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## **United Nations Development Programme Belize**

**Project Title: Strengthening National Capacities for the  
Operationalization, Consolidation and Sustainability of  
Belize's Protected Areas System**

**ANNUAL PROJECT REPORT [2012]**



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on Half Moon Caye Natural Monument – January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2012

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## Executive summary

This is the second Annual Report for the 'Strengthening National Capacities for the Operationalization, Consolidation and Sustainability of Belize's Protected Areas System Project' being implemented / executed by the United National Development Programme and the Government of Belize. The report covers the period January 1 – December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012.

The objective of the project is that by July 2013 (now April 2014), Belize will have effectively developed legal, financial, and institutional capacities to ensure sustainability of the existing National Protected Areas System (NPAS). The project has a total of 15 outputs of which 11 were to have been completed or be near completion by the end of 2012. Of the 11 outputs, nine have been partially completed whilst there was no progress on two of these. Total funds from the Global Environment Facility initially budgeted for 2012 was \$518,234.80; this was subsequently revised down to \$397,829 to reflect the amended work plan, i.e. amended as a result of delays caused by the 2012 elections. Of the revised amount, some \$285,005, or approximately 72%, was expended by the project.

Major areas of progress during 2012 were in the area of strengthening agreements with international non-governmental organizations and financing institutions, identifying opportunities to increasing revenues in priority protected areas, and building working relationships with entities from the productive sector.

It is also important to view the project within the context of the implementation of the wider National Protected Areas System Plan as many of the activities added value to the project and vice-versa. For example, the declaration of the Turneffe Atoll Marine Reserve has resulted in more acreage of mangrove now being under protection; the marine protected areas network is being strengthened via improved Rapid Response Mechanism, there are ongoing investments in the National Protected Areas System by the Sustainable Tourism Programme to improve financing, and increased awareness by protected areas management organizations of the need to consider climate change in all aspects of protected areas management as well as the need for better integration of protected areas into national development planning.

Many challenges to project implementation were encountered during 2012; two of these that significantly affected the project were the elections and relatively slow decision making by the decision makers in the Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and Sustainable Development – the entity with primary responsibility for the project (see Section IV for a more in-depth discussion of this and other challenges).

Of the various lessons learnt in 2012, perhaps the most important was the need to ensure that the Project Organization is adequately structured (and modified as necessary) to ensure that project implementation is optimized.

Additional details of the above and other project activities are outlined in the sections that follow this Executive Summary. Section I provides a brief description of the context in which the project is being implemented whilst Section II discusses various aspects pertaining to the project's performance during 2012. Section III provides a summary of the project results during the reporting period, Section IV highlights of the various challenges encountered and Section V deals with lessons learnt and recommended next steps. Financial information for the year in review is provided in Section IV.

# I. Context

The Strengthening National Capacities for the Operationalization, Consolidation and Sustainability of Belize's Protected Areas System Project is being implemented as part of the roll out of Belize National Protected Areas System Plan (NPASP). The NPASP has four main objectives:

- a. Objective 1: An enabling administrative structure is established for policy implementation.
- b. Objective 2: The national protected area system is functional.
- c. Objective 3: The national protected area system is comprehensive.
- d. Objective 4: The national protected area system is consolidated and simplified.

The project is making direct contribution to all four objectives as there is a direct co-relation between most of the project outputs and the actions in the NPASP.

Based on the project design, the project was developed to contribute to Outcome 3 of the 2007 – 2011 of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) with Belize, i.e.:

- By 2011, national frameworks and capacities are in place enhancing the ability to adequately address adaptation to and mitigation of the impact of disasters as well as the comprehensive, equitable, sustainable and effective management of the nation's natural resources.

More specifically, it is to contribute to the approved Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) as follows:

- **Expected CP Outcome(s):** 3.2 An operationalized framework for national integrated sustainable development strategy developed.
- **Expected CPAP Output(s):** 3.2.4 Innovative approaches and strategies established for improved sustainable land use and comprehensive water resources management and utilization knowledge and practices

The project is addressing three main barriers affecting the sustainability of the National Protected Areas System, i.e.:

- A fractured institutional, legal, and operational framework of PA management.
- An ineffective financial system that fails to address PA management needs.
- A weak institutional and individual management capacity.

To this end, the goal of the project is to safeguard globally significant terrestrial, coastal, and marine biodiversity of Belize whilst the objective is that by April 2014 (originally July 2013), Belize will have effectively developed legal, financial, and institutional capacities to ensure sustainability of the existing NPAS.

The Key Implementation Partners are the Forest Department, the Fisheries Department and the National Protected Areas Secretariat all under the Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and Sustainable Development and the key stakeholders are the: a) Forest Department, Fisheries Department, Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute, Institute of Archaeology, Protected Areas Conservation Trust, Association of Protected Areas Management Organization, Belize Association of Private Protected Areas, Individual Protected Areas Managers, OAK Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, National Protected Areas Secretariat and UNDP. The direct beneficiaries are primarily the key agencies responsible for protected areas management and the various protected areas management organization (PAMOs).

## II. Performance review<sup>1</sup>

### Progress review

#### 1. Overall progress towards the CPAP outcome and output(s)

The planned initiative contributes to the achievement of CPAP output, “Integration of environmental policies into national development agenda”. The restructuring of the national protected areas system advance significantly national efforts at recognizing the contribution of biodiversity systems to the sustainable human and economic development of the country. A restructured system is necessary as the country realizes sustainable growth as a resource based economy.

The project advances significantly the intent of the suggested output.

#### 2. Capacity development

For 2012 the change in national capacity for protected areas and project management as a result of project intervention is assessed as being “**moderately satisfactory**”. Areas of improved capacity were:

- Project management - via the project manager attending the 1st Workshop for Project Coordinators of UNDP-GEF Biodiversity for Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Assessing and monitoring carrying capacity - a one day training session on this topic was built into the consultancy pertaining to environmental/ecological and socio-economic assessment. The training session was for protected areas managers of the nine protected areas in which the assessments were being undertaken.
- Protected areas legislation - the ongoing exercise to develop/amend PAs legislation and the effort of the project partners to build awareness on the development of protected areas legislation resulted in national stakeholders being more cognizant (as determined by personal communication with the project coordinator/manager) of the processes involved in development of policies and legislation, as well as on the content of such legislation.

#### 3. Impact on direct and indirect beneficiaries

As noted on Page 4, the primary beneficiaries of the project are the Forest and Fisheries Departments and the various protected areas management organization. These entities benefited from project intervention during the reporting year, albeit not to the degree desired due to relatively slow project execution rate. Examples of benefits included improved skills via the National Training Programme for Protected Areas Management (and training by other consultants, e.g. on carrying capacity) and small scale investment in five priority protected areas.

Whilst the impact as a direct result of project deliverables was limited, there were additional impacts on the wider Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and Sustainable Development via the

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<sup>1</sup> Overall the Project’s Performance review is being considered within the context of the National Protected Areas System Plan and rated based on the following scale: **Highly Satisfactory** (HS): no shortcomings; **Satisfactory** (S): minor; **Moderately Satisfactory** (MS): moderate; **Moderately Unsatisfactory** (MU): significant; **Unsatisfactory** (U): major; **Highly Unsatisfactory** (HU): severe; **Not applicable** (N/A); **Unable to assess** (U/A).

various lessons learned, i.e. by identifying areas that need to be strengthened and mechanism by which such can be done, e.g. the need for giving additional attention to Project Organization.

In view of the above, this aspect is rated as being “**Moderately Satisfactory**” for 2012.

## **Implementation strategy review**

### **1. Participatory/consultative processes**

For 2012 this aspect is rated as being “**Highly Satisfactory**” with the main justification being:

- In elaborating the 2012 Annual Operational Plan, the project management unit (PMU) sought to obtain input from as many PAMOs as possible. This involved having a session in Belize City for stakeholders from the north and central regions of the country and a similar session in the Toledo District for stakeholders from the southern region.
- Additionally, various sessions were held with entities from other Government departments, the private sector and international non-governmental organizations, indigenous organization so as to have their input in moving the project forward.

### **2. Quality of partnerships**

During 2012, the Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and Sustainable Development, under whose purview the project falls, maintained, signed and/or commenced negotiating new partnerships with the following entities:

- The Bertarelli Foundation for the establishment and management of the Turneffe Atoll Marine Reserve
- The German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Selva Maya in Central America.
- The German Development Bank (KfW) as part of the assistance to the Mesoamerican Reef Fund – this will lead to assistance in the Port Honduras Marine Reserve. An agreement was also signed to strengthen the Belize Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation (REDD+).
- The Environmental Research Institute of the University of Belize for areas such as research and capacity building.
- Wildlife Conservation Society for cooperation in the fields of Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Conservation in Belize.
- Environmental Defense Fund Inc. – EDF and other entities as part of the Sustainable Fisheries Initiative –Belize.

Whilst these agreements did not directly impact the project, they provided tremendous benefit to the wider National Protected Areas System. This aspect is therefore rated as being “**Satisfactory**” for 2012.

### **3. National ownership**

The established criteria for assessing national ownership are: joint decision-making with national counterparts; involvement of national counterparts in the definition of priorities, planning of project resources allocation and/or reporting; joint monitoring and evaluation; allocation of national resources or in-kind contributions to the project; embedded staff.

Based on the above, the only conclusion that be drawn for 2012 is that national ownership is “**Satisfactory**”. It is important to note that based on the implementation progress of the project, it would appear the national ownership is lacking; however, when the many challenges that the project has had to navigate are considered, it becomes apparent that many of the factors were beyond the control of the project.

Decisions on the project were made collectively by the Project Board and implemented by the project management unit with support from personnel of the Forest and Fisheries Department and the Protected Areas Conservation Trust. In the early part of the year, there were some challenges in the PMU obtaining adequate technical backstopping from the regulatory agencies, but via improved planning and dialogue this situation significantly improved towards the end of the reporting period.

#### **4. Sustainability**

Part of the project strategy is that by its completion the Government of Belize will be financing the administration of the National Protected Areas System; this will be reflected by direct allocation in the national budget. To move this process forward, a Cabinet Information Paper was prepared by the National Protected Areas Secretariat and submitted to the decision makers in the MFFSD. All indications are that the relevant funding will be reflected in the national budget by the completion of the project; this aspect is therefore rated as being “**Satisfactory**”.

### **Management effectiveness review**

#### **1. Quality of monitoring**

Monitoring was accomplished primarily via the quarterly Project Board meetings which were held on the following dates: January 12, 2012, April 17, 2012, July 17, 2012 and October 10, 2012. The PMU was quite receptive to all recommendations made during the meetings and took immediate actions to carry these out. Quality of monitoring is therefore rated as being “**Satisfactory**”.

#### **2. Timely delivery of outputs**

As will be noted in the Section IV of this report, factors such as the 2012 national elections severely impeded the delivery of the project with the result being that of the eleven Outputs planned for delivery in 2012 only nine were partially completed (Output 3.1 was completed in 2011). In view of the delays, the Project Board has endorsed the request for a project extension. It is anticipated that by the end of 2013 all Outputs other than those pertaining to having legislation passed into law and will have been completed. Whilst there is clear justification for the delayed delivery, this aspect is nevertheless rated as “**Moderately Unsatisfactory**” for 2012.

#### **3. Resources allocation**

In 2012 the project expended a total of \$651,991.22 (\$285,005 from the GEF and \$366,991.22 in co-financing). Of this amount \$67,079.20 was for other project cost which equals to 10.29% of the total funds expended (or 23.54% of the GEF Funds). This aspect is therefore rated as being “Satisfactory”.

#### 4. Cost-effective use of inputs

In comparing the levels of resources used versus results obtained it becomes apparent that delivery of outputs was not on par with the input. The primary reason for this is that in the deliverable by the team working on Outputs 1.4 and 2.4 was not a quality that could be used.

This aspect is rated as “Moderately Satisfactory” for 2012.

### III. Project results summary

#### Outputs 1.1: National Protected Areas System Act (NPASA) has been developed passed into law.

##### a. 2012 Targets:

- By the end of the Q1 the first comprehensive draft of the NPASA would have been produced and endorsed by the NPATC.
- By the end of Q2 a ‘final’ comprehensive draft of the NPASA would have been approved and on its way up to the Legislature.

##### b. Activities Undertaken:

- Rationalization exercise  
The draft final report on the Rationalization exercise was submitted and reviewed by the National Protected Areas Technical Committee (NPATC) on December 17<sup>th</sup> 2012. The report made two main recommendations for administration of the system, i.e. reestablishment of the National Protected Areas Commission with strengthened coordination, cooperation and communication or a National Parks Service. The outcome of the review was that none of the options would be accepted. A decision was made that NPATC would further discuss the options for administration of the National Protected Areas System and make a final recommendation to the Government of Belize by January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013.
- Protected Areas legislation  
The first draft of the National Protected Areas System Bill was submitted in March, 2012 and was subsequently shared with national stakeholders; however, no further progress was made it was deemed more appropriate by the MFFSD to wait until the Rationalization exercise was complete before moving forward.

##### c. Quality of the Implementation Process

- This Output is being delivered via two main activities. As the Rationalization exercise is approximately 90% complete and the first draft of the National Protected Areas System Bill has been produced, it is safe to say that this Output is approximately 50% completed. At December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012 this output was six months behind schedule but has not exceeded project budget. The slow pace in arriving at a decision on the administrative structure has resulted in concerns being raised by some stakeholders regarding the lead agencies commitment to moving this output forward.



d. Implementation Constraints

- Main constraints were the 2012 national elections and relatively slow decision making (see Section IV)

e. Success Factors

- None

f. Relevant Changes

- No changes made to the output in 2012.

**Outputs 1.2: Reformed Forest Act, National Parks System Act, Finance Act, and Fisheries Act in support of NPAS.**

a. 2012 Targets

- By the end of the Q2 required amendments to bases legislation have been identified and draft amendments made.
- Approval of amendments by the end of Q3, 2012.

b. Activities Undertaken:

- No activities undertaken

c. Quality of the Implementation Process

- Zero percent completed and three months behind schedule as at December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012

d. Implementation Constraints

- The base legislations are to be reformed so as to harmonize with the National Protected Areas System Act (NPASA); however, as the NPASA is delayed, the ripple effect was that this output is also delayed.

e. Success Factors

- None

f. Relevant Changes

- No changes in 2012.

**Output 1.3: Legal instruments/frameworks addressing royalty payments, concessions, cost-sharing arrangements with long-term productive sectors (e.g., tourism, oil, gas, and mineral extraction) and environmental safeguards within NPAS.**

a. 2012 Targets

- By the end of the Q2 required amendments to base legislation have been identified and draft amendments made.
- Amendments to base legislations will be completed by the end of Q3 and approved by the NPATC.

b. Activities Undertaken:

- No activities undertaken

c. Quality of the Implementation Process

- Three months behind schedule as at December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012.

d. Implementation Constraints

- Same as Output 1.3.

e. Success Factors

- None

f. Relevant Changes

- No changes to this output during 2012.

**Output 1.4: Fees and charges standardization policy has been developed and guiding PAs fees collection, etc.**

a. 2012 Targets

- PAs Fee Policy and Framework, based on full stakeholder consultation, has been approved by the end of Q1, 2012.

b. Activities Undertaken:

- The consulting submitted the first comprehensive draft of the Protected Areas Fee Policy and Framework in early 2012. After a comprehensive review a meeting was held with the team on May 29<sup>th</sup> and an updated version of the report submitted in August, 2012 (unfortunately the team was unable to improve the deliverable to a standard acceptable to the Government of Belize this there was not further progress with the team).

c. Quality of the Implementation Process

- If it is assumed that some aspect of the work of the team that was infinitely contracted can be used, then it is fair to say that this Output is approximately 30% completed; however, if deliverable cannot be used at all, then delivery is at zero %. As at December 31<sup>st</sup> 2012 this output was some nine months behind schedule.

d. Implementation Constraints

- 2012 national elections and consultant's performance (see Section IV). Whilst the new recruitment process resulted in IUCN being chosen as the team to lead the consultancy, the MFFSD had asked that the final decision on contracting be delayed as there was a desire for IUCN to also undertake another consultancy at the same time; unfortunately at December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012 the additional financing necessary had not been sourced.

e. Success Factors

- None

f. Relevant Changes

- No changes made to this output in 2012.

**Outputs 2.1: Selected instruments (e.g., legislated NPASA-related regulations for increased government budget appropriations; amended co-management agreements for accountability, enabling regulations for tourism concession and royalty assignment to PAs, regulation for fee definition, etc.) enable PA investments.**

a. 2012 Targets:

- By the end of Q3 instruments to be amended will have been identified and draft

amendments made. These amendments will in part be guided by the consultancy to develop guidelines for investment by the productive sectors.

- By the end of Q4 concrete recommendations have been made for concrete recommendations for the establishment of four (4) partnerships across the National Protected Areas System.

b. Activities Undertaken:

- *Environmental/Ecological and Socioeconomic Assessment of Priority Protected Areas*

This exercise was successfully completed. Objectives were:

- Undertake an assessment of nine priority protected areas in Belize to determine such factors as carrying capacity, limits of acceptable change, benefits to buffer communities and management policies on these in the target protected areas
- Provide recommendations on the most suitable mechanisms/avenues for income generation in the identified protected areas and the extent to which these ought to be developed.

The exercise resulted in some strategic recommendations made on potential income generating opportunities and areas where instruments could result in increasing PAs revenues. In addition, various lessons were learnt (see section on Lessons Learnt) that can serve to strengthen the NPAS.

- *Co-management Agreements*

The co-management agreement in use in Belize was updated to reflect a more business approach to protected areas management. Five agreements based on the new template were signed in November, 2012.

c. Quality of the Implementation Process

- This output consisted of two main activities: a) completion of the component pertaining to the assessment and b) using such information to develop and or amend relevant instruments accordingly. The first component and some aspects of the second component were completed on schedule; however, the other portions of the second component remained behind schedule as at December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012.

d. Implementation Constraints

- Main constraints was that the MFFSD decided to put all work pertaining to legislation/regulations, etc. on hold until after a decision on the Rationalization exercise.

e. Success Factors

Two factors resulted in this output achieving some degree of success:

- First, the assessment component did not require any major decisions on national policies.
- Second, it does appear that some agitation by protected areas co-managers resulted in decisions on the co-management agreement being somewhat prioritized.

f. Relevant Changes

- No changes in 2012.

**Outputs 2.2: Selected mechanisms (e.g., business plans, PA marketing strategies; PA cross-subsidization; small-scale PA infrastructure and businesses; reinvestment system for concessions, royalty, and fees in PAs) increase PA revenues.**

a. 2012 Targets

- By the end of Q3 consulting team to work on business plans, marketing strategies, etc. has been contracted and work on business plans commenced. At least four business plans/marketing strategies to be completed by the end of Q4.
- By the end of Q4 investment in grants funds have commences in at least four priority protected areas.

b. Activities Undertaken:

- The consultancy to develop business plans was advertised twice but did not result in successful recruitment of a consulting team.
  - In the first instance the team was not accepted due to the MFFSD policy of not accepting Public Officers as part of consulting team and the team that scored the highest had included one such officer as a member whilst the other teams did not demonstrate adequate capacity.
  - In the second instance the contract was not awarded due to the fact that project budgetary tolerance would have been exceeded.
- Whilst there has been no increase in revenues as a result of project inventions, strategic activities were identified by the protected areas management organizations, the Project Board and the PMU and work on these commenced via five small grants provided by the project; it is expected that the impact of these investments will be evident by the end of 2013.

c. Quality of the Implementation Process

- At December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012 output is approximately 30% completed and some five months behind schedule.

d. Implementation Constraints

- MFFSD's procurement policy and difficulty in recruiting qualified consultants.

e. Success Factors

- None

f. Relevant Changes

- No changes made to this output in 2012.

**Outputs 2.3: Socialization program to build awareness and acceptance of the PA Financial Sustainability Strategy.**

a. 2012 Targets

- By the end of Q1 a consulting team to develop the communication strategy has been identified and a draft strategy, along with promotional material, completed. The final strategy is expected to be finalized by the end of Q2 at which time implementation should have commenced.
- Full implementation of the communication strategy will be completed by the end of Q4.

b. Activities Undertaken:

- This individual took up the position on December 1<sup>st</sup> and has prepared and submitted and Inception report.

c. Quality of the Implementation Process

- Satisfactory

d. Implementation Constraints

- Budgetary.

e. Success Factors

- This consultancy was initially planned to be undertaken as a short term consultancy; however, it was not possible to recruit a consultant due to budgetary constraints. A decision was therefore made to modify from a short-term consultancy to a project support officer position, i.e. a Communications Officer, for a period of one year. The success factor was therefore one of the project adapting to under budgeting.

f. Relevant Changes

- See above on change from a short term consultancy to a project support officer (via a service contract).

**Outputs 2.4: Revenue accountability system improves the efficiency of tourism fee collection and administration.**

2012 Targets

- By the end of Q1 a progress report detailing the draft operational procedures for the PA's Fee system would have been submitted. A follow up report on the comprehensive operational procedures to be prepared by the end of Q2.
- By the end of Q3 the fees website will be fully operational, i.e. based on any necessary modifications; a final report will be submitted by the end of Q4.

b. Activities Undertaken:

- See Output 1.4 as this Output was being undertaken as part of the same consultancy.

c. Quality of the Implementation Process

- See Output 1.4

d. Implementation Constraints

- See Output 1.4

e. Success Factors

- See Output 1.4

f. Relevant Changes

- See Output 1.4

**Outputs 2.5: Long-term investment plans with key productive sectors (e.g., tourism, fisheries, forestry, electricity generation, and mineral extraction and oil) embrace the concept of biodiversity offsets to ensure that there is no net loss of biodiversity occurring in the PA system.**

a. 2012 Targets

- Strategies and guidelines for investment in PAs by productive sector will be completed by the end of Q2.

- Concrete recommendations for agreements with productive sector available by the end of Q4.

b. Activities Undertaken:

- Consulting team contracted produce the following deliverables:
  - Report on initial findings and recommendations.
  - Draft Strategies and Guidelines for Development in and around Protected Areas.

c. Quality of the Implementation Process

- Whilst the progress on this particular output has been a bit slower than planned, the process has provided much insight on how an enabling environment can be created for attracting more investment in and around protected areas. Moreover, the process has resulted in strategic linkages with entities such as the Belize Trade and Investment Development Services and the Director for Public-Private Sector Dialogue in the Office the Prime Minister and enabled the MFFSD to clearly identify the need for an overarching framework for this aspect of PAs management.

d. Implementation Constraints

- As per Section IV: Issues.

e. Success Factors

- The success achieved in this output was primarily because the entities promoting the investments by the productive sector were willing to provide ready support to the project. Also, the PMU took an active approach in liaising with these entities.

f. Relevant Changes

- No changes made to this output in 2012.

**Output 2.6: Cooperation agreements with public and private sectors (including international partnerships) for scientific research, environmental education, ecotourism management, and monitoring as a means of underwriting management costs of at least 10 PAs.**

a. 2012 Targets

- No targets were set for this Output in 2012.

b. Activities Undertaken:

- See Quality of Partnerships in Section II.

c. Quality of the Implementation Process

- Satisfactory.

d. Implementation Constraints

- None

e. Success Factors

- The Government of Belize remains very much committed to the NPAS.

f. Relevant Changes

- No changes made to this output in 2012.

**Output 3.2: Staff from 20 co-managed PAs trained in management and business plan development, administration, and financial planning.**

a. 2012 Targets

- At least one course has been taught per quarter.

b. Activities Undertaken:

- A contract was signed with the University of Belize and the course on Financial Management (Level 1). The course was attended by some 13 participants representing governmental and non-governmental organizations. The objective of the course was for participants to:
  - Have a better understanding of the basics of accounting;
  - Have a comprehensive introduction to the fundamentals of budgeting and the role of the budget within the business plan;
  - Be able to interpret details of a standard financial report;
  - Understand the financial details/needs of grant reporting.

The knowledge and skills gained in the course can now be applied by Trainees to meet the financial reporting requirements of their current PA management mandates or co-management agreements.

c. Quality of the Implementation Process

- Implementation of the National Training Programme for Protected Areas Management was originally scheduled to commence in February but had to be put off until November. This means that it is about 13% completed when in fact it should have been around 40%; the delay is some nine months.

d. Implementation Constraints

- Delays due to 2012 elections in Belize.

e. Success Factors

- None

f. Relevant Changes

- No changes made to this Output in 2012.

**Output 3.3: Institutionalized management effectiveness assessment.**

a. 2012 Targets

- By the end of Q3 at least 20 co-managers have been trained in management effectiveness, including how to use the UNDP METT tool. At the end of Q4 at least 50% of co-managers are including management effectiveness in management of their protected areas.

b. Activities Undertaken:

- First component of the course on Protected Areas Management Effectiveness have been successfully completed. This component consisted on a three-day workshop and served as an introduction to the various approaches to undertaking Management Effectiveness.

c. Quality of the Implementation Process

- Satisfactory

d. Implementation Constraints

- See Output 3.2

e. Success Factors

- None

f. Relevant Changes

- No changes made to this Output in 2012.

## IV. Implementation challenges

### Project risks<sup>2</sup> and actions

A. The only Risk that escalated during 2012 had to do with elections in Belize and this is discussed in Project Issues and actions below.

### Project issues and actions

#### A. National Elections

National elections were held in the first quarter of the year and resulted in significant delays encountered for the following specific reasons:

- a. Personnel from the Forest and Fisheries Departments were occupied in pre-election duties and were not available to support project activities. The same was true of the GEF-OFP as well as a few other key individuals. PAs managers likewise indicated that they would not be available for consultations, etc.
- b. After the elections, there was re-alignment of various government ministries, including the ministry under which the project was being implemented. This re-alignment resulted in:
  - Uncertainty on the way forward on aspects of the project such as the administrative structure for the national protected areas system;
  - A change in the structure of the National Protected Areas Secretariat and the Project Organization;
  - A physical move of project's office;
  - Delayed co-financing by the Protected Areas Conservation Trust as the agreed co-financing could not be issued until its new Board of Directors was fully constituted.

The impacts of the above delays were that many project activities were delayed by approximately six months and the movement of project funds was below what was budgeted.

Recommendation:

This situation has been addressed by adjusting the global project work-plan and budget and by requesting an early no-cost extension to the project.

#### B. Communication between the PMU ( ) and the Technical Project Directors/Project Board

On at least two occasions the issue of communication was discussed as such was proving to be ineffective. A closer review of the situation revealed that:

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<sup>2</sup> At the commencement of the project it was agreed that Risk would be defined as future events that could impact the project and that Issues as factors that have or are affecting the project. As of 2013 this definition will be amended to reflect Risks as external and Issues as internal to the project.



- i. The project manager was attempting to keep the Technical Project Directors and Project Board updated primarily by emails and only occasionally by telephone<sup>3</sup>.
- ii. Correspondences from the project manager were not being read, thus it was not possible to obtain the necessary feedback/guidance.

Whilst the above situation resulted in decisions not being expedited, there is also a possibility that deliverables by consultants may also not be read as thoroughly as they ought to be, thus bringing the issue of assurance into question.

Recommendation:

This issue has for the most part been addressed through discussions with the Project Directors. It has been agreed that the will make every effort to communications as little as possible by email and matters that require urgent attention will be communicated via telephone or by meetings.

### **C. Relatively Slow Decision Making<sup>4</sup>**

During 2012, the project was plagued by extremely slow decision making which had ripple effects. For example, the final draft Rationalization reported was submitted in early September, but despite efforts by the project manager and the Administrative Project Director, it was not possible to get a meeting to decide on a way forward until late November, over two months later<sup>5</sup>. In addition, as progress of the protected areas legislation was contingent on the final decisions of the Rationalization report, it meant that all work on legislation had to be placed on hold until after the final decisions on the administrative section of the Rationalization exercise.

The result of the above has been rather low project execution rate (whilst the main cause for this is yet to be clearly identified, it is believed that it is closely related to the Project Organization; a document explaining this is available at the project's office). Of course, the fact that the project timelines do not fully harmonise with Government of Belize policy cycles cannot be ignored as a contributing factor to the slow decision making.

Recommendation:

As per Annex B; however, it is anticipated that the 2013 Mid-term Evaluation will lead to a comprehensive diagnosis of the situation and strategies for improving.

### **D. New Procurement Policies and Procedures**

As per UNDP's directive, in 2012 the project commenced using the Government of Belize procurement policies and procedures. Unfortunately, these were not quite clear and there was quite a bit of uncertainties and delays. Moreover, whereas the full process from advertising to contracting

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<sup>3</sup> This deficiency has been documented in the project manager's 2012 evaluation.

<sup>4</sup> Relative to project timelines, but probably normal for routine operations

<sup>5</sup> The meeting did not result in a decision on the recommendations of report, but rather on a decision on how and when the report would be reviewed and timeline for a decision on its recommendations.

consultants was approximately two months using UNDP policies and procedures, this process has been extended to approximately four months using the new arrangements.

Recommendation:

As a first step, the project operational manual is being updated to reflect these changes and the annual 2013 Annual Operational Plan will reflect the new realities. The PMU is recommending that the Project Board be expanded to include the MFFSD's Administrative Officer; this individual would be able to provide guidance on the Government of Belize policies/regulations, especially pertaining to procurement/tendering.

### **E. Absence of a Policy on Development in Protected Areas**

A recurring issue in discussing Output 2.5 "Long-term investment plans with key productive sectors (e.g., tourism, fisheries, forestry, electricity generation, mineral extraction and oil) include biodiversity offsets to ensure that there is no net loss of biodiversity found in the PA system" with different stakeholders has to do with the need for a national policy on development in protected areas. Stakeholders have indicated that in their opinion developing strategies and guidelines ought to be preceded by the policy, thus various attempts at engaging stakeholders on this output resulted in little or no positive gains. However, it was subsequently clarified that the laws are clear on what can/cannot be done in PAs, thus it appears that the issue is more on a policy for investment in PAs.

Recommendation:

The matter has been brought to the attention of the Project Board and decision makers from the Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and Sustainable Development. This issue will continue to be monitored by the PMU.

### **F. Mid-term Evaluation (MTE)**

The Mid-term Evaluation was originally planned for the first and second quarters of 2012; however, the PMU was informed that such was no longer necessary for certain categories of GEF projects. The effect of not undertaking the MTE has been that it has not been possible to independently identify weaknesses in the project and take early corrective action.

Recommendation:

Recommendation has been for this to be prioritized for the first quarter in 2013. The annual work plan reflects this exercise.

### **G. Consultants' Performance**

The project continues to be plagued by sub-optimal performance. For example, a decision had to be made not to proceed with Ackerman, Haas and Associates on the development of the Protected Areas Fee Policy and Framework due to substandard deliverables. The reason for this appears to be numerous and requires independent and comprehensive analysis; however, based on the PMU's observation, major contributing factors include:

- Capacity issues on consultants' behalf.
- Deficiencies in Terms of Reference.
- Deficiencies in the technical aspects of recruitment processes – for example, in the second process of attempting to recruit a team to develop the business plans, Zephyr Services Ltd.

was identified as the team with which the project should initiate discussions; however, at least one member of the selection panel expressed reservations as the team did not have the capacity (note: in the end the consultancy was not awarded because of budgetary constraints as well as capacity issues).

- Budgetary constraints.
- Weak project oversight – for example, the CEO in the MFFSD indicated that the issue with the PAs Fee Policy and Framework ought to have been flagged much earlier and appropriate actions taken.

Recommendation:

The key to ensuring adequate performance has to do with contracting the right consultants and for this to be possible require two main lines of actions:

- i. Improved project management and oversight – this will lead to more comprehensive Terms of References, improved recruitment processes, etc.,
- ii. Realigning project budgets based on new realities, sourcing additional co-financing, and modifying deliverables so that there is adequate funds to secure the services of the best consultants.

A lesson learnt from the Golden Stream Watershed Project can probably shed more light on the matter of project management and oversight. That project sought to pioneer Integrated Landscape Management (ILM); however, in attempting to develop a strategy for ILM, a point was reached where it was not possible to make further progress as the project staff, project steering committee and the consultants lacked the capacity to do so. Fortunately, voluntary technical assistance was obtained from an international expert, thus making it possible to overcome that hurdle. The point is that in project management and project governance/oversight, it is important to consider what the project is expected to deliver and ensure that capacities for such is available in all phases of the project cycle. In the situation with the consultancy pertaining to the business plans, in hindsight the selection panel should have included someone with a business background – such an individual would most likely have been in a better position to identify capacity issues with the team being considered. At the same time, it will be important to have business skills available to vet the business plans.

## **V. Lessons learnt and next steps**

### **A. Carrying Capacity in Protected Areas**

In Q1-2012 the team undertaking the Socio-Economic and Environmental Assessments consultancy held a workshop to train managers of the nine priority protected areas on various aspects of carrying capacity. During the workshop, a number of issues were identified:

- i. That many (most) PAs managers have little or no knowledge of how to monitor carrying capacity.
- ii. Carrying capacity is based on use of the protected areas and most management plans were/are not prepared to enable carrying capacity to be monitored.
- iii. Some PAs in Belize were declared for one purpose, but the major use is different, e.g. Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve where most activities are related to tourism; there is very little fishing hence monitoring carrying capacity may have little value.

The lesson learnt is that in planning project activities, consideration must be given to both how such fits in with projects as well as with management systems in place.

*Recommended Lines of Action*

*The recommendations based on the above lesson learnt was for the information to be considered by the Project Board and the National Protected Areas Technical Committee with a view of:*

- 1. Including carrying capacity in the national training programme.*
- 2. Bearing in mind that this lesson learnt may somewhat constrain the consultant final delivery as relevant information is not in place to determine carrying capacities of the PAs*
- 3. Giving consideration to inclusion of carrying capacity related issues in the preparation of management plans.*

## **B. Protected Areas and National Development**

In Q2-2012 meetings/discussions were held with entities such as BELTRAIDE, the Rural Development Department and various protected areas managers. Whilst the objectives of these meetings were met, two observations were made:

- i. There is significant confusion on the role of protected areas relative to wider biodiversity related issues/management in Belize. Many individuals are of the opinion that protected areas and their managers are responsible for all biodiversity related issues in the country. The result of this is that there appears to be over-expectation of the SNC.PAS Project and the wider National Protected Areas Secretariat.
- ii. Issues related to protected areas and biodiversity are often not framed in terms that can be readily understood by individuals from backgrounds other than PAs/biodiversity management. Similarly, some PAs managers apparently do not “recognize” (understand?) the importance of linking protected areas management with other sectors, e.g. rural development.

Lesson learnt is that there is a need for more strategic communication and an evolution in the approach to protected areas management.

*Recommended Lines of Action*

- 1. The general awareness of protected areas as tools for managing biodiversity and ecosystems needs to be increased; this should include a robust communication campaign and also adoption of a “new protected areas language”.*
- 2. There is a need for improved collaboration across sectors and line ministries and integration/mainstreaming of biodiversity issues in other sectors and vice-versa.*
- 3. There needs to be a gradual evolution from managing protected areas primarily for conservation to managing these to ensure life support systems are maintained. PAs need to be placed at the centre of sustainable development by having clearly established socio-cultural, economic as environmental/conservations targets, i.e. using integrated protected areas management.*

## **C. Projects within the National Context**

During Q3-2012 the PMU prepared a paper outlining various bottlenecks that were adversely impacting the project delivering as per project plan. The paper indicated that it appeared that during

project preparation the institutional environment (and national policy cycles) within the government service was not adequately considered, thus project timelines do not adequately reflect the timelines required for decisions to be made by the GoB (an opposing argument has been made that this could not be the case as the GoB signed off on the project). Nevertheless, the lesson learnt here is that project activities and timelines must harmonize (or be modified to ensure harmonization) with national strategies, etc.

*Recommended Lines of Action*

- 1. That the global work-plan be re-examined and adjusted based on the present realities.*
- 2. Future projects should reflect the lessons learnt and challenges encountered by the SNC Project (as well as other projects); perhaps allowing more time from the onset would be better than having to be adjusting work-plans and planning for no-cost extension/s.*

#### **D. Awareness of Global Environment Facility Strategies**

From October 31<sup>st</sup> to November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012 the Project Manager attended the 1st Workshop for Project Coordinators of UNDP-GEF Biodiversity for Latin America and the Caribbean held in Panama. This workshop proved timely and has certainly been benefiting the project as the project manager is now more fully informed on GEF's policies.

The lesson learnt from the above experience is that if project partners are not fully cognizant of the donor's requirement, then it is possible that such be reflected in the quality of their contribution to the project as it pertains to the donor's requirements.

*Recommended Lines of Actions*

*The workshop report submitted to the MFFSD and the Project Board (note: the GEF-OPF sits on the PB) made the following recommendation:*

- 1. That a session be convened in early 2013 to discuss how Belize can better meet its obligations to the GEF as well as maximize the benefits it obtains. This session would serve to educate/inform coordinators of GEF co-financed projects, project steering committees and as well as other partners.*

*However, in discussion the need for the above with key individuals, the following have also been recommended:*

- a. The session should not be a one-time event, but set the stage for an ongoing process.*
- b. The GEF provides country support for these awareness activities, but Belize has not been accessing such for some years.*
- c. Whilst the SNC.PAs project manager is cognizant of the need for increased awareness as indicated above, he does not have the mandate to undertake the session.*

#### **E. Engaging the Productive/Private Sector**

This lesson learnt is closely to *B. Protected Areas and National Development* and pertains to *Output 2.5 Long-term investment plans with key productive sectors include biodiversity offsets to ensure that there is no net loss of biodiversity found in the PA system*". To build awareness and support for this output, the took the initiative and consulted a few entities from the private sector as well as the Director for Public-Private Sector Dialogue in the Office the Prime Minister.

Many lessons were learnt via the above process with the most important being:

- a. If there is to be adequate engagement of the productive/private sector, then capacity to for such must be available;
- b. As indicated in Lesson Learnt B: *Protected Areas and National Development*, the need for inter-ministerial dialogue and collaboration cannot be over-emphasized as the work as one entity can contribute to the work of another, e.g. the work of the SNC.PAS Project can contribute to the work of the Director for Public-Private Sector Dialogue.

*Recommended Lines of Action*

*Based on the lessons learnt, the PMU is recommending that an official **Technical Working Group (TWG)** to guide this output be established. The PMU can take the lead on this; however, the PMU believes that it should a higher level committee to advise the MFFSD on matters pertaining to business in PAs. Options on the way forward could be:*

- a. *Establishing a special committee to provide guidance on this matter. Members ought to include representatives from BELTRAIDE, Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the office of the Director for Public-Private Sector Dialogue, the Lands Department as well as the MFFSD. It may also be possible to adopt Natural Resource and Environmental Policy System pioneered under the Strengthening Institutional Capacities for Coordinating Multi-Sectoral Environmental Policies and Programmes Project.*
- b. *Expanding the NPATC to reflect the above.*

## VI. Financial status and utilization

### Financial status

If the project has multiple phases, all figures should refer only to the current phase of the project (refer to the dates in the project document).

**Table 1: Contribution overview [start date of the project – end date of project]<sup>6</sup>**

DONOR NAME	CONTRIBUTIONS		CONTRIBUTION BALANCE
	Committed	Received	
GEF	975,000	476,816	498,184
Forestry Department	56,000	18,245	37,755
PACT	585,000	232,147	352,853
Oak Foundation	200,000	192,876	7,124
APAMO	112,471	225,628	(113,157)
Fisheries Department	76,500	41,875	34,625
UNDP - Belize	50,000		50,000
MFFSD		74,274	(74,274)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2054,971</b>	<b>1261,860</b>	<b>793,111</b>

**Table 2: Funding status (as of the end of the year)**

RECEIVED*	EXPENDITURES			PROJECT BALANCE	EARMARKED**	AVAILABLE FUNDING (as of 1 Jan of the next year)	REMARKS
	Period Prior to the Reporting Year	Reporting Year Only	TOTAL				
975,000	191,811	285,005	476,816	498,184		498,184	
56,000	10,425	7,819	18,245	37,755		37,755	
585,000	186,473	45,673	232,147	352,853		352,853	
200,000	37,729	155,146	192,876	7,124		7,124	-
112,471	131,089	94,540	225,628	(113,157)			-
50,000			-	50,000		50,000	
76,500	21,250	20,625	41,875	34,625		34,625	

\*The *Received* column in this table should match the figures in the column (of the same title) in the Resource Overview table.

\*\*The *Earmarked* column should specify if any donors have earmarked their funding to a specific activity or other requirement.

<sup>6</sup> The “resource overview” can be any kind of chart (a pie chart, for example, would be an effective way of demonstrating a funding gap).

## Financial utilization

The figures in this section (budget, expenditure, and balance) can refer only to the reporting period (i.e. one year).

**Table 3: Annual expenditure by activity [1 January – 31 December]**

Activity	BUDGET [year]	EXPENDITURES <sup>7</sup>	BALANCE	DELIVERY (%)
Activity 1 The NPAS is supported by legal and Institutional reforms furthering efforts in attaining sustainability of the system	81265	46240.58	35024.42	56.90
Activity 2: Modernize and Diversify financing for the Sustainability of the National Protected Areas System	253565	178976.55	74588.45	70.58
Activity 3; NPAS is supported by enhanced management capacities	32945	34693.87	(1748.87)	105.08
Activity 4: Project benefits from effective management and monitoring and evaluation	30055	25093.95	4961.05	83.49
UNDP GMS (based on donor agreements)				
<b>Total</b>				

**Table 4: Annual expenditure by donor [1 January – 31 December]**

ACTIVITIES (as per approved budget)		OPENING BALANCE For YEAR 2006	Q1 EXPENDITURES 01/01/06 - 31/03/06	BALANCE as of 31/03/06
Activity 1	Project Management	2900,400	-	2900,400
Activity 2	Operational Support	3168,650	200,000	2968,650
Activity 3	Public Outreach	5339,832	100,000	5239,832
Activity 4	ICT equipment	1251,642	200,000	1051,642
Activity 5	Training and Capacity Building Support	1340,000	-	1340,000
GMS 5% (see agreement)		700,026	25,000	675,026
<b>Subtotal DONOR I</b>		<b>14700,550</b>	<b>525,000</b>	<b>14175,550</b>
Activity 1	Project Management	1300,000	100,000	1200,000
Activity 4	ICT equipment	1251,642	200,000	1051,642
Activity 5	Training and Capacity Building Support	1340,000	-	1340,000
GMS 7% (see agreement)		272,415	21,000	251,415
<b>Subtotal DONOR II</b>		<b>4164,057</b>	<b>321,000</b>	<b>3843,057</b>
Activity 2	Operational Support	140,000	0	140,000
Activity 4	ICT equipment	160,000	0	160,000
Activity 5	Training and Capacity Building Support	400,000	0	400,000
5% (see agreement)		35,000	-	35,000
<b>Subtotal DONOR III</b>		<b>724,500</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>724,500</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>19589,107</b>	<b>846,000</b>	<b>18743,107</b>

<sup>7</sup> The expenditures for the year may be further broken down by quarters (four additional columns for quarters 1-4).



**Annexes:**

**1. Multi-Annual Work Plan (or RRF)**