

Removing Barriers Hindering Protected Area (PA) Management Effectiveness in Viet Nam

Country: Viet Nam
Region: Asia and the Pacific

GEF Agency: United Nations Development Programme
Executing Partners: Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment,
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
GEF Biodiversity Focal Area
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Terminal Evaluation Report
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This report has been prepared for UNDP for the terminal evaluation of the UNDP GEF project *Removing barriers hindering PA (PA) management effectiveness in Viet Nam*.

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Abbreviations

BCA	Biodiversity Conservation Agency
CDR	Combined Delivery Report
CDS	Capacity Development Scorecard
CIP	Co-Implementing Partner
DARD	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
DONRE	Department of Natural Resources and Environment
EOP	End-of-project
FPD	Forest Protection Department
FSC	Protected Area System Financial Sustainability Scorecard
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HPPMG	Harmonized Program and Project Management Guidelines
GoV	Government of Viet Nam
IPA	Indigenous Protected Area
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
IWPA	Internal Water Protected Area
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
METT	Management Effectiveness (of protected areas) Tracking Tool
MOF	Ministry of Finances
MONRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
MTR	Midterm review
NA	National Assembly
NIM	National Implementation (NIM) modality
NIP	National Implementing Partner
NP	National Park
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PA	Protected Area
PEB	Project Executive Board
PES	Payment for Ecosystem/ Environmental Services
PIF	Project Implementation Form
PIR	Project Implementation Review
PFES	Payment for Forest Environmental Services
PMU	Project Management Unit
PPC	Provincial People's Committee
PPG	Project preparation grant
QPR	Quarterly Progress Report
SUF	Special Use Forest
TE	Terminal evaluation
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Program
USD	Dollars of the United States of America
VEA	Viet Nam Environment Agency
VND	Viet Nam Dong
VNFOREST	Viet Nam Administration of Forest

Executive summary

Project summary table

Project Title:	Removing Barriers Hindering Protected Area Management Effectiveness in Viet Nam			
GEF Project ID:	3603	Financing	<i>at endorsement (US\$)</i>	<i>at completion (US\$)</i>
UNDP Project ID:	UNDP PIMS:3965 UNDP Atlas Project Number: 00074659	GEF:	3,536,360	
Country:	Viet Nam	UNDP:	7,050,000	
Region:	Asia	Government:	10,491,043	
Focal Area:	Biodiversity	Other:	1,000,000	
Focal Area Objectives:	Project approved under GEF-5 Focal Area Strategy and Strategic Objective 1 (SO-1), Catalyzing Sustainability of Protected Area Systems at national levels; and specifically, under Strategic Programme 1: Sustainable Financing of Protected Area Systems at the National Level	Total co-financing:	18,541,043	
Executing Agency:	Ministry of Natural Resources & Environment (MONRE)	Total Project Cost:	22,077,403	
Other Partners involved:	DoNC/MARD Xuan Thuy, Cat Ba, Bidoup-Nui Ba NPs	ProDoc Signature (date project began):	22 December 2010	
		(Operational) Closing Date:	Proposed: December, 2014	Actual: 31 December 2015

Project description and overview of terminal evaluation

This report presents the results of the terminal evaluation (TE) of the project *Removing barriers hindering protected area (PA) management effectiveness in Viet Nam* (hereafter “PA Financing” project), executed under UNDP’s National Implementation (NIM) modality, with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) acting as the National Implementing Partner (NIP) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) acting as the Co-Implementing Partner (CIP) with a financial grant provided by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Total project costs amounted to US\$22,177,403, including the GEF project grant of US\$3,536,360, government in-kind support amounting to US\$10,491,043 and in-kind and cash contributions from UNDP (US\$7,050,000) and IUCN (US\$1,000,000). The project is within the GEF biodiversity focal area. The project was officially approved by the GEF on 24 March 2010. Project implementation officially started on 22 December 2010.

The overall project objective is to “*secure a sustainably financed PA system, to conserve globally significant biodiversity*”. Four outcomes and eleven outputs are identified in the project:

- Outcome 1: A comprehensive and harmonized legal and policy framework supports sustainable PA financing
- Outcome 2: Clear and harmonized institutional mandates and processes support sustainable PA financing mechanisms
- Outcome 3: Knowledge and experience of sustainable financing options developed through demonstrations
- Outcome 4: Information on biodiversity and PA status supports PA management and builds public support for the PA system

The terminal evaluation’s objectives are to analyze and assess the achievements and progress made towards achieving the original project’s objectives as well as to synthesize lessons that can help to improve the selection, design and implementation of future GEF financed UNDP activities (UNDP, 2012). Achievements and progress are assessed against five key criteria, namely Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability and Impacts.

An evaluation team of two experts, international consultant Mr. José Antonio Cabo Buján and national consultant Ms. Le Ha Thanh conducted the TE in the period of January-February 2016. An evaluation mission took place in January, in which the key project stakeholders in Hanoi, Hai Phong, Nam Dinh, Lam Dong were interviewed, and three PAs were visited.

Main findings

The project was suited to the local and national development priorities and organizational policies. Project formulation and design were based on a clear identification of the needs and problems of biodiversity conservation and PA management in Viet Nam. The project design is clear but ambitious, with outputs and achievements formulated on a broad range of topics. Project activities included the preparation of studies, such as economic valuation of PAs, draft legal instruments, international outlook on the management of PA systems, communication materials, such as audiovisual productions, brochures and promotional and training materials, organization and facilitation of visits, trainings, workshops and conferences with an array of stakeholders, ranging from PA officials to tourist operators and members of the National Assembly (NA).

The project approval procedures within Government of Viet Nam (GoV) led to a significant delay of the start of the project. However, the outcome of the complex approval process is seen as satisfactory by all parties, and the current cooperation mechanism among the stakeholders is considered to be constructive. After the significant delays in the start-up of the project, the increased activities, results and disbursements in the last two years signaled a positive shift for the project. On a cumulative basis, the project has performed in a satisfactory manner.

With respect to **relevance**, the project objective is considered **relevant**, as the project clearly supports priority biodiversity conservation issues in Viet Nam.

The project's four outcomes are logically linked to the project objective and their achievement would indeed lead to a more effective management capabilities and an enabling environment for sustainable finance of PAs that should contribute to conservation of Viet Nam's biodiversity of global importance. Specifically, the project's outcomes correspond to the activities foreseen as support for GEF-4 first strategic program of sustainable financing of PA systems. The project strategy is also in line with the goal of the GEF-5 biodiversity focal area of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the maintenance of ecosystem goods and services, and specifically with the objective of improving sustainability of PA systems, as well as with national laws, regulations and policies, and is relevant to local resource user needs and priorities as well.

The project **efficiency** is rated **satisfactory**. The project has made considerable efforts to catch up with the delivery schedule after the significant initial delay. Delivery has reached 88.35% of the GEF grant at the time of the terminal evaluation, which is potential to receive a higher efficiency rating. However, given the fact that the project is actually one year behind schedule, having needed an extension, the efficiency rating must be of satisfactory. Project implementation arrangements have functioned well, although the level of coordination between MONRE and MARD can be improved. Project oversight mechanisms have been in place, but the role of the project executive board (PEB) should be enhanced to provide more hands-on and sustained support for the project.

Project **effectiveness** is assessed as **satisfactory**. The project succeeded in securing the enactment of various legal instruments of national or local (provincial) scope that enabled financing mechanisms for PAs or strengthen enforcement of conservation measures, including provincial instruments authorizing three national parks (NPs), Xuan Thuy (Nam Dinh), Bidoup-Nui Ba (Lam Dong) and Cat Ba (Hai Phong) to implement measures to increase revenue through leasing aquaculture concessions to local producers, payment for watershed protection services from a hydropower generation company and adjusting entrance fees respectively. Moreover, officials from most PAs of the country benefited from the training materials and capacity development activities led by MARD's PMU, and in cooperation with other ODA projects.

Efforts were made to enhance coordination among MARD and MONRE and a basic agreement on cooperation and information sharing was signed with project support. While officials from both agencies manifested their interest in achieving better coordination with the other, this has proven to be rather challenging at operational level. The project also supported other initiatives to set up a biodiversity information system that would be used for management of biodiversity, as well as to raise awareness of its importance among different groups of stakeholders and the general public. In this respect, members of the National Assembly were introduced by the project to the socio-economic importance of PAs and how PAs are being managed on the international context by a project-sponsored study and presentation.

The targets of the project's indicator framework were mostly met, raising the scores of its capacity development scorecard (CDC), the standard Financial Sustainability Scorecard (FSC) and the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT). However, it is worth mentioning that, the project was not the only initiative that contributed to the improved scores, but also other government measures, with or without official development assistance (ODA) support.

The project **overall sustainability** is rated *moderately likely*. The **financial and institutional dimensions of sustainability** are considered *likely*, as the current legal and regulatory framework does indeed enable sustainable financing of PAs and management boards, at least of the sites intervened by the project, have the technical capacity and know-how for their implementation. Moreover, sustained state and donor support for, at least some prominent PAs is very likely. The **socio-economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability** are assessed as *moderately likely* as the level of threats to biodiversity both within and outside PAs is likely to increase over the next decade due to population growth, economic development and the vulnerability of Viet Nams biodiversity. Even if stakeholders expressed support for conservation objectives, differences in awareness and a certain degree of competition between conservation and development objectives involves moderate risks of conservation objectives being relegated in favor of, e.g. tourism or infrastructure development.

The project **impact** is rated as *significant*. Through its support for the strengthening of the regulatory framework on PAs, the project has made a significant contribution to PA management effectiveness. While policy-making itself is a function of government (central and local) and indeed a complex process in Viet Nam, the project approach and efforts, together with other initiatives implemented in parallel and supported by different development partners have significantly contributed to the strengthening of the PA system in Viet Nam in the last five years. Nonetheless, the question remains if these gains would be enough to stop and reverse the current decline in biodiversity, in Viet Nam and worldwide.

Summary of conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned

Conclusions

Overall, the project has been successful with many achievements related to biodiversity conservation, PA financing and institutional capacity. Some of the main conclusions of the terminal evaluation are as follows:

- The development of a project document addressing most of the main issues in PA management in Viet Nam and was suited to the local and national development priorities and organizational policies. The project design is clear but ambitious, with outputs and achievements formulated on a broad range of topics and this requires time for consultation and consensus building.
- Project management by the leading agencies was conducted satisfactorily, with good standards in report preparation, with collaboration among stakeholders to perform project activities. In terms of coordination among main stakeholders, it must be noted that different instruments enacted during the project timeframe, with or without project support, have contributed to clarification of roles, stressing leadership of MARD on PA and MONRE on overall management of biodiversity. The project contribution in this sense has been to foster an agreement on cooperation and sharing of information mechanism among the two ministries, which can have important benefits for PA

management effectiveness at local and national level. However, there is still room for improvement in terms of coordination, staff motivation and crucially, in terms of differences in funding and capacity across the system, with some PAs still capturing most of the funding, training and international support.

- Overall, the project has been successful in meeting its end-of-project objectives and outcomes. Progress on certain key outcome was slow over the first two years, but on a cumulative basis the project has performed in a satisfactory manner. The project has made an important contribution to enable legal framework for management and financial sustainability, as well as to strengthen organizational and individual capacities. The project has led to some very important outcomes and impacts on PA management in Viet Nam such as a passage of new regulations supporting PA financing, increased public awareness of biodiversity conservation, establishment of financial mechanism for PA in Viet Nam. The strengthening of management effectiveness and financial sustainability showed by the results of the scorecards used as project indicators are the result of this project's activities together with other government and internationally supported projects.
- The project has more important impacts at local than at systemic level through demonstration of sustainable financing options at targeted PAs. Nevertheless, the project provides an excellent platform for Viet Nam to continue to expand its activities in biodiversity conservation and PA financing.
- Although awareness on biodiversity conservation of stakeholders has increased, the efforts to strengthen the knowledge systematically could have been more effective than generic or non-targeted awareness rising campaigns. Effective knowledge transfer system could have also benefited from a reduced inception phase with a more intense involvement of MARD, the primary PA agency of the country.
- Project outcomes are likely to be sustainable from a financial and institutional point of view. However, it must be noted that threats for biodiversity in Viet Nam are still very significant and that there are differences in the understanding of the importance and linkages between biodiversity and development. Continuation of support by stakeholders to consolidate key results of the project is recommended.

Recommendations

The recommendations from the terminal evaluation are indicated below:

- MARD and Ministry of Internal Affairs to consolidate and finalize the inter-ministerial circular on professional standards for conservation staff, initiated with project support to create incentives for PA staff.
- Biodiversity Conservation Agency (BCA) of MONRE and Department of Natural Conservation (DNC) of MARD to support the consolidation of the systematic collection of biodiversity data in PAs initiated. It is highly recommended that the two agencies and partners work with VEA Data Management Office to ensure that the biodiversity database system in place and is used to guide PA system management.
- MONRE and MARD, together with PPCs and provincial agencies managing or supervising PAs to institutionalize the use of monitoring tools/scorecards, especially the FSC and the METT as regular monitoring instruments, in combination with an enhanced information flow on biodiversity inside and outside PAs. These tools would not only contribute to improve management practices, but also act supporting coordination among agencies by creating a common understanding on the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities of PAs in Viet Nam.

- Along with top down approach, MONRE and MARD to explore the possibility of utilizing bottom up approach in policy making related to biodiversity conservation and sustainable PA financing. Experiences showed that working from the level of individual PAs up to provincial and national level is the most cost-effective approach. The project has achieved positive results at PA level which should be continued. In addition, lessons learned from the pilot cases can be used to create or revise national policies of PA financing mechanisms.
- UNDP to collect and systematize updated lessons learned from implementation of projects on PAs in Viet Nam to establish the best mechanisms of improving financial sustainability and management effectiveness of PAs. Also, UNDP should publish and disseminate any results from this project, including the survey on public awareness on biodiversity and protected areas commissioned by the project.
- UNDP to support the publication and dissemination of any results from this project, including the survey on public awareness on biodiversity and protected areas commissioned by the project.

Lessons learned

The lessons learned through the implementation of the project are the following:

- In the development of this type of project, it is important to ensure that key stakeholders are well identified and involved at a very early stage in the project design process to represent their stakes and interest to avoid later adjustments at the expense of project implementation time. All agencies involved must have a common understanding of the extent to which the chosen issues and indicators represent changes in the real world, as well as limitations, including how to determine attribution for said changes.
- Project design must consider likely without-project changes and not just simply assume away a static “without-project scenario”. If factors beyond project control that may impact implementation are likely to occur, then they should be included in the risk analysis. In this regard, delays in implementation of projects are always likely in complex socio-economic and institutional environments. Hence project strategies should be subjected to a rigorous sensitivity analysis to assess what effects delays would have on project implementation and effectiveness.
- The sequencing of activities in this type of project is very important for the effective and efficient delivery of outcomes and outputs. The project has shown that there may be several factors, some of which may have been anticipated within the project conceptualization, design and formulation. In contrast, there are unforeseen factors that could not be anticipated, but for which remedial solutions could be found through an adaptive, learning management system.
- The national legislation together with the provincial policy has been the basis for institutional arrangements. The experience developed in the “PA Financing” project is singular in this respect and provides experience for other PAs in Viet Nam to construct similar mechanisms. Institutional arrangements are always unique due to the combination of legal, social and economic circumstances but the successes of the Viet Nam case constitute a major asset of experience for development of similar arrangements elsewhere.
- Synergies among different projects or sources of funding supporting the implementing agencies achieve improved effectiveness and enhance the sustainability of achieved results and long-term development goals.

Evaluation rating table

The following is a summary of rating for key parameters specified by the GEF and UNDP guidelines for terminal evaluation.

Criteria	Rating	Comments
1. Monitoring and Evaluation		
M&E design at entry	S	M&E system was well conceived and was useful for adaptive management purposes
M&E plan implementation	S	
Overall quality of M&E	S	
2. IA & EA Execution		
Executing agency performance	S	Provision of required technical and administrative support
Quality of UNDP implementation - Implementing agency (IA)	S	
Quality of execution - Executing agency (EA)	S	
Overall quality of implementation/execution	S	Project implemented within expected timeframe with only minor setbacks
3. Assessment of Outcomes		
Relevance	R	Outcomes strongly linked to policy objectives
Effectiveness	S	Targets mostly achieved but not very strong attribution for systemic changes
Efficiency	S	Outputs delivered within budgetary and time frameworks
Overall project outcome rating	S	There have been improvements in financial sustainability of PA partially driven by the project
4. Sustainability		
Financial sustainability	L	State and donor support. Sustainable local financial streams
Socio-economic sustainability	ML	Some degree of competition between conservation and development objectives
Institutional sustainability	L	Enabling regulatory framework and sufficient know-how at local sites
Environmental sustainability	ML	Increasing level of threats for biodiversity in Viet Nam
Overall likelihood of sustainability	ML	
5. Impact		
Improved management effectiveness of PAs	S	Significant impacts at PA level with increased revenues. Limited but significant systemic impact

Rating scale used:

Ratings for Outcomes, Effectiveness, Efficiency, M&E, IA&EA Execution

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 6: Highly Satisfactory (HS): | no shortcomings |
| 5: Satisfactory (S): | minor shortcomings |
| 4: Moderately Satisfactory (MS) | |
| 3: Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): | significant shortcomings |
| 2: Unsatisfactory (U): | major problems |
| 1: Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): | severe problems |

Sustainability ratings

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 4. Likely (L): | negligible risks to sustainability |
| 3. Moderately Likely (ML): | moderate risks |
| 2. Moderately Unlikely (MU): | significant risks |
| 1. Unlikely (U): | severe risks |

Relevance ratings

- | |
|----------------------|
| 2. Relevant (R) |
| 1. Not relevant (NR) |

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of the terminal evaluation is to promote accountability and transparency by assessing and disclosing the extent the accomplishments of the project *Removing Barriers Hindering Protected Area (PA) Management Effectiveness in Viet Nam*, as well as to synthesize lessons that can help to improve the selection, design and implementation of future GEF financed UNDP activities (UNDP, 2012). The evaluation has been conducted according to the United Nations Evaluation Group's Code of Conduct for Evaluators, as required by the UNDP and GEF evaluation policies and guidelines. The code of conduct includes the evaluator's obligations to preserve anonymity of primary sources, treat all stakeholders with respect and dignity both at gathering information and communicating results, and to disclose all findings, including scope or methodological limitations (UNEG, 2008). A code of conduct signed by the international and national consultants is attached to this report as annex 8.

1.2 Methodology of the evaluation

The TE was conducted in January 2016 by a team of independent consultants: an international consultant with expertise in the GEF and UNDP project cycle and biodiversity and a national consultant with expertise environmental economics and policy.

Following UNDP and GEF guidelines, the evaluation uses the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impacts and sustainability. The criteria are defined as follows (UNDP, Guidance for conducting terminal evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects, 2012):

- **Relevance:** extent to which the project supports the main objectives of the GEF focal area, and to the environment and development priorities at the local, regional and national levels.
- **Effectiveness:** extent to which the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved.
- **Efficiency:** extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible
- **Impacts:** intended and unintended long-term changes to drivers of global environmental benefits at local, national or regional levels
- **Sustainability:** likelihood of advances achieved by the project being sustained for an extended period after project completion.

Accordingly, UNDP-GEF evaluation guidelines provide a list of standard evaluation questions that have been adapted to this project. The evaluation questions cover all the dimensions of the project, namely, project design, project implementation, project results, sustainability, catalytic role and impact. Thus, the evaluation report needs to disclose how effective the project has been in achieving its targets, i.e. to which extent have the results of the logical framework been achieved, and how efficient was the project administration, or how relevant was the projects to national development priorities and/ or local needs, as well as how likely are risks to project sustainability to materialized, as wells as to which extent has the project promoted innovative solutions or make a significant impact on the status of ecological or human systems. Each evaluation question is matched by a quantifiable indicator, for which the evaluator must find reliable information sources. A detailed evaluation matrix, that matches evaluation sections to questions, indicators and sources is included in this report as annex 5.

The information for the indicators of the evaluation matrix was obtained from a number of primary and secondary sources.

Secondary sources include all relevant literature on the project, including project documents, reports and tracking tools, government policy and legal documents, and peer reviewed and grey literature relevant to

the performance of the project, or the development context. Annex 4 includes all documents that have been reviewed for the terminal evaluation.

Primary information sources include project stakeholders and project sites. Information from primary sources has been collected through individual interviews. To enable collection of information and interviews with local government officials and beneficiaries an evaluation mission was conducted between January 13 and 22. The evaluation team visited the main project stakeholders in Hanoi and at all three project field sites. Stakeholders visited/ interviewed by the evaluation are detailed in annex 2.

2. Project description

2.1 Biodiversity (ecosystem, species) of Viet Nam

Viet Nam is home to emblematic ecosystems such as the moist forests of the Annamite range, or the Xi Jiang Rivers and Streams on the karstic terrains of the North West, among others, included in WWF's priority ecoregions for global conservation (WWF, 2016). Viet Nam also possesses important wetlands, including eight Ramsar sites, such as the Xuan Thuy Natural Wetland Reserve on the Red River delta (Ramsar Convention, 2016), as well as still extensive areas of mangrove forests (UNDP, 2009). This diversity of ecosystem types sustains high species diversity, with over 12,800 species of plants, circa 4,000 vertebrate species and over 7,500 insect species described. Both animal and plants have high levels of endemism (UNDP, 2009). Biodiversity directly contributed to almost a fifth (19%) of the gross domestic product between 2005 and 2012 (MONRE, 2014), or circa 223 billion current US\$ (World Bank, 2016) based only on the direct use market value of agricultural, fisheries and forestry products, i.e. not including regulating or support ecosystem services or aesthetic and cultural values.

In spite its global and national importance, biodiversity in Viet Nam is declining due mostly to loss of natural habitats to agriculture, forestry and infrastructure and degradation of habitats and populations due to overexploitation, invasive species, fires and pollution. PAs, if well managed and ecologically representative (Olson D. M., et al., 2001), have a critical role to play in ensuring the future of biodiversity in Viet Nam, by protecting diversity from current threats (Margules & Pressey, 2000) and allowing the flow of critical ecosystem services provided by them (Bovarnick, Baca, Galindo, & Negret, 2010). Currently, there are 207 (186 effective) PAs in Viet Nam that cover a total of 25,153 km² (24,962 km² terrestrial, 3,630 km² marine) or 8% and 1% of the country's land and marine area respectively (UNEP-WCMC, 2016). PAs in Viet Nam are classified by biome type (forest, marine and inland water) and fall under the jurisdiction of different state agencies at national and subnational level: special use forests, inland water and marine PAs fall under the mandate of MARD. However, most PAs, mostly forest biomes but also marine PAs, are under the direct jurisdiction of the Provincial or City People's Committees (PPCs), provincial Forest Protection Departments (FPDs) or provincial Departments of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) (34, 19 and 15% of all PAs respectively (UNDP, 2009) (Bui Thi Thu Hien et al., 2014). PA in all three biomes have different national and international denominations, including National Parks, nature reserves, cultural and historical sites and marine PA. At international level, Viet Nam has three World Heritage Sites, 8 Biosphere Reserves and 6 Ramsar sites.

2.2 Project objective and barriers and strategy

Yet, argues the project design, despite the protection offered by the national system of PAs, biodiversity and its associated ecosystem services are in decline in Viet Nam, threatening sustainable development. As weak effectiveness in management of PA is identified as one of the main factors contributing to degradation of ecosystem services, the project proposes to strengthen financial flows and management capacities at national and PA level in Viet Nam. The project design identifies several problems or barriers hampering effective management of PAs in Viet Nam, divided in policy, capacity and information barriers (UNDP, 2009).

Policy barriers include fragmentation of PA management, with uncoordinated, overlapping mandates and legal instruments over PAs from a variety of national and provincial state agencies. Moreover, the legal framework does not provide sufficient legal basis for revenue generation and retention for PAs beyond state budget allocations.

Capacity barriers include insufficient experience by PA management boards on administration of financial streams (entrance fees, payment for ecosystem services (PES), business concessions etc.), as well as limited individual skills and weak incentives for effective enforcement for PA staff.

Information barriers include the inexistence of an effective monitoring and communication system: PA management boards and responsible agencies do not have the necessary information at hand to either raise awareness on the importance of conservation among relevant stakeholders (state financial planning agencies, rural communities, general public) or take effective management actions to prevent degradation and/ or loss of biodiversity.

To overcome these barriers, the project strategy includes actions to deliver and policy reviews and analysis, valuation of ecosystem services, drafting and submitting legal or policy instruments, capacity development and awareness raising activities as well as facilitation of planning processes for relevant stakeholders to achieve four effects or outcomes:

- **Outcome 1.** *Comprehensive and harmonized legal framework to support sustainable funding of PAs*, based on the assumption that the current policy framework does not support alternative funding sources for PAs and aiming to develop regulations to this effect.
- **Outcome 2.** *Clear and harmonized institutional mandates and processes to support sustainable funding of PAs*, based on the assumption that the current administration of PAs lead to inefficient funding and significant deficits in budget allocation and institutional and individual capacities and thus aims to consolidate a PA authority, as well as develop capacities and performance incentives for PA staff *to ensure that PAs are managed consistently across the (PA) system*. The project does not envision the creation of a supervisory agency, but rather a coordination focal point that would ensure that budget allocations respond to conservation needs.
- **Outcome 3.** *Knowledge and experience of sustainable financing options developed through demonstrations*, based on the assumption that experience with diversified revenue sources is limited and that the only significant source of revenue for PAs are state budgets and official development assistance (ODA). The outcome aims to support revenue generation at project sites based on tourism fees, payment for ecosystem services (PES) and fees from sustainable exploitation of natural resources. Moreover, the project would also try out *operational cooperation and resource sharing among neighboring PAs*, as well as support the development of provincial biodiversity plans, as mandated by the biodiversity law in the provinces where the model PAs are located.
- **Outcome 4.** *Information on biodiversity and PA status supports PA management and builds public support for the PA system*, is based on the assumption that lack of monitoring of biodiversity, beyond some charismatic species, is not systematically conducted across PAs and aims to support the development of a systematic monitoring approach (including guidelines and reporting templates) that will generate and centrally manage information (knowledge management system) to support effective management actions to ensure conservation of biodiversity. Moreover, the project will use the information generated to raise awareness on biodiversity conservation among the public in cities, and communities adjacent to the pilot PAs.

2.3 Description of field sites

Project sites were selected by a working group that included officials from MONRE, MARD and several research and educational institutions working on nature and biodiversity conservation. The group selected four criteria for the selection: (i) representation of the three main ecosystem types (forest, marine,

wetland), (ii) possibilities of implement one or more sustainable finance activities, (iii) presence of globally significant biodiversity and (iv) an easy access from Hanoi. Thus, six sites were initially selected: Xuan Thuy NP, Tien Hai Nature Reserve, Cat Ba NP, Bai Tu Long NP, Bidoup-Nui Ba NP and Chu Yang Sin NP (UNDP, 2009).

However, by 2013, the project had yet to start field activities and the selection process was reviewed, reducing the number of sites from six to three: Xuan Thuy NP, Bidoup-Nui Ba NP and Cat Ba NP (Auer & Le , 2015). The other areas were intended as application sites for lessons learned.

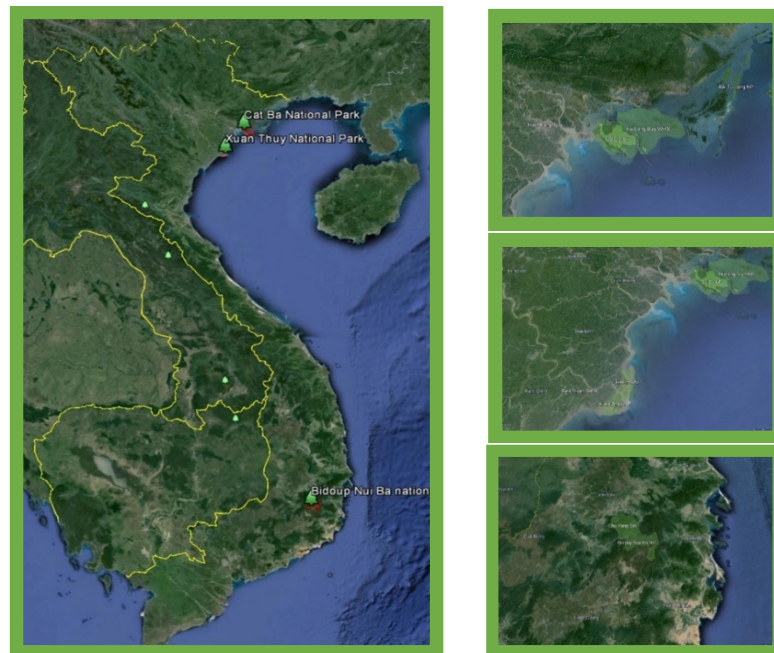
Xuan Thuy NP. Situated in the province of Nam Dinh, on the Red River Delta, the NP covers 71 km². It is part of the Red River Delta Biosphere Reserve. 12 km² of its core zone have been declared a Ramsar site in 1989. Its management board reports to the PPC. It has a staff of 19 and counts with a budget of US\$700,000 from state sources and additional US\$200,000 from several ODA projects (UNDP, 2009).

Bidoup-Nui Ba NP situated in the province of Lam Dong, on the Greater Annamite Ecoregion one of the 200 WWF's global ecoregions (Olson & Dinerstein, 1998). It was established in 2004 and it covers 575 km² (UNEP-WCMC, 2016) and counts with a budget of US\$53,840 from state sources. Its management board reports to the DARD of Lam Dong Province (UNDP, 2009). It was the site of an important US Aid funded project on payment for ecosystem services.

Cat Ba NP situated on the island of the same name, province of Hai Phong. The NP was gazette in April 2004 with the stated objective of protecting the unique island ecosystem. It covers 26.2 km² (UNEP-WCMC, 2016) of limestone forest and marine area. It counts with a staff of 93 and its management board reports to the Hai Phong Service of Agriculture and Rural Development (UNDP, 2009). Cat Ba was also declared an UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 2004 (UNESCO, 2016).

Figure 1. Map of the project sites

Image from (Google Earth, 2016) Polygons from (UNEP-WCMC, 2016)

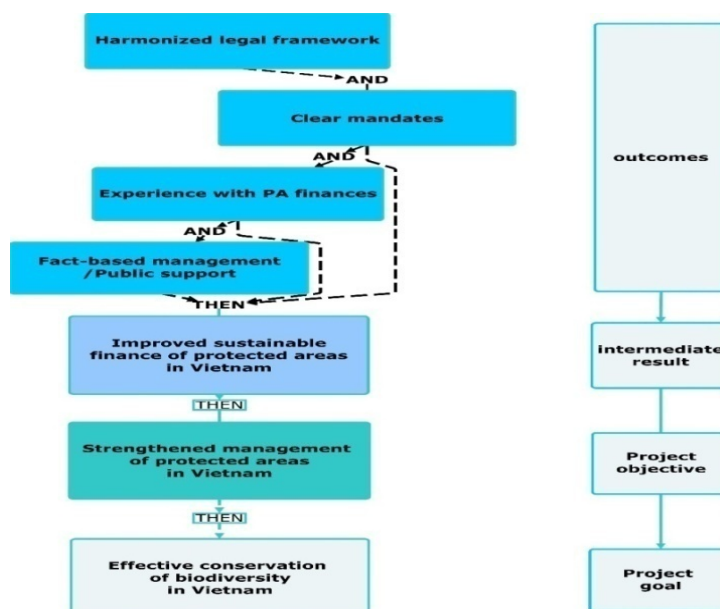


3. Findings

3.1 Project formulation

Project results were adequately formulated: they describe a specific future condition and are SMART¹ (UNDP, 2009). The project's four effects or outcomes are logically linked to the project objective and their achievement would indeed lead to a more effective management capabilities and an enabling environment for sustainable finance of PAs that should contribute to conservation of Viet Nam's biodiversity of global importance.

Figure 2. Project strategy



The project's 11 outputs are also logically linked to their outcomes: **if** the project succeeds in convincing the relevant state agencies to enact regulatory instruments that enable sustainable finances for PAs (output 1.1 and 1.2) **then** the legal framework should indeed enable sustainable finances for PAs (outcome 1). **If** the project succeeds in clarifying institutional roles (output 2.1) **and** improve capacity and motivation of PA management staff (outputs 2.2 and 2.3) **then** management effectiveness of PAs should be improved (outcome 2). **If** the project succeeds in implementing successful examples of sustainable funding for PAs (output 3.1 and 3.2) and integrate PAs into holistic biodiversity planning at provincial level (output 3.3) **then** capacities on sustainable funding for PAs must have been developed (outcome 3). In addition, lessons learned from the pilot cases can be used to create or revise national policies of PA financing mechanisms. **If** the project succeeds in creating a knowledge management system on biodiversity in PAs and effectively implement communicating mechanisms (outputs 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3) **then** management actions can be better linked to conservation objectives and awareness campaigns based on that information could increase public awareness and support for PAs (outcome 4).

The project strategy outlined above is based on the following assumptions:

- The current policy framework is inconsistent and often contradictory and thus does not facilitate financial sustainability of PAs
- The current administration of PAs in Viet Nam leads to important differences in budget allocation for individual PAs, and ineffective management
- Experience with diversified revenue sources for PAs in Viet Nam is extremely limited

¹Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound

- Lack of monitoring of biodiversity, beyond some charismatic species is not systematically conducted across PAs.

Lessons learned from GEF-funded projects on PAs in Viet Nam show that the legal framework did allow the generation of revenues from sources other than the state budget as early as 2003, as confirmed by the successful implementation between 2006 and 2010 of a project on payment for forest ecosystem services (PFES) in the province of Lam Dong, which prompted enactment of national legislation on PFES or the implementation in 2005 of a co-management and lease system involving payments by clam fishers to the management board of the Xuan Thuy NP. This seems to indicate that the most cost-effective intervention would have been at site level, and then to feedback any gap or inconsistency found in the regulatory framework at the systemic level.

The project design identified and rated political risks (weak coordination, conflict among agencies, rejection of proposed regulatory instruments), economic risks (decline in tourist visits) and environmental risks (climate change). Risks were rated based on their probability and impact as low and medium (no high risk rated) and each risk has an associated mitigation strategy. Low tourist revenue and rejection of proposed regulatory instruments were correctly rated low. Climate change impacts were assumed to play on a longer time scale and thus not affect the outcomes of the project. The other two risks identified, weak coordination and conflict are two of the problems (barriers) the project was set out to solve. However, the project design assumed no changes whatsoever in government policy or arrangements among government organizations regarding PAs (UNDP, 2009)², while in fact, relevant legal instruments³ that enabled financing of PAs through PES were enacted and approved during the lengthy project inception phase. These changes were in fact acknowledged at the project's inception workshop, which however did not prompt any changes in the project strategy.

While the project document does not make any reference to it, UNDP comparative advantage for the GEF lies in its global network of country offices, its experience in integrated policy development, human resources development, institutional strengthening, and non-governmental and community participation (GEF, 2016). UNDP fulfilled this role as described in section GEF agency below.

3.2 Project implementation

3.2.1 Monitoring and evaluation

The project used the following monitoring and evaluation instruments: **indicator framework** with specified quantitative baselines, targets, and means of verification, established in the project document and slightly modified at the **inception workshop**, which were annually reported at the **project implementation reports (PIR)**, and verified by an independent **midterm review (MTR)**. The PMU also prepared **quarterly progress reports (QPR)** and the UNDP prepared annual financial reports (**Combined Delivery Reports, CDR**), as well as independent **audit reports**.

The indicator framework used partial or total scores of the UNDP's Capacity Development Scorecard (CDS), Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool for PAs (METT)⁴ and UNDP's PA System Financial Sustainability Scorecard (FSC) as outcome and objective indicators. The METT and FSC scorecards are explicitly included as indicators for projects of the GEF-4 program strategy to which this program belongs (GEF, 2007), and capacity scorecards are also recommended to measure capacity development efforts in GEF-supported biodiversity projects (UNDP, 2012) (GEF; UNDP; UNEP, 2010). Two FSC versions were used for the baseline and project implementation: a modified version 1.5⁵ of 2008, completed during a

² See the Incremental Cost Analysis Section of the Project Document

³ Decree 99/2010/ND-CP or clarified organization and management of protected areas according to the Law on Biodiversity, such as Decree 117/2010/ND-CP were passed, supported by other ODA projects, namely the [GIZ-MARD project on biodiversity in forest ecosystems](#) and the [US Aid-funded project Asia Regional Biodiversity Conservation Program on payment for ecosystem services in Lam Dong](#). This development was duly documented at the project's inception report in 2011.

⁴ Developed by IUCN, WWF and the World Bank

⁵ (Bovarnick A. , Financial Sustainability Scorecard for National Systems of Protected Areas, version 1.5, August 2008, 2008)

multi-stakeholder workshop held in May and June 2008 for the baseline and the 2010 version for project monitoring⁶. The two versions differ in the total score possible (197 and 225 respectively) and absence of some elements and/or sub-elements. More importantly, the project does not document participation and number of PAs included in the baseline workshop and the resulting baseline FSC presents significant data gaps at both scores and justification. This problem was noted and corrected by the PMU in 2013. Henceforth, the information for the FSC was collected from a sub-set of 44 out of a total of 103 PAs representing over 60% of the total land area protected in Viet Nam. The card was also filled out in a more rigorous manner, including proper reference to legal instruments, reforms, strategies and plans to justify the score.

The METT was completed during the early stages of project preparation in 2007, and again at midterm in 2013 and in 2015. The scorecard has been correctly filled up in all occasions by senior or technical staff of 5 of the original six project PAs, except that threats were not included in the 2007 baseline. Neither project document, inception or any project report documents the reasons why only five PAs were included in the exercise⁷. Regarding the CDS, there were some gaps and calculation errors (corrected after the MTR) at the baseline level and subsequent capacity assessment exercises as not all the scores are correctly justified.

Table 1. Project indicator framework

Project result	Indicator
Objective: To secure a sustainably financed PA system, to conserve globally significant biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall Financial scorecard (FSC) scores • Overall Capacity scorecard (CSC) scores • Average METT scores (for all sites)
Outcome 1: A comprehensive and harmonized legal and policy framework supports sustainable PA financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks component of the FSC • Capacity to effectively conceptualize and formulate policies, legislations, strategies and programs component of the CSC
Outcome 2: Clear and harmonized institutional mandates and processes support sustainable PA financing mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business planning and tools for cost-effective management component of the FSC • Capacity to implement policies, legislation, strategies and programs component of the CSC
Outcome 3: Knowledge and experience of sustainable financing options developed through demonstrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools for revenue generation of the FSC
Outcome 4: Information on biodiversity and PA status supports PA management and builds public support for the PA system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build consensus, mobilize information, and monitor, report and learn components of the CSC

Responsibility for M&E activities was divided between UNDP (for the inception workshop and report, midterm review and terminal evaluation) and PMU for monitoring and reporting (indicator framework, tracking tools and reports). A budget of US\$91,000, or 3% of the total budget of US\$3,536,360, was allocated for all monitoring activities at inception (UNDP, 2011). Monitoring information was communicated and discussed during weekly coordination meetings, between project director and PMU staff, as well as through quarterly and monthly written reports. PMU staff conducted regular visits to project sites (Auer & Le , 2015).

The PMU completed and submitted all required reports, including annual GEF project implementation reports (PIR), with assessment by the UNDP at country and regional level. The reports contained accurate information, as confirmed by the terminal evaluation's primary sources. The main shortcoming of the project's reporting system was the limited assessment of the project's context (PA developments independent of the project) and not documenting the reasons behind the change in the number of field sites, a fact also noted in the MTR report. Moreover, there was unnecessary duplication of the same

⁶ The Biodiversity Tracking Tool of GEF includes the 2010 edition of the FSC

⁷ On 09 September 1994, the area of 12,500 hectares in Tien Hai district was recognized as Tien Hai Natural Reserve under the Decision No.4895 of Government office. But twenty years later the establishment of Tien Hai Wetland Natural Reserve was only decided by the Thai Binh PPC under the Decision No.2159/QD-UBND from 26 September 2014.

narrative statements in different report sections. Completion reports prepared by the implementing and co-implementing agencies complemented the PIRs offering more extensive financial information, as well as an overview of the accomplishments of the project. Additionally, the PMU also prepared quarterly project progress reports, as well as monthly written reports for the Viet Nam Environment Agency (VEA). Thus, reporting activities reportedly consumed a significant part of the PMU's staff time. While it is true that project management units will always need to dedicate time to write reports at the expense of other project activities, reporting can be easily made more efficient through a proper knowledge management system, i.e. information kept on tabulated form to be used in different quarterly and annual formats.

A crucial monitoring instrument, the midterm review (MTR), took place much later than planned and could only be concluded by March 2015, only 10 months before the terminal evaluation. The first MTR report produced was rejected on quality grounds and a new recruitment process needed to be launched. Despite the delays, the MTR succeeded in making useful recommendations that were implemented by the project, notably, securing a non-cost extension, reviewing and correcting errors in the scorecards, and more actively engagement of the Project Executive Board (PEB) to secure approval of proposed legal instruments. Some recommendations are still implemented as part of wider processes, like the revision of the harmonized program and project management guidelines (HPPMG) to streamline procurement processes and the setup of a biodiversity clearinghouse mechanism. A report on lessons learned recommended by the MTR as means to up-scale and replicate finance mechanism for PAs was still pending at the time of the TE.

Summarizing, the project included an appropriate mix of M&E instruments and allocated sufficient budget and clearly defined responsibilities for the conduct of monitoring and evaluation activities. Monitoring and reporting was properly conducted by the PMU, with some shortcomings in reporting. Adaptive management decisions, e.g. annual work plan process and management response to the MTR were indeed adopted based on data obtained from monitoring activities. However, as scorecards are an important instrument to assess progress but lend themselves to subjectivity, better justification of scores with more qualitative information could have improved the interpretation of said scores. Both FSC and METT can provide important insights into management effectiveness, strengths, weaknesses and could serve as an important monitoring tool for PA management boards and PA administrations if the exercise was continued in a coordinated manner after project end.

3.2.2 Management arrangements and project administration

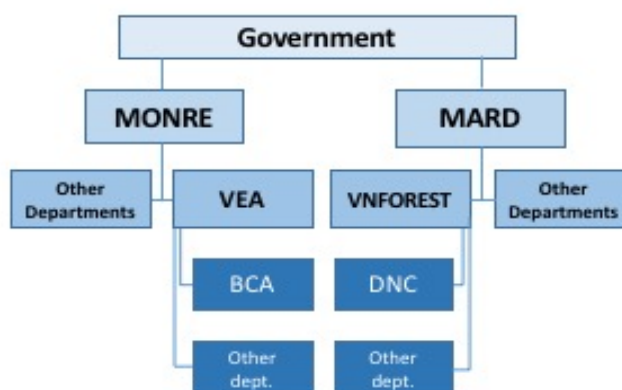
The project was formulated and implemented as a National Execution/National Implementation modality project (NEX/NIM)⁸ with MONRE as executing agency, BCA of VEA, as National Implementing partner (NIP) and the Department of Nature Conservation (DNC) of the Viet Nam Administration of Forestry (VNFOREST) later added as Co-Implementing Partner (CIP) (figure 3).

Relevant staff from MONRE and the UNDP led the project preparation grant (PPG) process which counted with participation of relevant PA managers (UNDP, 2009) (UNDP, 2011). Moreover, BCA officials considered the project as an important support for the implementation of the Biodiversity Law. However, national and local authorities that participated in the implementation of the project reported that the **project structure and strategy was difficult to understand and internalize**, which may indicate that the project's formulation relied too much on external consultants for the preparation of the project document and inception report.

MONRE is the focal point for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, 2016) of which GEF is the financial mechanism. MONRE's subsequent assignment of coordination responsibilities to the BCA is a logical step, as the agency is the specialized body on biodiversity within the Ministry.

⁸ Modality referred to as National Implementation Modality (NIM) under harmonized programing arrangements since 2011 (UNDP, 2011).

Figure 3. Simplified organizational structure of biodiversity institutions



At project design, a unique project management unit (PMU) was foreseen, responsible for the overall organization and implementation of all project activities to be located at the headquarters of BCA. The PMU would report to a National Project Director, to be a senior official of VEA, who, in turn would report to the PEB⁹. The board composition included representatives from the NA, MONRE, MARD, Ministry of Finances (MOF), Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), as well as the UNDP country office (UNDP, 2009). During implementation, the high-level status of the PEB members and the fact that they only met once a year limited the extent to which they could provide guidance for project implementation. Moreover, work plans were approved late in the year, with consequent delays for implementation of work plan activities. This issue was addressed at the midterm review and the management response involved a more intense involvement of the PEB, which held three meetings in 2015.

The role assigned by the project document to MARD was limited to *work in close cooperation with VEA and contribute to the project through administration and management of SUFs* (UNDP, 2009), as well as membership in the project board. No direct role in the implementation of the project was foreseen for MARD.

Table 2. Composition of the project executive board (UNDP, 2011).

Organization	Official position	PEB position
MONRE	Deputy Minister	Chairman
MONRE	Deputy Director General, VEA	Vice chairman
MARD	Deputy Director, VNFOREST	Member
MONRE	Acting Director, BCA	Member (National project director)
MONRE	Representation other departments	Member
MOF	Representatives	Member
MPI	Representatives	Member
National Assembly	Representatives	Member

However, the role of MARD as primary agency for PAs, which was strengthened through the enactment of several legal instruments during the inception phase, demanded a deeper involvement of MARD in project implementation and management.

Thus, new project governance arrangements were negotiated for a 13-month long period, resulting in the division of the project in two separate components, one managed by BCA (outcomes 1, 3 and 4, as well as the first output of outcome 2) and the other by DNC (capacity development activities of outcome 2 and 4), with each component managed by independent PMUs. Thus, the setup of the project's operational structures contributed significantly to the exceedingly long inception phase of over 30 months, from the approval of the project document in March 2009 (GEF, 2016) to the inception workshop in September 2011 (UNDP, 2011). The project's primary PMU at BCA started operations in April 2011 (UNDP, 2011), and the DNC PMU by late 2012 (Auer & Le, 2015). Other factors contributing to of the delay were the nine-month lapse to secure approval of the project document by the Government of Viet Nam, and

⁹ PEB is often referred to as project management board (PMB)

additional four months between signature of project document and setup of the PMU and PEB (UNDP, 2011). Such timeframes fall within the normal range of GEF project implementation in Viet Nam, and are beyond the control of the national implementing partners and the UNDP (Auer & Le , 2015).

3.2.3 GEF Partner Agency (UNDP) performance and comparative advantage

The functions of the GEF partner agency include quality assurance activities to determine the transfer and use of funds, such as financial management (cash transfers, financial spot-check, auditing), program monitoring and risk assessment (e.g. mid-term review, terminal evaluation), technical assistance and backstopping from both national and international staff, policy advocacy, as well as coordination and sharing with national and international development partners (bilateral, multilateral, government, non-government).

UNDP provided the necessary external consultants for project formulation, and facilitated workshops, activities and negotiations for the establishment of the management structures. During implementation, the UNDP adequately disbursed funds through direct cash transfers and commissioned and reviewed the mandatory annual audits, as well as on-site financial reviews. Also, the UNDP actively monitored the project by reviewing it in a documented manner at country office and regional office level, and verifying reports through participation in field visits and project executive board meetings. Also, the UNDP commissioned and managed the project's midterm review and terminal evaluation.

The current planning cycle of the United Nations agencies in Viet Nam (2012-2016) adheres to the HPPMG developed by the Government of Viet Nam and UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA that became effective on 1 July 2010 and involve closer coordination in assessment, planning and implementation of programs (UNCT, 2012) (United Nations, 2012). The harmonized guidelines intend to reduce transaction costs in project implementation and develop national capacities the same time (UNDG, 2014).

Albeit the HPPMG were supposed to make administration of projects more efficient, it caused delays by setting up strict procurement procedures requiring duly authorization for amounts above US\$1,500, particularly affecting the recruitment of national and international consultants, on which the implementation of the project strategy depended. The problem has been addressed by the midterm review (MTR) that recommended a review of the guidelines that is currently conducted by the UNDP and the implementing partner to avoid future bottlenecks. However, the MTR process was only completed in March 2015, due to the rejection by the PEB, on technical quality criteria, of the report submitted by an earlier consultant team. The new recruitment process postponed the field phase of the MTR to November 2014 and the iterative process resulting in the approval of the MTR report and the elaboration of the management response was then finalized by March of the following year. This means that the MTR report was prepared with scarcely one year before project end, severely limiting the impact of the review process and its recommendations. However, the PMU, the UNDP, as well as the implementing partners (NIP and CIP) promptly reacted to the recommendations of the MTR report, securing among others, a one-year extension, more involvement of the PEB and a revision of the HPPM guidelines.

UNDP comparative advantage for the GEF lies in its global network of country offices, its experience in integrated policy development, human resources development, institutional strengthening, and non-governmental and community participation (GEF, 2016). In this sense, UNDP has adequately fulfilled its role by providing required services to the project in terms of quality assurance and technical assistance, as well as facilitated dialogue among different stakeholders, particularly the implementing and co-implementing agencies. Delays in the formulation, inception and implementation phases were largely outside the control of UNDP except for the administrative bottlenecks caused by the harmonized program guidelines and the problems experienced by the midterm review process. However, in both instances, the UNDP reacted promptly, by engaging in a revision process of the harmonized guidelines to make procurement processes more efficient and by repeating the recruitment process for the midterm review after the first MTR report was justifiably rejected.

3.2.4 Implementing Partner's execution

After signing an agreement on the division of the project in a MONRE and MARD components in November 2012 both NIP and CIP worked through their respective outcomes for the achievement of the project's objective. However, in the case of MARD-DNC, focus was on the preparation and conduct of the capacity development activities, with little view, outside of the team directly involved with the project, of the project's final objective or the implications of the legal instruments supported by the project. MARD considers forest protection as its primary function, as mandated by the Law on Forest Protection, leaving management of biodiversity to MONRE. Thus, MARD acted rather as a responsible party in the sense of the UNDP manual for national implementation (UNDP, 2011).

BCA for its part considers PAs a key part of their biodiversity strategy, which includes the objective to improve management system for PAs, including management and financial plans (MONRE, 2015). Moreover, PAs play an important role in the collection of information on status of biodiversity nationwide the agency needs for effective management. Thus, MONRE has officially acknowledged the project's contribution to valuation of ecosystem services in Bidoup-Nui NP and to monitoring and reporting biodiversity status in PAs, as well as developments in benefit sharing at Xuan Thuy NP in its Viet Nam National Biodiversity Strategy to 2020, vision to 2030.

Both agencies coincide in the importance of effectively managed PAs for biodiversity conservation and forest protection and in the financial dimension being critical for sustainable and successful PAs. Moreover, both agencies do share a vision of a future unified PA management system in the near future (10 to 20 years). However, there is currently no concrete roadmap or vision on the form of such unified system.

In terms of administration and financial control, independent audits commissioned by the UNDP found all good with project administration procedures. The terminal evaluation concord with the findings of the midterm review that both PMUs conducted an effective and responsible day to day management of the project, and efficient financial and administrative management, including detailed and timely work planning and reporting. Both PMUs also coordinated execution of their respective project components. At site level, staff from both PMUs engaged well with local officials, facilitating strong participation by PA staff and local officials (Auer & Le , 2015).

Although the performance by the project management units of the project has been satisfactory, there is room for improvement in the management of the project by the implementing partner, MONRE-BCA: as one of the signatories of the project document and leading agency on biodiversity conservation it should have mobilized further to facilitate approval procedures and further engaged with the co-implementing partner at higher management level to expedite the conclusion of negotiation on project implementation.

3.2.5 Project finances

As mandated by Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT) guidelines, UNDP disbursed project funds to the implementing partners through a direct cash transfer (DCT) modality on a quarterly basis on a request by NIP or CIP who in turn reported and certified back the expenditure. Both request and report were linked to quarterly work plans, part of the annual work plan approved by the project board. Most of the funds of the project were disbursed in this manner. For instance, in 2015, out of a total expenditure of US\$791,012.76, 95% or US\$750,757.08 were executed through DCTs to the IPs. However, UNDP supported the project by directly paying for some services, as foreseen in the project document, for instance consultancies and associated travel, as well as audit fees. The project's audits in 2011, 2012 and 2013, conducted by the international firm KPMG, that concluded that the project "*did not note any matters involving internal control and other operational matters of the project*" (Auer & Le , 2015).

The project's total budget approved amounted to US\$22,177,403 including a GEF grant of US\$3,536,360.

Table 3. Project costs in US\$ (GEF, 2016)

Project costs	Amount (US\$)
Project preparation grant amount	100,000
GEF project grant	3,536,360
Co-financing total	18,541,043
GEF agency fees	363,636

Consumer price increases and devaluation of the Vietnamese Dong (VND) between 2008 and 2011 affected the budget, as most of it was committed for consultancy services (47%), grants (28%) other contract services (12%) and travel (8%). Hence, at project inception, the budget was modified by reducing the amount of consultancy services, but rising the unit cost to adjust for actual consultancy rates, as the original rates fell below market prices (UNDP, 2011).

To the date of the terminal evaluation the project had executed 88.35% of the total GEF grant, including 9% of total expenditure for management costs (against 11% management costs budgeted). Actual expenditure schedule caught up with planned delivery by 2014, after a very a very slow start, and will achieve full delivery, as the 12% of the project funds still to be executed at the start of 2016 correspond to activities such as financial audit, terminal evaluation and travel connected with the activities, as well as some minor activities conducted in 2015 but not yet paid. Moreover, the Budget for 2016 is executed by UNDP since the project has been operationally closed, and no longer transferred to the IP.

Table 4. Budget and expenditures per outcome (US\$, GEF grant only)

	Budget	Expenditure	%
Outcome 1	368,360.00	347,015.36	94.21
Outcome 2	1,005,095.00	851,458.86	84.71
Outcome 3	1,450,000.00	1,376,322.53	94.92
Outcome 4	360,000.00	293,163.46	81.43
Project management	352,905.00	256,396.51	72.65
Total	3,536,360.00	3,124,356.72	88.35

Identification and mobilization of co-finance

Co-finance amounted to US\$18.54 million as in-kind contribution from UNDP (US\$7.05 million), GoV (US\$10.49 million) and IUCN (US\$1.00 million). Actual disbursements were, respectively, US\$8.35 million, US\$12.45 million and US\$1.00 million (Auer & Le , 2015). Actual co-finance exceeded planned co-finance by 18%. The GoV contributed to project costs through VEA (36%), as well as Xuan Thuy NP (31%), Bidoup-Nui Ba NP (17%) and Cat Ba NP (16%), and included staff time and use of facilities (Auer & Le , 2015).

Table 5. GEF co-finance table

Co-finance (Type/ Source)	IA own financing (million USD)		Government (million USD)		Other sources (million USD)		Total financing (million USD)		Total disbursement (million USD)	
Grant							3.64	3.64	3.64	3.64
Credit										
Equity										
In-Kind	7.05	8.35	10.49	12.45	1.00	1.00	18.45	21.80	18.54	21.80
Non-grant										
Other types										
Total									22.18	25.44

3.3 Project results

3.3.1 Relevance of the outcomes

The project is aligned and supports the objectives of several policy and regulatory instruments, including the Law on Biodiversity and the Law on Forest Protection and Development, Decrees No.99/2010/ND-CP on payment for forest ecosystem services and Decree No.117/2010/ND-CP on organization and

management of the SUF system, as well as the National Biodiversity Strategy to 2020, vision to 2030, the latter developed with project support.

At local level, the project supports the objectives and vision of the district of Cat Hai (where Cat Ba NP is located) and the province of Hai Phong, as expressed in its Decision No.1780/QD-UBND of September 2014. The project is also aligned with the development priorities and conservation objectives of the Giao Thuy district (where Xuan Thuy NP is located) and the province of Nam Dinh as expressed in its Decision No.119/QD-UBND. Finally, the project also supported the conservation objectives of Lam Dong province (where Bidoup-Nui Ba NP is located), as expressed in their decision No.2393/QD-UBND.

The outcomes of the project are consistent with the GEF's theory of change for biodiversity, as the project's activities contributed to expand financial mechanisms, generation of information awareness, information sharing and access, as well as institutional capacities (regulatory framework) towards more effective management of PAs. Specifically, the project's outcomes correspond to the activities foreseen as support for GEF-4 first strategic program of sustainable financing of PA systems: (1) appropriate policies and laws to allow PAs to manage the entire revenue stream from generation of income to investment (outcome 1), (2) agencies responsible for managing PAs with sufficient capacity to manage PAs based on sound principles of business planning as well as conservation biology principles (outcomes 2 and 4) and (3) full recognition of the support to PA conservation and management made by communities living in and near PAs (outcomes 3 and 4) (GEF, 2007). The project strategy is still in line with the goal of the GEF-5 biodiversity focal area of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the maintenance of ecosystem goods and services, and specifically with the objective of improving sustainability of PA systems (GEF, 2012).

3.3.2 Effectiveness of the outcomes according to the project indicator framework and tracking tools

Outcome 1: A comprehensive and harmonized legal and policy framework supports sustainable PA financing

The project supported the development and promoted the adoption of legal instruments of national scope that can promote and facilitate co-management and additional revenue streams for both PA management and adjacent communities, as well as strengthening enforcement of environmental protection and nationwide management of biodiversity:

Decision No.45/2014/QD-TTg of the Prime Minister (PM), approving the master plan for nationwide biodiversity conservation by 2020, with a vision to 2030 that intends to expand the PA system, increasing underrepresented ecosystems, such as coastal and wetland ecosystems with specific targets per region and ecosystem type and developing ex-situ conservation facilities, such as animal rescue centers conservation facilities and biodiversity corridors in the area. The plan proposes to achieve this by improving conservation criteria, local and community engagement and coordination among state agencies.

Joint Circular No.160/2014/TTLT-BTC-BTNMT of MOF and MONRE guiding the management, use and liquidation for regular expenditure using state budget to implement tasks and projects under the Viet Nam National Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 with a vision to 2030 (BCA, 2015). It is expected that this circular would help linking budget allocation with biodiversity conservation objectives, as PA management actions are expected to be based on field data.

Decree No. 179/2013/ND-CP of the PM on penalties imposed for administrative sanctions in respect of environmental protection. The Decree regulates punishment applied for violation in respect of environmental protection. Violations in the field of biodiversity conservation were identified in Article 1, clause 1 (g) of the decree. The act of keeping parts or products of endangered species prioritized to protection (species listed in Decree 160/2013/ND-CP) shall be administratively sanctioned up to 500 million VND for individuals and 1 billion VND for organizations and all the exhibits need

Decision No.24/2012/QĐ-TTg of the PM on Policy for Investment in and the Development of Special-use Forests in 2011-2020 regulates state budgets for those forests managed by the MARD and local budgets used to invest in local government-managed special-use forests. The state budgets are used to provide targeted investment for NPs managed by local governments.

Inter-ministerial Circular No.100/2013/TTLT-BTCBNNPTNT on Guiding the Implementation of Certain Articles Regulated in Prime Ministerial Decision No.24/2012/QĐ-TTg of 1 June 2012 on Policy for Investment in and the Development of Special-use Forests in 2011-2020 regulates the budget for the operation of management units and for the management and protection of special-use forests in accordance with Article 7, 8 of Decision No.24, which includes: (i) budgets for the operation of special-use forest management boards, (ii) budgets for managing and protecting special use forests and (iii) budgets for communities development. The government provides an average rate of VND 100,000/ha/year for whole special-management board and 40,000,000/commune/year. The state treasury ensures the budget source for the operation of management boards, the management of special-use forests, and supporting communities in buffer areas after balancing the revenue gained from eco-tourism activities regulated in Article 14 of Decision No.24.

Inter-ministerial circular No.27/2015/TTLT-BTNMT-BNNPTNT on alien species, which provides criteria for the determination of invasive exotic species and includes a list of current and potential invasive species in Viet Nam.

The legal framework on PAs also benefited from the enactment, between 2008 and 2015, of instruments that enabled payment for ecosystem services (PES), established marine and wetland PAs, and setup management guidelines for PAs, including benefit sharing schemes, as result of other government actions with or without external support:

Decision of the Prime Minister No.380/2008/QĐ-TTg, at initiative of the MARD and the Provincial People's Committee (PPC) of Lam Dong¹⁰ constituted the pilot legal instrument for PES. The success of this Decision prompted the enactment of the Decree No.99 /2010/ND-CP on the Policy for Payment for Forest Environmental Services that enables PES at national level.

Decision of the Prime Minister No.742/2010/QĐ-TTg, establishes a system of marine PAs (MPA) under the mandate of MARD and Decision No.1479/2008/QĐ-TTg of the Prime Minister approving the planning of inland water PA system by 2020. Also, the Decision of the Prime Minister No.218/2014/QĐ-TTg ratifies Decrees 117, Decision 742 and Decision 1479 on SUFs, MPAs and inland water PAs (IWPA), under responsibility of MARD and PPCs. It mandates management units of SUFs, MPAs and IWPA to implement awareness activities, attract investment and engage adjacent communities in management, through benefit-sharing systems in the sense of Decision No. 126 (below) and to monitor biodiversity status and trends, particularly threatened species.

Decree No.65/2010/ND-CP, strengthens decentralization of the PA system by assigning responsibility to PPCs to establish PA, albeit under supervision and technical guidelines defined by MONRE in coordination with MARD. Moreover, it mandates MONRE, MARD and PPCs to review the status of PAs established prior to the Law on Biodiversity of 2008. To define conservation objectives, it mandates the regular monitoring, at least every five years, of relevant aspects of biodiversity in all PAs, led and coordinated by MONRE. Lastly, it mandates sharing of benefits derived from access to genetic resources, including sharing research results, transfer of technology or training, contributions for local economic development amounting to no less than 30% of the benefits converted to cash. The important Decree No.117/2010/ND-CP, clarifies the organization and management of the special use forest system, classifying forest PAs and setting up criteria for their establishment. It also regulates national and local PA management planning, including allowed uses, staff and organizational structure. Under this decree, PPCs can identify and declare special use forest in their territory subject to the criteria of the decree and

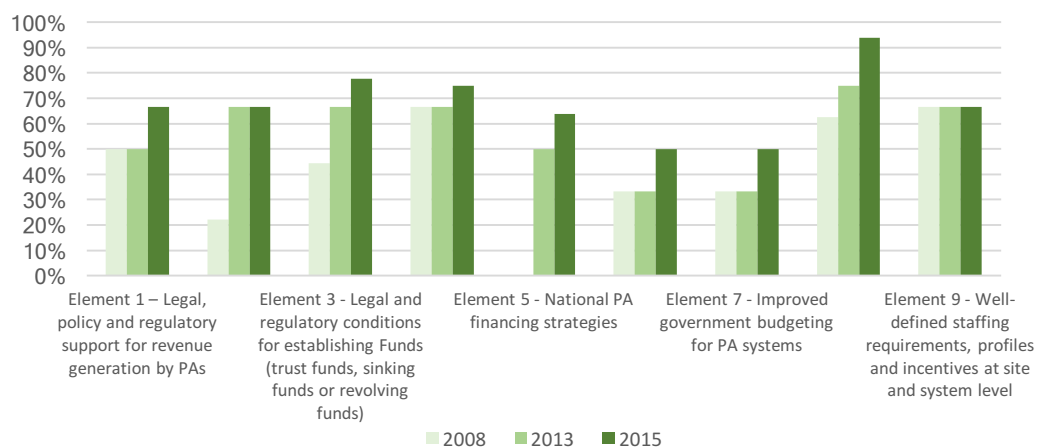
¹⁰ with support from the US Aid-funded Asia Regional Biodiversity Conservation Program

the national and provincial master plans for SUFs. For benefit sharing mechanisms, Decision of the Prime Minister No.126/2011/QD-TTg allows their implementation in Xuan Thuy, Bach Ma and Hoang Lien NPs. Lastly, Decision No.1976/2014/QD-TTg, sets conservation objectives for SUF and cites Decision No.24/2012/QD-TTg (project supported) as one of the legal fundamentals for sustainable financing of SUFs.

Considering the changes in the regulatory framework, influenced directly and indirectly by the project, occurring during the project’s timeframe, we can now evaluate the indicators for outcome 1, which were:

1. Increase in the score of the legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks component of the Financial Sustainability Scorecard (FSC)
2. Increase in the score of the capacity to conceptualize and formulate policies, legislations, strategies and programs component of the Capacity Development Scorecard.

Figure 4. Component 1 of the Financial Sustainability Scorecard: National, legal, policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks
Scores expressed as % of maximum attainable score



The legal, regulatory and institutional framework component measures the systemic capacities, including capacity to generate, retain and manage revenues. Considering that the same dimensions of financial sustainability are captured in the three applications of the FSC, it is possible to conclude that there has been significant improvement in score between 2008 and 2015, reaching a score of 67, surpassing by 17 points the target set for the end of the project (figure 4). The scores were mostly driven by the enactment of Decision 24, Decree No.117/2010/ND-CP, Decree No.99/2010/ND-CP and Decision of the Prime Minister No.126/2011/QD-TTg. In fact, the greatest improvements occurred between 2008 and 2013, through the authorization of payment for forest ecosystem services (Decree 99), benefit sharing projects (Decision 126) and leases and investment in ecotourism in SUFs (Decree 117 and Decision 24).

The capacity development score is composed of three elements related to clear roles and mandates, and leadership. There is little significant improvement since 2008, and the final score of 2015 falls short of half point from the outcome target of 7.5 points. The score was driven by the enactment of Decree No.117/2010/NP-CP and Decision No.45/2014/QD-TTg.

Decision 45, enacted with project support, sets targets for ecosystem type and region and thus supersedes Decision of the Prime Minister No.742/2010/QD-TTg on marine PAs and Decision No.1479/2008/QD-TTg on inland water PAs in terms of locations and coverage targets but not in terms of management responsibilities that were set in said legal instruments. What is significant is that advancements have only taken place in the two areas supported by the project, mandate for establishment and management of PAs and existence of institutions responsible for PAs and not in the dimension of PAs being championed (figure 5).

Figure 5. Capacity to conceptualize and formulate policies, legislations, strategies and programs of the Capacity Development Scorecard



Summarizing, there have been significant improvements in the financial sustainability and capacity development scores between 2008 and 2015. However, most of the contribution to said improvements has been made by legal instruments, such as Decree No.99/2010/NP-CP and Decree No.117/2010/NP-CP that were beyond the project framework. The important contribution by the project to the national regulatory framework in support of financial sustainability of PAs has been Circular No. 160 authorizing use of public funds for biodiversity monitoring and Decision 24 that authorizes and regulates concessions, a missing piece so far in the national legal framework and other investments and development projects executed by the management units of the PAs.

However, it must be noted that Decision 24 may reduce state budget contributions for PAs and may create an incentive to increase staff salary through leases and concessions for economic benefit in detriment of conservation. Although other legal instruments (e.g. Law of Forest Protection) mandate that economic activities in SUF should not be conducted at the expense of their protection functions, this has not always been respected by management units (Pedrono, Tuan, Chouteau, & Vallejo, 2009). The impact of Decision 24 will be determined by its application at the individual PAs. In fact, implementation of the Decision is not yet clear: despite the project-supported circular No. 100 between MOF and MARD guiding its implementation, MARD has recently sought support from the GIZ for a study on the implementation of Decision 24 (GIZ, 2016).

Outcome 2: Clear and harmonized institutional mandates and processes support sustainable PA financing mechanisms.

The project has supported clarification of roles and responsibilities in the management of PAs, development of individual capacity of PA staff, as well as attempted to create incentives for technical staff at PAs. Activities under this outcome were divided between BCA that implemented activities for harmonization of institutional roles and VNFOREST-DNC that developed and conducted training modules, and researched the incentives situation.

The project made efforts towards achieving a memorandum of understanding (MOU) clarifying possible synergies and division of roles between MONRE and MARD (PMU, 2015). The MOU, or formally, *regulation to coordinate implementation of state management on biodiversity conservation between MONRE and MARD* is a general agreement that, pursuant to the implementation of the Law on Biodiversity and the Law on Forest Protection and Development, mandates both ministries to keep each other informed on their plans and implementation and to *establish, manage and share database, information, data and reports on biodiversity conservation* (MONRE, 2012). The MOU had been signed by the time of the terminal evaluation.

At the same time, the project also funded a study on PA management in forty countries presented to the NA to give impulse to the idea of a unified country-wide PA authority based at one single ministry. The study found that while decentralized management of biodiversity is the most common modality, most (90%) of sampled countries manage biodiversity and PAs under a single ministry (Potess & Feltham, 2014).

Legal clarification of roles on PA management was further strengthened by, two decrees, developed independently from this project: Decree No.21/2013/NĐ-CP, providing for the functions, tasks, powers, and organizational structure of MONRE (Vision & Associates, 2013) and Decree No.199/2013/NĐ-CP, stipulating the functions, duties, power and organizational structure of MARD (ISG, 2013). Under these two decrees, MONRE has the responsibility of preparing a master plan of national biodiversity based on field data, and to provide guidance to provincial agencies or local authorities, as well as supervise the management of conservation facilities and evaluate the establishment of interprovincial or national PAs. MARD would direct and coordinate with stakeholders the planning and managing of the PA system, as well as other forest management duties and responsibilities (Auer & Le , 2015).

In terms of capacity development, the project developed and imparted courses on business planning and financial management, gap analysis and collection and spatial analysis of biodiversity data (in cooperation with the GIZ-funded project Preservation of Biodiversity in Forest Ecosystems in Viet Nam), as well as on the legal and regulatory framework. Target group of these training modules were officials of the provincial Departments of Natural Resources and Environment (DONRE), PA managers and rangers. The core of the activities took place between 2013 and 2014, with a total of 43 trainings, separately conceived and conducted by BCA and VNFOREST. Officials of 97 PAs participated in said trainings or almost half of the total (206) PAs of the country but over 91% of the 107 that have constituted a management board (PMU, 2015). The training modules have been consolidated into training manuals for future use, supported, at least in the case of MONRE, with a legal decision (Decision No.2585/QĐ-BNN-TCCB) that allocates funding for future training using five of the manuals developed by the project (Auer & Le , 2015). Stakeholders involved in the management of PA assessed the project contribution to develop staff capacity as very positive.

Lastly, the project identified inequity in salary, compensations and benefits between forest rangers and technical staff as the main incentive issue in PAs. Thus, project rangers have better job conditions due to the hierarchical structure and established promotions. With project support, MARD, together with the Ministry of Internal Affairs are enacting an inter-ministerial circular on professional standards for conservation staff (PMU, 2015). However, this circular has not been passed at the time of the terminal evaluation.

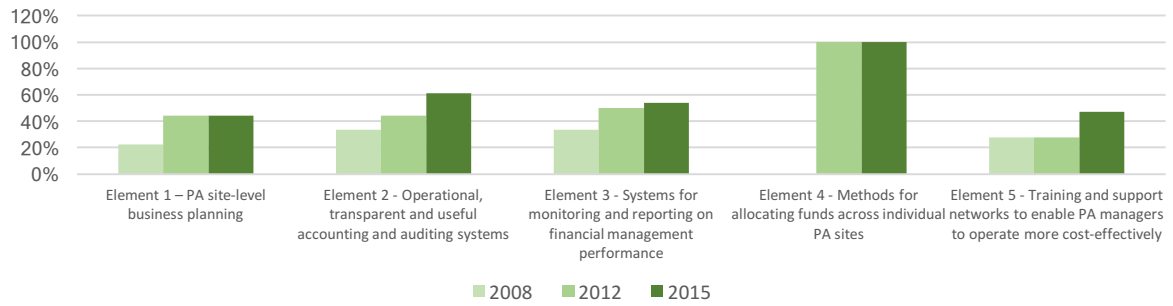
Having examined the changes in the regulatory framework and capacity development efforts by the project, we proceed to evaluate the targets for outcome 2. The targets were:

1. Score over 45 at the business planning and tools for cost-effective management component of the FSC
2. Score over 32 at the capacity to implement policies, legislation, strategies and programs of the CDS.

The score of the business planning and tools for cost-effective management component of the FSC, the score reached by 2015 was still 30.5, well under the target. However, there has been a clear improvement in the score since 2008. The main driver explaining the increase in score since 2008 was that most PAs have management plans, including business plans and an operational financial system. This is traced back to Decree No.117, which, as mention above (outcome 1) was enacted in 2010 at initiative of MARD with the support of GIZ. Other drivers of the score were the fact that budgets of PAs are allocated according to predetermined criteria, albeit not yet standardized across all systems and that additional income generation by the PA does not reduce government funding. In sum, while PAs have the legal tools to improve their financial management, they are not applied consistently throughout the PA system. More effort at the level of individual PAs would have been necessary to improve the FSC score and the project target.

Figure 6. Component 2 of the Financial Sustainability Scorecard: Business planning and tools for cost effective management

Scores expressed as % of maximum attainable score



For the capacity to implement policies, legislation, strategies and programs of the Capacity Development Scorecard the end-of-project score is 33, just above the target. The score is mostly driven by **improvement of management skills that can be attributed to the project’s capacity development activities¹¹**, and the very existence of the PA system, responsible agencies and management structures for PAs.

Figure 7. Capacity to implement policies, legislations, strategies and programs of the CDS
Scores on the horizontal axis



Summarizing, the project deployed a comprehensive training program that has contributed to improve individual and institutional capacities for management of PAs and may have further impacts if the modules developed keep being used to train new staff and consolidate skills. This can be done in the frame of an interagency agreement with MARD to systematically apply the training program across the PA system, which could also support and encourage PA boards to apply the legal instruments at their disposal for improved financial management.

Lastly, the study commissioned by the project on PA systems presented to the NA, while interesting enough, did not make any measurable contribution either to improved coordination at national level or to improved management capacities at site level.

Outcome 3: Knowledge and experience of sustainable financing options developed through demonstrations

¹¹ Confirmed by respondents of the terminal evaluation

The project implemented actions at three NPs under provincial administration to improve financial revenue and retention for the PAs, and worked together with PA management boards and PPCs to enact and approve resolutions pursuing to enable the new sources of revenue. The project also set out to support the development of provincial biodiversity management plans.

The project's activities were conducted in two stages:

1. Preparation of ecosystem valuation studies, review of management plans and support to the management units of the target PAs for the development of business plans (linked to existing management plans) identifying sustainable funding strategies. The project carried out ecosystem services valuation studies at 4 sites: Xuan Thuy, Cat Ba, Bidoup-Nui Ba and Bai Tu Long (Auer & Le , 2015)
2. Preparation and enactment of provincial instruments to implement identified sustainable financial strategies. Additionally, the project supported the design and implementation of communication plans for the PAs, aimed at raising the awareness on the importance of biodiversity and the role of PAs (Auer & Le , 2015).

Six sites were initially selected: Tien Hai NP (Thai Binh Province), Xuan Thuy NP (Nam Dinh Province), Cat Ba NP (Hai Phong City), Bai Tu Long NP (Quang Ninh Province), Bidoup-Nui Ba NP (Lam Dong Province) and Chu Yang Sin NP (Dak Lak Province) (UNDP, 2009). Of these preselected sites, the METT scorecard was applied to all PAs but the first one, Tien Hai NP. In this regard, actual project operations were limited to just three of the originally six PA selected. Neither project document nor project report provide any reason as to why the number was reduced from six to three in 2013: Xuan Thuy NP, Bidoup-Nui Ba NP and Cat Ba NP (Auer & Le , 2015). The terminal evaluation concurs with the MTR report in that *no detailed justification for this decision to re-validate the site selection appears to have been made, and given that this re-validation process greatly delayed project site activities without actually making any changes in the sites, it seems doubtful that this was an advisable strategy* (Auer & Le , 2015). However, the METT scorecard was still applied to two sites not included in the project activities: Chu Yang Sin and Bai Tu Long. This will allow comparison of the project intervention in terms of management effectiveness.

The ecosystem valuation studies provided the basis to identify the financial mechanisms to be included in the PA's business plans: Cat Ba NP opted for an increase in tourism fees, Xuan Thuy NP implemented fee collection for aquaculture (clam culture) concessions and the Bidoup-Nui Ba NP started collecting fees from hydropower generation as part of a PES scheme.

Cat Ba NP

The management board sought and obtained the enactment of Decision No.1780/QD-UBND of September 2014 of the Hai Phong PPC, authorizing the park to rise the tourism fee collected at the park from US\$1 to US\$2 per person. Although two tourist operators have dropped Cat Ba from their routes in response to the fee increase, total number of visitors has remained stable. It was estimated that 54,000 persons visited the park during 2015 (Auer & Le , 2015) and the revenue generated amounts to ca. US\$0.11 million. This equals to 25% of the total annual park budget of ca. US\$0.5 million. Yet, the additional income for the park, which is integrally retained, is discounted from the state budget, so that the total funds available to the park's management board remains the same. However, the new revenue grants more freedom to the management board, as state budgets may come late and are notoriously inflexible (Emerton, Rao, Nguyen, Tu, & Bao, 2003).

The project also supported the management board of Cat Ba NP in developing and submitting a proposal on a concession scheme for tourism services that would provide the park with ca. US\$30,000 annually in fees (Auer & Le , 2015). However, the PPC still needs to resolve on the financial and environmental sustainability of the concession scheme.

Xuan Thuy NP

Xuan Thuy, situated on the delta of the Red River, has been a traditional area for clam fishery and, since the 1990s, for clam aquaculture (seeding and collecting on delimited areas). These activities, that in 2014 covered 11 km² constituted the main livelihood of 273 households and have generated estimated US\$90,000 per hectare annually. Xuan Thuy is also supported by the Mangroves for the Future¹² project, which supports livelihood of clam collectors through microcredits (Nguyen T. B., 2013), as well as the SIDA¹³-funded Wetlands Alliance program.

Activities aiming to achieve co-management and benefit sharing with adjacent communities started in 2005 at the initiative of the park's board. The system involved payments from clam fishers to the commune governments (in which territory the park is located) as lease fees for the park's mudflats ranging between US\$25 to US\$150 per hectare per year. In exchange, the park ensures maintenance of the environmental quality that allows the clam fishery to exist. This pilot project was implemented successfully between 2006 and 2010 generating ca. US\$160,000 as revenue, which, as stipulated by the Nam Dinh PPC, was allocated 80% for a local welfare fund, 15% for an environmental protection fund and 5% for the NP.

Based on that experience, Decision No.126/2011/QĐ-TTg on benefit sharing mechanisms was enacted, which, in turn prompted the current benefit sharing program of the NP's board (Nguyen V. C., 2012). Pursuing to implement said Decision 126, the management board decided the implementation of five benefit sharing initiatives: sustainable clam fishery at the buffer zone, sustainable use of aquatic resources in mangrove forests and community based mangrove management, sustainable collection of medical plants, and sustainable use of clam seed beds in the park's core zone.

The project supported the latter initiative (sustainable clam fishery), and manage to secure the Decision No.119/QĐ-UBND of Nam Dinh PPC dated 23 January 2015, according to which, clam farmers are allowed to lease the clam culture area from the park, access credit and technical know-how etc. for a period of 5 years. Clam leases are authorized by Management board of Xuan Thuy NP against a fee that amounts on average to US\$50 per hectare per year. Of the total revenue generated, the management board of the NP can keep 30% while 40% is transferred to commune budget and 30% should go to district budget. The fee can be revised every five years depending on current situation of socio-economic development but not lower than the current price.

The leasing scheme is seen by the park board not as a revenue generating mechanism, but rather a benefit sharing mechanism, in line with Decision 126 that would help to formally regulate roles and responsibilities of the NP management and the fishing communities.

Bidoup-Nui Ba NP

The province of Lam Dong, through its Lam Dong Forest Protection and Development Fund, has experience with PES and it had already been collecting fees in concept of watershed protection services, amounting to ca. US\$4.5 million in 2010, from hydropower generation in the Da Nhim and Dai Nhin watersheds (adjacent but outside the Bidoup-Nui Ba NP). This scheme was initiated back in 2006 with the support of the US Aid-funded Asia Regional Biodiversity Conservation Program (ARBCP), which included the generation of revenue for conservation from PES (Winrock , 2011).

Ensuing efforts by MARD with the support of ARBCP led to the enactment of the Prime Minister's Decision No.380/QĐ-TTg on The Pilot Policy for Payment for Forest Environmental Services, dated April 10, 2008 that authorized the Forest Protection and Development Fund of Lam Dong and Son La

¹²Global initiative of IUCN and UNDP

¹³ Swedish International Development Agency

Provinces to collect fees from several hydropower and water supply operators (Government of Vietnam, 2008). The Fund transferred the fees to 22 forest management boards, which used them to fund co-management schemes with forest communities. The pilot PES policy prompted, in turn, the enactment of the Decree No.99/2010/ND-CP, Policy on Payment for Forest Environmental Services that enables the nationwide application of PES schemes.

Per the Decree 99, Bidoup-Nui Ba NP is eligible to sign the contracts with households for forest protection. As of 2015, Bidoup-Nui Ba NP has signed contracts with 1,450 households for forest protection activities over an area of 58,058 hectares of which 24,500 ha is located within Dong Nai river basin, and the rest 33,500 ha is within the Serepok river basin. The park receives money from the fund each quarter to make payments for the household. The rate applied for area within Dong Nai river is VND 495,000/ha (ca. US\$23.02/ha) and Serepok basin is VND 385,000/ha (ca. US\$17.91/ha). The park may keep 10% of total payment as the management fee, the remaining amount is given to the households as stated in the contracts.

Table 6. Financial flows to communities and national park based on Decree 99

Zone	Hectares	US\$ per hectare	Total
Dong Nai river basin	24,500	\$23.02	\$564,070
Serepok river basin	33,500	\$17.91	\$599,884
Total amount of contract			\$1,163,954
Money allocated for communities (90% of total contract)			\$1,047,558
Money allocated for Bidoup-Nui Ba NP (10% as management fee)			\$116,395

This project assisted the Bidoup-Nui Ba NP management board to secure and additional authorization from the Lam Dong PPC (Decision No.2393/QD-UBND) to initiate a payment for watershed protection services for hydropower generation purposes. Per Decision No.2393/QD-UBND the Bidoup-Nui Ba NP now may receive the money from PES for protecting the area of 6,700 ha (among 14,271ha of core zone). The current rate applied for Bidoup-Nui Ba NP is VND 180,000/ha/year (US\$8.37 per hectare per year). **Therefore, the park may receive an additional revenue of VND 1.2 billion/year or US\$56,079 per year.** The PA management board uses this money to carry out protection activities including biodiversity conservation.

Cooperation agreements between PAs

The project identified synergies in operation of tourism activities among the Cat Ba and Bai Tu Long NPs. With project support, the management boards launched a promotion campaign targeting tourist operators. Subsequently, the management boards subscribed an agreement of cooperation on tourism development and biodiversity conservation, based on a technical report commissioned by the project and discussed with tour operators in a project supported workshop (Auer & Le , 2015). The agreement is expected to create synergies and use funds more efficiently by cooperating in tourism promotion (PMU, 2015). The project also supported some joint training between the NPs of Bidoup-Nui Ba and Chu Yang Sin, as well as Xuan Thuy NP and Tien Hai Natural Reserve.

Additionally, the project intended to work together with the Viet Nam National Administration of Tourism to develop a tourism strategy to promote tourism in PAs. However, the Viet Nam Tourism Development Strategy to 2020 Vision to 2030 was approved in late 2011, and the project had no opportunity to integrate off-site financing into said strategy (PMU, 2015).

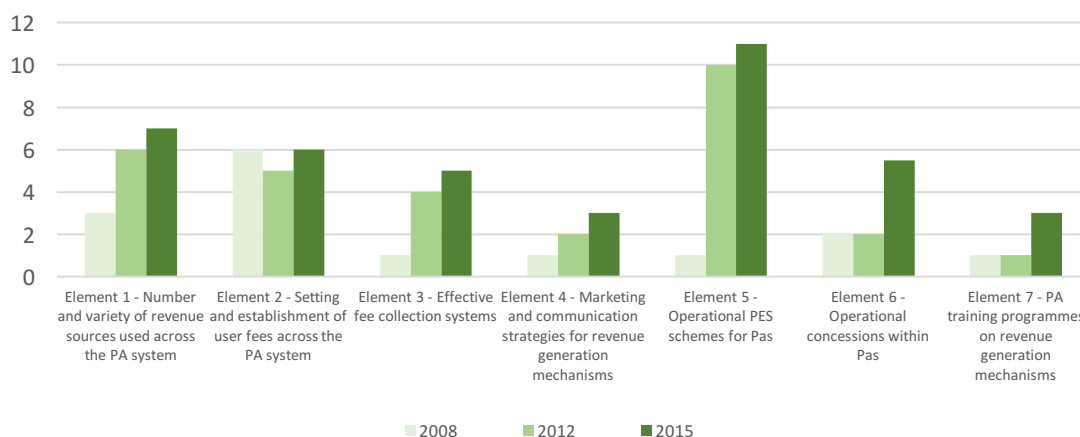
Provincial biodiversity conservation planning

The project supported BCA with the development of guidelines for the development of provincial biodiversity plans and the DONRE of Cao Bang province to prepare a provincial biodiversity plan by hiring an external expert to prepare a draft plan that was then revised and accepted in a project supported workshop with participation of the relevant provincial authorities. The revised plan was then submitted and the project secured the approval of the Provincial People's Committee as Decision No.867/2015/STNMT-BVMT on 27 May 2015. (PMU, 2015).

The target for outcome 3 was a score of at least 35 points of the *Tools for Revenue Generation component* of the Financial Sustainability Scorecard for National Systems of PAs, from a baseline value of 15.

The score reached 41 points by 2015, clearly above the target. The score has been driven by an increase in the number of revenue sources for PAs, including PES schemes and concessions. Thus, unsurprisingly, the drivers behind these score improvements are Decree 99 (see outcome 1) and Decision No.2393/QD-UBND of the Lam Dong PPC, together with the Law on Forest Protection and the already discussed Decision 24, as well as the capacity development activities conducted by the project.

Figure 8. Component 3 of the Financial Sustainability Scorecard: Tools for revenue generation
Scores expressed as % of maximum attainable score



Project efforts have been primary drivers of the improvement in the scores. Outcome 3 also used up most of the project budget and is indeed the only project action that has generated tangible and measurable financial flows for PAs (see Section Efficiency).

While project activities at Xuan Thuy and Cat Ba NPs, have indeed generated additional revenues for their respective NPs, the legal instruments supported by the project were not mentioned as supportive of the advances in any of the sub-element, maybe because they are rather related to benefit sharing and ability to modify fees and have been associated with scores of the indicators of outcome 1.

Other activities under this outcome, such as cooperation among Cat Ba and Bai Tu Long had modest results, yet potentially significant impact if their management units include the World Heritage Site Ha Long Bay in their agreement. As three very significant tourism destinations there is potential efficiencies in promotional costs resulting in increasing tourist revenues. Such an increase in the number of visitors is not exempted from risk, as Cat Ba and Ha Long have already experienced significant pressure and impacts from the tourism industry.

The support to the provincial biodiversity planning, though commendable, seems not to be in line with the target of this outcome and could maybe rather fit in outcome four, and as support for the development of a biodiversity information system. Moreover, the project did not document the reasons for the choice of a province not including any of the project's sites.

Outcome 4: Information on biodiversity and PA status supports PA management and builds public support for the PA system

Together with the JICA¹⁴ funded project *Development of the National Biodiversity Database System*, the project supported BCA in the development of biodiversity monitoring guidelines. Said guidelines were consulted with several PA management boards and tested at the Xuan Thuy NP. The resulting guidelines

¹⁴ Japan International Cooperation Agency

have been used as training material for staff of PAs during capacity development courses conducted by the project. However, the system needs yet to start feeding data from the field to a centralized knowledge management or database mechanism. The project has prepared and secured the approval of a circular for this effect, the already mentioned joint Circular No.160/TTLT-BTC-BTNMT (PMU, 2015) (GIZ, 2016).

The project supported the conduct of awareness campaigns targeting communities adjacent to the project's NPs, including development and dissemination of promotional materials (Bidoup-Nui Ba NP's brochure on biodiversity and tourism routes, dissemination of report on biodiversity and development and projection of a 25-minute video on NPs, and the building of a 3D map of the park, as well as developing a park website (www.vuonquocgiacatba.com.vn) and activities (participation of Bidoup-Nui Ba at the bi-annual Da Lat Flower Festival, workshop for tourism companies) (Auer & Le , 2015), as well as through national events in the capital, namely a forum on innovative financing mechanism to conserve biodiversity and an exhibition on biodiversity in Viet Nam (PMU, 2015).

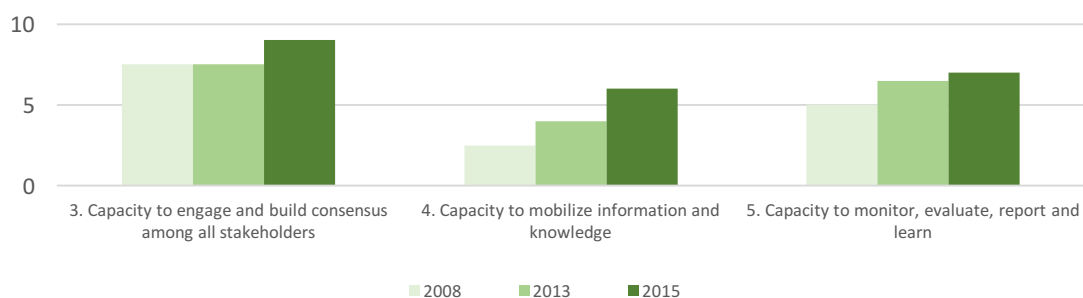
A baseline survey was conducted in 2009 among urban population, adjacent communities and PA staff that showed moderate awareness on biodiversity conservation objectives and its impacts on the economy and society, as well as on the current policy and regulatory framework (UNDP, 2009). Results of a survey conducted among the targeted population to assess awareness have not yet been published at the time of the terminal evaluation.

More importantly, the project has contributed in some measure to the Japanese funded project Development of the Biodiversity Database System in Viet Nam, that has the potential to significantly support BCA to fulfill its targets of monitoring biodiversity. However, the existence of the system does not necessarily conclude its success, as it is necessary that actual data start flowing in. Moreover, BCA has currently limited human resources and hence limited capacities to process and communicate results of biodiversity monitoring activities and would need more support and coordination from PA administrations and particularly MARD to collect, process and communicate biodiversity information that could then be used for actual management at PA site level.

The indicator of outcome 4 was a score for components 3-5 of the UNDP Capacity Scorecard (“Build consensus”, “Mobilize information”, and “Monitor, report and learn”) of at least 24, from a baseline of 15. In spite that by 2015 the score attained was just of 22 points, just two points below the target, there has been a clear improvement on all dimensions of these three components, but particularly at the “capacity to mobilize information and knowledge”. The reasons for the improvement are varied and include public awareness, political support, and more effective management of PAs, supported by capacity building activities and improved communication among management of PAs.

In sum, the project together with other initiatives implemented in parallel and supported by different development partners have contributed to knowledge building and awareness raising on biodiversity conservation. Although awareness on biodiversity conservation of stakeholders has increased, the efforts to strengthen the knowledge systematically could have been more effective than generic or non-targeted awareness rising campaigns. Effective knowledge transfer system could have also benefited with a more intense involvement of MARD, the primary PA agency of the country.

Figure 9. Capacity to build consensus, mobilize information and monitor, report and learn of the Capacity Development Scorecard
Scores on the horizontal axis



3.3.3 Overall effectiveness and achievement of project objective

The overall scores of the FSC tracking tools, as well as capacity development scorecard indicate a substantial strengthening of the PA system in Viet Nam between 2008 and 2016 (Table 7). In terms of individual PAs, METT scores also reveal a significant increase in the scores for all five PAs where the project applied the instrument (see further discussion in section impact below)

Table 7. Progress towards achievement of the objective

Result	Indicator	Baseline	EOP ¹⁵ target	EOP result
Objective: To secure a sustainably financed PA system	Financial scorecard scores	64	85	138
	Capacity scorecard scores	41	54	62
	Average METT scores (% of max. score)	45%	59%	74%

For the FSC, all three components show significant improvement in the scores as shown in figure 10. In terms of capacity development, all dimensions have shown improvements in 2015 compared with 2013 and 2008 as shown in figure 11. Altogether, it seems that the project has indeed exceed all the targets set in the project document.

Figure 10. Financial Sustainability Scorecard - results per component
Results expressed as % of the maximum score per component

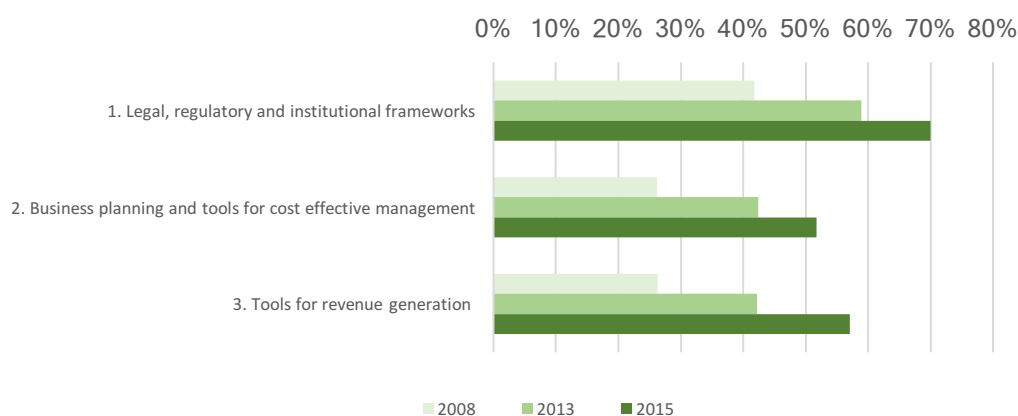
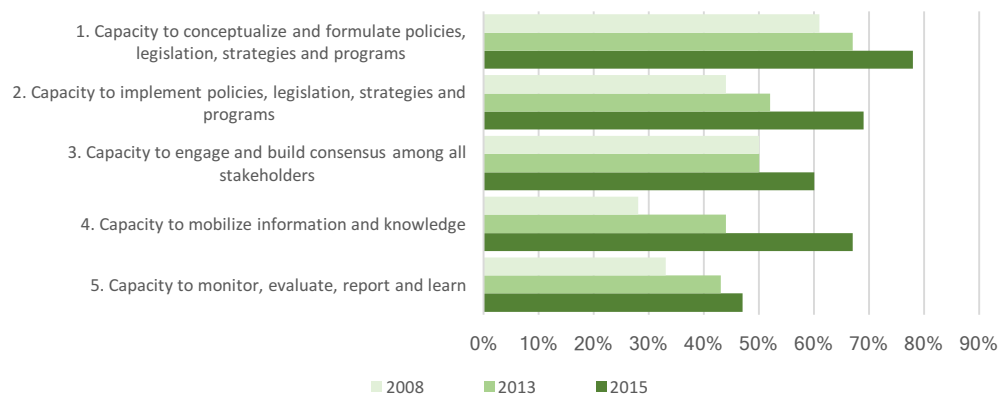


Figure 11. Overall results of the Capacity Development Scorecard
Results expressed as % of the maximum score per strategic area of support

¹⁵ End-of-project



However, the improvements of PAs' indicators, measured through capacity, financial sustainability and management effectiveness scorecards, can only be partially attributed to the project, as stakeholders involved in the scoring exercise cited mostly instruments developed outside the project domain, notably Decree 99, as the main drivers behind the improved scores for FSC. Nonetheless, the scorecard results reflect that the project contributed significantly to financial sustainability of protected by supporting the development of enabling legal instruments and capacity development in the NPs of Cat Ba, Xuan Thuy and Bidoup-Nui Ba.

Capacity development also constitutes one of the clearest link between actual impacts and project outcomes comes with the capacity development activities, as consistently confirmed by stakeholders, both those involved in the scoring exercise and respondents of the midterm and terminal evaluation. Hence, improvements in the scores of the capacity development scorecard can be tracked down to the extensive training program implemented by the project.

3.3.4 Efficiency of the outcomes

As shown in section finances, the project has made considerable efforts to catch up with the delivery schedule caused by the important initial delay. Delivery has reached 88.35% of the GEF grant at the time of the terminal evaluation. Based on the following scale, HS=80% or higher; S=75%-79.9%; MS=70%-74.9%; MU=65%-69.9%; U=60%-64.9% and HU=under 59.9%, but the fact that the project is actually one year behind schedule, having needed an extension, the efficiency rating must be of satisfactory.

Due to the high uncertainty involved in determining the real economic benefits of the project, including e.g. incremental value of improvement in protected biodiversity and the opportunity costs involved, and the uncertainty involved in determined the contribution of the project to said improvements, the terminal evaluation would only consider the financial rate of return, i.e. the ratio of financial project costs (i.e. the project budget) to the additional financial return of PAs as a direct result of the project actions.

Considering a discounted cash flow extending 10 years from the first year of project implementation (2011), and assuming effective disbursement of outcome three in 2014, total discounted costs, i.e. the project investment in outcome three, would amount to US\$115,101.77¹⁶ and the benefits to US\$647,286.01, i.e. the incremental revenue flows created by the actions of the project. Thus, the net present value of the project would be a positive US\$532,184.25 and the benefit/cost ratio¹⁷ of 5.62.

The cost-effectiveness in terms of incremental revenues for PAs would have been probably greater if sites of similar characteristics, as the ones pre-selected in the project document, would have been included. As we have seen in section effectiveness, the systemic contributions of the project have been limited and a

¹⁶ Discount rate 4.8% (World Bank, 2016)

¹⁷ Netting out 10 years

greater impact could have been very likely achieved if the project had concentrated more efforts on field activities.

3.4 Mainstreaming (linkage of project to UNDP programming instruments and broader development goals)

Although, the project formulation phase took place between 2007 and 2009 during the previous UNDP planning cycle, the project is still aligned supportive of the Outcome 1.4 of the 2012-2016 Common Country Program Document: *Key national and subnational agencies, in partnership with the private sector and communities, implement and monitor laws, policies and programs for more efficient use of natural resources and environmental management, and to implement commitments under international conventions* (UNICEF; UNDP; UNFPA, 2011).

The project has made contributions to improved natural resource management arrangements with local groups. In Bidoup-Nui Ba NP, the payment for forest ecosystem services received from hydropower operators is transferred to adjacent communities as part of a co-management system that involves forest protection tasks by residents. As of 2015, Bidoup-Nui Ba NP has signed contracts with 1,450 households to conduct forest protection activities over an area of 58,058 hectares.

In Xuan Thuy, the management board uses fees from artisanal clam fishery operators (273 households) to maintain protection and thus safeguard the environmental basis of the fishery and to ensure that fishery practices are sustainable.

The project did not, conduct a gender assessment nor did it target women or girls as beneficiaries. The project's targets were very specific in terms of improving enabling environment for the finance and effective management of PA in Viet Nam. The potential impacts of improved management and better conserved biodiversity on gender roles of rural households adjacent to PAs or gender roles in the society of Viet Nam at large are well beyond the scope of this project. In this context, however, it must be noted that the project manager was a woman and senior official of the BCA. However, *Viet Nam's Gender Development Index shows that the country is making progress closing, the gap in gender inequality, in women's leadership, the rates in the public sector are low* (UNDP, 2012), and in fact, most of PA officials interviewed for this evaluation report were men.

A complete review of gender inequality and the impact of female biodiversity managers in changing gender roles is beyond the scope of this evaluation report. However, the project could have conducted an analysis of gender impacts of its activities on communities adjacent to the NPs in Xuan Thuy and Bidoup-Nui Ba. The TE recommends therefore, that UNDP provides training and means to conduct gender analysis for future projects with field components.

3.5 Sustainability

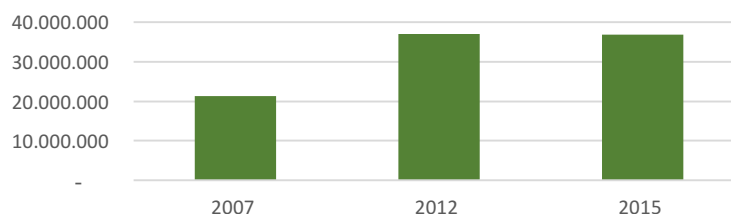
3.5.1 Financial dimension

Over the last decade (1996-2005), total investment in biodiversity from the state budget amounted to US\$81.6 million (MONRE, 2008). Funding for PAs has increased since 2007 and has remained stable for the last three years (Figure 12). Moreover, there is no indication of government funding of conservation objectives, mainly through MONRE, MARD and provincial committees, would be decreasing, and is in fact expected to increase gradually (MONRE, 2014).

In terms of external funding, between 2006 and 2010, Viet Nam received approximately US\$64 million for biodiversity conservation from international donors (MONRE, 2014) down from the figures from the previous decade 1996-2005 that amounted to US\$177 million (MONRE, 2008). Despite this seemingly decreasing trend, and accounting only for GEF funded projects, the next three years will see a total investment of ca. US\$80 million (including government co-finance) of which ca. US\$ 8 million will be

GEF grants for conservation projects (GEF, 2016). Bilateral agencies such as the German Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) (GIZ, 2016) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA, 2016), will continue their support for biodiversity conservation in Viet Nam at least in the midterm (till 2020). Moreover, stakeholders from the management boards of the project sites supported by the project show confidence in the sustainability of the newly established alternative or additional revenue generation as in all cases legal support from the pertinent authorities was obtained.

Figure 12. Total annual central government budget allocated to PA management
Excluding donor funds and revenues generated for the PA system. Data from (PMU, 2015)



3.5.2 Socio-economic dimension

Stakeholders at national and local level on the project sites expressed their support for biodiversity conservation. District, provincial and indeed biodiversity practitioners at state agencies or PA management boards manifested their firm commitment with biodiversity conservation objectives, as explicitly stated in national or local strategies.

However, the understanding of conservation of biodiversity, or the impacts that development actions, such as tourism infrastructure and operation or road infrastructure is different among stakeholders, particularly between officials in charge of promoting development and welfare and biodiversity practitioners. For instance, increasing visitors and development of tourism infrastructure and associated growth of Cat Ba town has been identified as a threat (as well an opportunity!) for threatened species, such as the endemic Cat Ba langur (*Trachypithecus poliocephalus*) (IUCN, 2014).

Lastly, the population of Viet Nam increased from 52.7 million to 90 million people during the period 1979 to 2013 and it is projected to increase to ca. 122 million people by 2050. With population density surpassing 240 people per km² in some areas, migration into forested areas to secure a livelihood is already happening (MONRE, 2014). At the same time, Viet Nam's economy keeps on growing, creating benefits in terms of increasing welfare and opportunities for the society, but also increasing consumption of natural resources, including timber and fisheries (MONRE, 2014) that will likely increase pressure on natural resources within and outside of PAs.

3.5.3 Institutional framework and governance dimension

Technical capacities among biodiversity protection agencies and staff involved in the management and protection of PAs is gradually increasing with the support, among others, of this project. However, there are still important differences among PAs, in terms of funding, and attention by ODA projects, which concentrates in a limited subset of PAs. Moreover, the rotation period of trained officials and the retention capacities of PAs of qualified personnel should be also researched.

The current policy and regulatory framework in Viet Nam, offers sufficient support for effective biodiversity conservation and sustainable financing of PAs. However, there is indeed a risk of conservation objectives having lower priority in front of development goals. For instance, in 2008, ca. 100 km² of primary dipterocarp rain forest of the Annamite range were lost to rubber plantation, under a government plan (MONRE, 2014) and PA management unit have been found to engage in economic activities with negative impacts on biodiversity (Pedrono, Tuan, Chouteau, & Vallejo, 2009).

3.5.4 Environmental dimension

Biodiversity in Viet Nam is still very vulnerable: not only does the country possess one of the highest proportions of threatened species in the world, but also high level of endemism (Pilgrim & Nguyen, 2007) cited in (Queiroz, Griswold, Nguyen, & Hall, 2013). Unabated anthropogenic threats, including hunting, habitat destruction through housing and infrastructure development, pollution and climate change will still pose an important threat for biodiversity conservation in Viet Nam.

3.5.5 Assessment of sustainability

Financial sustainability of project achievements, particularly at local level is rated as likely, as the revenue generating mechanisms have the enabling legal framework they need and the capacity and engagement of the PA management board that implement them. Moreover, sustained state and donor support for PAs is very likely.

The current legal and regulatory framework does indeed enable sustainable financing of PAs and management boards, at least of the sites intervened by the project, have the technical capacity and know-how for their implementation. Therefore, the terminal evaluation rates the institutional and governance sustainability as likely.

Project stakeholders expressed support for conservation objectives. However, different in awareness and a certain degree of competition between conservation and development objectives involves moderate risks of conservation objectives being relegated in favor of, e.g. tourism or infrastructure development. Therefore, the terminal evaluation rates the socio-economic sustainability as moderately likely.

The level of threats to biodiversity both within and outside PAs has not decreased and it is likely to increase over the next decade due to population growth, economic development and the vulnerability of biodiversity in Viet Nam. Therefore, the terminal evaluation rates the environmental sustainability as moderately likely.

3.6 Catalytic role

The project has contributed to the production of a public good¹⁸ in supporting the enactment of national and more importantly, local legislation that enables better financing of PAs, which in turn contribute to the maintenance of critical environmental services. Moreover, the project has made efforts to set up and maintain a knowledge management system on biodiversity to support both management effectiveness and public awareness.

The project has indeed supported demonstration, at local level, of three different additional funding sources for PAs: tourism revenue, payment of ecosystem services and sustainable fisheries. Moreover, capacity of PA officials beyond the project sites to implement such schemes has been developed with project support through training modules, training materials and guidelines.

3.7 Impact

Ultimately, the effectiveness of PA management should be reflected in an improvement of population of threatened species, or at least sub-populations within the limits of PAs. Thus, the number of threatened species, as reflected e.g. by IUCN Red List assessments should be decreasing in the midterm because of an improved management of PAs. However, the response of biological systems to changes in management effectiveness has a time-lag that would make impossible to attribute any current improvement on biodiversity to actions supported by this project. Therefore, monitoring and assessment of animal and

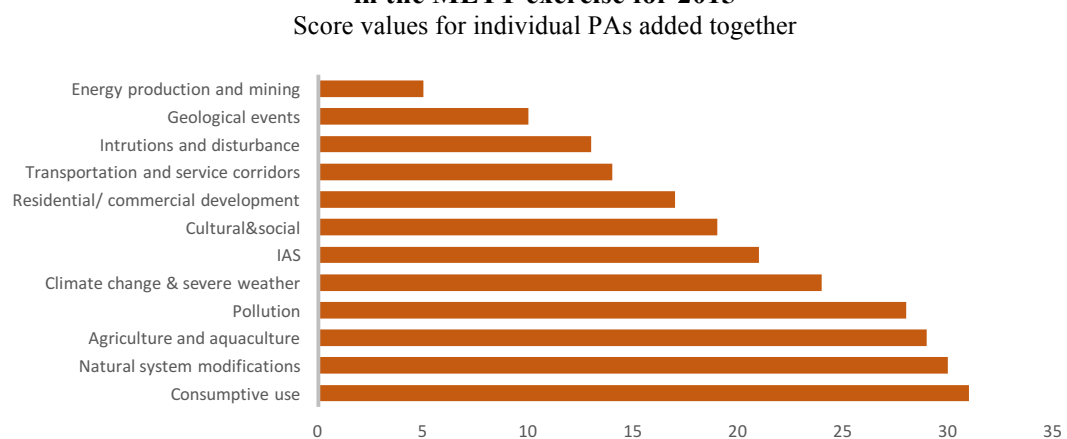
¹⁸ I.e. non rival, non-excludable

plant populations should be continued and expanded by the PA management boards, as it was intended by this project, as well as qualified external agents. Moreover, any positive or negative outcome may not reflect management effectiveness but rather other climatic, area (PA size)-related factors, or human population dynamics affecting endangered populations within the project’s PA (Coad, L. et al., 2015).

However, we may examine how threats for biodiversity have evolved over the last five years for Viet Nam and for the PAs considered in this project. The Logging ban introduced in mid 1990s and reforestation projects have caused forest cover to reach 40% of the total country area in 2010, projected to reach 47% by 2020 (Mant, et al., 2013). However, most of the reforestation efforts in Viet Nam consist of monoculture plantations of fast-growing exotic species of low biodiversity and ecosystem service value and conversion of primary forest to forestry plantations were still occurring by 2008-2009 (Mant, et al., 2013) (MONRE, 2015) (BCA, 2009), although natural forest has also been reported to have some modest increase (MONRE, 2014). Moreover, recent developments show that economic growth and development takes priority and that national authorities do not take prompt action to counter threats to biodiversity if that may go against real or perceived economic interest (Paddock, 2016) (Pedrono, Tuan, Chouteau, & Vallejo, 2009) (IUCN, 2014). Thus, virtually all populations of vertebrates assessed in the IUCN’s Red List in the vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered categories have continued their decrease in the period 2008-2015 (IUCN, 2016) and local extinctions are likely over the next decade.

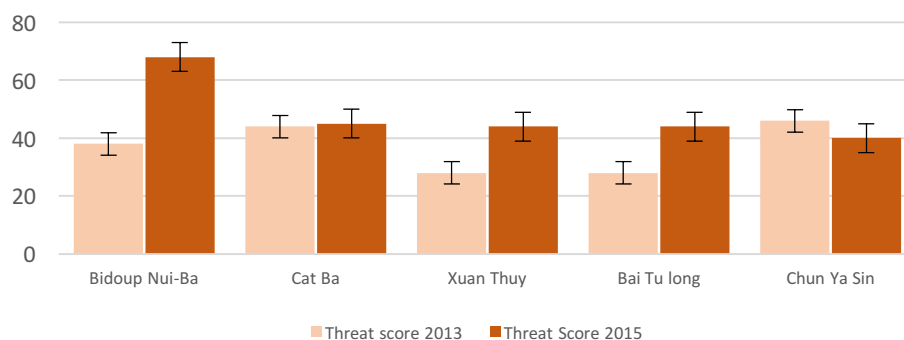
METT includes an assessment of threats that was applied at five PAs, the three project sites Badoup-Nui Ba, Cat Ba and Xuan Thuy, as well as the Bai Tu Long and Chung Ya Sin NPs. Threats including agricultural expansion, poaching, residential and commercial development and pollution, were assessed in 2013 and 2015 (not in 2008) through a specific scored questionnaire included in tracking tool standard version of the METT. Said questionnaire includes the IUCN Red List’s 52 specific threat categories (Stolton, et al., 2007). Poaching, including hunting and collection, and agricultural encroachment are the most important threats faced by the PAs assessed (figure 13). These threats are consistent with general threats to biodiversity identified in the current Viet Nam Biodiversity Strategy (MONRE, 2015).

Figure 13. Threat categories in order of increasing importance as assessed across all PAs included in the METT exercise for 2015



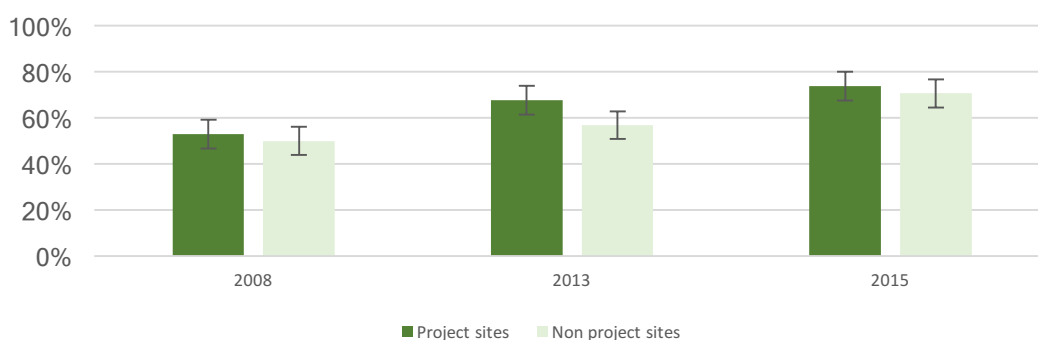
For the five PAs assessed, threat levels have mostly increased in the period 2013-2015, both at project and non-project sites (figure 14). While, the apparent trend may be caused either by the different perception in persons performing the exercise or changes in perception due to, among others, capacity development activities, it must be noted that there is no indication at interviews conducted for this terminal evaluation or in the qualitative information contained in METT that this would be the case. Moreover, increasing threats would be consistent with national trends discussed above and in section sustainability.

Figure 14. Threat levels measured using the METT at five PAs (2013-2015)



Having argued that the most effective efforts of the project are those conducted at the level of individual PAs, there would be an expectation of the individual effectiveness scores of the NPs directly supported by the project being better than those not directly supported by it. However, the results of the METT show improvements also in PAs without direct project intervention (figure 15).

Figure 15. METT scores averaged for site and non-site
Scores as % of maximum score.



This paradoxical result may be explained by the combination of two systemic contributions of the project. First, the project did support the enactment of legal instruments authorizing public funds for monitoring of biodiversity (Joint Circular 160) and it did setup, in cooperation with a JICA-funded project, the basis for a future knowledge management or information sharing mechanism, based on the regular collection of biodiversity information in PAs through systematic protocols. Lastly, the project-supported capacity development activities benefited officials of almost all relevant PAs of the country, i.e. those that have a constituted management board. Thus, through its systemic effects and capacity development activities, the project would have improved the management effectiveness across all, or at least many PAs.

However, it must be noted that the set of PAs subjected to the METT exercise merely constitutes a 5% of the PA with management board and just 2% of the total PAs in Viet Nam, together with the fact of this subset being particularly well funded and with wider international support. All limitations considered, i.e. subjectivity and other factors affecting correlation of score with PA outcomes, METT and FSC scorecard offer a valuable tool for the evaluation of PA management effectiveness, which can be enhanced by combining their results with field assessments of biodiversity within and outside PAs (Coad, L. et al., 2015). It is recommendable that PA administrators in Viet Nam should continue and expand the METT and FSC exercise annually (or biannually) under coordination either from the VNFOREST or the BCA, with results analyzed and reported to all concerned stakeholders.

In sum, through its support for the strengthening of the regulatory framework on PAs, the project has made a significant contribution to PA effectiveness. While the policy making itself is the function of any government (central and local) and policy making is indeed a complicated process in Viet Nam, the Project approach and efforts, together with other initiatives implemented in parallel and supported by different development partners have significantly contributed to the strengthening of the PA system in

Viet Nam in the last six years. Nonetheless, the question remains if these gains would be enough to stop and reverse the current decline in biodiversity, in Viet Nam and worldwide.

4. Conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned

4.1 Conclusions

Overall, the project has been successful with many achievements related to biodiversity conservation, PA financing and institutional capacity. Some of the main conclusions are as follows:

- The development of a project document addressing most of the main issues in PA management in Viet Nam and was suited to the local and national development priorities and organizational policies. It is well orientated document that has provided a basis for successful development of the project. It should, however, be noted that the project design is clear but ambitious, with outputs and achievements formulated on a broad range of topics and this requires time for consultation and consensus building.
- Project management by the leading agencies was conducted well with good standards in report preparation, development of collaboration among stakeholders and the preparation comprehensive documents. In terms of coordination it must be noted that different instruments enacted during the project timeframe, with direct and indirect project support, that have contributed to clarification of roles, stressing leadership of MARD on PA and MONRE on overall management of biodiversity. The project contribution in this sense has been to foster an agreement on cooperation and sharing of information mechanism among the two ministries, which can have important benefits for PA management effectiveness and knowledge, awareness and management of biodiversity at local and national level. However, there is still room for improvement in terms of coordination, staff motivation and crucially, in terms of differences in funding and capacity across the system, with some PAs still capturing most of the funding, training and international support.
- Overall the project has been successful in meeting its end-of-project objectives and outcomes. Progress on certain key outcome areas has slowed considerably over the first two years, but on a cumulative basis the project has performed in a satisfactory manner. The project has made an important contribution to enable legal framework for management and financial sustainability, as well as to strengthen organizational and individual capacities. The project has led to some very important outcomes and impacts on PA management in Viet Nam such as passage of new regulations supporting PA financing, increased public awareness of biodiversity conservation, establishment of financial mechanism for PA in Viet Nam. The strengthening of management effectiveness and financial sustainability showed by the results of the scorecards used as project indicators are the result of this project's activities together with other government and internationally supported projects.
- The project has more important impacts at local than at systemic level through demonstration of sustainable financing options at targeted PAs. Nevertheless, the project provides an excellent platform for Viet Nam to continue to expand its activities in the area of biodiversity conservation and PA financing.
- Although awareness on biodiversity conservation of stakeholders has increased, the efforts to strengthen the knowledge systematically could have been more effective than generic or non-targeted awareness rising campaigns. Effective knowledge transfer system could have also benefited from a reduced inception phase with a more intense involvement of MARD, the primary PA agency of the country.

- Project outcomes are likely to be sustainable from a financial and institutional point of view. However, it must be noted that threats for biodiversity in Viet Nam are still very significant and that there are differences in the understanding of the importance and linkages between biodiversity and development.
- Continued support to consolidate results achieved in this project is needed. The results obtained so far would not be lost if this project would come to an end at this stage, however, such a stoppage would slow down the achievement of the long-term planned goals.

4.2 Recommendations

The recommendations from the terminal evaluation are indicated below:

- MARD and Ministry of Internal Affairs to consolidate and finalize the inter-ministerial circular on professional standards for conservation staff, initiated with project support to create incentives for PA staff.
- BCA of MONRE and DNC of MARD to support the consolidation of the systematic collection of biodiversity data in PAs initiated. It is highly recommended that the two agencies and partners work with the VEA Data Management Office to ensure that the biodiversity database system is in place and is used to guide PA system management for example the biodiversity information should be actively used to help guide PA system priority setting, management activities, budget allocation based on the locations of critical ecosystems and species, and it should be used to identify overall system-level gaps in the PA system's coverage of globally significant biodiversity.
- MONRE and MARD, together with PPCs and provincial agencies managing or supervising PAs to institutionalize the use of monitoring tools/scorecards, especially the FSC and the METT as regular monitoring instruments, in combination with an enhanced information flow on biodiversity inside and outside PAs. These tools would not only contribute to improve management practices (to focus attention on the achievement of outcome level results related to PA financing, capacity strengthening, and conservation of globally significant biodiversity), but also act supporting coordination among agencies by creating a common understanding on the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities of protected areas in Viet Nam.
- Along with top down approach, MONRE and MARD to explore the possibility of utilizing bottom up approach in policy making related to biodiversity conservation and sustainable PA financing. Experiences showed that working from the level of individual PAs up to provincial and national level is the most cost-effective approach. The project has achieved positive results at PA level which should be continued. In addition, lessons learned from the pilot cases can be used to create or revise national policies of PA financing mechanisms.
- UNDP to collect and systematize updated lessons learned from implementation of projects on PAs in Viet Nam to establish the best mechanisms of improving financial sustainability and management effectiveness of PAs.
- UNDP to support the publication and dissemination of any results from this project, including the survey on public awareness on biodiversity and protected areas commissioned by the project.

4.3 Lessons learned

The following factors have been identified as **drivers for the success of future projects**:

- In the development of this type of project, it is important to ensure that key stakeholders are well identified and involved at a very early stage in the project design process to represent their stakes

and interest to avoid later adjustments at the expense of project implementation time. All agencies involved must have a common understanding of the extent to which the chosen issues and indicators represent changes in the real world, as well as limitations, including how to determine attribution for said changes.

- Project design must consider likely without-project changes and not just simply assume away a static “without-project scenario”. If factors beyond project control that may impact implementation are likely to occur, then they should be included in the risk analysis. In this regard, delays in implementation of projects are always likely in complex socio-economic and institutional environments. Hence project strategies should be subjected to a rigorous sensitivity analysis to assess what effects delays would have on project implementation and effectiveness.
- The sequencing of activities in this type of project is very important for the effective and efficient delivery of outcomes and outputs. The project has shown that there may be several factors, some of which may have been anticipated within the project conceptualization, design and formulation. In contrast, there are unforeseen factors that could not be anticipated, but for which remedial solutions could be found through an adaptive, learning management system.
- The national legislation together with the provincial policy has been the basis for institutional arrangements. The experience developed in the “PA Financing” project is singular in this respect and provides experience for other PAs in Viet Nam to construct similar mechanisms. Institutional arrangements are always unique due to the combination of legal, social and economical circumstances but the successes of the Viet Nam case constitute a major asset of experience for development of similar arrangements elsewhere.
- It is important that, beyond meeting the project’s objectives, continued support for this project and development of new initiatives toward biodiversity conservation and sustainable PA management creates synergy with other projects or sources of funding to enhance the sustainability of achieved results and long-term development goals.

Annex 1. Terms of reference

Terminal evaluation terms of reference

Introduction

In accordance with UNDP and GEF M&E policies and procedures, all full and medium-sized UNDP support GEF financed projects are required to undergo a terminal evaluation upon completion of implementation. These terms of reference (TOR) sets out the expectations for a Terminal Evaluation (TE) of the Project “Removing Barriers Hindering Protected Area Management Effectiveness in Viet Nam”(PIMS #.3965)

The essentials of the project to be evaluated are as follows:

Project summary table

Project Title:		Removing Barriers Hindering Protected Area Management Effectiveness in Viet Nam		
GEF Project ID:	3603	Financing	<i>at endorsement (US\$)</i>	<i>at completion (US\$)</i>
UNDP Project ID:	UNDP PIMS:3965 UNDP Atlas Project Number: 00074659	GEF:	3,536,360	
Country:	Viet Nam	UNDP:	7,050,000	
Region:	Asia	Government:	10,491,043	
Focal Area:	Biodiversity	Other:	1,000,000	
Focal Area Objectives:	Project approved under GEF-5 Focal Area Strategy and Strategic Objective 1 (SO-1), Catalyzing Sustainability of Protected Area Systems at national levels; and specifically, under Strategic Programme 1: Sustainable Financing of Protected Area Systems at the National Level	Total co-financing:	18,541,043	
Executing Agency:	Ministry of Natural Resources & Environment (MONRE)	Total Project Cost:	22,077,403	
Other Partners involved:	DoNC/MARD Xuan Thuy, Cat Ba, Bidoup-Nui Ba NPs	ProDoc Signature (date project began):		22 December 2010
		(Operational) Closing Date:	Proposed: December, 2014	Actual: 31 December 2015

Objective and scope

The project was designed to: secure a sustainably financed PA system, to conserve globally significant biodiversity. It has four outcomes, under which specific outcomes and outputs are expected:

- Outcome 1: A comprehensive and harmonized legal and policy framework supports sustainable PA financing
- Outcome 2: Clear and harmonized institutional mandates and processes support sustainable PA financing mechanisms
- Outcome 3: Knowledge and experience of sustainable financing options developed through demonstrations
- Outcome 4: Information on biodiversity and PA status supports PA management and builds public support for the PA system

The TE will be conducted according to the guidance, rules and procedures established by UNDP and GEF as reflected in the UNDP Evaluation Guidance for GEF Financed Projects. The purpose of the evaluation is to add to promote accountability and transparency, and to assess and disclose the extent of project

accomplishments; to synthesize lessons that can help to improve the selection, design and implementation of future GEF financed UNDP activities; to provide feedback on issues that are recurrent across the UNDP portfolio and need attention, and on improvements regarding previously identified issues; to contribute to the overall assessment of results in achieving GEF strategic objectives aimed at global environmental benefit; and to gauge the extent of project convergence with other UN and UNDP priorities, including harmonization with other UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and UNDP Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) outcomes and outputs. The objectives of the evaluation are to assess the achievement of project results, and to draw lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project, and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP programming.

The scope of the evaluation covers an assessment and analysis of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact of the project, covering areas such as project design, monitoring and evaluation, attainment of outcomes, implementation agency and executing agency execution, management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, stakeholder engagement, reporting, communications, etc.

Evaluation approach and method

An overall approach and method for conducting project terminal evaluations of UNDP supported GEF financed projects have developed over time. The evaluator is expected to frame the evaluation effort using the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact, as defined and explained in the UNDP Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed Projects. A set of questions covering each of these criteria have been drafted and are included with this TOR [Annex C](#)) The evaluator is expected to amend, complete and submit this matrix as part of an evaluation inception report, and shall include it as an annex to the final report.

The evaluation must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The evaluator is expected to follow a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with government counterparts, in particular the GEF operational focal point, UNDP Country Office, project team, UNDP GEF Technical Adviser based in the region and key stakeholders. The evaluator is expected to conduct a field mission to Xuan Thuy NP (Nam Dinh province), Bidoup - Nui Ba NP (Lam Dong province) and Cat Ba NP (Hai Phong city). Interviews will be held with the following organizations and individuals at a minimum: PA Project Management Board at MONRE - Biodiversity Conservation Agency, Vietnam Environment Administration - PA Project Management Board at MARD - Department of Natural Conservation, Vietnam Administration of Forestry - Xuan Thuy national park, Nam Dinh province - Cat Ba national park, Hai Phong city - Bidoup - Nui Ba national park, Lam Dong province

The evaluator will review all relevant sources of information, such as the project document, project reports – including Annual APR/PIR, project budget revisions, progress reports, GEF focal area tracking tools, project files, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the evaluator considers useful for this evidence-based assessment. A list of documents that the project team will provide to the evaluator for review is included in Annex B of this Terms of Reference. . The full scope methods used in the evaluation are at the discretion of the evaluator(s), but a mixed method of document review, interviews, and direct observations should be employed, at a minimum. The TE inception report and TE report should explain all the evaluation methods used in detail.

Evaluation criteria & ratings

An assessment of project performance will be carried out, based against expectations set out in the Project Logical Framework/Results Framework, which provides performance and impact indicators for project implementation along with their corresponding means of verification. The evaluation will at a minimum cover the criteria of: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact. Ratings must be provided on the following performance criteria. The completed table must be included in the evaluation executive summary. The obligatory rating scales are included in Annex D.

Project finance / cofinance

The Evaluation will assess the key financial aspects of the project, including the extent of co-financing planned and realized. Project cost and funding data will be required, including annual expenditures. Variances between planned and actual expenditures will need to be assessed and explained. Results from recent financial audits, as available, should be taken into consideration. The evaluator(s) will receive assistance from the Country Office (CO) and Project Team to obtain financial data in order to complete the co-financing table, which will be included in the terminal evaluation report.

Mainstreaming

UNDP supported GEF financed projects are key components in UNDP country programming, as well as regional and global programmes. The evaluation will assess the extent to which the project was successfully mainstreamed with other UNDP priorities, including poverty alleviation, improved governance, the prevention and recovery from natural disasters, and gender.

Impact

The evaluators will assess the extent to which the project is achieving impacts or progressing towards the achievement of impacts. Key findings that should be brought out in the evaluations include whether the project has demonstrated: a) verifiable improvements in ecological status, b) verifiable reductions in stress on ecological systems, and/or c) demonstrated progress towards these impact achievements.

Conclusions, recommendations & lessons

The evaluation report must include a chapter providing a set of conclusions, recommendations and lessons.

Implementation arrangements

The principal responsibility for managing this evaluation resides with the UNDP CO in Viet Nam. The UNDP CO will contract the evaluators and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the evaluation team, and support to VISA application if requested by the Consultant. The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the Evaluators team to set up stakeholder interviews, arrange field visits, coordinate with the Government etc.

Evaluation timeframe

The total duration of the evaluation will be over a time period of 10 weeks (30 day for IC and 27 for NC). The evaluators are expected to conduct a field mission to Hanoi, Lam Dong, Hai Phong, and Nam Dinh provinces. The travel costs within Viet Nam (per diem) will be included in the contract as the number of days in Viet Nam for the International Consultant and number of days in the fields outside Ha Noi for the National Consultant. The International Consultant is requested to spend 13 days in Vietnam: 3 days in Hanoi, 3 days in Hai Phong, 3 days in Nam Dinh, and 4 days in Lam Dong (days in provinces plus travel time)

Evaluation deliverables

The evaluation team is expected to deliver the following:

Deliverable	Content	Timing	Responsibilities
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Inception Re- port	Evaluator provides clarifications on timing and method	No later than 2 weeks before the evaluation mission: 25 November, 2015	Evaluator submits to UNDP CO
Presentation	Initial Findings	End of evaluation mission: 16 December, 2015	To project management, UNDP CO
Draft Evaluation Report	Full report, (per annexed template) with annexes	Within 3 weeks of the evaluation mission: 28 December, 2015	Sent to CO, reviewed by RTA, PCU, GEF OFPs
Final Report*	Finalized report	Within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on draft: 25 January, 2016	Sent to CO for uploading to UNDP ERC.

*When submitting the final evaluation report, the evaluator is required also to provide an 'audit trail', detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final evaluation report.

Team composition

The evaluation team will be composed of 1 international consultant (team leader) for 30 days and 01 national consultant for 27 days. The consultants shall have prior experience in evaluating similar projects. Experience with GEF financed projects is an advantage. The evaluators selected should not have participated in the project preparation and/or implementation and should not have conflict of interest with project related activities.

The Team members must present the following qualifications:

- Minimum 10 years of relevant professional experience
- Knowledge of UNDP and GEF
- Previous experience with results-based monitoring and evaluation methodologies
- Technical knowledge in the targeted focal area(s) of biodiversity conservation, protected areas
- Experience in environmental/biodiversity strategic/biodiversity financing

Evaluator ethics

Evaluation consultants will be held to the highest ethical standards and are required to sign a Code of Conduct (Annex E) upon acceptance of the assignment. UNDP evaluations are conducted in accordance with the principles out- lined in the [UNEP 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluations'](#)

Annex 2. Mission itinerary/Stakeholders interviewed

Time	Activities	Participants	Venue
Wednesday, 13 January			
13:30 - 15:30	Opening meeting to discuss 1) planning for the Terminal Evaluation and 2) project's results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Pham Anh Cuong - Project director, BCA • Ms. Tran Huyen Trang - Project coordinator, MONRE • Mr. Tshering Doley- UNDP regional technical advisor • Mr. Dao Khanh Tung - Programme analyst, UNDP • Mr. José Antonio- International consultant • Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National consultant 	UNDP country office
Thursday, 14 January			
7.00 - 12.00	Mini-bus and boat travel to Cat Ba NP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Tran Huyen Trang - Project coordinator, MONRE • Mr. José Antonio - International consultant • Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National consultant 	
13.30 - 15.00	Meeting with Cat Hai district authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Minh - Vice chairman of Cat Hai district • Mr. José Antonio - International consultant • Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National consultant 	Cat Ba NP office
15.00 - 17.00	Meeting with Cat Ba NP management board to discuss project activities at demonstration site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Nguyen Van Thuong - Vice director, Cat Ba NP • Mr. Nguyen Van Hach - Director of Tourism Development center of Cat Ba NP • Mr. Nguyen Van Huong -Chief accountant, Cat Ba NP • Mr. Hoang Van Cau - Project site coordinator • Mr. José Antonio - International consultant • Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National consultant 	Cat Ba NP office
Friday, 15 January			
8.00 - 13.30	Boat and mini-bus to Xuan Thuy NP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Tran Huyen Trang - Project coordinator, MONRE • Mr. José Antonio - International consultant • Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National consultant 	
14.00-15.30	Meeting with Xuan Thuy NP management board to discuss project activities at demonstration site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Nguyen Viet Cach - Director, Xuan Thuy NP • Mr. Phan Van Truong - Project site coordinator • Mr. José Antonio - International consultant • Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National consultant 	Xuan Thuy NP office
16.00-17.00	Meeting with Giao Thuy district authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Nguyen Tien Tung - Director of General Department of Giao Thuy district PC • Mr. José Antonio - International consultant • Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National consultant 	Giao Thuy district office
17.30-18.30	Meeting with Clam farming association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Truong, Mr. Tung, Mr. Ha - Community representatives • Mr. José Antonio - International consultant • Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National consultant 	Giao Thien commune
Saturday, 16 January			
8.30 - 14.00	Mini-bus to Hanoi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Tran Huyen Trang - Project coordinator, MONRE • Mr. José Antonio - International consultant • Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National consultant 	

Sunday, 17 January			
	Internal work of consulting team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. José Antonio – International consultant • Ms. Le Ha Thanh – National consultant 	
Monday, 18 January			
10.30 - 16.00	Car and Air Travel to Bidoup - Nui Ba NP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Le Anh Dung - Project officer, MONRE • Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National consultant 	
Tuesday, 19 January			
8.30 - 11.00	Meeting with Bidoup-Nui Ba NP management board to discuss project activities at demonstration site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Huong - Director, Bidoup – Nui Ba NP • Mr. Ton That Minh - Director of Intl. Centre for Tropical Highlands Ecosystem Research (ICTHER) • Mr. Truong Quang Cuong - Project site coordinator • Ms. Hong - Chief accountant • Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National Consultant 	Bidoup - Nui Ba NP office
13.30 - 15.30	Meeting with representative of Forest Protection and Development Fund of Lam Dong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Nguyen Van Bang - Vice director • Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National Consultant 	Lam Dong PPC office
Wednesday, 20 January			
10.30 - 13.00	Site visit to Bidoup - Nui Ba NP facilities and tour of park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National consultant • Mr. Truong Quang Cuong - Project site coordinator 	Bidoup - Nui Ba NP
15.25 - 17.10	Car and Air Travel to Hanoi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National Consultant 	
Thursday, 21 January			
10.30-12.00	Discussion of MARD component of project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Linh-Vice Director of VNFOREST-DNC • Mr. Khanh- Officer, PA project staff • Mr. José Antonio - International consultant • Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National consultant 	MARD/VNF OREST office
14.00-16.00	Discussion of MONRE component of project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Pham Anh Cuong - Project director, BCA • Mr. Dung - Vice director of MONRE PMU component • Mr. José Antonio - International consultant • Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National consultant 	MONRE PMU Office
Friday, 22 January			
9.30-12.00	Internal work of consulting team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. José Antonio – International consultant • Ms. Le Ha Thanh – National consultant 	
13.30-16.00	UNDP Debriefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Dao Xuan Lai – Assistant Country Director, UNDP • Mr. Tshering Doley – UNDP regional technical advisor • Mr. Dao Khanh Tung – Programme analyst, UNDP • Mr. Pham Anh Cuong – Project director, BCA • Ms. Tran Huyen Trang – Project coordinator, MONRE • Mr. José Antonio – International consultant • Ms. Le Ha Thanh – National consultant 	UNDP Country Office

Annex 3. Summary of field visits

The mission was implemented in 13-21 January 2016 in Cat Ba, Xuan Thuy and Bidoup-Nui Ba NPs and PMU offices of MONRE and MARD in Hanoi.

Undertaken activities

- In Cat Ba: Two meetings were conducted during the mission to Cat Ba
 - Meeting with Cat Ba's management board
 - Meeting with representative of district PC
- In Xuan Thuy: Three meetings were conducted during the mission to Xuan Thuy
 - Meeting with Xuan Thuy's management board
 - Meeting with representative of district PC
 - Discussion with representative of local communities (clam association)
- In BDNB: Two meetings were conducted during the mission to BDNB
 - Meeting with Bidoup-Nui Ba NP's management board
 - Meeting with Forest Protection and Development Fund of Lam Dong
- Field visits to Cat Ba, Xuan Thuy and Bidoup-Nui Ba NPs
- MARD PMU
- MONRE PMU

Highlights

1. CAT BA NP

1.1. Meeting with Cat Ba NP Board of management

Participants:

- Mr. Nguyen Van Thuong - Vice director, Cat Ba NP
- Mr. Nguyen Van Hach - Director of Tourism Development center of NP
- Mr. Nguyen Van Huong - Accountant, Cat Ba NP
- Mr. Hoang Van Cau - Project site coordinator

1.1.1. General information

Cat Ba NP was established on 31/3/1986 under the Decision No.79-CP dated 31/3/1986 by Chairman of Ministerial Committee (now is Prime Minister). It is recognized by UNESCO as one of the most important ecological conservation parks in Viet Nam which locates in the core area of the world Biosphere Reserve, Cat Ba archipelago. Cat Ba is situated on Cat Ba Island in Ha Long Bay, is administered by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development of Hai Phong city. The park is located approximately 30 km east of Hai Phong, covering about 263 km² and comprising 173 km² land and 90 km² of inshore water. Cat Ba NP is a special-use forest in Viet Nam, the world's biosphere reserve. Cat Ba NP is situated in the Cat Hai district, Hai Phong.

Currently, in Cat Ba NP there are 99 staffs in total, of which 80 are permanent staffs, and the remaining are temporary workers. There is one forest ranger unit within the Cat Ba NP.

1.1.2. Proposal on increasing the entrance ticket

The Proposal on increasing the entrance fee to Cat ba NP was approved by Hai Phong PPC on 15 August 2014 under the Decision No.1780/QD-UBND and became to effect from 1st September 2014. Before submitting the proposal to PPC for approval, the park already assessed affordability, visitors' WTP to determine the entrance fee for 15 trekking routes. The new fee is set at VND 40,000 for the adults and

VND 20,000 for the children. The NP has updated the info on the new ticket price on its website and at the park itself.

As described earlier, Cat Ba NP territory covers both forest and marine area. However, regarding the tourism activities, these two areas are managed by two different agencies namely (i) Cat Ba NP and (ii) Management board of Cat Ba Bay. The park only takes responsibility of managing tourism in the forest, while the surface water and marine area are managed by the Cat Ba Bay's management board. The entrance fee for marine tour is set at VND 30,000 per person.

There are at least two points to be considered in implementing of the Proposal on increasing the entrance ticket. First, increasing the entrance fee has some impacts on visitors to come to the Park. According to Mr. Huong, the Chief Accountant of NP, since the implementation of the new ticket fee, two tourism companies have cancelled the tour to Cat Ba NP. After the increase, in 2014 and 2015 the number of Viet Nameese tourists decreased, but foreign tourists increased due to difficulties in travel condition, constant rain in Cat Ba (flood), economic recession. Overall, the total number of visitors to Cat Ba remained unchanged. Second, the new entrance fee system is not considered by the park's leaders as a new source of incomes for the park. Like many other NPs, the budget of Cat Ba comes from four sources (i) State budget, (ii) State budget allocated to in capital construction projects, (iii) Funding from international organization's projects (including government and non-government) and (iv) Budget from other service activities including tourism. The state budget is allocated to regular expenditures and other expenditures of the Park. The total state budget is to the Park is estimated around VND 10 bill. annually. The Park can keep the collected entrance fee as a part of state budget. The government will transfer the remaining amount after deduction of collected entrance fee to the park. There will be no change in state budget allocated for the park with the implementation of new proposal on increasing the entrance ticket.

1.1.3. Proposal on concession scheme

The park has finished assessing the potentials, needs; reviewing legal basis; public hearing and consulting related parties on Concession scheme. A detailed proposal has been drafted (including the price, the site for concession, etc.) and submitted to the PPC for approval.

However, there are a numbers of issues/questions need to be clarified for proposal to be approved by the PPC for example:

- Is the NP capable to implement the proposal?
- How to ensure the environmental quality and how to avoid the negative environmental impacts of concession scheme?
- Is there any good experience/practice of concession scheme? What are the lessons learned?
- How the benefit/revenue from concession scheme will be allocated among the related stakeholders?
- How the concession price should be set?

1.1.4. Other source of income

At the moment, the park has got contracts with 21 groups, representing 121 households on protecting the forest on an area of 12,000 hectare. The protection fee varies from VND 100,000 to 400,000 depending on the location of forest the household is assigned to protect. The park receives an annually budget of more than VND 1 billion from the provincial budget for protecting the forest, and the park can keep 7% of this budget to cover the management expenditure.

1.1.5. Other issue

The Cat Ba NP has got two agreements with Bai Tu Long NP and Ha Long Bay Management Board on (i) tourism development and (ii) communication and awareness raising on biodiversity conservation. Also, Cat Ba NP has got agreement with Cat Hai District on monitoring and control over natural resources

environment. The activities under the last agreement include joint patrolling, information sharing and solid waste collecting.

1.1.6. Project impacts and contribution

All the participants from Cat Ba NP recognized the importance of the biodiversity conservation and PA project. It has been agreed that PA project is successful in terms of:

- Setting up a sustainable financial mechanism for NP to exploit the potential of NP. Even there is no change in state budget allocated for the park, with the implementation of new proposal on increasing the entrance ticket, the NP has more freedom and power in budgeting and spending money.
- Promoting tourism development and biodiversity conservation. With the implementation of activities under PA project, Cat Ba has more opportunities, resources to invest in tourism development activities, biodiversity conservation.
- Increasing the capacity of NP's staffs. The capacity of staff has been increased thru training courses and activities under project. Now the staffs of NP can do biodiversity conservation activities, reporting and etc.
- Job and income generation for local communities thru tourism activities.
- Increasing public (policy makers and local community) awareness of the importance of biodiversity conservation, role of Cat Ba NP thru public hearing and consultation on fee raising and environmental concession projects.
- Based on the experience from PA project, Cat Ba will continue with getting other sources of finance.

1.1.7. What would the project have needed to perform better?

The project may be performed better under the following conditions:

- Have a strong support and deep understanding of policy makers at provincial and district levels on the project goals/objectives, activities as well as biodiversity importance.
- Have a strong legal basis for the proposal development and implementation
- The project should be well written and understandable for public audience

1.2. Meeting with Mr. Minh, vice chairman of Cat Hai district PC

During the meeting with Cat Hai's authorities, Mr. Minh, vice chairman of Cat Hai's district PC highly appreciated the work of UNDP/GEF project. He recognized the importance of biodiversity conservation and UNDP/GEF project. Cat Ba NP plays important role in environmental protection and providing main sources of incomes for local people. The task of ensuring the functions of NP and sustainable use of NP became more and more important for Cat Hai district in particular and Hai Phong city in general. Cat Hai is among limited number of districts of Hai Phong who has the development strategy. In this strategy the role and importance of Cat Ba NP are well recognized as Cat Hai sets a target to become a world and regional tourist destination in future with biodiversity as a key point for tourists attraction.

Mr. Minh emphasized that Cat Hai district is welcome and supported the project implementation but further discussion and efforts need to be done to receive the official approval for environmental concession scheme from Hai Phong top leader.

2. XUAN THUY NP

2.1. Meeting with NP Board of management

Participants:

- Mr. Nguyen Viet Cach - Director, Xuan Thuy NP
- Mr. Phan Van Truong - Project site coordinator

2.1.1. General information

On 2 January 1989, the area of 12,000 hectare around the mouth of the Red River in Giao Thuy District located in north-east Viet Nam were recognized as Southeast Asia's first Ramsar site, being the 50th site worldwide. Six years later the establishment of Xuan Thuy Wetland Natural Reserve was decided by the government, soon after it was upgraded to be the Xuan Thuy NP in 2003, putting the NP under the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development of Nam Dinh Province. Furthermore, the park was acknowledged by UNESCO as part of the core zone of the Red River Biosphere Reserve. The numerous titles given by both national and international agencies and the strong support from the government and international organizations (governmental and non-governmental) reflect the importance of the area.

Currently, in Xuan Thuy NP there are 22 staffs in total, of which 80% are officials and 20% remaining are administrative workers. There is no forest ranger unit within the Xuan Thuy NP.

2.1.2. Proposal on pilot scheme to mobilize financial sources from developing co-management model for sustainable clam extensive farming

Giao Thuy district has expanded clam aquaculture area recently and made clam production one of the key drivers for local economic growth recently. However, clam aquaculture has exhibited unsustainable patterns in terms of income among farmers and over recent years.

Natural clam catching had been practiced by farmers located along the coastal line long time ago. Since 1990, farmers started to culture clam as the main occupation by using poles and polyethylene nets to enclose natural clam area, to manage and harvest. As of 2014, clam aquaculture area in Xuan Thuy is about 1,100ha. 273 households are now practicing clam farming in Xuan Thuy. Most of the clam is sold to traders and then transported to the South for export to EU markets or to the North for Chinese markets, or for domestic consumption. There was no any direct public investment on clam aquaculture documented.

Furthermore, the clams that are cultivated are a non-local species, *Meretrix lyrata*, imported from the Mekong Delta in southern Viet Nam. While there is a local species of clam, *Meretrix meretrix*, native to the north including the Red River Delta area, it is not as high-yielding as *M. lyrata*. However, clam production in Xuan Thuy has declined in recent years due to poor cultivation practices such as growing too many too close together resulting in greater risks of disease and lower overall growth rates. Indeed, clam culture is also experiencing the 'boom and bust' characteristics seen in shrimp aquaculture – initial high returns followed by a declining trend in returns. Problems of productivity have been further aggravated by changes in consumer preferences: China, which was hitherto the bigger market for clams, has stopped buying them from Viet Nam.

On average, total gross output per ha of a clam farm was estimated at VND 2000 mill.VND, varying among sizes and farming types. The profit generated per ha of clam farming is about NVD 400 mil.VND per ha.

There are a numbers of agencies and organizations which somehow have an influence on management of Xuan Thuy NP. They include local governmental authorities, state agencies, the Xuan Thuy NP Management Board as a special agency, internal agencies like the court, the public security and the army, local associations etc. This evidence may lead to overlapping in function and responsibility over the management of PA.

In February 2012, based the Prime Minister issued Decision 126 on piloting benefit sharing in the management, protection, and sustainable development of PAs. Xuan Thuy NP was chosen as one of two

sites to implement the decision. In line with the decision, the park is to carry out the following five components:

- Sustainable use of clam seed beds resources in frequently flooded areas in the Red River Estuary and around Lu and Ngan Islands.
- Sustainable local community use of aquatic resources inside the mangrove forests in the core zone of the park.
- Community-based mangrove management model in the park's buffer zone in Giao An, Giao Lac, and Giao Xuan Communes.
- Sustainable use of the clam culture areas while still protecting the important bird areas in the ecological restoration zone on Lu Island.
- Sustainable collection of medical plants in the casuarinas forests on Lu Island

Since the clam area located within the ecological restoration zone of Xuan Thuy NP, management board of Xuan Thuy is responsible for overall management of the area. This project aimed at institutionalizing the role, function and responsibility of the management board, clam farmers, and commune authorities.

The proposal on pilot scheme to mobilize financial sources from developing co-management model for sustainable clam extensive farming in Xuan Thuy NP was approved by Nam Dinh PPC on 23 January 2015 under the Decision No.119/QD-UBND. According to the Decision 119 clam farmers are allowed to lease the clam area from the park, access credit and technical know-how etc. with the period no longer than 5 years. The leasing license is granted by Management board of Xuan Thuy NP. The clam farmers should pay a fee on average of VND 1,000,000 per hectare per year or \$50/hectare/year for leasing area. The revenue is allocated as follow: The management board of NP can keep 30% of total revenue, 40% is transferred to commune budget and 30% should go to district budget. The fee can be revised one in five years depending on current situation of socio-economic development but not lower than the current price.

Right after the approval of Decision, the system of documents to support the implementation of decision have been issued like decision on establishment of steering committee and working group to implement the decision, the decision on how to use revenue from benefit sharing mechanism and so on.

During the meeting with Mr. Cach, director of Xuan Thuy NP, it was observed that raising revenue for the park from proposed mechanism is not the ultimate goal. Given the limited capacity, it is expected that, such kind of benefit sharing mechanism will help management board of Xuan Thuy and Giao Thuy district to effectively manage the PA in terms of legalizing and institutionalizing the role, function and responsibility of the management board, clam farmers, and commune/district authorities over the PA.

2.1.3. Project impacts and contribution

The management board of Xuan Thuy NP's well recognized the importance of the biodiversity conservation and PA project. It has been agreed that PA project is successful in terms of:

- Legalizing and institutionalizing the role, function and responsibility of the management board, clam farmers, and commune/district authorities over the PA.
- Setting up a sustainable financial mechanism for NP to exploit the potential of NP and sustainable use of natural resources.
- Enhancing the role of PA management board over the management of PA.
- Increasing the capacity of NP's staffs. The capacity of staff has been increased thru training courses and activities under project. Now the staffs of NP can do biodiversity conservation activities, reporting and etc.
- Sustainable job and income generation for local communities thru economic activities.
- Increasing public (policy makers and local community) awareness of the importance of biodiversity conservation, role of XT NP thru public hearing and consultation on benefit sharing mechanism.

- Information exchange with other PAs in Viet Nam
- Providing show-case, lessons learned for revising the Decree 99 on PFES
- Based on the experience from PA project, Xuan Thuy NP will continue with applying benefit sharing mechanism to other environmental services including bee keeping, mushroom growing etc.

2.1.4. What would the project have needed to perform better?

The project may be performed better under the following conditions:

- Have a strong support and deep understanding of policy makers at provincial and district levels on the project goals/objectives, activities as well as biodiversity importance.
- Have a strong legal basis for the proposal development and implementation
- The project should be well written and understandable for public audience
- The project output and outcomes should be better designed

2.2. Meeting with Mr. Nguyen Tien Tung, Director of General Department of Giao Thuy district PC

The local authority is well perceived of the role of Xuan Thuy NP and benefits of the biodiversity conservation. It has been agreed that Xuan Thuy wetland plays important role in flood control, coastal protection, sediment trap and providing main sources of incomes for local people. The bird of Xuan Thuy NP is now used as a logo for tourist's attraction of Nam Dinh province.

Mr. Tung highly appreciated the work of UNDP/GEF project in legalizing and institutionalizing the role, function and responsibility of the management board, clam farmers, and commune/district authorities over the PA thru the implementation of benefit sharing mechanism. The idea of such scheme did exist a long time ago with the approval of Decision 126 on piloting benefit sharing in the management, protection, and sustainable development of PAs. However due to the limited financial and human resources of district and Xuan Thuy NP, no activities has been carried out. PA project play a role as catalyst to realize the task. Mr. Tung emphasized that Giao Thuy district is welcome and supported the project implementation as the project has been meeting the demand and hope of the district, PA management board and local community, helped in dealing with concerned problems.

The project contributed significantly in improving the community awareness on environmental and biodiversity issues through variety of concrete activities. Through the activities, PA project had good influence on the awareness of local leaders and authority.

It is difficult to think of a way that PA project does not currently provide its beneficiaries with the support they need to improve their work effectively. It helps them develop their communication and management skills in a variety of the ways and provides funding for special events that create opportunities to interact directly with government officials, civil society and the media.

2.3. Discussion with representative of local communities (clam association)

Participants: Mr. Truong, Mr Tung, Mr. Ha

- Natural clam catching had been practiced by farmers located along the coastal line long time ago. Since late 1980s, farmers started to culture clam as the main occupation by using poles and polyethylene nets to enclose natural clam area, to manage and harvest. Most of the clam is sold to traders and then transported to the South for export to EU markets or to the North for Chinese markets, or for domestic consumption.
- Local people has received information about benefit sharing mechanism and strongly supported this idea as it helps protecting eco-systems, improving environmental quality and providing stable

income. More over with implementation of such scheme, the local people is officially granted leasing license, which allowed them to do clam aquaculture in leased area.

- Despite the fact that having awareness on environmental and biodiversity issue, the stakeholders have no deep knowledge about the subject matter. They cannot talk much about the current uses of wetland and the benefits of wetland and biodiversity.
- The voice/role of woman is still very weak as no woman attending the meeting.

3. BIDOUP-NUI BA NP

3.1. Meeting with NP Board of management

Participants:

- Mr. Huong, Director
- Mr. Minh, Director of Research department
- Ms. Hong, Chief of Accountant
- Mr. Cuong, NP's officer, PA project coordinator

3.1.1. General information

Bidoup-Nui Ba NP is about 30km from Da Lat City from the Northeast and about 80 km from Nha Trang City from the West. Bidoup-Nui Ba NP has primeval forests with high biodiversity which have been concerned and protected for a long time. Since 1980s, the Chairman of Ministerial Committee (currently is the Prime Minister) has listed these forests in the list of special-use forest system of Viet Nam under Decision No.194/CT dated 9 August 1986 with two separate PAs which are Nui Ba and Thuong Da Nhim. Until 26 December 2002, the Management Board of Bidoup-Nui Ba Natural Conservation Area was officially established under Decision No.183/2002/QD-UB and then, on 19 November 2004 the Prime Minister issued Decision No.1240/QD-TTg to upgrade Bidoup-Nui Ba Natural Conservation Area to Bidoup-Nui Ba NP with the official area of 64,800 hectares, in which the sub-area strictly protected is 28,731 hectares, sub-area for ecological restoration is 36,059 hectares, sub-area for services and administration is 10 hectares. Up to now, the total area of NP is 70,038 hectares. Bidoup-Nui Ba NP is one among the largest NPs in area of Viet Nam.

Currently, Bidoup-Nui Ba NP has 115 staffs in total, of which 102 are permanent staffs, and the remaining are temporary workers. There is one forest ranger unit within the Cat Ba NP.

3.1.2. Proposal on increasing and use of revenue from some environmental services in Bidoup-Nui Ba NP

The Proposal on increasing and use of revenue from some environmental services in Bidoup-Nui Ba NP was approved by Lam Dong PPC on 06 November 2014 under the Decision No.2393/QD-UBND according to PFES regulation (Decree 99). Before submitting the proposal to PPC for approval, the park already assessed and evaluated potential ecosystem services of Bidoup-Nui Ba NP and carried out environmental valuation study.

Decree No 99 on PFES from September 2010 allowed people participating in forest protection to received payments for forest ecosystem services. In the past, Lam Dong applied the PFES for local households participating in the forest protection program only.

The Lam Dong province has a trust fund - Lam Dong forest protection and development fund. Each quarter, this fund makes a payment for PFES. The payment to the households participating in the forest protection program made thru the PA management board as the park signed the contracts with the households for forest protection. If the forest is well protected, the household will receive money, otherwise the money will be deducted or the contract may be cancelled. The park receives money from

the fund each quarter to make the payment for the household. The park may keep 10% of total payment as the management fee, the remaining amount is given to the households as stated in the contracts.

Bidoup-Nui Ba NP still has 14,271ha of core zone that has not been acreage allotted, which obviously means that the park may receive environmental services fee on this area. This area is within the Serepok river estuary. According to Decision No.2393/QD-UBND the BDNB now may receive the money from PFES for protecting the area of 6,700 ha (among 14,271ha of core zone). The current PFES rate applied for Bidoup-Nui Ba NP is VND 180,000/ha/year. Therefore, the park may receive added revenue of VND 1.2 billion/year.

The PA management board uses this money to carry out protection activities including biodiversity conservation.

Right after the approval of Decision No.2393/QD-UBND, the system of documents to support the implementation of decision have been issued like decision on establishment of steering committee and working group to implement the decision, the decision on how to use revenue from PFES and so on.

3.1.3. Project impacts and contribution

All the participants from Bidoup-Nui Ba NP recognized the importance of the biodiversity conservation and PA project. It has been agreed that PA project is successful in terms of:

- Setting up a sustainable and transparent financial mechanism for NP to exploit the potential of NP.
- Promoting tourism development and biodiversity conservation. The money received under decision 2393 is used for forest protection and biodiversity conservation. The NP has signed two contracts on tourist development with total investment cost of billion 1,000 VND
- Increasing the capacity of NP's staffs. The capacity of staff has been increased thru training courses and activities under project. Now the staffs of NP can do biodiversity conservation activities, reporting and etc.
- More effectively protect the NP. In 2015 there was only 30-32 forest violation cases while in Cat Tien NP, the violation cases were more than 500.
- Stable job and income generation for local communities.
- Increasing public (policy makers and local community) awareness of the importance of biodiversity conservation, role of Bidoup-Nui Ba NP through public hearing and consultation on fee raising and environmental concession projects.
- Based on the experience from PA project, Bidoup-Nui Ba NP will continue with applying PFES for all area of 14,271ha of core zone and increasing the PFES rate applied (currently the rate applied for household is VND 385,000/ha/year while rate applied for Bidoup-Nui Ba NP is VND 180,000/ha/year).

3.1.4. What would the project have needed to perform better?

The project may be performed better under the following conditions:

- Have a strong support and deep understanding of policy makers at provincial and district levels on the project goals/objectives, activities as well as biodiversity importance.
- Have a strong legal basis for the proposal development and implementation
- The project should be well written and understandable for public audience
- The outputs, outcomes and activities should be clearer

3.2. Meeting with Mr. Nguyen Van Bang, vice director of Fund for forest protection and development of Lam Dong

Mr. Bang is well perceived of the role of Bidoup-Nui Ba NP and benefits of the biodiversity conservation. He used to work at Lam Dong DARD. As Lam Dong forest protection and development fund is trust fund, Mr. Bang is responsible for payment for PFES in Lam Dong province according to the instructions and guidance of Lam Dong PPC. He himself and his organization is not the one who makes the policy. Even Mr. Bang has no deep knowledge about the PA project, he strongly supported the idea of Bidoup-Nui Ba NP on increasing and use of revenue from some environmental services in Bidoup-Nui Ba NP as it was in line with Decree 99 on PFES. In his opinion, in future at national level, the Decree 99 should be revised. At provincial level let say Lam Dong, the implementation of decree 99 should also be changed reflecting what Bidoup-Nui Ba NP has now carried out under PA project.

During the meeting Mr. Bang also raised two points. First, any policy should consider the local aspects. For example, Lam dong is homeland of several ethnic minorities. The primary objective of socioeconomic development policy is to ensure the sustainable development of these communities. Second, it was said in the decision of Lam Dong PPC that the money received by Bidoup-Nui Ba NP under PFES is to compensate for extra 12 staffs of Bidoup-Nui Ba NP. The question of if the money is stable and if it could be increased/changed over time are not so clear.

4. MARD PMU

Participants:

- Mr. Linh, Vice Director Department of Natural conservation of VNFOREST
- Mr. Khanh, officer, PA project staff

4.1. General assessment

The project in general is well designed (4 score). After four-year implementation, the MARD component basically achieved the expected results, specifically as bellows:

- A set of training materials on PA capacity improvement with 08 themes, which has been appraised and approved by MARD under Decision No.2601/QĐ-BNN-TCCB dated on November 04, 2013. (5 score)
- The MARD component project has organized 19 trainings and training workshop with 1,199 trainee turns, which include 60, 70 and 1,069 turns from staff at central, provincial and PA level, respectively. (5 score)
- MARD Component has reviewed and developed incentive measures in the PA system in order to improve operation effectiveness of the system. In addition, it has developed a draft circular on professional standards for conservation positions. (4 score)

The project approach is good giving the opportunity for 2 ministries work together
Structure of project management is simple but effective. Within the project, management structure has been simplified appropriately.

4.2. Question: please explain what changes have occurred at systemic level (i.e. regulatory/ policy framework) or at field level (e.g. capacity build-up, increased financial streams) that justify your rating. Specifically ask what is the importance/ significance of the legislative measures, e.g. decision No. 24 of the Prime Minister, Inter-ministerial circular No.160/TTLT-BTC-BTNMT, etc. What was the specific contribution of the project towards the development/ enactment of this policy instruments?

This is hard question since MARD component concentrated mostly on training activities. Ms. Nga the former director of project may talk much about this. But general assessment is that project contributed to development of legal system over biodiversity management in VN. Several legal documents were issued under the supports of PA project.

4.3. What yet needs to be done in terms of improving management of PAs in Viet Nam? Specifically ask, what needs to be done in terms of information flow/financial flow or management system: decentralized/centralized, multiple agencies/one agency, new agency/existing agency.

The first thing we may think of is to unify the system of management over the PA. The idea of establishment of PA system authority is indeed a good idea but somehow is not feasible in Viet Namese context because of complexity of the PA management system in Viet Nam. Also, the management mechanism in Viet Nam is centralized. In order to have new body/organ we need to revise several laws incl. Law on Forest protection, Law on Biodiversity, and other related regulations, decrees, circulars. Another issue is the biodiversity conservation is relatively a new issue in Viet Nam (Even at central level, BCA is a small unit with around 40 staffs under VEA/MONRE. At provincial level there is a small division of biodiversity conservation under the DONRE with limited staffs. At district level, there is no biodiversity person).

As far as I know within the PA project framework several activities have been carried out incl.: (i) study the experiences of 40 countries around the world in PA management and biodiversity conservation management and draw the lessons learned for Viet Nam. The key lesson found is that PA system, biodiversity conservation, forestry management should be managed centrally by one organ/ministry; (ii) draft a report/book for National Assembly on current status, issues/problem of biodiversity management mechanism in Viet Nam and propose some recommendations on restructuring the institutional mechanism for biodiversity conservation; (iii) organize the conference for the National assembly to discuss the issues/problems and difficulties of biodiversity conservation mechanism in Viet Nam, and present the international experiences in biodiversity conservation mechanism and lessons learned for Viet Nam.

To change the system will take a long time. What I see more realistic is that MONRE and MARD to work together. With the approval of Government decrees on Functions of MARD and MONRE I think the situation is improved. Move over under PA project leaders of VNFOREST and VEEA had signed the cooperation agreement among two agencies toward biodiversity conservation. I think this is a great contribution of PA projects. However further concrete actions should be taken.

In order to do that we need more capacity building in terms of human and financial sources. The participation of different stakeholders should also be emphasized.

4.4. How does the good model for management of PA model look like?

My observation is that one organ may be responsible for management over different things but one thing should be managed by one organ. From this point, I think the good model may look like that:

- Institutional aspect: unify the legal system
- Management structure: unify the system of management from central to local level
- The management system should be integrated and participatory to cover all the aspects of PA system and to ensure the participation of different stakeholders.
- The Law on conservation should be emerged

5. MONRE PMU

Participants:

- Mr. Pham Anh Cuong, Director of BCA, member of steering committee, PA project director
- Mr. Dung, Vice director of MONRE PMU component

4.1. General assessment

- The project in general complex, aiming at working with different ministries, different proficiencies, different stakeholders. Basically the project achieved the expected results (4 score). For more infos please see the completion report.
- MARD component is somehow softer as dealing with training material and capacity building thru training courses, MONRE component is harder as dealing with legal and financial mechanism.
- There are many barriers to be removed for development of PAs, among those financial aspect is the hardest one.
- The greatest contribution of PA project is to establish the sustainable financial mechanism for PAs. At national level some decrees, circulars on BD finance were approved, a cooperation agreement between MARD and MONRE on BD was signed. At provincial level decisions on financial mechanisms were approved by local governments. The experiences of project will served as good lessons for whole PA system in Viet Nam.
- The project is helpful in capacity building for all governmental and local officers working in BD conservation field, equipped them with knowledge, skills.
- The project is successful in awareness raising on the importance of BD for all stakeholders from top policy makers to grass root people
- The project approach is about right giving the opportunity for 2 ministries work together
- The structure of project management is simple and effective.

4.3. What yet needs to be done in terms of improving management of PAs in Viet Nam? Specifically ask, what needs to be done in terms of information flow/financial flow or management system: decentralized/centralized, multiple agencies/one agency, new agency/existing agency.

Somehow similar to MARD

5.4. How does the good model for management of PA model look like?

- Remove all the barriers including institutional, legal, financial and human
- Unify the institutional and legal system of management over BD and PA
- Have enough resources for BD conservation and PA management including human, financial, international cooperation, technical and technological development and involvement of different stakeholders in management process.

6. Difficulties in implementation

There are numbers of difficulties encountered during the implementation of project at sites:

- Lack of deep knowledge and understanding of the importance of biodiversity at all levels (policy makers, local people)
- Contradiction between economic development pressure and biodiversity conservation
- Low capacity of NPs' staffs
- Not adequate infrastructure for biodiversity conservation
- Overlapping the function and responsibly of management system over PA
- Complicated system of laws, regulations
- The system of reporting and planning under GEF is quite complex
- The project outputs and outcomes are some how difficult to understand.

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Annex 5. Evaluation Matrix

Section	Evaluation questions	Indicators	Sources
Project formulation	Are the project results clearly formulated?	Project results are of SMART quality	Project document
	Is the project strategy based on valid assumptions?	Assumptions are outside project control, are valid, specific and verifiable, are very likely to certain to be present and are necessary conditions for the project strategy	Project document, Peer reviewed paper, grey literature, Stakeholders
	Have significant risks been identified and mitigation strategies outlined?	Risks have been identified that are outside project control but will have a significant impact if realized, valid, specific and verifiable, are moderately likely to occur but a mitigation strategy is feasible and within project control	Project document, Peer reviewed paper, grey literature, Stakeholders
	Have lessons learned from other projects been included in the project design?	Extent to which relevant lessons from other projects have been implicitly or explicitly integrated into the project design	Project documents, Peer reviewed paper, grey literature, Stakeholders
	Are the project results logically connected and internally coherent?	Degree to which the casual mechanisms between outputs, outcomes, objective and impact are valid and coherent (not contradictory)	Project document, Peer reviewed paper, grey literature, Stakeholders
	Is the project concept in line with national development priorities and plans of the country?	Project goals and outcomes contained within the national/ local policy framework or are likely to be included in said policy framework	Policy documents, Peer reviewed paper, grey literature, Stakeholders
Project formulation	Have the perspectives of those who would be affected by project decisions, those who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the process have been taken into account during project design processes?	Extent and depth of consultations conducted during the project development process	Project document, Project inception report, Peer reviewed paper, grey literature, Stakeholders
	Have roles and responsibilities for project implementation been identified and negotiated prior to project approval?	Degree of awareness and agreement by stakeholders with roles assigned in project design	Minutes of project board meetings, stakeholders
	Have the capacities of the implementing partners/ responsible agency been considered at project design?	Extent to which relevant implementing partners have technical/ financial capacities to implement their part of the project	Project document, Project inception report, Minutes of project board meetings, stakeholders

Section	Evaluation questions	Indicators	Sources
	Does the project have a timeframe sufficient for the achievement of its outcomes?	Level of complexity and connectivity of project activities/ Likelihood of unexpected factors delaying project implementation	Project document, Project inception report, Minutes of project board meetings, stakeholders
	Is there in place an enabling policy and regulatory environment for the implementation of the project?	Extent to which the activities of the project are within the national/ local policy and regulatory framework	Policy documents, Peer reviewed paper, grey literature, Stakeholders
	Have wider development and gender issues been considered in project design?	Extent to which gender perspective have been considered/ analyzed in the project design	Project document, Project inception report, Minutes of project board meetings, stakeholders
Project implementation	What kind of monitoring tools have been included?	Necessary monitoring and evaluation tools, including annual reports, field visits, midterm review, terminal evaluation, indicator framework have been included in the project design	Project document, Project inception report, Minutes of project board meetings, stakeholders
	Do the project indicators comply with SMART standards?	Compliance of indicators with SMART standard	Project document
	Have roles, responsibilities, methods, timeframe, reporting and budget for monitoring activities been defined and agreed with all relevant project stakeholders?	Extent to which roles, responsibilities, methods, timeframe, reporting and budget for monitoring activities been defined and agreed with all relevant project stakeholders	Project document, Project inception report, Minutes of project board meetings, stakeholders
	Were the allocated resources sufficient for the planned M&E activities?	Presence/ absence of constraints for monitoring activities	Project document, Project inception report, Minutes of project board meetings, stakeholders
	Were key project partners involved in monitoring activities?	Extent of partner involvement in monitoring activities	Minutes of project board meetings, stakeholders
	Was information from monitoring activities relevant for decision making?	Extent to which feedback from M&E activities used for adaptive management	Field visit reports, minutes of project board meetings, MTR, management response, PIRs, stakeholders
	Was work planning based on a results based framework?	Annual work plans follow project logical framework analysis	Annual workplans, stakeholders
	Was the monitoring system appropriate to the national/ local context?	Extent to which monitoring data is aligned or mainstreamed with national systems and/ or use existing information	Project document, annual report, PIR, minutes of project board meetings, grey literature, stakeholders
	Was the monitoring system appropriate to the national/ local context?	Cost-effectiveness of monitoring tools (i.e. cost in ratio usefulness as defined by users and amount of time/ human resources/ budget invested)	Project document, annual report, PIR, minutes of project board meetings, grey literature, stakeholders

Section	Evaluation questions	Indicators	Sources
	Did the implementing agency provide adequate and timely technical support to the executing agency and project team?	Quality and timeliness of technical support to the Executing Agency/ Implementing Partner and Project Team	Annual report, PIR, minutes of project board meetings, grey literature, stakeholders
	Did the implementing agency provide adequate and timely administrative support to the executing agency and project team?	Quality and timeliness of administrative support to the Executing Agency/ Implementing Partner and Project Team	Annual report, PIR, minutes of project board meetings, grey literature, stakeholders
	Was the implementing agency responsive to unforeseen challenges to the project implementation	Responsiveness to any salient issues regarding project duration and how they may have affected project outcomes and sustainability	Annual report, PIR, minutes of project board meetings, grey literature, media, peer reviewed papers, stakeholders
	Did the implementing agency provide adequate and timely technical support to the executing agency and project team?	Quality and timeliness of technical support to the Executing Agency/ Implementing Partner and Project Team	Annual report, PIR, minutes of project board meetings, grey literature, stakeholders
	Did the implementing agency provide adequate and timely administrative support to the executing agency and project team?	Quality and timeliness of administrative support to the Executing Agency/ Implementing Partner and Project Team	Annual report, PIR, minutes of project board meetings, grey literature, stakeholders
Project implementation	Was the implementing agency responsive to unforeseen challenges to the project implementation?	Responsiveness to any salient issues regarding project duration and how they may have affected project outcomes and sustainability	Annual report, PIR, minutes of project board meetings, grey literature, media, peer reviewed papers, stakeholders
	Was the project aligned with government priorities? Did government organizations consider the project to be in their interest?	Relevant country representatives from government and civil society involved in project implementation as part of the project steering committee	Annual report, PIR, minutes of project board meetings, grey literature, stakeholders
	Was the project aligned with government priorities? Did government organizations consider the project to be in their interest?	National and local government agencies/ departments/ ministries have provided the financial or technical support identified in the project document	Annual report, PIR, minutes of project board meetings, grey literature, stakeholders
	Was the project aligned with government priorities? Did government organizations consider the project to be in their interest?	Outcomes (or potential outcomes) from the project have been incorporated into the national sectoral and development plans or national/ local government has approved policies and/ or modified regulatory frameworks in line with the project's objectives	Annual report, PIR, minutes of project board meetings, grey literature, stakeholders
	Is the implementation of the project country-driven?	Relevant national government agencies (those with a stake in project's results or activities) and local government support the project's goals	PIR, minutes of project board meetings, media, stakeholders
	Is the implementation of the project country-driven?	Local and national government stakeholders have an active role in project decision-making that supports efficient and effective project implementation	PIR, minutes of project board meetings, media, stakeholders

Section	Evaluation questions	Indicators	Sources
Project implementation	Is the implementation of the project country-driven?	Existence of invested interest of stakeholders in the project's long-term success and sustainability	PIR, minutes of project board meetings, media, stakeholders
	Has stakeholder involvement significantly contributed to the achievement of the project's outcomes?	Project communication with stakeholders has contributed to their awareness of project outcomes and activities and long-term investment in the sustainability of project results	PIR, minutes of project board meetings, media, stakeholders
	Was the project administration efficient enough to make informed decisions regarding the budget at any time and for the timely flow of funds and for the payment of satisfactory project deliverables?	Variance between planned and actual acquisitions and other expenses	Audit report, Combined delivery reports, PIR, minutes of project board meetings, stakeholders
	Was the project administration efficient enough to make informed decisions regarding the budget at any time and for the timely flow of funds and for the payment of satisfactory project deliverables?	Number of steps and timeframe needed for approval for expenditures for different amounts	Audit report, Combined delivery reports, PIR, minutes of project board meetings, stakeholders
	Was the project able to mobilize the committed cofunding and/ or additional funds?	Extent to which the project has kept track of committed co-funding and recorded actual disbursement and use	Audit report, Combined delivery reports, PIR, minutes of project board meetings, stakeholders
	Was the project able to mobilize the committed cofunding and/ or additional funds?	Extent to which co-financers are included in management, engaged in project activities or informed about project implementation	Audit report, Combined delivery reports, PIR, minutes of project board meetings, stakeholders
Project results	How relevant were the project results to the project strategy and national/ local priorities	Extent to which the project supports policy goals and needs of beneficiaries	Project document, PIR, other project reports, publications, national/ local policy document, budgets and others, peer reviewed/ grey literature, project sites, stakeholders
	How effective was the project in achieving project results?	Extent to which the project has achieved its targets	Project document, PIR, other project reports, publications, national/ local policy document, budgets and others, peer reviewed/ grey literature, project sites, stakeholders
	How efficient has been the project in achieving project results? (one of three indicators)	1. The project completed the planned activities and met or exceeded the expected outcomes in terms of achievement of Global Environmental and Development Objectives	Project documents, Combined Delivery Reports, peer reviewed/ grey literature, stakeholders

Section	Evaluation questions	Indicators	Sources
		<p>according to schedule, without need for additional funding (Benchmark approach)</p> <p>2. The project did not exceed the costs levels of similar projects in similar contexts (Comparison approach)</p> <p>3. Extent to which management arrangements and key partners could have been re-arranged to achieve outcomes with less resources</p>	
	How did the project contribute to other development objectives?	Linkage of project to UNDP programming instruments and development priorities	UNDP programming instruments, government policy documents, peer reviewed/ grey literature
	How did the project contribute to other development objectives?	Project contribution/ linkage to better preparations to cope with natural disasters	UNDP programming instruments, government policy documents, peer reviewed/ grey literature
	How did the project contribute to other development objectives?	Project contribution/ linkage to greater consideration of gender aspects, (i.e. project team composition, gender-related aspects of pollution impacts, stakeholder outreach to women's groups	UNDP programming instruments, government policy documents, peer reviewed/ grey literature, stakeholders
Sustainability	Is there a significant risks that there would be no resources to continue delivering project benefits after project closure?	<p>Likelihood of financial and economic resources being available once GEF grant assistance ends (This might include funding through government - in the form of direct subsidies, or tax incentives, it may involve support from other donors, and also the private sector):</p> <p>1 Financial resources needed for the continuation of project benefits</p> <p>2. Financial resources available, e.g. establishment of financial and economic instruments and mechanisms to ensure the ongoing flow of benefits once the GEF assistance ends (UNDP, 2012)</p> <p>3. Mainstreaming project activities into the economy or community production activities</p>	Project document, Project strategy documents, UNDP programming instruments, government policy documents, financial outlook, ministry budgets, local budgets, International Partners' programming instruments, peer reviewed/ grey literature, stakeholders
Sustainability	Do project stakeholders see it in their interest to continue delivery of project benefits?	<p>Likelihood of level of stakeholder ownership (including ownership by governments and other key stakeholders) will be sufficient to allow for the project outcomes/benefits to be sustained</p> <p>1. Awareness of project objectives and results by key</p>	Project document, Project strategy documents, UNDP programming instruments, government policy documents, financial outlook, ministry budgets, local budgets, International Partners'

Section	Evaluation questions	Indicators	Sources
		stakeholders 2. Commitment to project objectives and results by key stakeholders 3. Identification and involvement of champions	programming instruments, peer reviewed/ grey literature, stakeholders
	Are the requisite systems for accountability and transparency, and required technical knowhow for the continuous delivery of project benefits present?	Policy and regulatory frameworks support project objectives	Project document, Project strategy documents, UNDP programming instruments, government policy documents, financial outlook, ministry budgets, local budgets, International Partners' programming instruments, peer reviewed/ grey literature, stakeholders
Sustainability	Are the requisite systems for accountability and transparency, and required technical knowhow for the continuous delivery of project benefits present?	Development of appropriate institutional capacity (systems, structures, staff, expertise, etc.	Project document, Project strategy documents, UNDP programming instruments, government policy documents, financial outlook, ministry budgets, local budgets, International Partners' programming instruments, peer reviewed/ grey literature, stakeholders
	Are there any environmental risks to project sustainability?	Likelihood that the dimension of natural or anthropogenic environmental changes will negate the achievements of the project	Project document, Project strategy documents, UNDP programming instruments, government policy documents, financial outlook, ministry budgets, local budgets, International Partners' programming instruments, peer reviewed/ grey literature, stakeholders, project sites
Catalytic role	Has the project demonstrated, contributed to replication or scale-up of any innovative technology/ approach? (one or none of the four indicators of the catalytic scale)	1. Production of a public good 2. Development of demonstration sites, successful information dissemination and training 3. Lessons and experiences are replicated in different geographic areas or experiences are replicated within the same area but funded by other sources 4. Approaches developed through the project are taken up on a regional / national scale, becoming widely accepted, and perhaps legally required	Project document, Project strategy documents, UNDP programming instruments, government policy documents, financial outlook, ministry budgets, local budgets, International Partners' programming instruments, peer reviewed/ grey literature, stakeholders, project sites
Impact	Has the project cause verifiable improvements in ecological/ human status or verifiable reductions in stress on ecological/ human systems? (one or the two indicators)	1. Verifiable improvements/ progress towards ecological/ human status 2. Verifiable reductions in stress/ vulnerability on ecological/ human systems	Project sites, stakeholders, project publications, grey/ peer reviewed literature

Annex 6. Main project milestones and context events

Context events	Project event	Month	Year	Project stage
		J	2008	Formulation
		F		
	Approval of project concept (PIF)	M		
Decision No. 380/2008/QĐ-TTg Pilot Policy for PFES		A		
		M		
	Approval of project preparation grant (PPG)	J		
	PPG implementation	J		
		A		
		S		
		O		
Biodiversity Law (20/2008/QH12) passed by National Assembly		N		
		D		
		J	2009	
		F		
		M		
		A		
		M		
		J		
	J			
	A			

Context events	Project event	Month	Year	Project stage
		S	2010	
		O		
		N		
		D		
PM Decision No. 742/QD-TTg of 2010: approving the planning of Viet Nam Marine PAs System to the year 2020		J		
		F		
		M		
		A		
		M		
Decree No. 65/2010/ND-CP: Detailed Guidelines for Implementation of some Articles of Biodiversity Law		J		
		J		
		A		
Decree No. 99/2010/ND-CP on Payment for Forest Ecosystem Services.	Designation of MONRE as national implementing partner (NIP)	S		
		O		
		N		
Decree No. 117/2010/ND-CP: Establishment, Organization and Management of Special Use Forests	Signature of project document and assignment of VEA as project focal point	D	2011	Inception
		J		
		F		
		M		
	Establishment PMU: at the Biodiversity Conservation Agency (BCA)	A		
	Establishment of the Project Executive Board	M		

Context events	Project event	Month	Year	Project stage	
	Meetings with development partners (World Bank, GTZ)	J			
		J			
		A			
	Project inception meeting	S			
		O			
		N			
		D			
		J	2012		Implementation
Decision 126/2012/QD-TTg on benefit sharing mechanism for SUF		F			
		M			
	Draft Memorandum of understanding between MONRE and MARD	A			
Circular No. 20/2012/TT-BNNPTNT by MARD on PES		M			
	Decision No 24 of Prime Minister on SUF (co-management)	J			
		J			
circular No.126/2012/TT-BTC, MoF on fees for NPs		A			
		S			
		O			
	VEA and VN Forest sign letter of agreement to implement the project	N			
	VNFOREST PMU starts operation	D			
		J	2013		
		F			

Context events	Project event	Month	Year	Project stage
Decree No. 21/2013/NĐ-CP on functions of MONRE		M		
		A		
	Guideline on provincial biodiversity planning approved by VEA	M		
	Draft inter-ministerial circular on important ecosystem identification	J		
	Circular No. 100 (MOF/MARD) guidance on Decision No. 24	J		
	Agreement on tourism and conservation Cat Ba and Bai Tu Long NP signed	A		
	Circulation No. 27/TTLT-BTNMT-BNNPTNT on exotic species	S		
	Decision 2585/QĐ-BNN-TCCB training using 5 modules of the project	O		
Decree No. 199/2013/NĐ-CP functions of MARD	Decision of Nam Dinh PPC on harvesting submitted to VEA and VNFOREST	N		
Decree No. 160/2013/NĐ-CP on Criteria for Identification and Management of Endangered, Rare and Precious Species	Draft decision of Lam Dong PPC PES revenue Bidoup - Nui Ba NP	D		
	Master plan for biodiversity conservation 2020 and orientations to 2030	J	2014	Implementation
		F		
		M		
		A		
	Training courses on financial management for PA staffs and managers	M		
	Draft inter-ministerial circular (MONRE/ MOF) on state budget to PA	J		
	Proposal submitted to Hai Phong PPC on Cat Ba NP concessions	J		
		A		
	Haiphong PPC Decision No. 1780/QĐ-UBND raising user fees approved	S		
	Joint Circular No. 160/2014/TTLT-BTC-BTNMT guiding the management, using state budget to implement the Viet Nam National Biodiversity Strategy	O		
	Decision No. 2393/QĐ-UBND on 06 Nov 2014 of Lam Dong PPC allows pilot Payments for Forest Ecosystem Services	N		

Context events	Project event	Month	Year	Project stage
	Report for the NA: Biodiversity Conservation, Status and Challenges	D		
National Biodiversity Database System (NBDS) is officially launched	Decision No. 119/QD-UBND on mollusk harvesting within the Xuan Thuy NP	J	2015	
	Biodiversity monitoring guidelines in cooperation with JICA project	F		
	Midterm review	M		
	Draft circular on biodiversity monitoring and reporting	A		
	Decision 867/STNMT-BVMT Cao Bang Biodiversity Conservation Plan	M		
	Draft Decision of Hai Phong PPC on concessions in Cat Ba NP	J		
	Draft circular (MARD/ MIA) on professional standards for conservation staff	J		
	Completed the design of a program on awareness raising	A		
		S		
		O		
		N		
	CHM has been designed, but is not yet operational	D		
	Terminal Evaluation	J		2016
		F		
		M		
		A		
		M		

Annex 7. Legal instruments relevant to the project objectives

Inter-ministerial circular No.160/2014/BTC-BTNMT between Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and Ministry of Finance on 19 Oct 2014 on biodiversity financing

It enables and provides guidelines to PA management boards to invest funds in monitoring and reporting biodiversity (Auer & Le , 2015). It is expected that this circular would help linking budget allocation with biodiversity conservation objectives, as PA management actions are expected to be based on field data.

Decision No.218/2014/QD-TTg dated February 7, 2014, of the Prime Minister approving the strategy for management special use forest, marine PAs and inland water PAs.

Pursuant to the December 25, 2001 Law on organization of Government, to the December 26, 2003 Law on fisheries, and to the December 03, 2004 Law on forest protection and development and at the proposal of Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

The decision approves the strategy for management of special-use forests, marine PAs and inland water PAs in Viet Nam until 2020 and vision to 2030 with the following principal contents:

- The special-use forests, marine PAs and inland water PAs are national assets, places to store, conserve special values involving natural conservation, the ecology standard sample, biological genetic resources, protection of historical, cultural relics, beauty spots, places for scientific research, in serve of national benefits
- The state encourages various investment forms aiming to attract organizations, individuals, scientists, international organizations, and encourages the participation in management of population communities at buffer areas of special-use forests, protective belt of marine PAs and inland water PAs in order to manage sustainably and consistently with legislations

The Decision sets objectives for PA coverage at 9% of area of terrestrial territory and 0.24% of area of Viet Nam sea areas. Management for the three types of PA (MPA, wetland and SUF) is to be based on the following legal instruments:

- System of special-use forests: In 2014, complete planning of special-use forests nationwide and submit to the Prime Minister for consideration and approval as prescribed in Government's Decree No.117/2010/ND-CP dated December 24, 2010, on organization and management of special-use forests.
- System of marine PAs: Further implement the planning of marine PAs in Viet Nam till 2020 under Decision No.742/2010/QD-TTg dated May 26, 2010, of the Prime Minister.
- System of inland water PAs: Further implement the planning of inland water PAs in Viet Nam till 2020 under Decision No.1479/2008/QD-TTg dated October 13, 2008, of the Prime Minister.

The Decision express the need to adjust the planning of special-use forests, marine PAs and inland water PAs to ensure the uniformity, according to new criteria of classification and planning for the establishment, removal and change of names of special-use forests, marine PAs and inland water PAs in accordance with targets and conservation forms, as well as to finish the determination and making landmarks as boundaries of zones, functional sub-zones and buffer zones and to implement policies of the Prime Minister on pilot sharing benefits in management, protection and sustainable development of special-use forests at Decision No.126/2011/QD-TTg.

The Decision encourages development of capacity of management teams and to implement awareness activities in the special-use forests, marine PAs and inland water PAs aiming to mobilize maximally force sources from all social sectors, especially local communities, to attract investment and mobilize out-state force sources for conservation activities at the special-use forests, marine PAs and inland water PAs and

to research changes of the natural ecology, endangered, precious and rare species of wild fauna and flora, as well as to supplement, update situation and changes of entire system on database network in serve of the management in the special-use forests, marine PAs and inland water PAs.

Decision No.45/2014/QĐ-TTg dated January 08, 2014 of the Prime Minister on approving the master plan on nation-wide biodiversity conservation by 2020, with a vision to 2030.

Pursuant to the Law on Government Organization dated December 25, 2001, the Law on Biodiversity dated November 13, 2008, Decree No.65/2010/ND-CP dated June 11, 2010 of the Government detailing and guiding the implementation of a number of articles of the Law on biodiversity, and at the proposal of Minister of Natural Resources and Environment.

It has the objective of *ensuring important natural ecosystems, the endangered, precious and rare species and genetic resources are conserved and sustainable developed, by improving the quality and increasing the area of natural ecosystems that are protected on a national scale, improving the forest cover to 45%; conserving and having plan for effectively protecting 0.57 million hectares of primary forest in the Central Highlands, Southeast and North Central; protecting and sustainable developing approximate 60,000 hectares of natural mangrove forests; protecting the ecosystems of coral reefs, sea grass beds in the South Central and Southeast regions; protecting the ecosystems of coastal lagoons in North Central, South Central and Southeast and restoring 2,000 hectares of forest on limestone mountains in the Northeast, completing the planning of system of PAs, ensuring putting into operation of 46 new PAs with a total area of about 567,000 ha, raising the total area of PA system in the country to about 2.94 million ha, Developing and upgrading the system of 26 biodiversity conservation facilities and formulating the development plan and establishing and putting into operation 4 biodiversity corridors in the Northeast and South Central regions with a total area of about 120,000 ha to connect habitats and enhance the capacity to respond to climate change of the ecosystems and species.*

The plan has specific geographical and ecosystem targets in terms of number of hectares per region per ecosystem, as well as the development of specific ex-situ regional conservation facilities: botanical gardens, medicinal plant gardens, gene banks, and animal rescue centers.

The implementation of said measures will be achieved through **reforming the legal normative documents** on management of PAs, biodiversity conservation facilities and biodiversity corridors, and establishment of PAs, biodiversity conservation facilities and biodiversity corridors, with criteria for classification of PA by ecosystems type and technical and economical norms. Also, by developing mechanisms and policies to encourage organizations and individuals, especially the local communities to participate in the planning of biodiversity conservation; assigning and decentralizing to local government and strengthening role of community in organizing the management and protection of PAs, biodiversity conservation facilities and biodiversity corridors in the area and increasing coordination for effective law enforcement. Implementation of the plan will be led by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MoNRE) that will produce the necessary guidelines and coordinate with other relevant state agencies: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), Ministry of Planning and Investment, Ministry of Finance and People's Committees. This decision supersedes the planning of marine PA system for Viet Nam by 2020 issued under the Decision No. 742/2010/QĐ-TTg dated May 26, 2010 and the planning of wetland PAs under the Decision No. 1479/2008/QĐ-TTg dated October 13, 2008 approving the planning of inland water PA system by 2020 (Government of Vietnam, 2014).

Inter-ministerial circular No.27/2013/TTLT-BTNMT-BNNPTNT dated September26, 2013

It provides criteria for determination of invasive exotic species and promulgating the list of invasive exotic species and identified a list of 25 species classified as invasive alien species, 15 species as having invasive risk which have been already appeared in Viet Nam, and 41 species as having invasive risk which have not been appeared in Viet Nam yet, including *Pomacea canaliculata*, *Mimosa pigra*, *Pygocentrus nattereri* and *Trachemys scripta* in the first group and *Crocodylus rhombifer* in the second (MONRE, 2014).

Prime Minister's Decision No.24/2012/QĐ-TTg of June 1, 2012 on special use forest development investment policies for the 2011-2020 period

Pursuant to the Law on Organization of the Government (2001), the Law on the State Budget (2002), the Law on Forest Protection and Development (2004), the Investment Law (2005), and the Government's Decree No.117/2010/ND-CP, on organization and management of the special use forest (PA) system.

Declares Special-Use Forest (SUF) as national assets that need essential infrastructure and fund for their operation, including biodiversity monitoring and surveillance and scientific research, and improvement of living conditions for inhabitants of buffer zones through benefit sharing mechanisms.

Encourages the development of forest environmental services and ecotourism in SUFs in order to generate revenues to cover expenses and increase incomes for officials and *gradually replace state budget investments*. Its objectives are to link users and beneficiaries of SUF services with forest protection, as well as to promote investment in SUFs for protection, research and development to reduce state payroll and increase involvement of local communities.

It mandates the development of 10-year master-plans on SUF development, including ecotourism that should serve as basis for the formulation and approval of investment projects. Authorized fund sources for SUFs are central and local government funds, revenues generated from service provision, including ecosystem services and business associations

It organizes use of public funds in SUFs with the following priorities: (i) facilities (offices and stations, staff lodges and power systems), (ii) roads (iii) fire prevention and fighting facilities (iv) nurseries and recovery and collection facilities and (v) tourism facilities. Infrastructure development must not exceed 5% of the SUF area. Moreover, it stipulates authorized sources of funds for SUF management units: central and local state budget, revenue generation through investment projects, and external grants. The revenues generated may be used as follows: 25% to replace state budget and forest management funds and 75% to be used by the SUF management unit with the following order of priority: (i) salary increase (ii) support for development communities in SUF buffer zones (iii) investment and ecotourism development.

The decision allows hiring of temporary staff from adjacent communities for forest protection work up to an amount of VND 100,000.00 per hectare and year (ca. US\$ 4.5 per hectare and year). Also, the decision authorizes payments from the PA budget (regardless of the source) of up to VND 40 million (ca. US\$ 1,800) per village per year to support communities settled at buffer zones to engage in production activities: agriculture, forestry, livestock and food processing, housing communication and water infrastructure, in exchange for cooperation in protection tasks.

The decision includes guidelines for implementation of tourism projects within PAs, setting maximum limits for area occupy for tourism infrastructure and provision that it must not affect the natural landscape of forests. Moreover, the decision allows SUF management units that earn an annual turnover of over VND 300 million annually (ca. US\$13,500), under supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, to create joint stock companies for tourism purposes if they retain 51% of the shares. SUF management units are also authorized to grant 5-year lease agreements¹⁹ of SUF environment to organizations and individuals for ecotourism businesses or scientific research except the collection of entrance fees for areas other than the area leased, under condition of not exerting any impacts on the forest environment.

Finally, the decision authorizes revenues collected from service provision or leases (under Decree No.99/2010/ND-CP on the Policy for Payment for Forest Environmental Services) on payments to

¹⁹ Extensible up to 20 years

adjacent communities (25%) and salary increases, development of buffer zones and ecotourism development (75%) (Government of Vietnam, 2012).

Supervision of implementation of the decision will be carried out by the MARD and investment projects under supervision by the Ministry of Planning and Investment, and master plans and budget under the authority of the Ministry of Finances.

Decree No.117/2010/ND-CP of December 24, 2010, on organization and management of the special use forest system

Pursuant to the December 25, 2001 Law on Organization of the Government, to the November 26, 2003 Law on Fisheries, to the December 3, 2004 Law on Forest Protection and Development, to the November 13, 2008 Law on Biodiversity and at the proposal of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

It defines special-use forest as an area with special values in terms of conservation of the nature, standard specimens of national forest ecosystems and forest gene sources for uses of scientific research, protection of historical-cultural relics or scenic places, and relaxation and tourism. Also, it defines a nature reserve as an area with forest ecosystems or also with wetland ecosystems, sea ecosystems in addition to common functions of a special-use forest, which is established mainly to sustainably conserve natural ecosystems. Finally, a special-use forest management unit is defined as a state organization which has the functions and tasks of a forest owner and for the purposes of managing, protecting and developing special-use forests, and conserving and promoting their special values.

It further classifies the special forest as NPs, nature conservation zones, landscape protection zones and research and experimental forests. The decree also defines the criteria for declaration for each category as follows:

- Nature reserve: possesses a nationally or internationally important natural forest ecosystem which has not yet or has little been changed or planted forests where natural succession is occurring. Also if it hosts at least 5 species endangered, rare and precious fauna and flora species prioritized for protection under law.
- Species/habitat conservation zone: presence of at least 1 endemic or endangered, rare and precious species
- Landscape protection zone: having high landscape, scenic or historical-cultural values, recognized by a competent state agency.
- Scientific research and experimentation forest zone: possessing ecosystems which meet scientific research and experimentation requirements of scientific or educational institutions
- NP: at least 1 ecosystem of national or international significance that expands over an area of at least 10,000 ha, at least 70% of which is covered with natural ecosystems and less than 5% of which is agricultural and inhabited land.

For planning of special use forests (SUF), the Decree mandates the Directorate of Forest to develop a national master plan that lists and evaluates the natural, economic, social, defense and security conditions, ecosystems, biodiversity, gene sources, and historical-cultural dimension of the SUFs. MARD must also submit a proposal for a system of SUFs, identifying suitable areas to the relevant ministries and provincial governments. The national master plan must be replicated at provincial level by the provincial Departments of Agriculture and Rural Development and approval by the provincial People's Committees.

Each SUF must also count with a five-year plan, including a zone plan, public information activities, forest management, protection, construction, development and use, scientific research and experimentation, rescue of wild fauna and flora and **finance** coherent with the national and provincial master plans developed by the management units and approved by the provincial People's Committees.

Financial planning. Special-use forest management units are revenue-generating non-business units under state current regulations. Special-use forest management units established by the Ministry of Agriculture

and Rural Development shall make budget estimates and submit them to the Forestry Directorate for approval and special-use forest management units established by provincial-level People's Committees shall make budget estimates and report them to provincial-level Agriculture and Rural Development Departments for appraisal and summarization, and submit them to provincial-level People's Committees for approval. The Ministry of Finance shall coordinate with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in guiding the making and implementation of annual budget estimates for special-use forests and the Prime Minister shall promulgate investment policies and financial mechanisms applicable to special-use forests.

Funding sources for SUFs are defined as follows:

- Central budget, which will finance activities of special-use forests under the Agriculture and Rural Development Ministry's management and locally managed NPs and support investment in locally managed special-use forests under the current law on the state budget
- Local budgets, which will finance activities of locally managed special-use forests
- Revenues from forest environmental services
- Supports from domestic and foreign organizations and individuals.

Establishment, uses and change of use of SUFs. The office of the Prime Minister and provincial People's Committees (PPCs) can declare special use forests. SUFs will be either under national management through MARD or under the authority of the PPCs.

A zone under SUF status can be reverted to other uses by decision of the Prime Minister, based on national interest or if so decided in the national master plan on SUFs. Dossiers for the change of use must be appraised by MARD. Likewise, SUF delimitation can be changed or adjusted by decision of the Prime Minister, MARD or the corresponded PPC provided due justification. but must count with the agreement of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

The Decree also regulates the restoration of natural ecosystems in special use forest, by natural succession or with silvicultural measures, depending on the denomination.

Sustainable use of forest resources. Procedures and technical measures for exploiting and using natural resources in special-use forests must comply with the Prime Minister's forest management regulations and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development's guidance. Sustainable use of forest resources must ensure the functions of conservation, maintenance and development of biodiversity of forests, as well as habitats of endemic, rare and precious forest fauna and flora species; forest fauna and flora species of high scientific and educational values; conservation of the nature, biodiversity and landscape, cultural, historical and environmental values.

Sustainable uses of SUFs include scientific research that must be approved by the Directorate of Forest, including specific activities and collection of specimens. Reports of teaching and scientific activities must be submitted to the Directorate of Forests.

Uses for natural parks, nature reserves, species/habitat conservation zones and landscape protection forest include:

- Collection of dead timber trees, broken and felled trees and forest flora in service-administrative sub-zones under state regulations, as well as collection of timber, firewood and forest flora within the areas cleared under approved projects.
- Sustainable exploitation of non-timber flora species which are outside the list of endangered, rare and precious species in ecological restoration sub-zones and service administrative sub-zones under schemes approved by competent state agencies

Payment for forest ecosystem services schemes can be implemented in SUFs as regulated by Decree No.99/2010/ND-CP.

Ecotourism activities are allowed if approved together with the SUF management plan and comply with the laws on forest protection and development, environmental protection, tourism, and cultural heritage, and regulations on special-use forest management. Management units may lease part of forests or forest land to or coordinate with organizations and individuals for the commercial provision of eco-tourist services in combination with forest protection and development and nature conservation under approved plans and current regulations. Ecotourism projects must be guided by MARD and cause no adverse impacts on the conservation of natural ecosystems, biodiversity, landscapes, the environment and other functions of a forest zone. For ecotourism purposes, trails, cable cars, underground roads, viewpoint posts and signposts may be built in a strictly protected sub-zone or ecological restoration sub-zone.

Management of special use forest. All SUFs covering over 5,000 hectares must count with a management unit. A common management unit should be established for all other minor SUFs. Management units should include at least a director and deputy director(s). Additionally, a management unit can have the following elements:

- ranger unit (mandatory for all SUFs covering an area of 15,000 hectares or more, up to one ranger officer per 500 hectares)
- organization-administrative division
- finance-planning division
- science and international cooperation division
- division for sea and wetland conservation, for special-use forests with sea and inland wetland conservation components;
- environmental education and forest environmental service center;
- rescue, conservation and development center

Buffer zones. A buffer zone that shall be identified and delineated when the SUF plan is formulated following MARD criteria, embraces the inhabited forest and land area, submerged land and sea area adjacent to the outside boundary or within the boundary of a special-use forest zone, which functions to prevent and mitigate encroachment upon the zone through managerial and conservation measures combined with activities to improve livelihood for communities, and sustainable socio-economic development. Special-use forest management units and organizations assigned to manage special-use forests shall formulate investment projects in buffer zones and act as their investors under law. (Government of Vietnam, 2010).

Decree No.99/2010/ND-CP dated September 24, 2010, on the policy on payment for forest environment services

Pursuant to the December 25, 2001 Law on Organization of the Government, the December 3, 2004 Law on Forest Protection and Development, the November 13, 2008 Law on Biodiversity and at proposal of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

The decree assigns the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development the prime responsibility for, and coordinate with concerned ministries, mainly the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, and the Ministry of Finance, in submitting to the Prime Minister for promulgation regulations on payers, levels of payment and method of payment for forest ecosystem services.

The decree provides for the policy on payment for forest environment services in Viet Nam, covering the types of forest environment services, providers and users of forest environment services, and their rights and obligations, management and use of the payment for forest environment services, as well as the responsibilities of state management agencies at all levels and of all sectors for the payment for forest environment services. Among forest ecosystem services, the decree includes soil protection, and control

of erosion and sedimentation, regulation and maintenance of water sources, carbon sequestration and retention, protection of natural landscape and conservation of biodiversity for tourism, and provision of spawning grounds, sources of feed and natural seeds.

Moreover, the decree defines the principles (payment between user and owner/ service provider, publicity, objectivity and fairness) and methods of payment (direct, through contract or indirect, through funds or intermediary organizations). The decree also sets levels of payment for different users, defined as:

1. Hydropower generation establishments (services of soil protection, and control of erosion and sedimentation)
2. Clean water production and supply establishments and industrial manufacture (service of regulation and maintenance of water sources)
3. Tourist service providers (service of protection of natural landscapes and conservation of biodiversity)

Payment levels are set at VND 20 per kWh of commercial electricity, VND 40 per m³ of commercial water and 1% to 2% of turnover for tourism enterprises.

Beneficiaries/ service providers are obliged to ensure that the areas of forests providing forest environment services be protected and developed properly in line with forest protection and development plans approved by competent state agencies. Service providers entitled to receive payments for forest ecosystem services are defined as:

1. Forest owners that are organizations with forests allocated or leased by the State for stable and permanent use for forestry purposes
2. Forest owners that are village communities, households, individuals with forests allocated or leased by the State for forestry purposes
3. Organizations, households, individuals and village communities that have concluded contracts on stable and permanent forest protection with forest owners

Finally, the decree establishes concrete rules for the management of payments through direct transfers and funds, as well as the duties of MARD and the People's Committees (Government of Vietnam, 2010).

Decree No.65/2010/ND-CP dated 11/06/2010 detailing and guiding the implementation of some articles of biodiversity law

Pursuant to the Law on Government Organization December 25, 2001, pursuant to the Law on Biological Diversity 13 November 2008 and at proposal of the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment.

The decree details and guides implementation of some articles of Law on Biodiversity, namely biodiversity conservation, PAs, conservation and sustainable development of species, and conservation and sustainable development of genetic resources. It mandates the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE) to coordinate, chiefly with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) but also with other ministries and agencies and also with provincial People's Committees for the purpose of determining and evaluating the needs of biodiversity conservation projects and overall planning of biodiversity conservation. This needs must be expressed in a master plan biodiversity conservation in the country prepared by a interdisciplinary evaluation council led by MoNRE at national level and by the respective People's Committees at provincial level.

The national masterplan must be the basis for the mainstreaming of biodiversity into other sectors, process to be led by the respective sector ministers. However, conservation of biodiversity will be superseded by important economic, industrial or national defense goals and when so decided by the respective People's Committees.

It strengthens decentralization of the PA system by assigning responsibility to People's Committees to establish PA, albeit under a series of criteria, outlined by this Decree, defined by MoNRE in coordination with MARD. The Decree defines a PA as an area where one or more of the following criteria apply:

1. Ecosystem represents natural values of a locality, such as scenic beauty
2. Ecosystem is valuable for scientific research, education or tourism
3. Permanent or seasonal habitat of endangered, rare or priority protection wild species. Criteria for determining said categories of wildlife will be developed by MoNRE. For this purpose, it mandates the regular monitoring, at least every five years of relevant aspects of biodiversity in all PAs. Monitoring is to be led and coordinated by MoNRE.

The decree also establishes rights and obligation of communities that inhabit buffer zones or areas adjacent to PAs as:

1. Priority in the exploitation of land, water, forests for agriculture, aquaculture and other purposes not prohibited by law, including projects to exploit PAs for tourism and other service activities.
2. Priority in recruitment, participation in the management of the reserve, as well as sharing of benefits from tourism activities or exploitation of resources, but are subjected to forest protection obligations in accordance with the law on forest protection and development.

MoNRE, MARD and People's Committees must review the status of PAs established prior to the 2008 Law on Biodiversity according to the following thematic division:

1. Provincial People's Committee: conservation areas under their respective management
2. Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development: special use forest land and sea areas of PAs expanding more than one province
3. Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment: PAs on wetlands, limestone, unused land and ecological mixed area expanding more than one province.

The Decree allows organizations and individuals to establish ex-situ conservation facilities such as rescue centers or gene banks under supervision and approval of the provincial People's Committees.

Finally, the Decree regulates access to genetic resources, to be controlled by MoNRE and Provincial People's Committees and mandates sharing of benefits derived from said access, including sharing research results, transfer of technology or training, contributions for local economic development amounting to no less than 30% of the benefits converted to cash (Government of Vietnam, 2010).

Annex 8. Evaluation consultant agreement form

Evaluators:

1. Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded.
2. Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.
3. Should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They should provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and respect people's right not to engage. Evaluators must respect people's right to provide information in confidence, and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate individuals, and must balance an evaluation of management functions with this general principle.
4. Sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing while conducting evaluations. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is any doubt about if and how issues should be reported.
5. Should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relations with all stakeholders. In line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality. They should avoid offending the dignity and self-respect of those persons with whom they come in contact in the course of the evaluation. Knowing that evaluation might negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate its purpose and results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.
6. Are responsible for their performance and their product(s). They are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/or oral presentation of study imitations, findings and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form

Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System

Name of Consultant: José Antonio Cabo Buján

I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.

Signed at Caldas, Spain on 30/12/2015

Signature:



Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form

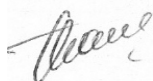
Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System

Name of Consultant: Le Ha Thanh

I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.

Signed at Hanoi, Viet Nam on 30/12/2015

Signature:



Annex 9. Audit trail

Audit Trail of the comments made to the draft terminal evaluation report for the project Removing barriers hindering PA management effectiveness in Viet Nam

#	Date	Comment location	Comment/Feedback on the draft TE report	TE Team's response and actions taken
1	15/11/16	Executive summary	This now is information also presented on the front page. Recommend deleting it here	Please refer to UNDP (2012) Guidance for conducting terminal evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects, annex F and this evaluation's TOR regarding report structure. The table has been revised and edited.
2	15/11/16	Executive summary	Please check and correct mentioning 88% and 89% in text below: 89% on pages v and 28; 88% on page 12 and 13 (so not only in graph as mentioned in audit trail)	The correct figure would be 88.35%. Corrections have been made.
3	15/11/16	Executive summary	Kindly consider rephrasing. The logic between "important impacts at local levels" and the "concern" with "pilots at the heart of the project" is unclear (at least to me)	Phrase deleted.
4	15/11/16	Executive summary	Recommend to make this a separate recommendation, as it requires an individual management response. In fact I see that in section 4.2 this is a separate recommendation	Recommendation has been separated.
5	4/10/16	Executive summary	To me, this ES is currently too long and messed up by unnecessarily detailed supporting information/data/evidence. Its length has posed limited space to your further analysis in the main text. Could you reorganize your summary to TWO PAGES please and structure it as required by the ToR, which include bullet points <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Summary Table • Project Description (brief) • Evaluation Rating Table Summary of conclusions, recommendations and lessons	Thank you for the suggestions. Changes made accordingly
6	8/4/16	Executive summary	It is recommended that the consultants include an executive summary, as required by the ToR, which includes the Project Summary Table, Project Description (brief), Evaluation Rating Table, and a summary of conclusions, recommendations and lessons. Currently there is only the Evaluation Rating Table (mislabelled as the Project Summary Table) listed on pg. 5.	Indeed. Executive summary has not been included in first draft to facilitate thorough discussion of findings of evaluation report. Of course, an executive summary has been incorporated. Table indeed mislabeled. Corrected in new version.
7	7/7/16	Executive summary	Please re-write this sentence. I would like to provide information for you as following:	Date of operations start for MONRE's PMU duly noted in exec. Summary.

#	Date	Comment location	Comment/Feedback on the draft TE report	TE Team's response and actions taken
			Project MONRE-PMU was set up in Apr 2011, Project MARD-PMU was set up in Jul 2011, Project steering committee was set up in Jul, 2011 so Project arrangement was completed in 2011. MONRE-PMU started to implement Project activities from Apr 2011. Agreement between MONRE and MARD was signed in Oct, 2012 and MARD component started after that	
8	7/7/16	Executive summary	MPI took lead to develop the Decision 24 and the Project supported to get consultation for draft Decision 24. For Circular 160, the Project supported to develop, consult,... and this circular is one of important legal tools to guide how to use state Budget in NBSAP implementation and biodiversity conservation that never had before. So we should mention circular 160 here	Circular 160 included in favor of Decision 24.
9	7/7/16	Executive summary	8672223/2014/2015/STNMT-BVMTQD-UBND of Cao Bang Provincial People Committee	Corrected
10	4/10/16	Executive summary	Does not add more information than already in table 1	Eliminated
11	4/10/16	Executive summary	Elsewhere (p.32): \$27,311,360 including a GEF grant of 3,725,000	Corrected
12	4/10/16	Executive summary	Not relevant in Exec Sum	Graph has been eliminated following suggestion contained in comment 1
13	4/10/16	Executive summary	Not discussed in main body of report	Please note that the issue of the baselines is exhaustively discussed in section M&E: the initial scorecards had significant gaps in terms of qualitative information, compounded by the use of different scorecards at project design and implementation, i.e., the baselines presented weaknesses.
14	4/10/16	Executive summary	Does not add more information than already in table 1	Corrected
15	4/10/16	Executive summary	Not "wetands" as mentioned in this sentence, but "Inland wáter conservation áreas"	Please refer to comment 17 below
16	4/10/16	Executive summary	Improve sentence stressing "main sites" and "other sites" for distribution.	Please note that both the MTR and the TE found no justification for the reduction of sites
17	4/10/16	Executive summary	See comments in text below; accordingly, this is not conclusive, propose to delete from Exec Sum.	Please note that the TE considers that it is indeed important to report on its findings.
18	7/7/16	Project description	Again comment: BCA is not Executing Agency, they are the Implementing partner	Indeed, pre-HPPMG concepts employed. Corrected and section integrated with findings: project management
19	7/7/16	Project description	Implementing partner according to HPPMG's definition.	Indeed, pre-HPPMG concepts employed. Corrected and section integrated with findings: project management
20	7/7/16	Project description	was reviewed, selected 3 sites as main sites: XT, BD-NB and CB and 3 other sites as sites to lesson learn from 3 main sites.	Relationship among primary and secondary sites reflected.

#	Date	Comment location	Comment/Feedback on the draft TE report	TE Team's response and actions taken
			Approach in the Project document is similar when applying cluster approach as 1 main site (to pilot increasing revenue mechanism and another site in a cluster to lesson learn)	
21	4/10/16	Project description	I think these are separate distinguished categories under different management agencies, not? Inland Water Conservation Areas (PM decisión 1479/2008) under Law of Fiesheries vs. Decision 45/2014 on Wetland PAs	It is true that, when referring to protected areas in Vietnam the term inland water is rather specific: PM Decision 218/QD-TTg and PM Decision 1479/QD-TTg. Inland water would include rivers, lakes, reservoirs and also coastal lagoons and estuaries. Wetlands is a more generic term used for coastal and inland aquatic ecosystems. The author of the comment refers to inland water PA as wetland PAs in a later comment. Also, the PD refers to "Inland wetland" protected area, and equates wetland with inland waters, as does the National Strategy for Environmental Protection until 2010. The topic is developed further in the context analysis of the GEF-UNDP project document Conservation of Critical Wetland Protected Areas and Linked Landscapes (PIMS 4537) under implementation (2014-2017) by your office. More importantly, revision of the aforementioned legal documents shows that all three categories of protected area fall under MARD's jurisdiction, not under MONRE as stated. Decree 65/2010 NP CP states that MONRE will coordinate with PPCs to establish protected area of WETLANDs, limestone and unused land area. However, PM Decision of 2014 gives MARD prime responsibility for, and coordinate with the relevant Ministries and sectors in implementing the strategy for inland water protected areas. The NBSAP of 2014 states: <i>Protected areas within terrestrial, inland water and marine ecosystems fall within the remit of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) but that Protected areas within wetland ecosystems, including wetlands listed under the Ramsar Convention, are the responsibility of MoNRE</i> Thus, MARD seems to be clearly in charge for inland water PA and that MONRE's wetland PAs are still needing consolidation. A new GEF-funded project, PIMS 4537 addresses this issue. Text has been changed accordingly.
22	4/10/16	Project description	= finding, not part of this chapter	It is pertinent however to the site description.

#	Date	Comment location	Comment/Feedback on the draft TE report	TE Team's response and actions taken
23	6/5/16	Findings/ project formulation	Yes, these assumptions are stated in the Project Document but as you say it's one of your findings then please give your analysis with these assumptions to make your point clear why it is a finding? I mean what exactly do you want to discuss these assumptions?	True, the presentation is confusing. Conclusions and recommendations have been moved up from section 4 (now deserted) for further clarity. The point here is that the assumptions are partially contradictory with the lessons learned in that the legal framework did permit sustainable funding and that project funds could have focus more at site level.
24	6/5/16	Findings/ project formulation	I don't really get your point here. Does "This Project" mean the PA Project you are evaluating? If so, what is the linkage you are trying to make in this statement between this Project and the other 8?	See response to comment 19
25	6/5/16	Findings/ project formulation	So what is your real point here? Are you talking about participatory planning or ownership? Please give some more thought of yours for each finding like this.	True. The finding has been expanded accordingly.
25	4/10/16	Findings/ project formulation	The fact that at the IR the Project activities and deliverables were not adapted to the changing conditions (legislative changes and activities by Gov and other projects) is not discussed by the TE	One of the main points of the TE report is precisely the failure of the project to adapt to a changing regulatory environment. To make it explicit, the TE report includes that the project did not react to changes in the regulatory framework instead of those changes being acknowledged in the IR
27	4/10/16	Findings/ project formulation	5 later in the text	This fact was mentioned in prior versions and just in a note in the last draft. Reference added in the main text
28	6/5/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ M&E	CDR is not quarterly, it's annually.	OK. Report did not say CDR was quarterly, but annually has been added for clarity. Either way, CDRs should be prepared quarterly: see UNDP, 2011, National Implementation by the Government of UNDP Supported Projects: Guidelines and Procedures p. 66 and UNDP, 2011, Inception Report, Removing Barrier Hindering Protected Area Management Effectiveness in Viet Nam p. 16 and UNDP's POPP § National Implementation Finances
29	6/5/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ M&E	OK, this is your description about the Capacity Devel Scorecard in general. What have you found from the Project Capacity Devel Scorecard in specific? How do you assess this scorecard of the Project you are evaluating? Please provide your analysis on the Project particular scorecard, e.g. was the scorecard filled properly? Were the data updated regularly? How was the progress of capacity development shown in the scorecard, etc.	Conclusions have been moved forward from section conclusions to make the narrative of the report more fluid. Use of scorecards belongs in section "implementation of M&E" but this assessment, indeed missing, has been moved adjacent to the discussion on the instruments. The results of the scorecards however, are still discussed in section results.
30	6/5/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ M&E	The same comments as above. Please discuss this METT of the Project you are evaluating.	See response to comment above

#	Date	Comment location	Comment/Feedback on the draft TE report	TE Team's response and actions taken
31	6/5/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ M&E	It is a generic statement (Finding 1), it will be better to provide supporting evidence.	The paragraph refers to the actual conduct of monitoring activities as showed in the monthly and weekly BCA reports, as stated in the MTR and confirmed by the Terminal Evaluator. However, section has been expanded offering more information.
32	4/10/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ M&E	HL: check discussion of adaptive management in legislation – did the Project respond to parallel development/progress in legislation being issued by government (with/out Support internat projects)?	Only partially in the sense that it cooperated with other initiatives. Redundant paragraph, eliminated from last version.
33	4/10/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ M&E	The text sounded more like poor performance of the first MTE team	Which is precisely what is stated. Redundant paragraph, eliminated from last version.
34	6/5/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ M&E	You may want to rephrase this statement as “regular PMU meeting” since the Project director belongs to the PMU serving as Head of the PMU	It is true that at the project’s inception report (2011), p. 20, it is said that the PMU is headed by a National Project Director. However, this direct relationship is not so obvious at the corresponding section of the project document, p.50, as the project design did not foresee the existence of two PMUs. Moreover, in most UNDP-GEF projects, the NPD would not such a close relationship to the PMU staff, meeting only at PEB meetings or technical committee meetings, when such a committee exists. The evaluation report wants to underline the close involvement of the NPD in this project.
35	6/5/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ M&E	Elaborate with supporting evaluative Evidence. Why not fully aligned	The paragraph explains that this not alignment meant duplication of monitoring duties. All statements are backed by evidence. In the case of documentary evidence, this is duly referred to in the report. However, primary informants are not identified as per guidelines and ethic code. Please refer to UNEG (2007) Code of Conduct for Evaluators.
36	7/7/16	Findings/ Project implementation/	(Project) management (unit)	Corrected

#	Date	Comment location	Comment/Feedback on the draft TE report	TE Team's response and actions taken
		Management arrangements		
37	4/10/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ Management arrangements	Executing agency later in text	Corrected
38	7/7/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ Management arrangements	In reverse angel.VEA as the Implementing Partner and MONRE as the Executing Agency.	Corrected
39	6/5/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ Management arrangements	Please note that this Project has been formulated and approved to be an umbrella Project that consists of two components. The MARD was involved as a Co-Implementing partner to implement a component and they can set up a sub-PMU for their component implementation. This is totally in accordance with the Gov's regulations. Ha Thanh could help clarify and rephrase this para by reviewing the Decree 38 and its subordinate circular 01. Also, I would expect to hear from your thought about this arrangement in the context of complex arrangement in BD management in Viet Nam between MONRE and MARD. Accordingly, whether this arrangement relevant or not to solve out the problems of inter-sectoral overlaps in BD management?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The management arrangements were assessed in the section conclusions. As said above, this structure leads to confusion, and therefore conclusions have been moved forward, close to the findings and expanded 2. The project formulation did not at all mention two components: there is no sign of it in the CEO endorsed project document. The first documental track of said structure only appears at the project inception report of September 2011.
40	6/5/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ Management arrangements	Generic statement	The § describes the annual planning process: <i>Annual work plans and implementation were based on said results framework. Annual work plans were submitted to the approval of the project board, composed of high level officials of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), as well as representatives from the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Planning and Investment and National Assembly</i>
41	6/5/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ Management arrangements	I would expect to hear from your thought about how the activities planned on different basis i.e. annually, quarterly. From that analysis, we could see the quality assurance in Project management. Please elaborate	In fact, this is expressed in the conclusions. The high level board has proven to be too inflexible for adequate support to PMU, therefore, the creation of an intermediate "technical" board is recommended for future projects
42	6/5/16	Findings/ Project implementation/	Elaborate based on Finding 3 as Project was took 30 months for setting management arrangement	§ states: Project implementation from the inception workshop was did not suffer any major backlogs, i.e. after management arrangements were agreed upon.

#	Date	Comment location	Comment/Feedback on the draft TE report	TE Team's response and actions taken
		Management arrangements		
43	8/4/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ Management arrangements	On pg. 30, stakeholder engagement is analyzed, but the main stakeholders' roles and contributions to the project (including in-kind contributions, technical assistance, participation, staff time, training, leadership and advocacy) are not clearly described.	Table with more detailed description has been included
44	6/5/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ Management arrangements	I think you may want to incorporate this finding with finding 3 to make a more meaningful finding instead of two fragmented ones.	Agreed.
45	7/7/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ Management arrangements	Please distinguish between the Project Executive Board and Project Management Unit. The organization you are describe here is for the Project Executive Board, not the PMU. Please clarify.	Paragraph eliminated because it was redundant. Clarification stressed in the report text.
46	4/10/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ Management arrangements	Refrase, de-link from logic discussion in previous sentences. This is a separate issue.	The paragraph has been eliminated as redundant
47	4/10/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ Management arrangements	Logic of argumentation unclear	The paragraph has been eliminated as redundant
48	4/10/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ Management arrangements	Incorrect	Thank you for noticing. While it is true that the GEF OFP is not the only agency that can implement GEF-funded project, an executing agency must have its endorsement, hence MONRE has indeed full powers to determine the project's executive agency. Either way, the paragraph has been eliminated as redundant
49	6/5/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ GEF Partner Agency (UNDP) performance	Is it important to incorporate in the Evaluation Report as findings	The terminal evaluation should assess the rate and quality of UNDP execution through consideration of the following issues: focus on results, technical support, annual reporting and responsiveness (UNDP, 2012, Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects), i.e. yes an enumeration of the services provided by the UNDP to the project is pertinent.
50	6/5/16	Findings/ Project implementation/	Well, I think you need to count more technical Support from UNDP in this Project including: Quality assurance acitvities such as financial	Agreed

#	Date	Comment location	Comment/Feedback on the draft TE report	TE Team's response and actions taken
		GEF Partner Agency (UNDP) performance	management, Budget transfer, financial spot-check, auditing, mid-term review, terminal evaluation and audit, direct TA from both national and international staff, mobilization of TA from other devel partners, international experience sharing, policy advocacy for new changes, etc. Please elaborate	
51	6/05/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ GEF Partner Agency (UNDP) performance	How we link with findings? It was a fact - how much affected the progress by this that's need to focus here	Indeed, the TE report exposes facts, on which conclusions are based. Since conclusions and recommendations have not been reviewed, the new version of the TE report has been reorganized to make conclusions more obvious.
52	6/05/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ Implementing partner performance	Well, firstly, I do not get your point as a finding in here. What are you trying to comment about this management structure? Positive, negative? Secondly, you may want to describe this management structure a bit clearer. Accordingly, this Project involved TWO EXECUTIVE AGENCIES that are MONRE and MARD and, therefore, it was designed as an umbrella Project as per the Gov's regulations. Is an umbrella Project, it consists of two component projects implemented by each of the above-mentioned. Therefore, MARD established a Sub-PMU to manage the implementation of their assigned component. The PMU under BCA was responsible for component implemented under their own assignments. Nevertheless, as the Project owner, the BCA, as assigned by the MONRE was responsible for the entire Project coordination and management. This arrangement helped facilitate the proactive implementation of each ministry and avoid unnecessary dependence of one ministry on the other while there were two sectors working on the same Project.	The terminal evaluation must assess agency performance based on the points described in the guidance for the conduct of terminal evaluations: results and timeliness, management inputs, ownership and reporting. The assessment of the management arrangements to which the comment refers is discussed in section management arrangements of the report. Please refer to said section and comments pertaining to it.
53	6/5/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ Implementing partner performance	I don't think this fits to this section since this section is trying to talk about implementing partners while this statements seems to talk about implementation progress. Besides, I think this statement needs sufficient supporting information to become a finding.	The section Executing Agency/ Implementing partner execution must report on focus on results, management inputs, timeliness, ownership and candor and realism in reporting (latter item already reported in section M&E), following UNDP (2012), Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-Supported, GEF-financed Projects. Section has been expanded.
54	6/5/16	Findings/ Project implementation/	Likewise, this finding does not fit to this section	See response above

#	Date	Comment location	Comment/Feedback on the draft TE report	TE Team's response and actions taken
		Implementing partner performance		
55	6/5/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ Stakeholder engagement	So, what is your opinion about this? How do you find this implementation?	Please refer to section Project Results. Effectiveness. NOTE: the section stakeholder engagement has been merged with
56	15/11/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ Finances	Still does not match value in Exec Sum (100,000 missing here)	Difference due to the project preparation grant of US\$ 100,000. The correction has been made.
57	6/5/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ Finances	<p>Firstly, we did Budget transfer on quarterly basis as per requests by the FACE form of the PMU. The AWP was approved by both the Project owner and UNDP as the base for QWP development and implementation. And this flow is not only in accordance with the Gov's procedures, it is in accordance with the Harmonized Approach in Cash Transfer (HACT) procedures. Please correct!</p> <p>Secondly, you may want to describe the entire process of workplanning and Budget transfer, financial recording and reporting to show the Project Budget flow.</p> <p>Thirdly, the quality assurance work included various activities such as financial spot-check, audits, and quarterly review of financial reports submitted by the PMU to UNDP.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Indeed 2. Described in section management arrangements 3. Described in section GEF agency performance
58	7/7/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ Finances	<p>Please note that the Budget for 2016 is executed by UNDP after the Project operational closure, not transfer to the IP. And this Budget is for operational activities such as financial audit, terminal evaluation, travels on terminal audit and evaluation, and for some minor liquidation of activities conducted in 2015 but not yet paid.</p> <p>The current statement might confuse the readers that the IP is still spending money after operational closure, which is not allowed by either GEF's approval or Government's regulations.</p>	Thank you! Clarification included
59	4/10/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ Finances	Elsewhere: 89%	Elsewhere refers to one point in a graph, with no value indicated.
60	4/10/16	Findings/ Project implementation/ Finances	Not clear why table 9 and figure 7 (draft TE report of 12 June) are no longer included (recommend one table of anual delivery per outcome against Budget). Figure 8 in draft TE report of 12 June is presented	ok

#	Date	Comment location	Comment/Feedback on the draft TE report	TE Team's response and actions taken
			only in the Executive Summary of this draft, which is not correct – should be presented here as well.	
61	6/5/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Relevance	Now, you have another Evaluation Question on the project relevance provided in the ToR to answer, which is “To what extent is the Project aligned to the main objectives of the GEF focal area?”. Please address!	As discussed during the presentation of preliminary results the project must be aligned with GEF objectives to be CEO endorsed. However, section on alignment and relevance to GEF has been added.
62	6/5/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Relevance	Corrections to box 3	Thanks!
63	4/10/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	Maintain consistency – this legal instrument is not elaborated upon below, the other 3 are	ok
64	4/10/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	The message can also be stated positively – that the project has NOT duplicated ongoing efforts; has proactively and targeted contributed to further strengthening legislation. It remains then to assess whether the initiatives chosen by the Project are the most appropriate ones	Ok. Text amended
65	6/5/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	Now, that would be great if you could give your primary assessment of this policy environment. Is it enabling? Supporting? Facilitating PA financing?	The section conclusions covered the assessment. However, the section has been moved forward and expanded.
66	6/5/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	Do you mean “Payment for Ecosystem Services”?	Indeed. The term is used in Vietnam’s legal instruments PM Decision No.24/2012/QD-TTg and Decree No.99/2010/ND-CP. Changed to ecosystem services
67	6/5/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	So, what is your assessment with these policies under the section of “Effectiveness of the project outcomes”?	See comment 37
68	6/5/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	What are you trying to analyze here? How does this finding Support your assesment of this outcome? How does the study Support further policy development under the framework of this Project? Any added value found?	See comment 37
69	4/10/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	In addition to the drivers of increasing CAS, an analysis of the causes for non-attainment would be useful as lesson-learned	ok
70	4/10/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	There is no mentioning or elaboration of this support before in this document	added

#	Date	Comment location	Comment/Feedback on the draft TE report	TE Team's response and actions taken
71	6/5/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	Again, how do you see these decrees as the Project outcomes? What kind of changes do you see from these two decrees in the lens of theory of change?	See comment 37
72	7/7/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	we should mention Circular 160 here	Circular 160 acknowledged
73	6/5/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	This statement tends to be lonely. I would add more supporting information from your field visit (i.e. IDI, FGD results to make it a meaningful finding rather than leaving it odd like this.	In fact, respondents said little specific, even when prompted about capacity development other than that. This is supported by the fact that the improvements in capacity scores seem to be related to the project's capacity development activities as shown in the scores of the capacity development card. The statement has been attached to the wider discussion on capacity development.
74	6/5/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	Do you have any information about the outcomes of this work? Any changes made over the Project cycle? Please provide some more info about the results.	This is just an introductory paragraph to describe the goals of the outcome. The detailed description of achievements follows
75	6/5/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	You may want to combine this finding with the finding 1 of this section to show changes over the Project cycle	Reference to the change in sites selected introduced
76	6/5/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	So, what is the added value that our Project made to this?	Support for Decision 119/QD-UBND of 23 January 2015, according to which, clam farmers are allowed to lease the clam culture area from the park, access credit and technical know-how etc. for a period of 5 years. However, there is a mistake in the presentation of the project contributions as it got somehow mixed up. This has been corrected
77	4/10/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	Only provincial - SUFs and Inland water bodies; Wetland PA will be assigned to MONRE	See comment 17
78	4/10/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	Please elaborate also as to why the target was not met. Current text only explains why an increase was observed; no attention being given to significant gap of non-attainment	First. The text and graph point to the obvious fact that the project: a) did not contribute at all to this dimension of the FSC b) PA boards do have the instruments to effectively manage their budgets but they are not applied throughout the system. However, a sentence has been added to make explicit the two aforementioned points.

#	Date	Comment location	Comment/Feedback on the draft TE report	TE Team's response and actions taken
				Please note that the TOR of the TE refer to project accomplishments and attribution of observed changes to project actions. A systematic study of capacities for financial management of PAs in Vietnam would be the subject of further study that UNDP could and likely should conduct in the light of the results of this TE.
79	15/11/16	Audit trail	This also includes analyzing in writing of non-attaining of planned targets	Please refer to answer to comment 78: The text and graph point to the obvious fact that the project: a) did not contribute at all to this dimension of the FSC b) PA boards do have the instruments to effectively manage their budgets but they are not applied throughout the system. However, a sentence has been added to make explicit the two aforementioned points
80	4/10/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	Maintain consistence: in the text the absolute score is discussed, here the %	Precisely the point, the TE report cites the score and the % it represents.
81	4/10/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	Interesting to note that obviously the official CAS (containing only integer scores 0-3) has been adapted to include fractuional half-scores.	Please refer to UNDP (2010) Incorporating the Capacity Development Framework with GEF Projects, section 6, use of the scorecard. The scores are ordinal and can be averaged yielding fractional numbers.
82	4/10/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	This seems extreme, especially compared with benefit sharing price per ha	The calculation is right based on the data provided by Mr. Cach, Director of XT NP. On average, total gross output per ha of a clam farm was estimated at VND 2000 mill. VND (USD 90,000), varying among sizes and farming types. The profit generated per ha of clam farming is about NVD 400 mil. VND per ha. The clam farmers should pay a fee on average of VND 1,000,000 per hectare per year or \$50/hectare/year for leasing area. During the meeting with Mr. Cach, director of Xuan Thuy NP, it was observed that raising revenue for the park from proposed mechanism is not the ultimate goal for PA management. Given the limited capacity, it is expected that, such kind of benefit sharing mechanism will help management board of Xuan Thuy and Giao Thuy district to effectively manage the PA in terms of legalizing and institutionalizing the role, function and responsibility of the management board, clam farmers, and commune/district authorities over the PA.

#	Date	Comment location	Comment/Feedback on the draft TE report	TE Team's response and actions taken
83	4/10/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	Annual or total for 5 years?	Total for the five years.
84	6/5/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	I understand you are trying to describe the enabling policy environment for our Project implementation. If so, please elaborate the link between this and our Project implementation.	The project (PIMS 3965) did not make any contribution to the development of the enabling regulatory framework on payment for ecosystem services, as described under outcome 1. However, as described in outcome 3, the project supported its local implementation.
85	4/10/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	Harmonize name and abbreviation	ok
86	6/5/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	This is a scale-up activity. Please inform the reader that Bai Tu Long NP belong to another province (Quang Ninh). Please describe this as a replication of the Project results. Likewise for the results in Bi Doup-Nui Ba and Xuan Thuy parks.	The activity is part of the regular project document, Output 3.2, <i>Models of Operational Cooperation and Resource Sharing among Neighboring PAs</i> . For Bidoup-Nui Ba and Xuan Thuy the project reports only indicate joint training activities with neighboring PAs (Chu Yang Sin and Tien Hai)
87	4/10/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	Response Tung to previous draft: revision to focus on 3 sites as main sites: Xuan Thuy, Bidoup-Nui Ba and Cat Ba and 3 other sites as sites to learn from 3 main sites	Please note that there was no proper justification for the reduction of sites as also stressed by the MTR.
88	4/10/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	The figures do not match – total available per year against ha under protection against price/ha	The calculation is correct. Bidoup-Nui Ba still has 14,271ha of core zone that has not been acreage allotted, which obviously means that the park may receive environmental services fee on this area. This area is within the Serepok river estuary. According to Decision No.2393/QĐ-UBND the Bidoup-Nui Ba now may receive the money from PFES for protecting the area of 6,700 ha (among 14,271ha of core zone). The current PFES rate applied for Bidoup-Nui Ba is VND 180,000/ha/year. Therefore, the park may receive added revenue of VND 1.2 billion/year. The PA management board uses this money to carry out protection activities including biodiversity conservation.

89	15/11/16	Audit trial	My comment was related to comparing the amount collected by Bidoup-Nui Ba (1.2 billion, correct) with the amount given to the communities: Dong Nai 24,500 ha x 495000 VND/ha = 12,128,000,000 VND. Serepak: 33,558 ha x 385,000 VND/ha = 12,920,000,000.	The rate is regulated under the Provincial Decision No.2393/QD-UBND. Even the rate is low compared with what given to the communities, it reflects the effort of PPC in setting up financial mechanism for biodiversity conservation in Bidoup-Nui Ba NP. A table has been added to clarify the issue.
90	6/5/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	Wow wow, I would be careful to talk about this. I think you may want to state that the action plan developed by the DONRE under technical Support from a consultant. This is the reality. By saying "...developed by a consultant..." I do not see any ownership in that action plan	§ reworded
91	6/5/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	What exactly those acts are? Do you think you want to provide more supporting information?	§ intended to provide a brief introduction to the activities described in the subsequent paragraphs. Since it does not serve the purpose, § has been removed. Following paragraphs have been expanded.
92	6/5/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	But then, after that baseline survey what was going on? What did the Project do with survey findings? What were the results?	Results not yet released.
93	4/10/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	Missed opportunity to have this site also in ENG (now only VT)	Please note that the promotion measures target national tourist and society in general
94	15/11/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	Was it, or was it not. "would have been" sounds as if it was not, but the remainder of the sentence suggest that it was, although "by far the only one"	By far NOT the only one. The sentence, as explained in the text above refers to the fact that there has been an increase in general awareness on biodiversity and protected area, shown by the increased score of the tracking tool, and that there have been several initiatives supporting this awareness. The sentence has been revised to state "In sum, the project together with other initiatives implemented in parallel and supported by different development partners have contributed to knowledge building and awareness raising on biodiversity conservation. Although awareness on biodiversity conservation of stakeholders has increased, the efforts to strengthen the knowledge systematically could have been more effective than generic or non-targeted awareness rising campaigns. Effective knowledge transfer system could have also benefited with a more intense involvement of MARD, the primary PA agency of the country."
95	15/11/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	I guess your sum wants to implicate that the awareness communication was not effective? If so, I don't find any link between this sum and info you describe above	
96	4/10/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	Requires elaboration, not only of why progress was made, but also why the target was not met.	Please note that the report states that there has been several actions on awareness within and outside the project and, in the absence of survey results, the scorecard results do not allow any further statement.

97	4/10/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	Requires elaboration as to who and how, also in conjunction with previous comment.	Please consult the reference given in the report.
98	6/5/16	Table 11, Progress towards achievement of outcomes (pg. 41)	Table 11, Progress towards achievement of outcomes (pg. 41) is not clear about what the number presented represent.	Table has been substituted and section has been expanded with further explanation
99	6/5/16	Table 11 (co-financing table) on pg. 31	There is another table labeled Table 11 (co-financing table) on pg. 31- the tables should be re-numbered correctly.	Numeration corrected
100	6/5/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	Please answer these Evaluation Questions of the ToR under Annex C to discuss the Efficiency: were the accounting and financial system in place adequate for project management and producing accurate and timely financial information? was the Project efficient with respect to incremental cost criteria? were progress reports produced accurately, timely and responded to reporting requirements including adaptive management changes? was project implementation as cost effective as originally proposed (planned vs. actual)? was procurement carried out in a manner making efficient use of project resources?	These are the standard evaluation questions included in annex four, sample evaluation criteria matrix of the Guidance for Conducting Evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects. All the questions are related to management and have been answered on the management arrangement section of the report. This is also coherent with the efficiency rating provided by the UNDP in the PIR, i.e. planned vs. actual delivery. Hence the TE will adopt this approach and a benefit cost ratio based on incremental discounted benefits for outcome three, because this outcome allows a financial cash flow analysis. The error involved in the estimation of economic benefits of the other outcomes, compounded by the attribution problems of this project make the effort useless for outcomes 1,2 and 4.
101	4/10/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	According to the information presented in this paragraph, “HS” would be the assessment	Please note that one dimension of efficiency is completion of project activities within timeframe, which this project has not achieved
102	4/10/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	This section does not seem to fulfill its title	Please refer to Evaluation Office UNDP (2012), Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects
103	6/5/16	Mainstreaming (pg. 42)	In the section on Mainstreaming (pg. 42), the TE should also address the extent to which the project was successfully mainstreamed with other UNDP priorities, including poverty alleviation, improved governance, conflict prevention, and improved gender equality. Additionally, the UNDAP (UN Development Assistance Framework) should be referenced. There is currently no mention of indigenous communities and there is no gender-related analysis included in the TE report, which is a requirement as indicated by the ToR. Have wider development and gender issues been considered in project design?	Link to UNDAF implicit, as referred Common Country Document is necessarily linked to UNDAF. Contributions to poverty alleviation are included in the report. Project did not have any gender or aspect. This has been also reported in the project’s annual reviews. However, a reference to gender has been included in report.

			What have been the project's contributions/ linkages to greater consideration of gender aspects, (i.e. project team composition, stakeholder outreach to women's groups)?	
	4/10/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	This chapter better fits before sustainability, as some arguments used here contribute to sustainability assessment (e.g. threats)	Please refer to Evaluation Office UNDP (2012), Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects
104	4/10/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	<p>(1) These overall scores have not been discussed in the main text, specifically section 3.3.2 where individual outcomes are discussed</p> <p>(2) It is more appropriate to recall here (also) the development of the detailed sectional scores for the different outcomes, as they shed a different light on progress and impact (as discussed above)</p>	Please note that the TE reports the individual components of the scorecards in the appropriate sections. The overall scores, which serve as indicators for the project objective is just the sum of the scores of the individual components. The first draft of this TE included a discussion of the scorecards that was rejected for being out of place. For further detail please refer to UNDP (2010) Monitoring Guidelines of Capacity Development in Global Environment Facility Projects, Bovarnick, A. (2007). Financial Sustainability Scorecard for National Systems of Protected Areas and WWF (2007) Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
105	4/10/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	I don't think you would need any further supporting evidences or data tables in the "conclusion". As discussed before, should you think data are important but the length does not make you put them in your main body, please move them to annexes	Thank you for the suggestion. Conclusions sections correspondingly modified.
106	4/10/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	HL: This leads me to the question whether the selected indicators were the right ones to assess project performance, considering ongoing parallel developments with impacts on these indicators. The TE does not raise this issue	Please note that the TE dedicates a whole section to the discussion of the indicators. The indicators are correct and their use is encouraged by GEF. The discussion on effectiveness links observed changes in score to project activities
107	4/10/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	The following part is analytical and should not be part of this chapter. HL: advise where it fits better (in draft version of 12 June this was part of separate section "overall assessment of the effectiveness of the Project outcomes" in chapter 3. This section no longer exists in this version of the TE report. I recommend to put them back into the main text	Thank you for the suggestion. Effectiveness and Conclusions sections correspondingly modified.
108	4/10/16	Project results/ Outcomes/ Effectiveness	Please apply similar presentation styles for comparable figures – subsequent years are presented in different order in this and previous figure.	Suggestion applied
109	4/10/16	Impacts	What is the contribution of this paragraph to the reasoned discussion of project impact?	A discussion on the impact of the project needs a description of the national context. Please also note that the report is authored by the independent evaluation team.
110	4/10/16	Impacts	The logic of this figure is not clear – representing annual data against the averaged value for the same period, and expressed in % without	A discussion on the impact of the project needs a description of the national context. Using anomalies, i.e. deviations from a

			linkage to the absolute ha/m3, etc.; as is the contribution to the reasoning of impact from the project	period mean for any given variable allows us to compare trend for different measures of threat, which was the object of the graph. However, the graph no longer figures in the report as part of the repeatedly requested reduction of pages.
111	4/10/16	Impacts	If reasoning is build on this, more explanation is needed, against previous statements of continued interest of the government on BD conservation and PA investment	Please note that the difference between stated intentions, understanding of the meaning of biodiversity conservation and actual actions is discussed widely in the report, with reference to pertinent documents.
112	4/10/16	Impacts	Contribution of this paragraph to discussion not clear. No direct relation to Project impact	A discussion on the impact of the project needs a description of the national context. Please also note that the report is authored by the independent evaluation team.
113	4/10/16	Impacts	Please clarify: Data for which year used?	2015
114	4/10/16	Impacts	Revise sentence to clarify TE opinion	At this point the TE report states that threat levels have increased at all sites have either increased or remain stable in the period 2013-2015 in both project and non-project sites as shown in the figure.
115	4/10/16	Impacts	Please clarify whether the TE has indentified team members; accordingly strengthen the statement	As stated in the report in section M&E and Impact: different PA staff members completed the METT exercise in different years, hence different personal perceptions cannot be discarded. Please refer to the METT cards.
116	4/10/16	Impacts	Please clarify: have threat assessment members indeed been target of awareness raising. Clarifications of the statement in this sentence should lead to an assessment of the usefulness of the METT treat scores as measure of project impact. Note: the 2016 METT versión no longer contains these detailed scores	Assessment of METT appropriateness is beyond the scope of this report. METT, with threat assessment is part of this project's tracking tool. However, the limitations of METT are indeed discussed in the report both in section M&E and Impacts. For details, please refer to WWF(2007) and Coed et Al (2015)
117	4/10/16	Impacts	The fact that the Project has been bypassed by other initiatives on legislative reforms cannot be interpreted as "limited impact". As stated above, the project contributed to legislation. Right questions to ask include what the Project did compared to ProDoc commitment, whether legislative focus was changed (due to external developments); whether/not the project invested agreed amount (effort; mandays; US\$) in legislative reforms (which can be assessed as "impact")	What the project did is discussed in section Effectiveness, as noted by the same comment author. The financial impacts of the project are discussed in sections efficiency and sustainability
118	4/10/16	Impacts	This should not be here – either in impact, or better, as overall effectiveness of the Project (where it is now not discussed). A concluding statement can be made here, if needed.	For report structure, please refer to Evaluation Office UNDP (2012), Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects.
119	4/10/16	Impacts	Accordingly, the discussion of METT increasebetween "Project" and "non-project" sites seems arbitrary and non-conclusive. The	Please note that there is indeed a distinction between project intervention and non-project sites, which offers an opportunity for

			contribution of these paragraphs to formulation of an opinion on the project is questionable	a counterfactual. This observation could indeed be expanded by a wider exercise including more protected areas, with a more detailed examination of their context. This is beyond the scope of the TE of this project. In terms of opinion, please note that TE evaluations are conducted by independent teams, to allow for interpretation of results not limited by interests or needs of project stakeholders.
120	4/10/16	Conclusions	The “Conclusions” are not concrete and clear. I would expect to read your concrete and fair conclusions that are summerized from your main body analysis. In such, I would not spend more time to read again the supporting information and sum up the conclusions for myself. Please state your conclusion clearly in one, two, three.... Bullet points	Thank you for the suggestion. Conclusions sections modified accordingly
121	4/10/16	Conclusions	These three paras could be the right way to build up your conclusions. Please work more on that in this way and clear off the rest above.	Thank you for the suggestion. Conclusions sections modified accordingly
122	4/10/16	Conclusions	One of proudful outcomes that this Project has produced is cross-setoral collaboration machenism, which was signed off between MARD and MONRE. How do you count it in this conclusion of yours	Please refer to section effectiveness, outcome 2 for a discussion of said agreement
123	4/10/16	Conclusions	Not in main text of the report	Thank you for reminding this. Corrected and added to main text
124	4/10/16	Conclusions	Can you make a HEADER saying that this is the “RECOMMENDATIONS” section? Also, I failed to link these recommendations to your “conclusions” above since your conclusions are not clear due to mixing of huge continued analysis in there. I would be happy to see your clear recommendations for Government, Local Authorities, UNDP, etc. That would be nice if you could build your recommendations on following up with achievements made by this Project.	Thank you for the suggestion. Modifications have been made accordingly
125	6/5/16	Recommendation, pg. 53 and executive summary	The consultants only make one formal recommendation (on pg. 53). Traditionally, more recommendations are expected. Because the project has already operationally closed, recommendations could be geared towards the future design of projects or the follow-up of activities from this project to sustain the project’s results. Recommendations should be numbered and prioritized. To the extent possible, each recommendation should be “SMART” (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound) and should clearly identify who the recommended implementer is, what the suggested timeframe is, etc. These recommendations should also be summarized in the executive summary.	There were five recommendations included in the draft report. More recommendations have been added.

126	6/5/16	Lessons learned and executive summary	There are also no lessons learned stated in the TE. Lessons might include best and worst practices in addressing issues relating to relevance, performance and success. The evaluators should make an effort to synthesize lessons that can help to improve the selection, design and implementation of future GEF financed UNDP activities in the country and region in the future.	Lessons learned not included in draft to facilitate discussion on findings and conclusions
127	6/5/16	Annexes	In addition to the annexes already included, the evaluator should include the following annexes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ToR ○ Summary of field visits ○ Questionnaire used (if applicable) and summary of results ○ Audit trail 	All annexes included

