

IMPLEMENTATION COMPLETION REPORT

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GEF Medium-Size Project:

PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

Syria: Conservation of Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management

November 2005 (revised October 2006)

**Medium Sized Project Completion Report
Syria: Conservation of Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management**

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List of Abbreviations

CEPA	Communication, Education and Public Awareness
FAD	Forestry and Afforestation Directorate at the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GoS	Government of the Syria Arab Republic
ICR	Implementation Completion Report
METAP	Mediterranean Environment Technical Assistance Program
MAAR	Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform
MLAE	Ministry of Local Administration and Environment
PA	Protected Area
PMU	Project Management Unit
TORs	Terms of Reference
TTLs	Task Team Leaders (World Bank)
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

Medium Sized Project Completion Report Syria: Conservation of Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management

I. Basic Data:

(1) **Date of Completion Report:** November 2005 (revised October 2006)

(2) **Project Title:** Conservation of Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management

(3) **GEF Allocation:** \$ 750,000

(4) **Grant Recipient:** The Syrian Arab Republic

(5) **World Bank Manager/Task Team:** Vijay Jagannathan (Manager), TTLs: Shobha Shetty (October 1999 – December 2003), Jumana Farah (October 2003 – July 2004), Dahlia Lotayef (July 2004 – closing March 2005). The Project Completion Report was prepared by Kanta Rigaud (Lead author), assisted by Jumana Farah.

(6) **Goals and Objectives: (include any changes in the objectives):**

Context: Following the ratification of the Convention of Biodiversity in 1996, the Government of the Syria Arab Republic (GoS) had taken some initial steps to advance the biodiversity agenda through specific measures, such as the creation of a biodiversity unit within MSE (Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs, now referred to as Ministry of Local Administration and Environment, MLAE); including specific references in the draft Environmental Framework Law for the need to establish responsibility for the identification and coordination management of high priority protected areas; and, the launch of the country study for biodiversity with UNEP/GEF. This project was conceived in early 1998 to further assist the GOS to enhance its capacity for the conservation of biodiversity at the national level, and to demonstrate the practical application of conservation principles within a priority site of global biodiversity significance. In addition, it is important to note here that the Bank has not had any lending operations in Syria since 1986. The only World Bank support in environment over the last 10 years has been through technical assistance in METAP (Mediterranean Environment Technical Assistance Program) and this GEF supported project.

The **goal** of the project was to enable the GoS to meet its obligations under the Biodiversity Convention by strengthening its legal and institutional capacity to protect and manage priority sites with high value for biodiversity of global importance.

The **outcomes** sought include: (i) the maintenance and enhancement of the ecological value of the forest ecosystem in the pilot site; (ii) the avoidance of loss of important regional and global biodiversity; and (iii) the enhancement of the importance of Syria's location on the Palearctic migratory flyways.

The **immediate objectives** of the project were two-fold: (i) to strengthen the Syrian Arab Republic's ability to protect and manage biodiversity of global and national importance; and (ii) to protect and manage a priority demonstration site encompassing biodiversity of global importance.

To achieve these objectives, project would seek to strengthen the institutional and legal framework and build national capacity for protected area management with a focus on the Cedar Forest Protected Area (PA). Towards this end, the project was to finance activities within the following **five components**:

Component 1: Drafting of enabling legislation: drafting the necessary executive legislation for the Draft Environmental Framework Law to incorporate the legal foundation for the establishment and management of a national network of protected areas.

Component 2: Institutional strengthening of the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Afforestation Directorate: the development of training modules for senior and junior levels of MSE (Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs, now referred to as Ministry of Local Administration and Environment, MLAE) and FAD (Forestry and Afforestation Directorate at the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform - MAAR) staff, both at Damascus and at the project site.

Component 3: Extension and legal designation of protected area: includes mapping of the proposed extension to the protected area and carrying out of topographic surveys to establish boundaries.

Component 4: Development and implementation of a management plan: includes baseline ecological surveys, provision of protected area infrastructure (2 ranger stations, lookout towers, 1 research center, campsite development), development of visitor facilities and on-site interpretation, and purchase of equipment. Local FAD staff would be trained in participatory approaches towards the development of alternative livelihoods for local communities, and management techniques for globally important species/ecosystems.

Component 5: Public awareness program: includes the production of TV spots, educational materials, and a training program in public awareness/educational techniques. This seeks to address the root causes of biodiversity loss in Syria e.g. hunting, grazing, etc.

These components clearly support the objectives of the project as described above.

Revised Components

There was no change in the objectives. However, the anticipated co-financing from FAO (total USD 200,000: USD 100,000 towards component 1. enabling legislation, and USD 100,000 for expertise in the area of forest ecology to assist with the baseline ecological survey at the demonstration site in view of developing the PA management plan-component4) and from UNDP (total USD 200,000: USD 125,000 towards component 4-the development and implementation of the PA management plan, and USD 75,000 towards component 5-public awareness campaigns) fell through. Consequently, some of the project components and related activities were either dropped or scaled down. Specifically, the component 1 for the drafting of enabling legislation was dropped; while the training, development and implementation of the management plan (including the development of alternative livelihoods), and public awareness program components (4 and 5) were scaled back to ensure adequate financing for the development of a basic management plan, its partial implementation, and the procurement of basic goods and civil works.

As will be noted in the analysis to follow this deficit in co-financing coupled with the reallocation of funding to the various components resulted in the compromise of some important

aspects of the project – particularly the legislative aspects and the development of alternative livelihoods as cornerstones of long-term sustainability of outcomes.

(7) Financial Information: [Describe any changes from original financing plan including co-financing. Table with key components (initial and final allocations). Key discrepancies can either be described here, or addressed in the sections below as they relate to other implementation issues.]

Table 1 provides the total finance estimates at project approval/appraisal and the actual estimate by financing source, including the breakdown by component. The total financing of the project at approval was \$1.43 million, of which \$750,000 represents the GEF contribution for the incremental costs of the project. The government contribution was reflected as \$280,000 (including both cash and in-kind) representing the baseline investments and project management costs. The co-financing from FAO and UNDP was recorded as \$400,000, representing a contribution of \$200,000 from each of the two agencies.

The actual financing of the project totaled \$870,300 of which \$695,900 was from the GEF, and \$174,400 from the GoS. As mentioned above, the co-financing from UNDP and FAO (total \$400,000) did not materialize. This translates to 93% of original GEF financing being applied to the project, compared to 62% from the GoS commitment being realized, and 0% of from other co-financing sources. The reduced counterpart financing from the GoS can be attributed to the reduced matching that was to be associated with FAO and UNDP co-financing, as well as a generally reduced counterpart financing due to the delays and scaling back of some activities within the various components. The GOS counterpart contribution includes in-kind contribution in staff time for government oversight, participation in Steering committee, participation of key MAAR and MLAE staff in training and consultation activities. As indicated in Table 1, component 4 and 5 relating to the development and implementation of the management plan and the public awareness program were significantly reduced.

Table 1: Project Financing by Source and Component (in US\$ 000 equivalent)

Component	Appraisal Estimate				Actual Estimate				Percentage of Appraisal			
	Bank/GEF	Gov.	CoF.	Total	Bank/GEF	Gov.	CoF.	Total	Bank/GEF	Gov.	CoF.	Total
1. Drafting of enabling legislation		14.0	100.0	114.0		0.0	0.0	0.0		0%	0%	0%
2. Institutional Strengthening	237.0	80.0		317.0	261.8	64.7		326.5	110%	81%		103%
3. Extension and legal designation of the protected area	13.0	13.0		26.0	24.7	0.6		25.3	189%	5%		97%
4. Development and implementation of the management plan	500.0	163.0	225.0	888.0	366.8	109.1	0.0	475.9	73%	67%	0%	54%
5. Public awareness program		10.0	75.0	85.0	42.6	0.0	0.0	42.6	426%	0%	0%	50%
<i>Total</i>	750.0	280.0	400.0	1,430.0	695.9	174.4	0.0	870.3	93%	62%	0%	61%

Tables 2 provides project costs by procurement arrangements for the GEF and GoS contribution (cash and in-kind) at approval/appraisal and Table 3 provides the actual estimates. The major discrepancies lie in the “Goods” category where both the GEF and GoS actual estimates are significantly reduced (largely due to procurement delays). At the same time the “Consultant Services and Training” category is higher (due to underestimation of costs at design and subsequent inclusion of training and community awareness campaigns). These reallocations of expenditure categories were approved by the TTL and procurement staff due to confirmation of real costs on the ground.

Table 2: Project Costs by Procurement Arrangements (Appraisal Estimate) (US\$ ‘000 equivalent) for Bank/GEF TF and Government Contribution

Expenditure Category	Procurement Method			Gov. Contribution	Total Cost
	QCSB	Shopping	Total Bank/GEF TF		
1. Goods		230.0	230.0	57.5	287.5
2. Small Works		90.0	90.0	22.5	112.5
3. Consultants’ Services and training	270.0	20.0	290.0		290.0
4. Operating Costs		140.0	140.0		140.0
Other *				183.0	
Total	270.0	480.0	750.0	263.0	1,013.0

* Represents government counterpart staff time (participation to Steering Committee meetings, technical committee meetings, stakeholder meetings, training, time allotted to discussions with consultants, etc., in addition to associated opportunity costs); plus in-kind counterpart contribution for training facilities, equipment, land, buildings, and use of headquarters and field offices etc.

Table 3: Project Costs by Procurement Arrangements (Actual/Latest Estimate) (US\$ ‘000 equivalent) for Bank/GEF TF and Government Contribution

Expenditure Category	Procurement Method			Gov. Contribution	Total Cost
	QCSB	Shopping	Total Bank/GEF TF		
1. Goods		94.3	94.3	23.6	117.8
2. Small Works		83.7	83.7	20.9	104.6
3. Consultants’ Services and training	339.9	4.9	344.8		344.8
4. Operating Costs		172.9	172.9		172.9
Other *				130.0	
Total	339.9	355.8	695.9	174.4	870.3

* Represents government counterpart staff time (participation to Steering Committee meetings, technical committee meetings, stakeholder meetings, training, time allotted to discussions with consultants, etc., in addition to associated opportunity costs); plus in-kind counterpart contribution for training facilities, equipment, land, buildings, and use of headquarters and field offices etc.

8. Leveraged Resources [Leveraged resources are additional resources—beyond those committed to the project itself at the time of approval—that are mobilized later as a direct result of the project. Leveraged resources can be financial or in-kind and may be from other donors, NGOs, foundations, governments, communities or the private sector.]

There are two positive indications of leveraged resources. The first relates to the current project, and the second to the larger context of PA management in the country. First, the momentum built around the Cedar Fir protected area during the project has been able to leverage human resources (a dedicated management team) for the future management of the Protected Area, and a reallocation of the Ministry of Agriculture (MAAR) budget to ensure dedicated funds for continued implementation of the management plan.

Second, the project has contributed, through an enhanced understanding in protected area conservation and management and progress on institutional arrangements, to the articulation of a follow-up UNDP/GEF protected area project. There are specific activities within this follow-on project which would continue to involve the Cedar/Fir protected area as part of training and cross-learning, and would seek to advance biodiversity conservation at a national scale through a focus on three additional protected area sites. The total costs of the UNDP/GEF project are \$6.92 million, with a GoS commitment of \$2.4 million.

II. Project Impact Analysis

(1) Project Impacts: (a) describe to what extent the objectives have been met; (b) whether the performance indicators have been achieved:

A full enumeration of the progress for each objective, project component and corresponding indicators is provided in Table 4. It provides a summary of the progress, challenges and obstacles faced and a sense of the achievement in each case.

(a) The overall achievement of the project objectives can be said to be moderately satisfactory:

In assessing project impacts, the performance of the project is judged against the anticipated outcomes and the two stated objectives in the Project Document. In that context, the performance vis-à-vis the first objective and components within it is moderately satisfactory; while the performance vis-à-vis the second objective is moderately unsatisfactory as it falls short of what was stipulated. See explanation below and Table 4 for the basis of this rating.

By the end of project implementation, the project had laid the foundation for the implementation for the long-term biodiversity conservation of the Cedar/Fir PA; raised awareness and understanding of the concept of biodiversity conservation and the role of PAs within the key institutions; built critical capacity within the key institutions; appointment of a core management team with a dedicated budget to implement the management plan for the Cedar/Fir PA. At the policy level, the project assisted in advancing the agenda of expanding and improving on the PA system in Syria, and put in place a working arrangement between the two key Ministries (MLAE and MAAR) who have a role and stake in PA management.

Thus, although the project has fallen short on its objectives due to the various challenges faced from the outset and through much of the project implementation stage, the following achievements indicate that the project has made progress on some critical fronts, and it is on the right path towards fully achieving its objectives, following closure.

- **Establishing provisional inter-ministerial arrangements for PA management:** At the start of the project, there was no clear understanding of the institutional roles and responsibilities relating to PA management for the Cedar/Fir PA and advancing biodiversity conservation in the country. At entry, the project had overlooked, ignored, or neglected to explore fully the

institutional arrangements to implement the project – an aspect which subsequently led to significant delays in start-up, strained institutional relationships, and placed the project management unit (PMU) in an awkward situation when conducting its responsibilities. Clarity on these fronts was especially critical as the area of PA management was a new arena in the country and clear roles and responsibilities were not in place and lines of jurisdiction over key issues relating to PA management were still nascent. Nevertheless, the project under the leadership of the second TTL was able to facilitate dialogue and get the two key ministries (MLAE and MAAR) to agree to a working/provisional arrangement as to their role and responsibilities within the project. These roles have gradually become more accepted, and it is interesting to note that the follow-up UNDP/GEF project which will target three additional PAs has built on these provisional arrangements between MAAR and MLAE, and is seeking to formalize them through an MOU between the two ministries. This formalization of responsibilities will also benefit the Cedar/Fir PA and ensure institutional sustainability. The UNDP/GEF project represents a case of learning well from the lessons of this project, and of scaling-up the protected area agenda in the country.

- **Improved understanding and appreciation of the role and importance of PAs and biodiversity conservation:** At the start of the project the conceptual understanding and management responsibility associated with PAs and biodiversity conservation was very limited, and where existing, was rudimentary – built on a belief that PAs should be fenced, with communities having no access to the PA, nor a role in their management or oversight. The shift towards contemporary understanding and increased commitment to PAs is witnessed by the following aspects: (i) appointment of a dedicated management team for the Cedar/Fir PA (with staff who were trained through the project); (ii) an indicative budget allocation by MAAR towards this staffing and for the implementation of some of the basic elements of the management plan (for example, finalizing the legal designation, zoning and community consultations); (iii) progress in PA dialogue and policy discussions by MLAE (in co-ordination with the General Commission for Environmental Affairs) about a national system of PAs (including a role for communities in the process of decision making and management); and (iv) a follow-on UNDP/GEF project with significant government commitment (\$ 2.44 million).
- **Training and capacity building of key staff and decision makers:** There were significant delays in recruiting the consultant firm for the development of the management plan (of which training was an essential element). However, once the firm was recruited, a training needs assessment was conducted collaboratively with the PMU technical committee and local consultants from universities. This was followed by the development of a training plan which was delivered to select decision makers and senior staff at MLAE and MAAR, as well as the newly appointed PA management team. It included the following modules: macro-level conservation; PA management planning, decision-making and administration; protected areas field management techniques, fauna and flora surveying and monitoring; CEPA (Communication, Education and Public Awareness) for PA; community conservation; ecotourism and visitor handling; monitoring and evaluation; socio-economic data-sheet and use, socio-economic aspects of the PA and alternative incomes. A total of 100 participants attended the courses, with several attending more than one module. In addition, a study tour was conducted to the El- Shouf Protected Area in Lebanon where the following training took place: development of a strategy, annual plans, and a budget; management of staff time and capacity; communication at national, regional and international level; fund raising; and research management. The participants included the PA Management Team and key staff of the provincial MAAR. The firm prepared the management plan collaboratively with the Technical committee of the PMU and university staff and there was significant on-the-job

training that took place as the new PA manager and several of his staff accompanied the consultant team in their field work.

- **Community consultation and participation:** There was some level of consultation and participatory dialogues and training with the communities, but up to now there have been no concrete measures or steps taken to engage them and have them more involved in the PA management, nor in terms of improving their alternative sources of income. Specific concerns of the communities remain valid: (i) lack of alternatives to fuel wood harvest while the restriction to enter the PA appears to have been enforced more stringently; (ii) lack of alternative livelihoods in place; (iii) continued application of some of the forest law provisions which discourage planting of trees within the buffer area; (iv) limited to no engagement of communities for co-management of PA, despite their comparative advantage in doing so (e.g. tree pruning and its organization, fire management, ecotourism). Both the ministries, up to the level of the Ministers, are fully aware of the urgency to address the community aspect, but the project itself has not made sufficient progress on this front. Unfortunately, this component suffered partially due to the fact that the UNDP co-financing which was to target the aspect of alternative livelihoods did not materialize. Some reallocation of funds allowed the initial consultation activities to take place, but clearly they have not translated into visible concrete action on the ground. It is critical that the political will of the Ministers be concretized into action, and the goodwill of the communities be harnessed as soon as possible if successful conservation of the PA and the surrounding buffer areas is to be achieved.

While it is clear that poor quality at entry and a lack of readiness contributed to the project trailing in terms of achieving its objectives, it has been able to address critical constraints and successfully put in place key elements and lay the foundation to ensure that the objectives could be met in due time (following closure), provided that the momentum and will to do so is sustained at current levels.

(b) A full enumeration of the progress for the different indicators is provided in Table 4. Consistent with the overall achievement of the objectives, *the achievement of the performance indicators can be stated to be moderately satisfactory.*

(2) Project Sustainability: [Provide an assessment of the approach taken to influence continuation of project benefits after completion of project implementation; assess likelihood of project sustainability and key factors/conditions needed for this.]

Overall the project sustainability can be assessed as moderately unsatisfactory in view of the following supporting observations.

Several aspects that were meant to be addressed have fallen short, including legal designation of the proposed extension to the PA (to ensure legal sustainability), the endorsement of the management plan by the GoS (to ensure technical/environmental sustainability); and transition institutional arrangements to transfer knowledge and skills acquired by the PMU to key government departments within the two key ministries (to ensure institutional sustainability).

Nevertheless, there are some positive signs for the continued and improved management of the Cedar/Fir PA due largely to the appointment of a dedicated and trained management team; provision of infrastructure (in particular, office, ranger stations, and research center) and equipment (vehicles, computers, binoculars etc.) for the PA; and an allocation of some resources

from MAAR to implement some elements of the management plan. The government also seems to have accepted in principle the need to immediately extend the PA and its buffer area from 13.5 km² to 88 km² with the view to increase it further to 200 km² by 2010, based on the propositions of the management plan. However, this has not been legally endorsed – and it is critical that the momentum on this front is sustained.

The following aspects may have constrained addressing project sustainability:

- Firstly, the delay in the project start-up (due largely to institutional hiccups resulting from poor design at entry), delay in the hiring of the consultant firm (for the development of the management plan), and the high turnover of personnel (including Ministers, and World Bank TTLs) meant that the project was continually playing “catch-up” till the end. These continued delays were not addressed with sufficient urgency in the first couple of years (see later for additional information on this front). All of these delays and lack of continuity resulted in the management plan being finalized just six months prior to the end of the (extended) project completion date. In addition, the failed co-financing resulted in reduced resources being available for the “implementation of the management plan” within the project duration. Hence there was a lost opportunity (both in terms of time and resources) for the appointed management team to commence the practical application of the management plan
- Secondly, following the finalization of the management plan, there was limited emphasis/push to get the plan endorsed by the Government and to commence implementation. This can be attributed largely to the following reasons: (i) the urgency to complete procurement of key goods and services to ensure that the grant funds were fully utilized before the end of the project; (ii) limited (remaining) resources to do so; and (iii) lack of technical leadership on the conservation and park management aspects within the PMU – hence there was no champion to lead on that aspect. The PMU which was located outside of the two ministries had a largely administrative function (overseeing procurement and disbursement, hire and oversight of consultants, purchase of equipment, etc) and performed excellently in terms of these functions and in providing continuity in managing the project in overall terms, including compliance with Bank procedures. It was, however, weak on the technical aspects of conservation and PA management (with no such full time technical specialist) and hence these issues tended to be marginalized on a day-to-day basis. Although there were technical representatives from MAAR and MLAE who formed part of the technical committee of the PMU, their role was intermittent and largely related to the preparation and development of the management plan (including the selection of the consultant firm).
- Thirdly, the longer-term overall sustainability of the park project would have benefited from technical and strategic advice from the World Bank to put in place a road-map/transition strategy to guide the follow-up to the proposed management plan: in particular an urgency to have the management plan endorsed by the GoS, and to commence preparation of annual working plans with clear roles and responsibilities, including budgetary requirements. This would have provided greater assurances of project sustainability, building on the momentum of the last year of the project. However, recommendations which should have been provided by the Bank prior to the closing of the project (or as comments to the Management Plan) were not officially communicated, although compiled internally, despite requests from the PMU. Part of this may be attributed to the internal transition process within the Bank between TTLs (where it seems that comments and recommendations appear to have fallen through the cracks). It is critical in the immediate-term for the appointed PA management team to

produce annual working plans based on the management plan towards longer term management of the Cedar/Fir PA.

(3) Replicability: [Describe the approach taken; assessment of likelihood of replication; targeted stakeholders for replication; and description of any evidence that replication is likely.]

The visibility brought about to PA management through the project certainly brought greater attention to the issue of biodiversity conservation and protected area management. Replicability as a consequence of this project can be noted on two fronts:

First, and more concrete, is the follow-up UNDP/GEF project. One aspect which the UNDP/GEF project has replicated with a view to building and enhancing on is the implementation (institutional) arrangements between the two ministries (MAAR and MLAE) – benefiting from the mistakes incurred while implementing this project. This follow-on project was very timely in ensuring that the momentum and interest generated in PA management at this early fledgling stage is sustained and replicated based on the lessons learnt from this project. The UNDP/GEF project will also scale up PA management techniques to three other PAs in the country (one of which is proximate to the Cedar/Fir PA), and the project intends to draw from the training material and expertise built up through this project.

Second, at the national level, the improved capacity and understanding of PAs has translated into an aspiration to plan for a more systematic approach to the PA vision. Overall, the project was successful in introducing a strategic integrated approach to dealing with biodiversity and protected areas, which embraced the concept of community based conservation and highlighted the economic dimension and the income generating opportunities as means for improving the livelihood of the community, including the potential for eco-tourism and business investments. This task has been delegated to the General Commission for Environmental Affairs, under the leadership of MLAE, and has the potential to replicate and scale-up conservation and PA efforts in the country.

(4) Stakeholder Involvement: [Describe the approach taken for stakeholder involvement; and adjustments to the approach; and any lessons learned from this approach.]

The key stakeholders of the project include: the communities in PA and in the buffer zones; the provincial and local administration (Governor's and Mayor's offices), the provincial Forestry and Afforestation Department within MAAR; the provincial MLAE; and the two ministries at the level of the central government. The direct beneficiaries are the communities in the PA and buffer zones.

There is one village in the core area of the PA, with 13 villages in the buffer zone of the original extent of the PA (13.5 km²)¹. The communities participated in the communication, education and public awareness raising campaigns as part of the process for the preparation and review of the Management Plan. There was also a good assessment and feedback on the perception of the communities towards the PA, their impact on the park and the need for a concerted strategy to address their concerns, but as indicated above the follow-up in concrete terms to engage the community, addressing the difficult conflict issues (e.g. harvest of wood for fuel needs, animal grazing, crop production) has been less than satisfactory. It is imperative that the goodwill

¹ There is only one house within the PA at this time, and is occupied intermittently.

generated from the consultations, and the raised expectations does not result in cynicism by the communities due to an absence of concrete follow-up measures, including the provision of alternative livelihood and agricultural production options. These sentiments were confirmed to the ICR team when they visited one of the villages and interviewed the community representatives.

While the alternative livelihood component was addressed within the management plan, it was not fully developed due to funding limitations, as the (UNDP) funding dedicated for this (\$125,000) fell through.

(5) Monitoring and Evaluation: [Describe the approach taken, any adjustments to the approach, and any lessons learned.]

The project received the GEF CEO endorsement in October 1998 and was effective a year later, in October 1999. The original project duration was three years for an initial closing date of September 2002. There were two extensions made: the first in September 2002 when the project was extended by two years to September 2004, followed by a second extension of six months, for a final closing date of March 2005.

Key aspects of M&E discussed here for the project duration include: progress reports by PMU; supervision by the Bank; financial management including procurement and disbursement; and progress on project objectives. *Overall the monitoring and evaluation processes can be said to be moderately satisfactory.*

(i) **Periodic Progress Reports** were provided by the PMU. Over time these reports got more formal and substantive, and were fairly thorough in reporting on the procurement, administrative and managerial aspects of the project. A balance sheet was provided on the flow of funds (especially in the last 18 months). The reports also highlighted issues of concern, such as problems relating to procurement and financial flows/shortfalls; and the need for reallocation of funds.

Reporting on the progress on the substantive aspects of the two objectives (i.e. relating to the PA management and conservation aspects) was, however, less forthcoming. This can be attributed to a couple of reasons: first due to the late start-up and slow disbursement in the early stages of the project, these progress reports from the PMU concentrated on ensuring that procurement and disbursement was proceeding as fast as possible prior to the closing of the project. Secondly, as mentioned above, this may be attributed to the absence of a full-time technical environment cum conservation specialist within the PMU to follow on these aspects, as well as the lack of actual progress (until the final months of the project).

(ii) Supervision by the World Bank:

The project had a total of three TTLs. In the initial period after project effectiveness (Oct. 1999) – there was no visit to the project/country by the TTL until Jan. 2004 (3.25 years) when the second TTL took over. This long gap in face-to-face dialogue between the Bank’s TTL and the PMU and other country counterparts may have prolonged the institutional grid-lock and other issues which were holding up project implementation. This lack of a visit to a country which had little experience with Bank procedures and processes, and where in fact this GEF supported project was the only direct interaction with the client country, clearly had a severe impact on project progress. For example, the total process to hire the consultant firm which was to take the lead in

the development of the management plan and training took 18 months. It is unfortunate, that a significant part of this delay can be attributed to the erratic and slow responses from the Bank at various stages of clearance (of the TOR) and/or request for advice.

It is noteworthy that several of these difficult issues were resolved following the first visit made by the Bank following effectiveness, in particular the establishment of provisional working arrangement between the ministries. Clear and prompt aide memoires that followed the visits in the mid stages of the project ensured a common understanding of agreements reached for follow-up action, and effective follow-up by the PMU and government counterparts. The lack of a clear aide memoire towards the end of the project again resulted in unclear follow-up and agreements on some issues (e.g. reallocation of budget etc.) that resulted in much back and forth between the PMU and the World Bank at a moment when time was critical.

The Bank procurement and financial specialists did make a couple of visits in the early stages of the project and again towards the end. However, the Bank did not have a formal launch workshop, and there was no formal procurement and financial management training provided to the PMU and government counterparts and these issues were not fully considered at entry nor in assessing readiness of the project for implementation. This omission subsequently led to a lot of confusion on procedures, conflict between the PMU and government, and increased the learning curve tremendously on the part of the PMU and government resulting in delays on several critical fronts, including setting up of a special account, taxation issues and the hiring of consultants. The procurement and fiduciary training to the clients may have been especially important in view of the fact that this was the first (and only) Bank operation in the country after a lapse of several years.

On a day-to-day basis the Bank procurement and financial specialists were fairly responsive. However, as indicated above there were serious lapses in the procurement of key equipment (including cars, motorcycles) and inadequate process in place for the selection of the civil works contractor. There was a concern from the procurement and financial specialists on the placement of the PMU outside the implementing agency, and the resulting impact on government capacity building, especially in view of the lack of transition arrangements to transfer skills to the government agency. There was also concern over the lack of an independent auditor. The procurement unit recommended that an independent (international) auditor audit the entire project toward the end of the project duration to address this concern. During the time that the ICR was undertaken the TOR for the auditor were being finalized. Despite various Bank letters to the government, it is not clear if this process has concluded satisfactorily.

(6) Special Project Circumstances (optional): [Provide an overview of the relevant economic, financial, social, institutional and environmental conditions that may have influenced project implementation. Identify main factors affecting implementation and outcomes distinguishing those within and outside control of the recipient.]

The Bank has not had any lending operations in Syria since 1986. The only World Bank support in environment over the last 10 years has been through technical assistance in METAP (Mediterranean Environment Technical Assistance Program) and this GEF supported project. Hence an understanding of World Bank procedures and requirements was almost non-existent, and there was no inherent capacity within the institutions to apply Bank procurement and disbursement procedures. In addition, the implementing agency in the project (MLAE) itself had limited understanding of biodiversity conservation and protected areas, a new area of intervention in the country. The need for a cross-sectoral approach to biodiversity conservation was not fully

grasped and this led to some misunderstandings as to the roles and responsibilities of key related ministries (although these issues should have been addressed during the design and preparation stage of the project).

These overarching factors certainly contributed to a significant delay in commencing the project, and placed obstacles which continued to plague the project through much of its implementation phase.

Summarizing, some examples of factors affecting implementation within and outside the control of the recipient:

Factors outside the control of government or implementing agency:

- Poor knowledge of how the World Bank operates.
- High turnover of ministers within the project period in both MLAE and MAAR contributing to lack of continuity and difficulty in resolving institutional issues.

Factors generally within the control of the government or implementing agency:

- Non-implementation of agreements signed with Bank (e.g. taxing goods provided through project; keeping funds disbursed from Bank in a Special Fund at the Syrian Bank in Syrian Pounds).
- Tedious Government procurement process and low thresholds for prior approval.
- Long delays in approving the Special Account in a bank in Lattakia (the project site and location of the PMU).
- Lengthy time taken to start the procurement process for maps, goods and equipment.

It is important to note here that the GEF medium size project represented an opportunistic approach which allowed the Bank to engage in a country where it otherwise did not have a presence. In effect, although often perceived as not cost effective, this fairly small operation was able to set the scene, test the ground (in this case in the area of biodiversity and protected areas) and lay the groundwork for larger follow-up investments. The project had demonstrated that there was good potential in Syria for other investment (Bank operations) in the environment sector and eco-tourism. This was confirmed by the follow-on UNDP/GEF project on scaling up PA conservation operation of \$ 7 million.

(7) Institutional Capacity / Partner Assessments (optional): Evaluate the implementing agency's performance during the preparation and implementation of the project, with an emphasis on lessons learned that could be relevant for the future. Evaluate the Bank and other co-financier's performance; and present any assessment(s) or comments from co-financiers and other project partners.

Borrower Performance

Overall the performance of the Borrower (Implementing Agency and PMU) can be said to be moderately satisfactory.

Examples to illustrate the Borrower's performance.

- Implementing Agency: As indicated above some of the factors affecting their performance were beyond their control (e.g. turnover of ministers; lack of awareness of Bank procedures – compounded by the lack of direct training at start of project). However, there were some

aspects that were inadequate, including unwarranted delays in the procurement of vehicles accompanied by poor documentation, and the use of procurement method (e.g. for civil works) contrary to Bank procedures despite repeated reminders from the Bank. It is important to note that the project did start to make progress when the current ministers (both MLAE and MAAR) assumed office, in the last two years of the project. Having champions and continued interest and commitment from them greatly enhanced the progress of the project in the last 18 months.

- PMU: Day-to-day project management was done through a project management unit (PMU) which consisted of the National Project Director, two assistants, one driver, one-part time accountant cum auditor, and technical representatives from MLAE and MAAR who attend regular administrative and programmatic meetings. There was much contention over the hiring and retention of the Project Director and the animosity between the Project Director and the Ministries haunted the project from time to time. Nevertheless, overall the PMU and the Project Director did an excellent job in continually pushing to have the project move forward. The PMU was the only entity within the project that had any continuity and institutional memory. It enabled as smooth an implementation of project activities as was possible under the difficult circumstances described elsewhere in this report. However, as the PMU staff were not provided with training on Bank procurement, they had a steep learning curve which may have delayed implementation to some extent. Nevertheless, once on board, they did an exemplary job in applying consultant guidelines, and managing the project on a day-to-day basis, including managing institutional dead-locks from time to time. On the downside, the placement of the PMU outside of the key implementing agencies, in a private office, with no secondments from the ministries, and no clear transition strategy to transfer capacity and skills acquired in managing Bank projects represents a lost opportunity for both the country and the WB. Also, as noted above the PMU should have had someone with knowledge on the technical aspects of conservation and PA management.
- Project Steering Committee: Oversight (in terms of overall supervision, budget, etc.) was provided by the Steering Committee comprised of 18 members. This committee was chaired by the Minister of MLAE, and representatives include the Deputy Ministers of MLAE, Deputy Minister of MAAR, Technical representatives of MAAR and MLAE, State Commission of Planning, Women's Union Representative, General Directorate for Remote Sensing, Directorate of Biodiversity, among other provincial representative. Overall the role of the Steering Committee was important as it provided a common forum to discuss difficult issues (procurement, contracting etc.) – and ensured continued commitment to the project.

World Bank Performance

Overall the performance of the Bank can be said to be moderately satisfactory. The performance of the Bank has been very uneven during the project duration, but the initial period was moderately unsatisfactory, followed by more satisfactory performance. This assessment is based on the information provided earlier in the report, and can be summarized here as follows:

- Preparation/Quality at Entry/Readiness for implementation: two critical issues which should have been given greater attention to ensure better quality at entry include clearly defined institutional arrangements, and the confirmation of co-financing from other partners. The lack of assessment for readiness in key areas (training on procurement and fiduciary aspects, PMU arrangements, Special Account) plagued the start-up and implementation of the project through much of its life.

- **Supervision:** was very weak at beginning of project coupled with late responses to enquiries (e.g. no-objections; requests for extension, TORs for an external auditor). The Bank did not formally comment on the PA management plan although specifically requested. In addition, although in relative terms the number of supervision missions (9) and man mission equivalent (19) (mainly after the first extension) may look adequate for the length and cost of the project, the timing and frequency was not commensurate with the objectives of the project nor the difficulties encountered in its implementation. Although the project is very modest in monetary terms, it was a pioneering and innovative project in Syria where an overall vision for protected areas/conservation practically did not exist, responsibilities were fragmented and unclear, and the procurement process which was arduous and not necessarily compatible with Bank procedures. On the positive side, the Bank facilitated two project extensions, as well as reallocation of funds to enable the project achieve its objectives.

III. Summary of Main Lessons Learned [Concise presentation of the lessons learned that are derived from the project impact analysis above (bullet points preferred).]

Lesson for the Preparation Stage

Lesson 1: Co-financing needs to be secured and committed prior to project effectiveness, otherwise it can hamper delivery on key components of the project, and compromise achievement of the stated objectives.

Lesson 2: Quality at entry must ensure that key aspects that are essential for the project to be effective are clearly designed (e.g. institutional arrangements, especially in areas of intervention which are new to the country; key legal/policy reform).

Lesson 3: Caution against over ambitious project design, especially in areas of intervention which are new to the country.

Lesson 4: The ‘Project Management Unit’ (or comparable unit) should have resident technical expertise relating to the objective of the project, over and above staff with general project management skills.

Lesson 5: Need for a grant agreement with clear thresholds acceptable to the Bank for prior review of procurement decisions in a country where administrative procedures have not been reviewed and updated.

Lessons for the Implementation and Supervision Stage

Lesson 6: Prolonged (undue) delays for Bank related clearances are not acceptable (e.g. review of TOR and provision of ‘no-objection’).

Lesson 7: Transitional arrangements (including institutional, financial, technical) need to be put in place prior to the end of the project to ensure continuity and sustainability on various fronts, and to ensure that the progress made by the project is not undermined/lost.

Lesson 8: Raising expectations of key stakeholders (especially communities), with limited, or no follow-up is poor strategy and can undermine achievement of the project objectives.

General Lessons

Lesson 9: Training on Bank financial and procurement procedures is essential, especially for clients that have not been engaged with the Bank for a long time.

Lesson 10: Need for much closer supervision in a country which has not engaged with the World Bank for a length of time.

IV. Financial Management Status

Summary of Audit Reports received and periods that they cover over the course of the project; and assessment from the internal Financial Management Review of these reports.

Due date of final statement of accounts and external audit with period of coverage: The report was due in September 30, 2005, covering the entire life of the project.
The last Audit report received covered the period January 2004 to September 2004, which is the first extended closing date.

Received by task manager: Yes/No (if no, please explain when final report is expected to be received)

The external audit report has not been received yet (the latest email from the Project Director dated 10/20/2005 indicated that the Auditor has not yet finished writing the report). The task manager has made several requests on this front – with the latest reminder sent on 11/22/2005, with copies to Ministry of Local Administration and Environment and Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform. A new reminder will be sent in November 2006. Given the Bank’s limited presence and role in Syria, it has very few ways of pressuring the government to comply with this commitment.

Table 4. Project Progress for objective, project component and corresponding indicators	
Planned	Results
<p>Goal: To enable the GoS to meet its obligations under the Biodiversity Convention by strengthening its legal and institutional capacity to protect and manage priority sites with high value for biodiversity of global importance.</p>	<p>The project, the first supported by the World Bank in advancing the concept of biodiversity conservation in Syria, has contributed positively to increasing the human and institutional capacity of the GoS in understanding the importance of biodiversity and protected areas, and to embark on a process to enhance and manage its protected areas more systematically.</p>
<p>Project outcomes: (i) maintenance and enhancement of the ecological value of the forest ecosystem in the pilot site; (ii) avoidance of loss of important regional and global biodiversity; and (iii) importance of Syria's location on the Palearctic migratory flyways enhanced.</p>	<p>These outcomes represent achievements that would be realized over the longer term. The progress towards these outcomes was assessed against the immediate objectives and the specific indicators (see below).</p>
<p>Immediate objective 1: To strengthen the Syrian Arab Republic's ability to protect and manage biodiversity of global and national importance. (Rating: moderately satisfactory)</p>	<p>Overall, as described under the specific project components, the project has assisted in creating an understanding of the key provisions of protected area management through training various stakeholders and building critical human capacity of key decision makers, senior staff and local stakeholders through a focus on the Cedar/Fir PA. For the first time, participatory processes were included in the process designing the Management Plan of the PA. This project, after a difficult start, put in place provisional institutional arrangements and designated roles and responsibilities for the two key Ministries (MAAR and MLAE) for the management of the Cedar/Fir PA and the implementation of the other components of the project. Prior to this, there was much friction, waste of resources, including conflicts on the ground between the two ministries. These provisional arrangements, although not ideal, seem to be evolving and have, in fact, formed the basis for the institutional roles and responsibilities in the follow-on UNDP/GEF PA project.</p>
<p>Indicator 1: Official adoption of executive legislation pertaining to protected area management.</p>	<p>See below under Project component 1.</p>
<p>Indicator 2: Staff trained in protected area management techniques.</p>	<p>Training needs assessment was conducted and training modules developed and delivered to select decision makers and senior staff in MLAE and MAAR, the newly appointed management team of the Cedar/Fir PA, and other targeted stakeholder groups, including the local communities.</p>
<p>Indicator 3: Government budgetary allocation to protected area management sustained.</p>	<p>MAAR has appointed a dedicated PA team and allocated a budget (for the protection and management of Cedar/Fir PA).</p>
<p>Immediate objective 2: To protect and manage a priority demonstration site encompassing biodiversity of global importance which would demonstrate the maintenance and enhancement of the ecological value of the forest</p>	<p>Overall, the project falls short on what was expected to be achieved under this objective, although it may be the case that these indicators/outcomes represent achievements that would be realized over the longer term. Nevertheless the project has made some towards these outcomes against the specific indicators (with further detail provided in the information in the remaining table and main text).</p>

<p>ecosystem in the pilot site; avoid loss of important regional and global biodiversity; and reflect and enhanced importance of Syria's location on the Palearctic migratory flyways. (Rating: moderately unsatisfactory)</p> <p>Indicator 1: Effective participatory approach towards the enforcement of controlling access to, and use of forests</p> <p>Indicator 2: Number of threatened species surviving within the pilot over the baseline</p> <p>Indicator 3: Increase in number of migratory birds over the baseline.</p>	<p>The proposed extension of the PA which has been in principle accepted by MLAE and MAAR, and is in the process of endorsement would be a first step towards realizing this outcome, coupled with the implementation of the management plan.</p> <p>Due to reduced resources and time available to undertake the management plan, inventory threatened of species which would have allowed a comparison with baseline was not undertaken. Rather the project compiled the baseline information from existing inventories, and focused on training key park staff on the methodologies for future inventory work. While this was a stated objective, with a specific indicator, there were no defined activities nor a budget allocated for a monitoring system to track enhanced biodiversity. Nevertheless, the project has made some progress and has put in place key elements which could be used to set up a monitoring process, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A monitoring and evaluation plan is proposed as part of the comprehensive management plan for the Cedar/Fir which provides a vision, objectives, an accompanying strategy, options and recommendations for PA boundaries extension, biodiversity protection and management through zoning management, participatory PA management, alternative income generation for the surrounding communities, PA income generation, etc. • Desk baseline surveys and training on survey methodologies were provided to the management team and key staff of MLAE (who has the mandate of monitoring PAs at the national level as part of their core responsibility). • The appointment of a trained PA management team at the Cedar/Fir PA. • The acquisition of vehicles and equipment and the construction of visitor centre which includes accommodation for researchers and staff would provide the opportunities for more systematic inventories. There was considerable delay in acquisition of these key elements which contributed to the limited surveying and inventory work. <p>This was not addressed within the project.</p>
<p>Project component 1: Drafting of enabling legislation (Rating: unsatisfactory)</p> <p>Indicator 1: Enabling legislation on protected areas management adopted.</p>	<p>Unfortunately, this component, which would have provided the necessary executive legislation for the Environmental Framework Law to incorporate the legal foundation for the establishment and management of a national network of protected areas, was dropped due to the fact that FAO co-financing which was to support this component did not materialize.</p> <p>This component was dropped since the co-financing did not materialize. Some progress was made on this issue - a review and assessment of the current PA management, institutional, and legislative set-up undertaken as part of</p>

	<p>the preparation of the management plan has provided options for the Government's consideration. The Government has not yet decided on a final institutional set up for PA management to replace the current provisional arrangements of responsibilities and mandates for MLAE and MAAR.</p>
<p>Project component 2: Institutional strengthening of concerned departments within MLAE and MAAR (Rating: Moderately satisfactory)</p> <p>Indicator 1: Assessment of institutional PA management in Syria conducted, weaknesses identified, and recommendations made</p>	<p>Overall, this component which started out as a challenge, made progress under very difficult circumstances, and both Ministries have made considerable progress in the area of protected area management and biodiversity conservation, coupled with their enhanced understanding and acceptance of role of communities within the context of PA management.</p> <p>1. A review of the institutional and legislative set up for PA management in Syria was conducted by the consulting firm as part of the preparation of the PA management plan. Several interviews with senior staff at MLAE and MAAR at the national and local level were conducted. A thorough assessment of responsibilities, roles, human resources and budgets was conducted for both MLAE and MAAR. Weaknesses in the capacity of managing a growing network of PAs and addressing encroachment issues were identified. Key issues which need to be addressed in a national strategy for the adequate management of PAs were discussed in a report presented to Government. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The fragmentation of responsibilities on PA management between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment ○ The extension and conditions of the existing PAs ○ The conflict between local people and PAs ○ The need to develop services which are absent in the present organization ○ The need to further develop activities concerning the conservation of biodiversity ○ The need to develop ecotourism as an economic base for PA management ○ Insufficient resources for the development and management of a PA network <p>2. The report made recommendations for an institutional set up that will be able to address the above issues. It also proposed a short-term institutional set-up and distribution of responsibilities in view of the fact that both MLAE and MAAR have different responsibilities for the management of PAs.</p> <p>Under their proposed arrangement, MLAE's responsibility would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Survey and monitor ecosystems and species in cooperation with national specialists in different universities and research centers. ○ Set up databanks and information management systems on biodiversity. ○ Carry out impact assessment studies of development projects. ○ Devise public awareness activities. ○ Work on legislation and regulations concerning biodiversity and protected areas. ○ Coordinate and cooperate with Arab and International Organizations. ○ Provide basic training and formation for necessary staff of the protected areas <p>Under their proposed arrangement, MAAR's responsibility would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Declare and delineate the protected area.

<p>Indicator 4: Vehicles and equipment for use by PA management team acquired.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A study tour was conducted to the El- Shouf Protected Area in Lebanon where the following training took place: development of a strategy, annual plans, and a budget; management of staff time and capacity; communication at national, regional and international level; fund raising; and research management: 8 participants from the PA Management Team and MAAR <p>The consultants worked collaboratively with the Technical committee of the PMU and university staff and there was significant on-the-job training seemed to have taken place. For example, the newly appointed manager of the PA accompanied the consultants in the field while they conducted the community and ecological surveys.</p> <p>Procurement of vehicles and equipment proceeded as planned, although three of the vehicles were procured very late in the project due to procurement challenges faced by the GoS and clearance procedures from the WB side. A total of 4 cars, 7 motorcycles, and different office and field equipment (computers, printers, binoculars, etc.) were procured which will be utilized by the PA management team after project closure. The delay in purchasing the vehicles represents a lost opportunity for a fuller engagement of the FAD/MAAR officials through more frequent field visits to the park for monitoring and surveillance and engaging the communities. It may also have reduced the opportunity for more intensive exchanges that could have taken place with the consultants during the preparation of the management plan (for enhanced on-the-job learning), and for inventory and survey work related to baseline monitoring (see above).</p>
<p>Project component 3: Extension and legal designation of protected area.</p> <p>Indicator 1: Passage of decree/law to establish protected area status for proposed pilot area by year 1 of project implementation.</p>	<p>The analysis, consultation and decision to extend the PA has been completed, and the declaration of the new boundaries and the formal adoption of the management plan by the ministers of MLAE and MAAR was drafted in preparation for signing. The management plan has been adopted (ICR contribution of government dated March 2006). However, the final step for the legal designation of the new boundaries has not yet occurred. However, it is to be noted that the full implications of extending the boundaries of the PA buffer zone for the communities in terms of livelihood incomes has not been assessed, and should be fully explored before sign-off.</p> <p>The consultants undertook and completed the preparatory work for identifying the new limits of the PA, mapping the extension of the PA, and recommending the new boundaries. Key elements are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The TA team proposed 2 options for extension (88 km² and 200 km²). MLAE and MAAR agreed to adopt the 88 km² extension in a first phase to be increased to 200 km² (for the PA to be connected through an important forest corridor to the Abu Kubeiss PA) by 2010. ▪ A public consultation workshop was conducted with adjoining village communities to ensure a participatory approach to boundary delineation. Their outlooks and apprehensions were recorded and responded to by the representatives of MLAE and MAAR present at the meeting. ▪ Mapping and topographic and ecological surveys were made for the 88 km² proposed extension. ▪ A declaration of the new boundaries into law, and the formal adoption of the management plan by the ministers of MLAE and MAAR were expected prior to the end of the project, but that did not happen. See caution above on extension of boundaries. <p>The formalization of the extension of the PA has not been completed. This is due in part to the continuing discussions between MLAE and MAAR, as well as with higher Government levels, on which entity should be</p>

	<p>responsible for the management of the steadily growing network of PAs in Syria. Overall, the component made good progress, and the expectation for the whole process to have been completed within a year was ambitious. The fall through of component 1 compromises this component due to unresolved legal accountability.</p>
<p>Project component 4: Development and implementation of management plan (Rating: moderately satisfactory)</p> <p>Indicator 1: Baseline surveys (flora and fauna) conducted MU</p> <p>Indicator 2: An overall management plan developed and implemented</p>	<p>The management plan was developed, but its implementation was much more limited – and restricted to the acquisition of the physical infrastructure and some equipment. The delay in the project start-up, hiring of the consultant firm (for the preparation of the management plan), and the much reduced co-financing resulted in fairly limited time and resources available for the “implementation of the management plan” within the project duration. Hence there was a lost opportunity for the appointed management team to commence on the practical application of the management plan. The management plan produced forms a sound basis upon which to commence implementation: it is clear in its objectives, scope and is well-tailored to the needs of the PA at this present time while providing a good vision. It is critical for the management team is to produce annual working plans based on the management plan towards the realization of specific objectives towards longer term management of the Cedar/Fir PA</p> <p>Due to the reduced time and budget allotted to the development of the management plan, the flora and fauna baseline surveys were not conducted in the field but rather were based on previous surveys and studies as this subject was fairly well documented in literature (based on local University research and international literature). The survey techniques were taught as part of the training modules</p> <p>The delay in contracting the TA firm for the preparation of the Management Plan, the reduced time frame allocated to their work (from 21 months to 12 months) and the completion of this report a few months prior to project closure (although subsequently the project was extended six months) greatly constrained the circumstances under which the plan was developed. Nevertheless, the plan which was produced by the TA firm, in co-operation with local consultants, university staff (including from Lebanon) with oversight from the technical committee of the PMU, is very satisfactory and provides an excellent basis for the implementation of the plan. However, there were hardly any steps taken towards implementation of the plan due to time and resource constraints.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The planning process for developing the management plan involved extensive field surveys, an assessment of the ecological and natural habitat situation of the PA site, an assessment of the socioeconomic situation and sources of livelihood of the surrounding communities, and a series of meetings and consultations with a range of key stakeholders to ensure that the plan is based on accurate information, and reflected what the stakeholders hoped to achieve. It accommodated ideas contributed by all. ▪ The Management Plan proposed was agreed on by all stakeholders following a survey of the natural and cultural values of the PA, the development of a vision for the future of the area, setting of management objectives, the formulation of a set of rules or policies and the programming of management activities aimed at achieving the adopted objectives. The plan provided options, based on local community surveys, for alternative income generation based on ecotourism. The management plan provided options for management zones (core, nature, recreational, buffer) and scenarios. Furthermore, the management plan provided proposals for PA income generation and financial sustainability through entrance fees and

<p>Indicator 3: Protected area infrastructure (2 ranger stations, lookout towers, 1 research center, campsite development, visitor facilities) and on-site interpretation, and equipment acquired</p>	<p>ecotourism taxation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In addition to the management plan, a monitoring and evaluation protocol was prepared for the PA flora and fauna to help the PA management team in the development of their annual management plans objectives and activities. <p>The lack of technical capacity within the PMU, and limited representation by MAAR and MLAE on a day-to-day basis meant that the follow-up action relating to the implementation of the management plan was limited – partially due to limited time and resources at this stage of the project. The PMU who co-ordinated the work of the Consultant, was not equipped to follow-up with the implementation, and at this later stage of the project was focusing its attention to getting the remaining funds disbursed to contracted activities and programs. The WB provided good feedback on the early versions of the management plan, but focused follow-up on the final version would have also been most useful. In any case, the full implementation of the management plan would not have been possible given the considerable delays as well as reduced budget allocated to this.</p> <p>Overall, this aspect was satisfactory, although plagued by delays and procurement challenges. Procurement was made and awarded for civil works and equipment. The necessary surveying and production of designs for a visitor’s center and accompanying facilities, e.g. parking, restrooms, etc. were made. A visitor’s center with offices for the management team was built. And 3 nearby structures were rehabilitated to provide accommodations for staff. However, due to the reduced time and budget allotted to the development and implementation of the management plan, some infrastructure development was not implemented, e.g. lookout towers and campsites. Different equipment was acquired to help the management team perform its duties, e.g. PCs, printers and scanner; photocopy machine; power point projector; overhead projector; digital camera; a complete set of communication equipment (VHF handsets and HF); binoculars; etc. In addition, as noted above, 4 vehicles (cars) and 7 motorcycles were purchased.</p>
<p>Project Component 5: Public awareness programs (Rating: Satisfactory)</p> <p>Indicator 1: Developing a Communication, Education, and Public Awareness strategy</p>	<p>Overall, the level of public awareness of the Cedar/Fir PA and its importance was good at all levels, including the central and local government, governor’s office, and among the communities. A Communication, Education, and Public Awareness (CEPA) strategy was developed. It was implemented in parallel to the development of the final management plan through formal meetings with Government decision makers at the national and local levels, the project Steering Committee, the PA Management Team, local stakeholders, and representatives of the tourism industry to present and discuss the economic value of the area and the proposed management plan, as well as elicit support and active participation by all concerned. The production of informative 2 TV spots/interviews; publication of educational material in Arabic and English on the project and its objectives (1000 copies), as well as on the area’s ecosystem, flora and fauna (10,000 copies). These materials were distributed to school students during field visits; at stakeholder and steering committee meetings; at general training sessions. There was also a production of a 27 minutes documentary in English, Arabic and Italian on the PA, and the activities of the project.</p> <p>Stakeholder research was carried out in order to get a clear picture of the different players and their information and communication needs. This was done through interviews with selected decision makers at the national, regional and local levels. In addition, formal meetings of the Steering Committee, the Management Team and of local stakeholders were organized. Finally, a survey was carried out among local inhabitants in the 21 villages</p>

<p>Indicator 2: Production of TV spots</p> <p>Indicator 3: Publication of educational materials</p> <p>Indicator 4: Production of a documentary on the PA, and the activities of the project.</p>	<p>surrounding the protected area, in which 44 households in Al-Ghab and Lattakie Governorates were visited and interviewed using a questionnaire. During the research and analysis phase, it has become apparent that general awareness of the deteriorating condition of the remaining Syrian Cedar and Fir forests is limited. Experience with participatory management is also limited.</p> <p>Subsequently, a public communication and education strategy was developed targeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local inhabitants in the 21 villages surrounding the protected area, in Al-Ghab and Lattakie Governorates; ○ Local decision makers and other key people in the same area with credibility and leadership among the local inhabitants; ○ Local, regional and national decision makers who play a role in promoting and sustaining the Syrian commitment to protected area management; ○ The Management Team of the Cedar-Fir Protected Area, who will be the interface between the Syrian government and the local stakeholders to the protected area; ○ Visitors to the forest, especially the summer visitors who come with large numbers at a time and as such give high pressure to the forest resources; and ○ Local businessmen and entrepreneurs, who make their living on the tourism potential and who could become ambassadors for ecotourism. <p>The strategy was developed and included in the final PA Management Plan document. It had 5 objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ to increase knowledge and awareness of the Cedar-Fir Protected Area, it's features, it's added value, and it's objectives ○ to increase active support of the future plans for the Cedar-Fir protected area, and the implications of these plans for local inhabitants ○ to increase the understanding among decision makers at all levels that sustainable protected area management requires integrated planning and long-term support ○ to strengthen the capacity for interactive stakeholder management and participatory decision making with the support of communication and public awareness ○ to increase the understanding and commitment for environmentally responsible behavior among visitors and entrepreneurs in the tourism sector. <p>Throughout project implementation all activities were covered by different media (TV, radio, main newspapers in Syria) notably the workshops, training activities and interviews were made with all stakeholders concerned with project implementation.</p> <p>See above.</p> <p>According to the government's ICR report (March 2006), a film on PAs and another entitled "Adel and the birds" were produced..</p>
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