Management Response: Implementation Plan for Evaluation Recommendations

UN environment programme | Evaluation Office

General Information

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Evaluation Manager	Myles Hallin / Pauline Marima
Project Evaluation Title	Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP/GEF project "Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE): Conserving Earth's Most Irreplaceable Sites for Endangered Biodiversity"
PIMS #	
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Project Manager/ Task Manager	Ersin Esen
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Implementation Plan finalized *(if different from the date above)*	

Implementation Plan

No	Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation	Recommendation	Priority level	Type of Recommendation	Responsibility	Proposed Implementation time-frame	Acceptance	Reason if not Accepted or Partially Accepted	Management Action(s) to be taken
1	The project's main weaknesses related to the following perfromance criteria: monitoring and reporting; financial management (specifically, completeness of project financial information); and project preparation and readiness. For this reason, this recommendation (broken down into three parts) proposes to pay greater attention to Monitoring and Evaluation	Place special emphasis on M&E practice in the GEF-7 AZE project, in order to lay the foundations for clear attribution of results, internal consistency, transparency in adaptive management decisions, and feedback loops and learning. The new project would benefit from a stronger 'M&E discipline' applied across all project countries, sites and executing partners. The	Important	Project	UNEP and global project execution team (ABC and BirdLife), and national execution teams	Within 6 months of the inception workshop of the GEF-7 AZE project	Accepted		1. We will review the suggested key aspects with the key partners at the inception meeting (which is scheduled in October 2022. 2. We will prepare with the lead EA and updated Monitoring Plan 3. The M&E exercise at the inception will comprise updating the M&E plan.

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	(M&E) requirements during the project inception phase.	following are key aspects to consider at inception: 1. Prepare a Monitoring Plan that specifies: (i) the needs associated with results monitoring: - baselines that lack data and need inputs from particular partners in the first months of project execution. - which information and 'means of verification' are needed to report on the project's Outcome indicators, GEF Core Indicators, Gender Action indicators, Indigenous Peoples Plan indicators, and indicators in the Grievance Redressal Mechanism. (See related POINT 3) - the responsibilities of each partner in collecting and compiling the above information and 'means of verification'. - use a common filing platform that all executing partners can access and use to store project files and information. (ii) the M&E exercises expected to take place at inception, mid-term (MTR) and project-end (TE), so as to: - have greater clarity in M&E tasks among project partners, especially the contributions expected from them (e.g. obtaining inputs from beneficiaries). - understand the TOC as a "living document" that can							4. We will aim to organize at least one global SC meetings ideally in-person or online

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		be reviewed and revised (in particular the assumptions and drivers) and changes to the Results Framework justified, if needed (and duly recorded). - derive learning opportunities that can help to formulate lessons learnt, or used to guide shifts in project methodologies, which may be linked to a revised TOC. 2. Considering language and time-zone differences, set realistic expectations for how the Global Project Steering Committee will function and adaptive management decisions be accounted for. - use electronic means to take decisions, and not only rely on actual Committee meetings. - use emails trails to record approvals or consent among Committee members, when decisions (especially adaptive management decisions) are taken via email. - ensure adaptive management decisions taken by agreement between the UNEP Task Manager and the global executing team, or the global team and country teams, are reflected in minutes or notes exchanged via email. - use the opportunity of the MTR to adjust and corroborate the Results Framework and TOC, to bring internal consistency to the							

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		project and its reporting, and provide an instance for learning. 3. Identify practical and innovative ways to obtain evidence for attribution of results and feedback from beneficiaries on project performance. - story-telling and web-stories can be a good way to answer to specific M&E requirements while also "show-casing" the social elements of the project (e.g., working with women and indigenous peoples, education programmes, etc.) - in support of M&E requirements outlined in POINT 1, greater use should be made of: photographical material as a means to record progress or change, social mobilization events and important meetings; interviews or quotes from key stakeholders /beneficiaries as a means to obtain feedback and corroborate results; meeting minutes or notes (that identify attendants) as a clear 'means of verification' for decisions taken, information shared, and feedback, requests or suggestions received. - at large meetings where a wifi connexion is available and attendants have a computer and/or smartphone, consider conducting live polls during presentations as a means to gather instant feedback and							

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		gauge levels of awareness or interest.							
2	Social aspects proved to be critical factors of success at the site-level; they can represent either risks or drivers of change and make the difference between failed and achieved results. They should therefore be monitored to ensure future project performance stays on track.

The drivers described in the TOC of the GEF-7 AZE project should also consider socially-motivated opportunities that can favour the project and be taken advantage of; some will be local, others national. Community-run events, fora, festivals, local associations and schools are good entry points for the project at the site-level and can be critical to mobilize support.

Capturing how the social dimension plays a role in biodiversity protection can also enhance an intervention's replication potential and offer lessons on key success factors. The MTR highlights the importance of social issues and early exchanges with local stakeholders and recommends to "incorporate insight from behaviour change science to address threats and guide marketing and communication efforts". | Integrate and report on social elements more distinctly in site-based interventions in the GEF-7 AZE project, considering them as factors of success (i.e., drivers and assumptions in the Theory of Change), and developing a narrative for how the project benefitted indigenous, gender and marginalization issues, and this in turn favoured conservation outcomes. | Opportunity for improvement | Project | UNEP and global project execution team (ABC and BirdLife), and national execution teams | Within 12 months of the inception workshop of the GEF-7 AZE project | Accepted | | 1. Gender and engagement with indigenous communities are more mainstreamed into the project formulation, we will review stakeholder engagement and gender aspects every year and report through Project Implementation Review |

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	One way to do this could be through "Pride" campaigns, such as those promoted by AZE member, Rare Conservation. The experience with school children in Chile mirrored the "Pride" methodology and was similarly motivating. Project teams are encouraged to either seek collaborations with Rare, or learn about the benefits of carrying "Pride" campaigns for the purpose of species conservation.								
3	Co-finance accounting should be a meaningful exercise, and ideally, trackable, having first agreed where it will come from, what shape it will take, what results it contributes to and who will report on it. Co-finance commitments at project approval need to be followed through with co-finance reports signed by each institution concerned. If a co-financing institution so decides, this reporting could be formally delegated to an executing partner, to report on their behalf, in line with an agreed budget (co-finance breakdown) and reporting approach (e.g. annual prorating). Significant differences were found in the way co-financing was reported by contributing partners. Making co-finance contributions visible has two beneficial aspects: One, it	Render co-finance tracking a meaningful exercise in the GEF-7 AZE project, by seeking firstly, a common understanding of co-finance sources and their relevance to the project and its reporting, and secondly, the means to track which results/Outcome Indicators the co-funding contributes towards.	Opportunity for improvement	Project	UNEP and global project execution team (ABC and BirdLife).	Within 6 months of the inception workshop of the GEF-7 AZE project	Partially Accepted	Having a 'common understanding of co-finance sources' is a broader scope than the GEF7 project. We can only track what is committed on the co-finance commitment letters.	1. We cannot setup a co-finance monitoring mechanism beyond Project Cooperation Agreement requirements. However, we will ensure co-finance realization is reported every year. 2. We will map with the EA each year's co-finance with the outcomes statements to enable tracking of the contribution of the co-finance to project results.

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	can help to develop a narrative that reflects the incremental nature of the GEF investment and the sustainability of project results, and portray a clearer picture of which co-financier supports which results; and two, it could serve to highlight the strengths of individual co-financiers, especially when these involve the private sector and landowners, through biodiversity offsets, and land donations or other payments and donations. Of particular interest are cases that can be counted as additional co-finance.								