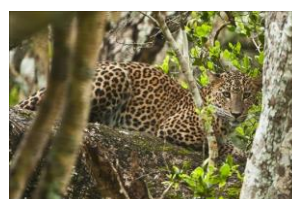
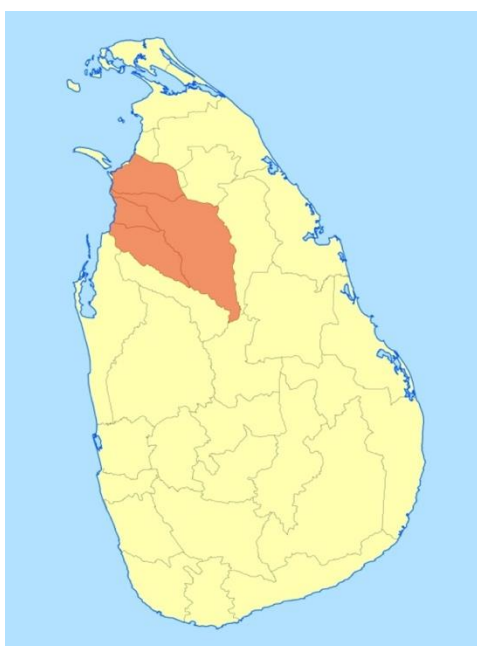


FINAL

**GEF-UNDP-IUCN-Sri-Lanka**  
**MANAGING TOGETHER PROJECT - MID TERM REVIEW (MTP-MTR)**  
**FINAL REPORT**

*Managing Together: Integrating community-centered, ecosystem-based approaches into forestry, agriculture and tourism sectors.*

**GEF Project ID 9372 / UNDP PIMS 5804**



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## PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This Report constitutes Deliverable 3 (Final MTR Report) of the Mid-term Review (MTR) of the GEF-UNDP-IUCN-Government of Sri Lanka *Managing Together* Project (MTP) (the MTP-MTR Report). The purpose of the MTP-MTR Report is to present, in detail, the 'draft' MTR findings, for review and comment by UNDP, IUCN and the Sri Lanka Ministry of Environment (MoE). This report builds on the Preliminary Findings that were presented to UNDP, IUCN and MoE after the country mission.

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## ACRONYMS

AIMs	-	Accelerated Implementation Measures
ASMP	-	Agriculture Sector Modernization Project
BD	-	Biodiversity
CCE	-	Community Conservation Experts
CO	-	Country Office
CRIWMP	-	Climate Resilient Integrated Water Management Project
CSIAP	-	Climate Smart Irrigated Agriculture Project
DS	-	Divisional Secretary
DWC	-	Department of Wildlife Conservation
ES	-	Executive Summary
E&S	-	Environmental and Social
FD	-	Forest Department
FPA	-	Finance & Procurement Associate
FSP	-	Full Size Project
FVCs	-	Focal Village Clusters
GEF	-	Global Environment Facility
GEF-TF	-	Global Environment Facility Trust Fund
GIZ	-	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH, German development agency
Govt.	-	Government
IC	-	International Consultant
IUCN	-	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LCO	-	Learning & Communication Officer
LD	-	Land Degradation
M&E	-	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEL	-	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MoE	-	Ministry of Environment
MTP	-	Managing Together Project
MTR	-	Mid Term Review
NC	-	National Consultant
NE	-	North Eastern
NIM	-	National Implementation Modality
NSC	-	National Steering Committee
NW	-	North Western
PA	-	Project Assistant
PD	-	Project Director
PE	-	Project Executive
PIMS	-	Project Information Management System
PIR	-	Project Inception Report
PM	-	Project Manager
PRF	-	Project Results Framework
ProDoc	-	Project Document
PSO	-	Project Support Officer
QA	-	Quality Assurance
SAPP	-	Sustainable Agriculture Production Project
SDGs	-	Sustainable Development Goals
SFM	-	Sustainable Forest Management
SMART	-	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant & Time-bound
STA	-	Senior Technical Adviser
TAC	-	Technical Advisory Committee
ToC	-	Theory of Change
TL	-	Trial Landscape
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme
USD	-	United States Dollar

## PROJECT DATA

<b>Project Title:</b>	FULL TITLE: <i>Managing Together: Integrating community-centered, ecosystem-based approaches into forestry, agriculture and tourism sectors.</i> SHORT TITLE: <i>Managing Together Project (MTP).</i>
<b>GEF Project Type:</b>	Full Size Project (FSP).
<b>GEF Agency:</b>	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (via Sri Lanka Country Office).
<b>GEF Project ID:</b>	<b>9372</b>
<b>UNDP ID Nos:</b>	<b>UNDP PIMS No.:</b> 5804. <b>Atlas Output ID:</b> 00114160. <b>Atlas Project ID:</b> 00117353.
<b>Country:</b>	<b>Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.</b>
<b>GEF Cycle, Trust Fund &amp; Focal Area:</b>	GEF 6, GEF Trust Fund (GEF-TF) – Biodiversity (BD), Land Degradation (LD) & Sustainable Forest Management (SFM).
<b>GEF Focal Area Objectives:</b>	BD-4 Program 9 / LD-2 Program 3 / SFM-1 Program 2 / SFM-3 Program 8.
<b>UNSDF 2018-2022 Strategic Priority:</b>	<i>By 2022, people in Sri Lanka, in particular the vulnerable and marginalized are more resilient to climate change and natural disasters and benefit from increasingly sustainable management of natural resources, better environmental governance and blue/green development.</i>
<b>UNDP Strategic Plan Strategic Solution:</b>	Signature Solution 4: Promote nature-based solutions for a sustainable planet.
<b>Project Implementing &amp; Executing Partners:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executing Agency: Government of Sri Lanka – Ministry of Environment (MoE).</li> <li>• Responsible Party: International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).</li> </ul>
<b>Implementation Modality:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Implementation Modality (NIM).</li> </ul>
<b>Planned project duration:</b>	4 years
<b>Project Start:</b>	1 Jan 2021
<b>Planned End:</b>	1 Jan 2025
<b>Mid Term Review (MTR) Date:</b>	January - March 2023

## Project Financing:

<b>1.GEF &amp; UNDP TRAC Funds</b>	<b>USD</b>
GEF Trust Fund:	3,346,708
UNDP TRAC resources:	0
Cash co-finance to admin by UNDP:	0
<b>Total administered by UNDP:</b>	<b>3,346,708</b>
<b>2.Parallel Co-financing</b>	
UNDP:	250,000
Government:	20,202,222
IUCN:	100,000
GIZ:	6,700,000
Biodiversity Sri Lanka:	2,000,000
<b>Total parallel co-financing:</b>	<b>29,252,222</b>
<b>3. Total Project Financing:</b>	<b>32,598,930</b>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (ES)

### ES 1. Brief Project Description

1. With USD 3,346,708 grant funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the GEF-UNDP-IUCN-Sri Lanka *Managing Together Project* (MTP) is designed to demonstrate and promote the integration of community-centered, ecosystem-based approaches into forestry, agriculture and tourism sectors in the Malwathu Oya River basin, in the northwest of Sri Lanka.
2. The GEF Agency is UNDP through the Sri Lanka Country Office (CO), with the Sri Lankan Ministry of Environment (MoE) as the Executing Agency, and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in Sri Lanka as the, Responsible Party for day-to-day project management, under a UNDP National Implementation Modality (NIM).
3. The Long Term Goal of the MTP is integrated, ecologically sensitive management of natural resources that protects biodiversity, reduces resource conflicts and maintains ecosystem services.
4. The Immediate Objective (end-of-Project state) is strengthened protection of globally significant biodiversity through mainstreaming of conservation and sustainable practices into land use planning and sectoral decision-making in the forestry, agriculture, fisheries and tourism sectors.
5. The MTP is working at the local government level (Districts and Divisions) in three Trial Landscapes (TLs), from the upper catchment to the coast (east to west) as follows:
  - TL 1: Upper catchment in Anuradhapura District (headwaters of the Malwathu Oya River).
  - TL 2: Mid to lower catchment across parts of Anuradaphura, Vavuniya & Manner Districts.
  - TL 3: Coastal and marine areas of the southern parts of Mannar District (around the mouth of the Malwathu Oya River).
6. The Project is organized into four Components as follows:
  - Component 1: Institutional capacity building and enhanced cross-sectoral, trans-jurisdictional and donor agency co-ordination in planning, decision-making and action.
  - Component 2: Design of landscape strategies for biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihoods and upward integration into existing policy.
  - Component 3: Participatory land-use planning and livelihood-focused interventions to demonstrate socio-economic benefits of biodiversity conservation.
  - Component 4: Monitoring and evaluation, and dissemination of knowledge.
7. There are Linked Outcomes and Outputs under each Component. Full details of the Project are contained in the UNDP Project Document (ProDoc) and an assessment of the Project design is presented in section 3.2 below.
8. The MTP has a planned four-year implementation period, which commenced in January 2021 and is due to end in January 2025. This Mid Term Review (MTR) was undertaken during January-April 2023 as part of the normal UNDP-GEF monitoring and evaluation requirements for all medium and full-sized projects.

### ES 2. Progress towards Project results

1. The Project Objective, Outcomes, Outputs, Indicators, Mid-term Targets and End-of-Project Targets are derived directly from the Project Results Framework (PRF) contained in the UNDP Project Document (ProDoc).

2. The MTR's assessment of progress towards the Project Objective, based on achievement of the Objective's Indicators and Mid-term Targets, and likely achievement of the Objective's End-of-Project Targets, is presented in [Annex 1](#).
3. The MTR's assessment of progress towards the Project Outcomes, based on achievement of the Indicators and Mid-term Targets for each Outcome, and likely achievement of the End-of-Project Targets for each Outcome, is presented in [Annex 2](#).
4. The MTR's assessment of progress towards the Project Outputs, based on the MTR's assessment of output documents and progress reports, is presented in [Annex 3](#).
5. Assessment of progress against the Indicators and Targets is based on direct, interactive inputs provided by UNDP and IUCN staff during a PRF review session convened by the MTR consultants at the UNDP office in Colombo on 8 February 2023. This was followed by crosschecking, infilling, expansion and verification by the MTR consultants based on detailed review of progress reports and output documents, and the findings from stakeholder interviews.
6. In summary, the findings are as follows (please refer Annexes 1, 2 and 3 for detailed assessment):
  - All Indicators and Targets combined - of the 25 Indicators (16 main plus 9 sub-indicators) in the ProDoc PRF:
    - Two could not be assessed due to lack of data / problems with the Indicators.
    - Only one mid-term Target has been achieved and is on track by end-of-project Target (4% achievement rate).
    - 24 mid-term Targets have NOT been achieved (96% mid-term failure rate).
    - 20 end-of-project Targets are NOT on track to be achieved (80% end failure rate).
    - Five end-of-project Targets could potentially be achieved if urgent corrective action is taken (20%).
  - Objective: Most of the Objective Indicators have not been achieved at MTR and are not on track to be achieved by project end (refer Annex 1).
  - Outcome 1: One of the two Indicators has not been achieved at MTR and is not on track by project end, while the other cannot be assessed by the MTR due to lack of data / problems with the Indicator (refer Annex 2).
  - Outcome 2: Three of the four Indicators have not been achieved at MTR and are not on track by project end, while the fourth cannot be assessed by the MTR due to lack of data / problems with the Indicator (refer Annex 2).
  - Outcome 3: Most Indicators have not been achieved at MTR and are not on track by project end (refer Annex 2).
  - Outcome 4: One of the two Indicators has not been achieved at MTR and is not on track by project end, while the other has been partially achieved and could be achieved by Project end with corrective action (refer Annex 2).
  - Outputs: **Fourteen out of 19** of the Project Outputs have not been achieved and are not on track at MTR, **with 3 partially achieved and two too early to assess** (refer Annex 3).
7. When considering that an 80% achievement rate is required for a project to be assessed as 'satisfactory', the results listed under paragraph 6 above, including 96% of mid-term targets not being met, represent an extreme, unprecedented rate of project failure. While there are several legitimate reasons for this lack of progress that were beyond the control of the project parties, including the COVID-19 pandemic and Sri Lankan financial crises, the rate of failure and limited time remaining clearly requires URGENT CORRECTIVE ACTIONS as recommended by this MTR Report. There is also a clear need for a 12 month and ideally 24-month no-cost extension to the project.
8. The reasons for this extreme lack of progress against the PRF are varied and are discussed in section 3.4.1.



### ES 3. Evaluation Ratings Table

1. The MTR's overall Evaluation Ratings are presented in Table 1. Refer Annex 4 for definitions of the MTR Ratings.

TABLE 1: *Evaluation Ratings Table*

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
<b>Progress Towards Results:</b>		
• Objective Achievement:	Unsatisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory*	The Objective progress table in Annex 1 shows that most of the Indicators have not been achieved at MTR and are not on track to be achieved by project end.
• Outcome 1 Achievement:	Unsatisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory*	The Outcomes progress table in Annex 2 shows that one of the two Outcome 1 Indicators has not been achieved at MTR and is not on track to be achieved by project end, while the other cannot be assessed by the MTR due to lack of data / problems with the Indicator.
• Outcome 2 Achievement:	Unsatisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory*	The Outcomes progress table in Annex 2 shows that three of the four Outcome 2 Indicators have not been achieved at MTR and are not on track to be achieved by project end, while the fourth cannot be assessed by the MTR due to lack of data / problems with the Indicator.
• Outcome 3 Achievement:	Unsatisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory*	The Outcomes progress table in Annex 2 shows that most of the Outcome 3 Indicators have not been achieved at MTR and are not on track to be achieved by project end.
• Outcome 4 Achievement:	Unsatisfactory*	The Outcomes progress table in Annex 2 shows that one of the two Outcome 4 Indicators has not been achieved at MTR and is not on track to be achieved by project end, while the other has been partially achieved and could be achieved by Project end with corrective action.
<b>Project Implementation:</b>	Unsatisfactory* (for all 3 parties – UNDP, MoE and IUCN)	The very poor achievement rate of the Project Objective and all four Outcomes as listed above indicates ineffective project implementation.  This could improve if the corrective measures recommended by this MTR are implemented.
<b>Adaptive Management:</b>	Moderately satisfactory	There was poor adaptive management by all project implementing and executing partners (UNDP, GoSL & IUCN) in response to significant problems and challenges in the first 1.5 years of the Project – hence problems and delays persisted.  This could be assessed as 'Unsatisfactory' however the situation is beginning to change with adaptive management now being applied – hence a more positive rating.  This could improve further if the recommended corrective measures are implemented.
<b>Sustainability:</b> (Refer section 3.4.4 for details)	Unlikely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Financial:</b> Due to Sri Lanka financial crisis - <u>Highly Unlikely</u>.</li> <li>• <b>Socio-political:</b> High level of support for MTP outcomes - <u>Moderately Likely</u>.</li> <li>• <b>Institutional &amp; governance:</b> Need to establish TL-level, cross-sectoral, <u>Integrated Catchment Coordinating Committee</u> in each TL – <u>Moderately Likely</u>.</li> <li>• <b>Environmental:</b> Many of the activities implemented to date, especially the agricultural development activities, are not aligned with environmental sustainability, and to date there has been a lack of application of environmental safeguards – <u>Unlikely</u>.</li> </ul>

\*Refer Annex 4 for the definitions of the standard UNDP-GEF MTR Ratings.

- Unsatisfactory is defined as 'The objective or outcome is not expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets.'
- Highly Unsatisfactory is defined as 'The objective or outcome has failed to achieve its midterm targets, and is not expected to achieve any of its end-of-project targets.'

## ES 4. Summary findings & lessons

1. The MTR's summary findings and lessons are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2: Summary findings & lessons

MTR Element	Summary Findings	Lessons / Recommendations
<p>1. Adequacy of MTR arrangements:</p>	<p>Some aspects of the MTR arrangements were outstanding, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The support from the UNV at UNDP was extremely well organized, responsive and timely with attention to detail.</li> <li>• Provision of Project documentation by UNDP and IUCN was efficient and comprehensive (some gaps had to be followed up).</li> <li>• MTR planning and turn around of the Inception Report by UNDP was very efficient.</li> <li>• Travel, logistics and stakeholder meeting schedules were extremely well organized.</li> <li>• MoE, IUCN and other stakeholders were very welcoming and engaging with the evaluators.</li> <li>• UNDP, MoE &amp; IUCN staff, <u>including very senior staff</u>, were very responsive to the MTR.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For future evaluations it is recommended that the positive aspects of the arrangements for this MTR, including the high level of organization and support from UNDP, be continued.</li> </ul>
	<p>Some aspects of the MTR arrangements were problematic, as follows:</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>UNDP Payment System</u>: UNDP was transitioning to a new global payment system during the MTR period, which was causing blockages to payments, did not inform the MTR consultants about this before mobilizing them, and took considerable time to resolve the issues, which caused delays to the overall MTR.</li> <li>• <u>MTR time frame was highly compressed</u>:</li> <li>• Only 10 days were allowed for in-country meetings, stakeholder interviews &amp; site visits.</li> <li>• The MTR consultants proposed 18 days as much more realistic to allow more representative and rigorous MTR – even 12-14 days would have been a big improvement – this was rejected by UNDP citing budget constraints, despite the budget being significantly underspent.</li> <li>• In TL1 only <u>3 out of 500 farms</u> were visited / many stakeholders could not be interviewed / the GEF Tracking Tool &amp; Co-financing review sessions could not be held / there was insufficient time to prepare the Preliminary Findings presentation in-country.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure consultants are <u>fully informed</u> of possible system problems and delays <u>BEFORE mobilization</u> – so they can make informed decisions and plan accordingly.</li> <li>• Given that UNDP was fully aware of the significant problems with the Project, the MTR should have been treated as a vital opportunity to evaluate these problems in detail and develop effective corrective measures – which is the very purpose of MTR and requires adequate time to allow for representative and rigorous evaluation.</li> <li>• UNDP needs to allow adequate time (and budget) for future project evaluations, and consider the advice of evaluation experts as to what minimum time is required to achieve a representative and rigorous evaluation.</li> </ul>

MTR Element	Summary Findings	Lessons / Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Lack of understanding of MTR purpose:</u></li> <li>• It was clear during interviews that many stakeholders did not understand the purpose of the MTR (esp District and Divisional level govts).</li> <li>• Many stakeholders tried to use the meetings to present additional project proposals / lobby the evaluators for additional funding.</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Lack of independence of some interviews &amp; site visits:</u></li> <li>• It was clear during interviews that many stakeholders (esp. District, Divisional &amp; Village levels) were simply reciting a standard script.</li> <li>• Reports were received that IUCN project staff were briefed to report ‘positively’ – which infringes the requirement for all staff to be allowed to make independent, objective, anonymous inputs.</li> <li>• In TL1 the Project’s CCE did not accompany the MTR at all – apart from the one-on-one MTR interview (as per all project staff), was conspicuous by absence.</li> <li>• TL1 site visits were coordinated by the Project’s Agricultural Consultants – who have direct vested interests and thus impaired independence of the site visits.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that all stakeholders are fully briefed on the purpose of evaluations.</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure, as much as possible, the independence of interviews and site visits, including NOT delegating Project Consultants to coordinate MTR activities.</li> </ul>
<p>2. Project relevance:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The MTR finds that the Project is <u>highly relevant</u> to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three GEF Focal Areas (Biodiversity, Sustainable Forest Management &amp; Land Degradation).</li> <li>• All 14 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).</li> <li>• UNDP Strategic Plan and Country Programme Document.</li> <li>• Sri Lankan Govt strategic development and related plans at national, provincial district and local levels.</li> <li>• The needs of the local people.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• There are <u>no doubts</u> about the <u>relevance</u> of and <u>vital need</u> for the Project.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Given the very high relevance of and demand for the Project, every effort needs to be made by the Project partners (UNDP, IUCN and MoE) to ensure its effective implementation in the remaining period.</li> </ul>
<p>3. Project design &amp; Results Framework:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MTR finds the Project design to be well developed &amp; based on thorough consultation process.</li> <li>• Some ProDoc wording is a bit ‘cumbersome’ / overly academic / could be simpler / clearer.</li> <li>• Project Design is not overly prescriptive / allows some flexibility to develop technical activities under each Outcome during the implementation phase (‘bottom up’</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Future project designs should be based on a thorough consultation process, as was carried out for the MTP (i.e. the MTP provides a model).</li> <li>• ProDoc’s should avoid cumbersome / overly academic wording and use simple, clear language that can be understood by all project stakeholders.</li> <li>• While allowing some flexibility to develop technical activities under each Outcome during</li> </ul>

MTR Element	Summary Findings	Lessons / Recommendations
	<p>approach) (although this has allowed some ‘drift’ from the project intent and PRF targets and indicators - see section 3.4.1 for details).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ProDoc includes well-developed Annexes such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Gender Analysis &amp; Action Plan</u>,</li> <li><u>Social &amp; Environmental Screening</u>,</li> <li><u>Stakeholder &amp; Partner Engagement Plan</u>; and</li> <li>various <u>Scorecard assessments</u></li> </ul>                     (although actual implementation of these has been problematic – basically they have not been used / implemented - see section 3.3.2 for details.</li> <li>PRF contains some Indicators (7, 9 and 11) that are <u>not</u> SMART and need replacement - see section 3.4.1 for details. (SMART = Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant &amp; Time-bound).</li> </ul>	<p>the implementation phase can be useful in helping to ensure that technical activities are aligned with local needs and priorities, it can cause ‘drift’ from the project intent and PRF targets and indicators. Bottom-up inputs should be incorporated during the early design phase, not after project implementation has commenced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project implementers should make use of and fully implement all supporting ProDoc Annexes, including the Gender Analysis &amp; Action Plan, Social &amp; Environmental Screening, Stakeholder &amp; Partner Engagement Plan; and various Scorecard assessments.</li> <li>Indicators 7, 9 and 11 in the ProDoc PRF should be revised and replaced with SMART indicators (see section 3.4.1 for details).</li> <li>For future projects, the project designers and partners should ensure that all indicators are SMART from the start.</li> </ul>
<p>4. Progress towards Project Results, Objective &amp; Outcomes:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refer ES 2 above for summary, Annex 1 for detailed assessment of progress towards the Project Objective and Annex 2 for detailed assessment of progress towards the Project Outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refer the Recommended Corrective Actions for the Project Objective in Annex 1 and for the Project Outcomes in Annex 2.</li> <li>Also refer the Consolidated Recommendations under ES 5 below.</li> </ul>
<p>5. Effectiveness of Project Implementing &amp; Executing Partners:</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNDP:</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Project is implemented under UNDP’s National Implementation Modality (NIM), with GoSL through MoE having lead responsibility for day-to-day implementation, and UNDP playing a less hands-on, general oversight and Quality Assurance (QA) role.</li> <li>The UNDP CO claims that this has limited its ability to intervene to correct the numerous problems and delays that the Project has been experiencing. The MTR does not share this view and assesses that as the GEF agency for the Project, even under NIM the UNDP CO still has a direct responsibility to ensure that the Implementing &amp; Executing Partners spend all GEF funds and undertake all Project activities in strict accordance with the ProDoc, PRF, Workplan and Budget, and all relevant UNDP and GEF policies and procedures.</li> <li>The UNDP CO has made multiple efforts to get the Implementing &amp; Executing Partners to address the numerous problems and delays that the Project has been</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a clear need for the UNDP CO to become more directly involved, assertive and strict in its oversight and QA role.</li> <li>Recommended actions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Robustly following up with the Implementing &amp; Executing Partners when corrective actions are not implemented within set timeframes.</li> <li>Commissioning the spot checks and audits recommended under Item 6 - Financial Management, below.</li> <li>Shifting the Project from NIM to Enhanced UNDP-support for NIM.</li> <li>Closely assessing IUCN’s performance against the Letter of Agreement and PRF over the next 3 months, and if performance is not adequate, consider replacing IUCN with another suitable agency.</li> <li>The UNDP CO directly contracting the following three Project positions under Individual Contracts, with all reporting directly to UNDP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <u>Senior Technical Adviser (STA)</u> – to work across MoE, IUCN and the 3 TLs.</li> <li>A dedicated <u>MEL Officer</u>, to also work</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

MTR Element	Summary Findings	Lessons / Recommendations
	<p>experiencing, including <i>inter alia</i> several meetings at the most senior levels, but these have not been effective, as evidenced by the fact that the numerous problems and delays have continued, as found by the MTR.</p>	<p>across MoE, IUCN and the 3 TLs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A <u>Project Support Officer</u> (PSO) to be embedded in MoE.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MoE:</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under the NIM modality, MoE is the lead GoSL Executing Agency, with the Director of the Biodiversity Division appointed as the overall National Project Director (NPD).</li> <li>• Because MoE staff members already have significant workload from their core day-to-day duties, and because GoSL has issued a policy prohibiting the establishment of project-specific Project Management Units (PMUs) within Ministries and Departments, MoE does not have the internal capacity to manage the entire Project.</li> <li>• IUCN has therefore been ‘contracted’ by UNDP as the so-called Responsible Party, to manage most of the Project on MoE’s behalf, while MoE retains direct responsibility for policy matters, overall coordination and monitoring of project implementation.</li> <li>• Unlike IUCN – which is able to use Project funds to recruit Project staff, including the Project Manager (PM) (see IUCN below), MoE cannot do this.</li> <li>• As a result, despite MoE staff being highly qualified and highly committed, due to the competing demands of their normal day-to-day duties, they are struggling to manage even MoE’s elements of the Project, as well as oversee IUCN’s activities.</li> <li>• This has hampered MoE’s effectiveness as the Executing Agency, and has contributed to the numerous problems and delays that the Project has been experiencing.</li> <li>• MoE (and IUCN) have not adhered to the ProDoc PRF and the Project has focussed primarily on agricultural activities in TL1, at the expense of other project elements and the other TLs, which is one of the major problems with the Project (see Item 9 below - Appropriateness &amp; effectiveness of Project activities to date).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a clear need to enhance the capacity of MoE as an the Executing Agency.</li> <li>• The most immediate recommended action is for the UNDP CO to directly contract the positions listed above, including a <u>Project Support Officer</u> (PSO) to be embedded in MoE.</li> <li>• Also immediately, there is a need for MoE to refocus on adhering to the ProDoc PRF, as per the recommendations under Item 9 below - Appropriateness &amp; effectiveness of Project activities to date.</li> <li>• Another useful initiative, perhaps for future projects, as it may be too late for MTP, would be for GoSL to lift its ban on PMUs within Ministries and Departments, so that MoE can use Project funds to recruit Project staff, and relieve workload demands on line-staff who have other competing duties.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IUCN:</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As outlined above IUCN has been ‘sub-contracted’ to manage most of the Project, and has used Project funds to recruit a PMU based in Colombo, comprising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PM,</li> <li>• Learning &amp; Communication Officer (LCO),</li> <li>• Finance &amp; Procurement Associate (FPA); and</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a clear need to enhance the effectiveness of IUCN as the Responsible Party.</li> <li>• The most immediate recommended action is for UNDP to closely assess IUCN’s performance against the Letter of Agreement and PRF over the next 3 months, and if performance is not adequate, consider replacing IUCN with another suitable agency.</li> <li>• The other recommended actions under UNDP</li> </ul>

MTR Element	Summary Findings	Lessons / Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Assistant (PA); plus</li> <li>• 3 x Community Conservation Experts (CCE) based in the three TLs.</li> <li>• In addition the <u>Senior Technical Adviser</u> (STA) position was filled for less than a year, and is currently vacant – which is a significant constraint on the Project.</li> <li>• While IUCN’s commencement was affected by delayed signing of LOA with UNDP, the COVID pandemic and other external factors, the MTR assesses that IUCN’s effectiveness as the Responsible Party has been highly problematic also due to internal issues, including <i>inter alia</i>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The IUCN-related issues cited under Item 7 - Financial management, below.</li> <li>• Extremely slow staff recruitment and procurement timeframes, contributing to long delays in implementation of activities.</li> <li>• Inability to retain some staff after recruitment, indicating internal corporate cultural issues.</li> <li>• Poor engagement, communication and coordination with other key stakeholders, as outlined under Item 8 below.</li> <li>• Along with MoE, not adhering to the ProDoc PRF and allowing the Project to focus primarily on agricultural activities in TL1, at the expense of other project elements and the other TLs, which is one of the major problems with the Project (see Item 9 below - Appropriateness &amp; effectiveness of Project activities to date).</li> <li>• While developing corrective workplans in response to UNDP demands, failing to fully implement these in a timely manner.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>above will also assist in enhancing IUCN’s performance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Also immediately, there is a need for IUCN, along with MoE, to refocus on adhering to the ProDoc PRF, as per the recommendations under Item 9 below.</li> <li>• A new IUCN Country Representative took charge of the IUCN Country Office during the MTR period and there are hopes that this will also help facilitate positive change in IUCN’s effectiveness as the Responsible Party.</li> </ul>
<p>6. Financial management &amp; co-finance:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial management is complicated by running through three separate systems (UNDP, IUCN and GoSL).</li> <li>• There are some indications of wasteful and unnecessary expenditures – e.g. hosting a planning meeting at an expensive resort outside of the Project area – this is totally inappropriate for a poverty-alleviation / development project and should NOT happen again.</li> <li>• IUCN awarded itself a contract to do Biodiversity Surveys – without transparent due process and NSC approval – this is highly concerning and should NOT happen again.</li> <li>• A financial ‘spot check’ of IUCN by UNDP ending Dec 2021 (“<a href="#">Report on Factual</a>”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Given the various problems with the project, the MTR recommends that UNDP commission: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a <u>full external Financial Audit</u> annually, starting this year (2023),</li> <li>• specific assessment of IUCN’s management of Project funds and ongoing compliance with LoA, UNDP and GEF requirements relating to this, as well as implementation of spot checks and audit findings,</li> <li>• investigate why salaries paid to IUCN project staff are <u>much less</u> than budgeted in ProDoc – and verify IUCN claims that it pays Project staff a range of benefits based on IUCN’s compensation policy, including superannuation (EPF, ETF, gratuity provisions) benefits and other statutory benefits (OPD, surgical and hospitalization,</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

MTR Element	Summary Findings	Lessons / Recommendations
	<p><a href="#">Findings -IUCN for the period ended 31 December 2021.docx</a> ) found irregularities – including that IUCN has <u>not maintained separate bank account not possible to reconcile bank statements against the accounting records.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is very concerning and MUST be addressed.</li> <li>• Other issues found by the ‘spot check’ include, <i>inter alia</i>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IUCN has charged 9.5% from each project related expense, despite the fact that this is not provided for in the LoA with UNDP. This has been decided internally by IUCN without UNDP or MoE / NSC approval, which is not acceptable – all use of GEF project funds, and esp admin fees should be pre-approved and agreed.</li> <li>• Spot-checker could not verify LKA 2.5 million charged by IUCN during the spot-check period.</li> <li>• There are inconsistencies between financial records in IUCN’s system and FACE Forms submitted by IUCN to UNDP.</li> <li>• IUCN transferred funds between budget lines at its own discretion, without UNDP approval.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Salaries paid to IUCN project staff <u>much less</u> than budgeted in ProDoc – this raises the question of where have those funds gone? IUCN also claims that it pays Project staff a range of benefits based on IUCN’s compensation policy, as detailed in section 3.3.5 below. However, there is no evidence that these have actually be paid or provided to Project staff, and again it does not correlate to the budget allocations for Project staff in the ProDoc, which should be followed.</li> <li>• Unexplained halt in Dec 22 to ‘hazard pay’ to TL3 staff – why?</li> <li>• The MTR has serious questions about the <u>Agricultural Development</u> activities in Tls 1 and 2, including <u>transparency of procurement and distribution procedures</u>, and <u>potential vested</u> and <u>conflicting interests</u>. While IUCN states that it applied IUCN process to beneficiary selection and procurement, the MTR directly observed concerns with these, as outlined in section 3.3.2.</li> <li>• <u>Available budget</u>: Despite very high inflation, the main project cost of staff salaries has not increased and the USD to LKR exchange rate has significantly increased the available in-country budget – this can be used to address some of the</li> </ul>	<p>person accident cover),</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a <u>strictly independent forensic financial audit</u> of all procurements and cash flows, including tracking all expenditure trails to end points, for the <u>Agricultural Development</u> activities in Tls 1 and 2; and</li> <li>• a <u>proper quantitative assessment of the actual additional funds available to the Project from the ongoing changes in the USD to LKA exchange rate, and reallocation of any extra funds achieved by this, to implementing the corrective actions recommended in this MTR report.</u></li> </ul>

MTR Element	Summary Findings	Lessons / Recommendations
	<p>recommended Corrective Actions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Co-financing:</b> While the 2021 Inception Workshop proposed a tool to report co-financing, and the 2022 PIR included some co-financing data from MoE and IUCN, the Project did not <u>report co-financing</u> at MTR (GEF policy requires the Project to do this).</li> </ul>	
<p>7. Effectiveness of partnerships, communication &amp; engagement:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Managing Together’ is the very theme of the Project however several stakeholders, including some very relevant senior government Officials, advised that they are not aware or know very little about the Project.</li> <li>• While IUCN advises that it sought approval from DWC &amp; FD at high level, and shared findings with both depts, at TL level DWC and FD advised they knew nothing about the Biodiversity Surveys undertaken by IUCN within their areas – they should have been key partners in accordance with the “Managing Together” theme of the Project.</li> <li>• The Project is undertaking activities that are covered by other Govt Depts, Semi-government institutions and projects – e.g. <u>Depts of Agriculture and Irrigation, Coconut Cultivation Board and SAPP sustainable agriculture project</u> (and many others) – without coordination.</li> <li>• A cross-sectoral, cross-jurisdictional <u>Integrated Catchment Coordinating Committee</u> is needed in each TL <u>catchment basin</u> (Project currently coordinating only at Divisional Level through <u>Ag Committees</u> / not <u>Enviro Committees</u>).</li> <li>• Like all of the Project activities to date – communication is being done on a largely <u>unplanned, ad-hoc, reactive basis</u> – without an <u>overall Communication Strategy</u> – need a proper Comms Strategy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Project needs to make much greater efforts to improve partnerships, communication &amp; engagement, including making full use of the already developed Stakeholder Engagement Plan in Annex F of the ProDoc (which seems to have been ignored).</li> <li>• The Project should undertake an updated stock-take of all other relevant organizations and initiatives in each TL, and seek to coordinate with these, leverage synergies and avoid duplication and overlap.</li> <li>• The Project should form a cross-sectoral, cross-jurisdictional Integrated Catchment Coordinating Committee in each TL catchment basin, to coordinate activities at the TL-level (the Project is currently focused on the local level).</li> <li>• The Project should develop and implement a proper Communication Strategy which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication objectives, with a focus on promoting the mainstreaming biodiversity into all landscape sectors.</li> <li>• Target audiences.</li> <li>• Key messages.</li> <li>• All modern communication techniques, tools, mediums and activities.</li> <li>• Budget and workplan.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>8. Effectiveness of Project monitoring &amp; evaluation:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M&amp;E should be MEL (Monitoring, Evaluation &amp; <u>Learning</u>).</li> <li>• UNDP M&amp;E Associate should have directly managed the MTR.</li> <li>• UNDP has not exercised ‘effective’ oversight and QA of the project partners – ‘high level’ attempts to address problems have not resulted in actual corrections.</li> <li>• Project has not developed and implemented sound protocols for <u>independent monitoring of project impacts at village and District levels</u>, as required by Indicator 15.</li> <li>• Project has not completed or updated the <u>GEF Tracking Tools</u> – a <u>mandatory GEF requirement</u>.</li> <li>• ‘Weekly’ progress reports to MoE Secretary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a clear need to enhance the effectiveness the Projects MEL, this includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shifting M&amp;E to MEL (Monitoring, Evaluation &amp; <u>Learning</u>).</li> <li>• Significantly enhancing UNDP’s oversight of the Project, as per the recommendations under UNDP above.</li> <li>• The UNDP CO directly contracting a dedicated <u>MEL Officer</u>, to work across MoE, IUCN and the 3 TLs.</li> <li>• Developing and implementing sound protocols for <u>independent monitoring of project impacts at village and TL levels</u>, as required by Indicator 15.</li> <li>• Completing and updating the <u>GEF Core Indicators</u> – a <u>mandatory GEF requirement</u>.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



MTR Element	Summary Findings	Lessons / Recommendations
	<p>is overkill and counter-productive – taking staff away from actual project implementation – fortnightly or preferably monthly is better.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project reports have tendency towards <u>activity-based reporting</u> – should focus more on <u>outcomes and impacts</u> / aligned with PRF indicators.</li> <li>Project needs a dedicated (and appropriately qualified) MEL officer.</li> <li>Overall – MEL to date is ‘Unsatisfactory’ (but can improve).</li> </ul>	<p>Reducing the ‘weekly’ progress reports to MoE Secretary to fortnightly or preferably monthly is better (as with all project progress reporting the monthly reports should focus on reporting on progress against the Project Objective, Outcomes Outputs, Indicators, Mid-Term Targets and End-of-Project Targets as contained in the ProDoc PRF, using the PRF as the reporting framework, and using quantitative, verifiable data. It should also identify barriers and delays encountered in the preceding month and recommend corrective actions to overcome these in the coming month, and report in these in each monthly report.).</p>
<p>9. <u>Appropriateness &amp; effectiveness of Project activities to date.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project has lost intended focus on <u>mainstreaming biodiversity into integrated, cross-sectoral landscape planning</u> – this needs to be corrected.</li> <li>As outlined above – the Project has become a “pot of money” for <u>ad-hoc, uncoordinated activities</u> without an overall <u>Strategic Integrated Landscape Plan</u> for each TL being developed first.</li> <li>Numerous and various <u>local-level proposals</u> are being submitted to the Project <u>without</u>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>standard guidelines</u> on what sub-projects are appropriate and relevant,</li> <li><u>standard proposal template</u>; and</li> <li>clear <u>project assessment</u> and <u>approval criteria</u>.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Many of the local-level proposals shared with the MTR are not relevant or appropriate to the Project Objective and Outcomes and some <u>pose significant safety, environmental and/or social risks</u>.</li> <li>As outlined above – Project has been ‘high-jacked’ into an agricultural development project – this is more appropriately done by Depts of Agriculture &amp; Irrigation, NOT Ministry of Environment, and by FAO, not UNDP-GEF.</li> <li>Project assisting ~500 farmers to plant <u>maize, coconuts, mangoes, citrus, water-melon, guava and other perennials</u>, and install <u>drip irrigation</u> and supply <u>inorganic chemical fertilizer</u>.</li> <li>These interventions <u>do not meet</u> the definition of <u>compatible with biodiversity conservation</u> listed in Indicator 10 – and in many ways go directly against it.</li> <li>The MTR has serious questions about the soundness and appropriateness of the <u>agriculture activities</u>, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>duplication of other Depts, Institutions and projects,</li> <li>adherence to farmer selection criteria,</li> <li>gender equity,</li> <li>transparency of procurement and</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Project needs to re-align its focus towards <u>mainstreaming biodiversity into integrated, cross-sectoral landscape planning</u> and implementing the ProDoc PRF. Project needs to develop an overall <u>Strategic Integrated Landscape Plan</u> for each TL, and all technical activities in each TL should be coordinated under those plans, through the recommended <u>Integrated Catchment Coordinating Committees</u> in each TL.</li> <li>For <u>local-level project proposals</u> the Project needs to develop <u>standard guidelines</u> on what sub-projects are appropriate and relevant, a <u>standard proposal template</u> and clear <u>project assessment</u> and <u>approval criteria</u>.</li> <li>The Project must ensure that all local-level projects and activities are subject to <u>proper E&amp;S screening</u>.</li> <li>With regard to the <u>current agricultural activities</u>, it is <u>strongly recommended</u> that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Immediately halt all and any further procurements</u> and rollout of crops, seeds, seedlings, irrigation systems, fertilizer and other materials under this activity.</li> <li>Complete only what has <u>already been contracted out</u> and financially committed <u>up to MTR</u>.</li> <li>UNDP engage a strictly <u>independent agricultural expert</u> to undertake <u>on-site verification and technical audit</u>, of ideally of <u>100% of all farms, but given resource implications at least not less than 30%</u>, that have been assisted by this activity – and report to UNDP (the MTR only had time to visit 3 of ~500 farmers – and all 3 exhibited problems).</li> <li>UNDP engage a <u>strictly independent forensic financial audit</u> of all procurements and cash flows, including tracking all expenditure trails to end points, under this activity – and report to UNDP.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Any <u>further agriculture activity</u> that might be undertaken should:</li> </ul>

MTR Element	Summary Findings	Lessons / Recommendations
	<p>distribution procedures,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• quality control and oversight of on-ground activities; and</li> <li>• potential vested and conflicting interests.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be <u>strictly within</u> the framework of the <u>Strategic Integrated Landscape Plans</u> which should be developed for each TL first, as recommended under Indicator 1,</li> <li>• focus on <u>truly ecologically sustainable methods</u> only; and</li> <li>• focus on assisting <u>the most needy groups and women</u>.</li> </ul>
<p>10. Likelihood of post-Project sustainability:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MTR cannot see any signs that any Project partners are <u>planning and providing for sustainability, up-scaling and replication</u> of project outcomes post-project.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A <u>long-term sustainability plan</u> should be a <u>mandatory core-requirement</u> of all sub-projects and activities supported by the Project.</li> <li>• In addition, IUCN &amp; MoE should develop an overall <u>Post-project sustainability, up-scaling and replication plan</u>, for review and approval by the NSC (should be developed this year – NOT towards end of Project).</li> </ul>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 MTR activities & timeframe

1. The MTR consultancy contracts started on 4 January 2023 and ran until 29 March 2023, and was extended to 15 June due to delays caused by UNDP's change over to a new global project management and payment system. The steps in the MTR process were:
  - a) MTR consultants held remote Inception Meeting with UNDP on 5 January 2023.
  - b) MTR consultants prepared Draft Inception Report and submitted to UNDP on 12 January 2023.
  - c) MTR consultants submitted Final Inception Report incorporating UNDP comments on 21 January 2023.
  - d) MTR consultants undertook desk-top review of all relevant project documents (from contract start until submission of this Draft Report).
  - e) MTR Questionnaire was sent to >70 stakeholders on 6 February with return date of 17 February, followed by remainder with new return date of Friday 10 March 2023.
  - f) MTR consultants undertook MTR Mission to Colombo the three Trial Landscapes (TLs) (6 to 17 Feb 2023):
    - Stakeholder interviews in Colombo 6 and 7 February (refer Annex 5 for list of meetings).
    - Held PRF review workshop at UNDP (including IUCN project staff) on 8 February.
    - Attended National Steering Committee (NSC) meeting and made a presentation about the MTR process on 8 February.
    - Undertook site visits and key stakeholder interviews in the three TLs from 9 to 15.
    - Returned to Colombo and back to homes on 16 February.
  - g) MTR consultants made Preliminary Findings presentation to UNDP on 1 March 2023.
  - h) MTR consultants made Preliminary Findings presentation to MoE, IUCN & UNDP on 29 March 2023.
  - i) MTR consultants prepared Draft MTR Report for review by UNDP, MoE and IUCN
  - j) MTR consultants prepare Final MTR Report (this Report) addressing review comments.
2. Figure 1 shows some of the evaluation activities undertaken by the MTR consultants during the MTR site visits.



FIGURE 1: *Some of the evaluation activities undertaken by the MTR consultants during the MTR site visits*

## 1.2 Structure of the MTR Report

1. This report is structured in accordance with the standard template for MTR reports as contained in Annex 3 of the UNDP-GEF MTR Guidelines (UNDP-GEF Directorate 2014. *Project-level Monitoring: Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed Projects*), with some minor adaptations to improve the logical sequencing of sections and findings.

## 1.3 Purpose & objectives of the MTR

1. In accordance with the UNDP-GEF MTR Guidelines the purpose and objectives of the MTR are to:
  - a) Assess progress towards the achievement of the Project Objectives and Outcomes as specified in ProDoc.
  - b) Assess early signs of Project success or failure with the goal of identifying any necessary changes and adaptive management measures in order to set the Project on-track to achieve its intended results.
  - c) Review the Project's strategy and its risks to sustainability.
2. Based on the findings and recommendations of the MTR, as the GEF agency UNDP could take corrective measures to ensure the Project will achieve the set objectives by the end of the project in consultation with the main implementing and executing partners, MoE and IUCN.
3. The MTR report also aims to promote accountability and will assess how cross cutting issues (including gender equality, right based approach, capacity development, poverty-environment nexus, crisis prevention and recovery, disaster risk reduction, climate change mitigation and adaptation as relevant) are being addressed by the Project.

## 1.4 MTR guidelines & ethics

1. The overall approach and methodology of the MTR followed the *UNDP-GEF MTR Guidelines* and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) *Ethical Guidelines for Evaluators*, in particular:
  - a) ensuring a collaborative and participatory approach, seeking close engagement with a representative set of Project stakeholders,
  - b) respecting and protecting the anonymity and confidentiality of all individuals who are interviewed and who submit completed Questionnaires; and
  - c) remaining objective and independent and avoiding and rejecting any attempts at undue influence by any parties.

(pls refer Annexes 8 and 9 for signed Code of Conduct forms).

## 1.5 MTR scope, methods & approach

1. The MTR attempted to source evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful, and reviewed all relevant information sources, including the documents listed in Annex X. These include but are not limited to all documents prepared during the preparation phase (i.e. PIF, UNDP Initiation Plan, UNDP Environmental & Social Safeguard Policy and ProDoc), project reports including Annual Project Review/PIRs, project budget revisions, lesson learned reports and national strategic and legal documents.
2. The MTR Consultants followed a collaborative and participatory approach ensuring close engagement with the focal agencies of the beneficiary country, the UNDP Country Office and a representative sample of key stakeholders selected from Annex 4 (time limits on the country mission did not allow for interviews with all stakeholders, as identified listed in Annex 5).

- On 6 February 2023 the MTR Consultants emailed out an MTR Questionnaire as contained in Annex 7 to all stakeholders that have emails listed in Annex 5, with an invitation to submit completed responses by 17 February, which was extended to 10 March due to a low level of responses (a total of only eight completed Questionnaires were received). Respondents were not required to identify themselves on the Questionnaire, and all responses were treated as anonymous.

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## 1.6 Data analysis & triangulation

- Wherever possible, data triangulation (use of multiple, cross-checked sources of information) was applied to verify and substantiate information reported and to help overcome bias that may arise from single sources of information. For example, if a stakeholder reported a certain view on an issue, the evaluation team actively sought views on the same issue from other stakeholders during separate interviews, and the view was only reported as an evaluation finding if three or more stakeholders share that view.
- When stakeholders reported views on matters that could be checked in documents – the relevant documents were checked. Conversely, when a document reported certain findings, these were verified by discussing with stakeholders involved with production and/or review of the document.
- When it was not possible to apply triangulation for some Project parameters, due to lack of alternative data sources, for example finance and co-financing data, the reports provided by UNDP on such data, were accepted at face value.

## 1.6 Assessment of progress towards results & MTR ratings

- The MTR consultants assessed progress towards results following the UNDP MTR Guidelines, using a colour-coded 'traffic light' score (green, yellow, red) based on the level of progress achieved, as presented in the Tables in Annexes 1 and 2.
- The Project Objective, Outcomes, Indicators, Mid-term Targets and End-of-Project Targets are derived directly from the Project Results Framework (PRF) contained in the UNDP Project Document (ProDoc).
- Assessment of progress against the Indicators and Targets was based on direct, interactive inputs provided by UNDP and IUCN staff during a PRF review session convened by the MTR consultants at the UNDP office in Colombo on 8 February 2023. This was followed by crosschecking, infilling, expansion and verification by the MTR consultants based on detailed review of progress reports and output documents, and the findings from stakeholder interviews.
- The MTR consultants allocated ratings of the project's results and brief descriptions of the associated achievements as presented in the *MTR Ratings Table* in Table 1 of the Executive Summary above. Refer Annex 3 for definitions of the MTR Ratings, which are derived from Section B of the UNDP-GEF MTR Guidelines.

## 2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION & DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

[Please refer UNDP ProDoc for full description of the Project, only a summary is provided here as background for the MTR Report]

### 2.1 Overall Project Description

- Sri Lanka's biodiversity is globally significant both for its irreplaceability and its vulnerability. About 30% of the country's land area has been designated as protected, in a range of categories managed mainly by the Forest Department and the Department of Wildlife Conservation. This is the highest level of protected areas for any country in Asia and already meets the 30% by 2030 (30/30) targets agreed under the Convention on Biological Diversity. However, it has long been recognized that protected areas are vital but alone, are not enough to conserve biodiversity and maintain natural ecological processes. Human activities in surrounding landscapes and seascapes threaten the effectiveness of individual protected areas.

2. Government policies, and the activities of people in different production and development sectors often conflict not only with biodiversity conservation, but also with each other. The Managing Together Project (the Project) aims to establish and demonstrate a holistic landscape approach to incorporating biodiversity conservation into planning and implementation in agriculture, tourism, forestry and fisheries in the Malwathu Oya Basin (River of Flower Gardens) of northwest Sri Lanka (Figure 2).
3. The Malwathu Oya River is the island nation's second largest river, steeped in mystic history and lying at the very heart of the origins of Sri Lanka's ancient irrigation-based civilization. The river originates at the holy Buddhist mountain of Ritigala and flows across the Raja Rata (Land of Kings) into the Gulf of Mannar, which connects Sri Lanka to India via the Ram Sethu (Adam's Bridge) chain of islets.
4. The catchment and coasts of the Malwathu Oya encompass some of Sri Lanka's most important biodiversity resources, including *inter alia* some the only remaining herds of wild Sri Lankan elephants (*Elephas maximus maximus*) (an endemic sub-species of the Asian elephant), endemic Sri Lankan Leopards (*Panthera pardus kotiya*), other globally important animal species, several significant forest, coastal and marine protected areas, and coastal mangroves, seagrass meadows, coral reefs, historic pearl beds and some of South Asia's last remaining herds of Dugong (which are evolutionarily related to elephants).
5. The area is also densely populated by humans and intensively used for agriculture and fisheries and other natural resource uses, which create constant conflicts with nature and wildlife. In addition, although access to this area was restricted during the 26-year civil war (1983 to 2009), post-COVID tourism – based on the outstanding natural beauty of the area, is beginning to blossom, with inadequate infrastructure. There is a need to develop and implement enhanced planning controls and social and environmental safeguards in time to avoid repeating damaging mistakes in tourism development in the south of the country.
6. In order to ensure that ever-increasing human use of the area and its biodiversity values can co-exist sustainably, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), is assisting all levels of government and local communities to mainstream and integrate biodiversity conservation considerations into economic development planning, through the four-year project *Managing Together: Integrating community-centered, ecosystem-based approaches into forestry, agriculture and tourism sectors in the Malwathu Oya River basin*.
7. The Project is working with national institutions to include existing in-service and pre-service training programs the concepts and practice of 'mainstreaming' – the routine and mandatory consideration of biodiversity and ecosystem services in decision-making and action across all government sectors.
8. At district and divisional levels the project is working with government and civil society across multiple sectors and jurisdictions to mainstream biodiversity conservation into natural resources management and land-use planning in three separate Trial Landscape (TLs) of the Malwathu Oya Basin - two terrestrial and one marine as follows (Figure 2):
  - TL 1: Upper catchment in Anuradhapura District (headwaters of the Malwathu Oya River).
  - TL 2: Mid to lower catchment across parts of Anuradhapura, Vavuniya & Mannar Districts.
  - TL 3: Coastal and marine areas of the southern parts of Mannar District (mouth of Malwathu Oya River).
9. Two Focal Village Clusters (FVCs) from each TL were selected for detailed community-centred and cross-sectoral land-use planning and livelihood-focused project interventions. Livelihoods-focused interventions will link biodiversity conservation with socio-economic benefits. The key to success will be involving the public and local government jointly in planning and action. The Project will set up and implement a long-term monitoring program to track the impacts of the landscape approach, make necessary adjustments based on results in the three TLs and establish a replication mechanism to encourage adoption of the modified approach in other parts of the country.
10. The total GEF budget is USD 3,346,708 and planned parallel co-financing is USD 29,252,222. The project duration is 4 years (January 2021 to January 2025). The Project is currently (January 2023) at mid-point and requires Mid Term Review (MTR) in accordance with GEF and UNDP requirements.

11. The Long Term Goal (development Objective) of the Project is *Integrated, ecologically sensitive management of natural resources that protects biodiversity, reduces resource conflicts, and maintains ecosystem services.*

The Immediate Objective (end-of-Project state) is: *Strengthened protection of globally significant biodiversity through mainstreaming of conservation and sustainable practices into land use planning and sectoral decision-making in forestry, agriculture, fisheries and tourism sectors.*

12. The Project is organized into four Components with a linked Outcome under each as follows:

- Component 1: Institutional capacity building and enhanced cross-sectoral, trans-jurisdictional and donor agency co-ordination in planning, decision-making and action:
  - Outcome 1: An enabling environment to mainstream integrated approaches into natural resource management in production sectors and landscapes.
- Component 2: Design of landscape strategies for biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihoods and upward integration into existing policy:
  - Outcome 2: Natural resource management, tourism and land use are guided by a strategic design for biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihoods across multiple jurisdictions in three TLs in the Northern and North Central Provinces.
- Component 3: Participatory land-use planning and livelihood-focused interventions to demonstrate socio-economic benefits of biodiversity conservation:
  - Outcome 3: Biodiversity conservation priorities shape sustainable livelihoods in natural resource management and tourism in six FVCs in three TLs in the Northern and North Central Provinces:
- Component 4: Monitoring and evaluation, and dissemination of knowledge.
  - Outcome 4: Monitoring and evaluation, and dissemination of project methods and results contribute to wider application of landscape approach to mainstreaming of biodiversity.

13. There are multiple Outputs under each Component / Outcome. Full details of the Project are contained in the UNDP Project Document (ProDoc) and an assessment of the Project design is presented in section 3.2 below.

14. The GEF Agency is UNDP through the Sri Lanka Country Office, with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in Sri Lanka as the responsible party, on behalf of the Sri Lankan Ministry of Environment (MoE) being the executing agency under a UNDP National Implementation Modality (NIM).

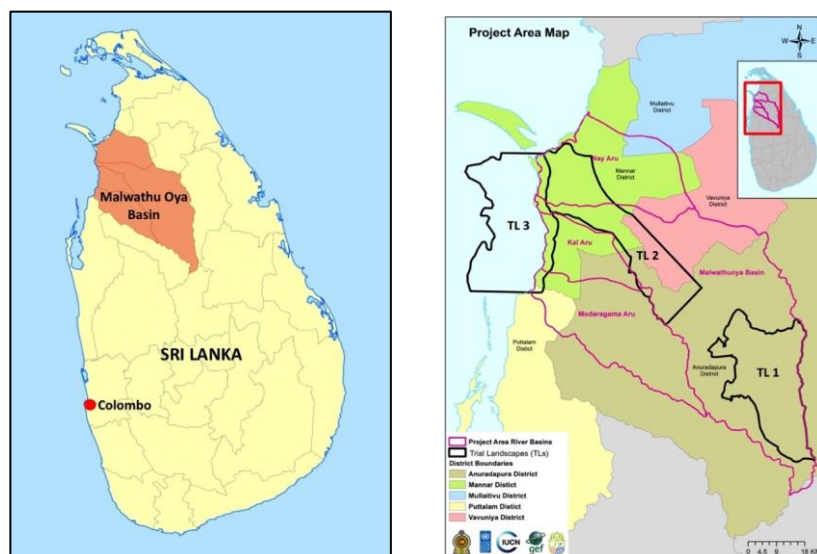


FIGURE 2: Left - Project Area. RIGHT – Trial Landscape (TL) areas.



## 2.2 Immediate & development objectives & expected results

1. As outlined above the Long Term Goal (development Objective) of the Project is: *Integrated, ecologically sensitive management of natural resources that protects biodiversity, reduces resource conflicts, and maintains ecosystem services.*
2. The Immediate Objective (end-of-Project state) is: *Strengthened protection of globally significant biodiversity through mainstreaming of conservation and sustainable practices into land use planning and sectoral decision-making in forestry, agriculture, fisheries and tourism sectors.*
3. The ProDoc includes a Theory of Change (ToC), which outlines how the Long Term Goal and Immediate Objective will be achieved, as shown in Figure 3, and identifies the following 'required changes' that the Project seeks to achieve:
  - a) improved levels of knowledge and understanding of the need for biodiversity mainstreaming,
  - b) improved cross-sectoral and trans-jurisdictional co-ordination among government agencies,
  - c) improved capacities in local government and communities for shift to modified livelihoods,
  - d) strengthened political will and proactive measures to enforce existing policies and legislation and to review ecologically perverse incentives,
  - e) resolution of social instabilities, uncertainties over land tenure, and heavy dependence on unfair loans,
  - f) elimination of damaging practices in agriculture, tourism, fisheries, forestry and wildlife conservation,
  - g) improved water management,
  - h) increased involvement of public in land-use decision making; and
  - i) greater involvement of women and young people in joint decision making at the community level.

The ProDoc also includes a Project Outline diagram showing how achievement of the Long Term Goal and Immediate Objective is supported by the four Project Components with a supporting Outcome and several Outputs under each Component (Figure 4).

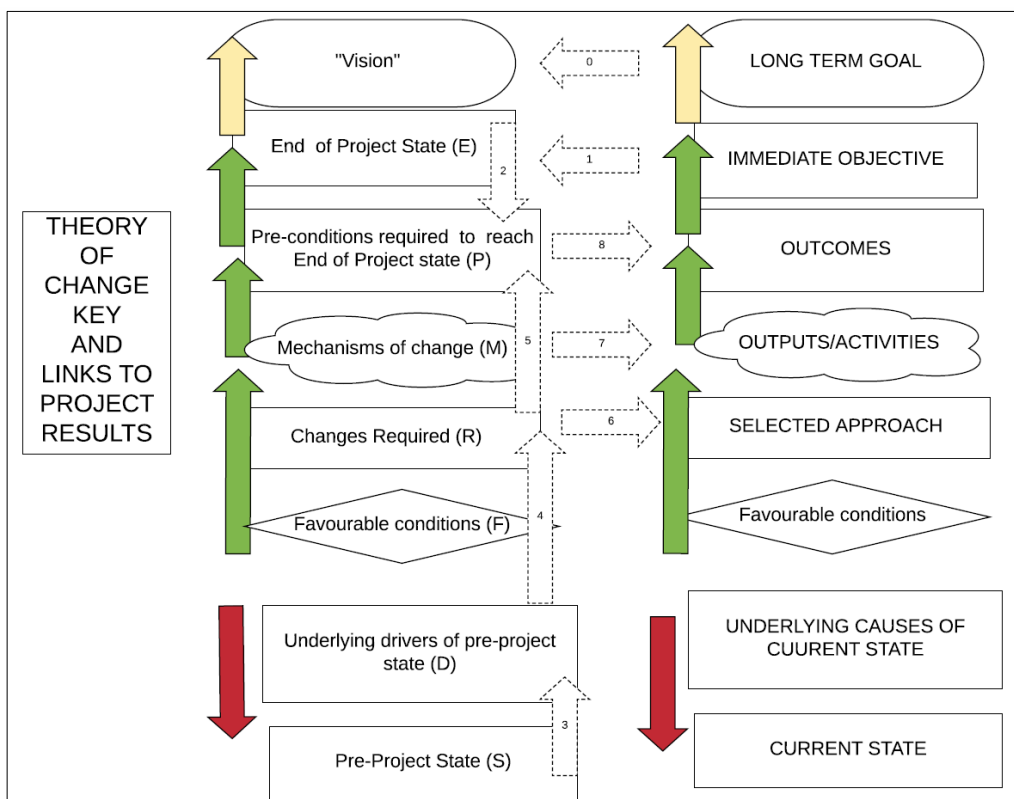


FIGURE 3: The Project's Theory of Change



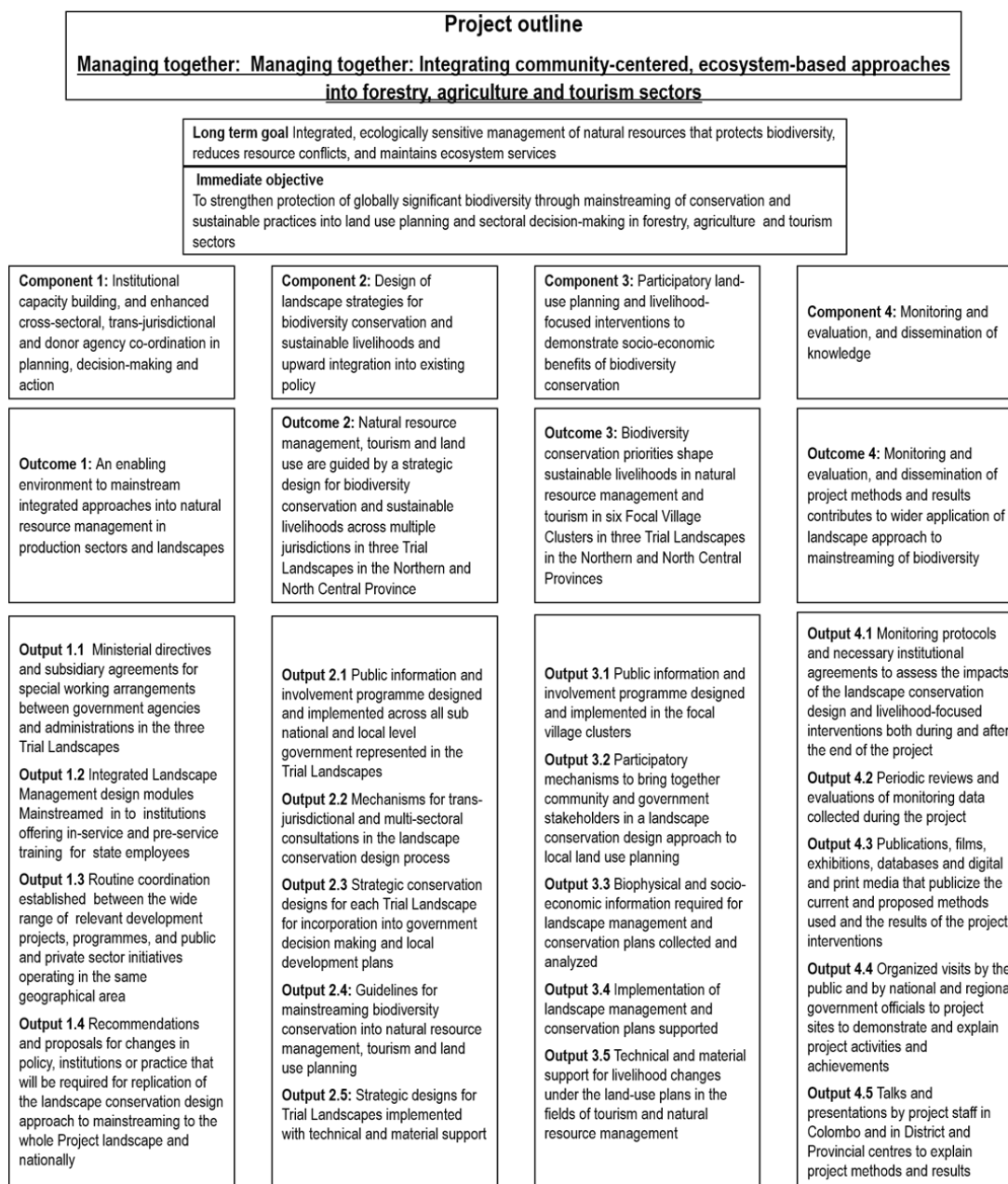


FIGURE 4: *The Project Outline showing how achievement of the Long Term Goal and Immediate Objective is supported by the four Project Components with a supporting Outcome and several Outputs under each Component*

### 2.3 Baseline Indicators established

1. The ProDoc contains a well-developed Project Results Framework (PRF), which includes Indicators under the Project Objective and each Outcome, with a Baseline, Mid-term Target and End-of-Project Target for each Indicator. These are shown in Annexes 1 and 2 of this report (the Progress Towards Results Tables) and are not repeated here.

### 2.4 Main stakeholders

1. The ProDoc contains a well-developed Stakeholder Engagement Plan in section 4.4. and Annex F, which identifies the main organizational stakeholders, their normal roles and responsibilities and their relationship and/or participation with the Project. There are a large number, as would be expected in a Project entitled Managing Together and with

the aim of "mainstreaming" biodiversity into natural resource management, and these are not repeated here, but include stakeholders from the following broad categories:

- a) National Government Ministries and Departments.
- b) Provincial Council Ministries and Departments
- c) Local Government administrations.
- d) Local Residents acting independently of any organization.
- e) National Civil Society/Non-Governmental Organizations.
- f) Local Civil Society/Non-Governmental Organizations.
- g) Military and civil law enforcement agencies.
- h) General public outside the local area.
- i) Lenders and donors to international development projects.
- j) Universities and other places of learning and research.

2. The ProDoc also includes a section on 'partnerships' in section 4.2, which includes a table listing potential partners and how they relate to the Project. This includes a number of existing development programs and project and outlines how they relate to the Project and how the Project can benefit from coordinating and cooperating with them.

## 2.5 Project implementation arrangements

1. (see also section 3.2.6 below) The GEF Agency is UNDP through the Sri Lanka Country Office, with the Sri Lankan Ministry of Environment (MoE) as the lead national Executing Agency, under a UNDP National Implementation Modality (NIM). UNDP has also entered into a Letter of Agreement (LoA) with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in Sri Lanka as the Responsible Party for day-to-day management of the Project, under the coordination of the MoE National Project Director (NPD).
2. A Project Management Unit (PMU) has been established at IUCN comprising a Project Manager (PM), Senior Technical Adviser (STA) (vacant at the time of the MTR), Communication & Learning Officer (CLO), Finance & Procurement Associate (FPA) and Project Assistant (PA), plus three Community Conservation Experts (CCEs), with one based in each of three the TLs. The PMU is also back-stopped by the IUCN Country Representative and other country office staff.
3. Overall oversight of the Project is conducted by a Project Board, now called the National Steering Committee (NSC), (which is a misnomer, as the Project does not have national scope). The NSC is chaired by the Secretary of MoE with the NPD acting as secretariat, and members include UNDP, IUCN and other project partners. The ProDoc also provides for a Technical Advisory Group (TAG), and while this was very active during the project-design phase, it does not appear to have been convened since project inception.

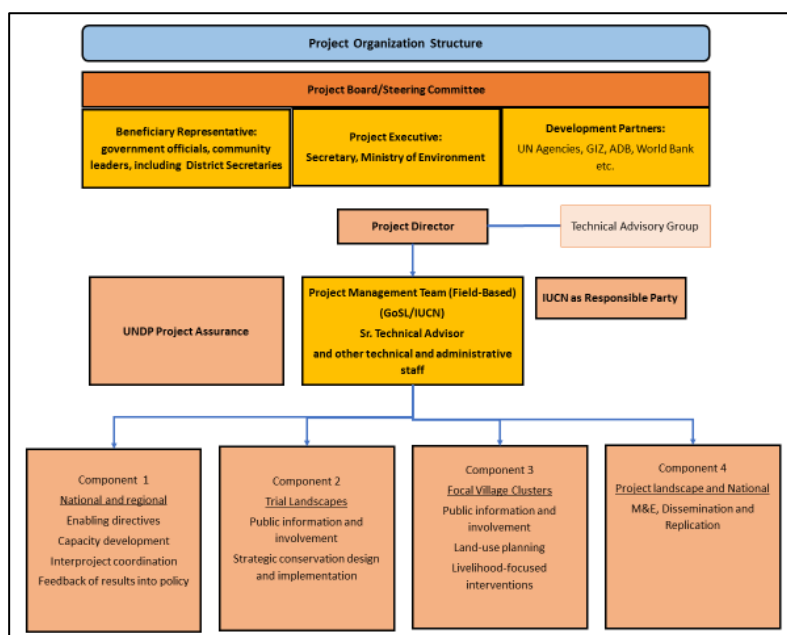


FIGURE 5: *The Project management and governance arrangements*

### 3. MTR FINDINGS

#### 3.1 Adequacy of MTR arrangements

1. The MTR was commissioned by the UNDP Country Office in Sri Lanka, which took the lead in making all necessary arrangements, with some support from IUCN Project Staff for the visits to the TLs.
2. Some aspects of the MTR arrangements were outstanding, as follows:
  - a) The support from the UNV at UNDP was extremely well organized, responsive and timely with attention to detail.
  - b) Provision of Project documentation by UNDP and IUCN was efficient and comprehensive (some gaps had to be followed up).
  - c) MTR planning and turn around of the Inception Report by UNDP was very efficient.
  - d) Travel, logistics and stakeholder meeting schedules were extremely well organized.
  - e) MoE, IUCN and other stakeholders were very welcoming and engaging with the evaluators.
  - f) UNDP, MoE & IUCN staff, including very senior staff, were very responsive to the MTR.
3. For future evaluations it is recommended that the positive aspects of the arrangements for this MTR, including the high level of organization and support from UNDP, be continued.
4. Some aspects of the MTR arrangements were problematic, as follows:
  - a) UNDP Payment System:
    - UNDP was transitioning to a new global payment system during the MTR period, which was causing blockages to payments, did not inform the MTR consultants about this before mobilizing them, and took considerable time to resolve the issues, which caused delays to the overall MTR.
    - It is recommended that UNDP should ensure consultants are fully informed of possible system problems and delays BEFORE mobilization – so they can make informed decisions and plan accordingly.
  - b) MTR time frame was highly compressed:
    - Only 10 days were allowed for in-country meetings, stakeholder interviews & site visits. The MTR consultants proposed 18 days as much more realistic to allow more representative and rigorous MTR – even 12-14 days would have been a big improvement – this was rejected by UNDP citing budget constraints, despite the budget being significantly underspent.
    - In TL1 only 3 out of 500 farms were visited / many stakeholders could not be interviewed / the GEF Tracking Tool & Co-financing review sessions could not be held / there was insufficient time to prepare the Preliminary Findings presentation in-country.
    - Given that UNDP was fully aware of the significant problems with the Project, the MTR should have been treated as a vital opportunity to evaluate these problems in detail and develop effective corrective measures – which is the very purpose of MTR and requires adequate time to allow for representative and rigorous evaluation.
    - UNDP needs to allow adequate time (and budget) for future project evaluations, and consider the advice of evaluation experts as to what minimum time is required to achieve a representative and rigorous evaluation.

c) Lack of understanding of MTR purpose:

- It was clear during interviews that many stakeholders did not understand the purpose of the MTR (especially District and Divisional level govts). Many stakeholders tried to use the meetings to present additional project proposals / lobby the evaluators for additional funding.
- It is important to ensure that all stakeholders are fully briefed on the purpose of evaluations.

d) Lack of independence of some interviews & site visits:

- It was clear during interviews that many stakeholders (esp. District, Divisional & Village levels) were simply reciting a standard script.
- Reports were received that IUCN project staff were briefed to report 'positively' – which infringes the requirement for all staff to be allowed to make independent, objective, anonymous inputs.
- In TL1 the Project's CCE did not accompany the MTR at all, and apart from the one-on-one MTR interview (as per all project staff), was conspicuous by absence. The TL1 site visits were coordinated by the Project's Agricultural Consultants – who have direct vested interests and thus impaired independence of the site visits.
- It is important to ensure, as much as possible, the independence of interviews and site visits, including NOT delegating Project Consultants to coordinate MTR activities.

5. Recommendations from this section are included in section X.

## 3.2 Assessment of Project Design

### 3.2.1 Overall Project design

1. The MTR finds the Project design to be well developed and based on a thorough consultation process. Future project designs should be based on a similarly thorough consultation process as was carried out for the MTP (i.e. the MTP provides a model).
2. Some ProDoc wording is a bit 'cumbersome' and overly academic and could be simpler and clearer. ProDoc's should avoid cumbersome / overly academic wording and use simple, clear language that can be understood by all project stakeholders.
3. Project Design is not overly prescriptive and allows some flexibility to develop technical activities under each Outcome during the implementation phase (a 'bottom up' approach) (although this has allowed some 'drift' from the project intent and PRF targets and indicators - see section X for details). While allowing some flexibility to develop technical activities under each Outcome during the implementation phase can be useful in helping to ensure that technical activities are aligned with local needs and priorities, it can cause 'drift' from the project intent and PRF targets and indicators. Bottom-up inputs should be incorporated during the early design phase, not after project implementation has commenced.
4. The ProDoc includes multiple well-developed Annexes, including *inter alia*:
  - a) Gender Analysis & Action Plan,
  - b) Social & Environmental Screening,
  - c) Stakeholder & Partner Engagement Plan; and
  - d) various Scorecard assessments

5. However, actual implementation of these has been problematic – basically they have not been used / implemented - see section X for details.
6. Project implementers should make use of and fully implement all supporting ProDoc Annexes, including the Gender Analysis & Action Plan, Social & Environmental Screening, Stakeholder & Partner Engagement Plan; and various Scorecard assessments.

### 3.2.2 Assessment of Project Results Framework

1. The MTR finds that the Project Results Framework (PRF) is well developed with a clear overall Project Objective and subordinate Outcomes and Outputs, and set Baselines, Indicators, Mid-term Targets and End-of-Project Targets for the Objective and each Outcome.
2. However, three of the PRF Indicators (7, 9 and 11) are not SMART and need replacement, as follows (SMART = Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant & Time-bound):
  - Existing Indicator 7: *Annual percentage of Minor and Major Permit applications in which biodiversity impact criteria used in decisions by Coast Conservation Department (CCD) in Trial Landscape 3.*
    - Baseline: No permit applications available before the inception.
    - Mid-term Target: New permit applications if available.
    - End-of-Project Target: Increase of permit applications from mid-term review.
3. This Indicator and its Baseline and Targets do not make sense and cannot be measured. The MTR assumes that the intent is for the Project to work with CCD to incorporate biodiversity impact criteria into its decision making process for coastal protection and engineering works. The MTR observed poorly conceived coastal protection structural works (a beach groin which did not incorporate biodiversity criteria and appears to be causing erosion downstream on the coast) and other coastal problems (severe erosion at the river mouth) in TL3 – which need to be addressed (Figure 6).
4. It is recommended that this Indicator be revised as follows:
  - New Indicator 7: *Number of coastal management interventions assessed, approved and/or undertaken by CCD that incorporate biodiversity impact criteria.*
    - Baseline: 0
    - Mid-term Target: 0 (too late for target).
    - End-of-Project Target: 100%
5. It is recommended that the Project should work with CCD to develop and implement the necessary best practice biodiversity impact criteria for coastal management interventions (there are multiple models available globally).
  - Existing Indicator 9: *Estimate of the annual amount of carbon (tCO<sup>2</sup>eq) sequestered / emissions avoided over the twenty years following the project's inception taking into account progress on the development, adoption, and implementation of the strategic designs at the heart of the project.*
    - Baseline: 889,058 Ha
    - Mid-term Target: 889,058 Ha
    - End-of-Project Target: 889,058 Ha

6. This is an unrealistic / non-useful Indicator as it assumes that all planned Project interventions will be undertaken (which they clearly won't) and cannot account for future developments in next 20 years. Even if undertaken, the results will not be of any practical use to anyone, it will just be an academic exercise. The Baseline and Targets are also meaningless, they are just the total combined land area for the three TLs repeated, and thus do not show any 'progress' or 'improvement' due to Project interventions, which means they are not actually Targets.
7. It is recommended that this Indicator be revised to the following, and include both green and blue carbon, with green carbon representing terrestrial vegetation (forests and agriculture) and blue carbon representing aquatic vegetation (including freshwater plants in rivers, streams, tanks, lakes, ponds and wetlands throughout all three TLs, and marine vegetation in TL3 – mangroves and seagrasses).
  - New Indicator 9: Undertake whole-of-landscape' green carbon estimate for each TL now (current status) (do both green/blue for TL3) as a baseline for future assessments, including training of relevant personnel in undertaking green / blue carbon inventories.
  - Baseline: No green / blue carbon inventory for the Project area and no personnel trained in undertaking green / blue carbon inventories.
  - Mid-term Target: 0 (too late for target).
  - End-of-Project Target: Green / blue carbon inventories undertaken for each TL, and 10 personnel trained in undertaking green / blue carbon inventories (also link training to existing Indicator 4 on overall training).
8. The Project, through the NSC, will need to decide which personnel from which institutions should receive the training.
  - Existing Indicator 11: Estimate the extent of damage to corals due to anthropogenic activities along fixed transects in the three major coral reef areas of Trial Landscape 3 (Silavathurai, Arippu, and Vankalai) measured against a baseline using standard coral reef monitoring methodology (English et al. 1997). The abundance of selected species of fish and large invertebrates will also be estimated using standard methods. A decrease in damage to corals due to anthropogenic activities (e.g. destructive fishing) during the project period may indicate a positive impact due to the implementation of the project:
    - Baseline: Measured after one year against baseline condition measured by inception **Note**: Baseline will be measured after training of community participant according to research plan. Baseline will be established within 1,500 ha of coral reef / seagrass habitats. The 1<sup>st</sup> surveys will be done in end of 2021.
    - Mid-term Target: Changes to baseline by 10%.
    - End-of-Project Target: Changes to baseline by 30%.
9. The MTR IC (who is a global marine expert) has concerns about the practicality and usefulness of this Indicator, the wording and Targets simply do not make sense scientifically and do not relate to specific Project interventions that will result in a reduction in anthropogenic impacts on coral reefs (the Project does not contain any such interventions).
10. It is recommended that this Indicator be dropped as there is no time remaining for the Project to do anything meaningful on reducing coral reef impacts. It is recommended that in TL3, for marine issues the Project should focus only on:
  - a) Mangrove restoration as per Indicator 3.
  - b) Dugong by-catch in fishing nets (Indicator and activities need to be developed).
11. Finally, while project management is referenced in the ProDoc M&E plan, the PRF does not include a Component (Component 5) on Project Management – which is a significant deficiency. The PRF should always include a component on Project Management, which is an essential component of any project, and this should include



Outcomes, Outputs, Targets and Verifiable Indicators for the PMU, linked to the M&E plan. The M&E plan should be a sub-set of project management, not vice-versa.



FIGURE 6: *Example of coastal erosion and protection issues in TL3 – mouth of the Malwathu Oya River*

### **3.2.3 Assumptions & risks**

1. The MTR finds that the ProDoc addresses assumptions and risks extremely well in a dedicated section 4.3, supported by detailed analysis in Annex E - UNDP Social & Environmental Screening and Annex H - UNDP Risk Log. In fact the MTR finds that the way that assumptions and risks are addressed in the Project design provides a best-practice model for other Projects. The problem is that the design has not been applied properly during Project implementation.
2. Section 4.3 includes a table which describes 12 different risks that the Project faces according to risk type (political, regulatory, financial, operational, social and environmental), ranks them into high, medium and low risk categories, assesses their likely probability and impact, proposes mitigation measures for each, and allocates an 'owner' (Project staff member) to be responsible for managing each risk.
3. The highest risk identified is Risk 11 and concerns possible negative reactions if people are asked or forced to relocate from forest areas designated as Elephant Corridors as part of overall conservation management. No Project funds will be applied directly to implementing any land acquisitions or involuntary relocations. However, government or other development partners who operate in the Project area may well apply their own funds to this. Should this occur the Project may be associated, at least by perception. This is because any involuntary relocations that take place within the TLs should be included as integral components of the landscape designs developed for each TL by the Project. It is therefore essential that the Project should engage with the implementers of any involuntary relocations that might occur within the TLs comply with UNDP and GEF safeguards standards for resettlement.

### **3.2.4 Lessons from other relevant projects incorporated into Project design**

1. The MTR finds that the ProDoc puts significant emphasis on the need for the Project to learn relevant lessons from other projects and from the global community of practice during the implementation phase, and also puts significant emphasis on the need for the Project to share the lessons that it learns with other parties. However, there is nothing explicit in the ProDoc that indicates that the design itself has incorporated lessons from other relevant projects.

2. Section 2 of the ProDoc on 'Partnerships' is relevant to this issue, as it identifies a range of other programs and projects that MTP can collaborate and coordinate with during implementation, as listed in Table 2 above. However, again this does not explicitly incorporate lessons from those other programs and projects into the design of MTP.
3. The MTR consultants are aware of various international best practice guidelines on mainstreaming biodiversity, including the IUCN report 'Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Priority Economic Sectors' and the IUCN-Species Survival Commission 'Position Statement on the Management of Human-Wildlife Conflict'. Despite IUCN itself being a key project partner and contributor to the Project design, these are not even mentioned in the ProDoc as sources of lessons.
4. Overall the MTR concludes that the Project design does not appear to explicitly incorporate lessons from other programs and projects.

### **3.2.5 Planned stakeholder participation**

1. The MTR finds that the ProDoc addresses planned stakeholder participation extremely well, including a dedicated section on 'partnerships' in section 4.2, and a well-developed Stakeholder Engagement Plan in section 4.4 and Annex F (as described under section 2.5 above).
2. As with other aspects of the Project, the problem is that the design has not been applied properly during Project implementation (see section 3.3.3 below).

### **3.2.6 Management arrangements**

1. The MTR finds that the Project's management arrangements are described comprehensively but somewhat awkwardly in the ProDoc, in three separate sections as follows; Section 3.6 - General principles of project management & implementation, Section V - Project Management and Section VIII - Governance & Management Arrangements.
2. Section 3.6 - General principles of project management & implementation includes the following (summarized):
  - a) Operate within existing policy and institutional frameworks and categories of land protection.
  - b) Keep the scope narrow enough to achieve results but wide enough to have continued impact.
  - c) Emphasize the importance of highly qualified and effective project personnel based full time in the Project landscape.
  - d) Do not be over-prescriptive, allowing for adaptive management and maintaining flexibility in activities.
  - e) Demonstrate and publicize Project results to stimulate continuation and replication elsewhere.
  - f) Emphasize short, regular and sustained interactions with local government and community stakeholders.
  - g) Involve central government in seeking feedback on project reports, in capacity building in different sectors, and in drawing up recommendations for possible policy changes.
  - h) Synergize and collaborate with relevant donor-funded and government-funded projects, in particular the UNDP/GEF/GOSL Environmentally Sensitive Areas project; the ADB/GOSL Northern Provinces Sustainable Fisheries Project and the GIZ/GOSL Management of Wilpattu National Park and Influence Zone Phase 2).
  - i) Collaborate with private and public sector partners.
  - j) Upward integration of results to established planning frameworks.
  - k) Contribute to biodiversity conservation through engagement with donor agencies regarding mainstreaming of biodiversity into poverty alleviation and rural development programmes.
  - l) Take particular care to avoid common pitfalls and flawed assumptions in planning livelihood-focused interventions for biodiversity conservation. E.g. 'alternative livelihoods' unless well planned, can easily become supplementary sources of income that may even subsidize the original damaging practices.
  - m) Environmental and biodiversity assessment will be required for every project intervention.
3. Section V - Project Management, basically outlines the structure of the Project Management Unit (PMU) to be recruited by IUCN but under the direction of the MoE National Project Director (NPD) – given that MoE is the primary Executing Agency under NIM, and IUCN is 'sub-contracted' to do day-to-day management (referred to as the



Responsible Party). This arrangement has the IUCN-employed Project Manager (PM) working primarily from the IUCN office, but also in the MoE office two days and week and in the field in the three TLs when needed. It is not clear why there needs to be both an NPD and a PM, noting that there is also a higher level overall Project Executive (PE) – who is the Secretary of MoE and who chairs the Project Board (see below). Normally a single position should be in charge of the Project.

4. The MTR finds this complex, multi-layered arrangement to be somewhat unwieldy and inefficient, which has manifested in the poor performance seen in project delivery to date. The MTR assesses that it would have been more efficient and effective to have a single organization responsible for coordinating all in-country implementation, with enhanced support from UNDP.
5. The ProDoc intent was to locate the PMU in Manner, closer to all three TLs than if located in Colombo, and to develop the Project office as a 'centre of excellence' where anyone (private individual, journalist or government official) who wants to know about biodiversity conservation in the northern provinces automatically refers. While being of noble intent, the MTR has doubts that this would have been effective given the time, resources, expertise and effort required to develop a real 'centre of excellence', and the fact that project staff need to focus fully on managing and implementing the Project. A proper 'centre of excellence' would be more suited to an academic institution where there are long-term experts, academics and researchers, not a short-term project office that is focused on administering a project. There is also currently a lack of developed infrastructure, facilities and services in Manner, which would constrain effectiveness of such an office. As it turned out the PMU was established at the IUCN office in Colombo, with a Community Conservation Expert (CCE) being based in each of the three TLs – which in the MTR's assessment is the better arrangement.
6. Section V of the ProDoc also provides for the PMU to include a Senior Technical Adviser (STA), a Learning and Communications Officer (LCO) and a Safeguards and Monitoring Officer (SMO). An STA was engaged for less than a year and is currently vacant, the LCO has only recently been recruited, and an SMO has not been recruited. However, IUCN has recruited a Finance and Procurement Officer (FPO) and a Project Assistant (PA) to the PMU using Project funds. . Oddly, these positions are not mentioned in Section V of the ProDoc, but appear in Annex D.
7. Despite describing these project management arrangements in the narrative in Section V, the PRF does not include a Component 5 on Project Management – which is a significant deficiency. The PRF should always include a component on Project Management, which is an essential component of any project, and this should include Outcomes, Outputs, Targets and Verifiable Indicators for the PMU, linked to the M&E plan. Without these, there is no framework for monitoring and evaluating the performance, delivery and effectiveness of the PMU against SMART indicators, which is essential.
8. Section VIII - Governance & Management Arrangements, builds on Section V in that it outlines the broader Project management and governance arrangements, including the roles of the different parties and management 'organs' as follows:
  - a) UNDP: As the GEF Agency for the Project, and under NIM, UNDP is responsible for supervision, oversight and quality assurance of the Project, while remaining totally independent from day-to-day implementation. UNDP's role is to support the Project Board, MoE and PMU by carrying out objective and independent project oversight and monitoring functions, and ensure that project management milestones are managed and completed. UNDP's costs for this role are covered by the GEF Agency fee.
  - b) MoE: As the lead national Executing Agency for the Project, MoE's role is to:
    - Designate the Secretary of MoE as the Project Executive (PE), who chairs the Project Board and is ultimately responsible for ensuring that MoE meets all of its responsibilities to implement the Project.
    - Designate the Director of the Biodiversity Division as the National Project Director (NPD), who provides the secretariat to the Project Board and is responsible for the day-to-day coordination of MoE's responsibilities to implement the Project, including ensuring that IUCN meets its responsibilities.

- Manage the Project to ensure that all Outcomes, Outputs, Targets and Indicators are achieved, and undertake monitoring and evaluation of project interventions and ensure the effective use of GEF funding, including by IUCN.
- c) IUCN: As the 'sub-contracted' Responsible Party for Implementation, IUCN's role is to:
- Employ, manage and support the PMU staff (as described above).
  - Manage day-to-day implementation of Project activities, in accordance with approved annual workplans and under the supervision of the Project Board, PE and NPD
  - Prepare and submit all required progress reports, monitoring and evaluation reports and reports as required in the Responsible Party Agreement.
- d) Project Board (now National Steering Committee - NSC): The NSC is the overall coordinating body for the Project and should comprise a core membership of the key representatives from UNDP, MoE and IUCN, plus as required representatives from other relevant national government ministries and departments (e.g. DoWC and FD, provincial, district and divisional governments in the three TLs and other stakeholders (but only if required and when relevant) (when the MTR consultants attended the NSC meeting on 8 February 2023 they were very surprised to see a very large number of participants from a wide range of organizations – including consultants with vested interests driving certain agendas - it is recommended that this be rationalized for future NSC meetings). The role of the NSC is to:
- Make management decisions, by consensus, when guidance is required by the PM, including recommendations for IP approval of project workplans and budgets and revisions.
  - Addressing any project level grievances.
  - Play a critical role in project monitoring and evaluations by providing quality assurance and using evaluations for performance improvement, accountability and learning.
- In order to ensure UNDP's ultimate accountability, Project Board decisions should be made in accordance with standards that shall ensure management for development results, best value for money, fairness, integrity, transparency and effective international competition.
- e) Beneficiary Representatives: This is a small but representative group of government officials and community leaders from the three TLs, including the District Secretaries of Anuradhapura and Mannar Districts. Its primary function is to ensure the realization of Project results from the perspective of the local-level beneficiaries, and represent these at NSC meetings.
- f) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC): A TAC was convened during the Project design phase and the ProDoc proposes that it should continue to meet quarterly in years one and two and biannually in years three and four to give technical and scientific guidance to the Project. As far as the MTR can ascertain the TAC has not meet since Project implementation commenced.
9. The Project management and governance arrangements are shown in Figure 5, copied from the ProDoc. The overall assessment of the MTR is that these arrangements are fairly standard, although the fact that both MoE and IUCN have implementation responsibilities makes the system somewhat complex. As with other aspects of the Project design, while the design is sound, implementation has been problematic.

### **3.2.7 Replication & up-scaling approach**

1. The MTR finds that the ProDoc puts significant emphasis on the need to maximize benefits from the Project by replicating and up-scaling positive achievements of the Project and communicating and sharing lessons and good practices from the Project throughout Sri Lanka.
2. The Project strategy contains a number of Outputs which relate directly to replicating and up-scaling Project achievements as follows:
  - Output 1.2: Integrated Landscape Management design modules mainstreamed into institutions offering in-service and pre-service training for state employees.
  - Output 1.4: Recommendations and proposals for changes in policy, institutions or practice that will be required for replication of the landscape conservation design approach to mainstreaming nationally.
  - Output 2.1: Public information and involvement programme designed and implemented across all sub national and local level govt authorities represented in the Trial Landscapes.
  - Output 2.4: Guidelines for mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into natural resource management, tourism and land use planning.
  - Output 4.3: Publications, films, exhibitions, databases and digital and print media that publicize the current and proposed methods used and results of the project interventions.
  - Output 4.4: Organized visits by the public and by national and regional government officials to project sites to demonstrate and explain project activities and achievements.
  - Output 4.5: Talks and presentations by project staff in Colombo and in District and Provincial centres to explain project methods and results.
3. The overall assessment of the MTR is that the Project design is strong with regard to replication and up-scaling of Project benefits, however as with other aspects of the Project design, implementation has been problematic.

### **3.3 Project Implementation**

#### **3.3.1 Adaptive management**

Requires a rating: MTR rates as 'Moderately Satisfactory'

1. The MTR assesses that there was poor adaptive management by the implementing and executing partners in response to significant problems and challenges in the first 1.5 years of the Project, as the parties did not adapt to address the problems and hence the problems and delays persisted. It should be noted that UNDP, in its oversight and QA role, made multiple attempts to get the Project on-track, including meetings with MoE and IUCN at the most senior level, however for reasons that are not clear to the MTR, the partners initially not respond to these efforts, and then began responding but slowly.
2. In the last six months adaptive management appears to be improving and both MoE and IUCN have been making concerted efforts to accelerate implementation of activities. However, adaptive management may have now gone 'too far' in that MoE and IUCN decided to move away from the ProDoc PRF and led the Project to focus primarily on agricultural activities in TL1, at the expense of other project elements and the other TLs, which is one of the major problems with the Project (see section 3.3.2 below). There is an urgent need for the MoE and IUCN to refocus on adhering to the ProDoc PRF.
3. Adaptive management could be assessed as 'Unsatisfactory' to date however the situation is beginning to improve hence the MTR allocates a more positive rating of Moderately Satisfactory. This could improve further if the recommended corrective measures are implemented.

### 3.3.2 Appropriateness & effectiveness of Project activities to date

1. The MTR assesses that the Project has lost intended focus on mainstreaming biodiversity into integrated, cross-sectoral landscape planning, and this needs to be corrected. The Project has become a 'pot of money' for ad-hoc, uncoordinated activities without an overall Strategic Integrated Landscape Plan for each TL being developed first.
2. Numerous and various local-level proposals are being submitted to the Project without:
  - a) standard guidelines on what sub-projects are appropriate and relevant,
  - b) standard proposal template; and
  - c) clear project assessment and approval criteria.
3. Many of the local-level proposals shared with the MTR are not relevant or appropriate to the Project Objective and Outcomes and some pose significant safety, environmental and/or social risks.
4. The MTR assesses that the Project has been 'high-jacked' into an agricultural development project – which would be more appropriately undertaken by the Departments of Agriculture and Irrigation, and not the Ministry of Environment, and at the UN-level, by FAO, and not by UNDP-GEF.
5. The Project has been assisting ~500 farmers to plant maize, coconuts, mangoes, citrus, water-melon, guava and other perennials, and install drip irrigation and supply inorganic chemical fertilizer. These interventions do not meet the definition of compatible with biodiversity conservation listed in Indicator 10 – and in many ways go directly against it.
6. The MTR visited farms in TL1 that have been assisted by the Project, and interviewed multiple stakeholders about their views on the agricultural activities, including beneficiaries and the two agricultural consultants who have been contracted by the Project to manage these activities. As a result the MTR has serious questions about the soundness and appropriateness of the agriculture activities, including:
  - a) duplication of other government departments, institutions, programs and projects, including but not limited to the Departments of Agriculture and Irrigation, the Coconut Cultivation Board, some of the Projects listed in Table 1 above, the Sustainable Agriculture Production Project (SAPP), Climate Resilient Integrated Water Management Project (CRIWMP), Agriculture Sector Modernization Project (ASMP), Climate Smart Irrigated Agriculture Project (CSIAP) and others.
  - b) adherence to farmer selection criteria,
  - c) gender equality,
  - d) transparency of procurement and distribution procedures,
  - e) quality control and oversight of on-ground activities; and
  - f) potential vested and conflicting interests.
7. In terms of adherence to farmer selection criteria the MTR observed one case where an existing and successful water-melon farmer had received funding and support from the Project, including drip irrigation, plastic mulch and inorganic fertilizer, to simply replicate /expand his water melon fields, with no obvious link to the Project's core objective of mainstreaming biodiversity (Figure 7). Clearly Project funds should prioritise assistance to farmers who actually need assistance to improve their livelihoods, and not expand an existing productive farm.
8. The same farmer, by his own admission, had already been provided with more than enough drip-irrigation pipe from another donor (as shown in Figure 8), which raises obvious questions as to why MTP is also providing him with the same materials. Any such support should obviously go to a more needy beneficiary.
9. The MTR also has concerns about the environmental soundness and cost-benefits of providing farmers with plastic mulch, as shown in Figure 9. This material will break down over time, causing plastic contamination of the soil. It is also an expensive, imported product, which means that ultimately some the Project funds used to purchase the material will be diverted offshore to pay the manufacturer, as well as pay the importer, supplier, retailer and other 'middle men' in Sri Lanka.

10. A much more appropriate approach would be for the Project to provide coconut husk mulch to the farmers, and preferably set up a long-term supply arrangement rather than one-off provisions, to ensure sustainability. Coconut husk mulch is organic and environmentally sound, consistent with the core objectives of MTP, will break down over time to enhance soil fertility (i.e. in addition to acting as mulch it is also a natural fertilizer), and is produced locally in Sri Lanka, ensuring that Project funds used to purchase it are kept in the country rather than benefitting overseas suppliers.
11. The MTR visited one farm where the farmer reported that they had received 90 coconut seedlings from the Coconut Cultivation Board (CCB) with proper instructions on spacing, land preparation and planting from the CCB field officer. They were then provided with another 20 coconuts seedlings from MTP. Clearly if the farmer already had 90 from the CCB they did not need more from MTP, and the 20 should have been provided to another farmer who truly needs them. This is another example of adherence to farmer selection criteria that are supposed to support those most in need.
12. The MTR observed cases where the planting distances between coconut seedlings and inter-planting with fruit trees was way less than the standard specifications required, which will impair the viability of the plantings, and indicating poor technical oversight, quality assurance and monitoring and verification (Figure 10).
13. The MTR was also introduced to two personnel who were employed by the Project's agricultural consultants, using Project funds, to undertake technical oversight and site verification of the very activities that the Project is paying the agricultural consultants to implement. This is clearly a serious conflict of interest – paying consultants to employ people to monitor and evaluate themselves. This also conflicts with the advice from IUCN to the MTR that the Project is using the local-government Agricultural Development and Economic Development Officers to undertake technical oversight and site verification of the agricultural activities. This situation needs to be investigated further and clarified.
14. All farms visited by the MTR are within catchments of major tanks and micro-catchments of the small tanks of cascade tank systems. That means the Project could be actually supporting intensive agricultural activities encroaching into areas of critical importance for conservation of both terrestrial as well as aquatic biodiversity. As outlined in section 3.2.7 above one of the core management principles of the Project is that *environmental and biodiversity assessment will be required for every project intervention*. Clearly the Project is not complying with this requirement.
15. The MTR found that as a result of the priority focus on agricultural activities in TL1 and a little in TL2, there has been no substantive progress on other activities, including development of eco-tourism livelihoods, and no progress at all on physical implementation of any activities in TL3. Development needs are clearly highest in TL3 and the key Project stakeholders with support from the TL3 CCE, have developed a number of very worthwhile activities that are ready to be implemented if approved. These include some very well designed eco-tourism developments, a eucalyptus nursery to reduce harvesting of mangroves for fishing poles, a mangrove nursery and restoration project, and avenue planting for schools.
16. Given these problems the MTR recommends the following:
  - a) The Project give immediate approval and prioritise the implementation of the various activities that are ready to be commenced in TL3, to assist them in catching up with TLs 1 and 2.
  - b) The Project re-align its focus towards mainstreaming biodiversity into integrated, cross-sectoral landscape planning and implementing the ProDoc PRF.
  - c) The Project develop an overall Strategic Integrated Landscape Plan for each TL, and all technical activities in each TL should be coordinated under those plans, through the recommended Integrated Catchment Coordinating Committees in each TL.
  - d) For local-level project proposals the Project needs to develop standard guidelines on what sub-projects are appropriate and relevant, a standard proposal template and clear project assessment and approval criteria.



- e) The Project must ensure that all local-level projects and activities are subject to proper E&S screening.
- f) With regard to the current agricultural activities, it is strongly recommended that:
- Immediately halt all and any further procurements and rollout of crops, seeds, seedlings, irrigation systems, fertilizer and other materials under this activity.
  - Complete only what has already been contracted out and financially committed up to MTR.
  - UNDP engage a strictly independent agricultural expert to undertake on-site verification and technical audit of 100% of all farms that have been assisted by this activity – and report to UNDP (the MTR only had time to visit 3 of ~500 farmers – and all 3 exhibited problems).
  - UNDP engage a strictly independent forensic financial audit of all procurements and cash flows, including tracking all expenditure trails to end points, under this activity – and report to UNDP.
- g) Any further agriculture activity that might be undertaken should:
- Be strictly within the framework of the Strategic Integrated Landscape Plan, which should be developed for each TL first, as recommended under Indicator 1.
  - Focus on truly ecologically sustainable methods only (e.g. as shown in Figures 11 & 12).
  - Focus on assisting the most needy groups and women.



FIGURE 7: The MTR observed one case where an existing and successful water-melon farmer had received funding and support from the Project, including drip irrigation, plastic mulch and inorganic fertilizer, to simply replicate /expand his water melon fields, with no obvious link to the Project's core objective of mainstreaming biodiversity



FIGURE 8: The same farm as Figure 5 had already been provided with drip-irrigation pipe from another donor



FIGURE 9: The MTR has concerns about environmental soundness and cost-benefits of providing farmers with plastic mulch.



FIGURE 10: The MTR observed cases were the planting distances between coconut seedlings and inter-planting with fruit trees was way less than the standard specifications required, which will impair the viability of the plantings, and indicating poor technical oversight, quality assurance and monitoring and verification





FIGURE 11: Any further agriculture activity that might be undertaken should focus on truly ecologically sustainable methods only – such as replacing diesel-powered irrigation pumps such as this one, with solar-pumps throughout all three TLs. This would be an extremely beneficial intervention, not only improving ecological sustainability, but also significantly reducing production costs by eliminating the need for farmer to purchase diesel



FIGURE 12: Any further agriculture activity that might be undertaken should focus on truly ecologically sustainable methods only – such as supporting use of organic rather than inorganic fertilizers (these are charred rice husks)



### 3.3.3 Effectiveness of partnerships, communication & engagement

1. As outlined in section 3.2.5 above the MTR finds that the ProDoc addresses planned stakeholder participation extremely well, however as with other aspects of the Project, the problem is that the design has not been applied properly during Project implementation.
2. 'Managing Together' is the very theme of the Project and the implementing and executing partners should put significant effort into partnerships, communication and engagement, including the Stakeholder Engagement Plan already developed in section 4.4 and Annex F of the ProDoc. However, this does not appear to have been implemented, and several stakeholders, including some very relevant senior government officials, advised that they are not aware or know very little about the Project.
3. The Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWC) and the Forest Department (FRD), including the local offices located in the three TLs, advised they knew nothing about the Biodiversity Surveys undertaken across the TLs by IUCN, when they should have been key partners, including holding significant data on biodiversity that could have been used.
4. As outlined above the Project is undertaking activities that are covered by other government departments, institutions, programs and projects, including but not limited to the Departments of Agriculture, Agrarian Development Department and Irrigation Department, the CCB, some of the Projects listed in Table 1 above, the Sustainable Agriculture Production Project (SAPP) Climate Resilient Integrated Water Management Project (CRIWMP), Agriculture Sector Modernization Project (ASMP) and Climate Smart Irrigated Agriculture Project (CSIAP) and others – without proper coordination.
5. As outlined above the Project is currently coordinating only at the Divisional Level through the Divisional Agriculture Committees and not the Divisional Environment Committees, which are more relevant to the biodiversity-mainstreaming objectives of the Project. The Divisional Committees have a very local focus, which is important for coordinating on-ground implementation of technical activities, but there also needs to be a whole-of-TL coordination mechanism in each TL, in the form of a cross-sectoral, cross-jurisdictional Integrated Catchment Coordinating Committee in each TL catchment basin.
6. Like all of the Project activities to date, communication is being done on a largely unplanned, ad-hoc, reactive basis – without an overall Communication Strategy. The Projects need a proper Communication Strategy.
7. The Project needs to make much greater efforts to improve partnerships, communication and engagement and the MTR recommends the following:
  - a) Make full use of the already developed Stakeholder Engagement Plan in Annex F of the ProDoc (which seems to have been ignored).
  - b) Undertake an updated stock-take of all other relevant organizations and initiatives in each TL, and seek to coordinate with these, leverage synergies and avoid duplication and overlap.
  - c) In addition to coordinating at the Divisional Level through the Divisional Agriculture Committees, also work through the Divisional Environment Committees, which are more relevant to the biodiversity-mainstreaming objectives of the Project.
  - d) Form a cross-sectoral, cross-jurisdictional Integrated Catchment Coordinating Committee in each TL catchment basin, to coordinate activities at the TL-level.
  - e) Develop and implement a proper Communication Strategy which includes:
    - Communication objectives, with a focus on promoting the mainstreaming biodiversity into all landscape sectors.
    - Target audiences & Key messages.
    - All modern communication techniques, tools, mediums and activities.
    - Budget and workplan.

### 3.3.4 Effectiveness of Implementing & Executing Partners

Requires a rating: MTR rates as 'Unsatisfactory' (for all 3 partners).

#### UNDP

1. The Project is implemented under UNDP's National Implementation Modality (NIM), with GoSL through MoE having lead responsibility for day-to-day implementation, and UNDP playing a less hands-on, general oversight and Quality Assurance (QA) role.
2. The UNDP CO claims that this has limited its ability to intervene to correct the numerous problems and delays that the Project has been experiencing. The MTR does not share this view and assesses that as the GEF Agency for the Project, even under NIM the UNDP CO still has a direct responsibility to ensure that the implementing and executing partners spend all GEF funds and undertake all Project activities in strict accordance with the ProDoc, PRF, Workplan and Budget, and all relevant UNDP and GEF policies and procedures.
3. As outlined above the management and governance arrangements for the Project described in section VIII of the ProDoc clearly state that UNDP's role includes supporting the Project Board, MoE and PMU by carrying out objective and independent project oversight and monitoring functions, to ensure that project management milestones are managed and completed.
4. To be fair the UNDP CO has made multiple efforts to get MoE and IUCN to address the numerous problems and delays that the Project has been experiencing, including *inter alia* several meetings at the most senior levels of MoE and IUCN, but these have not been effective, as evidenced by the fact that the numerous problems and delays have continued, as found by the MTR.
5. It is not clear to the MTR why MoE and IUCN did not take the necessary corrective measures when requested to do so by UNDP, but it is clear that UNDP needs to become more directly involved, assertive and strict in its oversight and QA role. **This requires increased CO support to NIM, which requires additional Project resources to be allocated to UNDP. This needs to be discussed with the NSC.**
6. To address this the MTR recommends that UNDP implement the following actions:
  - a) Robustly follow up with the Implementing Partners when corrective actions are not implemented within set timeframes.
  - b) Commission the audits recommended under section 3.3.5 - Financial Management, below.
  - c) Shift the Project from NIM to Enhanced UNDP-support for NIM.
  - d) Closely assess IUCN's performance against the Letter of Agreement and PRF over the next 3 months, and if performance is not adequate, consider replacing IUCN with another suitable agency.
  - e) Directly contract the following three Project positions under Individual Contracts, with all reporting directly to UNDP:
    - The Senior Technical Adviser (STA) – to work across MoE, IUCN and the 3 Tls.
    - A dedicated MEL Officer, to also work across MoE, IUCN and the 3 Tls.
    - A Project Support Officer (PSO) to be embedded in MoE.
    - Safeguards expert consultant.
    - Gender consultant.
7. **As outlined above this requires additional Project resources to be allocated to UNDP and this needs to be discussed with the NSC.**
8. MOE
  1. Under the NIM modality, MoE is the lead GoSL Executing Agency, with the Secretary of MoE appointed as the Project Executive (PE) and Chair of the NSC, and the Director of the Biodiversity Division appointed as the overall National Project Director (NPD). As outlined above as the lead National Executing Agency, MoE has the lead responsibility to

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manage the Project to ensure that all Outcomes, Outputs, Targets and Indicators are achieved, and undertake monitoring and evaluation of project interventions and ensure the effective use of GEF funding, including by IUCN.

2. Because MoE staff members already have significant workload from their core day-to-day duties, and because GoSL has issued a policy prohibiting the establishment of project-specific Project Management Units (PMUs) within Ministries and Departments, MoE does not have the internal capacity to manage the entire Project.
3. IUCN has therefore been 'contracted' by UNDO to manage most of the Project on MoE's behalf, while MoE retains direct responsibility for policy matters, overall coordination and monitoring of project implementation
4. Unlike IUCN – which is able to use Project funds to recruit Project staff, including the Project Manager (PM) (see IUCN below), MoE cannot do this. As a result, despite MoE staff being highly qualified and highly committed, due to the competing demands of their normal day-to-day duties, they are struggling to manage even MoE's elements of the Project, as well as oversee IUCN's activities.
5. This has hampered MoE's effectiveness as the Executing Agency, and has contributed to the numerous problems and delays that the Project has been experiencing.
6. MoE (with IUCN) has also not adhered to the ProDoc PRF and has led the Project to focus primarily on agricultural activities in TL1, at the expense of other project elements and the other TLs, which is one of the major problems with the Project (see section 3.3.2 above) (Lack of the Project Technical Committee and failure of the National Steering Committee also can be accounted for such deviations from the ProDoc PRF.
7. The monitoring and evaluation responsibilities of MoE have also not be properly met, as exemplified by the fact that MoE has not been able to get IUCN to take corrective actions to address the mutiple problems and delays being experienced by the Project.
8. MoE has also failed to take necessary corrective actions, when concerns were raised by the most senior levels of UNDP.
9. There is a clear need to enhance the capacity of MoE as the Executing Agency. To address this the MTR recommends the following actions:
  - a) The PE and NPD take action, in coordination with UNDP and IUCN, to ensure that MoE meets its responsibilities to ensure that all Proeject Outcomes, Outputs, Targets and Indicators are achieved, undertake monitoring and evaluation of Project interventions and ensure the effective use of GEF funding, including by IUCN.
  - b) The NPD in coordination with UNDP and IUCN, to refocus on adhering to the ProDoc PRF.
  - c) The UNDP CO directly contract the positions listed above, including a Project Support Officer (PSO) to be embedded in MoE.
10. Another useful initiative, perhaps for future projects, as it may be too late for MTP, would be for GoSL to lift its ban on PMUs within Ministries and Departments, so that MoE can use Project funds to recruit Project staff, and relieve workload demands on line-staff who have other competing duties.

### IUCN

1. As outlined above IUCN has been 'sub-contracted' to manage most of the Project, and has used Project funds to recruit a PMU based in Colombo, comprising the PM, LCO, FPA and PA plus three CCEs based in the three TLs. In addition the STA position was filled for less than a year, and is currently vacant – which is a significant constraint on the Project.
2. The MTR assesses that IUCN's effectiveness as the Responsible Party has been highly problematic, including *inter alia*:
  - a) The IUCN-related issues cited under section 3.3.5 – Financial management & co-finances.

- b) Extremely slow staff recruitment and procurement timeframes, contributing to long delays in implementation of activities.
  - c) Poor engagement, communication and coordination with other key stakeholders, as outlined under Item 8 below.
  - d) Along with MoE, not adhering to the ProDoc PRF and allowing the Project to focus primarily on agricultural activities in TL1, at the expense of other project elements and the other TLs, which is one of the major problems with the Project (see section 3.3.2 above).
  - e) Failing to take necessary corrective actions, when concerns were raised by the most senior levels of UNDP.
3. There is a clear need to enhance the effectiveness of IUCN as the Responsible Party. To address this the MTR recommends the following actions:
- a) In coordination with UNDP and MoE, refocus on adhering to the ProDoc PRF.
  - b) UNDP to closely assess IUCN's performance against the Letter of Agreement and PRF over the next 3 months, and if performance is not adequate, consider replacing IUCN with another suitable agency.
  - c) The other recommended actions under UNDP above will also assist in enhancing IUCN's performance.
  - d) Do NOT move PMU to Manner – remain in Colombo.
  - e) Need Admin Support Officer in the TLs (located in either TL3 or TL1 but support all 3).
  - f) Need to clarify and optimize basing of the TL2 CCE and allocate all activities in TL2.
  - g) Need dedicated vehicles in TL1 and TL3/2 (esp TL3).
4. It is noted that a new IUCN Country Representative took charge of the IUCN Country Office during the MTR period and there are hopes that this will also help facilitate positive change in IUCN's effectiveness as the Responsible Party.

### **3.3.5 Financial management & co-finance**

1. It should be noted that the MTR consultants are not accountants or financial auditors, and it would be useful if the financial management aspects of the Project were assessed by relevant financial experts.
2. Financial management of MTP is complicated by running through three separate and different systems (UNDP, GoSL and IUCN) which makes it difficult to track and reconcile financial reports and expenditures through the different systems, and also creates additional transaction costs than if funds flowed only from UNDP to a single Implementing Partner.
3. The MTR consultants reviewed Quarterly Progress Reports (QPRs) from both MoE and IUCN to UNDP, which include expenditure reporting under the UNDP ATLAS system, and could not make any sense out of the reports in term of aligning actual expenditure with the planned budget for each Project Component, Outcome and Output as contained in the ProDoc. The use of LKA in the QPRs when the ProDoc budget is in USD, made it impossible for the MTR to assess actual expenditure (LKA) against planned expenditure (USD), given wide fluctuations in the USD to LKA exchange rate, linked to the Sri Lankan financial crises.
4. Normally UNDP would provide the evaluators with copies of all of the project's Combined Delivery Reports (CDRs) that are prepared annually by UNDP. For some reason for this project the CDRs have not been provided. This further constrains the ability for the evaluators to assess the financial aspects of the project.
5. The annual, self-assessed Project Implementation Reviews (PIRs) do not contain detailed financial reporting and only present summary data on cumulative disbursement totals. Only one PIR (2022) was available to the MTR – and this reports:
  - a) Cumulative General Ledger delivery against total approved amount (in ProDoc): 7.31%
  - b) Cumulative General Ledger delivery against expected delivery as of the year: 9.08%

6. These are unprecedented low expenditure rates for a GEF project and clearly indicated serious underlying problems that needed to be investigated by UNDP and addressed by the parties. However, despite this extremely low delivery rate, the PIR allocates an overall rating of only 'moderately' unsatisfactory and an overall risk rating of only 'moderate' – when they should have been 'highly unsatisfactory' and 'very high' respectively.
7. While there are several legitimate reasons for this lack of progress that were beyond the control of the project parties, including the COVID-19 pandemic and Sri Lankan financial crises, the extremely low rate of progress and limited time remaining clearly requires URGENT CORRECTIVE ACTIONS as recommended by this MTR Report. There is also a clear need for a 12 month and ideally 24-month no-cost extension to the project.
8. The MTR also makes the following observations with regard to financial issues:
  - a) There are some indications of wasteful and unnecessary expenditures – e.g. hosting a planning meeting at an expensive resort outside of the Project area – this is totally inappropriate for a poverty-alleviation / development project and should not happen again.
  - b) IUCN awarded itself a contract to do Biodiversity Surveys – without transparent due process and NSC approval – this is highly concerning and should not happen again.
  - c) A financial 'spot check' of IUCN by UNDP ending Dec 2021 found irregularities, including that IUCN has not maintained separate bank account not possible to reconcile bank statements against the accounting records. This is very concerning and must be addressed. Other issues found by the 'spot check' include, *inter alia*:
    - IUCN has charged 9.5% from each project related expense, despite the fact that this is not provided for in the LoA with UNDP. This has been decided internally by IUCN without UNDP or MoE / NSC approval, which is not acceptable – all use of GEF project funds, and esp admin fees should be pre-approved and agreed.
    - Spot-checker could not verify LKR2.5 million charged by IUCN during the spot-check period.
    - There are inconsistencies between financial records in IUCN's system and FACE Forms submitted by IUCN to UNDP.
    - IUCN transferred funds between budget lines at its own discretion, without UNDP approval.
  - d) Salaries paid to IUCN PMU staff much less than budgeted in the ProDoc. This raises the question of where have those funds gone? IUCN also claims that it pays Project staff a range of benefits based on IUCN's compensation policy, including superannuation (EPF, ETF, gratuity provisions) benefits and other statutory benefits (OPD, surgical and hospitalization, person accident cover). However, there is no evidence that these have actually be paid or provided to Project staff, and again it does not correlate to the budget allocations for Project staff in the ProDoc, which should be followed
  - e) There was an unexplained halt in December 22 to 'hazard pay' to TL3 staff. IUCN stated that this pay was only approved until December 2022, but did not explain why. This needs to be investigated and explained.
  - f) The MTR has serious questions about the Agricultural Development activities in TLs 1 and 2, including transparency of procurement and distribution procedures, and potential vested and conflicting interests. While IUCN states that it applied IUCN process to beneficiary selection and procurement, the MTR directly observed concerns with these, as outlined in section 3.3.2.
  - g) Despite very high inflation, the main project cost of staff salaries has not increased and the USD to LKR exchange rate has significantly increased the available in-country budget – this can be used to address some of the recommended Corrective Actions
9. With regard to co-financing, while the 2021 Inception Workshop proposed a tool to report co-financing, and the 2022 PIR included some co-financing data from MoE and IUCN, the Project did not report co-financing at MTR (GEF policy requires the Project to do this).

10. To address these issues the MTR recommends the following actions:

- a) All Project meetings and workshops should be held in modestly priced venues appropriate to a poverty-alleviation / development project, and within the Project area, to keep benefits within the Project area and reduce travel costs (and carbon footprint).
- b) MoE and IUCN should not award any contracts without following transparent, due process and approval by the NSC, including UNDP.
- c) UNDP commission a full external Financial Audit annually, starting this year (2023).
- d) UNDP commission a strictly independent forensic financial audit of all procurements and cash flows, including tracking all expenditure trails to end points, for the Agricultural Development activities in TLs 1 and 2.
- e) IUCN explain why PMU staff are paid much less than budgeted in the ProDoc, and advise the NSC where those funds have gone, and confirm that all benefits that IUCN claims it pays to Project staff are actually paid.
- f) IUCN explain why 'hazard pay' to TL3 staff was halted in December 2022, and advise the NSC where those funds have gone.
- g) MoE and IUCN begin tracking and reporting co-financing, as required by GEF policy.
- h) UNDP undertake a proper quantitative assessment of the actual additional funds available to the Project from the ongoing changes in the USD to LKA exchange rate, and reallocation of any extra funds achieved by this, to implementing the corrective actions recommended in this MTR report.

### **3.3.6 Effectiveness of Project monitoring & evaluation**

Requires a rating: MTR rates as 'Unsatisfactory'.

#### M&E design at entry

1. The MTR finds that the ProDoc contains very well developed monitoring and evaluation (M&E) arrangements.
2. The PRF Indicators and Targets provide the framework for assessing progress towards each Indicator and Target and should form the bases for all M&E reporting.
3. The ProDoc contains a dedicated M&E Plan in section VII, which includes:
  - a) Clear allocation of M&E responsibilities.
  - b) Clear definition of UNDP-GEF M&E requirements: Inception Workshop Report, annual Project Implementation Reports (PIRs), Lessons-learned & Knowledge Generation activities, MTR (this report) and Terminal Evaluation (TE).
  - c) A requirement for M&E of E&S risks in accordance with the E&S Screening (Annex E of the ProDoc).
  - d) A requirement for an E&S Grievances mechanism.
  - e) A requirement for M&E of the Gender Action Plan (Annex G of the ProDoc).
  - f) A requirement for M&E of the Project Risk Log (Annex H of the ProDoc).
  - g) A requirement for Supervision mission to Project sites by MoE and IUCN.
  - h) A requirement for Oversight missions to Project sites by UNDP.
  - i) A requirement for the NSC to act as the penultimate M&E body for the Project.
4. The ProDoc also contains Project Core Indicators in Annex B and pre-Project Scorecards for Sustainable Tourism Indicators, Landscape Performance Indicators and Capacity Development Indicators in Annexes Y, Z1 and Z2 respectively, which all provide useful baseline scores that are supposed to be re-scored during and at the end of the Project, providing an additional powerful M&E tool.
5. The only deficiency that the MTR finds with the design of the M&E arrangements is that M&E should be MEL (Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning), and there should be greater emphasis on the MEL lessons-learned and knowledge generation activities that facilitate the learning aspects.

M&E implementation

1. Given that the Project design includes such well-developed M&E arrangements, implementation of M&E during the Project should have been to a very high standard. However, as with other aspects of the Project, the problem is that the design has not been applied properly during Project implementation. Problems observed by the MTR include:
2. The UNDP M&E Associate should have directly managed the MTR, and this should be taken on for future evaluations.
3. In performing its oversight role, UNDP has convened multiple management review meetings (at senior management level) to address the Project's implementation delays. These meetings were followed up with workplans and commitments from IUCN. The issues have also been discussed at the NSC. Unfortunately, for reasons that could not be clearly established by the MTR, these efforts have not been effective – agreed corrective actions and workplans have not been fully implemented in a timely manner, and the Project continued to go way off track with extremely low achievement against the PRF. Despite significant efforts, UNDP CO has not been able to exercise 'effective' oversight and QA of the project partners. Even high level attempts to address problems have not resulted in actual corrections by MoE and IUCN.
- 4.
5. The Project has not developed and implemented sound protocols for independent monitoring of project impacts at village and District levels, as required by Indicator 15.
6. The Project has not completed or updated the Core Indicators for input to the MTR, which is a mandatory GEF requirement.
6. The Project has not made use of the Project Core Indicators in Annex B of the ProDoc and pre-Project Scorecards for Sustainable Tourism Indicators, Landscape Performance Indicators and Capacity Development Indicators in Annexes Y, Z1 and Z2 of the ProDoc respectively, as additional powerful M&E tools.
7. The 'weekly' progress reports to the MoE Secretary (Project Executive) is overkill and counter-productive, taking staff away from actual project implementation – fortnightly or preferably monthly progress reports would be better.
8. Project progress reports, including the one PIR produced so far, have a tendency towards activity-based reporting – they should focus more on outcomes and impacts and align more with reporting quantitatively against the PRF Indicators and Targets.
9. There is a clear need to enhance the effectiveness the Project's MEL, and the MTR recommends the following:
  - a) Shifting M&E to MEL (Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning) and placing greater emphasis on lessons-learned and knowledge generation activities.
  - b) Significantly enhancing UNDP's oversight of the Project, as per the recommendations under UNDP in sections 3.3.4 and 3.3.5 above.
  - c) The UNDP CO directly contracting a dedicated MEL Officer, to work across MoE, IUCN and the 3 TLs.
  - d) Developing and implementing sound protocols for independent monitoring of project impacts at village and District levels, as required by Indicator 15.
  - e) Completing and updating the GEF Tracking Tools – a mandatory GEF requirement.
  - f) Using the Project Core Indicators in Annex B of the ProDoc and pre-Project Scorecards for Sustainable Tourism Indicators, Landscape Performance Indicators and Capacity Development Indicators in Annexes Y, Z1 and Z2 of the ProDoc respectively, as additional powerful M&E tools.
  - g) Implementing a proper E&S Grievances Mechanism and ensuring thorough E&S assessment and reporting of all Project activities.

- h) Reducing the 'weekly' progress reports to the MoE Secretary to fortnightly or preferably monthly is better.
- i) Shifting all project progress reports away from activity-based reporting to focus more on reporting outcomes and impacts / aligned with PRF indicators. *As with all project progress reporting the monthly reports should focus on reporting on progress against the Project Objective, Outcomes Outputs, Indicators, Mid-Term Targets and End-of-Project Targets as contained in the ProDoc PRF, using the PRF as the reporting framework, and using quantitative, verifiable data. It should also identify barriers and delays encountered in the preceding month and recommend corrective actions to overcome these in the coming month, and report in these in each monthly report.*

### 3.4 Achievement of Project Results

#### 3.4.1 Progress towards Objective, Outcomes & Outputs

Requires a rating: MTR rates as 'Unsatisfactory' to 'Highly Unsatisfactory'.

9. The Project Objective, Outcomes, Outputs, Indicators, Mid-term Targets and End-of-Project Targets are derived directly from the Project Results Framework (PRF) contained in the UNDP Project Document (ProDoc).
10. The MTR's assessment of progress towards the Project Objective, based on achievement of the Objective's Indicators and Mid-term Targets, and likely achievement of the Objective's End-of-Project Targets, is presented in [Annex 1](#).
11. The MTR's assessment of progress towards the Project Outcomes, based on achievement of the Indicators and Mid-term Targets for each Outcome, and likely achievement of the End-of-Project Targets for each Outcome, is presented in [Annex 2](#).
12. The MTR's assessment of progress towards the Project Outputs, based on the MTR's assessment of output documents and progress reports, is presented in [Annex 3](#).
13. Assessment of progress against the Indicators and Targets is based on direct, interactive inputs provided by UNDP and IUCN staff during a PRF review session convened by the MTR consultants at the UNDP office in Colombo on 8 February 2023. This was followed by crosschecking, infilling, expansion and verification by the MTR consultants based on detailed review of progress reports and output documents, and the findings from stakeholder interviews.
14. In summary, the findings are as follows (please refer Annexes 1, 2 and 3 for detailed assessment):
  - All Indicators and Targets combined - of the 25 Indicators (16 main plus 9 sub-indicators) in the ProDoc PRF:
    - Two could not be assessed due to lack of data / problems with the Indicators.
    - Only one mid-term Target has been achieved and is on track to achieve the end-of-project Target (4% achievement rate).
    - 24 mid-term Targets have NOT been achieved (96% mid-term failure rate).
    - 20 end-of-project Targets are NOT on track to be achieved (80% end failure rate).
    - Five end-of-project Targets could potentially be achieved if urgent corrective action is taken (20%).
  - Objective: Most of the Objective Indicators have not been achieved at MTR and are not on track to be achieved by project end (refer Annex 1).
  - Outcome 1: One of the two Outcome 1 Indicators has not been achieved at MTR and is not on track to be achieved by project end, while the other cannot be assessed by the MTR due to lack of data / problems with the Indicator (refer Annex 2).



- Outcome 2: Three of the four Outcome 2 Indicators have not been achieved at MTR and are not on track to be achieved by project end, while the fourth cannot be assessed by the MTR due to lack of data / problems with the Indicator (refer Annex 2).
  - Outcome 3: Most of the Outcome 3 Indicators have not been achieved at MTR and are not on track to be achieved by project end (refer Annex 2).
  - Outcome 4: One of the two Outcome 4 Indicators has not been achieved at MTR and is not on track to be achieved by project end, while the other has been partially achieved and could be achieved by Project end with corrective action (refer Annex 2).
  - Outputs: Almost 100% of the Project Outputs have not been achieved and are not on track at MTR (refer Annex 3).
15. When considering that an 80% achievement rate is required for a project to be assessed as 'satisfactory', these results represent an extreme, unprecedented rate of project failure - and require URGENT CORRECTIVE ACTIONS as recommended by this MTR Report.
16. The reasons for this extreme lack of progress against the PRF are varied and appear to include the following:
- a) A 12-month delay to Project-start, staff recruitment etc (which are themselves symptoms of underlying problems – not causes).
  - b) The COVID pandemic and associated lock-downs and slow down in the ability to work.
  - c) The Sri Lankan financial crises – slowing down Government processes.
  - d) Failure to follow the PRF – instead the Project has become a 'pot of money' for ad-hoc, uncoordinated activities, mainly in the form of agricultural 'hand-outs', without an overall Strategic Landscape Plan in each TL.
  - e) NSC's decision to prioritise agricultural activities in TL1 and a little in TL2 – at the expense other Project Outcomes. The Project has thus been 'high-jacked' into an agricultural development project.
  - f) Moving away from the intended focus on mainstreaming biodiversity into integrated, cross-sectoral landscape planning.
  - g) NSC's decision to prioritise TL1 followed by TL2 then TL3 in a sequential staged approach – rather than an equal, parallel approach (when TL3 has greatest needs).

### **3.4.2 Relevance**

Requires a rating: MTR rates as 'Highly Relevant'.

1. The MTR finds that the Project is highly relevant to:
  - a) Three GEF Focal Areas (Biodiversity, Sustainable Forest Management & Land Degradation).
  - b) All 14 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
  - c) The UNDP Strategic Plan and Country Programme Document.
  - d) Sri Lankan Government strategic development and related plans at national, provincial, district and local levels.
  - e) The needs of the local people.
2. All stakeholders engaged by the MTR at all levels strongly emphasized the relevance, importance, benefits and value of the Project, and the need to implement all of its components.

3. There are no doubts about the relevance of and vital need for the Project. Given the very high relevance of and demand for the Project, every effort needs to be made by the Project partners (UNDP, IUCN and MoE) to ensure its effective implementation in the remaining period.

### **3.4.3 Mainstreaming of gender equality & social inclusion**

1. As outlined above the ProDoc contains a well-developed Gender Action Plan (Annex G of the ProDoc). However, as far as the MTR can assess, this has not been implemented by the Project, and as with other important and useful ProDoc Annexes, appears to have been largely ignored.
2. The MTR recommends the following in relation to gender equality issues:
  - a) Implement the ProDoc Gender Action Plan.
  - b) Ensure that ALL sub-projects and activities include gender inclusion and equality elements.
  - c) Ensure that ALL MEL reporting includes reporting on gender outcomes.

### **3.4.4 Sustainability**

#### **3.4.4.1 Financial sustainability**

1. One of the most important measures of success of a project is whether its outcomes and benefits will be replicated and sustainable, and this requires allocation of adequate post-project financial resources. Unfortunately, GoSL including MoE and local governments are currently facing a significant financial crisis, and this is likely to persist for at least several years. These pressures along with competing national priorities like basic poverty alleviation, education and health make it highly unlikely that GoSL will be in a position to allocate significant financial resources to ensure sustainability of MTP outcomes, once GEF funding comes to end.
2. It would appear that the best prospect for financial sustainability of MTP outcomes, including scaling up and replication in other parts of Sri Lanka, is further support from development partners, until such time that the economic situation in the country improves.
3. Given this reality, it is recommended that MoE with the support of UNDP begin to scope out additional potential development to support financial sustainability of MTP outcomes, including scaling up and replication.

Evaluation Rating: Highly Unlikely.

#### **3.4.4.2 Socio-political sustainability**

1. There appears to be a high level of social and political support for the Project's objectives, outcomes and benefits and the MTR received multiple statements from national and local government staff, local community members and other stakeholders of a wish to continue to implement MTP-related activities into the future, even if these are not yet backed up with documented and budgeted plans.

Evaluation Rating: Moderately Likely (but Unlikely if not supported by financial resources)

#### **3.4.4.3 Institutional & governance sustainability**

1. Overall, at MTR the Project has not been effective in establishing the institutional framework and governance arrangements that are needed to ensure the sustainability of Project outputs, outcomes and benefits into the future. However there is still scope to achieve this by the end of the Project if efforts are commenced ASAP. The highest

priority in this regard is to establish the TL-level, cross-sectoral, Integrated Catchment Coordinating Committee in each TL, as the core institutional and governance framework for each TL.

Evaluation Rating: Moderately Likely (but only if the Project moves quickly to establish the Integrated Catchment Coordinating Committee in each TL)

#### 3.4.4.4 Environmental sustainability

1. If most Project outcomes are achieved by the end of the Project, then environmental benefits would theoretically be positive and prospects for environmental sustainability should be likely. However, as reported in section 3.4.2 it seems highly unlikely that most outcomes will be achieved by the end of the Project, especially those relating to biodiversity mainstreaming. Many of the activities implemented to date, especially the agricultural development activities, are not aligned with environmental sustainability, and to date there has been a lack of application of environmental safeguards, as outlined in section 3.3.2. It therefore seems that environmental sustainability of project outcomes is unlikely.

Evaluation rating: Unlikely.

#### 3.4.4.5 Overall sustainability

1. Combining the MTR assessments of financial, socio-political, institutional and governance and environmental sustainability as described above results in an assessment of overall sustainability of unlikely.
2. The MTR could not find any signs that any Project partners are planning and providing for sustainability, up-scaling and replication of project outcomes post-project.
3. A long-term sustainability plan should be a mandatory core-requirement of all sub-projects and activities supported by the Project.
4. In addition, IUCN & MoE should develop an overall Post-project sustainability, up-scaling and replication plan, for review and approval by the NSC (should be developed this year – NOT towards end of Project).

Overall Evaluation Rating: Unlikely.

## 4. CONSOLIDATED RECOMMENDATIONS

**NOTE:** These recommendations include those listed in the right-hand column of Table 2 in the Executive Summary, and also the Corrective Measures listed against each PRF Indicator in Annexes 2 and 3, so there is some repetition.

1. The recommendations are divided into:
  - a) 'Corrective Measures / Accelerated Implementation Measures (AIMs)', which are designed to bring the MTP back into line with the ProDoc and accelerate implementation so as to increase the level of achievement against the PRF targets and indicators; and
  - b) 'Quick Wins' which are proposed technical activities that are designed to have rapid positive impact within the 1.5 years of project time remaining (noting that the MTR also recommends a 12-month no-cost extension, which would allow another 2.5 years).
2. The recommendations are listed in the order that they appear throughout the narrative in the report, and not in any particular order of priority. Prioritization can be decided by UNDP, IUCN and MoE.

### 4.1. Recommended Corrective Measures / Accelerated Implementation Measures (AIMs)

Recommendation 1: Enhancing UNDP effectiveness: Recommended actions include:

## FINAL

- Robustly following up with the Project Implementing and Executing Partners when corrective actions are not implemented within set timeframes.
- Commissioning the spots checks and audits recommended under Recommendation 4 - Financial Management, below.
- Shifting the Project from NIM to Enhanced UNDP-support for NIM.
- Closely assessing IUCN's performance against the Letter of Agreement and PRF over the next 3 months, and if performance is not adequate, consider replacing IUCN with another suitable agency.
- The UNDP CO directly contracting the following three Project positions under Individual Contracts, with all reporting directly to UNDP:
  - The Senior Technical Adviser (STA) – to work across MoE, IUCN and the 3 TLs.
  - A dedicated MEL Officer, to also work across MoE, IUCN and the 3 TLs.
  - A Project Support Officer (PSO) to be embedded in MoE.

**Recommendation 2: Enhancing MoE effectiveness:** There is a clear need to enhance the capacity of MoE as an the Executing Agency. To address this, the MTR recommends the following actions:

- The PE and NPD take action, in coordination with UNDP and IUCN, to ensure that MoE meets its responsibilities to ensure that all Project Outcomes, Outputs, Targets and Indicators are achieved, undertake monitoring and evaluation of Project interventions and ensure the effective use of GEF funding, including by IUCN.
- The NPD in coordination with UNDP and IUCN, to refocus on adhering to the ProDoc PRF, as per the recommendations under Item 9 below - Appropriateness & effectiveness of Project activities to date.
- The UNDP CO directly contract the positions listed above, including a Project Support Officer (PSO) to be embedded in MoE.
- Another useful initiative, perhaps for future projects, as it may be too late for MTP, would be for GoSL to lift its ban on PMUs within Ministries and Departments, so that MoE can use Project funds to recruit Project staff, and relieve workload demands on line-staff who have other competing duties.

**Recommendation 3: Enhancing IUCN effectiveness:** There is a clear need to enhance the effectiveness of IUCN as the Responsible Party. To address this, the MTR recommends the following actions:

- In coordination with UNDP and MoE, refocus on adhering to the ProDoc PRF.
  - UNDP to closely assess IUCN's performance against the Letter of Agreement and PRF over the next 3 months, and if performance is not adequate, consider replacing IUCN with another suitable agency.
  - The other recommended actions under UNDP above will also assist in enhancing IUCN's performance.
  - Do NOT move PMU to Manner – remain in Colombo.
  - Need Admin Support Officer in the TLs (located in either TL3 or TL1 but support all 3).
  - Need to clarify and optimize basing of TL2 CCE / allocate all activities in TL2.
  - Need dedicated vehicles in TL1 and TL3/2 (esp TL3).
- It is noted that a new IUCN Country Representative took charge of the IUCN Country Office during the MTR period and there are hopes that this will also help facilitate positive change in IUCN's effectiveness as an the Responsible Party.

**Recommendation 4: Improving financial management:** Given the various problems with the project, the MTR recommends:

- All Project meetings and workshops should be held in modestly priced venues appropriate to a poverty-alleviation / development project, and within the Project area, to keep benefits within the Project area and reduce travel costs (and carbon footprint).
- MoE and IUCN should not award any contracts without following transparent, due process and approval by the NSC, including UNDP.
- UNDP commission a full external Financial Audit annually, starting this year (2023).
- UNDP commission a strictly independent forensic financial audit of all procurements and cash flows, including tracking all expenditure trails to end points, for the Agricultural Development activities in TLs 1 and 2.
- IUCN explain why PMU staff are paid much less than budgeted in the ProDoc, and advise the NSC where those funds have gone.
- IUCN explain why 'hazard pay' to TL3 staff was halted in December 2022, and advise the NSC where those funds have gone.

- MoE and IUCN begin tracking and reporting co-financing, as required by GEF policy.

Recommendation 5: Improving effectiveness of partnerships, communication & engagement:

- The Project needs to make much greater efforts to improve partnerships, communication & engagement, including making full use of the already developed Stakeholder Engagement Plan in Annex F of the ProDoc (which seems to have been ignored).
- The Project should undertake an updated stock-take of all other relevant organizations and initiatives in each TL, and seek to coordinate with these, leverage synergies and avoid duplication and overlap.
- The Project should form a cross-sectoral, cross-jurisdictional Integrated Catchment Coordinating Committee in each TL catchment basin, to coordinate activities at the TL-level (the Project is currently focused on the local level).
- The Project should develop and implement a proper Communication Strategy which includes:
  - Communication objectives, with a focus on promoting the mainstreaming biodiversity into all landscape sectors.
  - Target audiences.
  - Key messages.
  - All modern communication techniques, tools, mediums and activities.
  - Budget and workplan.

Recommendation 6: Improving Project monitoring & evaluation: There is a clear need to enhance the effectiveness of the Project's MEL, and the MTR recommends the following:

- Shifting M&E to MEL (Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning) and placing greater emphasis on lessons-learned and knowledge generation activities.
- Significantly enhancing UNDP's oversight of the Project, as per the recommendations under UNDP in sections 3.3.4 and 3.3.5.
- The UNDP CO directly contracting a dedicated MEL Officer, to work across MoE, IUCN and the 3 TLs.
- Developing and implementing sound protocols for independent monitoring of project impacts at village and District levels, as required by Indicator 15.
- Completing and updating the GEF Tracking Tools – a mandatory GEF requirement.
- Using the Project Core Indicators in Annex B of the ProDoc and pre-Project Scorecards for Sustainable Tourism Indicators, Landscape Performance Indicators and Capacity Development Indicators in Annexes Y, Z1 and Z2 of the ProDoc respectively, as additional powerful M&E tools.
- Implementing a proper E&S Grievances Mechanism and ensuring thorough E&S assessment and reporting of all Project activities.
- Reducing the 'weekly' progress reports to the MoE Secretary to fortnightly or preferably monthly is better.
- Shifting all project progress reports away from activity-based reporting to focus more on reporting outcomes and impacts / aligned with PRF indicators.

Recommendation 7: Improving appropriateness & effectiveness of Project activities:

- The Project should give immediate approval and prioritise the implementation of the various activities that are ready to be commenced in TL3, to assist them in catching up with TLs 1 and 2.
- The Project needs to re-align its focus towards mainstreaming biodiversity into integrated, cross-sectoral landscape planning and implementing the ProDoc PRF.
- Run a training and awareness program for UNDP, IUCN, MoE and other Govt agencies on 'what is?' mainstreaming biodiversity and integrated landscape and catchment management (using suitably qualified and experienced experts).
- The Project needs to develop an overall Strategic Integrated Landscape Plan for each TL, and all technical activities in each TL should be coordinated under those plans, through the recommended Integrated Catchment Coordinating Committees in each TL.
- For local-level project proposals the Project needs to develop standard guidelines on what sub-projects are appropriate and relevant, a standard proposal template and clear project assessment and approval criteria.
- The Project must ensure that all local-level projects and activities are subject to proper E&S screening.
- With regard to the current agricultural activities, it is strongly recommended that:
  - Immediately halt all and any further procurements and rollout of crops, seeds, seedlings, irrigation systems, fertilizer and other materials under this activity.
  - Complete only what has already been paid for up to MTR.

- UNDP engage a strictly independent agricultural expert to undertake on-site verification and technical audit of 100% of all farms that have been assisted by this activity – and report to UNDP (the MTR only had time to visit 3 of ~500 farmers – and all 3 exhibited problems).
- UNDP engage a strictly independent forensic financial audit of all procurements and cash flows, including tracking all expenditure trails to end points, under this activity – and report to UNDP.
- Any further agriculture activity that might be undertaken should:
  - be strictly within the framework of the Strategic Integrated Landscape Plans which should be developed for each TL first, as recommended under Indicator 1,
  - focus on truly ecologically sustainable methods only; and
  - focus on assisting the most needy groups and women.

Recommendation 8: Improving gender equality and social inclusion:

- Implement the ProDoc Gender Action Plan, ensure that ALL sub-projects and activities include gender inclusion & equality elements, as required by the Gender Action Plan and ensure that ALL MEL reporting includes reporting on gender outcomes, as required by the Gender Action Plan.

Recommendation 9: Improving likelihood of post-Project sustainability:

- A long-term sustainability plan should be a mandatory core-requirement of all sub-projects and activities supported by the Project.
- In addition, IUCN & MoE should develop an overall Post-project sustainability, up-scaling and replication plan, for review and approval by the NSC (should be developed this year – NOT towards end of Project).

Recommendation 10: Need for Project extension:

- It is clear that Project will struggle to achieve its Objectives & Outcomes in remaining <2 years.
- This will drive push to ‘spend funds quickly’ – which may not have quality outcomes / positive impact / creates potential for negative occurrences (misappropriation etc).
- It is strongly recommended to seek ideally an extra 24 months and at least an extra 12 months no cost Project extension, to complete the Project properly / ensure post-project sustainability and scaling up.
- (some question from UNDP if such extension is possible under GEF policy? MTR understands that it is fully possible to seek approval)

## 4.2 Recommended ‘Quick Wins’

Quick Win 1: Rapid Promotion of TL2 & 3 Ecotourism Livelihoods:

- Support DWC to develop infrastructure to open NW (Mollikulum - TL3) & NE (Thanthirimala - T2) entrances to Wilpattu National Park – to allow eco-tourism safari operators access from TL3 and TL2 (likely to be rapid uptake and positive livelihood returns).

Quick Win 2: Demonstrate best-practice biodiversity mainstreaming through ‘Elephant Corridors’:

- Under both PRF Indicators 3 & 6, prioritise and focus only on habitat rehabilitation and restoration of DWC identified elephant corridors in TLs 1 & 2 – including elephant fencing, water hole development and habitat enrichment planting
- Do not spend resources on restoration and habitat rehabilitation of other areas in this phase, except mangroves in TL3.

Quick Win 3: Learn from international best practice elephant/human conflict mitigation:

- Fund delegation from IUCN, MoE, DWC and FD to undertake fact-finding mission to Thailand, Lao, Cambodia and/or Vietnam.
- Report lessons-learned back to Sri Lankan national workshop on return home / incorporate best-practices into the Project.
- Make better use of expertise from IUCN global ‘community of practice’.

Quick Win 4: Technical equipment for DWC & FD

- Provide 2 drones each to DWC and FD field offices in the Project Area – to improve compliance monitoring and enforcement activities – including training in their use for natural resource management applications.

Quick Win 5: Improve Strategic Benefits & Reduce Negative Impact of Elephant Fencing:

- Commission Strategic Review & Comprehensive Site Audits of all current and proposed elephant fencing in all 3 TLs, by two relevant eminent experts (one national and one international).

**4.3 Additional Corrective Measures against PRF Indicators**

Please refer the right hand columns of Annexes 1 and 2.



## ANNEX 1: PROGRESS TOWARDS PROJECT OBJECTIVE

Based on achievement of Indicators &amp; Mid-term Targets &amp; likely achievement of End-of-Project Targets (derived from the ProDoc PRF)

Project Objective:	Objective Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term Target	End-of-Project Target	PIR Self-Assessment (2022)	Status at MTR	Justification for Score	Corrective Measures
To strengthen protection of globally significant biodiversity through mainstreaming of conservation and sustainable practices into land use planning and sectoral decision making in forestry, agriculture and tourism sectors.	<b>Indicator 1 (Ref. GEF Core Indicators 4 &amp; 5):</b> Area of land and marine habitat administered under a landscape conservation design that mainstreams biodiversity conservation into natural resource management (hectares):	Land 0 Sea 0	Land 80,000:	Land 155,000 ha	Stated not on track.  Provided long-winded narrative, which does really address the Indicator.	At MTR: Not achieved  By end: Not on track	At MTR - <b>Zero Ha administered under landscape conservation design that mainstreams biodiversity conservation</b> as a result of Project interventions.  No plans in place to achieve this by project end.	Prioritise <u>Strategic Integrated Landscape Plans</u> for all three TLs (TL3 to include <u>Seascape Plan</u> ), based on holistic, cross-sectoral, integrated catchment management, which <u>mainstreams biodiversity</u> .
			• TL1 - 44,000:	TL1 87,000	As above.	At MTR: Not achieved  By end: Not on track	As above.	As above.
			• TL2 - 27,000:	TL2 53,000	As above.	At MTR: Not achieved  By end: Not on track	As above.	As above.
			• TL3 - 9,000:	TL3 15,000	As above.	At MTR: Not achieved  By end: Not on track	As above.	As above.
			Marine (TL3) - 20,000:	TL3 55,000	As above.	At MTR: Not achieved  By end: Not on track	As above.	As above.

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Project Objective:	Objective Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term Target	End-of-Project Target	PIR Self-Assessment (2022)	Status at MTR	Justification for Score	Corrective Measures
To strengthen	<b>Indicator 2 (Ref: GEF Core Indicator 11):</b> The <u>number of people</u> , disaggregated by gender, that have <u>benefitted</u> either monetarily or non-monetarily, or both, from <u>project-induced changes in livelihoods</u> :	Male 0 Female 0	Male 500:	Male 1,600	Claimed to be on track, starting with identifying beneficiaries.	At MTR: Achieved* By end: On track*	PMU reports >500 – all from Ag activities in TL1 (Outcome 3). *PMU to revert with data	Diversify livelihoods to include non-Ag sectors such as eco-tourism.
			Female 500:	Female 1,600	As above.	At MTR: Not Achieved By end: On track*	PMU reports ~200 – all from Ag activities in TL1 (Outcome 3). *PMU to revert with data	Prioritise women & implement ProDoc Gender Action Plan. Diversify livelihoods to include non-Ag sectors such as eco-tourism. Support DWC to develop infrastructure to <u>open NW (Mollikulum - TL3) &amp; NE (Thanthirimale - T2) entrances</u> to Wilpattu National Park – to allow eco-tourism safari operators access from TL3 and TL2 (likely to be rapid uptake and positive returns on livelihoods).
	<b>Indicator 3 (Ref: GEF Core indicator 3):</b> Area of <u>tropical dry forest</u> and <u>mangrove</u> in the three Trial Landscapes <u>restored and rehabilitated</u> under a <u>landscape conservation design</u> (hectares):	0 ha	Dry Forest: - 6,000:	21,000	Claims to be on track, but only cites work that is still planned, not yet undertaken.	At MTR: Not achieved By end: Not on track	At MTR - <u>Zero Ha</u> of <u>dry forest or mangrove</u> have been <u>restored or rehabilitated</u> . Limited plans in place to achieve by project end.	See for each TL below.

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Project Objective:	Objective Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term Target	End-of-Project Target	PIR Self-Assessment (2022)	Status at MTR	Justification for Score	Corrective Measures
To strengthen			• TL1 - 2,500:	TL1 8,950	As above.	At MTR: Not achieved By end: Not on track	"	Combine with <u>Outcome 2, Indicator 6</u> – Prioritise and focus only on restoration and rehabilitation of DoWC identified <u>elephant corridors</u> in TL1 – including electric fencing and habitat enrichment planting & rehabilitation of water holes.  Revise end-of-project Ha target downwards to align with corridors areas only.  To enable progress on above, do not spend resources on other areas in this phase.
			• TL2 - 3,000:	TL2 8.950	As above.	At MTR: Not achieved By end: Not on track	"	Combine with <u>Outcome 2, Indicator 6</u> – Prioritise and focus only on restoration and rehabilitation of DoWC identified <u>elephant corridor</u> in TL2 – including electric fencing and enrichment planting & rehabilitation of water holes.  Revise end-of-project Ha target

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Project Objective:	Objective Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term Target	End-of-Project Target	PIR Self-Assment (2022)	Status at MTR	Justification for Score	Corrective Measures
To strengthen								downwards to align with corridor area only.  To enable progress on above, do not spend resources on other areas in this phase.
			• TL3 - 3 500:	TL 3 3,000	As above.	At MTR: Not achieved  By end: Not on track	"	To enable progress on mangroves as per below, do not spend resources on Dry Forest areas in TL3 (lower priority in TL3).
			Mangrove (TL3) - 20:	TL3 100	As above.	At MTR: Not achieved  By end: Not on track	Proposal has been developed to undertake mangrove restoration in TL3 – not yet commenced.	Accelerate implementation and expansion of mangrove restoration in TL3.

## ANNEX 2: PROGRESS TOWARDS PROJECT OUTCOMES

Based on achievement of Indicators &amp; Mid-term Targets &amp; likely achievement of End-of-Project Targets (derived from the ProDoc PRF)

	<u>Outcome Indicators</u>	<u>Baseline</u>	<u>Mid-term Target</u>	<u>End-of-Project Target</u>	<u>PIR Self-Assment (2022)</u>	<u>Status at MTR</u>	<u>Justification for Score</u>	<u>Corrective Measures</u>
<b>Outcome 1</b> <b>An <u>enabling environment to mainstream integrated approaches into natural resource management in production sectors and landscapes.</u></b>	<b>Indicator 4:</b> Number of <u>sectoral and vocational training institutions</u> that have <u>adopted modules on mainstreaming of biodiversity</u> into natural resource management, tourism and other economic development:	0	4	9	Claimed to be on track, citing commencement of ‘Training Needs Assessment’ of institutions within 3 TLs. Stated that future plans to start developing training modules (yet by MTR there had not been progress on this).	<b>At MTR: Not achieved</b> <b>By end: Not on track</b>	At MTR - <b>Zero Training Modules</b> developed and adopted.  No plans in place to develop these by project end.  MoE commissioned ‘Training Needs Assessment’ of institutions within 3 TLs – no action since.	<b>PMU to provide copy of training needs assessment report to MTR.</b>  Urgently commence development of Training Modules on biodiversity mainstreaming for all relevant training institutions operative in each TL.
	<b>Indicator 5:</b> <u>Capacity of institutions as measured by the UNDP’s Capacity Development Scorecard (CDS)</u>	District 18/45 Division 14/45	District 22/45 Divisional 17/45	District 30/45 Divisional 30/45	Claimed that ID of institutions had commenced.  Provided some long-winded narrative, which does really address the Indicator.	MTR cannot assess.	Basis of X/45 is not clear (what is 45?)  CDS has not been redone at MTR and no capacity building has been provided to Districts and Divisions.  Refer Annex Z of ProDoc.	UNDP to advise.
<b>Outcome 2: <u>Natural resource management, tourism and land use are guided by a strategic design for biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihoods across multiple jurisdictions in three Trial Landscapes in the</u></b>	<b>Indicator 6 (Ref. GEF Core Indicator 4.1):</b> Area of <u>High Conservation Value Forest</u> that is under improved management to <u>benefit biodiversity under landscape conservation designs</u> in the three Trial Landscapes (hectares): <i>(equivalent to GEF Core</i>	0	0	18,824 ha  First proposed <u>Elephant Corridor in TL1.</u>  Second proposed <u>Elephant Corridor in TL1.</u>  Areas expected to	Stated not on track, but that work had commended to ID high conservation value areas (but quoted very small areas that do not relate to what the targets require.	<b>At MTR: Not achieved</b> <b>By end: Not on track</b>	At MTR - <b>Zero Ha of High Conservation Value Forest</b> under <u>improved management to benefit biodiversity under landscape conservation designs</u> as a result of Project interventions.  No plans in place to achieve this by project	<b>Combine with Project Objective, Indicator 3 –</b> Prioritise and focus only on restoration and rehabilitation of DoWC identified <u>elephant corridors</u> in TL1 and TL2 – including electric fencing and habitat

	Outcome Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term Target	End-of-Project Target	PIR Self-Assessment (2022)	Status at MTR	Justification for Score	Corrective Measures
Northern and North Central Provinces.	<i>Indicator 4.1 but excluding the 1,219 ha of Forest Plantation)</i>			<p>match ESA criteria in TL1.</p> <p>Forest plantations in TL1.</p> <p>Proposed <u>Elephant Corridor</u> in TL2.</p> <p>Areas expected to match ESA criteria in TL2.</p> <p>Areas expected to match ESA criteria in TL3.</p>			end.	<p>enrichment planting.</p> <p>In TL3 focus on high priority mangroves only – as per Indicator 3.</p> <p>Revise end-of-project Ha target downwards to align with <u>corridor and mangrove areas</u> only.</p> <p>To enable progress on above, do not spend resources on other areas in this phase.</p>
	<i>Indicator 7: Annual percentage of Minor and Major Permit applications in which <u>biodiversity impact criteria</u> used in decisions by <u>Coast Conservation Department (CCD)</u> in Trial Landscape 3:</i>	No permit applications available before the inception	New permit applications if available	Increase of permit applications from mid-term review	<p>Stated not on track.</p> <p>Provided some long-winded narrative, which does really address the Indicator.</p>	MTR cannot assess.	<p>Indicator does not make sense.</p> <p>MTR assumes that the intent is for the Project to work with CCD to incorporate <u>biodiversity impact criteria</u> into its decision making process for coastal protection and engineering works.</p> <p>The MTR observed poorly conceived coastal protection structural works and other coastal problems in TL3 – which need to be addressed.</p>	<p>Revise indicator to the following:</p> <p>“Indicator 7: No of coastal management interventions assessed, approved and/or undertaken by CCD which incorporate biodiversity impact criteria.</p> <p>Baseline: 0</p> <p>Mid-term Target: 0 (too late for target).</p> <p>Project End Target: 100%”</p>

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	<u>Outcome Indicators</u>	<u>Baseline</u>	<u>Mid-term Target</u>	<u>End-of-Project Target</u>	<u>PIR Self-Assessment (2022)</u>	<u>Status at MTR</u>	<u>Justification for Score</u>	<u>Corrective Measures</u>
								Project should work with CCD to develop and implement the necessary best practice biodiversity impact criteria (there are multiple models available globally).
	<p><b>Indicator 8:</b> Mean score (+/- SD) on a standard <u>environmental/ biodiversity impact assessment scorecard</u> modified for the project, of tourism operations (a) marine-based (b) land-based in the three Trial Landscapes:</p>	To be established based on the tourism action plan of each trial landscape	15% increment of the score	30% increment of the score	<p>Stated that work on indicator had not yet commenced.</p> <p>Stated that Project will be able to report on this in 2023 – but at MTR was not able to.</p>	<p>At MTR: Not achieved</p> <p>By end: Not on track</p>	<p>At MTR no progress has been made on this Indicator.</p> <p>Development of <u>Tourism Action Plans</u> has not commenced for TLs 1 and 2.</p> <p>A <u>Tourism Action Plan</u> has been developed for TL 3 but does not include an <u>environmental/ biodiversity impact assessment scorecard</u> and baseline.</p> <p>No plans in place to achieve this by project end.</p>	<p>Develop <u>Tourism Action Plans</u> for TLs 1 and 2 (as sub-sets of the overall <u>Strategic Integrated Landscape Plans</u> recommended under Indicator 1), and including an <u>environmental/ biodiversity impact assessment scorecard</u> and baseline.</p> <p>Develop <u>biodiversity impact assessment scorecard</u> and baseline for the TL3 <u>Tourism Action Plan</u> and integrate that plan with the overall <u>Strategic Integrated Landscape &amp; Seascape Plan</u> for TL3.</p>



	<b>Outcome Indicators</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Mid-term Target</b>	<b>End-of-Project Target</b>	<b>PIR Self-Assessment (2022)</b>	<b>Status at MTR</b>	<b>Justification for Score</b>	<b>Corrective Measures</b>
	<b>Indicator 9:</b> Estimate of the <u>annual amount of carbon</u> (tCO <sub>2</sub> eq) <u>sequestered / emissions avoided</u> over the <u>twenty years following the project's inception</u> taking into account progress on the development, adoption, and implementation of the strategic designs at the heart of the project:	889,058	889,058	889,058	<p>Claimed to be on track, but the only work undertaken was to identify some carbon tools including FAO EX-ACT.</p> <p>Provided a target of Feb 2023 to make progress on this indicator, yet at MTR was not able to report progress.</p>	<p>At MTR: Not achieved</p> <p>By end: Not on track</p>	<p>At MTR no progress has been made on this Indicator.</p> <p>No plans in place to achieve this by project end.</p> <p>Unrealistic / non-useful Indicator as assumes that all planned Project interventions will be undertaken (which they clearly won't) and cannot account for future developments in next 20 years.</p>	<p>Replace indicator with doing 'whole-of-landscape' green carbon estimate for each TL <u>now</u> (current status) (do both green/blue for TL3) as baseline for future assessments.</p> <p>Include training of relevant personnel in doing green / blue carbon inventories.</p>
<b>Outcome 3</b> <b>Biodiversity conservation priorities shape sustainable livelihoods in natural resource management and tourism in six Focal Village Clusters in three Trial Landscapes in the Northern and North Central Provinces.</b>	<b>Indicator 10 (Ref. Core indicator 4.3):</b> Area of <u>land in production systems under sustainable land management compatible with biodiversity conservation</u> (hectares):	0  Note: As baseline is yet to be completed.	15,000	50,406	<p>Claimed to be on track, and lists some preparatory activities undertaken, which do not relate to area quantums needed to achieve the targets.</p> <p>Provided some long-winded narrative, which does really address the Indicator.</p>	<p>At MTR: Not achieved</p> <p>By end: Not on track</p>	<p>Project has supported agricultural development in two village clusters in TL1 and one village cluster in TL2 – reportedly assisting ~500 farmers to plant maize plus coconuts, mangoes, citrus, water-melon, guava and other perennials, and install drip irrigation and supply inorganic chemical fertilizer.</p> <p>The area covered is a tiny fraction of the MTR target of 15,000 ha [PMU pls advise exact Ha to date]</p> <p>These interventions do not meet the definition of <u>compatible with</u></p>	<p>It is strongly recommended that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediately halt all and any further procurements and rollout of crops, seeds, seedlings, irrigation systems, fertilizer and other materials under this activity.</li> <li>• Complete only what has already been paid for up to MTR.</li> <li>• UNDP engage a strictly independent agricultural</li> </ul>

	<u>Outcome</u> Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term Target	End-of-Project Target	PIR Self-Assessment (2022)	Status at MTR	Justification for Score	Corrective Measures
							<p><u>biodiversity conservation</u> listed in Indicator 10 – and in many ways go directly against it.</p> <p>The MTR has serious questions about the soundness and appropriateness of these activities, adherence to farmer selection criteria, gender equity, transparency of procurement and distribution procedures, quality control and oversight of on-ground activities, potential vested and conflicting interests and potential political dimensions.</p>	<p>expert to undertake on-site verification and technical audit of 100% of all farms that have been assisted by this activity – and report to UNDP (the MTR only had time to visit 3 of ~500 farmers – and all 3 exhibited non-trivial problems).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNDP engage a strictly independent forensic financial audit of all procurements and cash flows, including tracking all expenditure trails to end points, under this activity – and report to UNDP.</li> <li>• Any further agriculture activity that might be undertaken should be strictly within the framework of the <u>Strategic Integrated Landscape Plans</u> for each TL recommended</li> </ul>

	<u>Outcome Indicators</u>	<u>Baseline</u>	<u>Mid-term Target</u>	<u>End-of-Project Target</u>	<u>PIR Self-Assessment (2022)</u>	<u>Status at MTR</u>	<u>Justification for Score</u>	<u>Corrective Measures</u>
								under Indicator 1, should focus on truly ecologically sustainable methods only, and focus on assisting the most needy groups and women.
	<p><b>Indicator 11:</b> Estimate the extent of <u>damage to corals</u> due to <u>anthropogenic activities</u> along fixed transects in the <u>three major coral reef areas</u> of Trial Landscape 3 (Silavathurai, Arippu, and Vankalai) measured against a baseline using standard coral reef monitoring methodology (English et al. 1997). The <u>abundance of selected species of fish and large invertebrates</u> will also be estimated using standard methods. A decrease in damage to corals due to anthropogenic activities (e.g. destructive fishing) during the project period may indicate a positive impact due to the implementation of the project:</p>	<p>Measured after one year against baseline condition measured by inception</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Baseline will be measured after training of community participant according to research plan. Baseline will be established within 1,500 ha of coral reef / seagrass habitats. The 1<sup>st</sup> surveys will be done in end of 2021.</p>	Changes to baseline by 10%	Changes to baseline by 30%	Claimed to be on track, but cites previous work by IUCN and does not provide evidence that actual progress had been made.	<p>At MTR: Not achieved</p> <p>By end: Not on track</p>	<p>At MTR no progress has been made on this Indicator.</p> <p>No plans in place to achieve this by project end.</p> <p>MTR IC (who is a marine expert) has concerns about practicality / usefulness of this Indicator.</p>	<p>It is recommended that this Indicator be dropped from the Project as there is no time remaining for the Project to do anything meaningful on reducing coral reef impacts.</p> <p>Recommend that in TL3, for marine issues the Project should focus only on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mangrove restoration as per Indicator 3.</li> <li>• Dugong by-catch in fishing nets (Indicator and activities need to be developed).</li> </ul>

	<b>Outcome Indicators</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Mid-term Target</b>	<b>End-of-Project Target</b>	<b>PIR Self-Assessment (2022)</b>	<b>Status at MTR</b>	<b>Justification for Score</b>	<b>Corrective Measures</b>
	<b>Indicator 12:</b> <u>Percentage of interviewees disaggregated by gender</u> in Focal Villages whose livelihoods have been enhanced as a result of <u>mainstreaming biodiversity</u> into land-use plans:	0 (men) 0 (women)	20% (men) 20% (women)	50% (men) 50% (women)	Stated this would be initiated in April 2023 (which would be too late to meet MTR Target).	At MTR: Not achieved  By end: Could potentially be achieved if corrective action taken	At MTR the Project has not enhanced villagers' livelihoods by <u>mainstreaming biodiversity</u> into land-use plans.  The Ag activities under Indicator 10 are partially relevant in terms of supporting livelihoods, but do not <u>mainstream biodiversity</u> into land-use plans.  Project has not undertaken one-on-one interviews to address this Indicator.	Develop and implement livelihood activities for each Village Cluster, with a focus on truly ecologically sustainable agriculture and eco-tourism, and a focus on assisting the most needy groups and women, within the framework of the <u>Strategic Integrated Landscape Plans</u> for each TL recommended under Indicator 1.
	<b>Indicator 13:</b> <u>Percentage of key government and community organizations that publicly endorse and commit to</u> each of the six <u>village-cluster land-use plans</u> :	Plan 1: 0 Plan 2: 0 Plan 3: 0 Plan 4: 0 Plan 5: 0 Plan 6: 0	Plan 1: 30 Plan 2: 30 Plan 3: 30 Plan 4: 30 Plan 5: 30 Plan 6: 30	Plan 1: 60 Plan 2: 60 Plan 3: 60 Plan 4: 60 Plan 5: 60 Plan 6: 60	Claimed to be on track with initial discussions completed with project stakeholders, however by MTR no evidence that <u>village-cluster land-use plans</u> were actually under development was available.	At MTR: Not achieved  By end: Could potentially be achieved if corrective action taken	At MTR the Project has not developed any <u>village-cluster land-use plans</u> that address the Outcome elements.	Develop and get endorsement for <u>village-cluster land-use plans</u> that address the Outcome elements, including mainstreaming biodiversity, within the framework of the <u>Strategic Integrated Landscape Plans</u> for each TL recommended under Indicator 1.
	<b>Indicator 14:</b> <u>Policy, community readiness for sustainable tourism</u> in the Focal Village Clusters	Baseline to be conducted within the year 2021 - score	Increase of 15% on baseline score out	Increase of 35% on baseline score out of 205	Stated that progress had been delayed.  Stated that	At MTR: Not achieved	At MTR the Project has not implemented any tourism activities.	Implement sustainable / eco-tourism activities within the

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	<b>Outcome Indicators</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Mid-term Target</b>	<b>End-of-Project Target</b>	<b>PIR Self-Assessment (2022)</b>	<b>Status at MTR</b>	<b>Justification for Score</b>	<b>Corrective Measures</b>
	<u>measured by Scorecard in Annex Y:</u>	out of total 205	of 205		<p>inception workshop was too early to decide the target, and recommends that MTR would recommend the final target.</p> <p>MTR does not understand this, as the targets are already clearly stated in the PRF (in the 2 columns immediately left of this one).</p>	By end: Could potentially be achieved if corrective action taken	Baseline not been conducted and measurement against Scorecard in Annex Y has not been undertaken.	<p>framework of the <u>Strategic Integrated Landscape Plans</u> for each TL recommended under Indicator 1.</p> <p>Conduct baseline and measure against Scorecard in Annex Y.</p>
<b>Outcome 4</b> <b><u>Monitoring and evaluation, and dissemination of knowledge of project methods and results contributes to wider application of landscape approach to mainstreaming of biodiversity</u></b>	<b>Indicator 15:</b> Number of (a) villages and (b) DSDs in which <u>independent monitoring of project impacts</u> is taking place according to <u>sound protocols</u> :	(a) 0 (b) 0	a) Around 15 villages b) Around 5 DSDs	a) Around 40 villages b) Around 17 DSDs	<p>Claimed to be on track and that villages had been IDd and monitoring systems planned starting with water quality and biodiversity.</p> <p>This indicates lack of understanding of the monitoring required by Indicator 15 – the monitoring protocols should focus on measuring project impacts, in terms of achieving the project outcomes – not environmental factors like water quality and biodiversity.</p>	At MTR: Not achieved By end: Not on track	<p>At MTR the project has not undertaken any <u>independent monitoring of project impacts</u> according to <u>sound protocols</u> at village and DSD levels.</p> <p>MTR itself extremely limited due to time constraints (e.g. only 3 of ~500 farmers were visited).</p> <p>No plans in place to achieve this by project end.</p>	<p>Project should develop and implement sound protocols for <u>independent monitoring of project impacts</u> at village and DSD levels.</p>

	<u>Outcome Indicators</u>	Baseline	Mid-term Target	End-of-Project Target	PIR Self-Assessment (2022)	Status at MTR	Justification for Score	Corrective Measures
	<p><b>Indicator 16:</b> Number of <u>knowledge products</u> that reflect <u>best practices</u> and <u>lessons</u> learned including project results and sustainability strategy:</p>	0	22	42	<p>Claims to be on track and lists a number of knowledge products that have reportedly be produced (although MTR was not provided with most of these – so cannot verify).</p>	<p>At MTR: Partially achieved</p> <p>By end: Could potentially be achieved if corrective action taken</p>	<p>Unrealistic indicator at mid term – too early to have ‘lessons’.</p> <p>PMU has developed a Comms ‘Activity Plan’ but not a proper Communication Strategy.</p> <p>Project has developed a few ad-hoc communication products (e.g. pamphlets, note book, t-shirt and video), but within an overall, proper Communication Strategy.</p> <p>The video is high quality but is odd in that it promotes tourism rather than <u>best practices</u> and <u>lessons relating mainstreaming biodiversity into all landscape sectors</u> – which is supposed to be the focus of the Project’s comms activities.</p>	<p>Project should develop and implement a proper Communication Strategy which promotes mainstreaming biodiversity into all landscape sectors and includes:</p> <p>Communication objectives.</p> <p>Target audiences.</p> <p>Key messages.</p> <p>All modern communication techniques, tools, mediums and activities.</p> <p>Budget and workplan.</p>



### ANNEX 3: PROGRESS TOWARDS PROJECT OUTPUTS

- Project Outputs are listed in the ProDoc PRF.
- The MTR's assessment of progress towards the Project Outputs is based on review of output documents and progress reports. This indicates that almost 100% of Outputs have not been achieved and are not on track at MTR.

Outcome	Output	Output Status at MTR
<p><u>Outcome 1:</u> An enabling environment to mainstream integrated approaches into natural resource management in production sectors and landscapes</p>	<p><u>Output 1.1:</u> Ministerial directives and subsidiary agreements for special working arrangements between government agencies and administrations in the three Trial Landscapes.</p>	<p>MTR has not seen any evidence of such directives and subsidiary agreements being developed, or even plans to develop these.</p> <p>NOT ACHIEVED / NOT ON TRACK.</p>
	<p><u>Output 1.2:</u> Integrated Landscape Management design modules mainstreamed into institutions offering in-service and pre-service training for state employees.</p>	<p>MTR has not seen any evidence of such training modules being developed, or even plans to develop these.</p> <p>NOT ACHIEVED / NOT ON TRACK.</p>
	<p><u>Output 1.3:</u> Coordination established with relevant development projects, programmes, and public and private sector initiatives operating in the same geographical area.</p>	<p>MTR has not seen any evidence of such coordination being established, or even plans to develop this type of coordination.</p> <p>Project is coordinating only through District- and Division-level Agriculture Committees, which are focussed on agriculture and do not coordinate with other relevant development projects, programmes and public and private sector initiatives and do not have an integrated, TL-level coordination capacity.</p> <p>There are also existing District- and Division-level Environment Committees, which are more relevant to the biodiversity-mainstreaming objectives of the Project, but these have not been engaged</p> <p>There is a need to form TL-level, cross-sectoral, <u>Integrated Catchment Coordinating Committee</u> in each TL, with a focus on biodiversity-mainstreaming into all sectors, not just agricultural development.</p> <p>NOT ACHIEVED / NOT ON TRACK.</p>
	<p><u>Output 1.4:</u> Recommendations and proposals for changes in policy, institutions or practice that will be required for replication of the landscape conservation design approach to mainstreaming nationally.</p>	<p>MTR has not seen any evidence of such recommendations and proposals being developed, or even plans to develop these.</p> <p>NOT ACHIEVED / NOT ON TRACK.</p>
<p><u>Outcome 2:</u> Natural resource management, tourism and land use are guided by a strategic design for biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihoods across multiple jurisdictions in three Trial Landscapes in the Northern and North Central Provinces.</p>	<p><u>Output 2.1:</u> Public information and involvement programme designed and implemented across all sub national and local level govt authorities represented in the Trial Landscapes.</p>	<p>MTR has not seen any evidence of such public information and involvement programmes being developed, or even plans to develop these.</p> <p>The Project has developed some ad-hoc communication products without first having an overall Communication Strategy in place, and which are not specifically targeted at sub national and local level govt authorities in the TLs. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A video (which oddly promotes tourism rather than mainstreaming biodiversity).</li> </ul>

Outcome	Output	Output Status at MTR
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A branded diary.</li> <li>• Branded t-shirts.</li> <li>• Some simple pamphlets about the Project itself.</li> </ul> <p>There is a need for the Project to develop and implement a proper Communication Strategy which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication objectives.</li> <li>• Target audiences.</li> <li>• Key messages – including best practices for biodiversity-mainstreaming.</li> <li>• All modern communication techniques, tools, mediums and activities.</li> <li>• Budget and workplan.</li> </ul> <p>NOT ACHIEVED / NOT ON TRACK.</p>
	<p><u>Output 2.2:</u> Mechanisms for trans-jurisdictional and multi-sectoral consultations in the landscape conservation design established and implemented.</p>	<p>As per Output 1.3.</p> <p>NOT ACHIEVED / NOT ON TRACK.</p>
	<p><u>Output 2.3:</u> Strategic conservation designs for each Trial Landscape for incorporation into government decision making and local development plans.</p>	<p>MTR has not seen any evidence of strategic conservation designs for each TL being developed, or even plans to develop these.</p> <p>There is a need for the Project to develop, as an immediate priority, an overall <u>Strategic Integrated Landscape Plan</u> for each TL, which focusses on biodiversity-mainstreaming, and all technical activities in each TL should be coordinated under those plans, through the recommended Integrated Catchment Coordinating Committees in each TL.</p> <p>NOT ACHIEVED / NOT ON TRACK.</p>
	<p><u>Output 2.4:</u> Guidelines for mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into natural resource management, tourism and land use planning.</p>	<p>MTR has not seen any evidence of such guidelines being developed, or even plans to develop these.</p> <p>There is a wealth of existing material available from global sources, including from IUCN’s global body of practice (e.g. the IUCN Report ‘Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Priority Economic Sectors’), which could be used by the Project to rapidly develop such guidelines.</p> <p>NOT ACHIEVED / NOT ON TRACK.</p>
	<p><u>Output 2.5:</u> Strategic designs for Trial Landscapes implemented with technical and material support.</p>	<p>MTR has not seen any evidence of strategic designs for each TL being developed and implemented, or even plans to develop these.</p> <p>There is a need for the Project to develop, as an immediate priority, an overall <u>Strategic Integrated Landscape Plan</u> for each TL, which focuses on biodiversity-mainstreaming, and all technical activities in each TL should be coordinated under those plans, through the recommended Integrated Catchment Coordinating Committees in each TL.</p> <p>NOT ACHIEVED / NOT ON TRACK.</p>
<p><u>Outcome 3:</u> Biodiversity conservation priorities shape sustainable livelihoods in natural resource management and tourism</p>	<p><u>Output 3.1:</u> Public information and involvement programme designed and implemented in the focal village clusters.</p>	<p>As per Output 2.1.</p> <p>NOT ACHIEVED / NOT ON TRACK.</p>

Outcome	Output	Output Status at MTR
<p>in six Focal Village Clusters in three Trial Landscapes in the Northern and North Central Provinces.</p>	<p><u>Output 3.2:</u> Participatory mechanisms to bring together community and government stakeholders in a landscape conservation design approach to local land use planning.</p>	<p>As per Output 1.3. NOT ACHIEVED / NOT ON TRACK.</p>
	<p><u>Output 3.3:</u> Biophysical and socio-economic information required for Landscape management and conservation plans collected and analysed.</p>	<p>IUCN has partially completed biodiversity assessments for each TL, although these did not involve key stakeholders such as DWC and FD, and are still to be fully reported.  MTR has not seen any evidence of socio-economic information required for landscape management and conservation plans being collected and analysed, or even plans to do this.  PARTIALLY ACHIEVED / NOT ON TRACK.</p>
	<p><u>Output 3.4:</u> Implementation of landscape management and conservation plans supported.</p>	<p>As per Output 2.5. NOT ACHIEVED / NOT ON TRACK.</p>
	<p><u>Output 3.5:</u> Sustainable livelihood interventions to enhance tourism and natural resource management under the land-use plans developed and implemented.</p>	<p>Some livelihood interventions have been undertaken by the Project in the form of support for agricultural development in two village clusters in TL1 and one village cluster in TL2 – reportedly assisting ~500 farmers to plant maize, coconuts, mangoes, citrus, water-melon, guava and other perennials, and install drip irrigation and supply inorganic chemical fertilizer. These interventions do not meet the definition of <u>compatible with biodiversity conservation</u>. No livelihood interventions have yet been undertaken in TL3. No livelihood interventions relating to tourism have yet been undertaken, although there are plans to do so.  PARTIALLY ACHIEVED / COULD BE BROUGHT ON TRACK</p>
<p><u>Outcome 4:</u> Monitoring and evaluation, and dissemination of knowledge of project methods and results contributes to wider application of landscape approach to mainstreaming of biodiversity</p>	<p><u>Output 4.1:</u> Monitoring protocols and necessary institutional agreements to assess the impacts of the landscape conservation design and livelihood-focused interventions both during and after the end of the project.</p>	<p>MTR has not seen any evidence of such monitoring protocols and necessary institutional agreements being developed, or even plans to develop these.  The Project records basic ‘activity-based’ data on seedlings, irrigation materials, fertilizer etc handed out to farmers, and on participation by individuals in activities, but this does not constitute the required monitoring protocols., which should look at all Project elements and report outcomes and impacts, not just activities, and focus on assessing the achievement of the Project’s biodiversity mainstreaming objectives.  NOT ACHIEVED / NOT ON TRACK.</p>
	<p><u>Output 4.2:</u> Periodic reviews and evaluations of monitoring data collected during the project.</p>	<p>Need to implement 4.1 to be able to achieve this.  UNDP undertakes its own reviews and evaluations, including PIRs and this MTR, but these are limited by the lack of data from impact-monitoring required under 4.1.  PARTIALLY ACHIEVED / COULD BE BROUGHT ON TRACK</p>

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Outcome	Output	Output Status at MTR
	<p><u>Output 4.3:</u> Publications, films, exhibitions, databases and digital and print media that publicize the current and proposed methods used and results of the project interventions.</p>	<p>As per Output 2.5.  NOT ACHIEVED / NOT ON TRACK.</p>
	<p><u>Output 4.4:</u> Organized visits by the public and by national and regional government officials to project sites to demonstrate and explain project activities and achievements.</p>	<p>MTR assumes that this Output would be undertaken in the second half of the Project when there are achievements and results available and that can be promoted, shared, scaled-up and replicated.  Too early to assess at MTR.</p>
	<p><u>Output 4.5:</u> Talks and presentations by project staff in Colombo and in District and Provincial centres to explain project methods and results.</p>	<p>MTR assumes that this Output would be undertaken in the second half of the Project when there are achievements and results available and that can be promoted, shared, scaled-up and replicated.  Too early to assess at MTR.</p>

**ANNEX 4: DEFINITIONS OF THE STANDARD UNDP-GEF MTR RATINGS**

From: UNDP-GEF Directorate 2014. *Project-level Monitoring: Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed Projects.*

<b>Highly Satisfactory (HS):</b>	The objective or outcome is expected to achieve or exceed all its end-of-project targets, without major shortcomings. The progress towards the objective/outcome can be presented as “good practice”.
<b>Satisfactory (S):</b>	The objective or outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets, with only minor shortcomings.
<b>Moderately Satisfactory (MS):</b>	The objective or outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings.
<b>Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU):</b>	The objective or outcome is expected to achieve its end-of-project targets with major shortcomings.
<b>Unsatisfactory (U):</b>	The objective or outcome is expected not to achieve most of its end-of-project targets.
<b>Highly Unsatisfactory (HU):</b>	The objective or outcome has failed to achieve its midterm targets, and is not expected to achieve any of its end-of-project targets.

## ANNEX 5: KEY STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED DURING THE MTR

Date (chronological order)	Person	Position	Organization	Email	Venue (Meeting Place plus Town/City)
6 Feb 2023	Mr. Chandana Sooriyabandara	Director General	Department of Wildlife Conservation	dg@dwc.gov.lk	Department of Wildlife Conservation, Jayanthi Mawatha, Battaramulla
	Mr. Manjula Amararathna	Director (Protected Area Management)	Department of Wildlife Conservation		Department of Wildlife Conservation, Battaramulla
	Dr. K.M.A. Bandara	Conservator General of Forests	Forest Department Sri Lanka	cgfsoffice@gmail.com	'Sampath Paya', Rajamalwatta Road, Battaramulla
	Mrs. R.H.M.P Abeykoon	Project Director, Managing Together Project and Director (Biodiversity)	Ministry of Environment	pathma66a@gmail.com	'Parisara Piyasa', Battaramulla
	Dr. R.D.S. Jayathunga	Additional Secretary (Environment Development)	Ministry of Environment	sunimal68@hotmail.com	'Parisara Piyasa', Battaramulla
	Ms. Nilmini Ranasinghe	Assistant Director (Biodiversity)	Ministry of Environment	ranasinghenilmini@yahoo.com	'Parisara Piyasa', Battaramulla
	Mr. Manoj Prasanna	Programme Assistant (Biodiversity)	Ministry of Environment	mprasanna74@yahoo.com	'Parisara Piyasa', Battaramulla
7 Feb 2023	Mr. Kalana Cooray	Project Manager,	Managing Together Project	kalana.cooray@iucn.org	IUCN Country Office, Battaramulla
	Dr. Shamen P. Vidanage	Former Acting Country Representative & Earmarked Country Representative	International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Sri Lanka	shamenpv@gmail.com	IUCN Country Office, Battaramulla
	Mr. Janapriya Gamage	Learning and Communication Officer	Managing Together Project	borala.mudalinda@iucn.org	IUCN Country Office, Battaramulla
	Ms. Ishari Madhurangi	Finance and Procurement Associate	Managing Together Project	ishari.gabadage@iucn.org	IUCN Country Office, Battaramulla
	Ms. Semini Nallaperuma	Project Assistant	Managing Together Project	semini.nallaperuma@iucn.org	IUCN Country Office, Battaramulla
	Mr. Anshuman Saikia	Coordinator, Regional Portfolio Management and Officer in Charge	IUCN, Sri Lanka	anshuman.saikia@iucn.org	IUCN Country Office, Battaramulla
	Mr. Shantha Gamage	Finance Manager	IUCN, Sri Lanka		IUCN Country Office, Battaramulla
9 Feb 2023	Mr. Kasun Wickremasinghe	Conservation Expert (TL1 & TL2)	Managing Together Project	kasun.wickramasinghe@iucn.org	MTP Office, Anuradhapura
	Mr. Saman Devage	Agriculture Consultant	Managing Together Project		MTP Office, Anuradhapura
	Mr. Saman Jayakody	Agriculture Consultant	Managing Together Project		MTP Office, Anuradhapura
	Mrs. Sandhya Abeysekera	Additional District Secretary	District Secretariat, Anuradhapura	moha.dist.anuradhapura@gmail.com	District Secretariat Anuradhapura
	Mrs. Lalitha Thenuwara	District Director of Agriculture	Department of Agriculture, Anuradhapura		District Secretariat Anuradhapura
	Mr. Janaka Jayasundara	District Secretary	District Secretariat, Anuradhapura	moha.dist.anuradhapura@gmail.com	District Secretariat Anuradhapura

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Date (chronological order)	Person	Position	Organization	Email	Venue (Meeting Place plus Town/City)
	Mrs. M.H.B.P.H. Madana	Provincial Director of Agriculture	North Central Provincial Council	ncpagri@gmail.com	District Secretariat Anuradhapura
10 Feb 2023	Mrs. Manjari C. Chandradasa	Divisional Secretary	Divisional Secretariat, Mahawilachchiya	ds@mahawilachchiya.ds.gov.lk	Divisional Secretariat, Manupa (Nuwaragam Palatha)
	Mr Hewandugala	Assistant Director (Planning)	Divisional Secretariat, Mahawilachchiya	ds@mahawilachchiya.ds.gov.lk	Divisional Secretariat, Manupa (Nuwaragam Palatha)
	Mr. R.M.G. Senarathne	Divisional Secretary	Divisional Secretariat, Manupa (Nuwaragam Palatha)	ds@nuwaragamc.ds.gov.lk	Divisional Secretariat, Manupa (Nuwaragam Palatha)
	Mr. W.A.K.S. Chandrarathna	Assistant / Deputy Director (Anuradhapura & Mannar Districts)	Department of Wildlife Conservation	<a href="mailto:keerthi_chandrarathne@yahoo.com">keerthi_chandrarathne@yahoo.com</a> / <a href="mailto:anuradhapuraad@gmail.com">anuradhapuraad@gmail.com</a>	DWC Deputy Directors Office, Anuradhapura
	Mr. Nihal Ranjith Dharmasena	Farmer	Nelumwila Cluster, Mahawilachchiya DS Division		Farm land at Nelumwila
11 Feb 2023	Mr. Suranga Rathnayake	Park Warden, Wilpattu National Park	Department of Wildlife Conservation	wnp.dwc@gmail.com	Wilpattu Park Office, Entrance Gate, Hunuwilagama
	Mr. P.S.N.Jayasinghe	Wildlife Ranger Mullikulam Range Office	Department of Wildlife Conservation	Sugath0123456@gmail.com	Mullikulam Range Office / Entrance gate of Wilpattu National Park
13 Feb 2023	Mr. R.Senthil	Divisional Secretary	Divisional Secretariat, Kahatagasdigiliya	kahatads@gmail.com	Divisional Secretariat, Kahatagasdigiliya
	Mr. Siril Disanayake	Farmer	Allewewa Cluster, Kahatagasdigiliya DS Division		Farm land at Allewewa
	Mr. Kapila Kumara Priyantha	Farmer	Mekichchawa Cluster, Madawachchiya DS Division		Farm land at Mekichchawa
14 Feb 2023	Ms. M.C. Malaviarachchi	Divisional Secretary	Divisional Secretariat, Madawachchiya	dsmedawachchiya@gmail.com	Divisional Secretariat, Medawachchiya
	Mr. S. Sriskanthakumar	Divisional Secretary	Divisional Secretariat, Nanattan	admnanattan@gmail.com	Divisional Secretariat, Nanattan
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	Mr. J.Thennakoon	District Forest Officer,	Forest Department	dfomannar@gmail.com	Divisional Forest Office Uilankulam, Mannar
	Mr. A.R.N. Ranathnaweera	Additional District Forest Officer	Forest Department	dfomannar@gmail.com	Divisional Forest Office, Mannar
15 Feb 2023	Mr. Anton Siyamsing Sosai	Community Conservation Expert TL 03	MTP / IUCN	anton.soysa@iucn.org	MTP TL3 Office, Mannar
	Ms. Kowshayini Pathmanadan	Community Conservation Expert TL 02	MTP / IUCN		MTP TL3 Office, Mannar



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Date (chrono order)	Person	Position	Organization	Email	Venue (Meeting Place plus Town/City)
	Mr. A.R.N. Ranathnaweera	Additional District Forest Officer	Forest Department	dfomannar@gmail.com	Range Forest Office, Madu Road, Mannar
16 Feb 2023	Mrs. Stanley De Mel	District Secretary	District Secretariat, Mannar	gamannar@gmail.com	District Secretariat, Mannar

**ANNEX 6: FULL LIST OF PROJECT STAKEHOLDERS**

Many were not consulted during the MTR due to the highly compressed MTR timeframe. Refer Annex 5 for those that were interviewed.

**Government Stakeholders**

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Mr.H.M.N.K.Herath	Development Officer- Ellewewa, Kahatagasdigliya DS	710531075	
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Mr.Sunil	Grama Niladari - Thantrimale and Nelumvila GND, Mahawilachchiya DS	714479281	
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Ms P.A Dulmini	Development Officer - Sadamaleliya, Mahawilachchiya DS	766001127	
Ms.R.M.Janaka Rthnayake	Development Officer - Halabagaswewa, Manupa DS	712894433	
Mr.Stanley Mascarenhas	Chairman - Tourism Bureau, Northern Province		<a href="mailto:stan.mas@gmail.com">stan.mas@gmail.com</a>
<b>Ministry of Environment</b>			
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**IUCN Staff**

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## Project Consultants

Name	Designation and Office	Consultancy	Contact Number	Email
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**Farmer Community**

Cluster	Designation	Name	Contact No
<b>Medawachchiya DS Division</b>			
Thammenna Elawaka	Secretary	P.Weerasooriya	784494031 /728583833
	Chairmen	D.Sunil Ashoka	
	Treasure	H.Karunaratna	
Diulwewa	Secretary	B.Susil Hemakumara	775951947
	Chairmen	A.K.Amarasinghe	767134653
	Treasure	D,B,Ginadasa	
Parasanwewa	Secretary	P.Piyasiri	
	Chairmen	D.B.Jayasena	767931436
	Treasure	S.Janaka	721524533
Minihettigama	Secretary	K.Inoka Karunaratna	717033214
	Chairmen	D.S.S.Jayathilaka	712201376
	Treasure	W.M.Madushanka Pradeep	762837967
Thammenna Elawaka MG	Secretary	Waruni Hansika	783218886
	Chairmen	W.W.imalwathi	
	Treasure	Madushani Ruwanthika	713429167
Udumbugala	Secretary	N.M.M.Naleer	787601613
	Chairmen	A.Mohomad	766161166
	Treasure		
Bellankadawala	Secretary	J.Rohitha Pushpakumara	778960727
	Chairmen	N.W Wajira Shantha Darpampriya	713976351
	Treasure	K.Mallika	719079183
<b>Kahatagasdigiliya</b>			
Ellewewa	Secretary	Senarath Jyarathna	716669434
	Chairmen	N.Dilshan Madu Karpitigala	711064313
	Treasure	K.Tharaka Dilshan	711973298
Mekichchawa	Secretary	S.Sudarshani Cahndra Herath	
	Chairmen	Kapila Priyantha	716669008
	Treasure	S.Deepa Senwirathna	710560807
Ranpathvila	Secretary	S.D.Kumarasinghe	
	Chairmen	Palitha Thennakoon	715810235
	Treasure	T.M.Raja Thennakoon	
Kahatagasdigiliya West	Sectotary	M.Sumanalatha	763096618
	Chairmen	K.W.M.Upali Senavirathna	714032166
	Treasure	J.K.C.C Rathnayake	762362627
<b>Mahavilachchiya</b>			
Thuppitiyawa	Secretary	U.M Maheepala	783058900

**FINAL**

Cluster	Designation	Name	Contact No
	Chairmen	P. Sujith Fonseka	772401685
	Treasure	S. Ayesha Pushparani Senarthna	772127297
Nawodagama	Secretary	Asanka De Silva	763254064
	Chairmen	K. Chaminda Kumara	778060998
	Treasure	K. Bandula Wijeweera	787548158
Thanthirimale	Secretary	Harshani Pradeepika	
	Chairmen	Upali Jaysooriya	718761528
	Treasure	Sunil Premarathna	
Nelumvila	Secretary	H. Madushanka Hemapala	789639477
	Chairmen	K.M Aberathna	766082057
	Treasure	M. Bandaramenike	782397664
Dematamalgama	Secretary	Sumana Amarasinghe	710622105
	Chairmen	A.H. Nihal Jayawardhana	
	Treasure	Sangeetha Wijerathna	776394329
Sadamaleliya	Secretary	Sanjeewa Karunasena	778299243
	Chairmen	S.S.U.K Somasiri	769315151
	Treasure	Lal Bandu	
<b>Manupa</b>			
Halabagaswewa	Secretary	Supun Srinath	776261159
	Chairmen	K. Farook	779455513
	Treasure	M.C. Nawsath	770830924
Ehetuwewa	Secretary	M.M.P.Wijesooriya	766155266
	Chairmen	Wijenanda Amarasena	782927150
	Treasure	Shanika Maduwanthi	788092832
Asirikgama	Secretary		
	Chairmen		
	Treasure		

**CBOs**

Name	Designation and Office	Contact Number	Email
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## UNDP

Name	Designation and Office	Contact Number	Email
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Mr. Roshan Raja	Monitoring and Evaluation Associate	766560977	<a href="mailto:roshan.raja@undp.org">roshan.raja@undp.org</a>
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**ANNEX 7: MTR QUESTIONNAIRE**

[see next page]

**GEF-UNDP-IUCN Sri Lanka *Managing Together* Project  
Mid Term Review Questions (EQs)**

**Please note:** Respondents are NOT required to identify themselves on the questionnaire, and all responses will be treated as anonymous and fully confidential.

Pls email your response to the MTR International Consultant by Friday 17 FEB 2023.  
[steve@eco-strategic.com](mailto:steve@eco-strategic.com)

QUESTION	RESPONSE (pls try and add explanations beyond just 'yes' or 'no')
<b><u>1. Relevance of the Project:</u></b>	
1.1 Is the project relevant to the needs of the country?	
1.2 Is the project relevant to the needs of your organization?	
1.3 Is the project relevant to the needs of your community?	
1.4 Other comments on relevance:	
<b><u>2. Effectiveness:</u></b>	
2.1 Has the project been effective in meeting its objectives & targets to date?	
2.2 How was the project most effective to date?	
2.3 How could the effectiveness of the project be improved?	
<b><u>3. Efficiency:</u></b>	
3.1 Has the project used funding, resources and personnel efficiently to date?	
3.2 Have there been any wasteful or inefficient practices in the way that the project was implemented to date?	
3.3 How could the efficiency of the project have be improved?	
<b><u>4. Sustainability:</u></b>	
4.1 Do you think that the project outcomes will be continued and sustained after the Project has closed?	
4.2 What are main barriers to continuity and sustainability that need to be overcome? (e.g. financial, institutional, technical capacity, community ownership, etc):	
4.3 What would you recommend to improve sustainability of the project benefits after it ends?	
<b><u>5. Impact:</u></b>	
5.1 Has the project helped to reduce environmental stress and/or improved ecological status?	

FINAL

QUESTION	RESPONSE (pls try and add explanations beyond just 'yes' or 'no')
5.2 Has the project improved the daily lives of local communities?	
5.3 Has the project improved government coordination, planning and decision making in relation to ocean governance and marine resource management:	
<b>6. Project Implementation:</b>	
6.1 Has UNDP done well as the GEF project implementer?	
6.2 How could UNDP improve as the GEF project implementer?	
6.3 What has IUCN done well as the project implementing partner / executing agency?	
6.4 How could IUCN improve as the project implementing partner / executing agency??	
<b>7. Communication &amp; Consultation:</b> In your view, to date - how effective was the project at communication and consultation with key stakeholders? What was done well and what could have been done better?	
<b>8. Main Project Strengths:</b> In your view what are the main strengths of the project?	
<b>9. Main Project Weaknesses:</b> In your view what are the main weaknesses of the project?	
<b>10. Other Points / Recommendations:</b> Please feel free to make any additional points and recommendations about the project:	

Pls email your response to the MTR International Consultant **by Friday 17 FEBRUARY 2023.**  
[steve@eco-strategic.com](mailto:steve@eco-strategic.com)

**ANNEX 8: TE CONSULTANT CODE OF CONDUCT AGREEMENT FORM - MTR INTERNATIONAL CONSULTANT (IC)**

**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<sup>1</sup>**

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

**Name of Consultant:** Steve Raaymakers

**Name of Consultancy Organization** (where relevant): EcoStrategic Consultants

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

Signed at *Cairns, Australia* on *10 January 2022*

Signature: 

<sup>1</sup>[www.unevaluation.org/unegcodeofconduct](http://www.unevaluation.org/unegcodeofconduct)

## ANNEX 9: TE CONSULTANT CODE OF CONDUCT AGREEMENT FORM – MTR NATIONAL CONSULTANT (NC)

### 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<sup>2</sup>

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


Name of Consultant: H.M.B.C.Herath

Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant): N/a

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

Signed at *Colombo* on *11 January 2022*

Signature:



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<sup>2</sup>[www.unevaluation.org/unegcodeofconduct](http://www.unevaluation.org/unegcodeofconduct)

**ANNEX 10: TE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

[Pls refer separate document – not included here to keep size of this document reasonable]