

Implementation Plan of Recommendations

Project Title and Reference No.: Enhancing livelihoods in rural communities of Armenia through mainstreaming and strengthening agricultural biodiversity conservation and utilization (GEF ID 5483) (2016 – 2018)

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	PLANS			
RECOMMENDATIONS	ACCEPTED (YES/NO/PARTIALLY)	WHAT WILL BE DONE?	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	REPOSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY
Upscaling and mainstreaming of this project’s results is still crucial if Armenia were to combat the expansion of arid zones, land degradation and climate change adverse effects. In fact, a second phase of this project as designed with these mainstreaming and upscaling goals would be a right response. Integrating into similar new projects would also be another solution.	Yes	This project’s results are integrated in the new UNEP/GEF “Land restoration and ecosystem service improvement through use of fruit and nut tree biodiversity in Armenia” project. As part of the new project, it is planned to restore 10 000 ha (directly) and 20 000 ha (indirectly) of land.	Ongoing	Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Armenia, Ecopartol Service, “ArmForest” SNCO. Name and title of the responsible officer: Mr. Armen Danielyan, Adviser of Director of “ArmForest” SNCO.
Elaborate risk mitigation, sustainability, environmental and social impact strategies and concrete measures during the formulation and	Yes	Risk mitigation, sustainability, environmental and social impact strategies are considered during the PPG phase of UNEP/GEF “Land restoration and ecosystem service improvement through	Ongoing	Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Armenia,

Management-Led Terminal Review, UNEP

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design stage of the project and adjust/refine them during implementation as needed.		use of fruit and nut tree biodiversity in Armenia” project.		<p>Ecopartol Service, “ArmForest” SNCO.</p> <p>Name and title of the responsible officer: Mr. Armen Danielyan, Adviser to Director of “ArmForest” SNCO.</p>
<p>Plan and incorporate concrete strategies and detailed actions of collaboration with the initiatives, programmes, projects that were identified as complimentary in the prodoc.</p> <p>Plan for lessons learnt South - South activity with Uzbekistan where and in-situ and ex-situ programmes for CWR, traditional varieties of fruit and nut species are more advanced, and with whom they share a common past.</p>	Partially	<p>UNEP/GEF “Land restoration and ecosystem service improvement through use of fruit and nut tree biodiversity in Armenia” project will establish close cooperation and collaboration with related ongoing projects, in particular, those that are managed by FAO and WWF-Armenia; these projects are already mentioned in the project document of the above-mentioned new UNEP/GEF project.</p> <p>The newly developed project for Armenia will contact FAO Uzbekistan for potential south-south collaboration engagements during the project execution.</p>	Ongoing	<p>Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Armenia, Ecopartol Service, “ArmForest” SNCO.</p> <p>Name and title of the responsible officer: Mr. Armen Danielyan, Adviser to Director of “ArmForest” SNCO.</p>

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The following is a summary of lessons learned from some of the project’s experiences and based upon explicit findings of the review. They briefly describe the context from which the lessons are derived, and the potential for wider application:

Lesson Learned #1:	<p>Too ambitious goals set during the project preparation and design stage. Mainstreaming into other sectors, upscaling into other locations than the project sites, or having a functional supply chain approach for agrobiodiversity friendly eco-produces is a gradual and iterative medium-to-long-term process that was unrealistic for a 36-month project with rather a limited scope and financial envelope.</p>
Context/comment:	Fully agree. The project’s goals should be manageable and achievable.

Lesson Learned #2:	<p>Underestimation of political risk and external context. The velvet revolution and ensuing government restructuring that protracted over the years could not be foreseen at the project preparation and design stage. However, better risk assessment with experts in the field and scenarios for frequent staff changes in governmental entities could have mitigated to some extent this risk which was rated as low in the prodoc.</p>
Context/comment:	Fully agree. Risk assessment should consider governmental and project’s staff changes.

Lesson Learned #3:	<p>Sustainability of results beyond the project lacked concrete strategy and plans. If there had been concrete measures and agreed plans as to handover some of the results may have been sustained. Both the project staff and national partners did not foresee very concrete strategies, methodologies and also resources to institutionalize the results of the project. The phenomenon that with the end of a project the results achieved disappear and wither away with time was starkly evident with this project as the terminal review was happening after 4 years of the completion of activities. In the case of Armenia this effect was compounded by the fact that towards the end of the project some key interventions could not see their proper closure e.g. a proper uptake of Agrobiodiversity Strategy, national law on wild fruit species, or integration of the national inter-agency committee into another entity such as SDG platform could not be realized.</p>
Context/comment:	Fully agree. The project’s sustainability beyond the GEF-funded project should be specified.

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<p>Lesson Learned #4:</p>	<p>Sub-national/local level interventions and with research and academia are more resilient in contexts like Armenia where changes at ministerial level and in government staff is rather frequent.</p> <p>Thus, investing in them pays off. There have been 5 different ministers of environment between the start of the project and the terminal review. And the 6th one is about to be nominated. Ministry of Agriculture, a key national level partner for agrobiodiversity, was dissolved in 2019 and subsumed as several departments in the Ministry of Economy. With the high-level changes, counter partners in government entities can leave their posts from one day to the next.</p> <p>Despite the government major restructuring the outputs at the sub-national level were delivered. The project team worked more closely with technical experts, academic and research institution representatives with the farmers communities and regional administrations and delivered key trainings and monitored the agro-biodiversity friendly practice implementation at the selected project intervention sites.</p>
<p>Context/comment:</p>	<p>Agree. Constant communication with all levels of stakeholders (including taking into account the governmental staff frequent changes) is important for project implementation.</p>
<p>Lesson Learned #5:</p>	<p>Documenting, data collecting and monitoring are still weak aspects that require concerted attention by all.</p> <p>The project team dissolves and stops this work with closure of the project. Many national partners see this as a side task, do not pay much attention, or put aside resources to go on documenting and monitoring the progress of the results after the completion of the project. With the legacy of “revolving door” ministerial and other levels of staff change, key partner agencies people do not necessarily acknowledge achievements of the previous government. Thus, there has been very little statistical data, hard evidence left to attest to the sustainability of the results during the terminal review.</p>
<p>Context/comment:</p>	<p>Fully agree. Documenting, reporting on data collecting and monitoring should be among the main steps of implementing partner(s).</p>