

 	<b>United Nations Development Programme</b>  <b>Bangkok Regional Hub (BRH)</b>	<b>BACK TO OFFICE REPORT (BTOR)</b> Submitted by: Doley Tshering, Title: Regional Technical Advisor, EBD Date Submitted: 20 June 2017 TA Serial Number:
1. Practice Area: Resilience and Sustainable Development		
2. Service Line(s):		
3. Mission Period (incl. of travel days): 5-9 June 2017		
4. Type of Service/Mission <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advocacy <input type="checkbox"/> Analysis <input type="checkbox"/> Policy Advice <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Programme / Technical Backstopping <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Resource Person <input type="checkbox"/> Regional Technical Consultations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Training / Capacity Development <input type="checkbox"/> Others (specify):	5. Client(s) / Key Counterparts: UNDP Laos CO SFLM Project	
6. Purpose of Mission: To provide technical support and implementation oversight to the “Sustainable Forestry and Land Management in the Dry Dipterocarp Ecosystems of Southern Lao PDR (SFLM Project)		
8. Mission Member(s): Doley Tshering (DT)	9. Cost (for RCC staff only):	
10A. Brief Summary of the Mission Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviewed implementation progress, issues and challenges with the project team</li> <li>Meetings with several partners (ADB, FAO, WWF etc.)</li> <li>Meetings with the GEF OFP, the UNCBD Focal Point</li> </ul> For details please see attached <a href="#">mission itinerary</a>		
10B. Mission Findings <b>Implementation review of the SFLM Project</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Key information:</b> The SFLM project (PIMS 5448) will secure the long-term ecological integrity of the Dry Dipterocarp Forest (DDF) ecosystems located in Savannakhet Province. The project objective is “to facilitate a transformative shift towards sustainable land and forest management in the forested landscape of Savannakhet Province in order to secure the critical wildlife habitats, conserve biodiversity and maintain a continuous flow of multiple services including quality water provision and flood prevention”.</li> <li>The project was CEO endorsed 3 March 2016, the project document was signed 20 May 2016 and an inception workshop was organised on 20 October 2016 at the Savannakhet Province. The total approved project budget is US\$ 12.07 million including a cash co-financing of US\$ 1.2 million from UNDP CO. The project will be implemented following the UNDP National Implementation Modality (NIM) with the UNDP CO providing support to NIM where relevant.</li> <li>The Implementing Partner (IP) that executes the project is the Department of Forests Resources and Management (DFRM). As part of broader national level reforms, DFRM was recently moved from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MAF). The project currently enjoys strong national ownership and support. A Deputy Director of DFRM has been detailed as the Project Manager while the Deputy Director General serves as the Project Director. In addition, the project is supported by the following project recruited personnel including: Assistant Project Manager, Gender and Livelihoods expert, Ecotourism expert and a UNV M&amp;E specialist.</li> <li><b>Achievements till date:</b> In addition to the above, the project has so far focussed on preparatory activities such as clarifying implementation arrangements between different line agencies both at the national and sub-national levels. Some of these have been formalized through the signing of the Letter of Agreement (LOA) such as with the Department of Environmental Quality Promotion (DEQP) who will lead project interventions related to Integrated Spatial Plans. Terms of reference for several key positions including the Protected Areas specialist and the Chief Technical Advisor have been finalized and recruitment process will be initiated soon. Besides the project also undertook some outreach and training activities in the Province including on land use planning, sustainable forest management and PA management. The project also supported the design and placement of boundary signage for Ong Mang PA. Besides initial consultations with local authorities on the upgradation of the PA has been carried out. The project has also procured field equipment and vehicles that were handed over to the Implementing Partner during a ceremony that the RTA attended on 5 June 2017.</li> <li>The RTA reviewed with the project team the following key documents: project results framework; the UNDP SESP; Theory of Change (TOC). In addition, given that the project will complete its first PIR this year, a brief presentation was made on the UNDP-GEF PIR. Project team was also briefed on the other reporting requirements and introduced to the UNDP-GEF policy on project monitoring and evaluations.</li> <li><b>Recommendations:</b> It was agreed that revisions to the project results framework including changes to the indicators (at the output level) should be reported during the 2017 PIR while finer changes at the activity level</li> </ol>		

should be utilized to guide the Annual Work Plan (AWP) preparation.

7. To acknowledge the presence of ethnic groups in the project area, the project will undertake the following as required by the UNDP SESP: prepare a detailed ethnic group plan; revise the stakeholder engagement plan to clarify how the ethnic groups will be involved in the implementation of the project; any project activities that involve or impact the ethnic groups will be preceded by an appropriately conducted FPIC.
8. The following actions should be prioritised and completed as soon as possible: recruit the project CTA and other personnel including the PA Specialist; complete the biodiversity assessment in the project area and related activities to establish the project baseline.
9. A key output of the project is to contribute to revision / harmonization of key national policies. Given that policy revision efforts can take a long time, the project should begin the gap assessment as soon as possible including identifying on-going policy review initiatives and prepare a detailed plan and timeline.
10. In order to optimize the learning outcome from planned South-South exchange with Khao Yai NP, Thailand, it is recommended to make use of the guidance 'The Art of Knowledge Exchange: A Results-Focussed Planning Guide for the GEF Partnership'<sup>1</sup> to appropriately design and implement the study visit.

#### **Meetings with partners:**

11. Meetings with the following partners were organised: WWF, ADB and FAO. All three agencies are important partners providing co-financing to the project. Discussions focussed on identifying areas of collaboration, tracking co-financing and exploring opportunities to work together on specific project outputs.
12. WWF Laos is a key partner that supported the formulation of the SFLM project while their long engagement in the management of the Eld's deer conservation in Savannakhet formed an important baseline for the project.
13. WWF Laos is keen to involve to support the implementation of the project – they have technical capacity and on the ground relations to do so. In response, UNDP CO clarified the procurement process via which WWF and other agencies will be involved in the future implementation of the project.
14. ADB is currently implementing several related initiatives in the Province, most notably the East-West Corridor project, a project focused on irrigation infrastructure development. Several areas of collaboration were identified including: working together on capacity building on government agencies; joint efforts to improve capacity of farmers for sustainable natural resource management; sponsoring the same community-based collectives/groups (ADB project will promote water user groups while the current project aims to support formation of community forestry groups) to avoid duplication; coordination on efforts to promote ecotourism.
15. It was agreed that UNDP and ADB will explore opportunities for joint field monitoring and work planning to enable better coordination.
16. The meeting with FAO explored issues and lessons from the recently concluded Agrobiodiversity project (PIMS 2903 –Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Lao PDR's Agricultural and Land Management Policies, Plans and Programmes) that was jointly implemented with FAO. Discussion focussed on how to ensure effective dissemination of the lessons and products of the ABP and make use of these to promote replication and scale up in the country.
17. In addition, the meeting discussed potential synergies and areas of collaboration between the SFLM and FAO GEF-LDCF funded 'Climate Adaptation in Wetlands Areas project (CAWA)'. FAO will implement the CAWA project in partnership with IUCN and will focus on enhancing climate adaptation and resilience through the sustainable management of the wetlands. The following areas of interface and collaboration were identified: monitoring of key species (e.g. the Siamese crocodile); measures to promote ecotourism; promotion of sustainable use and harvest techniques for wild products; harmonised guidelines and efforts to revise key national legislations (e.g. upgradation of Provincial level parks (including Ramsar sites) to National Parks)
18. It was recommended to set up a Project Technical Advisory and Coordination Group that includes all project partners (FAO, WWF, ADB etc.) that will among others serve as an effective mechanism to coordinate the related efforts of the various partners in the Province while also facilitating easy tracking and reporting of co-finance for the SFLM project. All three partners expressed their willingness to be part of such a mechanism and the IP (DFRM) accepted the recommendation.

#### **Other meetings:**

19. Meetings were also organised with the UNCBD Focal Point for Laos and the GEF OFP. The CBD focal point was briefed on the progress with the submission of the 6NR project – Laos is among the countries that UNDP will support to prepare the country's sixth national report to the UNCBD. Discussions also explored priorities for biodiversity conservation in Laos as per the recently completed NBSAP. The CBD focal point requested UNDP support to implement some of the key priorities of the NBSAP during the GEF 7 cycle.
20. In the meeting with the GEF OFP for Laos, following a brief update on the SFLM project, discussions centred around priorities for GEF 7. Two key areas were highlighted as possible priorities for biodiversity conservation – addressing the threat of illegal wildlife trade and promoting green growth and sustainable development. Besides, the GEF OFP requested alignment with national priorities and strategies including the 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-economic Development Plan.
21. At the end of the mission a close-out session was also organised with the UNDP CO Senior Management to

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/publications/GEF\\_WB\\_AoKE\\_English.pdf](https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/publications/GEF_WB_AoKE_English.pdf)

brief on key achievements of the mission and recommendations.

**10C. Results Achieved (concrete outputs)**

- RTA is familiar with the key priorities and institutional set up biodiversity conservation in the country
- UNDP Laos CO is supported with sound technical advice in the implementation of the existing projects and recommendations made for potential future EBD programming.

**11. Key counterpart (s):**

Margaret Jones Williams (MJW); Chitlada Keomuongchanh (CK); Norah Ngeny (NN)

**12. Follow-up Action Matrix**

<b>Actions to be taken</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
Share examples from on tracking and monitoring co-finance	DT	21 June 2017
Revise project results matrix as discussed and share final with DT. Any changes as approved should be reported during the 2017 PIR	NN	30 June 2017 Per PIR deadline
Map common areas of work between project and initiatives of partners including ADB, FAO, WWF and others (building on information in UNDP Project Document)	NN/CK	End July 2017
Develop a communication plan including social media presence, website and a catchy name for the project for use in social media	NN/Project Team	End July 2017
Revise UNDP SESP, prepare detailed Ethnic Group Plan	NN/CK/MJW	End August 2017
Design and implement the S-S exchange to Thailand following the Art of Knowledge Exchange Guide	NN/CK	Before study visit (Aug 2017)
Clarify and communicate to WWF and other partners as relevant on ways of engaging in the project including potentially as Responsible Parties	MJW	As soon as possible
Develop detailed terms of reference and establish the National Project Advisory and Coordination Committee	MJW/CK/Project Team	Before the next PSC
Identify and institute joint work planning and monitoring mechanisms to encourage coordination, synergy and cross-partner integration (e.g. joint field trips)		
Prepare draft concept notes on: illegal wildlife trade and promotion of green growth strategies as potential GEF 7 ideas	DT/MJW	By Nov 2017

**13. Distribution List (BTOR sent to):**

**UNDP Lao:** Margaret Jones Williams, Chitlada Keomuongchanh, Norah Ngeny, B. Murali, Karina Immonen

**UNDP BRH / UNDP-GEF:** Gordon Johnson, Sharad Neupane, Pakamon Pinprayoon, Noparat Uathamthanworn, Midori Paxton, Katarina Hadad