Inception Report

International consultant for Midterm Review

UNDP GEF Project entitled "Support to the Consolidation of a Protected Area System in Guinea-Bissau's Forest Belt" (PIMS #3650)

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Table of contents

A.1) Introduction

This Inception Report covers the Midterm Review (MTR) of the GEF-UNDP project entitled "Support to the Consolidation of a Protected Area System in Guinea-Bissau's Forest Belt". This 4-year project will complete its second year of implementation in November 2014 and needs a midterm evaluation. This inception report of the MTR has been designed based with respect of highest evaluation standard in particular the UNDP and GEF requirements. This inception report will be discussed and validated, and can be translated in French is required.

A.2) Brief description of the project

Guinea-Bissau is a small country wedged between the sub-Saharan arid ecosystems and the Guinean moist forest ecoregion. The resulting combination creates very rich and diversify ecosystems such as open forests, gallery forests, woodland savannah, which are a refuge for animal life and migratory species. For years the attention of both government and donors has been focused on protecting the costal and marine region. The GEF-UNDP project entitled "Support to the Consolidation of a Protected Area System in Guinea-Bissau's Forest Belt" signed in 2010 proposes to correct this imbalance.

The goal of this project is:
- To conserve globally significant biodiversity in Guinea-Bissau's forest belt region by creating and strengthening protected areas.

This GEF-UNDP project started in November 2012, its global objective is:
- To establish and operationalize terrestrial PAs in the Dulombi-Boé-Tchetche (DBT) complex and thereby significantly expand and strengthen Guinea-Bissau's PA system.

In order to achieve these objectives, three 'outcomes' are expected from the project:
- Immediate threats to terrestrial ecosystems mitigated through the effective expansion and management of PAs in the forest belt region
- Improved systemic and institutional capacity of key PA management stakeholders provides the enabling framework for establishing and managing a more representative PA network; and
- Participatory conservation management approaches in the DBT Complex are implemented.

The project is implemented through the Institute for Biodiversity and Protected Areas (IBAP), Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), Government of Guinea-Bissau.

A.3) Context and purpose of the evaluation

As the UNDP-GEF project "Support to the Consolidation of a Protected Area System in Guinea-Bissau's Forest Belt" is a full-sized project, it requires a Midterm Review (MTR). The objective of the mission, as proposed in the TOR, is to provide the project partners (GEF, UNDP) and the Government of Guinea Bissau with an independent MTR of the project.
The purpose of the MTR is to:
- Assess achievements and challenges at mid-point
- Recommend corrective actions to achieve stated outcomes
- Consider sustainability issues and exit strategy.

The MTR will assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document, and assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying the necessary changes to be made in order to set the project on-track to achieve its intended results. The MTR will also review the project's strategy, its risks to sustainability. The MTR will focus on:

- Assess the level of achievement of key indicators,
- Meet the challenges,
- Draw the lessons learnt during the implementation,
- Propose the recommendations for the rest of period of implementation.

A.4)   Methodology of data collection

The MTR will provide evidence based credible and reliable information. The MTR will set-up a collaborative and participatory approach in order to ensure close commitment with the Project Team, government counterparts (the GEF Operational Focal Point), the UNDP Country Office(s), UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisers, and other key stakeholders.

Mainly three sources of primary data and information will be examined:

1. **A wide variety of documents** (Project Document / GEF Documents / UNDP Documents) covering project design, implementation progress, monitoring, amongst others:
   a. PRODOC and CEO Endorsement.
   b. UNDP Initiation Plan, UNDP Environmental & Social Safeguard Policy.
   c. The Project Document, project reports including Annual Project Review, project budget revisions, lesson learns reports, technical reports produced during the project implementation.
   d. National strategic and legal documents (such as Biodiversity National Strategy Report among others).

   The MTR will also review the baseline GEF focal area Tracking Tool submitted to the GEF at CEO endorsement, and the midterm GEF focal area Tracking Tool that must be completed before the MTR field mission begins.

2. **Face-to-face consultations** with a wide range of stakeholders, using "semi-structured interviews" with a key set of questions in a conversational format. The questions asked will aim to provide answers to the points described in the following section. Triangulation of results, i.e. comparing information from different sources, such as documentation and interviews, or interviews on the same subject with different stakeholders, will be used to corroborate or check the reliability of evidence.

3. **Direct observations of project results and activities** at a selection of field sites: to Boé and Dulombi in inland from Guinea-Bissau, including the following project sites Beli, Tchetche, Dulombi, Cansamba, Quirafo, Cuntabane, Xitole.

Stakeholders interviewed will include amongst others:
- GEF operational focal point
- Gabu, Bafatá an Quinará Regional Government
- State Secretariat for Environment and Tourism (SEAT)
- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (General Directorate/Department of Forestry and Fauna)
- Ministry of Economy

- Planning and Regional Integration (General Directorate of Planning)
- Project Steering Committee
- Project team (capital and field-based)
- UNDP Country Office
- UNDP GEF Ecosystems and Biodiversity Regional Technical Advisor for North and West Africa
- Other project stakeholders
- Community based organisations
- Private-sector individuals and organisations
- NGOs

The information collected, including documentary evidence, interviews and observations, will be compiled and organized according to the questions asked in the assessment.

A.5)   Assessment of evidence

The MTR team will assess the following four categories of project progress:

1. **Project Strategy**

   A. Project design:

The MTR will review / assess those following components:
- The problem addressed by the project.
- The effect of any incorrect assumptions or changes to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document.
- The relevance of the project strategy and assess whether it provides the most effective route towards expected/intended results. Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated into the project design?
- The extent to which the project idea/conceptualization had its origin within national, sectorial and development plans/priorities and focuses on national environment and development interests.
- Decision-making processes: Assess information dissemination, consultation, and "stakeholder" participation in design stages.
- The extent to which relevant gender issues were raised in the project design.

   B. Results Framework/Logframe:

The MTR will review / assess those following components:
- Project's logframe indicators and targets, assess how "SMART" the midterm and end-of-project targets are (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound), and suggest specific amendments/revisions to the targets and indicators as necessary.
- How the project's objectives and outcomes or components are enough clear, practical, and feasible within the time frame
- Identify potential beneficial development effects (i.e. income generation, gender equality and women's empowerment, improved governance etc...) that should be included in the project results framework and monitored on an annual basis, with a specific focus on gender aspect.

The MTR will develop and recommend SMART development indicators, including sex-disaggregated indicators and indicators that capture development benefits

2. **Progress Towards Results**

The MTR will review the logframe indicators against progress made towards the end-of-project targets using the Progress Towards Results Matrix developed and presented in the Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects;

The following Matrix template will be used:

Project Strategy	Indicator[3]	Baseline Level[4]	Level in 1st PIR (self-reported)	Midterm Targets[5]	End-of-project Target	Midterm Level & Assessment[6]	Achievement Rating[7]	Justification for Rating

This Matrix will highlight the following key assessments indicators, based on the level of progress achieved.

Green= Achieved	Yellow= On target to be achieved	Red= Not on target to be achieved

The MTR will propose an analysis and recommendations to 1) understand the "red rating" and 2) raise bottlenecks.
In addition to the progress towards outcomes analysis:
- Compare and analyse the GEF Tracking Tool at the Baseline with the one completed right before the Midterm Review.
- Identify remaining barriers to achieving the project objective in the remainder of the project.
- By reviewing the aspects of the project that have already been successful, identify ways in which the project can further expand these benefits.

3. **Project Implementation and Adaptive Management**

   A. Management arrangement
- Review overall effectiveness of project management as outlined in the Project Document. Have changes been made and are they effective? Are responsibilities and reporting lines clear? Is decision-making transparent and undertaken in a timely manner? Recommend areas for improvement.
- Review the quality of execution of the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner(s) and recommend areas for improvement.
- Review the quality of support provided by the GEF Partner Agency (UNDP) and recommend areas for improvement.

   B. Work planning
- Review any delays in project start-up and implementation, identify the causes and examine if they have been resolved.
- Are work-planning processes results-based? If not, suggest ways to re-orientate work planning to focus on results?
- Examine the use of the project's results framework/ logframe as a management tool and review any changes made to it since project start.

   C. Finance and co finance
- Consider the financial management of the project, with specific reference to the cost-effectiveness of interventions.
- Review the changes to fund allocations as a result of budget revisions and assess the appropriateness and relevance of such revisions.
- Does the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allow management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allow for timely flow of funds?

- Informed by the co-financing monitoring table to be filled out, provide commentary on co-financing: is co-financing being used strategically to help the objectives of the project? Is the Project Team meeting with all co-financing partners regularly in order to align financing priorities and annual work plans?

D. Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:

- Review the monitoring tools currently being used: Do they provide the necessary information? Do they involve key partners? Are they aligned or mainstreamed with national systems? Do they use existing information? Are they efficient? Are they cost-effective? Are additional tools required? How could they be made more participatory and inclusive?
- Examine the financial management of the project monitoring and evaluation budget. Are sufficient resources being allocated to monitoring and evaluation? Are these resources being allocated effectively?

E. Stakeholders engagement

This should include assessments of the mechanisms for information dissemination in project implementation and the extent of stakeholder participation in management, emphasizing the following:

- The production and dissemination of information and lessons generated by the project.
- Local resource users and NGOs participation in project implementation and decision making and an
- Analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the approach adopted by the project in this arena.
- The establishment of partnerships and collaborative relationships developed by the project with local,
- National and international entities and the effects they have had on project implementation.
- Involvement of governmental institutions in project implementation, the extent of governmental support of the project.

F. Reporting

- Assess how adaptive management changes have been reported by the project management and shared with the Project Board.
- Assess how well the Project Team and partners undertake and fulfil GEF reporting requirements (i.e. how have they addressed poorly-rated PIRs, if applicable?)
- Assess how lessons derived from the adaptive management process have been documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners.

G. Communications

- Review internal project communication with stakeholders: Is communication regular and effective? Are there key stakeholders left out of communication? Are there feedback mechanisms when communication is received? Does this communication with stakeholders contribute to their awareness of project outcomes and activities and investment in the sustainability of project results?
- Review external project communication: Are proper means of communication established or being established to express the project progress and intended impact to the public (is there a web presence, for example? Or did the project implement appropriate outreach and public awareness campaigns?)
- For reporting purposes, write one half-page paragraph that summarizes the project's progress towards results in terms of contribution to sustainable development benefits, as well as global environmental benefits.

4. **Sustainability**

Validate whether the risks identified in the Project Document, Annual Project Review/PIRs and the ATLAS Risk Management Module are the most important and whether the risk ratings applied are appropriate and up to date. If not, explain why.
In addition, assess the following risks to sustainability:
- Financial risks to sustainability:
- Socio-economic risks to sustainability:
- Institutional Framework and Governance risks to sustainability:
- Environmental risks to sustainability:

Project sustainability will receive ratings as follows:
- **Likely** (L): negligible risks to sustainability, with key outcomes expected to continue into the foreseeable future.
- **Moderately Likely** (ML) : moderate risks, but expectations that at least some outcomes will be sustained
- **Moderately Unlikely** (MU): substantial risk that key outcomes will not carry on after project closure, although some outputs and activities should carry on.
- **Unlikely (U):** severe risks that project outcomes as well as key outputs will not be sustained.
- **Highly Unlikely** (HU): expectation that **few** if any outputs or activities will continue after project closure.

5. **Conclusions & Recommendations**

The MTR will provide corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project. Recommendations will be specific and clearly justified in relation to the achievement of the project objectives. It will be, for example:
- Actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the project
- Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives
- Changes to project strategy, including the log frame indicators and targets

The MTR will propose relevant factors to improve the sustainability of project outcomes include.

6. **Ratings**

The MTR team will rate the project's results and give a brief description of the associated achievements in a table called MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary. This table will be presented in in the Executive Summary of the MTR report.

A.6)   Evaluation time frame

The total duration of the MTR will be approximately 04 weeks.

The tentative MTR timeframe is as follows:

	n° week	week 1							week 2							week 3							week 4				
	n°day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Total Day/expertise	**26**																										
Discussion - validation of the inception report & Document review	**4**	1	1	1	1																						
Data collection design & field mission preparation	**3**					1	1	1																			
MTR mission: stakeholder meetings, interviews, field visits	**12**								1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1							
Mission wrap-up meeting & presentation of initial findings- earliest end of MTR mission	**1**																				1						
Draft report conception & presentation	**5**																					1	1	1	1	1	
Incorporating feedbacks on the draft report & Finalization of MTR report	**1**																										1