – i.e what would have happened without a project. This would require, at least, a full analysis of (i) other similar sites in each of the project countries (ii) progress in other, similar countries; Or,
- Success will be evaluated compared to 'what could reasonably have been expected at the project outset'.

All the above are very challenging in the present project. To the extent possible, the evaluation adopts an approach combining all three. Based on the initial situation, and on the initial expectations of the project sponsors, and on the experience of the Evaluation Team, the Evaluation Team retrospectively identified a series of targets for *'what it could be reasonable for the project to achieve'*. In each case, the Team remained conservative, so as not to be too demanding of the projects. More information on this is provided in Annex 5a.

During the evaluation, the Evaluation Team assessed progress compared to what they considered 'reasonable', and used this as the ultimate basis for drawing conclusions.

In addition, it was necessary to ensure 'attribution'. That is, that the progress in the participating countries was sufficiently attributable to the actions under this project.

Attachment – Detailed list of Questions/Issues to be Covered by the Evaluation[50]

Notes: The following is developed based on Egypt, It will be modified slightly for each country;
The symbol * means we must provide a 'ranking'
The symbol (E) means this is specific to the Egypt project logframe
The symbol (I) means this is taken from the overall project logframe, and should be reported on.

Overall Project and Objective Level

Project appraisal period
- Was it appropriate and useful?;
- How did this contribute to project design?
- How did this contribute to project implementation arrangements?
- How did this contribute to project success?

Achievements of the Project, in terms of Impact (*)
- Is there a good biodiversity indicator at the project sites (e.g. population of key species)? Has it been monitored, what are the results?
- How has the project contributed to establishing and extending protected areas, and improving their management?
- How has the project contributed to conserving and ensuring the sustainable use of biological resources in the production environment (landscapes and seascapes)?
- Has the project contributed to improve the enabling environment through effective policies, institutional capacity building, increased public awareness, appropriate stakeholder involvement, promoting conservation and sustainable use research, leveraging resources and providing incentives for conservation? Give evidence or explain.
- What is the project contribution to replication or scaling up of innovative practices or mechanisms that support the project objectives?
- (I) Have the globally significant sites been legally protected?
- (I) Are protection and conservation activities being undertaken to preserve and further protected biodiversity on threatened sites?
- (I) Has training and technical assistance been provided to the local people and national team? Was it effective, give evidence.
- (I) Have there been opportunities for networking and exchange of experience at regional level?

Sustainability (*);
- What is the likelihood that financial and economic resources will be available so that the project outcomes/benefits will be sustained once the GEF assistance ends?
- Did the project develop and implement a sustainability strategy?
- Did the project establish financial and economic instruments and mechanisms to ensure the ongoing flow of benefits once the GEF assistance ends (from the public and private sectors, income generating activities, and market transformations to promote the project's objectives)?
- Did the project develop suitable organizational arrangements by public and/or private sector?
- Did the project develop policy and regulatory frameworks that further the project objectives?
- Did the project incorporate environmental and ecological factors affecting future flow of benefits?
- Did the project develop appropriate institutional capacity (systems, structures, staff, expertise, etc.) **?**
- Has the recipient government maintained financial commitment to the project?;
- Has the government approved policies and/or modified regulatory frameworks in line with the project's objectives?
- Have any innovative financial instruments been developed?

[50] The following sources of 'questions' were used: Annexes (4 and 6) of the MWC Final Evaluation TOR; Section X of the PIR 2006 format; the METT Tool; the document 'Monitoring, evaluating and reporting for sustainable land management in SIDS/LDC countries; Annex 1 to PIR; Tracking Tools for BD1 and BD 2; the detailed of the project logframes; comments and suggestions of RCU.

Monitoring and reporting and adaptive management (*)

- was it useful?
- How did the Project react to findings, changing situations and new knowledge?;
- Was an appropriate M&E system for the project put in place and did it allow for tracking of progress towards projects objectives (M & E tools might include a baseline, clear and practical indicators and data analysis systems, or studies to assess results planned and carried out at specific times in the project)?;
- Was there sufficient capacity and resources to implement the M&E system?
- Was the M&E system used for project management?
- Has information been collected regarding indicators?
- Have there been any changes to the project logframe or strategy, or indicators?

Implementation approach (*)
(institutional arrangements and project governance, financial arrangements, coordination arrangements, technical support)

- What was the role of the RCU in project implementation? Was it beneficial? Was it cost-effective? How could it have been improved?
- What was the role of the UNDP CO in project implementation? Was it beneficial? Was it sufficient? How could it have been improved?
- What was the role of the UNDP/GEF in project implementation? Was it beneficial? Was it sufficient? How could it have been improved?
- Was the logical framework used during implementation as a management and M&E tool?
- Were effective partnerships arrangements established for implementation of the project with relevant stakeholders involved in the country/region?
- Were lessons from other relevant projects incorporated into project implementation?
- Was the feedback from M&E activities used for adaptive management?

Cost-effectiveness

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

Outcome 1 *National policies and tools to address policy related root causes of the loss of wetland and coastal biodiversity are promoted and capacity is develo*ped

Project design

- was it appropriate?;
- how could the design have been better?
- Did the project concept originate within national sectoral and development plans?

Achievements of the Project, in terms of Impact (*)

- Are the legal frameworks, policies and governance and public administration structures and processes in place to support the objectives of the project and the continued flow of benefits?
- Are the required systems for accountability and transparency and the required technical know-how are in place?
- Has the project gone over and above what it should have done??
- Have there been any ‘good’ surprises?

- (I) Have the sites been legally protected by national legislation?
- (I) Has there been any new acts or amendment to existing acts?
- (I) Are political decision-makers aware of and involved in the project?
- (I) What is the status of national wetland policy (compliant with Ramsar convention)?
- (I) What financial and human resources are allocated at the national level to the project and its follow-up?
- (I) Is there evidence of appropriate organizational change to support cross-sectoral planning and project outcomes?
- (I) What is the status of the National Steering Committee?
- (E) Has the national wetland strategy and action plan been established/being implemented? [51]
- (E) Has the national wetland data-base been established, and is it being used to monitor Egypt's wetlands using MedWet methodology?
- (E) is monitoring of land-use changes in and around the Med protected areas been undertaken, and is it using the central NCS GIS system (analyse satellite and aerial images) developed through the project?

Sustainability (*);
- Have the project outcomes (or potential outcomes) been incorporated into the national sectoral and development plans?
- Did the project identify and involve champions (i.e. individuals in government and civil society who can promote sustainability of project outcomes)?

Regionality (*)
- to what extent was the 'Mediterranean Circle closed'?, and to what extent were regional benefits generated?;
- Has there been knowledge transfer across the project sites, across the countries, or with other countries (knowledge transfer may be in the form of dissemination of lessons through project result documents, training workshops, information exchange, a national and regional forum, etc)?
- Has there been expansion or duplication of demonstration projects?
- Has there been capacity building and training of individuals, and institutions to expand the project's achievements in the country or to other countries?
- Have the individuals (institutions or companies) trained by the project been used to replicate the project's outcomes in other countries?
- Has the project compiled any lessons or good practices?
- Have any of the lessons or demonstrations from the project been adopted elsewhere?

Participation (*)
- Do the various key stakeholders perceive a continued flow of benefits to be in their interest?
- Were the appropriate, relevant people involved, and in the most appropriate manner;
- Were the relevant country representatives (e.g., governmental official, civil society, etc.) actively involved in project identification, planning and/or implementation?
- Did the project implement effective outreach/public awareness campaigns?
- Did the project consult and make effective use of the skills, experiences and knowledge of NGOs, community and local groups, the private and public sectors, and academic institutions in the design, implementation, and evaluation of project activities?
- Were the Project institutional networks well placed within the overall national or community organizational structures, for example, by building on the local decision making structures, incorporating local knowledge, and devolving project management responsibilities to the local organizations or communities as the project approaches closure?
- Did the project effectively build partnerships among different project stakeholders?

[51] Items marked (E) are specific to the Egypt logical framework

Outcome 2.*1* *Important biodiversity sites are managed for biodiversity conservation and are protected, including related capacity building and sustainability.*

Project design
- Was it appropriate in terms of PAs?;
- Was it based on national priorities, strategies and needs?
- Was it based on any previous national initiatives?

Achievements of the Project, in terms of Impact (*)
- How was the planning processes for the PA handled?
- Was management plan developed for the site?
- Who prepared the management plan and how involved were the site teams in the process?
- How was the plan designed and based on which standards?
- How effective was the plan implemented? Number of outputs achieved, activities implemented ..etc?
- Was there a clear monitoring and evaluation program of the plan?
- Were there enough financial resources to implement the plan?
- Was their any capacity building done for the site team in plan implementation and M & E?
- How many staff does the PA have? How are their costs covered?

Sustainability (*);
Is the PA making any income? How is it sustaining its existence?
Are their PA team in place? Are they national, local, expatiates?
Did the PA have a business plan?
Are there any tourism activies taking place in the PA? How much of the running and development costs are being covered?
What is the legal status of the PA? Was a specific law or decree developed for it?
What is the level of qualifications and skills of the sites management team?
What is the level of delegation given to them in managing human and financial resources?

Regionality (*)
- to what extent was the 'Mediterranean Circle closed'?, and to what extent were regional benefits generated;
- Did the project help set up other PAs in the country and the region? How many and through what means?
- Were there any regional exchange done for PAs?
- Were there any regional documentations or publications done to share lessons, best practices and guidelines?
- How was the knowledge generated by the project for the PAs handled? Where is it now? How can other access it?
- How did the PA teams from various countries communicate in relation to PAs?
- How was the language and other cultural differences handled?
- Was the project successful in choosing to regionalize its intervention in terms of PAs? Explain how?

Participation (*)
- were the appropriate, relevant people involved, and in the most appropriate manner;
- who was involved in the PA planning and management?
- What approaches were used in involving the various stakeholders' particularly local communities?
- What mechanisms and tools were used in informing stakeholders?
- How were stakeholders involved in monitoring and evaluating performance?
- Do local communities have any say in decisions regarding the PA planning and management? How?
- Do local communities have any share of the benefits from the PA? How?
- How did the structure of the PA team developed to ensure continuous communication with stakeholders?

Cost-effectiveness

- How cost effective was the planning for the PA? What could have been improved?
- How effective is the management of the PA now? How can it be improved?
- Was the project investment sufficient to achieve its goals in the PA?
- How is PA costs covered today?
- What is the level of government commitment to its management?
- Are the current allocations (income) sufficient?

Outcome 2.2 *At important biodiversity sites and surrounding areas, biodiversity conservation is adequately integrated into local economic and political decision-making, including related capacity building.*

Context - baseline

- What were the most important problems at local level, at the start of the project, as regards biodiversity, in your project area(s)? Please characterise these problems in a as precise as possible way (qualitatively and quantitatively);
- What practices or decisions by local stakeholders were these problems related?
- By what factors were these practices/decisions determined?

Project design

- What local level threats/constraints to biodiversity, related to economic, social, cultural and politic aspects, were identified at the start of the project? (complete list or examples);
- How have the nature and the intensity of the relation between these threats/constraints and the economic, social, cultural and politic aspects/constraints (be they local or not) been assessed? (complete list or examples);
- Have these threats been hierarchised by level of seriousness? (complete list or examples);
- When the strategic analysis was done, what articulation between and hierarchy of problems on local and national level were assessed?;
- What protected area objectives have been formulated and what protected area design and other project activities developed while taking into account in a realistic way the threats and constraints mentioned above ? (examples);
- Have these economic, social, cultural and politic aspects been explicitly related to well identified decision makers/stakeholders? (examples);
- What type of local action was defined beforehand for all of the national components?;
- What local strategy of action was defined for the national component of the project in your country?;
- What specific training activities related to outcome 2.2 have been planned in your country? (examples of target groups, corresponding training objectives and activities);

Achievements of the Project, in terms of Impact and Sustainability (*) - Inputs

- What specific human resources - personnel, necessary for taking into account these economic, social, cultural and politic aspects on the local level have been affected at different stages of the project cycle (project design, project implementation, monitoring and evaluation)?;
- Idem for specific material resources (equipment, “consommables”, other recurrent costs, …..).

Achievements of the Project, in terms of Impact and Sustainability (*) - Process

- Has the project strategy evolved (explicitly or implicitly) during its implementation? ;
- What local natural resources were addressed by the project ?;
- What local natural resources were concerned by “pure protection aspects” of the project?;
- What local natural resources were concerned by sustainable production aspects of the project?;
- Which relevant economic, social, cultural and politic issues defined by the project design have been effectively taken into account on the local level? (give precise examples).;
- Has the monitoring and evaluation design been implemented in a satisfactory way as regards to the specific economic, social, cultural and politic aspects that had been outlined? (examples);

- (Idem for training of all personnel and stakeholders);
- Which awareness raising activities have been conducted at local level, targeting what stakeholders?.

Achievements of the Project, in terms of Impact and Sustainability (*) - Project outputs and outcomes (to be distinguished later on)

- Obtain a list of current decisions made "in and around the area" with participation of local stakeholders, as a result of the project;
- Obtain a list of current decisions made "in and around the area" with consultation of local stakeholders, as a result of the project;
- Obtain a list of current decisions made "in and around the area" with taking into account issues important for local stakeholders, as a result of the project;
- Obtain a description of socio-economic activities supported by the project (both natural resource related and not natural resource related);
- Do project supported socio-economic activities have good viability ? (give micro/macro-economic indicators, ….);
- For local natural resources concerned by sustainable production aspects of the project, what changes were obtained in production? (indicate baseline and final situation).
- For local natural resources concerned by sustainable production aspects of the project, what changes were obtained in sales? (indicate baseline and final situation);
- For local natural resources concerned by sustainable production aspects of the project, what changes were obtained in income of local stakeholders? (indicate baseline and final situation);
- For each of the practices/decisions related to the most important problems at local level, at the start of the project, as regards biodiversity, which were the most significant changes and innovative activities since the start of the project? (some local sectors and aspects possible concerned: politics, spatial planning, agriculture, forestry, tourism, respect of legislation (restrictions on hunting and fishing activities; removal of illegal activities; infractions observed and reported), (indicate baseline and final situation);
- These changes were they a result of the project?;
- Has the project improved the markets or profitability for biodiversity friendly business? (output). If yes, list business / industry: eg. tourism, agricultural "organic" products, etc and list the changes for each;
- Has the project resulted in certification or certification systems for any products? (output). If yes, list products being certified: eg. timber, coffee, etc;
- Has the project increased the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits of biodiversity? (output). If yes, list the results (list of benefits, products, incomes; details on beneficiary groups or individuals, ….) and the actions taken to attain them (eg. changing policy, changing regulations, training communities, raising awareness, etc);
- What (other) changes in local awareness as regards to biodiversity (importance, problems, solutions, …) were obtained (give precise examples, indicators)?;
- Looking back over the last 15 years, what do you think are the most important changes in the ….. region? What caused this change?;
- Looking back over the last 15 years, what were the most important changes in your personal life/work in the project area?

Participation (*)

- What formal tools were planned for and effectively used by the project (for problem, potential and solution analysis, analysis of stakeholders and analysis by stakeholders, local institution building and /or reinforcement (internal operational and/or formal organisation and communication), communication – direction, targets, approaches/procedures, supports - inter stakeholder conflict resolution, seeking of areas of convergence between preservation and resource use, identifying stakeholder capacity building needs)?;
- What participatory activities were planned (P) and done (D) (field workshops, other workshops, informative meetings, visits, training, …..)?;

- What were the products of each of activities done ? (built relations or trust; jointly defined objectives, decisions, solutions, actions, ….)?;
- What stakeholders and/or target groups were taken into consideration (supposedly, at the start and effectively, afterwards)(prominent institutional and private decision makers, marginal groups, women; in- and out-of-system; ….)?;
- Which should have been and have effectively been the different ways, stages and levels of effective implication of each of these stakeholders? (identification, conception, decision making, implementation, execution, …. ; individual, local, regional, ….)?;
- How did all these aspects evolve during project implementation?;
- What were the most important practical aspects of the local Management Plan that were the result of these implications of local stakeholders?;
- Was participatory monitoring and evaluation with local stakeholders done during the project? Please give precise examples with results/outputs?
- What is the status of the site management committee (goals, responsibilities, legal prerogatives, ..)?;
- What are the profiles of members of the local management committees?;
- What are the operational procedures of the local management committees?;
- How do local management committees effectively function? (number of meetings, subjects treated, decisions taken, impact on site management plan, decisions implemented; interaction with stakeholders, interaction with local management units, various problems, ….)?;
- Specific problems met in participatory approach?;.
- For outcome 2.2 (taking into account biodiversity in local decision making) replication, what did the project plan and achieve as for:
    - budget
    - activities
    - outputs?
- What obstacles to efficient local action, resulting from out-of-system (national, regional; legal, institutional, economic; ….) inadequacies were identified during the project?;
- What other "new" major local constraints were identified during the project?

Regionality (*)

- to what extent was the 'Mediterranean Circle closed'?, and to what extent were regional benefits generated;

Outcome 3 *The 'Mediterranean Circle' is closed - knowledge has been transferred and sustainable knowledge-sharing mechanisms are effective*

Outcome 3 is aggregated from the 'regionality' section under Outcomes 1, 2.1 and 2.2.

Annex 5a – Introduction to how the 'reasonably expected targets' were set.

The project documents were prepared almost a decade ago and did not provide a clear logical framework or adequate indicators and targets. The various project planning and design documents provide an array of possible objectives, targets and indicators. However, none of these documents clearly define the baseline[52] or the targets to be achieved by the project. Nor do they provide effective indicators of success. Hence, in line with UNDP/GEF evaluation guidelines, the Evaluation Team had to determine the baseline and determine what would be reasonable achievements of the project, or targets. Then, the Team assessed progress relative to what was determined reasonable. Accordingly, for each Outcome, with regards to *impacts,* the Evaluation Team carefully considered the project starting point and established, retrospectively, *reasonable* targets which it felt that the project should have reached.

This sub-annex provides additional information on how this was done. It is important to note that this retrospective target-setting *could only be done after the Evaluation Team had visited most sites and met with most participants.* I.e. it was only towards the end of the evaluation and *after* all country visits that the Evaluation Team had enough information to retrospectively set targets. This limited the ability to discuss these targets directly with the project teams, and even with the national evaluation consultants.

The steps to retrospectively setting these reasonable targets are set out below.

Information collection

Within the general framework of the evaluation activities, the Team collected information on what was happening and what was possible in the region and in the participating countries. The Team looked mostly at the natural resources sector, but was not limited to this sector. For example, through this it became clear that 'changing behaviour' is challenging and time-consuming in all the countries, and targets should be set below. Likewise, the Team realised that it would not be reasonable to achieve more than one policy advance in each country – these things take too much time, and there are too many uncertainties. However, overall, the Team did feel that some policy advances should have been made after seven years of project implementation. Also, the ground was set in each country for significant advances on protected area management.

At this stage, the ongoing interactions with the national evaluation consultants also played a key role in identifying what was generally possible in the countries.

Based on this information collection, the Team had an overall idea for the kind of advances the project should have supported in each country.

Benchmarking with similar projects in similar countries

The Evaluation Team has experience of similar projects in over 40 countries, including most countries in the 'southern' Mediterranean, North Africa and the Middle East. Based on this experience, the Team was in a position to estimate what the MWC project should have achieved, with its given budget and timeframe, during the implementation period. For example, the protected area system in Jordan was used as an 'upper' limit as to what could be achieved, – although it is clear that no country could start from zero and reach this level within the project timeframe. This benchmarking also allowed a clarification of what should be considered "innovative" in the region, in the implementation period. For example, the knowledge of many projects in the countries and the region illustrated that some of things being attempted by MWC were not particularly innovative or groundbreaking.

[52] Either in terms of the situation at the project outset, or in terms of the situation that there would have been in 2006 if there had been no project.

Based on this, the Team could be more precise in terms of the targets to have been reached by the MWC project, with regards to each Outcome.

Allowing for the cross-cutting and multi-headed nature of the project.

The Team recognises that the MWC project was active on many fronts: national and local; protected area management and biodiversity mainstreaming; training and policy development. Accordingly, allowance had to be made to lower the targets. For example, if the project had only attempted one thing in a given country (e.g. developing a wetland's strategy) the targets would have been set considerably higher.

However, in certain cases, this effect works both ways. In some cases the many fronts addressed by the project could be mutually reinforcing. For example, undertaking training and developing a wetland's strategy should be mutually reinforcing. Doing either of these should contribute to the other. Allowance was also made for this.

After allowing for the fact that the MWC project had multiple objectives, the targets for each objective were lowered accordingly.

Setting targets

Based on the above, each international expert first attempted to identify reasonable targets for his/her field of expertise. These were then reviewed, discussed, and revised, first by the three international experts. Next, at the regional evaluation meeting in Tunis, each national expert provided feedback on the estimates.

Adopting the lowest estimate as the targets

It was recognised that the project was innovative and cut across many sectors and fields, and covered six quite different countries. It took place in a complex environment. In general, the team felt it important not to be over-ambitious, and hence selected the least ambitious target as the most reasonable. For example, for Outcome 2.2, the reasonable targets related to only implementing demonstration activities, and not to the more ambitious changes of behaviour/attitude.

Validation

The reasonable targets were introduced to the RAC meeting in Marrakech in November 2006. The only comments received were from the RC:

- That the reasonable targets set by the Team for Outcome 2.2 were too low, too lenient. However, the Evaluation decided to keep these targets;
- That the reasonable targets selected for Outcome 3 are based on the Project Brief, and not the Project Documents, and this is unfair because during implementation the project team followed the Documents, not the Brief. However, the Team feels that at the Outcome level, the Brief and Documents are consistent - differences appear at a lower level in the project logical framework. Also, no alternative targets were suggested.

Annex 5b - Introduction to 'counting' biodiversity related development actions.

Introduction.

Outcome 2.2 of the MWC Project states that "At important biodiversity sites and surrounding areas, biodiversity conservation is adequately integrated into local economic and political decision-making, including related capacity building".

To achieve this outcome, the project directly targeted grass-root actors (essentially natural resource users and other actors whose actions directly impact environment and biodiversity) and local institutional actors (administrative departments, elected bodies and NGOs at the intermediate and sub-national levels).

As pointed out in Section 4.1.3, the evaluation of Outcome 2.2 took as a main indicator the number of biodiversity related actions effectively implemented by the project in order to demonstrate successful behaviour change of these actors. These actions, which simultaneously targeted socio-economic development and biodiversity conservation, are referred to as 'biodiversity-development actions'. These actions are divided into four categories: changing policy and practices of institutional actors; introducing new livelihood activities that benefit from biodiversity; modifying existing livelihood activities that benefit from biodiversity, and; establishing biodiversity/development trade-offs.

In order to assess the project success, the evaluation team had to count these actions. In order to 'count' these actions, some practical questions had to be answered. These are discussed briefly in this sub-annex, and relate to:

- the "size" of the actions;
- how to count of actions that were undertaken at several sites;
- clearly distinguishing between *protection* measures and *biodiversity development* actions;
- clearly distinguishing between *biodiversity development* actions and actions that focus on development without a direct link to and biodiversity;
- what actions count as 'trade-offs'?s

The following sections describe how the Evaluation team resolved these issues.

In addition, the evaluation looked at the pure development actions supported by the project with no intrinsic link to biodiversity, but that may have served as a means to facilitate the implementation of biodiversity related actions. However, the number of these was not used as an indicator of success.

1. The "size" of the actions was not taken into account.

Clearly, there is a difference between actions with different "physical" size and different budgetary costs. Thus, improving biodiversity on 10 hectares of rangeland is different from doing it on 3.500 hectares. Likewise, dredging a seawater inlet costs far more than, for example, developing female handicraft activities. Moreover, an action involving 4 fishermen is in some sense less important than one that involves directly 10 fishermen and that affects 55 other fishermen.

Theoretically, it might have been possible to weigh actions, so as to take into account these parameters – and, for example, a 'big' action could have counted for two 'small' actions. The evaluation team decided not to do this for several reasons.

1. The main reason is that, as was explained in section 4.1.3, expected impact under Outcome 2.2 was limited to "*demonstrate* how to change practices/behaviour". Thus, the qualitative aspect of these actions takes precedence over their "size" (it is noted that the size was in most cases very modest anyway).

Hence, the demonstrative effect is important. And a small activity may have as much, or more, demonstrative power as a larger one.

2. It is not possible to compare the different physical size of different types of actions (e.g. planting fodder shrubs and promoting legal fishing gear).

3. Finally, if we were to consider different activities, a common parameter to measure the action would be necessary. For example, this could be its "cost" or the "number of beneficiaries". However, the information available to the evaluation team with regards to individual actions was not sufficiently complete to allow for the systematic use of such parameters.

Accordingly, the only indicator used was the number of implemented actions.

2. The same Actions undertaken at several sites were only counted once.

In some countries, some strictly identical actions were undertaken twice, at two different sites (e.g. promoting legal fishing gear in Egypt or supporting beekeeping in Tunisia). For the reasons set out above, these were only counted as one action. Notably, the 'demonstrative aspect' is the same for one or for two identical actions.

3. How to distinguish between a site 'protection' measure and a biodiversity-development actions.

The indicator used for Outcome 2.2 is the number of biodiversity-development actions. Hence, an action implemented by the project that focuses *only on protection* does not count, even if it is very successful. In many cases it is easy to distinguish – an action is clearly either 'protection' or 'biodiversity-development'. Many actions, for example building fences, are clearly for protection. They do not have a development aspect and they do not directly aim to change behaviours. Other actions are clearly biodiversity-development actions, for example changing the harvesting system and timetable for medicinal plants.

However, many activities lie in between these two extremes and it is very difficult to determine if it is a 'protection' activity or a 'biodiversity-development action'.

The main criteria used to determine whether an action was 'protection' or a 'biodiversity-development' is whether the action was designed to "changed behaviour", or whether it led to behaviour change. Any action that was designed to change behaviour, or did change behaviour, was counted as a biodiversity development action. Using this criteria, two technically similar actions can be categorized either as "protection" or "biodiversity-development" according to whether its implementation led to changed behaviour or attitudes of local actors or not.

In order to illustrate, let's take an example: the inlet and canal dredging in lake Burullus (Egypt) was financed by the project and the national budget. It is not considered a biodiversity development action, but a site protection action. There is no evidence of changed behaviour or attitudes through this action, and it was not designed to change behaviour. However, the same action in lake Zaranik was partly financed by the local salt industry. This activity was developed in consultation with the project and local fishermen. Although there is no proof, the Evaluation Team feel this approach is likely to have led to changed behaviour towards the economic management of the lake, and it therefore counts as a biodiversity development activity.

4. The distinction between a 'biodiversity development' action and a pure development action, with no direct impact on biodiversity.

The evaluation team only counted biodiversity related development actions. That is, development actions that were supported by the project that were not directly related to biodiversity were not counted. Even if the action possibly created favourable conditions (e.g., by building mutual confidence and understanding; or helping resource users to work with other partners) for the biodiversity project implementation.

In many cases it is difficult to differentiate. In such cases, the Evaluation Team gave the project the *benefit of the* doubt. I.e., if it is not clear whether the project had a direct link or not to biodiversity, it is counted as a biodiversity development action. For example, the following actions were *all counted*:

- changing policy and practices of institutional actors:
    - establishing a new local regulation forbidding construction in and at a given distance from the to-be-protected site;
    - establishing a permanent waste collection system in the neighbourhood surrounding the site in order to prevent uncontrolled waste disposal;
- introducing new livelihood activities benefiting from biodiversity:
    - ecotourism based on the biodiversity and landscape value of site;
- modifying existing biodiversity livelihood activities:
    - promoting improved or reduced grazing related to improving the genetic quality of flock;
    - installing filters in water inlet of the salt industry so as to avoid mortality of small fish fry;
    - promoting the use of fishing nets with legal mesh dimensions, to replace small meshed nets.

5. Biodiversity trade-offs.

A biodiversity trade-off is a transaction through which improved ways of using natural resources (with positive impacts on biodiversity) are adopted by locals in exchange for support to local development from the project or government. These can be considered 'trade-offs' *only if* the exchange is clearly made explicit, with precise obligations on the local resource users and on the project or local government.

If a project (or local government) supports an action without making an explicit agreement, the supporting action is considered to be a pure local development action, not a trade-off. Despite this, the action may still have an indirect impact on biodiversity, positive or negative.

For example, distributing beehives is considered to be an ordinary development action, even if there is "hope" that it will diminish grazing. It would become a trade-off if an agreement was set with a group of shepherds that, in exchange for the beehives received from the project, they would reduce grazing on rangeland, with the details clearly set out.

There was no example of such a trade-off under the MWC project.

Annex 6: Comments by Stakeholders

To be inserted

Annex 7: Co-Financing

Co financing (Type/Source)	IA own Financing (mill US$)		Government (mill US$)		Other* (mill US$)		Total (mill US$)		Total Disbursement (mill US$)	
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
– Grants	0	0	0	0	1,755,270	1,755,270	1,755,270	1,755,270		
– Loans/Concessional (compared to market rate)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
– Credits	0	0	2,976,679	2,976,679	0	0	2,976,679	2,976,679		
– Equity investments	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
– In-kind support	0	0	1,732,000	7,838,870	0	2,925,123	1,732,000	10,763,993		
– Other (*)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Totals	0	0	4,708,679	10,866,276	1,755,270	4,680,393	6,463,950	15,546,669		

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Albania
Egypt
Lebanon
Morocco
Tunisia

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