Mid-Term Review of the UNEP - GEF Project

Strengthening institutions, information management and monitoring to reduce the rate of illegal wildlife trade in South Africa

GEF Project ID number **9525**

Ecosystems Division, GEF – Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit

November/2024

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This report has been prepared by an external consultant as part of a Mid-Term Review, a management-led process to assess performance at the project's midpoint. The UNEP Evaluation Office provides templates and tools to support the review process. The findings and conclusions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of Member States or the UN Environment Programme Senior Management.

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Strengthening institutions, information management and monitoring to reduce the rate of illegal wildlife trade in South Africa
GEF Project ID number 9525
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1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Mid Term Review report was prepared for the United Nations Environment Programme by Ms. Doreen Mnyulwa, as an independent consultant.

The reviewer would like to express their gratitude to all persons consulted and who contributed to this review, as listed in Annex II.

The reviewer would like to thank the project team and in particular the Project Manager, Ms. Mercedes Marele, and other Project Management Unit members for their contribution and collaboration throughout the review process. Sincere appreciation is also expressed to the Project Steering Committee, who took the time to provide comments on the draft report. The reviewer would also like to thank the leadership of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment, South African National Biodiversity Institute, South African National Parks, Peace Parks Foundation, World Wildlife Fund South Africa, and communities living in the periphery of the Kruger National Park for their cooperation and support during the review process.

Special acknowledgments to the UNEP Ecosystems Division, including, Johan Robinson, Jane Nimpanya, Aska Ochiel, and Ruth Igamba for their technical guidance and collaboration during this mid-term review.

The review consultant hopes that the findings, conclusions, and recommendations will contribute to the successful implementation of the project to the end, and to the continuous improvement of similar projects in South Africa, other countries, and regions.

BRIEF EXTERNAL CONSULTANT(S) BIOGRAPHY

Ms. Doreen Mnyulwa is a seasoned development expert with over 30 years of experience, including 18 years as an international consultant specialising in project design, management, and evaluation. Her extensive career spans critical areas such as biodiversity conservation, agriculture, food security and livelihoods, climate change adaptation, Access and Benefit Sharing, seed technology and conservation, and protected areas management. Throughout her career, Ms. Mnyulwa has demonstrated exceptional expertise in project cycle management, successfully designing, implementing, and evaluating large-scale, multi-stakeholder programs across Africa. She has raised significant funds for development projects and consistently delivered results through a results-based monitoring and evaluation (M&E) approach. Ms. Mnyulwa has a strong command of M&E methodologies, including logical framework planning, Theory of Change (ToC), and M&E matrix development, ensuring that projects align with strategic goals and support evidence-based decision-making. In addition to her technical skills, Ms. Mnyulwa has played a pivotal role in conducting midterm and final evaluations for donor-funded initiatives, enabling adaptive management and enhancing the impact of development interventions. Her systems-thinking approach, combined with her ability to engage diverse stakeholders, has contributed to the success of various regional initiatives, particularly in biodiversity, science and technology innovation, and sustainable development. Ms. Mnyulwa's analytical mindset and multi-sectoral expertise make her a sought-after consultant, delivering impactful solutions that address the complex challenges faced by communities and ecosystems across Africa. doeshumbamnyulwa@gmail.com or dmnyulwa@raeinafrica.org.za

2. ABOUT THE REVIEW

Joint Review: No

Report Language(s): English.

Review Type: Mid-term Review

Brief Description: This report is a management-led Mid Term Review of a UNEP/GEF 6 project. The project's overall development goal was to "to fight against illegal wildlife trade through institutional strengthening, improved information management and monitoring (and collaboration at an international level), thereby influencing the supply system at local (protected areas), national (South Africa) and regional levels". The review sought to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency) and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The review has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements and (ii) to promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP, the GEF, and the relevant agencies of the project participating countries.

Key words[1]: Biodiversity; CITES, Capacities, Livelihoods; Multi-Stakeholder

Primary data collection period: 15 August 2024 to 4 October 2024

Field mission dates: 26 September 2024 to 4 October 2024

[1] Please provide maximum five key words, which are not already in the project title.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3. LIST OF ACRONYMS

BD	Biodiversity Focal Area
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CITES	The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
DFFE	Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment
EMs	Environmental Monitors
E-Permitting	Electronic-Permitting
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GKSC	Greater Kruger Steering Committee
GLTCA	Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area
GWP	Global Wildlife Program
IWT	Illegal Wildlife Trade project
KII	Key Informant Interviews
KNP	Kruger National Park
M/F	Male or Female
MoAs	Memorandums of Agreements
MTR	Mid-Term Review
MTS	Mid Term Strategy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NISCWT	National Integrated Strategy to Combat Wildlife Trafficking
OVI	Objectively Verifiable Indicator(s)
PCA	Project Cooperation Agreement
PIR	Project Implementation Review Report
PMT	Project Management Team
PMU	Project Management Unit
POW	Programme of Work
PPF	Peace Parks Foundation
ProDoc	Project Document
PSC	Project Steering Committee
SANBI	South African National Biodiversity Institute
SANParks	South African National Parks
SAoSA	Scientific Authority of South Africa
SAWC	Southern Africa Wildlife College
SAWPS	South African Wildlife Population System
SDGC(s)	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
SET	Socio-economic Transformation
SITA	State Information Technology Agency
SOE	State Owned Enterprise
SSIs	Semi-Structured Interviews
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USD	United States Dollar
WCMC	World Conservation Monitoring Centre
WWF-SA	World Wildlife Fund South Africa

4. PROJECT IDENTIFICATION TABLE

Table 1: Project Summary

GEF Project ID/SMA ID[2]:	9525	**Grant ID:**	
Implementing Agency (UNEP Division/Branch/Unit):	UNEP-Ecosystems Division/ GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit	**Executing Agency:**	Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment Affairs (DFFE)
Sources of Funding (Co-finance):	*Country[3](ies): South Africa*		*Institution[4] Name/Type:* DFFE -Government; SANBI (Government); SANParks (Government); PPF (NGO); WWF (NGO)
Relevant SDG(s):	Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls Goal 15: Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss		
MTS (at approval):	2018 - 2021	**UNEP approval date:**	1 March 2018
POW Output(s) number/reference *(applicable for projects approved pre-2022)*	*POW Direct Outcome 3.1:* Reduction in rates of poaching of elephants, rhinos, and other threatened species and increase in arrests and prosecutions *POW Output:*	**POW Expected Accomplishment(s) number/reference *(applicable for projects approved pre-2022):***	*MTS 2025 Outcome:* *POW Expected Accomplishment: Use of the ecosystem services and sustainable productivity of terrestrial and aquatic systems is increased*
Sub-programme:	Nature Action	**Programme Coordination Project:**	N/A
UNEP approval date:	1 March 2018	**GEF approval date:**	7 May 2018
GEF Operational Programme #:	N/A	**GEF Strategic Priority:**	BD -2 – Reduce threats to globally significant biodiversity Programme 3- Preventing the

[2] SMA refers to the ID provided by the Integrated Planning, Management and Reporting Solution system, which was introduced by UNEP in July 2023.

[3] Where applicable, list countries who have provided project funds and/or co-finance.

[4] Indicate where funding institutions are any/all of the following: Foundation/NGO; Private Sector; UN Body; Multilateral Fund; Environment Fund.

			extinction of known threatened species
Project type:	Full Size Project	**Focal Area(s):**	Biodiversity
***Expected* start date:**	26 February 2019	**Actual start date:**	20 November 2019
***Planned* completion date:**	20 November 2024	**Actual operational completion date:**	31 December 2025
***Planned* total project budget at approval:**	$12,306,009	**Actual total expenditures reported as of [date]:**	$ 7 844 539.00
GEF grant allocation:	$4,886,009	**GEF grant expenditures reported as of June 2024**	$2,112,583.00
***Expected* Medium-Size Project/Full-Size Project co-financing:**	*Cash: $3,980,000* *In-kind: $3,440,000*	**Secured Medium-Size Project/Full-Size Project co-financing:**	*Cash: $685 983* *In-kind :$5 045 972*
No. of formal project revisions:	None	**Date of last approved project revision:**	N/A
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	8	**Date of Last Steering Committee meeting:**	3-4 February 2024
Mid-term Review/ Evaluation *(planned date):*	May 2022	**Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (actual date):**	August 2024
Coverage - Country(ies):	South Africa	**Coverage - Region(s):**	Africa
Dates of previous project phases:	N/A	**Status of future project phases:**	N/A

5. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Background

1. The "Strengthening Institutions, Information Management, and Monitoring to Reduce the Rate of Illegal Wildlife Trade in South Africa" project, funded through the Global Environment Facility and implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme, addresses the increasing challenges posed by illegal wildlife trade in South Africa. The project is executed by South Africa's Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and Environment in collaboration with key partners, which include the South African National Biodiversity Institute, South African National Parks, Peace Parks Foundation, and the World Wide Fund (WWF) South Africa. Starting in November 2019, the project is scheduled for completion in December 2025, including a one-year no-cost extension.

2. The Illegal Wildlife Trade project aligns with South Africa's national biodiversity strategies and international commitments under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. The project contributes to global biodiversity targets, including those outlined in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The project aims to strengthen institutional capacities, enhance information management, and foster community collaborative engagement. The project is structured in three components: (a) Strengthening capacity and information systems for effective management of wildlife trade monitoring, (b) development of a ready-to-use electronic permitting system for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species - listed species, and (c) strengthening community capacity to reduce the rate of illegal wildlife trade.

This Review

3. This mid-term review was conducted from August to November 2024, and applied the United Nations Environment Programme and the Global Environment Facility evaluation guidelines. The review employed both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods, including document analysis, stakeholder interviews and focus group discussions, field visits, and a survey. The review assessed the project's relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, financial management, and sustainability, focusing on how well the project has delivered the planned outputs, progress toward outcomes, and adequacy of current project strategies and resources.

Key Findings

The IWT project exhibits several strengths, including the following:

4. It aligns well with the United Nations Environment Programme's Programme of Work and Medium-Term Strategy. The project integrates well with the Global Environment Facility's strategic goals and international agreements, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. Additionally, it supports the Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Framework and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. It aligns well with regional and national conservation priorities, including the African Union's Agenda 2063, the Southern African Development Community's biodiversity strategies, and South Africa's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. The project complements various initiatives to combat illegal wildlife trade in South Africa, including the Global Wildlife Programme and conservation efforts by the United Nations Development Programme, the World Wide Fund, and the United States Agency for International Development.

5. The project design is well-structured, with components that tackle poaching and illegal wildlife trade. It integrates technological advancements and institutional capacity-building in Components 1 and 2, strengthening data management, wildlife monitoring, and law enforcement. While Component 3's governance framework is aligned with reducing illegal wildlife trade; there is a logical gap between outputs and outcomes. This gap highlights the need for refined performance indicators and a clearer alignment between outputs and outcomes. Clarifying the linkage between governance structures and behaviour change will enhance the project's effectiveness in achieving sustainable community engagement.

6. The project has achieved substantial progress in developing the South African Wildlife Population Monitoring System and a centralized e-permitting system for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora - listed species which have leveraged partnerships and technological innovations for enhanced wildlife monitoring and law enforcement. The e-permitting

system has processed over 10,000 applications strengthening control over wildlife trade, in alignment with the CITES international standards. The phased provincial rollout is designed to ensure a smooth national integration.

7. The MTR identified some weaknesses which include:

Resource utilization in the project has been primarily effective, particularly in implementing technology-driven monitoring and e-permitting systems and the Environmental Monitors Programme. However, the UNEP budget burn rate is 43% due to delayed disbursements and limited cash co-financing, with only 17% of committed funds received by June 2024. Nevertheless, partner commitment is evident through increased in-kind co-financing. Financial management is moderately satisfactory, indicating a need for better tracking and reporting to improve efficiency in the remaining project period.

8. Component 3, focusing on community governance and livelihood development, has faced challenges in delivering the intended outcome due to delays in developing governance guidelines and alternative livelihood interventions. These delays and difficulties in aligning outputs with intended outcomes have complicated the implementation of the intervention logic. While some livelihood projects have received funding, there remains a need for aligning the supported livelihoods interventions to provide alternative livelihoods to deter people living in the periphery of the KNP from participating in illegal wild life trade and poaching. Such an approach would enhance project performance, increase community benefits, and strengthen community ownership and commitment to conservation efforts. Adaptive management has led to extra outputs, mainly on capacity building on good governance, to assist in the co-development of governance guidelines. Additionally, adaptive management contributed to addressing technical, operational, and stakeholder-related challenges

9. While the Project Steering Committee, Project Management Team and the Project Management Unit are in place, these structures have not provided the needed monitoring, evaluation, and learning roles. This has hindered systematic data-driven progress tracking and sharing of lessons learned, reducing the visibility of the project's current outputs and outcomes. As a result, some indicators are not aligned to what they are designed to measure. Furthermore, data to measure the progress of performance is not being collected. For example, capacity assessment of Components 1 and 2 outputs and outcomes were not updated, and the data to assess community knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions toward wildlife conservation had no baseline data measured.

10. The Project Monitoring Unit is currently understaffed, operating with only two people instead of the planned four, missing two key positions, Finance and Coordinator. The lack of a Finance Officer has hindered timeous financial responses and reporting. The main responsibilities of the Project Coordinator were to oversee monitoring and evaluation and to provide overall technical guidance on performance tracking. Due to the lack of continuity in the Project Coordinator position, performance tracking and project knowledge management are not being adequately provided. The limited personnel in the Project Monitoring Unit pressurises the Project Manager and reduces the ability to provide the necessary comprehensive programme management duties.

11. The project has established a strong foundation for sustainability, notably through institutionalizing wildlife monitoring and e-permitting systems. Capacity-building at institutional and community levels is a positive step towards sustainability. Although the policy environment supports South Africa’s commitment to wildlife protection and aligns with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species for Fauna and Flora, financial sustainability remains uncertain. A comprehensive exit and sustainability strategy will be essential to ensure funding beyond the project’s lifespan, leading to lasting benefits post-project completion

Conclusions

12. Based on the findings from this review, the project demonstrates performance at the ‘Satisfactory’ level (a table of ratings against all review criteria is found below). The project has demonstrated strong performance in areas such as enhancing institutional capacity, establishing wildlife population monitoring and e-permitting systems, and improving community engagement through the Environmental Monitors Programme. These efforts have advanced South Africa’s compliance with international conservation commitments and contributed to sustainable wildlife management. The multi-stakeholder approach has effectively brought together key institutions and local communities to combat illegal wildlife trade, fostering institutional sustainability.

13. Areas that would benefit from further attention include the co-development of community governance guidelines to ensure sustained community involvement in wildlife conservation, the establishment of a monitoring, evaluation, and learning framework for tracking progress, and the formulation of a comprehensive exit strategy to ensure the sustainability of project outcomes. The project would also benefit from improving gender and social inclusion strategies and strengthening communication and public awareness efforts. An extension of one year is recommended to complete these critical outputs and reinforce project impact.

Table 2: Project Performance Ratings[5]

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating
A. Strategic Relevance	The project is well-aligned with strategic priorities	**HS**
1. Alignment to UNEP's, Donors and Country (global, regional, sub-regional, and national) Strategic Priorities	The project aligns completely with strategic priorities	**HS**
2. Complementarity with existing interventions/ Coherence	The project has synergies with other projects in the country, and the target landscape	**HS**
B. Quality of Project Design	Evidence-based design: Gaps were identified in intervention logic for Component 3. These gaps can be resolved in the remaining project implementation period. Indicators are not objectively verifiable and, in some cases, do not relate to the stated targets.	**S**
C. Effectiveness		**S**
1. Theory of Change	Some pathways of change were not well articulated	**S**
2. Availability of outputs	Program outputs were delivered satisfactorily and are of practical utility to stakeholders. All outputs still require more work to get to full completion.	**S**
3. Progress towards project outcomes	Outcomes need to be tracked and measured; identified indicators are not objectively verifiable; progress toward achieving meaningful outcomes is partial.	**S**
4. Likelihood of impact	The route to impact is visible, and the connections to the desired impact can be seen, making the likelihood of impact feasible.	**HL**
5. Adaptive management	The project responds accordingly based on changing conditions during the implementation of project activities and adapts.	**S**
D. Financial Management		**MS**
1. Adherence to UNEP's/Donor financial policies and procedures	Effective allocation of resources, although the project lacked timely reporting.	**MS**
2. Completeness of project financial information	Financial information was not timely completed	**MS**
E. Efficiency	Effective approaches and strategies applied in delivering outputs.	**S**
F. Monitoring and Reporting		**MS**
1. Monitoring of project implementation	The project lacks performance tracking.	**MUS**
2. Project reporting	The project complies with UNEP reporting requirements; however, there is no evidence of a documented process to show project progress and enable appreciation of the reported percentage completion of outputs and outcomes. Reported	**S**

[5] Most criteria will be rated on a six-point scale as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact are rated, also on a six-point scale, from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU) and Nature of External Context is rated from Highly Favourable (HF) to Highly Unfavourable (HU).

	progress appears limited to the measurements provided in UNEP-mandatory reports.	
G. Exit Strategy and Sustainability		**L**
1. Exit strategy	No exit strategy is in place, though there is evidence of consideration for ensuring sustainability.	**MS**
2. Socio-political sustainability	Current socio-political conditions are in support	**L**
3. Financial Sustainability	Institutionalizing the key project outputs suggests a strong chance of ongoing financial support.	**L**
4. Institutional sustainability	Institutions mandated for wildlife conservation and CITES implementation at the national level will likely sustain positive outcomes.	**HL**
H. Factors Affecting Performance		**MS**
1. Project Inception	Delays in fund disbursement and the mobilization of the PMU negatively impacted preparation and readiness for inception.	**MS**
2. Quality of project management and supervision	Overall project management and supervision were provided, but limitations in the PMU's capacity impacted negatively on the quality of both supervision and management.	**MS**
2.1 UNEP/Implementing Agency:	Project oversight and implementation provided	
2.2 Partners/Executing Agency:	Partnership arrangements are effective; however, limited capacity in the PMU and high staff turnover lead to a loss of institutional memory.	
3. Stakeholders' participation and cooperation	Key stakeholders participating and cooperating at all levels	**HS**
4. Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality	The awareness of stakeholders regarding gender, equity, and social inclusion does not translate into mainstreaming the issues in programming leading to underreporting.	**MS**
5. Environmental and social safeguards	The project has a low risk of environmental impact, but social safeguards are limited due to a lack of strategy and planning.	**MS**
6. Country ownership and driven-ness	Aligned to national development objectives and priorities.	**HS**
7. Communication and public awareness	Not being strategically addressed, reactive actions are evident.	**MS**
Overall Project Performance Rating at Mid-Point		**S**

Lessons Learned

14. Lesson 1: Importance of a Logical Theory of Change and SMART Indicators in Project Design: The Project's Theory of Change lacked clarity in some pathways, especially in Component 3, leading to inconsistencies in logic from outputs to outcomes. The absence of SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) indicators hindered accurate progress tracking.

15. Lesson 2: Multi-Stakeholder Approach in Addressing Illegal Wildlife Trade - The importance of the multi-stakeholder approach demonstrated collaboration, resource mobilization, and accountability, leading to more comprehensive and effective interventions. This collaboration leveraged the unique strengths of each stakeholder, enhancing the potential for impactful and sustainable outcomes and illustrating the importance of the approach in addressing complex conservation challenges.

16. Lesson 3: Advantages of a Phased Rollout for Technology Systems - The phased rollout of the e-permitting system enhances user input and supports effective implementation by allowing for early testing, capacity building, and stakeholder engagement. This incremental approach enables the project team to gather feedback, address technical challenges, and refine system functionality before full

deployment, fostering stakeholder ownership and infrastructure readiness. It serves as a practical strategy for implementing complex systems, facilitating early issue identification, gradual capacity building, and meaningful stakeholder engagement

17. Lesson 4: Importance of Consistent Terminology in Project Design - Inconsistent governance-related terminology led to varied interpretations among stakeholders and affected the implementation of Component 3.

Recommendations

18. A one-year extension is recommended to allow for the complete delivery of outputs and the realization of desired outcomes and to maximize the project's impact and effectiveness.

19. Capacitate the Project Management Unit as per the original project design to ensure all roles and tasks are delivered efficiently and reduce the overstretching of the current staff. This can be achieved by recruiting an expert/consultant in monitoring, evaluation, and learning or personnel to join the Project Management Unit, recruiting a finance officer, or outsourcing to support the Project Management Unit in financial management and reporting. This can also strengthen the implementation and reporting on human rights and gender dimensions in the project.

20. Expedite the conclusion of an agreement on linking the e-permitting system to the international system of the United National Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre.

21. Expedite Community Governance Guidelines: The co-development of community governance guidelines should be prioritized. This would leverage the foundational work established in target communities and ultimately create functioning governance mechanisms that integrate community structures and responsibilities.

22. Develop a comprehensive monitoring, evaluation, and learning framework to facilitate performance tracking to ensure accountability and adaptability. Within the tracking system, revisit the indicators to ensure they are objectively verifiable and can measure the set targets. Complete the Capacity Assessment for Indicators under Outcomes 1 and 2 and the Knowledge, Attitude, and Practices survey under Outcome 3, ensuring that the assessments required to inform progress are done. This will also facilitate better knowledge management and inform end-of-project evaluation.

23. Formulate and implement the following strategies: (i) an exit and sustainability, (ii) comprehensive communication, (iii) human rights gender and social inclusion, and (iv) environmental and social safeguards. The Exit and sustainability strategy should be developed by all partners and guided by the leadership of the Project Management Unit, while all the other three strategies can be outsourced to consultancies if need be.

I. PROJECT OVERVIEW

24. The Strengthening Institutions, Information Management and Monitoring to reduce the Rate of Illegal Wildlife Trade in South Africa (IWT) (GEF ID 9525), hereinafter referred to as "the project", is funded under the Global Environment Facility (GEF) 6 cycle. The project is implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Ecosystems Division/ GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit, and executed by the Department of Forestry Fisheries and Environment (DFFE). The IWT project falls within the Biodiversity GEF focal area, under the programme of work on Ecosystems Sub-programme. To address the complexity of illegal wildlife trade, DFFE is implementing the project in partnership with the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), South African National Parks (SANParks), Peace Park Foundation (PPF), and World Wide Fund (WWF) South Africa.

25. The Implementation organizational structures, illustrated in the Project Document (ProDoc), are shown in Figure 1 below:

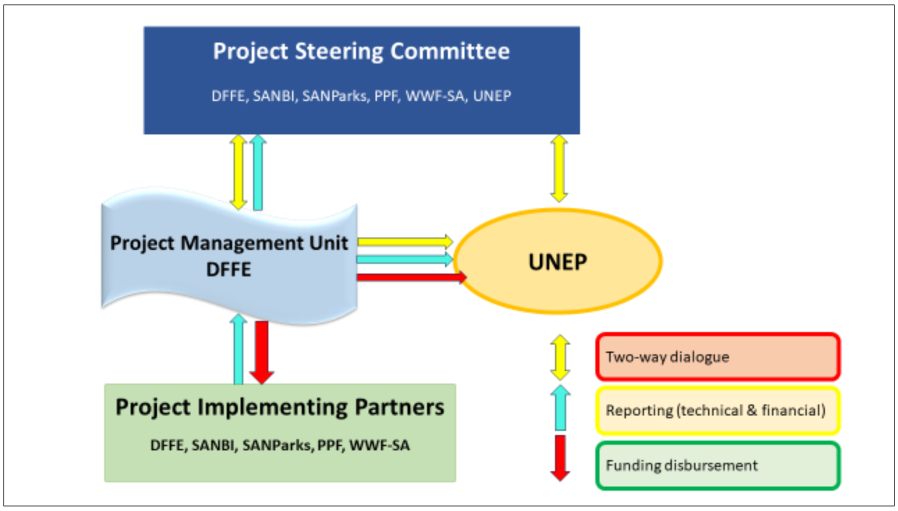


Figure 1: Project governance structures

26. The project is designed to address the critical global issue of illegal wildlife trade, which threatens biodiversity ecosystems and the economy. South Africa, which holds 82% of Africa's rhinoceros population, became the epicentre of poaching activities, risking a tipping point where deaths from poaching exceed births, leading to a rapid decline in rhinoceros numbers. The illegal wildlife trade led to a dramatic increase in poaching incidents, particularly of rhinoceros, with the number killed rising from 13 in 2007 to 1,215 in 2014. Illegal wildlife trade is worsened by:

- Lack of scientific expertise in critical institutions responsible for monitoring wildlife populations and enforcing laws to protect biodiversity.
- The limited use of improved technologies for managing trade in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)-listed species makes it difficult to track fraudulent activities and to respond.
- Women, men, and youth in communities surrounding protected areas face limited alternative economic opportunities to sustain their livelihoods. Additionally, awareness about biodiversity conservation is lacking. As a result, communities are vulnerable to engaging in illegal wildlife trade.

27. The project was designed to be implemented over 60 months, commencing 26 February 2019. However, the actual commencement date was 20 November 2019, triggered by the receipt of the first tranche of funds by the Government of South Africa. The DFEE received the funds from National Treasury almost a year later. They were no major changes to the project except for a one-year budget neutral extension granted.

28. The project, implemented in the Kruger National Park (KNP) protected area, has a total budget of $12,306,009, consisting of a GEF grant totalling $4,886,009 and co-financing of $7,420,000, of which $3,980,000, in cash and $3,440,000, in kind. Table 3 below shows the budget at design and expenditure by component, while Table 4 shows planned sources of funding / co-finance by component.

Table 3: Project budget at design by component

Description	Estimated Costs at design Approved				
	Co-finance			UNEP-GEF	Total
	In-kind	Cash	Total		
Component 1: Strengthening capacity and information systems for effective management of wildlife trade monitoring. - SANBI	1,520,000	1,220,000	**2,740,000**	1,377,000	**4,117,000**
Component 2: Development of a ready-to-use electronic permitting system for CITES-listed species-DFFE & WCMC	1,100,000	1,000,000	**2,100,000**	1,442,000	**3,542,000**
Component 3: Strengthening community capacity to reduce the rate of illegal wildlife trade-SANParks, WWF-SA & PPF	820,000	1,760,000	**2,580,000**	1,857,000	**4,437,000**
Project management Unit-DFFE	-	-	-	210,009	**210,009**
Totals	**3,440,000**	**3,980,000**	**7,420,000**	**4,886,009**	**12,306,009**

Table 4: Planned Sources of Funding / Co-finance by component

Co-financing Source	Role in Project	Cash	In-kind
Component 1			
Department: Environmental Affairs	National Executing Agency	1,000,000.00	1,000,000.00
SANBI	Government beneficiary of institutional strengthening	200,000.00	420,000.00
SANParks	Collaboration in field training excursions	20,000.00	
WCMC	Technical advisory and training services		100,000.00
Sub-total		**1,220,000.00**	**1,520,000.00**
Component 2			
Department: Environmental Affairs	National Executing Agency	1,000,000.00	1,000,000.00
WCMC	Technical advisory and training services		100,000.00
Sub-total		**1,000,000.00**	**1,100,000.00**
Component 3			
Department: Environmental Affairs	National Executing Agency	500,000.00	500,000.00
SANParks	Executing partner	460,000.00	20,000.00
WWF-SA	Partner NGO	500,000.00	
PPF	Partner NGO	300,000.00	300,000.00
Sub-total		**1,760,000.00**	**820,000.00**
TOTAL		**3,980,000.00**	**3,440,000.00**

29. The project aims to fight illegal wildlife trade through institutional strengthening and improved information management and monitoring. This will thereby influence the supply system at local (protected areas), national (South Africa), and regional levels and improve monitoring and collaboration

at the international level. The project was designed to be implemented through three Components, delivering the following Outcomes:

i. Component 1: Strengthening institutional capacity and information systems for effective management of wildlife trade monitoring. The expected outcome is 'Increased capacity within the Scientific Authority of South Africa (SAoSA) for legal and sustainable wildlife trade'. The project will strengthen SAoSA members' capacities for effective wildlife trade monitoring and assessment and develop a centralised system for monitoring wildlife in trade.
ii. Component 2: Development of a ready-to-use e-permitting system for CITES-listed species. The expected outcome is 'National web-based electronic permit system for CITES-listed species used by South African CITES Authorities'. The developed system will be linked with relevant national and international permitting systems. To ensure sustainability, internal software developers will provide technical support to the system.
iii. Component 3: Strengthening community capacity to reduce the rate of illegal wildlife trade. The expected outcome is 'Functional community governance mechanisms for sustainable livelihoods and reduced rate of illegal wildlife trade.' Component 3 was designed to fully integrate the women, men, and youth living in communities in the periphery of the KNP in reducing illegal wildlife trade through the co-development of governance guidelines and testing them in target communities, resulting in community-driven governance mechanisms. Alternative livelihood options were to be co-created and supported, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility towards preserving local biodiversity.

30. The IWT project stakeholders include UNEP and GEF; DFFE, SANBI, and SANParks at the different spheres of government; co-financiers (WWF and PPF); policymakers; Southern African Wildlife College (SAWC) and communities surrounding KNP. This multi-stakeholder approach has significant advantages, particularly in resource mobilization and ensuring the active involvement of key stakeholders critical for project success. Furthermore, the approach enhances collaboration among government, non-governmental organizations, private sectors, and community groups, thereby integrating diverse expertise. Stakeholder analysis effectively identifies and evaluates the influence of various groups on project outcomes, resulting in a strong representation of essential actors in the fight against illegal wildlife trade in the KNP landscape. Each stakeholder group contributes uniquely, with conservation organizations providing technical knowledge, NGOs and community groups offering local insights, government agencies ensuring regulatory support, and private companies delivering relevant services. Stakeholders' influence and interests are analyzed in Figure 2 below:

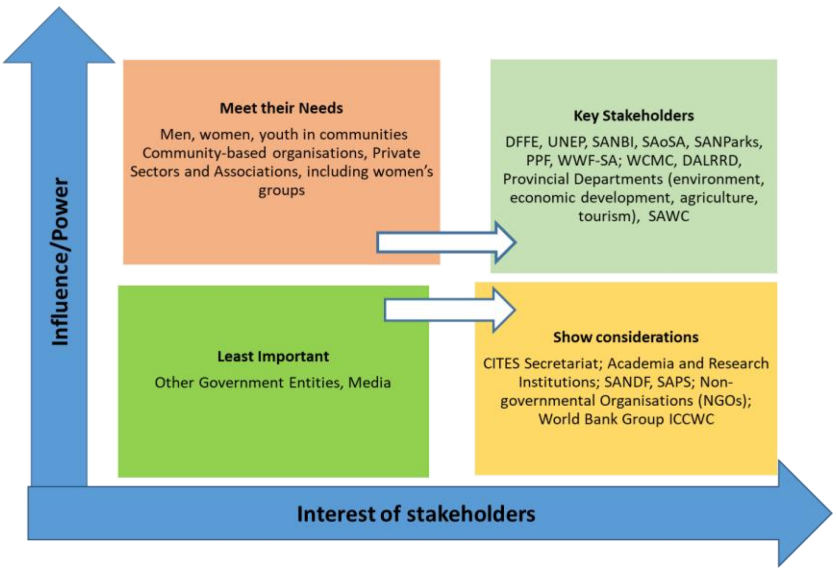


Figure 2: Levels and nature of stakeholder participation in the IWT Project

31. The project inception phase coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. South Africa went into a hard lockdown (Level 5) from 27 March to 30 April 2020, followed by Level 4 (1 – 31 May 2020), and Level 3 (1 June – 17 August 2020), which restricted movements and normal business operations. These lockdowns made it difficult for partners to implement the activities, causing a loss of momentum during the early days of implementation.

II. REVIEW METHODS

32. The MTR was conducted as an independent, in-depth, consultative, and participatory process with project teams, guided by the GEF and UNEP evaluation guidelines and protocols, including the project theory of change (TOC), results framework, and the MTR criterion rating matrix. The MTR used quantitative and qualitative methods. Data was collected from different sources, allowing triangulation and objective analysis of the findings.

33. The following methodology was used:

i. Review of relevant project documents: An extensive review of a range of project documents was carried out to inform the review process and to triangulate further information collected from various sources.

ii. Consultations with stakeholders: Key informants were interviewed to gather additional data, and focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with stakeholders. In addition, three consultative meetings were held with implementers of Component 3 to evaluate the design pathway and logic flow, including one meeting in which the UNEP Task Manager participated. A field mission to KNP and target areas in the periphery of the protected area was carried out from 26th September to 4th October (Annex III). Further key informant interviews were held during this mission. FGDs were conducted at three locations with 22 (9 female) Environmental Monitors (EMs) (9 Northern Cluster, 6 Southern Cluster, and 7 Central Cluster). Thus, 32% EMs (41% female) were reached through FGDs (Annex II)

iii. Observations: The mission provided an opportunity to observe some of the livelihood interventions being supported. Representatives of the livelihood interventions were also interviewed.

iv. Stakeholder perspective survey: A stakeholder survey (non-statistical sampling) was conducted targeting project stakeholders who were not reached through interviews. Fifty-seven project participants (35% female) participated in the survey (Annex XV).

v. Analysis and assessment of project implementation: The project performance was assessed using the UNEP/GEF Criteria Matrix.

vi. Peer review and finalization: The content and conclusions were discussed with key stakeholders and selected stakeholders before finalisation.

34. Selection of stakeholders: Purposive sampling was used, targeting those directly managing the project, leading implementation of activities under each component, employed in the EMs Programme, and representatives of livelihood interventions supported by the project. This allowed the review to deliberately select stakeholders based on their unique roles and responsibilities in the project.

35. Limitations on Stakeholder Selection: The stakeholders interviewed by this review were primarily those directly involved in project implementation, except community representatives who are direct beneficiaries (the EMs and livelihoods project beneficiaries). The reach to provincial representatives on the monitoring and e-permitting systems was low. This limitation was mitigated by acknowledging that although active in the provinces, the systems are still in the early stages of broader provincial use. Capturing the views of provincial users will be crucial in the final project evaluation. Additionally, the review did not interview community leaders or representatives who did not directly benefit from the livelihoods project but benefited from awareness creation activities. Therefore, the review could not fully assess the level of awareness for women, men, and youth in the KPN landscape. The MTR notes the ongoing Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) survey, which, if supported by a second survey at the project's conclusion, would offer a more comprehensive understanding of the awareness generated and its effect on community attitudes towards wildlife conservation and its impact on illegal wildlife trade.

36. There was no specific evaluation questions included in the Terms of Reference (ToR) (Annex IX). The MTR utilized the UNEP guidance documents[6] as well as data collection tools presented during the Inception Phase. The MTR followed the process below:

[6] https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/INDEPENDENT+EVALUATION+TOOLS+AND+TEMPLATES

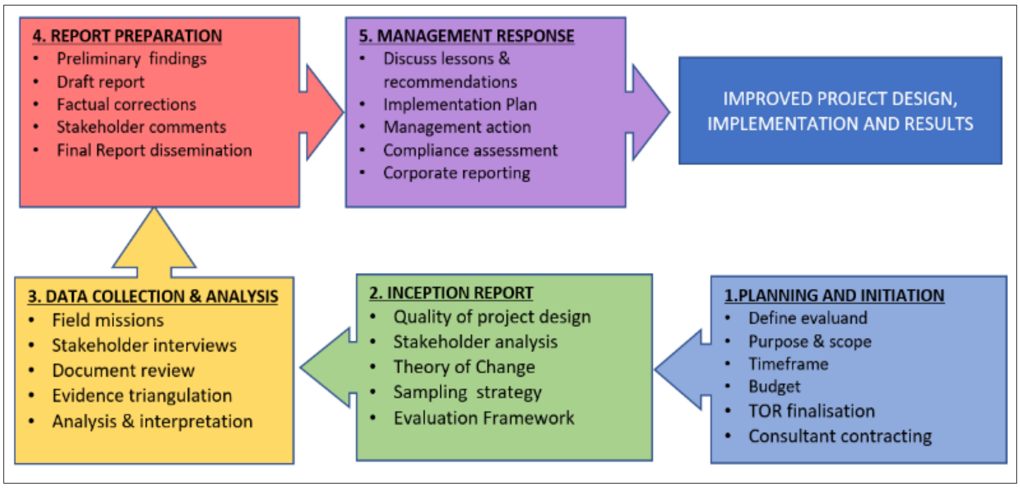


Figure 3: Review process

37. The project review was based on the following key areas, with ratings provided in alignment with the performance criteria outlined by the UNEP Evaluation Office. Furthermore, the ratings for each criterion are weighted to determine the overall project performance rating.

- Key evaluation criteria included quality of project design, the nature of the external context, implementation efficiency, financial management, effectiveness (including availability of outputs, progress towards outcomes, likelihood of impact, and adaptive management), monitoring and reporting, sustainability, and cross-cutting issues affecting overall project performance.
- Rating system: The UNEP 6-point scale below was used to rate each section:
    1. Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)
    2. Unsatisfactory (U)
    3. Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)
    4. Moderately Satisfactory (MS)
    5. Satisfactory (S)
    6. Highly Satisfactory (HS)

Additionally, sustainability and likelihood of impact are rated from:
  - Highly Likely (HL) to Highly Unlikely (HU)

The nature of the external context is rated from:
  - Highly Favourable (HF) to Highly Unfavourable (HU)

38. In the review, evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of delivering outputs and outcomes and the likelihood of project success and sustainability was crucial. The review specifically considered the cost-effectiveness of project execution to assess if the project achieved the expected results at the lowest possible costs and whether the spending rate aligned with the outputs delivered during the review period. Additionally, it assessed how financial management influenced the quality of project performance, including the timeliness of output delivery, considering the approved work plans. The MTR examined whether financial reporting and auditing met UNEP's financial policies and GEF standards. Finally, the review analysed the actual expenditure compared to the original budget to identify any changes and their justifications.

39. To adhere to South Africa's Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) and uphold ethical and human rights standards, all interviewees provided written consent to participate in the review. Additionally, prior informed consent was obtained from women, men, and youth for any pictures taken or information gathered from their communities. All discussions were kept anonymous, and information was collected following the UN Standards of Conduct, ensuring confidentiality throughout the review process. Furthermore, efforts were made to ensure that the perspectives of both mainstream and marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities, were represented.

III. THEORY OF CHANGE

Theory of Change at Review

40. The Theory of Change (TOC) presented in the ProDoc (Annex VII), reconstructed at the Inception Phase was reviewed to further assess the IWT project's pathways of change. Critical analysis of the original TOC diagram and narrative, deeper engagement with the project partners and beneficiaries, and clarifications sought from key informants led to a more nuanced understanding of how the project intended to drive change.

41. The reconstructed TOC (Figure 4) maintains the pathways for Components 1 and 2 as was in the original TOC from outputs to outcomes. In agreement with the Component 3 key implementing partners and the Task Manager, outputs being delivered, from planned activities, were identified and added as in Table 5 and Figure 4. The outputs have laid a foundation to facilitate the co-development of governance guidelines, a process yet to be implemented. The review found the original TOC's pathway of change from outcomes to mid-term impacts ambitious (Annex VII). Thus, a pathway from all outcomes to project goal (reduced illegal wildlife trade) is proposed. The contributing conditions (assumptions and drivers), Table 6, to support the pathways of change were reviewed and reformulated. The assumptions and drivers were reformulated to align with the context at review. The identified additional outputs have enabled the project to build a foundation for the co-development of governance guidelines. Figure 4, Table 5, and Table 6 should be read together.

Table 5: Component 3 results hierarchy

	Results as stated in the Project Document	**Results as formulated in TOC at MTR**
Impact	Conservation and sustainable use of CITES-listed species	
Purpose	Poaching recruitment at target sites reduced	**Reduced illegal wildlife trade.**
Outcome	Functional community governance mechanisms for sustainable livelihoods and reduced rate of illegal wildlife trade	
Outputs	3.1 Key guiding principles and project activities co-developed with target communities	**Output 3.1a: Co-developed community governance guidelines** Output 3.1 (ai): Training manuals on governance principles prepared Output 3.1 (aii): Community leaders trained on good governance
		Output 3.1(b): Co-developed livelihood interventions
		Output 3.1(c): Community governance working groups established
		Output 3.1(d): Partnerships/collaboration mechanisms established.
	3.2 Environmental Monitors Programme strengthened	3.2 Environmental Monitors Programme strengthened
	3.3 Co-ordination and communications strategy developed to share lessons in landscape and beyond	3.3 Co-ordination and communications strategy developed to share lessons in landscape and beyond

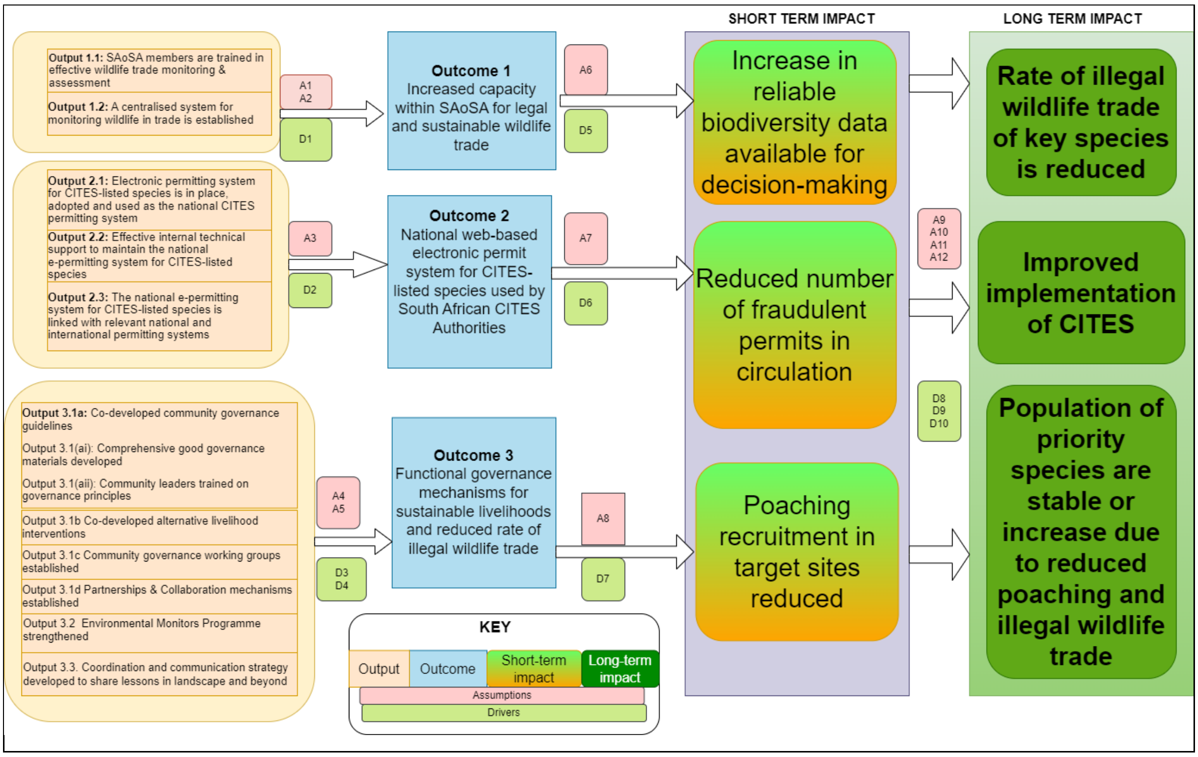


Figure 4: Reconstructed theory of change at MTR

Table 6: TOC assumptions and drivers

Level	Assumptions	Drivers
A1 & A2 transition from outputs 1.1 and 1.2. to outcome 1	A1- Ongoing governmental support and adequate resource allocation. A2- Stakeholder willingness to share data and participate in training.	D1 - Efficient and effective institutional support systems at the provincial and national levels.
Transitioning from outputs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 to outcome 2	A3 - Relevant government authorities and other stakeholders are willing to collaborate on the use of the e-permitting system for CITES-listed species	D2 - An e-permitting system that is easy to use and highly fit for purpose
Transitioning from outputs 3.1 (a), (b), (c) & (d); 3.2 to 3.3 to Outcome 3	A4 - Alternative livelihood programs are viable, responsive, and desirable within affected communities. A5 – Women, men, youth and other marginalized individuals in communities are in support of the governance processes for wildlife conservation	D3 - Communities sufficiently buy into the project interventions. D4 - Identified livelihood interventions are sustainable and emphasize human rights, with consideration of gender, equity and social inclusion
Transition from Outcome 1 to project purpose	A6 – There is reliable biodiversity data to inform decisions on the off-take of endangered species.	D5 - The biodiversity monitoring system provides updated population data, resulting in the improved sustainable use of CITES-listed species.
The transition from	A7 – The e-permitting systems for CITES-listed species will result in reduced circulation of	D6 - Punitive measures that deter illegal wildlife trade.

Outcome 2 to project purpose	fraudulent paper permits for endangered species.	
The transition from Outcome 3 to project purpose	A8- Communities at the target sites engage in and benefit from Kruger National Park's (KNP) conservation efforts and become active guardians of wildlife.	D7 – The benefits from the interventions are enough to deter any attraction to participating in poaching.
The transition from project purpose to Impact		D8 - The routes of illegal wildlife trade are no longer porous for the trade to continue.
Transition from the project purpose to impact	A9- Sustainability of livelihoods strategies for the communities in the periphery of Kruger National Park A10 – The monitoring system continues to provide quality data for wildlife trade decision-making adequately. A11 – The functionality of the e-permitting system is sustained A12 – Project results built into the daily activities of DFFE beyond the project lifespan.	D9 –Financial resources will not be diverted to control human driven crimes D 10 –Sustainability of project results beyond external support.

IV. REVIEW FINDINGS

A. Strategic Relevance

Alignment to UNEP's, Donors and Country (global, regional, sub-regional and national) Strategic Priorities

42. The project objectives and implementation strategies address illegal wildlife trade (IWT), a critical global issue, that threatens biodiversity and iconic species. This is consistent with global, regional, and national environmental priorities and needs.

43. The IWT project aligns with UNEP's MTS[7] 2022-2025 and UNEP's Programme of Work (PoW)[8] 2022-2023 through the following key areas:

I. Supports biodiversity conservation and reduces wildlife crime, positively impacting ecosystem management and enhancing environmental rule of law.
II. Supports environmental governance and security by fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration to strengthen legal frameworks and policies against illegal wildlife trade to fight organized crime.
III. It addresses UNEP's strategic priority on biodiversity loss and aligns with global frameworks, such as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework's targets 5, 7, 8, and 21.
IV. Aligns with UNEP's Capacity-Building and South-South Cooperation Policies by equipping national institutions and communities with skills to combat IWT and providing opportunities for knowledge exchange.

44. The priorities of the IWT project with GEF are clearly outlined in the project reports. These documents describe how the project's activities support GEF's strategic objectives and the broader development goals outlined in the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). The IWT project aligns with the GEF 6 Biodiversity Focal Area through three key areas: BD1 - Reducing biodiversity threats by addressing illegal wildlife trade; BD2 - Integrating biodiversity conservation into policies and enhancing governance to combat wildlife crime, particularly Program 3: Preventing the Extinction of Known Threatened Species; and BD4 - Building financial sustainability and institutional capacity for conservation.

45. The project targets immediate threats to critically endangered species like rhinoceros and elephants due to poaching and illegal trade. It aligns with international agreements, including the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), CITES, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The project also directly supports the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (1, 2, 12, 19), and contributes to SDGs 1, 4, 5, and 15.

46. The project aligns with the African Union's 2063 Sustainable Development Agenda, particularly in terms of biodiversity conservation and wildlife resource protection. Regionally, the project aligns with the Southern African Development Community (SADC)'s Biodiversity Strategy, SADC Protocol on Wildlife Conservation, and SADC's Law Enforcement and Anti-Poaching Strategy.

47. The project supports South Africa's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan which aims to prevent the trafficking of endangered species and enhance biodiversity conservation. Crucially, the IWT project addresses national biodiversity concerns by engaging communities through awareness, skills development, and alternative livelihoods to reduce reliance on poaching. The project also aligns with the 2030 National Development Plan's environmental sustainability and resilience goals. Additionally, it assists in enforcing and monitoring South Africa's environmental laws, such as the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act 10 of 2004 and the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act 57 of 2003, to combat poaching and illegal trade.

Rating for Alignment to UNEP's, Donors and Country (global, regional, sub-regional and national) Strategic Priorities: Highly Satisfactory

[7] UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2022-2025 - https://www.unep.org/resources/people-and-planet-unep-strategy-2022-2025

[8] UNEP's Programme of Work (PoW) 2022-2023 - https://www.unep.org/resources/unep-programme-work-and-budget-2022-2023-pow-annex-1-people-and-planet

Complementarity/Coherence with Existing Interventions

48. The project is closely linked with several projects implemented in South Africa and neighbouring countries, promoting biodiversity conservation and increasing the economic participation of rural communities living adjacent to protected areas. The IWT project is a child project of the Global Wildlife Programme (GWP) under the GEF 6, and aligns with the GWP strategies and objectives.

49. The project also compliments other GEF 6 projects in the landscape, including UNDP's GEF6 Bio-prospecting and mainstreaming biodiversity into land use projects. It also has synergies with WWF-SA's Khetha project on reducing the impact of the illegal wildlife trade in the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLTCA), as well as the USAID's Wildlife Crime Tech Challenge, which sponsors novel anti-poaching technologies, and organizations such as TRAFFIC, working on improving wildlife trade monitoring and enforcement, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which enhances legal and investigative skills to combat illegal wildlife trading.

Rating for Complementarity/Coherence with Existing Interventions: Highly Satisfactory

Rating for Strategic Relevance:	**Highly Satisfactory**

B. Quality & Revision of Project Design

50. The IWT ProDoc provided a well-researched framework. The narrative articulates essential outputs and outcomes to address poaching and illegal wildlife trade in South Africa, primarily through institutional strengthening for monitoring wildlife species populations and trade, and empowering men, women, and youth living in communities bordering the KNP to participate in activities to reduce illegal wildlife trade. The necessary outputs and direct outcomes in the design are logically connected to "reducing illegal wildlife trade." The design includes outputs that lead to science-informed decisions on wildlife conservation and strengthened law enforcement, essential component for combating poaching and illegal trade. The stakeholder analysis effectively identified and evaluated the influence of various groups on project outcomes, resulting in a solid representation in the project design of essential actors in the fight against illegal wildlife trade in the KNP landscape. This multi-stakeholder approach enhances resource mobilization and coordination by integrating the expertise of government, NGOs, private sectors, and community groups to drive project success.

51. In assessing the design of Components 1 and 2, the MTR notes a clear intervention logic to the expected results. For Component 1 and 2, leveraging on technological innovations, institutional capacity strengthening, alignment with international standards, and strategic partnerships with national and international organisations, have developed systems enabling strong data management and monitoring systems for tracking wildlife populations, poaching incidents, and law enforcement efforts, leading to reduced illegal wildlife trade. Therefore, the pathways of change and causal linkages are aligned to deliver the intended results.

52. For Component 3, the pathways of change and causal linkages are partially traceable as they are masked in the use of governance terminologies. The MTR noted lack of clarity and uniformity in the use of the terms 'governance principles,' 'governance guidelines,' 'governance mechanisms,' and 'governance structures". Although these terms are interconnected within the governance framework, they pertain to different levels. If used in a project design, they should be delineated to enhance understanding and enable interpretation of the intended result. Inconsistencies in how the design intentions are conveyed across various project documents were noted. The original TOC has four (4) outputs, while the narratives and results framework in the ProDoc elaborates on three (3) outputs. Outcome 3 could have been better crafted, with a more explicit causal effect from outputs to outcome and project purpose. In addition, there are no indicators to measure the linkages between functional governance mechanisms and sustainable livelihoods, as well as the behavioural change of people in communities leading to reduced wildlife trade. The proposed indicators ''Number of governance guidelines and % of projects developed in consultation with stakeholders and community'', and ''Improved community knowledge and attitude towards wildlife at the three target clusters'' do not adequately measure the change envisioned in the design logic. The MTR notes that partners had challenges interpreting the intervention logic as demonstrated by their deliberations in the 10 – 11 November 2020, Results Framework Workshop.

53. To clarify the envisioned logic for Outcome 3 and establish effective performance measurement, several iterative discussions were conducted with project partners. The following understanding was established: ''Functional community governance mechanisms for sustainable

livelihoods and reduced rate of illegal wildlife trade" are interpreted to include the following - co-developed governance guidelines operationalized, co-developed project activities, nature compatible livelihoods projects supported, good governance working groups in communities established, strengthened Environmental Monitors programme, and communications platforms and products developed" (see reconstructed TOC under Section III).

Rating for Quality & Revision of Design:	Satisfactory

C. Effectiveness

Theory of Change

54. The theory of change (TOC) clearly shows the pathways of change from outputs to the expected outcomes, and ultimately to the envisaged impact for Components 1 and 2. Component 3, although not clearly articulated in the design, has been redirected through the added outputs and does contribute to the project's outcome and purpose. The reconstructed TOC articulates the pathway of change that will lead to delivering the desired project results.

Rating for Theory of Change: Satisfactory

Availability of Outputs

55. The planned strategies and inputs for the IWT project appear realistic, appropriate, and adequately aligned to deliver the intended results (Annex. XIII) The strategies for various outputs have been effectively sequenced to facilitate efficient delivery. The programmed outputs and milestones outlined in the ProDoc and work plan, have been satisfactorily delivered and are of practical utility to stakeholders. The MTR notes outputs that have been fully delivered, considering that the review has taken place well after the project's midpoint. The delivered outputs are elaborated below:

56. **Output 1.1 –** SAoSA members are trained in effective wildlife trade monitoring and assessment - This output is evident. The development and delivery of training modules on wildlife trade assessment for SAoSA members was carried out successfully. The project identified and trained 20 young professionals (55% females) intended to serve in SAoSA, enhancing their wildlife trade monitoring skills through an induction course. Continuous capacity development for SAoSA members is available through an online induction course (https://www0.sun.ac.za/awei/study/learn/cites/), developed in collaboration with the African Wildlife Economy Institute at the University of Stellenbosch.

57. **Output 1.2 –** A centralised system for monitoring wildlife trade is established. This output was delivered. South Africa produced its first technology-driven Wildlife Population System (SAWPS). Its development has reached the minimum viable product stage and the system is being tested in four provinces. The system has undergone initial user training and testing and is currently being populated with data from multiple stakeholders, including the private wildlife sector. A multi-institutional Committee (40% female) was established to provide strategic guidance and unblock systemic challenges. The users' experiences during the testing phase will continue to inform the finalization of the system.

58. **Output 2.1** E-permitting system for CITES-listed species, in place and in use. The Electronic Permitting System for CITES-Listed Species (the e-permitting system) went live in April 2023 and has processed over 10,000 permit applications, with a high rate of successful approvals, over 60%. The phased approach used in rolling out the system to provinces has been sequenced to deliver the expected results efficiently. The approach allows early feedback from users, contributing significantly to the system's full development. By implementing the system in stages, feedback is gathered, analyzed, and incorporated at each stage, ensuring that user needs and potential challenges are addressed progressively. This iterative approach helps refine the system's functionality and fosters user confidence and adaptability, ultimately leading to a more robust and responsive permitting system.

59. **Output 2.2.** Internal software developers provide skilled technical support to the e-permitting system Internal software developers have been capacitated to technically and operationally support the system. The challenge of inadequate infrastructure in the provinces is an ongoing issue that needs to be addressed in the remaining project period.

60. **Output 2.3:** The national e-permitting systems for CITES-listed species are linked with relevant national and international permitting systems. This output is partially delivered. Efforts for collaboration

with UNEP - World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) to align the e-permitting system with international systems are in process.

61. **Output 3.1:** Governance guidelines and project activities co-developed with target communities (CEO Endorsement page 12; ProDOC para 303; 304) / Key guiding principles and project activities co-developed with target communities (TOC diagram, ProDoc para 255) – This output is partially delivered. The MTR notes the different wording of the output as stated above. Given that principles are fundamental concepts that inform and shape the governance framework of an organization, institution or system, they are standard and cannot be developed. Thus, the MTR assessed the output of ''co-developed governance guidelines and co-developed community activities''. While co-development activities were not carried out due to circumstances beyond the project's control, the MTR notes the additional outputs (from planned activities), contributing to Outcome 3. These outputs constitute the foundation for the co-development of governance guidelines and project activities, driving toward governance mechanisms. The following has been achieved:

a) Training manuals on community governance principles were prepared.
b) Leaders of community structures were capacitated and strengthened on good governance.
c) 12 livelihood projects (4 in each cluster) were identified for support, and 60% have received funding to provide social, economic, and environmental benefits for women, men, and youth in the local communities.
d) The Greater Kruger Steering Committee (GKSC) and cluster task teams were established to facilitate collaboration, partnerships, and community engagements. The Committee and task teams have been instrumental in coordinating the participation of target communities, allowing for ongoing discussions on biodiversity conservation and support for ongoing livelihood projects.

62. The Project Steering Committee (PSC) approved the diversion of funds earmarked for the co-development of guidelines to support existing livelihood interventions in the three clusters. These were selected using a criterion developed by the project partners and informed through data from a situational analysis in the KNP landscape of 2021, updated in April 2023, and shared with the community leaders. Hence, the co-development of governance guidelines is planned to be delivered during the remaining period of the project. Terms of Reference (TORs) to procure the services of a consultant to lead the activity have been developed. An effective co-development process, as outlined in the TORs, must be inclusive, and participatory, allowing community members to contribute to the guidelines they will ultimately own. This collaborative effort can lead to positive conservation outcomes and benefits for the community. The MTR notes that it is not feasible to fully deliver the initially planned outputs during the remaining one-year period, thus a further one-year extension is required.

63. **Outputs 3.2:** Environmental Monitors' (EMs) programme strengthened - The EMs Programme is progressing well, creating employment for 78 people under the GEF6. At the time of the MTR, there were 68 EMs (45% female), including one Coordinator, and two supervisors. All EMs are from the KNP landscape; thus, the program offers youth job opportunities, reducing their likelihood of participation in illegal wildlife trade. The EMs have been trained, primarily through the Southern African Wildlife College (SAWC), acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills to monitor the boundary fence of KNP effectively. The EMs' conservation efforts are highly valued, as they raise awareness, and engage communities on wildlife stewardship, and help manage human-wildlife conflicts.

64. **Output 3.3:** Co-ordination and communications strategy developed to share lessons in landscape and beyond – This output is partially delivered, in collaboration with WWF-Khetha Project. However the communication strategy provided is incomplete as it addresses only Component 3, does not have an Action plan and is not fully implemented in the project. The Strategy aims to share the lessons learned and facilitate knowledge sharing among stakeholders. The project partners have participated in some fora, including the CITES and GWP learning events, to highlight the IWT project successes and lessons. The MTR notes a lack of comprehensive efforts to share IWT project successes, lessons, and best practices beyond the usual partnerships established by the project.

Rating for Availability of Outputs: Satisfactory

Progress Towards Project Outcomes

65. The project outcomes are relevant and realistic, aligning well with South Africa's need to strengthen legal wildlife trade, enhance regulatory systems, and foster community governance to combat illegal wildlife trade. Significant progress has been made towards achieving each outcome, with some outcomes exceeding the planned mid-term targets, considering that the review has taken place in the 5th

year of implementation. However, more time is required to complete the outputs to achieve the desired outcomes.

66. **Outcome 1:** Increased capacity within SAoSA for legal and sustainable wildlife trade **–** There has been no capacity assessment since the project started, thus, the MTR could not quantitatively verify the expected capacity increase (Table 7). Nevertheless, the MTR qualitatively established an increase in capacity within SAoSA, demonstrated by a developed SAWPS. The development of the SAWPS is advanced (https://sawps.sta.do.kartoza.com/), with SANBI, provincial authorities, and other users testing the system. The capacity developed supports the functioning of the system and deployment to the provinces. There is a proposal to create a community of practice to ensure that technical competencies can be enhanced through peer-to-peer learning. While the number of SAoSA members trained on legal and sustainable wildlife trade, has exceeded the mid-term target by five times, their absorption into the target institutions is yet to be established. The long-term sustainability of the institutional capacity developed through this project relies on the ability of institutions to retain the capacitated young professionals. The centralized system significantly enhances the country's ability to monitor wildlife populations and improve decision-making on trade. This achievement strengthens the wildlife trade monitoring and management capabilities of SAoSA members, promoting sustainable trade practices. It improves individual and institutional capacity, contributing to a long-term shift in wildlife management.

Table 7: Progress towards Outcome 1

Outcome	Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term targets	Achieved by MTR
Component 1: Strengthening institutional capacity and information systems for effective management of wildlife trade monitoring				
Outcome 1: Increased capacity within SAoSA for legal and sustainable wildlife trade.	**Indicators in Results Framework**			
	I. % Increase Score in Capacity Scorecard	Capacity Scorecard score - 26,3 %	Capacity Increased by 5% over baseline.	**60% progress** No quantitative capacity assessment of SAoSA members were done Qualitative data indicate an increase. in capacity 20 young professionals trained
	II. Number of monitoring systems in place and in use at national and provincial levels	No standard monitoring systems of wildlife in place at provincial and national levels	National wildlife monitoring systems are in place and are used by SANBI and two provincial authorities.	**100% progress** The system in place and being tested in four provinces One case study on NDFs (black rhino) completed

67. **Outcome 2:** Web-based CITES electronic permitting application used by CITES Authorities as a national permitting system - The national electronic permit system for CITES-listed species is operational, and being deployed to all provinces. The system has processed over 10,000 applications since its launch, marking a substantial step towards aligning with international trade standards. For *Indicator I,* the MTR notes a misalignment between the indicator, baseline, and midterm target (Table 8), as the target does not directly address the initial low confidence in documentation authenticity nor effectively measure the intended outcome of increased confidence among customs officials. For *Indicator II*, while the quantitative capacity assessment for system technical support had not been carried out by the time of the MTR, the e-permitting system has been used since April 2023. Qualitative information gathered demonstrated capacity within DFFE for managing and maintaining the e-permitting system. The State Information Technology Agency (SITA) has capacitated internal IT personnel at national and provincial levels. For *Indicator III*, the agreement with WCMC is being processed and is essential for achieving the project's transformational objectives. The system improves the efficiency and accuracy of trade permit

issuance, making it easier to track and regulate wildlife trade at a national level, and represents significant progress toward meeting CITES compliance requirements.

Table 8: Progress towards Outcome 2

Outcome	Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term targets	Achieved by MTR
Component 2: Development of a ready-to-use e-permitting system for CITES-listed species				
Outcome 2: Web-based CITES electronic permitting application used by CITES Authorities as a national permitting system	I. Customs officials at national export points have confidence that wildlife exports are based on authentic documentation	Low confidence that paper-based, export documentation is authentic	E-permitting system for CITES-listed species has been designed	E-permitting system is in place, **BUT**, the target does not relate to baseline nor measure the indicator (confidence of customs officials).
	II. Capacity of DFFE's software developers and IT support personnel to provide technical management and troubleshooting of the electronic permitting system.	Capacity scorecard for DFFE for the E- permitting for CITES species: 8.5%	Capacity Scorecard scores increased by 25% over the baseline	No capacity assessment, and cannot quantitatively estimate the progress level of capacity change. MTR infers that there is capacity in DFFE as the system is operational. Inference is supported by qualitative data confirming the presence of necessary capacities.
	III. South Africa's e-permitting system for CITES-listed species interfaces with international biodiversity databases.	No e-permitting system for CITES-listed species in place.	Data sharing agreement with one international biodiversity database operator.	Not achieved Agreement with WCMC not yet in place, though process has been initiated

68. **Outcome 3**: "Functional community governance mechanisms for sustainable livelihoods and reduce the rate of illegal wildlife trade," is partially achieved. Due to circumstances associated with the COVID-19 pandemic the service provider to facilitate the co-development of the governance guidelines could not deliver, hence the sequencing of the implementation strategy was changed. (Table 9). For *Indicator I*, the governance guidelines have not yet been co-developed and tested. In addition, the co-development of alternative livelihood interventions was not done. The delay in the co-development of governance guidelines prompted the project to identify and support 12 ongoing livelihood interventions in the central, northern, and southern clusters. Investments in the identified livelihood projects should have included comprehensive assessments, detailed analysis, and tailored support to improve viability and ensure long-term sustainability. For *Indicator II*, there is no baseline on community Knowledge, Attitude, and Practices toward wildlife conservation (KAP), because the KAP survey, initially planned for year 1 was not undertaken. The MTR observes that EMs, as local community members, are raising awareness to manage the antagonistic attitudes within their communities toward protected areas due to ongoing human-wildlife conflict, as evidenced in this article: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yLzQi6ph6Ku8eCAR5aA3G_d1F_S0lcle/view. Furthermore, more than 80% of survey respondents indicated positive personal and professional growth as a result of learning about wildlife conservation and being more conscious of the necessity of environmental protection (Annex XV). During the MTR, a KAP survey was underway. If a second survey is implemented at the end of the project, the comparison could be used to measure shifts in community knowledge and attitude towards wildlife conservation at end project evaluation.

Table 9: Progress towards Outcome 3

Outcome	Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term targets	Achieved by MTR
Component 3: Strengthening community capacity to reduce the rate of illegal wildlife trade				
Outcome 3: Functional community governance mechanisms for sustainable livelihoods and reduced rate of illegal wildlife trade	I. Number of governance guidelines and % of projects developed in consultation with stakeholders and community	Development projects use a top-down approach with little consultation between stakeholders and input from the community.	Co-developed Governance guidelines are designed and tested in two target sites 50% of projects are developed in consultation with stakeholders and the community.	30% progress No governance guidelines were developed. Foundations for the co-development of governance mechanisms have been initiated through capacity building on governance principles. Initial efforts to empower communities are evident in 12 GEF 6-supported livelihood projects. However, no projects have been co-developed with communities.
	II. Improved Community knowledge and attitude towards wildlife at the three target clusters	Results of Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) survey to be undertaken in year 1 of the project	Environmental Monitors trained and communicate issues of environmental importance to community members and represent the community's views on environmental issues	Although the KAP survey is not yet finalized, EM testimonies indicate improved knowledge and attitudes toward wildlife conservation in the three target clusters. The Peace Parks Foundation Annual Review 2022 (p. 71) further supports that Environmental Monitors foster protection and peace in these communities. (PPF-Annual-Review-2022.pdf)

Rating for Progress Towards Project Outcomes: Satisfactory

Likelihood of Impact

69. The project has made substantial progress towards reducing the rate of illegal wildlife trade, as evidenced by the outputs already delivered and their alignment with desired outcomes. The institutionalization of a centralized system for monitoring wildlife trade and an e-permitting system for CITES-listed species has significantly enhanced the capacity of institutions responsible for wildlife trade management and CITES enforcement. These technology-enabled systems are expected to improve information management and data sharing, strengthening decision-making processes critical to wildlife management. Collectively, these milestones support the improved implementation of CITES and contribute to the stabilization or increase of priority species populations, ultimately advancing the conservation and sustainable use of CITES-listed species by reducing pressures from illegal trade.

70. The MTR notes the project's impact of employment opportunities through the EMs programme. EMs respondents to the survey emphasized the contribution made by the employment opportunity to economic status for some participants and their families (Annex XV). The survey respondents also valued the decrease in poaching and human-wildlife conflicts, crediting these successes to enhanced environmental monitoring and community involvement. By empowering women, men, and youth living in communities in the periphery of the KNP landscape through community-driven governance mechanisms and viable alternative livelihood options, the project is fostering community stewardship toward preserving local biodiversity. While the MTR lacks quantitative confirmation of reduced illegal wildlife trade, qualitative data shows an increase in wildlife contraband seizures. Although rhino poaching data is limited, it has decreased from 1,054 in 2016 to 209 in 2021. This data indicates the effectiveness of policing and enforcement systems to which the GEF 6 project is contributing to, potentially leading to long-term positive impacts.

71. However, the project's overall long-term impact will largely depend on how effectively it navigates contextual challenges such as securing adequate resource allocation, managing the balance

for community involvement in wildlife conservation and maintaining an alternative livelihoods support system, maintaining political support, and managing external funding dependencies. The project's emphasis on human rights, gender equality, capacity building, and awareness creation in Component 3 provides an opportunity for a more inclusive pathway toward impact. However, assumptions related to political and socio-economic drivers of wildlife crime present potential risks. The adaptive management processes embedded in the project will be crucial in mitigating these risks and ensuring that the project remains responsive and can achieve sustainable, transformative outcomes, thus enhancing its prospects for meaningful, sustainable outcomes. The project's strong foundation due to its multi-stakeholder approach, comprehensive stakeholder engagement, and alignment with broader biodiversity frameworks, significantly increases its potential for impact. While contextual challenges remain, the project's adaptive management and focus on sustainable, inclusive outcomes make a substantial impact highly probable.

Rating for Likelihood of Impact: Highly Likely

Adaptive Management

72. The project encounters various risks, including technical, social, and operational challenges. To address technical risks, it provides targeted training for software developers and maintains ongoing communication with technical teams, secured by partnerships for sustained support. Stakeholder engagement risks are mitigated through ongoing dialogue and tailored strategies involving local community members and trusted organizations. Operational risks are addressed by improving communication and aligning priorities among stakeholders. The project also emphasizes environmental safeguards and compliance with CITES standards to handle external risks. Although COVID-19 impacted the co-development of governance guidelines, adaptive measures were implemented to maintain community engagement through the livelihoods project. These strategies aim to sustain project momentum and enhance effectiveness in reducing illegal wildlife trade.

73. The cash co-financing commitments from various stakeholders pose a risk, as some partners have not met their financial obligations. However, partners have mitigated this risk by increasing their in-kind contributions (see Table 10). The MTR highlights the limitations caused by the absence of progress tracking and data provision, which are essential for timely adaptations in response to challenges or underperformance. This is exacerbated by the non-actioning of essential issues the Project Management Team (PMT) raised, which impacted the project's agility in addressing emerging challenges. Implementing adaptive management could promote a strong learning culture and encourage cross-component collaboration among stakeholders. Regular reviews and feedback sessions would facilitate knowledge exchange, equipping stakeholders with shared insights and adaptive solutions, thereby enhancing the project's resilience and effectiveness in addressing complex wildlife conservation needs.

Rating for Adaptive Management: Satisfactory

Rating for Effectiveness: Satisfactory

D. Financial Management

Adherence to UNEP's/Donor Financial Policies and Procedures

74. The project is financed through GEF 6, with co-finance commitments by DFFE, SANBI, SANParks, PPF, and WWF-SA (Tables 10). It is implemented using the Public Finance Management Act of South Africa. Therefore, government procedures, rules, and regulations are followed. In addition to the DFFE, other project partners also follow their institutional procedures, which are in tandem with the government procedures. According to the Project Cooperation Agreement (PCA), the Executing Agency, DFFE, is to submit quarterly financial reports and to the annual external audited expenditure reports. The later has to be submitted within six months after the project's financial year-end. However, the project did not follow this requirement. The review noted that the 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 external audited expenditure reports were all signed on the 4th of April 2024. The project had submitted internal audit reports; however, these were not aligned with the PCA, thus, UNEP did not accept these reports. Hence, DFFE had to institute external audits as required by UNEP.

75. By the time of the Midterm Review (MTR), in-kind co-financing contributions had significantly surpassed expectations, reaching 147% of the committed levels. This positive achievement highlights the project partners' strong dedication to the initiative's objectives. However, the realization of cash co-financing commitments remained a challenge. As of June 30, 2024, only 17% of the pledged cash co-

financing from project partners had been fulfilled (Table 10). The MTR acknowledges the difficulties partner institutions face in meeting their cash co-financing obligations, indicating that these commitments may only be partially realized by the end of the project. Despite this, the substantial in-kind contributions demonstrate the partners' unwavering support and active engagement with the project's goals. The overall UNEP budget burn rate of June 2024 was 43%, which is low, considering that the project only has one year left. The review notes that the following administrative challenges partially explain the low burn rate: Disbursement of funds from the National Treasury to the DFFE took almost a year. Although partners pre-financed to enable some activities to continue, other activities had to be rescheduled. The total co-finance burn rate is 77% (see Table 10 below). The MTR notes that the PMU budget expenditure is 181% of the initial approved budget at the design level. Further analysis has shown that this expenditure was approved through revised work plans and budget (see Table 11&12)

Rating for Adherence to UNEP's/Donor Financial Policies and Procedures: Moderately Satisfactory

Completeness of Financial Information

76. The QER financial reports have been signed as confirmation of their approval by UNEP and compliance with the agreed reporting requirements. However, approving QER reports before they feed into the PIR has presented challenges. Incomplete QER information impacts the accuracy of figures reported in the PIR. For instance, during the reporting period ending 30 June 2024, the PIR was submitted based on draft QER expenditure figures. When UNEP later approved the QER, adjustments were made to the initially reported expenditure of USD 2,222,399. The final approved cumulative expenditure for April to June 2024 was USD 2,112,822. The PIR was compiled before the QER was approved, resulting in a variance of USD 109,577 between the total UNEP GEF expenditure reported in the PIR and the expenditure reflected in the approved QER. These errors point to the need for consolidating all expenditure reports and getting approval before submitting the PIR.

77. The MTR noted that the December 2023 audit report, due by 30 June 2024, had not yet been submitted by mid-October 2024. The challenges identified relate to protocol issues within DFFE's supply chain management procedures.

Rating for Completeness of Financial Information: Moderately Satisfactory

Table 10: Project funding sources

Funding source **All figures as USD**	**Planned funding**	**% of planned funding**	**Secured funding**	**% of secured funding**
	Cash			
Funds from the Environment Fund				
Funds from the Regular Budget				
Extra-budgetary funding (listed per donor-GEF):	4 886 009	100%	3 627 614	74%
Sub-total: Cash contributions	**4 886 009**	**100%**	**3 627 614**	**74%**
In-kind				
Environment Fund staff-post costs				
Regular Budget staff-post costs				
Extra-budgetary funding for staff posts (listed per donor)				
Sub-total: In-kind contributions				
Co-financing*				
Co-financing cash contribution	3 440 000	100%	685 983	17%
Co-financing in-kind contribution	3 980 000	100%	5 045 971	147%
Sub-total: Co-financing contributions	**7 420 000**		**5731 955**	**77%**
Total	**12 306 009**		**9 381 982**	**76%**

Table 11: GEF Expenditure by project component

Description	Estimated Costs at design	Actual Costs / Expenditure	Usage %
Component 1	1,377,000	484,955	35%
Component 2	1,442,000	468,048	32%
Component 3	1,857,000	778,480	42%
PMU –DFFE	210,009	381,100	181%
Totals	**4,886,009**	**2,112,583**	**43%**

Table 12: Co-finance Expenditure by Project Component

Description	Estimated Costs at Design			Actual Costs / Expenditure			
	In-kind	Cash	Total	In-kind	Cash	Total	Usage %
Component 1	1,520,000	1,220,000	**2,740,000**	902 657	252,360	**1,155,017**	42%
Component 2	1,100,000	1,000,000	**2,100,000**	2,893,311	10,715	**2,904,026**	138%
Component 3	820,000	1,760,000	**2,580,000**	1,250,004	445,322	**1,672 912**	65%
Totals	**3,440,000**	**3,980,000**	**7,420,000**	**5 045 972**	**685 983**	**5 731 955**	**77%**

Rating for Financial Management: Moderately Satisfactory

E. Efficiency

78. Project resources have been utilized well to enhance institutional capacity, develop a centralized wildlife monitoring system, implement an e-permitting system for CITES-listed species, build community capacity, implement the EMs programme, and conduct livelihood interventions. These elements are well-aligned with the objectives of reducing illegal wildlife trade.

79. By 30 June 2024, the project burn rate of GEF funds was 43%. This suggests an underspending trend, mainly due to delays in fund disbursement. The lengthy process of funds flowing from the National Treasury to DFFE, and finally to partners takes about 12 months, negatively impacting the implementation of project activities and spending rate. However, the project exhibits a satisfactory commitment-to-disbursement ratio. Leveraging the strategic use of partnerships and existing structures, such as collaboration with the SANBI, SANParks, PPF, and WWF-SA has increased cost-effectiveness. Additionally, the project aligns with ongoing regional initiatives, such as the GLTCA. The project focuses on value for money through a strong emphasis on leveraging in-kind resources, which has helped mitigate some cash co-financing shortfalls.

80. Despite efforts at cost containment, certain oversights have impacted project efficiency.

I. Although the PMU was approved for four positions, it operates at 50% capacity and lacks a dedicated finance officer. This gap delays reporting and requires the Project Manager and Administration Officer to handle financial duties, detracting from their primary roles. A finance officer is also essential for mandatory external audits.

II. Assigning roles to institutions with specific local expertise can improve project efficiency. For instance, directly assigning Output 3.2 to SANParks, with its experience in the KNP region, could have strengthened community outcomes and minimized administrative layers. Subcontracting, especially in Component 3, has increased project costs and limited efficiency. Although PPF excels in community-based governance, its engagement strengths were underused. Key community-related outputs were outsourced to Consultancies. Greater direct PPF involvement could have enhanced the integration of conservation and community development efforts.

III. The approach for Component 3 livelihood interventions lacks customization for different project contexts and does not adequately address specific local needs. Critical analysis show that the interventions do not demonstrate that they provide alternative sources of livelihoods to reduce community reliance on illegal wildlife trade. Investments are not explicitly designed to offer sustainable economic opportunities, aligned with the realities and needs of the communities living in the periphery of KNP.

81. The project has received a one-year "no-cost extension" under the approved results framework. Evidence indicates that implementing cost-effective approaches and strategies has supported progress toward targets. However, the MTR notes the need for additional time to complete certain outputs delayed by factors beyond the project's control.

Rating for Efficiency: Satisfactory

F. Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring of Project Implementation

82. Appropriate governance structures were established to oversee and monitor project implementation:

I. The PMT, which coordinates and monitors the three project components, meets quarterly and has completed 70% of scheduled meetings to support project activities. A PMU manages daily operations but faces capacity limitations, affecting data collection, analysis, and documentation. Each component is led by a Component Lead, responsible for implementation and reporting. Initially, an Inter-Agency Oversight Committee (IAOC) was set up but later discontinued due to role overlap with the PSC However, the MTR found the IAOC's role essential for technical integration across components, and its removal led to siloed operations, missing opportunities for collaborative innovation.

II. The PSC, meeting bi-annually, provides strategic guidance, and approves annual work plans, budgets, and requested changes. Although the PSC has met eight times since the project's inception, and the project follows a work plan and budget, a comprehensive monitoring framework was never established, limiting the tracking of project progress against the set indicators related to outcomes. The absence of a dedicated M&E role has impacted the PSC's oversight, limiting systematic progress tracking, adaptive management, and data-driven decision-making. Furthermore, this gap undermines the PSC's capacity to provide strategic oversight and tailored guidance, resulting in decisions that are less anchored in quantitative evidence and qualitative insights derived from routine evaluations.

83. The lack of a dedicated M&E role has further affected the systematic tracking and reporting of critical indicators, impeding a comprehensive assessment of the project's impact on strengthening institutional capacities. Without updated capacity scorecards, the MTR has no data to quantitatively measure improvements in institutional information management capacities compared to baseline assessments. Additionally, community engagement progress cannot be fully evaluated due to the absence of a Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) survey, which would have established baseline awareness and attitudes toward biodiversity conservation. Implementing a KAP survey will set a foundational benchmark for future assessments on community empowerment and conservation awareness. Again, the PIR necessitates meticulous monitoring and evaluation efforts, along with knowledge management and learning, including the documentation of success stories at the project level. However, the MTR found these elements to be absent from the project work plans.

Rating for Monitoring of Project Implementation: Moderately Unsatisfactory

Project Reporting

84. The project has followed reporting processes aligned to the UNEP requirements. Although the project was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and delays in funds disbursements, all the reporting requirements were met, albeit with some delays (see section D). Project reporting is done through seven types of reports as follows: Annual Project Implementation Review (PIR) Report, Half-Yearly Progress Report, Quarterly Expenditure Report, Annual Co-Financing Report, and Annual External Audit Report (Annex XIV).

85. As a multi-stakeholder project, the review could not trace any reports or monitoring tools that detail implementation processes by component. Failing to elaborate on implementation limits opportunities for collaboration among components and technical areas. In addition, the reports do not adequately reflect gender, equality, and social inclusion perspectives at output and outcome levels.

Furthermore, without M&E reports, it is difficult to track implementation progress and achievements compared to those reported in the mandated UNEP reports.

Rating for Project Reporting: Satisfactory

Rating for Monitoring and Reporting:	**Moderately Satisfactory**

G. Exit Strategy & Sustainability

Exit Strategy

86. The review noted a lack of a comprehensive exit strategy, which is essential for sustaining outcomes and impacts for beneficiaries. However, the project has included capacity building, institutional strengthening, and partnership building to sustain the project benefits. Institutional arrangements for managing and maintaining wildlife population monitoring and e-permitting systems have also been established.

87. For Components 1 and 2, both SANBI and DFFE are capacitating in-house IT personnel for systems support. SANBI has also established arrangements for SAoSA members, and others in the wildlife economy to continue accessing the induction course on the e-platform that was developed in collaboration with the African Wildlife Institute at Stellenbosch University. The project is making strides to ensure full institutionalization and allocation of an annual budget from the fiscus.

88. Under Component 3, the linkages and relationships created through the GKSC benefit the project as the various stakeholders who are members of the Committee, are working in the KNP landscape have overlapping projects and will continue to facilitate the integration of communities living in the periphery of KNP into the conservation of wildlife. Adapting to evolving threats requires ongoing efforts and resources, which the project needs to plan for by developing and implementing an exit strategy that ensures continuity.

Rating for Exit Strategy: Moderately Satisfactory

Socio-political Sustainability

89. The current social and political factors in the KNP landscape support the continuation and further development of the project's outcomes. South Africa developed the first National Integrated Strategy to Combat Wildlife Trafficking (NISCWT) in May 2023, acknowledging the need to improve the government's ability to prevent, combat, and investigate wildlife trafficking. The NISCWT was developed through a participatory and consultative process, involving key stakeholders, as demonstrated by the identification of roles and expectations of the different actors in the ecosystem, including, government departments, state-owned entities, private sector, NGOs and communities. This strategy is an addition to other legislations and regulations that govern wildlife protection and biodiversity conservation. Therefore, there is government ownership in implementing the project.

90. Additionally, the project is supporting the implementation of the Greater Kruger Strategic Development Plan, which promotes partnerships between government, communities, and the private sector to respond to the needs of the Greater Kruger area finding a balance between conservation and socio-economic development to support surrounding communities. The IWT project is strengthening partnerships and collaboration mechanisms, through the GKSC. The project is partnering with WWF - Khetha, a United States Agency for International Development funded project, ending in 2027, and focused on reducing the impact of the illegal wildlife trade on rhinos and elephants. While project outcomes are likely to be sustained on a larger scale, the unique socio-economic conditions of the communities surrounding KNP require context-specific considerations in the execution of the exit strategy. Each cluster has its unique socio-political environment. Hence, governance guidelines must be tailored to each and developed with the participation of women, men, and youth in the different communities. Such an approach will consider the unique socio-political context fostering community ownership, and ensuring alternative livelihood interventions that are viable and resilient.

Rating for Socio-political Sustainability: Likely

Financial Sustainability

91. The strategy of using institutions already mandated to lead, guide, and manage natural resources and biodiversity conservation as project implementers contribute to financial sustainability. DFFE, SANBI, SANParks, and the provincial departments of environment will fully integrate the operational costs of the systems developed in their annual work plans. These institutions are already providing co-financing, both in kind and cash, demonstrating commitment that project activities will continue after support ends.

92. It is unclear how the EMs programme will be institutionalized for continuity beyond the GEF 6 project and WWF Khetha. Currently the EMs salaries is supported by GEF 6 co-financed by SANParks. While SANParks is likely to continue supporting the livelihoods project through its Socio-Economic Transformation (SET) Unit, fully integrating the EMs into SANParks might be a challenge as SANParks is mandated to maintain the inside of the protected area. On the other hand, the Department of Agriculture is mandated to manage the protected areas boundaries (fence) from the outside and thus the EMs are most likely to be their responsibility.

Rating for Financial Sustainability: Likely

Institutional Sustainability

93. All the key institutions mandated by law for natural resources, biodiversity conservation, biodiversity monitoring, and managing trade of CITES-listed species are involved in implementing the project. The project has enhanced the technical and managerial capacities of DFFE, SANParks, SANBI, including SAoSA, and the provincial environment departments, especially the CITES competent authorities.

94. The South African Wildlife Population Monitoring System has established structures for sustainability. SANParks have already adopted the system, the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, CapeNature, and the Free State Department of Economics, Small Business Development, Tourism, and Environmental Affairs (DESTEA). DFEE has in-built capacity for managing and maintaining the system.

95. The electronic permitting system for CITES-listed species is highly likely to be sustained as it was developed through the leadership of DFFE at the national level. This guidance ensures that all provinces have the necessary infrastructure and capacities to manage and use the system effectively after the project ends. The system was developed by the State Information Technology Agency, a government entity that is building capacities and skills within the DFFE IT Unit to facilitate continued management and maintenance.

96. The SANParks-led Environmental Monitors (EMs) program has capacitated champions, mostly youth, to be environment and biodiversity stewards. Embedded in the communities bordering KNP, the EMs' roles of monitoring the park's boundary on the outside complement the responsibilities of the Field Rangers who monitor wildlife movement from the inside. Many stakeholders acknowledge the EMs as *"the eyes and ears on the ground to protect wildlife '. A*s EMs proudly deliver on their promise, they 'embody their maxim' as illustrated in the following: *"We are, the human fence for managing human-wildlife conflict and reducing illegal wildlife trade."*. Institutionalizing the EMs will help sustain project benefits and mitigate human-wildlife conflict and illegal wildlife trade.

97. There is likelihood to sustain efforts to address illegal wildlife trade through the partnerships and collaborations facilitated by the Greater Kruger Steering Committee involving DFFE, SANParks, PPF, WWF Khetha, SAWC, Kruger to Canyons Biosphere, Vhembe Biosphere Reserve, Endangered Wildlife Trust, Sabi Sand Nature Reserve, Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency and Limpopo Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism.

Rating for Institutional Sustainability: Highly Likely

Rating for Sustainability: Likely

H. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

Project Inception

98. GEF approved the project on 7 May 2018. As per the PCA provision, the project's official start date is recorded as the date of receipt of funds on 19 November 2019 by the National Treasury. The

inception process was supported by a PSC meeting held on 25 October 2019, in which project implementation arrangements, roles, and responsibilities were clarified to ensure a shared understanding. Memoranda of Agreements (MoAs) between DFFE and SANBI, and DFFE and PPF were already signed by the time of the PSC meeting.

99. There were delays in mobilizing PMU staff, which happened in May 2020, and in receipt of funds form the National Treasury. DFFE received the first tranche of funds ten months after the National Treasury received them. The Lead Project Partners received their allocations in October 2020. Thus, implementation was delayed by almost a year. The delays in DFFE drawing down the first tranche of funds may have been due to several factors, including meeting the National Treasury's specific requirements before the funds could be transferred to the department. The absence of a Project Manager at the time of funds disbursement (the manager recruited in March 2020) may have delayed the submission of request. As this was the first tranche, the MTR notes that a dedicated person to prepare and submit the required documents was necessary to ensure timely drawdown of funds from National Treasury.

Rating for Preparation and Readiness: **Moderately Satisfactory**

Quality of Project Management and Supervision

100. ***UNEP/Implementing Agency:*** UNEP established appropriate institutional arrangements for managing the project. A Task Manager regularly engages with the Executing Agency, through a PMU, ensuring timely reporting and compliance to UNEP and GEF rules and regulations on technical reporting and financial accountability. The Task Manager attends all PSC meetings providing necessary advice and supervision.

101. ***Partners/Executing Agency:*** DFFE, as the National Executing Agency leads project implementation in partnership with SANBI, SANParks, and PPF. Several other stakeholders are engaged as service providers to deliver the planned project outputs. While the governance structures were appropriately set at project inception, resourcing these structures and retaining the staff has been a challenge. Staff attrition was experienced across the board, leading to loss of institutional memory, and negatively impacting the project. The review notes that per the approved project design, the PMU should have a complement of a Project Manager, Project Coordinator, Finance Officer and Project Assistant/Administrator. However, the PMU, designed to provide strategic oversight and facilitate component coordination, operates at 50% capacity. This shortage requires the Project Manager to handle multiple roles, including those of the missing Project Coordinator and Finance Officer, creating gaps in monitoring, and financial and knowledge management. The absence of adequate support strains the Project Manager, limiting oversight and increasing the risk of errors and underreporting. This underscores the gaps that this review has noted in project monitoring and evaluation, technical reporting, financial management (including drawing down of funds), and knowledge management. The understaffed PMU presents a risk to the quality of the project's implementation.

102. Component 1 had a temporary lead from November 2019 to February 2022, with another lead from March 2022 who has since resigned. Component 3's SANParks lead, instrumental to the project, also left in March 2023, with the recruitment of a replacement taking over a year. PPF experienced similar staff changes, leading to a loss of institutional memory, which has hindered understanding of project outcomes, especially in Outcome 3.

103. Governance structures have managed the project's complexity with transparency and inclusivity, but a siloed approach in component-based implementation has limited integration. Key inter-component linkages, like connecting the population monitoring and e-permitting systems, were not designed collaboratively, missing potential resource efficiencies. Stakeholders are now exploring options to link these systems.

104. The component-based approach appears to have led the project to delegate the development of governance guidelines solely to PPF. Innovative pathways to functional governance mechanisms might have emerged if the team had collaboratively deliberated on the specific needs for community governance guidelines. The PSC of March 2022 approved the use of funds earmarked for guidelines development to support some livelihood interventions as they waited for next disbursement. A critical analysis of the livelihood interventions selected for support—including several that were visited during the field mission from September 26 to October 4, 2024, reveals that due diligence for each identified intervention was not thoroughly conducted. This omission does not fall solely on PPF. Instead, those responsible for the project's oversight and supervision should have recognized these gaps and provided appropriate guidance to the component partners.

105. Furthermore, based on the minutes of project meetings, apart from one session that reviewed the results framework, it seems that partners mainly reported on progress at the component level, with limited deep engagement on technical, logistical, or administrative matters. As a result, the project missed out on the potential benefits of a multi-stakeholder approach, where project team members could have developed a shared understanding of the project's intended results, benefiting from each other's expertise and experiences, and enriching processes. By managing the IWT project in silos, the team missed critical opportunities for deep engagement among stakeholders on technical, logistical, and administrative aspects of each project component during planning meetings. This lack of collaborative discussion prevented stakeholders from identifying and questioning gaps—such as those that delayed the development of guidelines. Had there been a more integrated approach, team members could have collectively recognized these issues early on and developed mitigation strategies in their subsequent plans, thereby enhancing project efficiency and effectiveness.

Rating for Quality of Project Management and Supervision: Moderately Satisfactory

Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation

106. Key national institutions and international organisations are involved in implementing the IWT projects. Through its participation in the GWP project, the IWT project is connected to stakeholders vital for data exchange and experience sharing on illegal wildlife trade issues. In the Greater Kruger landscape, the project has formed partnerships with several key stakeholders by supporting the GKSC. By strengthening the GKSC and participating in the implementation of the Greater Kruger Strategic Development Plan, the project is promoting collaborative action, resource-sharing, and common ownership of results. The project implements activities to involve communities through Component 3. The project is developing community governance framework to involve women, men and youth in wildlife conservation as well as providing support mechanisms for alternative livelihoods. The EMs programme demonstrated how youth in the KPN landscape can participate in wildlife conservation as well as contribute to curbing illegal wildlife trade. Whilst foundational capacity building on good governance has been developed by the project, further community engagement is needed through the development of community governance guidelines and mechanisms like in the manner that the Makuleke Contractual National Park Community Property Association is involved in wild life conservation. The Makuleke Community has participated and cooperated in project activities, providing experiences on community-managed wildlife conservation.

The Makuleke Community are also benefiting from GEF6 livelihoods project (see link https://url.za.m.mimecastprotect.com/s/7ndSCY6xmVTknnPoh0WCS_?domain=drive.google.com). Increased participation by the National Department of Agriculture and Veterinary Services, which manages the boundary fence in the project, could improve the performance of the EMs.

Rating for Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation: Highly Satisfactory

Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality

107. Addressing human rights and ensuring gender equality and all aspects of social inclusion are issues to be considered in various ways in project implementation. The design indicated that implementation would align to the UN Common Understanding on the human rights-based approach and adherence to UNEP's Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment. The PMT meeting of 26 September 2021 recommended enlisting the services of a consultant to conduct an assessment and develop a gender mainstreaming strategy and action plan for the project. The project is currently operating without a gender action plan. The MTR notes some gender and social inclusion consciousness in interviews, yet these considerations are limited in implementation as reflected in the reports. While the project indicates the participation of women in project-related decisions, more data is needed in terms of how the project is creating economic opportunities for women and other vulnerable population groups and whether the project is addressing the systemic, social, and cultural challenges faced by women and marginalized groups in the target wildlife economy. From analysis and observation, the EMs programme has a youth lens, and ensures that 40% of the recruits are female. This addresses the high youth unemployment in South Africa, which stood at 45.5% in the first quarter of 2024, while the unemployment rate among young females was estimated at 49,4% in the same period. However, youth employment as EMs, is an alternative livelihood option provided by the project, yet it is underreported in all reports.

Rating for Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality: Moderately Satisfactory

Environmental and Social Safeguards

108. The IWT project presents a low safeguard risk due to its lack of direct environmental footprint. However, it highlights significant gaps in its approach to environmental and social safeguards. A major concern is the lack of a Social Safeguards Strategy and Implementation Plan. Communities near KPN receive few economic or social benefits, as conservation efforts primarily focus on tourism rather than local development. While the project's design aligns with the UN General Assembly Resolution 69/314[9], advocating for developing sustainable, alternative livelihoods for communities impacted by illegal wildlife trafficking, its implementation has not yet facilitated meaningful inclusion or benefit-sharing. Delays in co-developing governance guidelines have limited the project's impact on the livelihoods of local men, women, and youth.

109. The MTR notes that in September 2021, the PMT recommended the development of a comprehensive safeguards strategy. Without the strategy, the project struggles to engage communities as partners in conservation and sustainable resource use. This shortfall underscores the necessity of prioritizing safeguard measures to foster community inclusion and capacity-building for better aligning with the project's wildlife conservation goals. While the livelihoods projects aimed to support alternative livelihoods, the practical impact remains limited. Livelihood initiatives have yet to show significant social benefits. This conclusion is being reached as the implemented livelihoods projects have not yet demonstrated the social benefits. Without M&E tools, the MTR cannot verify the extent of community benefits, such as the number of households or demographics impacted. A robust safeguards strategy and action plan would help balance conservation goals with local socio-economic development.

Rating for Environmental and Social Safeguards: Moderately Satisfactory

Country Ownership and Driven-ness

110. The project's underlying premise was that interest existed at the highest levels of Government of South Africa to address poaching and illegal wildlife trade. The participation of all the key institutions mandated to protect wildlife and conserve biodiversity at national and provincial levels is enough testimony for country ownership and drivenness. The project outputs on monitoring and e-permitting systems have been highly recognized at the highest levels, as evidenced in the launch of the e-permitting system in March 2023 (https://www.dffe.gov.za/Deputy-Director-General-Biodiversity-and-Conservation-Ms-Flora-Mokgohloa-Celebration-of-World-Wildlife-Day-2023).

Rating for Country Ownership and Driven-ness: Highly Satisfactory

Communication and Public Awareness

111. The plan was that the communication strategy and plan developed under Component 3 would facilitate knowledge management and learning from the whole project. The MTR notes the said strategy is in draft form and the project has operated without an integrated plan for communication and public awareness. The MTR also notes the recommendation by the PMT on the need for developing a comprehensive communication strategy and action plan for the project. This had not been done by the review time. The identified gap limits the project's ability to fully share experiences, lessons learned, and knowledge products, reducing its visibility as envisioned in the project design. Greater public awareness could foster strategic partnerships for resource mobilization, enhancing the sustainability of efforts to combat illegal wildlife trade. However, GWP training equipped project partners to document lessons learned, which could have been further utilized to capture additional experiences and insights. Despite not having an integrated communication and awareness strategy, various opportunities to share project experiences, successes, best practices, and lessons learned were utilized. These include the launch of the e-permitting system during South Africa's 50th environmental day celebration, CITES event, and other regional and international fora.

Rating for Communication and Public Awareness: Moderately Satisfactory

Rating for Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues:	Moderately Satisfactory

[9] UN General Assembly Resolution **69/314**, titled *"Tackling Illicit Trafficking in Wildlife,"* adopted on July 30, 2015- emphasizes the importance of involving local communities in and around wildlife habitats as active partners in conservation and sustainable use efforts.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions

112. The IWT project is designed to combat illegal wildlife trade in South Africa by strengthening institutional frameworks, improving information systems, and enhancing community involvement in wildlife conservation efforts. The project engaged strategic institutions in wildlife conservation through a multi-stakeholder approach to implement the identified core components. This approach created an inclusive framework that facilitated the integration of diverse experiences, perspectives, and expertise. Furthermore, the project is highly relevant, as the outputs and outcomes align well with its goal of reducing illegal wildlife trade. By the MTR, the project had demonstrated substantial progress in strengthening South Africa's wildlife conservation capacity, aligning with national, regional, and global biodiversity and conservation objectives, including the Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Framework and the SDG.

113. The MTR highlights the significant achievements of the IWT project, which include the establishment of a wildlife population monitoring system. The system supports decision-making by informing the SAoSA and critical stakeholders in promptly and accurately assessing species health and population dynamics and determining sustainable trade levels for priority species. The system is a critical tool for sustainable wildlife management and ongoing conservation planning. The collaboration with Stellenbosch University's African Wildlife Economy Institute reinforces the project's commitment to sustainability, ensuring the platform is accessible to all users, continuously receives updates, and evolves in response to user experiences. Close monitoring of wildlife populations reveals the need to address illegal wildlife trade's socio-economic and geopolitical drivers. It also emphasizes upskilling young professionals to innovate within wildlife value chains and pursue entrepreneurship, which could reduce youth unemployment—a key factor in illegal wildlife trade. (Cf. paras 56-57, 66, Table 7).

114. Another key achievement is the establishment of a robust e-permitting system, which has streamlined the permit issuance process and strengthened regulatory oversight, reducing opportunities for illegal wildlife trade. The system has improved tracking and data-driven decision-making, advancing South Africa's alignment with international standards and compliance with CITES. Infrastructure assessments are in progress to expand the system nationwide, and formal steps are being taken to establish international data-sharing with the UNEP - World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC). The system's sustainability is supported through its institutionalization within the DFFE and partnering entities. (Cf. paras 58 -60, 67, Table 8).

115. Another major achievement is strengthening the EMs programme, which significantly supports the project's efforts to combat illegal wildlife trade by enhancing enforcement capacity and promoting community engagement in wildlife conservation. The programme has strengthened communication and coordination channels between communities, protected area rangers, and law enforcement agencies, facilitating the exchange of information on wildlife issues, addressing human-wildlife conflict, and enhancing community responsibility for wildlife conservation. As a result, there has been a more effective reporting and response system for illegal activities. The EMs programme has created employment opportunities for youth, reducing the reliance of the employed EMs on illegal activities. However, expanding and sustaining the program is crucial to maintain its positive outcomes. It is still unclear how this sustainability will be achieved beyond the project's lifespan. (Cf. paras 63, 68, Table 9).

116. The MTR observes that functional community governance mechanisms for sustainable livelihoods are not fully established. Nonetheless, the foundations for the co-development of governance guidelines have been established, and the project plans to continue the process during the remaining implementation period. While the TORs are clear on the process of guidelines co-development, the facilitation process should adopt a more participatory and inclusive approach. This would transform the resulting guidelines into effective governance mechanisms embraced by the women, men and youth, fostering community involvement in wildlife conservation. This process will require a minimum of two years to adequately deliver the intended outcome. (Cf. paras 63, 68, Table 9).

117. MTR identified a gap in performance tracking due to the lack of a M&E framework and plan. This absence prevents the systematic measurement of established indicators, making it difficult to assess progress toward outcomes and hindering opportunities for learning and improvement. Baseline data, while initially presented, lacks midterm follow-up through necessary tools such as KAP surveys and updated capacity scorecard assessments. The absence of performance tracking has reduced the project's capacity to effectively address gender and other cross-cutting issues, resulting in limited insight,

accountability, and adaptability—elements essential for achieving equitable and inclusive outcomes. This gap ultimately weakens the knowledge management process, vital for continuous learning, sharing, and adaptive management, enabling the flexibility and responsiveness needed in complex and evolving project environments. (Cf. paras 82-85)

118. The MTR notes efforts toward sustainability at the component level. However, the absence of a comprehensive project-level exit and sustainability strategy presents risks to the long-term impact. Without a well-defined plan for transitioning ownership and embedding the project's outcomes within national and local systems, there is a risk of reversing the gains. Developing a comprehensive exit strategy is imperative to ensure the project's long-term impact. As the project approaches completion, strengthening the sustainability component must remain a priority to ensure that the progress made is preserved and built upon. (Cf. paras 86-97)

119. The MTR commends the overall management of the project, noting that the PMU, the PMT and the PSC have consistently provided implementation oversight and devised strategies to address challenges, particularly those arising from external risks like the COVID-19 pandemic. The review highlighted areas for improvement, especially the need for integrated management to align outcomes with the project's objectives better and enhance coordination between components. Additionally, it is crucial to strengthen the PMU's skills in financial management, reporting, monitoring, evaluation, and learning. These capabilities will ensure the timely delivery of outputs and support the achievement of project goals for the remainder of the implementation period. (Cf. paras 102-106).

120. The review identified further gaps due to missing critical strategies, including communication, gender and social and environmental safeguard strategies. Despite the PMT highlighting these needs and seeking approval from the PSC, the necessary strategies are still not in place, leaving the project without a structured approach to addressing cross-cutting issues. This oversight has led to challenges, such as ineffective communication, insufficient focus on gender equity, and unaddressed social risks. For instance, in the absence of a communication strategy, the project appears fragmented. It lacks cohesion in its messaging, which limits its visibility and awareness, ultimately reducing its reach, sustainability, and overall impact. The absence of these foundational strategies has hindered the project's ability to meet its objectives fully. It has also affected its compliance with donor expectations and best practices for inclusive, transparent, and accountable project implementation. (Cf. paras 108, 109-110,112).

121. Despite the identified challenges, the project holds strong potential for long-term impact, mainly through its alignment with South Africa's National Biodiversity Strategy and international conservation commitments. By prioritizing areas such as stakeholder coordination, sustainable infrastructure support, and developing a comprehensive strategy for community engagement and participation in wildlife conservation, the project is well-positioned to make a lasting contribution to biodiversity conservation in South Africa and globally (Cf. paras 68 - 70).

122. The rating table below provides a detailed assessment of the project's performance across critical criteria.

Table 13: Project Performance Ratings[10]

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating
A. Strategic Relevance	The project is well-aligned with strategic priorities	**HS**
1. Alignment to UNEP's, Donors and Country (global, regional, sub-regional, and national) Strategic Priorities	The project aligns completely with strategic priorities	**HS**
2. Complementarity with existing interventions/ Coherence	The project has synergies with other projects in the country, and the target landscape	**HS**

[10] Most criteria will be rated on a six-point scale as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact are rated, also on a six-point scale, from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU) and Nature of External Context is rated from Highly Favourable (HF) to Highly Unfavourable (HU).

B. Quality of Project Design	Evidence-based design: Gaps were identified in intervention logic for Component 3. These gaps can be resolved in the remaining project implementation period. Indicators are not objectively verifiable and, in some cases, do not relate to the stated targets.	**S**
C. Effectiveness		**S**
1. Theory of Change	Some pathways of change were not well articulated	**S**
2. Availability of outputs	Program outputs were delivered satisfactorily and are of practical utility to stakeholders. All outputs still require more work to get to full completion.	**S**
3. Progress towards project outcomes	Outcomes are not being tracked and measured; identified indicators are not objectively verifiable; progress toward achieving meaningful outcomes is partial.	**S**
4. Likelihood of impact	The route to impact is visible, and the connections to the desired impact can be seen, making the likelihood of impact feasible.	**HL**
5. Adaptive management	The project responds accordingly based on changing conditions during the implementation of project activities and adapts.	**S**
D. Financial Management		**MS**
1. Adherence to UNEP's/Donor financial policies and procedures	Effective allocation of resources, although the project lacked timely reporting.	**MS**
2. Completeness of project financial information	Financial information was not timely completed	**MS**
E. Efficiency	Effective approaches and strategies applied in delivering outputs.	**S**
F. Monitoring and Reporting		**MS**
1. Monitoring of project implementation	The project lacks performance tracking.	**MUS**
2. Project reporting	The project complies with UNEP reporting requirements; however, there is no evidence of documented process to show project progress and enable appreciation of the reported percentage completion of outputs and outcomes. Reported progress appears limited to the measurements provided in UNEP-mandatory reports.	**S**
G. Exit Strategy and Sustainability		**L**
1. Exit strategy	No exit strategy is in place, though there is evidence of consideration for ensuring sustainability.	**MS**
2. Socio-political sustainability	Current socio-political conditions are in support	**L**
3. Financial Sustainability	Institutionalizing the key project outputs suggests a strong chance of ongoing financial support.	**L**
4. Institutional sustainability	Institutions mandated for wildlife conservation and CITES implementation at the national level will likely sustain positive outcomes.	**HL**
H. Factors Affecting Performance		**MS**
1. Project Inception	Delays in fund disbursement and the mobilization of the PMU negatively impacted preparation and readiness for inception.	**MS**
2. Quality of project management and supervision	Overall project management and supervision were provided, but limitations in the PMU's capacity impacted negatively on the quality of both supervision and management.	**MS**
2.1 UNEP/Implementing Agency:	Project oversight and implementation provided	

2.2 Partners/Executing Agency:	Partnership arrangements are effective; however, limited capacity in the PMU and high staff turnover lead to a loss of institutional memory.	
3. Stakeholders' participation and cooperation	Key stakeholders participating and cooperating at all levels	**HS**
4. Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality	The awareness of stakeholders regarding gender, equity, and social inclusion does not translate into mainstreaming the issues in programming leading to underreporting.	**MS**
5. Environmental and social safeguards	The project has a low risk of environmental impact, but social safeguards are limited due to a lack of strategy and planning.	**MS**
6. Country ownership and driven-ness	Aligned to national development objectives and priorities.	**HS**
7. Communication and public awareness	Not being strategically addressed, reactive actions are evident.	**MS**
Overall Project Performance Rating at Mid-Point		**S**

B. Lessons learned

Lesson Learned #1	**The importance of integrating Theory of Change, Results Framework, and indicators in project design**
Context/ comment	The review identified design challenges where the original TOC lacked clear alignment between impact pathways and the results chain, resulting in disjointed logic from outputs to outcomes, and from outcomes to mid-term impacts. Additionally, many project indicators are not SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) and do not effectively capture progress toward mid-term targets. These gaps limited the project's ability to measure and track performance at the outcome level accurately. This experience highlights the critical need for a well-defined TOC with clear impact pathways that logically connect activities, outputs, and outcomes. Indicators should be SMART and directly linked to each stage in the results chain, ensuring they measure the intended progress and accurately reflect project impact. Such design practices help create a coherent intervention logic, making it easier to track progress, make adjustments, and effectively report on achievements. Prioritizing a rigorous TOC with SMART indicators during the design phase ensures a strong foundation for project implementation, facilitates effective monitoring and evaluation, and enhances the potential for achieving intended results in line with long-term impact. (Cf. paras 40-41, 54 - 64)
Lesson Learned #2:	**The multi-stakeholder approach fostered institutional strengthening in addressing illegal wildlife trade through strategic engagement of relevant institutions in monitoring, permit issuance, community empowerment, and enhanced collaboration.**
Context/ comment	The project demonstrated the utility of partnerships by leveraging multi-stakeholder collaboration involving government institutions, civil society organizations, international organizations, the private sector, community organizations, and local communities at the periphery of KNP. This targeted stakeholder selection fostered alignment on critical issues and leveraged each stakeholder's strengths, increasing the likelihood of impactful and lasting outcomes. Involving strategically positioned stakeholders in a multi-stakeholder approach is essential for achieving a holistic, sustainable approach to complex conservation challenges and resource mobilization. Furthermore, these partnerships and collaborations foster trust, increase transparency, and encourage accountability, which is vital for strengthening institutions. Activities should be planned and implemented using a systems design thinking approach to enhance effectiveness. This helps avoid siloed efforts and ensures synergies and innovative components. (Cf. paras 106).
Lesson Learned #3	**The Phased approach in developing an information management system enhances user input**

Context/ comment	The phased rollout of the e-permitting system allows for early testing, incremental capacity building, and stakeholder engagement. By implementing the system in stages, the project team gathers user feedback and addresses technical challenges within a controlled environment, making necessary adjustments before full deployment. This approach refines the system's functionality, supports gradual infrastructure readiness, and fosters stakeholder ownership. The phased approach exemplifies a practical strategy for complex system implementation, offering a framework for projects where new technology requires extensive user adoption and alignment with on-the-ground needs. The approach allows project teams to identify and resolve potential issues early, progressively build capacity, and meaningfully engage stakeholders. (Cf. paras 58).
Lesson Learned #4	**Consistent terminology in project design is essential to ensure a shared understanding of the project concepts, effective implementation, and stakeholder alignment.**
Context/ comment	The review identified challenges in implementing the governance-related components due to inconsistencies in the use of terms such as "governance principles," "governance guidelines," "governance mechanisms," and "governance structures" during the design phase. This lack of clarity led to varied interpretations among stakeholders, impacting the implementation of Component 3. Consequently, the lack of clarity affected the project's ability to develop cohesive governance pathways and delayed key activities related to community engagement and decision-making processes. This experience underscores the importance of precise and consistent terminology in project design, especially in complex, multi-stakeholder initiatives. Ensuring clarity around terms and concepts fosters a shared understanding, aligns stakeholder expectations, and supports coherent implementation. (Cf. para 61).

C. Recommendations

123. A one-year extension is recommended for the outputs to be fully delivered and contribute to the desired outcomes.

Recommendation #1:	**Expedite the co-development of community governance guidelines.** 1. To enable the co-development of governance guidelines in the remaining period of the project, the following steps are required (a) Key stakeholder engagement to set clear TORs, including agreeing on a facilitation process; (b) Engage a Facilitator with a blend of technical expertise, cultural sensitivity and strong facilitation skills to engage diverse community stakeholders to foster ownership effectively; (c) Execute the co-development process, ensuring the participation of women, men, and youth and other marginalised groups; and (d) Set up a monitoring, evaluation, and learning framework from the start that assesses progress towards developing governance guidelines, ensuring timely adjustments can be made when deficiencies are identified, ensuring documentation of the processes in each cluster. Leveraging on the foundation of good governance principles developed in target communities the process of co-developing governance guidelines should aim to produce functional governance mechanisms that are embedded in community structures. This approach will foster genuine collaboration encouraging communities to actively participate in conservation efforts, hence addressing poaching and the illegal wildlife trade. **Co-identification of alternative livelihood interventions** 2. Alongside the co-development of the governance guidelines in the targeted clusters, the project partners should facilitate a process of co-identification of alternative livelihood interventions. Leadership from the SANParks SET Unit should leverage these developments to ensure continuity beyond the project lifespan. 3. For the twelve (12) already identified livelihood interventions, the project must facilitate and develop viable social enterprise business plans focused on increasing benefits for women, men, and youth and aligning with conservation goals. The project should also capacitate the enterprise managers to keep records to measure viability and other benefits.

Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Community-owned governance guidelines are a missing output on which Outcome 3 hinges. As illustrated in the CEO endorsement, the resultant outcome is critical for GEF's incremental value.
Priority Level:	High
Type	Operational
Responsibility:	PPF, SANParks, DFFE,
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Within three months

Cross-reference(s) to the rationale and supporting discussions:
Section: IV (C), paras 60-61, 67 Table 9, and Annex XV

Recommendation # 2:	**Establish a robust M&E framework and plan to strengthen performance tracking, accountability, reporting, and adaptability.** Develop and implement a comprehensive M&E framework and plan, including the following elements: 1. Provide M&E resources (Recruit an Expert/consultant or M&E Officer) to design and oversee the M&E framework development and implementation, ensuring systematic data collection, analysis, and reporting, including detailed component-level reporting. 2. Revise the existing indicators to be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART), ensuring they align directly with the project's outcomes and end-of-project targets. Finalize the ongoing KAP survey and conduct a second one by the last quarter of the project timeline. 3. Update capacity scorecards for Outcomes 1 and 2 within three months after the Mid-Term Review (MTR) and again in the last quarter of the project's lifespan to inform the final evaluation. 4. Embed gender-disaggregated data collection and analysis into the M&E framework to track gender equity and other social inclusion metrics (This will also address social safeguards risks). 5. Establish regular review processes to assess project progress, address gaps, and make data-driven adjustments, fostering flexibility and responsiveness to evolving project needs. 6. Ensure mainstreaming of human rights and gender in implementation, performance tracking, and reporting. 7. Knowledge Management and Learning Mechanisms: Implement a structured feedback loop to document lessons learned and integrate findings into ongoing project activities, supporting continuous improvement and adaptive management.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Lack of systematic measurement of set indicators, absence of performance tracking, limited insights, accountability, and adaptability, undermining continuous learning and limiting adaptive management.
Priority Level:	High
Type	Strategic
Responsibility:	DFFE
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Within 6 months

Cross-reference(s) to the rationale and supporting discussions:
Section IV (F), paras 82-83, and Annex XIII

Recommendation #3:	**Formulate the recommended strategies and action plans as per ProDoc and implement them.** A. **Communication Strategy and Action Plan**

	Formulate a holistic communication strategy and action plan for the whole project with clear roles and responsibilities for the implementing partners. Draw an action plan with agreed-on timelines to ensure the project's outputs and outcomes are shared nationally, regionally, and globally. This can be done through the services of a consultant. B. **Exit and sustainability strategy** A structured exit plan will ensure a smooth transition of funding responsibilities, enabling institutions to maintain and build on the project's successes. The exit strategy will secure the continuity of key initiatives, reinforce ownership, and establish frameworks for sustained resource mobilization and capacity-building. The strategy must be developed with inputs from all key stakeholders implementing activities. The two technology systems, the EMs program, and community empowerment initiatives are among the issues to sustain. This can be led by the PMU. **C. Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy** In line with the Pro-Doc, secure a consultant's services to develop a Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy and plan. The Project Team to ensure that this is actioned and tracked in the remaining project timeline. D. **Environmental and Social Safeguards Strategy**
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation	The project lacks all the mentioned strategies = a holistic communication strategy, a comprehensive exit strategy, undermining the long-term sustainability of its key initiatives, particularly in community engagement, institutional strengthening, and the e-permitting system, a gender and social inclusion strategy, and an environment and social safeguard strategy Without these strategies, there is no organized, systemic implementation of these issues in the project. The IWT project remains invisible to many, cannot prove its gender and social inclusion, and risks losing momentum and impact after completion. Implementing these strategies will add value to the project and enhance its outputs and outcomes.
Priority Level:	High
Type	Strategic
Responsibility:	DFFE, SANBI, SANParks, PPF UNEP
Proposed implementation time-frame:	For immediate implementation

Cross-reference(s) to the rationale and supporting discussions:

- Section: IV (F), paras 86-90;
- Section IV (G), para 107, 108-109, 111

ANNEX I. RESPONSE TO STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

Page Ref	Stakeholder comment	Reviewer Response
All	Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT): Abbreviation Hopefully, we stick to this abbreviation instead of IWLT. ProDoc speaks of IWT	Noted and addressed corrected the abbreviation throughout the document
All	Maybe we remove WCSA and stick to the SAWC as captured in the ProDoc: Pg 7	Noted and addressed
Pg 10	The project effective date, as per the Project Cooperation Agreement (PCA), is the date that UNEP released the funds. This is November 2019.	The expected start was 26 February 2019. However, the commencement date is when South Africa received funds from UNEP—paragraph 1 states precisely that: November 2019.
Para 7	The reviewer's observation on Paragraph 7: I suggest linking it to an example. This will hopefully show that the observation is not only linked to the late transfer of funds but mainly due to aligning outputs with intended outcomes. (I see Paragraph 70 mentions the long time it took for funds to be transferred to DFFE by the National Treasury).	Paragraph 7 is an executive summary. Please note that the report provides elaboration in Paragraphs 61 to 64 and 68.
Para 8	The cohesive social framework is welcomed. Such a framework can be compiled to assist with future reporting. I am not sure if the reviewer was able to go through the KNP Greater Kruger Strategic Development Plan, which guides how the livelihood projects were chosen. Where appropriate in this report, it would be important to contextualise that GEF6 Component 3 project is enhancing and complementary to the nationally adopted SANParks KNP Greater Kruger Strategic Development Plan (https://www.greaterkrugerlandscape.co.za/pages/documents-data , as an existing landscape level framework which informed and advised GEF6 livelihoods projects' identification, 'selection' and support approach.	The project evaluates what was approved according to the project document. Any changes to the original document require formal revisions approved by UNEP and GEF. The references made in interviews and in the minutes of the selection criteria used are limited in applying the bottom up approach articulated in the Pro-Doc and the indicators and targets. The reviewer took note of the selection Committee selection of projects, of the notification of the selected projects to the community leadership, and the preference of the particular needed support by the beneficiaries. The reviewer noted that there is no community engagement to assess the aspirations of the existing, selected livelihoods interventions, marrying them with the project objective of strengthening issues such as – the creation of job opportunities, sustenance of community livelihoods, and widening the benefits to involve the community and remove them from poaching. For example, in the southern part of KNP, the Timele cleaning greening project - the IWT project invested in assorted Personal Protective Equipment and plans to purchase a glass crusher. In interacting with the leadership of this women's group, while they aspire to operate a profitable business, it's clear that their volumes of waste are too low to make any meaningful business

Page Ref	Stakeholder comment	Reviewer Response
		venture. The IWT indicated that they supported the project beneficiaries' preference. However, it is noted that the interviews and available documents do not elaborate on the project's participatory engagement process to purchase PPEs and glass crusher. The IWT could have identified and invested in addressing the major greening project challenge. Within a short time of interaction, the Reviewer managed to identify the major business challenge for this project which is the low volumes of waste to make business profitable. In addition, they are currently only 25 people (19 female and 6 males) involved in this project. Supposedly, if the project had looked at facilitating (investing in) increasing waste volumes, more people (especially youths) could have been involved through picking and supplying waste, and the business would have increased its chances of being profitable, with a high probability of sustenance and contributing to alternative livelihood sources for a greater number of people in this locality, thus reducing poaching. Similar conclusions could be drawn from most of the projects visited by the Reviewer, who traced this challenge to the limited bottom-up approach to planning the selected projects' investments.
	The reviewer observation on adaptative management we will welcome it.	Noted
Para 14	We welcome the observation from reviewer on Paragraph 14.	Noted
Para 26	Paragraph 26 is linked to the project effective date as per PCA.	Noted that the [project commenced in November 2019, and the project Partners received the funds much later.
Para 29 (iii)	Paragraph 29 (iii), The initial explanation and understanding was that the GEF 6 project will support existing projects and not develop new ones. Paragraph 299 of ProDoc does refer to GEF 6 supporting existing projects/programmes	Agreed that the GEF 6 would support existing projects, however the support was to further the IWT objectives. In supporting the existing livelihood interventions, the objective should be to further the objectives of IWT, which is to provide sustainable alternative livelihood sources to deter the participation of the KNP people in illegal wildlife trade. See above the comments and example given on why the Reviewer argues that the selected projects are not bottom up as the participatory processes were not identified in the data and observations.
Para 33	Paragraph 33 II, maybe the reviewer can indicate which areas in the periphery of the park. How these were also linked to the GEF 6 project. Because mostly these are the livelihood projects that were visited.	Noted and corrected to “target areas.”
Para 68	On Paragraph 68, hopefully reviewer can consider a statement on how the projects were identified? Seeing that the GEF 6 project is meant to assist existing projects.	GEF 6 project is not meant to “assist existing projects”. This interpretation is not what the Reviewer gets from the approved Project Document. GEF 6 project is to leverage existing livelihoods projects to “further its objective of reducing illegal wildlife trade through facilitating

Page Ref	Stakeholder comment	Reviewer Response
		alternative livelihoods projects to discourage the participation in illegal wildlife by the those living in the periphery of the Kruger National Park" See comments above on this.
Para 73	Paragraph 73. PPF has requested other options to add to their cofinance. I don't think the reviewer needs to capture what is requested by PPF.	Not applicable for the Review as this is after the Review issue
Para 80 (II)	This statement is misleading as it implies PPF did not ''apply its full expertise or capacity''; As per the ProDoc and DFFE endorsement, it was the transparent intention from the start (project design) to appoint SAWC as implementation partner as they are based in the landscape with extensive engagement and capacitation experience; staff turnover - for an extended period, PPF Community Development dept. was under-capacitated due to staff turnover.	Addressed and edited as follows: Assigning roles to institutions with specific local expertise can improve project efficiency. For instance, directly assigning Output 3.2 to SANParks, with its experience in the KNP region, could have strengthened community outcomes and minimized administrative layers. Subcontracting, especially in Component 3, has increased project costs and limited efficiency. Although PPF excels in community-based governance, its engagement strengths were underused. Key community-related outputs were outsourced to Consultancies. Greater direct PPF involvement could have enhanced the integration of conservation and community development efforts.
	The reviewer observation under paragraph 99 is noted. Perhaps consider rephrasing as this implies that no partner collaboration took place, however there was an initial service provider appointed (Sustento) in collaboration with partners and an inception report + draft 1st deliverable provided which partners approved of; the subsequent draft framework for the governance guidelines (annexed to the terms of reference) was co-developed by SANParks, PPF and SAWC with inputs from WWF Khetha at various occasions	Agreed, these are all Component 3 Partners. The Reviewer considered the whole project approach, which limited participation by other partners from Components 1 and 2 in the review of Component 3's activities.
92	Under paragraph 92, SANParks is highlighting the point that the GEF 6 project funds are used to strengthen the current existing EM programme. The salaries of the EM are paid through cofinance by SANParks.	Noted and edited to read " Currently the EMs salaries are supported by GEF 6 co-financed by SANParks. While SANParks is likely to continue supporting the livelihoods project through its Socio-Economic Transformation (SET) Unit, fully integrating the EMs into SANParks might be a challenge as SANParks is mandated to maintain the inside of the protected area. On the other hand, the Department of Agriculture is mandated to manage the protected areas boundaries (fence) from the outside and thus the EMs are most likely to be their responsibility.

ANNEX II. PEOPLE CONSULTED DURING THE REVIEW

Organisation	Name	Position	Role in the project	Gender
Key Informant Interviews				
UNEP	Jane Nimpamya	GEF Task Manager/Programme Management Officer	Task Manager	Female
DFFE	Ms Mercedes Marele	PMU	Project Manager	Female
DFFE	Sipho Mabunda	PMU	Project Assistant	Male
DFFE	Mpho Tjiane	Deputy Director: CITES Policy Development and Implementation	Component 2 Lead	Male
DFFE	Phindile Langazane	Biodiversity Officer Grade A	Component 2 Admin	Female
SANBI	Theressa Frantz	Head of Branch: Biodiversity Science & Policy Advice	PSC Member	Female
SANBI	Matthew Child	Deputy Director: Biodiversity Economy Projects	Component 1 Lead	Male
PPF	Nita Viljoen	Community Development Administrator	Component 3 lead	Female
PPF	Nomfundo Phewa	Community Development Coordinator	Component 3	Female
BIOVISTA	Jenny Newenham	Conservation Consultant	Livelihoods Support - PPF	Female
WWF-Khetha	Lindie Botha	Project Manager	Partner - Component 3	Female
SAWC	Sboniso Phakathi	Training Coordinator	Training Contractor -PPF	Male
GEF 6 - SANParks	Lazaro Sibiya	EMs Coordinator	Coordinator	Male
Consultative Workshop on Component 3 on 27/09/2024				
DFFE	Ms Mercedes Marele	PMU	Project Manager	Female
PPF	Nita Viljoen	Community Development Administrator	Component 3 lead	Female
DFFE	Sipho Mabunda	PMU	Project Assistant	Male
DFFE	Renira Boodhraj	Control Environmental Officer: International Governance	National GEF Office Desk	Female
SAWC	Sboniso Phakathi	Training Coordinator	PPF Contractor for Training	Male
BIOVISTA	Jenny Newenham	Conservation Consultant	Livelihoods Support -PPF	Female
Field Mission Key Informant Interviews				
KNP/SANParks	Solly Themba	Socio-Economic Transformation Lead	Support in community engagements	Male
KNP/SANParks	Kally Ubisi	Field Rangers	Law enforcement support	Male
BIOVISTA	Jenny Newenham	Conservation Consultant	Livelihoods Support - PPF	Female
GEF 6 - SANParks	Lazaro Sibiya	EMs Coordinator	Coordinator	Male

Organisation	Name	Position	Role in the project	Gender
GEF 6 - SANParks	Azwifaneli Phandachadzi	EMs Supervisor	Northern Cluster Supervisor	Male
Field Mission Focus Group Discussions				
GEF 6 - SANParks	Nkateko Master Nghonyama	Northern Cluster EM	EM Pafuri	Male
	Hardlife Munyai	Northern Cluster EM	EM Pafuri	Male
	Rodney Nemkhanyani		EM Pafuri	Male
	Azwitakadzi Tshihume		EM Pafuri	Female
	Takalani Bernard Tshwandula		EM Pafuri	Female
	Vincent Mudzanani		EM Makuya	Male
	Pfareio Mutele		EM Makuya	Male
	Portia Rotakala Ngilasi		EM Makuya	Female
	Takalani Mahlangu		EM Makuya	Female
	Nkosimuzi Zikwa	Southern Cluster EM	EM	Male
	Richard Mbuyane		EM	Male
	Nonkululeko Mbuyane		EM	Female
	Nomunole Mhlanga		EM	Female
	Bethuel Maseko		EM	Male
	Samkelisiwe Magagula	GEF 6 EMs Programme	Southern Cluster Supervisor	Female
	Martin Nkosi	Central Cluster EM	EM	Male
	Goodman Shabalala		EM	Male
	Omphrey Mgwenya		EM	Male
	Donald Ngomanye		EM	Male
	Jenny Nkuna		EM	Female
	Surprice Mdubana		EM	Female
	Robert Ndlovu		EM	Male
Field Mission Livelihood Interventions Interviews and Observations				
Makuleke Contractual Park	Hatlane Mavis	Chair - Makuleke Community Property Association (CPA)	Northern Cluster Livelihood Intervention	Female
	Aubrey Makuleke	Coordinator - CPA		Male
Nthakeni Makuya Conservation Reserve	Kobus Venter	Owner of Nthakeni Bush and River Camp		Male
Mbende Mutale Women's Agricultural Group	Johanna Asilanu Siphuga	Chair		Female
	Azwimmbavhi Ella Xivambu	Secretary		Female
Timele Greening	Thulisile Mohale	Chair of Timele Greening	Southern Cluster Livelihood Intervention	Female
	Hlengiwe Mthembu	Secretary of Timele Greening		Female
Swikoxeni Waste Management	Bethuel Mashele	Managing Director	Central Cluster Livelihood Intervention	Male

ANNEX III. REVIEW ITINERARY

Milestone	Tentative Dates
1. Inception Draft Report	13 August
2. Inception Final Report	16 September
3. **Review mission - Data collection and analysis**	
a. Desk review and literature review	14 August to 30 October
b. interviews – Virtually	23 August - 16 September
c. Field mission to project sites in South Africa	26 Sept to 4 October
4. Analysis and report writing	4 October to 10 November
5. Preliminary findings – PowerPoint presentation on findings and recommendation	12 November
6. Draft Report submission to Task Manager	12 November
7. Draft Report shared with the wider group of stakeholders	
8. Final Main Review Report	15 December
9. Final Main Review Report shared with all respondents	15 December

MTR Field Mission – 26/09 – 04/10 2024		
DAY	**ACTIVITY**	**NOTES**
Day 1 26/09	Travel Day – arrival Arrive Hoedspruit	Travel
Day 2 27/09	Interview with SAWC Full-day consultative workshop Component 3 partners feedback & reflection	DFEE, PPF - SAWC, BIOVISTA, SANParks
Day 3 28/09	Travel day to the North	Travel
Day 4 29/09	- Interviews with Makuleke Community Property Association Leaders and at least 2 livelihood projects (interviewed Aubrey Maluleke) - Makuleke project site visit	Makuleke CPA members
Day 5 30/09	- Focus group discussion with EMs Northern Cluster - Interview with the Northern Cluster Supervisor – Fanie Phandavhudzi - Bende Mutale Project Visit – interviews - Ntakeni project interview	Northern cluster Pafuri gate and Northern Cluster Livelihoods project visit
Day 6 1/10	- Travel day - Drive to Skukuza	Traveling
Day 7 2/10	- Focus Group discussion with EMs Southern Cluster - Interview Samkelisiwe – South Cluster Supervisor - Timele waste management project visit and interviews	Southern Cluster
Day 8 3/10	- Focus group discussions with EMs in Central Cluster - Swikoxeni waste management project - Interviews with SANParks Field Ranger (Skukuza)	Central cluster
Day 9 4/10	Travel day - Departure (Skukuza Airport)	Travel Back to Pretoria

ANNEX IV. SUMMARY OF CO-FINANCE INFORMATION AND EXPENDITURE

Table A - Project Funding Sources

Project Funding source All figures as USD	Planned funding	% of planned funding	Secured funding	% of secured funding
Cash				
Funds from the Environment Fund	4 886 009	100%	3 627 614	74%
Funds from the Regular Budget				
Extra-budgetary funding (listed per donor):				
Sub-total: Cash contributions	**4 886 009**	**100%**	**3 627 614**	**74%**
In-kind				
Environment Fund staff-post costs				
Regular Budget staff-post costs				
Extra-budgetary funding for staff-posts (listed per donor)				
Sub-total: In-kind contributions				
Co-financing*				
Co-financing cash contribution	3 440 000	100%	582 642	15%
Co-financing in-kind contribution	3 980 000	100%	4 855 461	141%
Sub-total: Co-financing contributions	**7 420 000**		**5 438 103**	**73%**
Total	**12 306 009**		**9 065 717**	**74%**

*Funding provided by a donor to a partner, which is not deposited into UNEP accounts, but is utilized by a UNEP partner or collaborating centre to achieve the results in a UNEP-approved project.

Table B- Expenditure by Outcome/Output

Component/sub-component/output All figures as USD	Estimated cost at design	Actual Cost/ expenditure	Usage
Component 1 / Outcome 1	1,377,000	484,955	35%
Component 2 / Outcome 2	1, 442,000	468,048	32%
Component 3 / Outcome 3	1,857,000	778,480	42%
Project Management Unit	210,009	381,100	181%
Total	**4,886,009**	**2,112,583**	**43%**

ANNEX V. COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH TOOLS

The tool used for this MTR is a PowerPoint presentation. The presentation outline is below:

- Focus and purpose of the MTR
- MTR Implementation Timeline & Methodology
- Project overview
- Project design and components
- What is working well?
- Findings
- Lessons learnt
- Recommendations

ANNEX VI. LIST OF DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

Project Planning and Reporting Documents

1. UNEP ProDoc
2. Full GEF Approved CEO Endorsement Request package,
3. Project Cooperation Agreement
4. Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) – June 2020 to June 2024
5. Half-yearly progress reports from Feb 2019 to June 2024
6. Annual Workplans with budget - 2019 to 2024
7. All annual financial reports – 2020 - 2023
8. All quarterly expenditure reports
9. Annual Audit Reports – 2019 to 2022
10. Partners Co-Finance Reports

Project Management

11. Memorandum of Agreements
12. PSC minutes
13. PMT minutes
14. Workshop reports

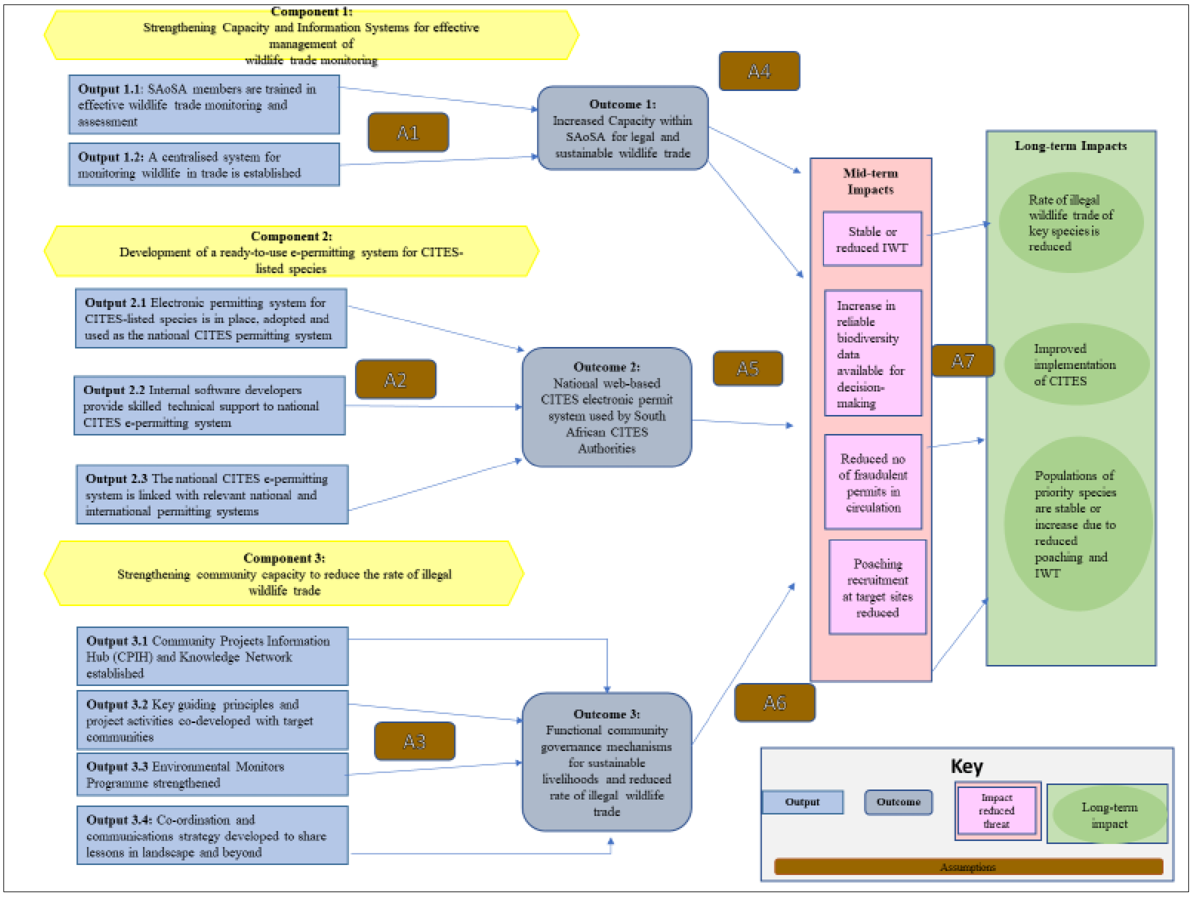
Reference documents

15. National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
16. Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act 10 of 2004
17. National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act 57 of 2003
18. National Integrated Strategy to Combat Wildlife Traffic – May 2023
19. Namibia's National Policy on Community-Based Natural Resource Management (2013)
20. SADC Protocol on Wildlife Conservation and Law Enforcement (1999)
21. Community-Based Natural Resource Management Policy in Botswana

22. **Other Project Report**

- Background; Context - GEF6 Inception Meeting Handouts
- Communications Draft Framework
- Draft Communications Action Plan - 2023
- Communication Presentation by WWF
- Draft Coordination and Communication Strategy_24062021
- Cluster-level draft plans
- Training Plan_1st Iteration August 2021 & 2nd Iteration April 2022
- Supplementary documents and tools
- Livelihoods Projects Support Inception Report and Work plan
- Training Reports November 2021 & December 2022
- Training Progress Disaggregation_20.02.2023
- Action Reports_#1 & #2 Project Status Update 2023 SAWC
- Product Leading Heart Student Guide_FINAL
- Product Governing Heart_1_Student Guide_FINAL
- Partners Coordination Meetings and Workshops Reports
- Inception meeting handouts
- Situational Analysis Report draft Iteration# 2_2022 SAWC and 2024
- The Technical Development of Community Best Practice Governance Guidelines Focusing on Strengthening Institutions, Information Management, and Monitoring To Reduce The Rate Of Illegal Wildlife Trade Linked to the GE6 Programme in South
- Terms of References for Development of Community Best Practice Governance Guidelines
- Integrated workplan (master)
- Terms of References project structures: Greater Kruger Steering Committee (GKSC) and Cluster Task Teams TORs
- Minutes of meetings and several emails

ANNEX VII. ORIGINAL THEORY OF CHANGE



ANNEX VIII. BRIEF CV OF THE REVIEWER

Name: Doreen Mnyulwa

Profession	Programme Management and Monitoring & Evaluation
Nationality	Zimbabwean
Country experience	Extensive experience across Africa, including Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Lesotho, Uganda, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe,
Education	MSc in Agriculture from the Life Science University of Ukraine

Short biography

Doreen Mnyulwa is a seasoned development expert with over 30 years of experience, including 18 years as an international consultant specializing in project design, management, and evaluation. Her extensive career spans critical areas such as biodiversity conservation, agriculture, food security and livelihoods, climate change adaptation, Access and Benefit Sharing, seed technology and conservation, and protected areas management. Throughout her career, Ms. Mnyulwa has demonstrated exceptional expertise in project cycle management, successfully designing, implementing, and evaluating large-scale, multi-stakeholder programs across Africa. She has raised significant funds for development projects and consistently delivered results through a results-based monitoring and evaluation (M&E) approach. Ms. Mnyulwa has a strong command of M&E methodologies, including logical framework planning, Theory of Change (ToC), and M&E matrix development, ensuring that projects align with strategic goals and support evidence-based decision-making. In addition to her technical skills, Ms. Mnyulwa has played a pivotal role in conducting midterm and final evaluations for donor-funded initiatives, enabling adaptive management and enhancing the impact of development interventions. Her systems-thinking approach, combined with her ability to engage diverse stakeholders, has contributed to the success of various regional initiatives, particularly in biodiversity, science and technology innovation, and sustainable development. Ms. Mnyulwa's analytical mindset and multi-sectoral expertise make her a sought-after consultant, delivering impactful solutions that address the complex challenges faced by communities and ecosystems across Africa.

Key specialties and capabilities cover:

- Programme management, including leading multi-country, multi-stakeholder projects.
- Development of M&E frameworks and systems for large-scale programs.
- Conducting independent evaluations using qualitative and quantitative methodologies.
- Strategic planning, including the integration of M&E into program designs.
- Capacity building for stakeholders in M&E techniques and project management.

Independent reviews/evaluations (selected assignments):

- Midterm Reviewer (2019): UN Environment/GEF Project for Sustainable Capacity Building for Effective Participation in the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH III), which involved reviewing the project's progress, assessing design and implementation efficiency, and providing strategic recommendations for future phases.
- Review and Facilitation (2019): UN Environment LDC/NAP project, reviewing National Adaptation Plans of Least Developed Countries in Africa.
- Monitoring and Evaluation Consultant (2018): UNICEF project evaluation on South Africa Food Security and Nutrition policies.
- Monitoring and Evaluation Consultant (2018): Evaluated the Southern African Community Seeds Project for the Community Development Trust of Zimbabwe.

ANNEX IX. MID-TERM REVIEW TORS

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Mid-Term Review of the UNEP project

"Strengthening Institutions, Information Management and Monitoring to reduce the rate of Illegal Wildlife Trade in South Africa" and "GEF ID: 9525"

Section 1: PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

1. Project General Information

Table 1. Project Summary

UNEP PIMS/SMA[11] ID:	GFL-Ecosystems Division – M99-32GFL-11207-14AC0003-SB-011413		
Donor ID:	GEF ID 9525		
executing Partners:	Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Environment (DFFE) South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) Peace Parks Foundation (PPF) South African National Parks (SANParks)		
SDG(s) and indicator(s):	Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss. 15.5 Take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species. 15.7 Take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products.		
Sub-Programme:	Environmental Governance	**Expected Accomplishment(s):**	2030 outcome: Recovery of nature occurs and is contributing positively to ecosystem stability and human well-being. 2C: Nature conservation and restoration are enhanced. 2.1 Collective action by United Nations system entities. Addresses biodiversity loss and promotes conservation and restoration. 2.11 Illegal and unsustainable use of biodiversity decreases. 2.9 Institutional capacity to adopt and act on national and international commitments is enhanced and accountability frameworks are strengthened
UNEP approval date:	11th December 2019	**Programme of Work Output(s):**	Output 2.5. Relevant MDAs, LGAs and communities have the knowledge and skills to co-create and implement policies, plans and programmes to ensure the

[11] Acronym for ID assigned by the Integrated Planning, Monitoring and Reporting (IPMR) system.

			sustainable management and conservation of South Africa's natural resources # of people directly benefitting from initiatives to protect nature and promote sustainable use of resources disaggregated by Gender IFAD.	
Expected start date:	3 Nov 2019	**Actual start date:**	3 Nov 2019	
Planned operational completion date:	31-Dec-25	**Actual operational completion date:**	31-Dec-25	
Planned total project budget at approval (show breakdown of individual sources/grants):	US$12,306,009	**Actual total expenditures reported as of 31 December 2023:**		
Expected co-financing:	US$ 7,420,000	**Secured co-financing**[12]:	USD 7420000	
First disbursement:	US$ 800,000	**Planned date of financial closure:**	31 December 2025	
No. of project revisions:	1	**Date of last approved project revision:**	14 Feb 2024	
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	6	**Date of last/next Steering Committee meeting:**	Last:	Next:
Mid-term Review *(planned date)*[13]:	30 June 2024	**Mid-term Review (actual date):**	June 2024	
Terminal Evaluation/Review *(planned date):*	30 June 2025	**Terminal Evaluation/Review (actual date):**	*Not applicable*	
Coverage - Country(ies):	South Africa	**Coverage - Region(s):**	Africa	
Dates of previous project phases:	n/a	**Status of future project phases:**	n/a	

2. Project Rationale

The main objective of the project is to fight against illegal wildlife trade through institutional strengthening, improved information management and monitoring (and collaboration at an international level), thereby influencing the supply system at local (protected area), national (South Africa) and regional levels.

Project Description.

Project summary

This Project aims to strengthen institutions and targeted communities to improve decision-making and reduce the rate of illegal wildlife trade in South Africa. It will specifically carry out activities to improve monitoring and management of iconic CITES-listed species threatened by illegal and unsustainable levels of international trade, and develop appropriate community governance mechanisms and management tools that will ultimately lead to improved wildlife monitoring and a reduction in illegal wildlife trade from South Africa.

[12] State whether co-financing amounts are cash or in-kind.

[13] UNEP policies require projects with planned implementation periods of 4 or more years to have a mid-point assessment of performance. For projects under 4 years, this should be marked as N/A.

Project activities have been designed to address three inter-related Components:

Component 1: Strengthening capacity and information systems for effective management of wildlife trade monitoring. The entity responsible for biodiversity monitoring in South Africa is the South African National Biodiversity Institute. Component 1 aims to develop a centralised system for improved wildlife trade monitoring through development of training modules and providing skills training to Scientific Authority of South Africa on effective wildlife trade monitoring and assessment, as well as through the creation of a national wildlife monitoring system.

Component 2: Development of a ready-to-use electronic permitting system for CITES-listed species. The centralised national system developed under Component 1 will integrate with the national e-permitting system to be developed under Component 2, which will provide an electronic system for CITES permitting that will ultimately communicate with other CITES e-permitting systems, including that already created by UNEP-WCMC. The Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) is the designated CITES Management Authority in South Africa. It is responsible for implementation of CITES in South Africa and adherence to its obligations under the Convention. In this regard, ensuring that international wildlife trade is legal, sustainable and verifiable is a fundamental consideration for the DEA.

Component 3: Strengthening community capacity to reduce the rate of illegal wildlife trade. This Component will bring communities living adjacent to the western boundary of Kruger National Park into the integrated process in South Africa to address illegal wildlife trade. Efforts under the Project will focus on community-level social development through implementation of novel community governance guidelines specifically targeting community-based natural resource management. A community-led Environmental Monitors Programme will be designed and put into action to increase security of rural communities and target species (rhino, elephant, big cats), thereby reducing the rate of illegal activities in the adjoining KNP.

1.1. The global environmental and/or adaptation problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed.

The international illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products has reached crisis proportions and is now ranked the fourth largest global illegal activity. It is a threat to the existence of iconic species, undermines the rule of law, threatens local community development and livelihoods and local and national revenue streams, and compromises local and global security .Species with a high market value, such as rhinoceros (Ceratotherium simum, Diceros bicornis, Rhinoceros unicornis, Dicerorhinus sumatrensis, Rhinoceros sondaicus), tiger (Panthera tigris), elephant (Loxodonta africana, Elephas maximus) and pangolin (Manis javanica, Manis pentadactyla), amongst others, are under increasing threat of extinction caused by the recent escalation in poaching. Experts predict that a tipping point is imminent for African rhinoceros populations, with deaths from poaching exceeding births, leading to a rapid decline in numbers.

According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and INTERPOL, combined estimates place the monetary value of environmental crime at between US$70 and US$213 billion each year. Although the value of illegal trade remains uncertain, it has variously been estimated at between USD 5 – 20 billion per annum. These estimates suggest that wildlife crime is the fourth most lucrative type of transnational crime after illegal narcotics, human trafficking and armaments. While threatening the future existence of wildlife species, this illicit trade devastates vulnerable communities, drives corruption and undermines efforts to reduce poverty. International criminal syndicates target poor communities living within and around conservation areas, offering them large sums of money to kill endangered species.

South Africa is bearing the brunt of wildlife crime. The number of rhino killed has escalated from an average of 13 in 2007 to 668 in 2012, 1004 in 2013 and 1215 in 2014. Illegal wildlife trade has also decimated other high value species such as cycads (>90% decline over 20 years) and abalone, and there is increasing illegal trade in a range of other species. Illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife parts is an escalating driver of biodiversity loss. Unprecedented biological or commercial extinction of many life forms is now a critical reality throughout the world, jeopardizing the very foundations of biodiversity, including the future well-being of humans and requiring unprecedented political will, social sacrifice and law enforcement action to stem further losses. Progressively, through the advent of the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 1975, together with a host of national legislative and regulatory instruments and mechanisms, the global community has moved to address the threat to thousands of species of wildlife posed by unfettered trade.

The problem is particularly acute in Africa, where charismatic species – the African elephant, white and black rhinos, as well as dozens of other species such as pangolins, succulents and cycads – are being targeted to the brink of extinction. Last year over 25,000 elephants were slaughtered for their ivory, which can fetch up to $40,000 per tusk. The rhino poaching crisis is similarly escalating: in 2008, 13 rhinos were poached in South Africa in the entire year. In 2014, three were poached daily.

As poaching has become industrial in scale, with criminal organizations coalescing around the fact that wildlife is unguarded, poorly valued and its ownership remains unclear, responses to poaching remain fragmented with a focus on piloting new approaches. Poaching is facilitated by trafficking routes that are not guarded and over which regulatory authorities and private sector transportation entities have no incentives, will or tools to monitor for wildlife contraband. In addition, involvement of sophisticated criminal syndicates means that illicit wildlife trade cannot be dealt with on a species by species basis. Trade in items such as ivory or rhino horn may benefit from existing illicit conduits associated with illegal timber. Alternatively, a focus on one species or one area may result in a shift to other species (e.g. for abalone and crayfish) or new areas.

The major threats currently facing the large game species include poaching for the illegal wildlife trade, habitat fragmentation, habitat degradation, human-wildlife conflict, and unsustainable use of resources, unregulated development, and the impacts of climate change. This project will address illegal wildlife trade as the key and most immediate threat as elaborated below.

South Africa, which contains 82% of Africa's rhinoceros and has a strong conservation track record, has emerged as the centre of rhinoceros killing, in absolute terms. Between 1990 and 2005, rhinoceros poaching losses in South Africa averaged 14 animals each year but poaching dramatically increased in 2008 and has been exponentially increasing ever since, reaching a total of 1,215 in 2014 . The South African poaching trend has to some extent been replicated in Kenya, which suffered a spike in poaching in 2013 and where poaching in relative terms is now slightly higher than South Africa. Poaching in Zimbabwe peaked in 2008 but, in contrast to Kenya and South Africa, has been declining. It remains low in Namibia but there is a risk it could increase there, with some reports indicating that this is already occurring.

As poaching escalates at a continental level, a tipping point is imminent, which will result in the African rhinoceros population as a whole starting to decline. Worst-case scenario predictions suggest that the tipping point, where numbers killed exceed the replacement rate from new births, could have been reached in 2014.

Aside from posing a severe threat to global biodiversity, the illegal wildlife trade disrupts local, national and international security. Owing to the high economic value of the trade, it is strongly linked to organized crime, violence, corruption and fraud; furthermore, it has been found to fund terrorist groups.

Finally, the poaching of charismatic species such as elephant and rhinoceros prevents sustainable rural development since it reduces the tourism potential of natural habitats. To date, interventions aimed at ending the poaching crisis have focused on protecting animals from extinction, protecting biodiversity, and sustaining rural economies and livelihoods. Though these efforts have proven effective in terms of increasing arrests and creating jobs in the tourism sector, they have not reduced the rising body count. International trade policy and enforcement experts from around the world agree that more resources are required to fully understand the dynamics of international trafficking syndicates and to deal with them effectively.

Barriers can be summarized under two categories (elaborated in section 3.2.2):

Inadequate Capacity to monitor legal and illegal wildlife trade effectively:

The key functions of the SAoSA are to monitor legal and illegal wildlife trade and carry out non-detriment findings (NDFs) for CITES Appendix II listed species based on a wide range of information sources that determine whether the combined impacts of legal and illegal trade will have a detrimental impact on wild populations.

Although SANBI is the national repository of biological data for all South Africa's wildlife species, it does not have a comprehensive database of scientific/biological information for every species. The 2016 Red List of Mammals of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland was produced by the EWT and SANBI, with collaboration from the universities of Cape Town and Pretoria's MammalMAP and IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC), provincial and national conservation agencies, museums and universities. Whilst species have been categorized according to the IUCN Red List, precise data sheets are lacking for a greater proportion of the species listed. Without such data, it is a difficult task for the SAoSA to make an NDF or determine with a high degree of certainty whether the level of trade (determined by the number of permits sought and issued) is sustainable. In addition, scientific oversight requires skilled capacity across the SAoSA, as well as access to a nationally-accessible database on key species in trade.

Some monitoring of wildlife (including plants) is carried out by provincial and park authorities, particularly for large mammal species. However, there is no coordinated monitoring, nor population counts for even the most high-profile species such as rhino, lion, leopard and elephant. As a result, every time an assessment is required, the SAoSA must compile data from individual and dispersed datasets, making it difficult, if not impossible, to detect the scale or impact of illegal trade, or to use the available information as part of the decision-making process for wildlife trade.

The current lack of capacity with the SAoSA to carry out its prescribed functions in terms of the NEM:BA and the text of the CITES Convention is a root cause of the illicit trade in less-newsworthy but equally important biodiversity in South Africa. The inability to determine whether trade is sustainable, or even legal, has caused CITES Parties to question South Africa's exports of fauna and flora, with trade sanctions being imposed in the past on certain species. There is therefore an urgent need to improve the capacity of SAoSA at local, provincial and national levels in monitoring and determining the sustainability of harvest for legal trade.

The current scenario in South Africa consists of an established Scientific Authority (15 members) with a cadre of wildlife scientists, some of whom are close to retirement. In terms of national law, once SAoSA members have served their 4-year terms of office, they need to be replaced (or re-appointed by the Minister). However, replacing members has proved problematic due to a number of reasons, i.e. vacant but frozen posts in the provinces, availability of young graduates, who have little or no experience of wildlife trade. This lack of experience and exposure to different wildlife management issues means that SAoSA members in the provinces are less able to provide independent advice and are potentially more easily exposed to pressure from unscrupulous operators.

For many years, efforts have been made to improve the functions carried out by Scientific Authorities around the globe, including workshops on NDFs and capacity of Scientific Authorities, where not only the biological characteristics of species but also the socioeconomic factors would have important influences on the likely sustainability of harvests. In numerous cases, neither detailed biological nor socio-economic information might be readily available, and so monitoring and adaptive management of the harvest must play a central role in ensuring non-detriment. However, even this type of adaptive management demands a skill that is often lacking, as is the case with some of the members of SAoSA.

Many Parties to CITES operate under various constraints, the most common one being a need for improved monitoring and data collection. To make an NDF, Scientific Authorities need to have good communication links with the Management Authority and key institutions in-country, better cooperation between important and exporter nations, and a framework for cooperation between Parties to facilitate technology and capacity transfer. In a large country such as South Africa, which is separated into 9 Provinces each with their own Conservation Authority responsible for its Provincial inputs to the SAoSA, distances, data collation, disparate analytical capabilities, and inter-Provincial communications are problematic.

In addition to the capacity issue, there is no centralised facility to store and share species and survey data, each province keeping its own monitoring and survey records. A centralised portal that would allow for access to key datasets is needed to improve scientific oversight of wildlife trade. An efficient system has been developed by the AfESG for gathering and sharing information from both government and private reserves and this GEF project aims to establish a similar system for all wildlife traded from South Africa. At present, when trade in any species is assessed, the data must first be collated and then analysed. However, the data in the provinces is not always available and delays ensue. This was the case with a query from the European Union regarding trade in the African lion, where delays in securing the data from small and private reserves in the provinces, which account for 25% of the lion population, resulted in a trade ban being imposed on South Africa.

Lack of an electronic permit system for CITES-listed species

The CITES Working Group on Electronic Systems and Information Technologies was created under CITES and, together with the CITES Secretariat and skilled partners, has developed an 'eCITES', with a set of standard tools and software solutions to improve e-permitting accessibility to all Parties. It is anticipated that eCITES will 'create opportunities for sustainable development of legal trade in wildlife… and income opportunities for local communities.'

The CITES Secretariat has also developed a CITES e-permitting toolkit. This toolkit is the culmination of discussions at CITES CoPs where Parties noted that development of an electronic licensing system would 'greatly assist in the handling and processing of CITES applications, the issuance of electronic permits and the collation and dissemination of CITES trade information.' The toolkit provides advice on the use of common information exchange formats and protocols for e-permitting systems, as well as how to develop and implement inter-operable information exchange pilot projects on e-permitting systems. The toolkit aims to assist Parties and organisations to ensure greater security and less fraud, and harmonise documentation of CITES species in international trade. South Africa's single-window national permitting system will benefit from oversight and technical inputs from CITES Secretariat and WCMC to ensure a streamlined transition from a paper to an electronic permitting system.

Wildlife trade is managed through a permit system. South Africa currently uses a complex, unaligned permitting system that is prone to human error, corruption and forgery. The system is manual, slow, and inefficient to the extent that the GoSA is not able to meet its Batho Pele – or Putting People First – principles.

South Africa has been the target for significant and high-profile illegal trade in wildlife. There is a need to develop a national e-permitting system that will contribute towards ensuring the sustainable use of species legally in trade and in preventing illegal trade by reducing the opportunities for fraud. South Africa's e-permitting system will have a regional (and possibly further afield) reach as other CITES Parties developing e-permitting systems will be able to learn from the technologies developed in South Africa. By creating a ready-to-use e-permitting system for CITES-listed species, the international community will be equipped with the right tools to monitor South Africa's international wildlife trade into their respective countries, verify permits and detect illegal trade as it happens. By developing a system that can be used by all, it will create incentives for other governments to use the system and have a combined approach to monitoring global trade.

Insufficient support at community-level in addressing illegal wildlife trade

It has been acknowledged that poverty heightens the vulnerability of communities to the recruitment, bribery or coercion of local officials, police, members of the military and wildlife rangers by poachers and criminal networks. New technologies are worsening the situation by allowing poachers to conduct more elaborate operations and better collude and partner with illegal traders and criminal organisations.

Rural communities in South Africa depend heavily on wild species for their livelihoods. Wildlife plays an important role in South Africa's economy and communities living near conservation areas must be connected and not see wildlife as a threat to their livelihoods. In general, people are more likely to protect what they benefit from when the benefits outweigh the costs. It is important to keep communications simple and creative when building capacity and empowering people. Wildlife conservation should not only be about wildlife, it must involve people too. Furthermore, human-wildlife conflict, which not only presents a significant threat to wildlife populations but hinders the socio-economic development of rural communities, can be costly and difficult to mitigate; therefore, community awareness and engagement through strategic community action plans that identify social development initiatives will be developed.

In community areas adjacent to the KNP, local municipalities perceive the proximity of the Park and ecotourism as major strengths and an opportunity to promote local economic development and provide employment opportunities. However, most adjacent local Municipalities are struggling with inadequate funding and capacity, and are unable to maintain infrastructure and provide critical services, such as water. The local Municipalities also show demonstrably poor integrated land-use planning and local economic development, as well as poor service delivery, a lack of monitoring and evaluation systems, unplanned rural/urban spread, an influx of immigrants, conflicting sector development pressures, and a lack of 'mature' socio-economic sectors that could sustain local economies.

None of the Municipal Local Economic Development Plans (LEDs) recognize the tourism sector as a major strength in the municipal IDPs, such that no tangible statistics exist regarding the actual - or multiplier - impact of KNP and adjacent conservation estates and Protected Area network. The GEF5 Protected Area project study concluded that this 'oversight' results in a poor understanding and appreciation of the direct and indirect (value-added and downstream) contributions that the KNP and adjacent conservation estates provide to the local and regional economy. Conflicting land uses and poorly-directed resources and services have ensued, with potentially negative impacts on KNP's operations and its future sustainable development objectives (SANParks, 2017). SANParks has noted that it is critical that all local partners work together towards agreed goals and that a well-prepared communications plan is developed to share lessons learned, not only within the communities but also among SANParks' and KNP's development partners.

Whilst preparing this GEF6 project, it was recognized that it is important that community considerations should be given an appropriate level of priority and be institutionalized, ie that community governance systems and interactions with government departments and conservation development partners should be strengthened. Weak governance systems and a lack of institutional and transactional capacity is a widespread problem in KNP's neighbouring communities. Lessons learned from previous efforts by SANParks indicate that it is necessary to build governance capacity upfront before establishing partnerships with a community. They noted further that all potential community beneficiation efforts ultimately depend on a solid governance foundation and the vision of seeing an inclusive wildlife economy is highly dependent on establishing this first step.

Additionally, the effectiveness of CBNRM is dependent on sound with-in community governance, within an enabling environment that protects women and marginalized groups against elite capture. However, most communities have low levels of associational capital and trust as a result of decades and even centuries of trauma, including slavery, colonialism, apartheid, displacement, and families broken up by modernization. Even if they tend to fall back on authoritative traditional leadership and on top-down religious organization, levels of confidence and trust in leadership is low, impeding collective action especially when it comes to economic activities and natural resource management. Consequently, the performance of mechanisms of collective community governance such as Communal Property Associations (CPAs) have been disappointing, and plagued by elite capture and under-performance.

In the absence of national guidelines for participatory governance by communities of the wildlife economy, articles of association for communities tend to entrench rather than avoid problems of governance and elite capture. South Africa's laudable goals of an inclusive wildlife economy are only likely to succeed if they are based on effective governance, including an enabling environment that supports effective governance including training, policy, procedural auditing and so on. The DEA's Wildlife Economy programmes provide further implementation support for diversified wildlife economy projects linked to the conservation network, but sustainability can only be achieved it this is embedded within a broader regional approach.

Appropriate land use development must be developed through Spatial Development Frameworks (SDFs) that are governed through SPLUMA to protect the conservation estate - whilst at the same time enhancing sustainable and responsible local and economic growth that supports KNP products and business development opportunities. This also requires active participation in the municipal Local Economic Development (LED) processes. It is essential for SANParks that adjacent land use development opportunities are compatible with the Park's Management Objectives. During the GEF6 project, SANParks will aim to carry out a comprehensive sector maturity assessment within the respective local municipalities in an attempt to leverage additional funding and economic development opportunities. This will also assist in determining the viability and feasibility of community beneficiation models and programmes.

Poaching is sometimes opportunistic, and as such is often made possible on the ground by the involvement of local or neighbouring community members tacitly supporting, cooperating with, providing services to, and participating in the activities of criminal poaching gangs. Figure 7 above shows where this has been the case with target communities at the Project sites on the western boundary of KNP. In many cases, this is a result of national policies that excluded local communities from deriving benefits from wildlife and their habitats, which created resentment and a sense of alienation. In addition, the combined effects of weak enforcement, continued rural poverty and lack of economic opportunity have provided conditions where poaching and illegal wildlife trade thrives. In many countries, South Africa included, to some extent, the revenues captured from tourism and hunting do not go back to the communities, thus creating disincentives for them to protect or manage wildlife sustainably.

However, communities have not been properly involved in planning or decision-making. Whilst projects were established with good intentions, few have been able to show significant improvements in either conservation or human well-being, or both. Most difficulties are due to fixed ideas about how conservation and community development issues should work together. Complicating the situation was the assumption that communities are a relatively unified and undiversified group. Most communities are made up of people who are different when it comes to class, wealth, education, political and traditional authorities and religion. Such differences deeply influence the degree and type of participation possible and therefore affect the success of projects.

Various models of counter-poaching (such as Ntomeni Ranger Services, the International Anti-Poaching Foundation (IAPF) and supported by the Black Rhino Management Biodiversity Plan and the draft White Rhino Biodiversity Management Plan) emphasise the importance of working with communities in rhino areas to gather information on an ongoing basis, to identify threats and to support anti-poaching activities. All models emphasise the need for good training and remuneration.

The GoSA is working to improve relationships with communities living on the periphery of KNP to reduce the risk of poaching. Greater inclusion and benefit sharing (jobs and opportunities) will have benefits for both rhinos and communities. Communities who live close to critical rhino areas are the first to know when a stranger is in their area, or when there is a sudden increase in wealth of community members. Having been excluded from parks, which they consider as areas exclusively for tourists, communities derive little if no benefit from national parks, and, accordingly, have little motivation to help stop the rhino poaching. If communities participated in conservation decision-making and received financial incentives, it is surmised that they would be more willing to cooperate with wildlife officials.

3. Project Results Framework

Appendix 4: Results Framework

Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term Targets	End of Project Targets	Means of Verification	Assumptions
Project Objective: To reduce the rate of Illegal Wildlife Trade through strengthened institutions, improved data collection, management and analysis, and targeted community participation.	Number of seizures of IWT of target species in calendar year[14]	Illegal trade in Rhino 2017 seizure data – *baseline =7 cases* Illegal trade in Elephant 2017 seizure data – *baseline data = 36 cases* Illegal trade in Lion 2017 seizure data – *baseline data = 4 cases* Illegal trade in Cheetah 2017 seizure data – *baseline data = 1 case* Illegal trade in Leopard 2017 seizure data – *baseline data = 2 cases*	Illegal trade in Rhino 2016 seizure data – *increase compared to baseline* Illegal trade in Elephant 2016 seizure data – *increase compared to baseline* Illegal trade in Lion 2016 seizure data – *increase compared to baseline* Illegal trade in Cheetah 2016 seizure data – *increase compared to baseline* Illegal trade in Leopard 2016 seizure data – *increase compared to baseline*	- Illegal trade in Rhino 2016 seizure data – *decrease compared to baseline* - Illegal trade in Elephant 2016 seizure data – *decrease compared to baseline* - Illegal trade in Lion 2016 seizure data – *decrease compared to baseline* - Illegal trade in Cheetah 2016 seizure data – *decrease compared to baseline* - Illegal trade in Leopard 2016 seizure data – *decrease compared to baseline*	• Seizure data collected by DEA • E-permitting system for CITES-listed species operational • Customs officials receive updates through mobile applications • SANParks rhino poaching data • National species monitoring system captures data from various sources	• IWT will become more evident through strengthening the knowledge base of legal wildlife trade • Communities at the target sites engage in and benefit from KNP's conservation efforts, and become active guardians of wildlife • Poachers and syndicates do not move into other areas e.g. Mozambique
	Number of fraudulent documents on	In 2017 (*number to be determined*) wildlife exports were	E-permitting system for CITES-listed	Zero as all export documentation is electronic		

[14] It is assumed as the capacity and knowledge to manage legal trade increases, the ability to identify illegal wildlife trade will improve in the short term. However, as criminals are arrested and prosecuted and the chances to be arrested increase, the 'desire' to engage in illegal activities should decrease. Therefore, by mid-term there should be an increase in seizure records, but the end-of-project target will be a decrease in the number of seizures.

Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term Targets	End of Project Targets	Means of Verification	Assumptions
	wildlife exports out of SA identified at international ports	identified having fraudulent documents – *baseline data will be collected in 2017*	species has been designed			
	Rhino poaching rates in KNP attenuate as a result of more positive community attitude to wildlife	Number of rhino poached in 2016 in KNP: *1054*	Number of rhino poached in June 2020 in KNP: *equal or less than 1054*	Number of rhino poached in December 2022 in KNP: *less than 1054*		
Component 1: Strengthening institutional capacity and information systems for effective management of wildlife trade monitoring						
Outcome 1: Increased capacity within SAoSA for legal and sustainable wildlife trade	% Increase Score in Capacity Scorecard)	Capacity Scorecard score: 26.3%[15]	Capacity Scorecard scores increased by 5% over baseline	Capacity Scorecard scores increased by 15% over baseline	Capacity Scorecard	• The SAoSA will continue to have an engaging and enthusiastic chair and a robust secretariat • Continued MTEF funding of the SAoSA • SAoSA members are willing to mentor interns • Private sector trusts government to share data • Historic data from other sources can be included in the system
	# of monitoring systems in place and in use at national and provincial levels	No standard monitoring system on wildlife in place at provincial and national level	National monitoring systems on wildlife in place and used by SANBI and 2 provincial authorities	National monitoring systems on wildlife in place and providing accurate information	- Monitoring system reports - NDFs use monitoring data - CITES delegation national permitting reports	
Outputs under Component 1 1.1 – SAoSA members are trained in effective wildlife trade monitoring and assessment ; 1.2 – A centralized system for monitoring wildlife in trade is established						
Component 2: Development of a ready-to-use e-permitting system for CITES-listed species						
Outcome 2: Web-based CITES electronic permitting	Customs officials at national export points have confidence that wildlife exports are	Low confidence that paper-based, export documentation is authentic	E-permitting system for CITES-listed species has been designed	High confidence as documentation all electronic leaving little chance for fraud.	- E-permitting system for CITES-listed species operational	• Adequate web access and infrastructure exists at Permitting Authorities)

[15] See Appendix 16

Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term Targets	End of Project Targets	Means of Verification	Assumptions
application used by CITES Authorities as a national permitting system	based on authentic documentation				- Customs officials receive updates through mobile applications - Capacity Scorecard - E-permitting collaboration agreement documents with one international database operator	• Clients are willing to use the system • Efficient communication and information sharing within and between relevant agencies in South Africa • Suitable IT firm is identified and available
	Capacity of DEA's software developers and IT support personnel to provide technical management and troubleshooting of the electronic permitting system	Capacity scorecard for DEA for the E-permitting for CITES species: 8.5%[16]	Capacity Scorecard scores increased by 25% over baseline	Capacity Scorecard score: 80%		
	South Africa's e-permitting system for CITES-listed species interfaces with international biodiversity databases	*No e-permitting system for CITES-listed species in place*	Data sharing agreement with one international biodiversity database operator	SA e-permitting system for CITES-listed species shares and collects data from other international biodiversity databases		
Outputs under Component 2 - 2.1 – E-permitting system for CITES-listed species is in place, adopted and used as the national CITES permitting system; 2.2 – Internal software, developers provide skilled technical support to national CITES permitting system; 2.3 – The national e-permitting system for CITES-listed species is linked with relevant national and international permitting systems						
Component 3: Strengthened community capacity to reduce the rate of illegal wildlife trade						
Outcome 3: Functional community governance for sustainable livelihoods and reduced rate of illegal wildlife trade	Number of governance guidelines and % of projects developed in consultation with stakeholders and community	Development projects use a top-down approach with little consultation between stakeholders and input from community	Co-developed Governance guidelines are designed and tested in two target sites 50% of projects developed in consultation with stakeholders and community	- Co-developed Governance guidelines are designed and tested in all target sites - 100% of projects developed in consultation with stakeholders and community	Governance Guidelines, co-developed with community, for stakeholder engagement Terms of Reference for Environmental Monitors Syllabus for Environmental Monitors capacity	• Communities are willing to enforce more strongly against IWT both within their communities and outside. • Communities are willing to collaborate with external enforcement agencies, i.e. historical or existing

[16] See Appendix 17

Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term Targets	End of Project Targets	Means of Verification	Assumptions
	Improved Community knowledge and attitude towards wildlife at the three target clusters	Results of Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) survey to be undertaken in year 1 of the project	Environmental Monitors trained and communicate issues of environmental importance to community members and represent the community's views on environmental issues	Knowledge and attitude of community towards wildlife improved (based on the end of project KAP survey) as a result of clear understanding of the economic benefits from wildlife as well as tangible benefits of development projects linked to wildlife e.g. WWF-SA Khetha project investment.	development program Attendance record of Environmental Monitors at training programmes Reports on successful community projects Minutes of consultation meetings and workshops	tensions with police force, park rangers or other authorities are not excessively high • Communities are willing to engage in capacity building

Outputs under Component 3 - 3.1 – Key guiding principles and project activities co-developed with target communities; 3.2 – Environmental Monitors Programme strengthened
3.3 – Co-ordination and communications strategy developed to share lessons in landscape and beyond

4. Executing Arrangements

SECTION 4: INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENT

This project will be executed nationally by the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) on behalf of the Government of South Africa. UN Environment will be the Implementing Agency.

Overall project supervision will be the responsibility of UN Environment, with UN Environment's Task Manager providing support and working closely with the DEA. The Task Manager is located in Nairobi, Kenya, but will be in constant contact with the project team throughout the project period to ensure consistency with GEF and UN Environment policies and procedures, as well as provide regular operational oversight for the project. Operational oversight will include: ensuring that the project practices due diligence with regard to Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP). UN Environment will also have representation on the Project Management Committee (PMC) with regard to general project implementation.

UN Environment will provide overall coordination and ensure that the project remains in line with its Medium-Term Strategy and its Programme of Work, as approved by the UN Environment's Governing Council. Project supervision missions by the Task Manager will be described in the project supervision plan, which will be developed. UN Environment will also report to the GEF Secretariat on progress against milestones outlined in the CEO ER, as well as inform the GEF Secretariat of any substantive changes in co-financing that could impact on the project objectives, scope, conformity with GEF criteria, outcome of the project, or likelihood of project success. UN Environment will also be responsible for the following:

- Submission of overall annual Project Implementation Review (PIR) to the GEF Secretariat and Evaluation Office, which will include an annual rating of the project in terms of progress meeting project objectives, project implementation progress, risk, quality of project monitoring and evaluation
- Review and clearance of reports and other documents prepared by DEA, as Executing Agency, before publication
- Review and agree any communications on the project prior to publication/dissemination
- Arrange for independent mid-term evaluation by the Evaluation Office (EO) and ensure that EOU arranges a terminal evaluation and submits its report to the GEF Evaluation Office
- Management and disbursement of GEF funds in accordance with rules and procedures of UN Environment.

DEA will be responsible for the coordination, management and day-to-day administration of the project in accordance with the activities, outputs and outcomes described in this document. DEA is the CITES Management Authority in South Africa and works closely with national, regional and international partners to address illegal wildlife trade in priority species. DEA's role in the project will ensure full coordination and added value through the GoSA's complementary activities with SADC, CITES Secretariat and other international initiatives.

DEA will provide the key political interface with other relevant government Ministries and institutions and will provide assurance to UN Environment for the timely execution of financial and technical inputs to the project. DEA's responsibilities will include:

- Coordination of annual work plans (drafting, sharing, finalising) with project partners
- Oversight of all project activities
- Coordination of monitoring and evaluation missions and reports
- Coordination of stakeholder consultations at national, regional and international levels

A Project Management Unit already exists within the DEA as a project implementation division. For this GEF6 Project, the following PMU team will be created within the PMU at the DEA: Project Manager (PM); Project Coordinator (PC); Administrative & Procurement Assistant (AA). The PMU will be responsible for facilitating communications, providing technical cooperation and coordination between stakeholder agencies and project partners, reviewing technical documents, providing advice and guidance to consultants hired to complete project activities, acting as secretariat support for all PMC meetings.

The Project Manager (PM) will be responsible for overall guidance and oversight of the Project implementation, development of annual action plans, coordination of monitoring and evaluation reports for UN Environment and GEF, managing the project execution arrangements, acting as contact point for the project, and management of sub-contracts.

The Project Coordinator (PC) will assist the PM and be responsible for the day-to-day operations. The Administrative Assistant will provide project accounting services, as well as project procurement services. Independent auditors will be contracted to audit the project accounts. National and International Consultants will be hired as required to support project activities (as outlined in Appendix 14).

For this project, additional Project Managers will also be nominated at SANBI and SANParks to provide guidance and oversight to project activities under Component 1 and Component 3, respectively. The Project Manager-SANBI will act as the interface between the SAoSA and SANBI and will provide progress and implementation reports to the lead Project Manager (PM). The Project Manager-SANParks will be nominated at SANParks to provide leadership and oversight to project activities in the Greater Kruger Buffer Zone and at the target clusters specifically. The Project Manager-SANParks will also be responsible for coordination of activities carried out in terms of SANParks co-financing contribution to the project.

5. Project Cost and Financing

1.11 Cost of project

Cost of project	**US$**	**%**
Cost to the GEF Trust Fund	**4,886,009**	**39.70%**
Co-financing		
Cash		
Department of Environmental Affairs	2,500,000	20.32%
South African National Parks	480,000	3.9%
South African National Biodiversity Institute	200,000	1.63%
World Wildlife Fund South Africa	500,000	4.06%
Peace Parks Foundation	300,000	2.44%
Sub-total	**3,980,000**	**32.34%**
In-kind		
Department of Environmental Affairs	2,500,000	20.32%
South African National Parks	20,000	0.16%
South African National Biodiversity Institute	420,000	3.41%
World Conservation Monitoring Centre	200,000	1.63%
Peace Parks Foundation	300,000	2.44%
Sub-total	**3,440,000**	**27.95%**
Total	**12,306,009**	**100%**

6. Implementation Issues

[Record any issues that have arisen in the initial implementation period including: significant delays, changes in partners, implementing countries and/or results statements. Note the dates when such changes have been approved.]

None yet

Section 2. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF THE MID-TERM REVIEW

7. Objective of the Review

In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy[17] and the UNEP Programme Manual[18], the Mid-Term Review (MTR) is undertaken approximately half-way through project implementation to analyze whether the project is on-track, what problems or challenges the project is encountering, and what corrective actions are required.

8. Key Review Principles

Mid-Term review findings and judgements will be based on sound evidence and analysis, clearly documented in the Review Report. Information will be triangulated (i.e. verified from different sources) as far as possible, and when verification is not possible, the single source will be mentioned (whilst anonymity is still protected). Analysis leading to evaluative judgements should always be clearly spelled out.

Possible questions to be considered include, *(MTR Review Framework Questions available from UNEP Project Manager):*

- Does the TOC properly reflect the project's intended change process?
- Is the stakeholder analysis still appropriate and adequate to support the project's ambitions?
- Are results statements in keeping with UNEP definitions (e.g. outcomes are expressed as the uptake or use of outputs)
- Are roles and responsibilities commonly understood and playing out effectively?
- Is there an effective monitoring mechanism for the project's implementation (this is separate from, and supports, reporting)?
- Is the rate of expenditure appropriate for the mid-point?
- Have plans for inclusivity, equality and/or equity been implemented as planned, or does more need to be done?
- Are safeguard identification and mitigation plans being monitored and steps taken to minimize negative effects?
- Is there an exit strategy in place and are the elements needed for the project's benefits to be sustained after the project end, being incorporated in the project implementation?
- (Where relevant) Have recommendations from previous learning exercises/performance assessments been appropriately addressed
- (Where relevant) What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how might any changes affect the project's performance?

A Mid-Term Review is a *formative assessment*, which requires that the consultant(s) go beyond the assessment of "*what*" the project performance is and make a serious effort to provide a deeper understanding of "*why*" the performance is as it is.

Attribution, Contribution and Credible Association: In order to *attribute* any outcomes and impacts to a project intervention, one needs to consider the difference between what has happened with, and what would have happened without, the project (i.e. take account of changes <u>over time</u> and <u>between contexts</u> in order to isolate the effects of an intervention). This requires appropriate baseline data and the identification of a relevant counterfactual, both of which are frequently not available for reviews. Establishing the *contribution* made by a project in a complex change process relies heavily on <u>prior intentionality</u> (e.g. approved project design documentation, logical framework) and the articulation of <u>causality</u> (e.g. narrative and/or illustration of the Theory of Change). Robust evidence that a project was delivered as designed and that the expected causal pathways developed supports claims of contribution and this is strengthened where an alternative theory of change can be excluded. A *credible association* between the implementation of a project and observed positive

[17] https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/policies-and-strategies

[18] https://wecollaborate.unep.org

effects can be made where a strong causal narrative, although not explicitly articulated, can be inferred by the chronological sequence of events, active involvement of key actors and engagement in critical processes.

Partners and Key Project Stakeholders. A key aim of the Mid-Term Review is to encourage reflection and learning by UNEP staff, the implementing partners and key project stakeholders The Review Consultant should consider how reflection and learning can be promoted, both through the review process and in the communication of review findings and key lessons.

9. Review Criteria

All review criteria will be rated on a six-point scale as follows: Highly Satisfactory[19] (HS = 6); Satisfactory (S = 5); Moderately Satisfactory (MS = 4); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU =3); Unsatisfactory (U = 2); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU =1). A Criteria Ratings Matrix is available, within the suite of tools, to support a common interpretation of points on the scale for each review criterion. The Overall Performance Rating is calculated as a simple average of the ratings for each criterion (A-H). **Any criterion assessed as being in the 'Unsatisfactory' range should trigger corrective action in the Management Response.**

A. Strategic Relevance

The Mid Term Review (MTR) will assess the extent to which the activity is suited to the priorities and policies of UNEP, the donors, implementing regions/countries and target beneficiaries and is operating in a way that is complementary to other ongoing interventions.

The MTR will assess whether there have been any changes in priorities since the project was designed and whether the project has/should adapt to address the changing policy/strategy context.

This criterion comprises two elements:

i. Alignment to UNEP's, Donors and Country (global, regional, sub-regional and national) strategic priorities

The Review should assess the project's alignment with the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS) and Programme Of Work (POW) under which the project was approved and include, in its narrative, reflections on the scale and scope of any contributions made to the planned results reflected in the relevant MTS and POW. UNEP strategic priorities include the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building[20] (BSP) and South-South Cooperation (S-SC). The MTR will assess the extent to which the project is suited to, or responding to, donor priorities as well as alignment of the project with global priorities such as the SDGs and Agenda 2030. The extent to which the project is suited, or responding to, the stated environmental concerns and needs of the countries, sub-regions or regions where it is being implemented will also be considered. Examples may include: UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (Cooperation Framework) or, national or sub-national development plans, poverty reduction strategies or Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA) plans or regional agreements etc. Within this section consideration will be given to whether the needs of all beneficiary groups are being met and reflects the current policy priority to leave no-one behind.

ii. Complementarity/Coherence[21] with Relevant Existing Interventions

An assessment will be made of how well the project is taking account of ongoing and planned initiatives (under the same sub-programme, other UNEP sub-programmes, or being implemented by other agencies within the same country, sector or institution) that address similar needs of the same target groups.

The MTR will consider if the project team, in collaboration with all partners, is fulfilling any commitments to collaborate made at project design and is working to ensure their own intervention is complementary to other interventions. Examples may include work within Cooperation Frameworks or One UN programming. Linkages with other interventions should be described and instances where UNEP's comparative advantage has been particularly well applied should be highlighted.

[19] *Sustainabilit*y is similarly rated on a six-point scale but labelled from Highly **Likely** (HL) down to Highly **Unlikely** (HU).

[20] http://www.unep.fr/ozonaction/about/bsp.htm

[21] This sub-category is consistent with the new criterion of 'Coherence' introduced by the OECD-DAC in 2019.

GE TF	To encourage utilization, each evaluation should optimize relevance by ensuring (i) that the primary intended users of the evaluation and their intended uses are clearly identified and engaged at the beginning of the evaluation process; (ii) that “intended users” include funding, implementing, and beneficiary stakeholders; and (iii) that evaluators ensure these intended users contribute to decisions about the evaluation process.

B. Quality & Revision of Project Design

The MTR should provide a brief overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the project design and assess whether all elements of the project design have been initiated and/or are still planned for. Based on a review of the project design document, regular reports and meeting minutes, the Review Consultant will confirm whether any amendments[22] have been made to the activities and/or results of the project. This includes changes to the formulation of results statements as well as changes in results indicators and/or project targets and the associated budget. Where revisions have been made the Consultant should confirm that formal documentation for these amendments is available and that UNEP/donor policies for revisions have been followed. In the absence of such formalisation the Review Consultant will make appropriate recommendations.

C. Effectiveness

The Review will assess effectiveness across three dimensions: availability of outputs, progress towards project outcomes and adaptive management. The Review Consultant will confirm that all results statements conform to UNEP’s definitions[23] and make recommendations for adjustments where necessary. At the project’s mid-point emphasis is placed on the timeliness, quality and ownership of outputs and whether the project is adopting approaches or delivering activities to support the uptake of outputs (i.e. outcome level results).

i. Theory of Change

The Review will assess whether the Theory of Change/Results Framework represents a coherent and realistic change process from a cause and effect perspective. Considerations will be given to whether the causal pathways are effectively shown/articulated and supported by a full set of contributing conditions ((‘drivers’ are external factors largely under the influence of the project; ‘assumptions’ are external factors largely outside the influence of the project). The TOC should also reflect[24] UNEP’s commitment to increasing equality in line with the UN’s commitment to human rights. If adjustments are needed they should be clearly presented and justified during the MTR process and a recommendation made on how any revisions could be formally approved.

ii. Availability of Outputs[25]

The Review will assess the project’s success in producing the planned outputs and making them available to the intended beneficiaries as well as its success in achieving milestones as per the project design document or any formal revisions. The availability of outputs will be assessed in terms of both quantity and quality, and the assessment will consider their ownership by, and usefulness to, intended beneficiaries and the timeliness of their provision. It is noted that emphasis is placed on the performance of those outputs that are most important to achieve outcomes. The Review will briefly explain the reasons behind the success or shortcomings of the project in delivering its planned outputs and recommend corrective action as appropriate.

[22] The conditions and processes for amendments should abide by the terms of the funding agreement. For example, the GEF has specific requirements for the approval/reporting of ‘minor’ and ‘major’ amendments. This includes the provision that any minor and major (approved) amendments should be reflected in the PIR report of the same year.

[23] UNEP, 2019, Glossary of Results Definitions

[24] This can be as a driver or assumption if there is no specific equality results statement.

[25] Outputs are the availability (for intended beneficiaries/users) of new products and services and/or gains in knowledge, abilities and awareness of individuals or within institutions (UNEP, 2019)

iii. Progress towards Project Outcomes[26]

At the project mid-point, the Review Consultant will focus on the links between the provision of outputs and their adoption at the outcome level. The MTR will explore whether the assumptions and drivers that need to be in place to support the uptake of outputs are evident/emerging and consider whether sufficient effort and attention is being directed towards reaching outcome levels.

The Review Consultant will review the project Theory of Change (TOC) and confirm that is properly reflects all levels (outputs, outcomes, intermediate states and long-lasting impact) of results included in the project design. Where necessary, the TOC should be reconstructed, in discussion with the project team, to better guide and strengthen project implementation.

iv. Likelihood of Impact

Based on the articulation of long-lasting effects in the reconstructed TOC (i.e. from project outcomes, via intermediate states, to impact), the Review will assess the likelihood of the intended, positive impacts becoming a reality.

The Review will consider the extent to which the project has played a catalytic role27 or has promoted scaling up and/or replication as part of its Theory of Change (either explicitly as in a project with a demonstration component or implicitly as expressed in the drivers required to move to outcome levels) and as factors that are likely to contribute to greater or long-lasting impact.

v. Adaptive Management

The Review will assess whether any adaptive management[28] is evident, possibly reflected in annual reports or reports from field missions etc. The Review Consultant will consider the project's performance to-date from a risk perspective considering: a) the likelihood of any non/late delivery of the project's work plan; b) likelihood of any negative effects, including reputational risks and safeguard issues and c) factors undermining the endurance of project achievements.

During the MTR, forward plans should be reviewed and adaptive management strategies discussed such that the project's effectiveness and efficiency are maximized. Actions for adaptive management should be reflected in the MTR recommendations, which may include recommendations on governance structures, implementation arrangements, project design elements, monitoring and/or exit strategies etc.

Global Environment Facility	The Review should consider, under Effectiveness, the extent to which the evaluan is reaching Core Indicator targets (from GEF-6 onwards).
Global Environment Facility	The Review will determine, under Effectiveness, the project's additionality by comparing the benefits of GEF support to a scenario without GEF support. It will identify specific areas where GEF support has contributed additional results and what these additional results were. It will provide quantitative and qualitative evidence to support the findings.

D. Financial Management

Under financial management the Mid-Term Review will assess: a) whether the rate of spend is consistent with the project's length of implementation to-date, the agreed workplan and the delivery of outputs and b) whether financial reporting and/or auditing requirements are being met consistently and to adequate standards by all parties. Any financial management issues that are affecting the timely delivery of the project or the quality of

[26] Outcomes are the use (i.e. uptake, adoption, application) of an output by intended beneficiaries, observed as changes in institutions or behaviour, attitude or condition (UNEP, 2019)

[27] The terms catalytic effect, scaling up and replication are inter-related and generally refer to extending the coverage or magnitude of the effects of a project. Catalytic effect is associated with triggering additional actions that are not directly funded by the project – these effects can be both concrete or less tangible, can be intentionally caused by the project or implied in the design and reflected in the TOC drivers, or can be unintentional and can rely on funding from another source or have no financial requirements. Scaling up and Replication require more intentionality for projects, or individual components and approaches, to be reproduced in other similar contexts. Scaling up suggests a substantive increase in the number of new beneficiaries reached/involved and may require adapted delivery mechanisms while Replication suggests the repetition of an approach or component at a similar scale but among different beneficiaries. Even with highly technical work, where scaling up or replication involves working with a new community, some consideration of the new context should take place and adjustments made as necessary.

[28] Adaptive management is an **iterative process** in which practitioners test hypotheses and adjust behavior, decisions, and actions based on experience and actual changes (Stankey et al., 2005).

its performance will be highlighted. Expenditure should be reported, where possible, at output/component level and will be compared with the approved budget.

Ratings should be provided for two sub-categories (*adherence to policies and completeness of financial information*), as assessed at the mid-point: i) the Review will verify the application of proper financial management standards and adherence to UNEP's financial management policies; ii) the Review will record where standard financial documentation is missing, inaccurate, incomplete or unavailable in a timely manner. The Review may comment on the level of communication between the UNEP Project Manager[29] and the Fund Management Officer as it relates to the effective delivery of the planned project and the needs of a responsive, adaptive management approach.

Global Environment Facility	The Review will determine, under Financial Management, i) time from CEO endorsement (FSP) / CEO approval (MSP) to first disbursement; ii) disbursement balance; iii) whether the project has secured co-financing higher than 35% and iv) time between CEO Endorsement and (likely) end of MTR.

E. Efficiency

Under the efficiency criterion, the Review will assess the extent to which the project delivered maximum results from the given resources. The Review will assess the *cost-effectiveness and timeliness* of project execution.

Focusing on the translation of inputs into outputs, *cost-effectiveness* is the extent to which an intervention has achieved, or is expected to achieve, its results at the lowest possible cost. *Timeliness* refers to whether planned activities have been/are being delivered according to expected timeframes as well as whether events are being sequenced efficiently. The Review will give special attention to efforts being made by the project teams during project implementation to make use of/build upon pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities[30] with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. to increase project efficiency.

The Review will also assess ways in which potential project extensions can be avoided through stronger project management.

F. Monitoring and Reporting

The Review will assess monitoring and reporting across two sub-categories: monitoring of project implementation and project reporting.

i. Monitoring of Project Implementation

Each project should be supported by a sound monitoring plan that is designed to track progress against SMART[31] results towards the achievement of the project's outputs and outcomes, including at a level disaggregated by gender, marginalisation or vulnerability, including those living with disabilities. In particular, the Review will assess the relevance and appropriateness of the project indicators as well as the methods used for tracking progress against them as part of conscious results-based management.

The Review will assess whether the monitoring system is operational and facilitates the timely tracking of results and progress towards project milestones and targets throughout the project implementation period. This assessment will include consideration of whether the project gathered relevant and good quality baseline data that is accurately and appropriately documented. This should include monitoring the representation and participation of disaggregated groups, including gendered, marginalised or vulnerable groups, such as those living with disabilities, in project activities. It will also consider how quality monitoring data are being used to adapt and improve project execution, achievement of outcomes and ensure sustainability. The Review should confirm that funds allocated for monitoring are being used to support this activity.

ii. Project Reporting

UNEP has a centralised information management system32 in which project managers upload six-monthly progress reports against agreed project milestones. This information will be provided to the Review Consultant

[29] For GEF funded projects the UNEP Project Manager refers to the Task Manager.

[30] Complementarity with other interventions during project design, inception or mobilization is considered under Strategic Relevance above.

[31] SMART refers to results that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-oriented. Indicators help to make results measurable.

[32] Project Information Management System (PIMS) or, from 2022, Integrated Planning Monitoring and Reporting (IPMR)

by the UNEP Project Manager. Donors may have specific reporting requirements and copies of reports will be made available by the UNEP Project Manager. The Review will assess the extent to which both UNEP and Donor reporting commitments have been fulfilled. This should include confirmation that meeting and field mission reports are being written and centrally stored.

Where the need for any corrective action has been indicated in any project reports (e.g. as an identified risk), the Review Consultant will record whether this action has been taken. This may include responses made during the COVID-19 pandemic or other unpredictable external events of a disruptive or crisis nature. The Review Consultant will also confirm whether formal reports have been appropriately authorised by both the author and the relevant supervisor.

Global Environment Facility	For internally executed projects the Review Consultant should review the quality of regular reports and confirm they have been submitted on a timely basis.

G. Exit Strategy & Sustainability (for Adaptation Fund, read Human and Ecological Sustainability and Security)

Sustainability33 is understood as the probability of the benefits derived from the achievement of the project outcomes being maintained and developed after the close of the intervention. It may be considered from the perspectives of socio-political, institutional and/or financial sustainability. The Review will identify and assess the key conditions or factors that are likely to undermine or contribute to the endurance of benefits at the outcome level. Some factors of sustainability may be embedded in the project design and implementation approaches while others may be contextual circumstances or conditions that evolve over the life of the intervention. It is assumed that environmental sustainability is central to any UNEP project design but where applicable an assessment of bio-physical factors that may affect the sustainability of project outcomes may also be included.

The Review will ascertain that the project has put in place an appropriate exit strategy and measures to mitigate risks to sustainability. The Review Consultant will consider: a) the level of ownership, interest and commitment among government and other stakeholders to take the project achievements forwards; b) the extent to which the sustainability of project outcomes is dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance and c) the extent to which project outcomes are dependent on future funding for the benefits they bring to be sustained. It will consider whether institutional achievements such as governance structures and processes, policies, sub-regional agreements, legal and accountability frameworks etc. are robust enough to continue delivering the benefits associated with the project outcomes after project closure.

Adaptation Fund	The Review should consider, under Human and ecological sustainability and security – the extent to which the intervention is likely to generate continued positive or negative, intended and unintended impacts beyond its lifetime, taking into consideration, social, institutional, economic, and environmental systems. Is the intervention sensitive to conflict and fragility, i.e., to what extent does it consider the political context and the sharing of natural resources? Is it contributing towards targeted communities' livelihoods and to the health or well-being of the ecosystems on which they depend?

H. Factors and Processes Affecting Project Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

i. Project Inception

This criterion focuses on the inception or mobilisation stage of the project. The Review will assess whether appropriate measures were taken to either address weaknesses in the project design, fill information gaps or respond to changes that took place between project approval, the securing of funds and project mobilisation. In particular, the Review will consider the nature and quality of engagement with stakeholder groups by the project team, the confirmation of partner capacity34 and development of partnership agreements as well as initial staffing and financing arrangements. The Review Consultant will confirm whether appropriate inception meetings were held and whether an inception report is available on file.

ii. Quality of Project Management and Supervision

During the MTR the consultant will review the planned implementation structure and the roles and responsibilities assigned to each partner or party. Where roles are not being played as planned, an appropriate recommendation to formalise correction action and/or a change in the implementation structure, should be made.

In some cases 'project management and supervision' may refer to the supervision and guidance provided by UNEP to partners and national governments while in others it may refer to the project management performance of an implementing partner and the technical backstopping and supervision provided by UNEP. The performance of parties playing different roles should be discussed and a rating provided for both types of supervision (UNEP/Implementing Agency; Partner/Executing Agency) and the overall rating for this sub-category is established as a simple average of the two.

The Review will assess the effectiveness of project management to-date with regard to: providing leadership towards achieving the planned outcomes; managing team structures; maintaining productive partner

[33] As used here, 'sustainability' means the long-term maintenance of outcomes and consequent impacts, whether environmental or not. This is distinct from the concept of sustainability in the terms 'environmental sustainability' or 'sustainable development', which imply 'not living beyond our means' or 'not diminishing global environmental benefits' (GEF STAP Paper, 2019, Achieving More Enduring Outcomes from GEF Investment)

[34] During 2023 UNEP is reviewing its Partnership Policy and Procedures and a future version is expected to include a requirement for risk mitigation against weak performance among partners.

relationships (including Steering Groups etc.); maintaining project relevance within changing external and strategic contexts; communication and collaboration with UNEP colleagues; risk management; use of problem-solving; project adaptation and overall project execution. Evidence of adaptive project management should be highlighted.

Global Environment Facility	For internally executed projects the Review Consultant should review whether the segregation of responsibilities meets the GEF requirements35 (the GEF Agency must separate its project implementation and execution duties and establish each of the following: (a) A satisfactory institutional arrangement for the separation of implementation and executing functions in different departments of the GEF Agency; and (b) Clear lines of responsibility, reporting and accountability within the GEF Agency between the project implementation and execution functions.

iii. Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation

Here the term ‘stakeholder’ should be considered in a broad sense, encompassing all project partners; duty bearers with a role in delivering project outputs; target users of project outputs and any other collaborating agents external to UNEP and the implementing partner(s). The assessment will consider the quality and effectiveness of all forms of communication and consultation with stakeholders throughout the project life to-date and the support given to maximise collaboration and coherence between various stakeholders, including sharing plans, pooling resources and exchanging learning and expertise. The inclusion and participation of all differentiated groups, including gender groups, should be considered.

iv. Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality (for Adaptation Fund, read ‘Equity’; for GCF, read ‘Gender Equity’)

The Review will ascertain to what extent the project has applied the UN Common Understanding on the human rights-based approach (HRBA) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Within this human rights context the Review will assess to what extent the intervention adheres to UNEP’s Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment36.

The report should present the extent to which the intervention, following an adequate gender analysis at design stage, has implemented the identified actions and/or applied adaptive management to ensure that Gender Equality and Human Rights are adequately taken into account. In particular, the Review will consider the extent to which project implementation has taken into consideration: (i) possible gender inequalities in access to, and the control over, natural resources; (ii) specific vulnerabilities of disadvantaged groups (especially women, youth and children and those living with disabilities) to environmental degradation or disasters; (iii) the role of women in mitigating or adapting to environmental changes and engaging in environmental protection and rehabilitation.

v. Environmental and Social Safeguards (for Adaptation Fund, read Human and ecological sustainability and security ‘)

UNEP projects address environmental and social safeguards primarily through the process of environmental and social screening, risk assessment and management (avoidance or mitigation) of potential environmental and social risks and impacts associated with project and programme activities. The Review will confirm whether UNEP requirements37 were met to: screen proposed projects for any safeguarding issues; conduct sound environmental and social risk assessments; identify and avoid, or where avoidance is not possible, mitigate, environmental, social and economic risks; apply appropriate environmental and social measures to

[35] GEF Minimum Fiduciary Standards: Separation of Implementation and Execution Functions in GEF Partner Agencies (2019).

[36]The Evaluation Office notes that Gender Equality was first introduced in the UNEP Project Review Committee Checklist in 2010 and, therefore, provides a criterion rating on gender for projects approved from 2010 onwards. Equally, it is noted that policy documents, operational guidelines and other capacity building efforts have only been developed since then and have evolved over time. https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/7655/-Gender_equality_and_the_environment_Policy_and_strategy-2015Gender_equality_and_the_environment_policy_and_strategy.pdf.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y

[37] For the review of project concepts and proposals, the Safeguard Risk Identification Form (SRIF) was introduced in 2019 and replaced the Environmental, Social and Economic Review note (ESERN), which had been in place since 2016. In GEF projects safeguards have been considered in project designs since 2011.

minimize any potential risks and harm to intended beneficiaries and report on the implementation of safeguard management measures taken.

The Review will also consider the extent to which the management of the project is minimising UNEP's environmental footprint.

vi. Country Ownership and Driven-ness

The Review will assess the quality and degree of engagement of government / public sector agencies in the project to-date. While there is some overlap between Country Ownership and Institutional Sustainability, this criterion focuses primarily on the forward momentum of the intended project results, i.e., either a) moving forward from outputs to project outcomes or b) moving forward from project outcomes towards intermediate states. The Review will consider the involvement not only of those directly involved in project execution and those participating in technical or leadership groups, but also those official representatives whose cooperation is needed for change to be embedded in their respective institutions and offices (e.g. representatives from multiple sectors or relevant ministries beyond Ministry of Environment). This factor is concerned with the level of ownership generated by the project over outputs and outcomes and that is necessary for long term impact to be realised. This ownership should adequately represent the needs and interests of all gender and marginalised groups.

vii. Communication and Public Awareness

The Review will assess the effectiveness of: a) communication of learning and experience sharing between project partners and interested groups arising from the project during its life and b) public awareness activities that were undertaken during the implementation of the project to influence attitudes or shape behaviour among wider communities and civil society at large. The Review should consider whether existing communication channels and networks were used effectively, including meeting the differentiated needs of gender or marginalised groups, and whether any feedback channels were established. Where knowledge sharing platforms have been established under a project the Review will comment on the plans to sustain, handover or decommission the communication channel at the end of the project.

Section 3. REVIEW APPROACH, METHODS AND DELIVERABLES

The Mid-Term Review will use a participatory approach whereby key stakeholders are kept informed and consulted throughout the review process. Both quantitative and qualitative review methods will be used as appropriate to determine project achievements against the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts. It is highly recommended that the Review Consultant maintains close communication with the project team and promotes information exchange throughout the review implementation phase in order to increase their (and other stakeholder) ownership of the review findings.

The findings of the Review will be based on the following: [This section should be edited for each review]

(a) A desk review of:

- Relevant background documentation,
- Project Document and Appendices
- Project design documents (including minutes of the project design review meeting at approval); Annual Work Plans and Budgets or equivalent, revisions to the project (Project Document Supplement), the logical framework and its budget;
- Project reports such as six-monthly progress and financial reports, progress reports from collaborating partners, meeting minutes, relevant correspondence etc.;
- Evaluations/Reviews of similar projects.

(b) Interviews (individual or in group) with:

- UNEP Project Manager38 and team members;
- Representatives of Implementing Agencies and National Governments etc;
- UNEP Fund Management Officer (FMO);
- Representatives from civil society and specialist groups (such as women's, farmers and trade associations etc).

(c) Field visits: one field visit will be conducted

(d) Other data collection tools: If needed, to be decided by the Review Consultant at the inception phase

10. Review Deliverables and Review Procedures

[38] For GEF funded projects, UNEP Project Manager refers to the Task Manager.

See Annex 1 of these TOR for a list of tools and guidance available, see Annex 2 for a list of review criteria and sub-categories to be assessed. The Review Consultant will prepare:

- Inception Report: (see Annex 3 of these TOR for guidance on structure and content) containing confirmation of the results framework and Theory of Change of the project, project stakeholder analysis, review framework and a tentative review schedule.
- Preliminary Findings Note: typically, in the form of a PowerPoint presentation, the sharing of preliminary findings is intended to support the participation of the project team, act as a means to ensure all information sources have been accessed and provide an opportunity to verify emerging findings.
- Draft and Final Review Reports: (see Annex 4 for guidance on structure and content) containing an Executive Summary that can act as a stand-alone document; detailed analysis of the review findings organised by review criteria and supported with evidence; lessons learned and recommendations and an annotated ratings table.

Review of the draft Review Report. The Review Consultant will submit a draft report to the UNEP Project Manager and revise the draft in response to their comments and suggestions. Once a draft of adequate quality has been peer-reviewed and accepted, the Project Manager will share the cleared draft report with key project stakeholders for their review and comments. Stakeholders may provide feedback on any errors of fact and may highlight the significance of such errors in any conclusions as well as providing feedback on the proposed recommendations and lessons. Any comments or responses to draft reports will be sent to the Project Manager for consolidation. The Project Manager will provide all comments to the Review Consultant for consideration in preparing the final report, along with guidance on areas of contradiction or issues requiring an institutional response.
At the end of the review process and based on the findings in the Review Report, the UNEP Project Manager will prepare a Recommendations Implementation Plan in the format of a table, to be completed and updated at regular intervals, and circulate Lessons Learned.

11. The Review Consultant

The Review Consultant who will work under the overall responsibility of the UNEP Project Manager Jane Nimpamya. in consultation with the Head of Branch/Unit Johan Robinson, Fund Management Officer, George Saddimbah. The consultant will liaise with the Project Manager on any procedural and methodological matters related to the Review. It is, however, the consultant's individual responsibility (where applicable) to arrange for their travel, visa, obtain documentary evidence, plan meetings with stakeholders (with assistance from the Partners), organize online surveys, and any other logistical matters related to the assignment. The Project Manager and project team will, where possible, provide logistical support (introductions, meetings etc.) allowing the Review Consultants to conduct the review as efficiently and independently as possible.

The Review Consultant will be hired over a period of 3 months [03 Month/2024 to 06 Month/2024] and should have the following: an Advanced university degree in Natural sciences, Natural resources Management, Environmental Sciences, monitoring and evaluation, International Development or other relevant political or social sciences area is; a minimum of 7 years of technical / evaluation experience including project planning, management, monitoring and evaluation is required, preferably including evaluating large, regional or global programmes and using a Theory of Change approach; and Experience in evaluation of GEF projects is highly desirable; Excellent writing skills; team leadership experience and, where possible, knowledge of the UN system, specifically of the work of UNEP and GEF programming is an asset; Experience in managing partnerships, knowledge management and communication is desirable for all evaluation consultants. English and French are the working languages of the United Nations Secretariat. For this consultancy, fluency in oral and written English is a requirement. The work will be home-based with possible field visits.

The Review Consultant will be responsible, in close consultation with the UNEP Project Manager, for overall management of the Review and timely delivery of its outputs, described above in Section 10 Review Deliverables, above. The Review Consultant will ensure that all review criteria and questions are adequately covered.

12. Schedule of the Review

The table below presents the tentative schedule for the Review.

Table 3. Tentative schedule for the Review

Milestone	Tentative Dates
Inception Report	15 June 2024
Review Mission	20 June 2024
E-based interviews, surveys etc.	30 June 2024
PowerPoint/presentation on preliminary findings and recommendations	5 July 2024
Draft Report to UNEP Project Manager	15 July 2024
Draft Report shared with the wider group of stakeholders	30 July 2024
Final Main Review Report	15 August 2024
Final Main Review Report shared with all respondents	30 August 2024

13. Contractual Arrangements

The Review Consultant will be selected and recruited by the UNEP Project Manager under an individual Special Service Agreement (SSA) on a "fees only" basis (see below). By signing the service contract with UNEP/UNON, the consultant certifies that they have not been associated with the design and implementation of the project in any way which may jeopardize their independence and impartiality towards project achievements and project partner performance. Consultants who carry out a Mid-Term Review may not be contracted for a Terminal Review of the same evaluand. All consultants are required to sigh the Code of Conduct Agreement Form.

Fees will be paid on an instalment basis, paid on acceptance by the UNEP Project Manager of expected key deliverables. The schedule of payment is as follows:

Schedule of Payment for the Consultant:

Deliverable	Percentage Payment
Approved Inception Report (as per Guidance Note)	40%
Approved Draft Main Review Report (as per Guidance Note) and draft preliminary findings	40%
Approved Final Main Review Report (as per Report Template) and final preliminary findings	20%

Fees only contracts: Where applicable, air tickets will be purchased by UNEP and 75% of the Daily Subsistence Allowance for each authorised travel mission will be paid up front. Local in-country travel will only be reimbursed where agreed in advance with the UNEP Project Manager and on the production of acceptable receipts. Terminal expenses and residual DSA entitlements (25%) will be paid after mission completion.

The consultants may be provided with access to UNEP's information management systems (e.g. PIMS, IPMR, Anubis, SharePoint etc) and if such access is granted, the consultants agree not to disclose information from that system to third parties beyond information required for, and included in, the Review Report.

In case the consultant is not able to provide the deliverables in accordance with these guidelines, and in line with the expected quality standards by the UNEP Project Manager, payment may be withheld at the discretion of the Head of Branch/Unit until the consultants have improved the deliverables to meet UNEP's quality standards.

If the consultant fails to submit a satisfactory final product to the UNEP Project Manager in a timely manner, i.e. before the end date of their contract, UNEP reserves the right to employ additional human resources to finalize the report, and to reduce the consultants' fees by an amount equal to the additional costs borne by the project team to bring the report up to standard or completion.

ANNEX X. GEF PORTAL INPUTS

The following table contains text to be uploaded to the GEF Portal. **It will be drawn from the Review Report, either as copied or summarised text.** In each case, references should be provided for the paragraphs and pages of the report from which the responses have been copied or summarised.

Table A: GEF portal inputs

Portal Entry: What is the performance at the project's mid-point against Core Indicator Targets? *(For projects approved prior to GEF-7, these indicators will be identified retrospectively and comments on performance provided[39])*
Response: (Might be drawn from Monitoring and Reporting section). Please complete the following GEF Template capturing results as at MTR for all core/sub indicators that had targets at CEO Endorsement. *See attached Annex X (B)*
Portal Entry: What has been the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding engagement of stakeholders in the project/programme? *(This should be based on the description included in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan or equivalent documentation submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval)*
Response: (Might be drawn from Factors Affecting Performance section/Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation) Key national institutions and international organizations are involved in implementing the IWT projects. Through its participation in the GWP project, the IWT is connected to stakeholders who are vital for data exchange and experience sharing on illegal wildlife trade issues. The project has formed partnerships with several key stakeholders in the Greater Kruger landscape by supporting the GKSC. The project is developing a community governance framework to involve women, men, and youth in wildlife conservation as well as providing support mechanisms for alternative livelihoods. The EMs programme demonstrated how youth in the KPN landscape could participate in wildlife conservation as well as contribute to curbing illegal wildlife trade. Whilst foundational capacity building on good governance has been developed by the project, further community engagement is needed through the development of community governance guidelines and mechanisms.
Portal Entry: What has been the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding gender-responsive measures and any intermediate gender result areas? *(This should be based on the documentation at CEO Endorsement/Approval, including gender-sensitive indicators contained in the project results framework or gender action plan or equivalent)*
Response: (Might be drawn from Factors Affecting Performance section/Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality) The project is currently operating without a gender action plan. The project results framework does ot have gender sensitive indicators. The MTR notes some gender and social inclusion consciousness in interviews, yet these considerations are limited in implementation as reflected in the reports. While the project indicates the participation of women in project-related decisions, more data is needed in terms of how the project is creating economic opportunities for women and other vulnerable population groups and whether the project is addressing the systemic, social, and cultural challenges faced by women and marginalized groups in the target wildlife economy. From analysis and observation, the EMs programme has a youth lens, and ensures that 40% of the recruits are female. This addresses the

[39] This does not apply to Enabling Activities

high youth unemployment in South Africa, which stood at 45.5% in the first quarter of 2024, while the unemployment rate among young females was estimated at 49,4% in the same period. However, youth employment as EMs, is an alternative livelihood option provided by the project,
Portal Entry: 1- *Provide an overall ESS risk classification to be entered into the portal as either Low, Medium/Moderate, or Hight/Substantial). Please reach out to UNEP Safeguards Advisor.* 2- *Provide updates on any revisions to identified types of risk classifications/ratings and describe progress made in the implementation of the management measures as outlined in the CEO Endorsement/Approval. Please make reference to any PIR-reported ESS risks.* 3- *Provide supporting documents*
Response: (Might be drawn from Factors Affecting Performance section/Environmental and Social Safeguards) *The IWT project presents a low safeguard risk due to its lack of direct environmental footprint. However, it highlights significant gaps in its environmental and social safeguards approach. A primary concern is the lack of a Social Safeguards Strategy and Implementation Plan. Without the strategy, the project struggles to engage communities as partners in conservation and sustainable resource use. Communities near KPN receive few economic or social benefits, as conservation efforts primarily focus on tourism rather than local development. While the project's design aligns with the UN General Assembly Resolution 69/314, advocating for developing sustainable, alternative livelihoods for communities impacted by illegal wildlife trafficking, its implementation has not yet facilitated meaningful inclusion or benefit-sharing. Delays in co-developing governance guidelines have limited the project's impact on the livelihoods of local men, women, and youth.* *This shortfall of safeguards underscores the necessity of prioritizing safeguard measures to foster community inclusion and capacity-building to better align with the project's wildlife conservation goals. Although the livelihoods projects aimed to support alternative livelihoods, their practical impact has been limited, as they have yet to demonstrate significant social benefits or clear advantages for the community. Without monitoring and evaluation tools in place, the MTR could verify the extent of the benefits to the community, such as the number of households benefiting or demographic information.*
Portal Entry: What has been the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding the implementation of the project's Knowledge Management Approach, including: Knowledge and Learning Deliverables (e.g. website/platform development); Knowledge Products/Events; Communication Strategy; Lessons Learned and Good Practice; Adaptive Management Actions. *(This should be based on the documentation approved at CEO Endorsement/Approval)*
Response: (Might be drawn from Factors Affecting Performance section/Communication and Public Awareness) The MTR notes the absence of an integrated communication and public awareness plan for the project. The communication plan developed under Component 3 is still in draft form and has not been fully implemented for communication and public awareness. The identified gap limits the project's ability to document and fully share experiences, lessons learned, and knowledge products, reducing its visibility as envisioned in the project design and constraining reaction challenges. Despite not having an integrated communication and awareness strategy, various opportunities were utilized to share project experiences, successes, best practices, and lessons learned. These include launching the e-permitting system during South Africa's 50th environmental day celebration, CITES event, and other regional and international fora.
Portal Entry: *What are the main findings of the review?*

1. The IWT project aligns well with the United Nations Environment Programme's Programme of Work and Medium-Term Strategy. The project integrates well with the Global Environment Facility's strategic goals and international agreements, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. Additionally, it supports the Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Framework and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. It aligns well with regional and national conservation priorities, including the African Union's Agenda 2063, the Southern African Development Community's biodiversity strategies, and South Africa's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. The project complements various initiatives to combat illegal wildlife trade in South Africa, including the Global Wildlife Programme and conservation efforts by the United Nations Development Programme, the World Wide Fund, and the United States Agency for International Development.
2. The project design is well-structured, with clear components aimed at tackling poaching and illegal wildlife trade. It integrates technological advancements and institutional capacity-building in Components 1 and 2, strengthening data management, wildlife monitoring, and law enforcement. While Component 3's governance framework is aligned with reducing illegal wildlife trade; there is a logical gap between outputs and outcomes. This gap highlights the need for refined performance indicators and a clearer alignment between outputs and outcomes. Clarifying the linkage between governance structures and behaviour change will enhance the project's effectiveness in achieving sustainable community engagement.
3. The project has achieved substantial progress in developing the South African Wildlife, Population Monitoring System and a centralized e-permitting system for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species - listed species which have leveraged partnerships and technological innovations for enhanced wildlife monitoring and law enforcement. The e-permitting system has processed over 10,000 applications, improved wildlife trade control, and aligned South Africa with international standards. The phased provincial rollout aims for seamless national integration.
4. Component 3, focused on community governance and livelihood development, has struggled to deliver the outcome due to delays in developing governance guidelines and alternative livelihood activities. This delay and challenges in aligning outputs with intended outcomes created difficulties in implementing the intervention logic. Although some livelihood projects have received funding, a unified social enterprise framework is still needed to enhance performance, increase benefiting communities, and have community ownership and commitment to conservation. Adaptive management has since led to additional outputs that support the co-development of governance guidelines. Furthermore, adaptive management strategies help mitigate technical, operational, and stakeholder-related challenges.
5. Resource use in the project has been primarily effective, particularly in implementing technology-driven monitoring systems and the Environmental Monitors Programme. However, the budget burn rate is 43% due to delayed disbursements and limited cash co-financing, with only 15% of committed funds received by June 2024. Despite this, partner commitment is demonstrated through increased in-kind co-financing. Financial management is moderately satisfactory, indicating a need for better tracking and reporting to improve efficiency in the remaining project period.
6. Governance structures are in place, although limited capacity in monitoring, evaluation, and learning, negatively affected systematic progress tracking and sharing of lessons learned, reducing the visibility of the project's outputs to date. Gaps in baseline data complicate assessments of community attitudes toward wildlife conservation, underscoring the need for improved data collection and a focus on gender and social inclusion.
7. The project has established a strong foundation for sustainability, notably through institutionalizing the wildlife monitoring systems and e-permitting system. Capacity-building at institutional and community levels is a positive step towards sustainability. While the policy environment supports South Africa's commitment to wildlife protection and compliance with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, financial sustainability remains

uncertain without assured funding beyond the project's lifespan. A comprehensive exit and sustainability strategy will be essential to ensure lasting benefits post-project completion.

***Portal Entry**: Actual Sources of Co-financing*

Response: Please include evidence for co-financing for the project as at MTR (please add rows as necessary and confirm with the EA and FMO as relevant)

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Cofinancing	Investment Mobilized	Amount ($)
Government of South Africa	DFFE	Cash		10,715.00
		Inkind		2,893,310.00
Project partners	SANBI	Cash		252,360.00
		Inkind		902,657.00
	WWF-SA	Cash		360,948.00
		Inkind		265,931.00
	SANPARKS	Inkind		862,127.00
	PPF	Cash		84,374.00
		Inkind		121,946.00
Totals				**5,754,368.00**

Portal Entry: Key Risks (please refer to ANNEX XI)

ANNEX XI. GEF RISKS TO ACHIEVING PROJECT OUTCOMES (FOR GEF FUNDED PROJECTS)

Summarize risks that might affect the achievement of desired outcomes and the mitigation measures which are planned or already undertaken to address these. The risk rating should reflect the *residual* risk to achieving outcomes after considering the implementation of mitigation measures. The rating scale is: High, Substantial, Moderate, Low. See the *GEF Risk Appetite* document (GEF/C.66/13) for more information and its Annex B for a description of each risk category. Note that the rating for the "Environment and Social" category should be the same as the risk rating for Safeguards.

GEF risks to achieving project outcomes

RISK CATEGORIES	RATINGS	ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION MEASURES
CONTEXT		
Climate	Low	Climate change risks increasing the vulnerability of wildlife and threatening the effectiveness of wildlife conservation efforts.
Environment and Social	Medium	Recurring drought in the region reduces livelihood options for communities and threatens wildlife populations. Social factors such as urbanization encroachment, high unemployment rates, historical patterns of social exclusion, and limited livelihood options risk increasing illegal wildlife trade.
Political and Governance	Low	The development of the e-permitting system is already institutionalized in the government priorities as it is built into Operation Phakisa. Thus, changes in the political landscape will not affect the programme.
INNOVATION		
Institutional and Policy	Low	The project employs a multi-stakeholder approach, involving key institutions responsible for wildlife conservation, including government agencies, NGOs, the private sector, and local communities. In light of the environmental and social context mentioned, Component 3 was introduced to empower communities to reduce the involvement of local communities in illegal wildlife activities by providing alternative livelihood options and strengthening their capacity to engage in wildlife conservation through effective governance mechanisms.
Technological	Low	The technological systems introduced in the project are directly positively impacting conservation efforts. Their likelihood of long-term positive impact is high as their sustainability is embedded in already existing wildlife conservation institutions at local, provincial, national, and global levels. achieve intended environmental outcomes
Financial and Business Model	Moderate	The project's business model benefits from significant in-kind co-financing by key stakeholders. Thus, there is high likelihood that the technological innovations will be sustained as they are embedded in national conservation priorities and institutional mandates. Although there is technological support available, the lack of long-term funding guarantees and commitments from partners could jeopardize community participation in wildlife conservation. This highlights the need for robust contingency planning and diverse funding sources. Ability to mobilize funding for community involvement in anti-wildlife trafficking through engagement of new financial partners and innovative funding mechanisms is uncertain. It is unclear how the EMs programme and the developed governance guidelines will continue to be financially supported and evolve into effective governance mechanisms. Effectively scaling community interventions requires coordination and careful balancing of competing priorities between environmental benefits and community empowerment, making it difficult to

		develop and maintain a business model that addresses the illegal wildlife trade while ensuring environmental benefits.
EXECUTION		
Capacity for Implementation	Low	The project's design is elegant. The Lead Executing entities in the project have convening power, and participating key institutions can effectively sustain the systems introduced by the project. The Capacity enhanced by the project is within key institutions already mandated for wildlife conservation. Service providers in the project do not have far-reaching influence over project benefits. The project team exercised adaptive management, although the project lacked systematic M&E, leading to a gap in performance tracking. The absence of an M&E framework and plan prevents the systematic measurement of established indicators, making it difficult to assess progress toward outcomes and hindering opportunities for learning and improvement.
Fiduciary	Moderate	The limited personnel within the PMU spread themselves thinly to cover the financial management tasks, which compromises the program's financial management and compliance with UNEP requirements. There is no skilled financial management person in the PMU, nor is there a separation of functions in financial management. However, the project assistant assists in procurement, thus neutralizing the impact of lack of separation of duties. The government's internal controls, policies, and practices mitigate the challenge. The successful external audits prove this. Although late, they are all unqualified.
Stakeholder	Low	The project's multi-stakeholder approach, embedded in the project design, effectively delivers the intended outcomes. Stakeholder participation is adequate at both global and national levels. To ensure the sustainability of the community empowerment component of the project, it is essential to prioritize community engagement and inclusion in project activities. In the KPN landscape, the project works through the Greater Kruger Steering Committee, which links the project to other key stakeholders in implementing the project on the ground. Although the GSKC links the project to relevant community organizations, the MTR noted a gap in the level of community engagement, exacerbated by the postponement of the co-development of governance guidelines. Community ownership can be fostered by actively consulting and engaging with communities to draw context-specific governance guidelines. Despite the identification and implementation of community livelihood projects in the KPN landscape, the selection did not include consultation of the wider community. Thus, community ownership is not actively fostered.
Other	Low	The absence of gender strategy and plan, communication strategy, and social and environmental safeguard strategy led to challenges, such as ineffective communication, insufficient focus on gender equity, and unaddressed social risks. The absence of these critical strategies affected the project's ability to meet fully meet its objectives and comply with donor expectations and best practices.
Overall Risk Rating	Low	Identified risks either have mitigatory strategies inbuilt in the project or such strategies are recommended by the MTR. If these risks are managed the project will be able to deliver on envisaged outcomes.

ANNEX XII: FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT EVIDENCE

Financial management components:		Rating	Evidence/ Comments
1. Adherence to UNEP's policies and procedures:		**MU**	• The project did not follow the agreed-upon procedures and reporting timelines, specifically with audits. • Delayed disbursement of funds to in the project
Any evidence that indicates shortcomings in the project's adherence[40] to UNEP or donor policies, procedures or rules		**Yes**	The 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 Project Audit reports were not audited within the six months after the end of the project financial year as required by UNEP project procedures. They were all signed in April 2024
2. Completeness of project financial information[41]:			There are some information gaps, and the PIR report figures do not match the QER figures.
Provision of key documents to the reviewer (based on the responses to A-H below)		**HS**	
A.	Co-financing and Project Cost's tables at design (by budget lines)	**Yes**	The co-finance Budget and expenditure were reported under the same budget lines as the UNEP expenditure reports as per the approved budget
B.	Revisions to the budget	**Yes**	Submitted
C.	All relevant project legal agreements (e.g. SSFA, PCA, ICA)	**Yes**	Submitted
D.	Proof of fund transfers	**Yes**	These are in place for both funds from UNEP and Funds transferred to project partners, although there are time delays, especially from the confirmation of funds received until the partners are paid.
E.	Proof of co-financing (cash and in-kind)	**Yes**	Submitted and still to view SANParks and WWF However, the Cash in-kind contribution was only 15% of the initially budgeted amount
F.	A summary report on the project's expenditures during the life of the project (by budget lines, project components and/or annual level)	**Yes**	The reports are detailed in-terms of each budget line item as per the approved project budget
G.	Copies of any completed audits and management responses *(where applicable)*	**Yes**	Although audits are not being done according the donor requirements. Missing end of 2023 audit
H.	Any other financial information that was required for this project (list):	N/A	
3. Communication between finance and project management staff		**S**	Manager and Project Assistant plays a major role in Financial management there is absence a Fund Management Officer
Project Manager and/or Task Manager's level of awareness of the project's financial status.		**S**	Project Manager – knowledgeable in the absence of a Finance Officer. The Project manager works with the Project Assistant (Administrator), and the Department Finance Office provides oversight over the management
Fund Management Officer's knowledge of project progress/status when disbursements are done.		**S**	
Level of addressing and resolving financial management issues among Fund Management Officer and Project Manager/Task Manager.		**S**	
Contact/communication between the Fund Management Officer, Project Manager, and task Manager during the preparation of financial and progress reports.		**HS**	The Task Manager provides the relevant support for finalisation of reports
Project Manager, Task Manager and Fund Management Officer responsiveness to financial requests during the review process		**HS**:	
Overall rating		**S**	

[40] If the review raises concerns over adherence with policies or standard procedures, a recommendation maybe given to cover the topic in an upcoming audit, or similar financial oversight exercise.
[41] See also document 'Criterion Rating Description' for reference

ANNEX XIII: RESULTS FRAMEWORK USED IN THE MTR

Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term Targets	Achievement by 30 June 2024
Project Objective: To fight against illegal wildlife trade through institutional strengthening, improved information management and monitoring (and collaboration at an international level), thereby influencing the supply system at local (protected area), national (South Africa) and regional levels	number of seizures of illegal wild life trade of target species in calendar year	• Illegal trade in Rhino 2017 seizure data – *baseline =7 cases* • Illegal trade in Elephant 2017 seizure data – *baseline data = 36 cases* • Illegal trade in Lion 2017 seizure data – *baseline data = 4 cases* • Illegal trade in Cheetah 2017 seizure data – *baseline data = 1 case* • Illegal trade in Leopard 2017 seizure data – *baseline data = 2 cases*	• Illegal trade in Rhino 2016 seizure data – increase compared to baseline • Illegal trade in Elephant 2016 seizure data – increase compared to baseline • Illegal trade in Lion 2016 seizure data – increase compared to baseline • Illegal trade in Cheetah 2016 seizure data – increase compared to baseline • Illegal trade in Leopard 2016 seizure data – increase compared to baseline	Data not available -
	Number of fraudulent documents on wildlife exports out of SA identified at international ports	In 2017 (*number to be determined*) wildlife exports were identified as having fraudulent documents – *baseline data will be collected in 2017*	E-permitting system for CITES-listed species has been designed	NO data on the Indicator / no baseline data Epermitting in place
	Rhino poaching rates in KNP attenuate as a result of more positive community attitude to wildlife	Number of rhino poached in 2016 in KNP: *1054*	Number of rhino poached in June 2020 in KNP: *equal or less than 1054*	Data Not available
Component 1: Strengthening institutional capacity and information systems for effective management of wildlife trade monitoring				
Outcome 1: Increased capacity within SAoSA for legal and sustainable wildlife trade	% Increase Score in Capacity Scorecard)	Capacity Scorecard score: 26.3%[93]	Capacity Scorecard scores increased by 5% over baseline	Data Not Available qualitative data capacities confirmed
	# of monitoring systems in place and in use at national and provincial levels	No standard monitoring system on wildlife in place at the provincial and national level	National monitoring systems on wildlife in place and used by SANBI and 2 provincial authorities	80%
Output 1.1 – SAoSA members are trained in effective wildlife trade monitoring and assessment; *Output 1.2 – A centralised system for monitoring wildlife in trade is established*				
Component 2: Development of a ready-to-use e-permitting system for CITES-listed species				

Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term Targets	Achievement by 30 June 2024
Outcome 2: Web-based CITES electronic permitting application used by CITES Authorities as a national permitting system	Customs officials at national export points have confidence that wildlife exports are based on authentic documentation	Low confidence that paper-based, export documentation is authentic	E-permitting system for CITES-listed species has been designed	Indicator and baseline misaligned with midterm target E0-permitting system in place (50%)
	Capacity of DFFE's software developers and IT support personnel to provide technical management and troubleshooting of the electronic permitting system	Capacity scorecard for DFFA for the E-permitting for CITES species: 8.5%[94]	Capacity Scorecard scores increased by 25% over the baseline	No data Qualitative data – some capacity available at national and four provinces (50%)
	South Africa's e- permitting system for CITES-listed species interfaces with international biodiversity databases	*No e-permitting system for CITES-listed species in place*	Data sharing agreement with one international biodiversity database operator	In progress – no agreement (25%)
Output 2.1 - Electronic permitting system for CITES-listed species is in place, adopted and used as the national CITES permitting system *Output 2.2 – Internal software developers provide skilled technical support to national e-permitting system for CITES-listed species* *Output 2.3 – The national e-permitting system for CITES-listed species is linked with relevant national and international permitting systems*				
Component 3: Strengthening community capacity to reduce the rate of illegal wildlife trade				
Outcome 3: Functional community governance for sustainable livelihoods and reduced rate of illegal wildlife trade	Number of governance guidelines and % of projects developed in consultation with stakeholders and community	Development projects use a top-down approach with little consultation between stakeholders and input from community.	Co-developed Governance guidelines are designed and tested in two target sites 50% of projects developed in consultation with stakeholders and community.	No governance guidelines were developed nor tested. No bottom-up developed projects Evidence of good governance capacity and supported livelihoods projects – 30%
	Improved Community knowledge and attitude towards wildlife at the three target clusters	Results of Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) survey to be undertaken in year 1 of the project	Environmental Monitors trained and communicate issues of environmental importance to community members and represent the community's views on environmental issues	No KAP baseline nor data to qualify level of awareness - qualitative data – EMs capacitated and engaging communities – 50%
Output 3.1 – Key guiding principles and project activities co-developed with target communities Output 3.2 – Environmental Monitors Programme strengthened Output 3.3 – Co-ordination and communications strategy developed to share lessons in landscape and beyond				

ANNEX XIV: PROJECT GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES ENGAGEMENTS

Structure	Frequency of Engagement	Status at Review		Notes
Project Steering Committee (PSC)	Bi-annually	1. Inception - 25/10/2019 2. 22/07/2020 3. 8-9/12/2020 4. 13/07/2021 5. 02-03/03/2022 6. 27/01/2023 7. 10/07/2023 8. 3-4/02/2024		PSC met once in 2021 and only 1 meeting was held in 2022
Inter-Agency Organising Committee (IAOC)	Annually	Discontinued		
Project Management Team (PMT)	Quarterly	1. 28/05/2020 2. 25/06/2020 3. 25/03/2021 4. 24/06/2021 5. 26/09/2021 6. 06/12/2021 7. 22/03/2022	8. 27/06/2022 9. 29/09/2022 10. 20/01/2023 11. 31/05/2023 12. 29/06/2023 13. 26/10/2023 14. 25/01/2024	The PMT met at least 70% as expected by the review time, providing appropriate project implementation support and monitoring.
Project Management Unit (PMU)	Day-to-day operational support	Project Manager Project Assistant		Not fully staffed as Project Coordinator and Project Finance Officer positions were vacant

ANNEX XV: SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO SURVEY

This report presents insights from a survey conducted as part of the MTR. The survey aimed to collect feedback from project participants who were not interviewed individually. A total of 57 respondents participated in the survey, which included Environmental Monitors (EMs), community members, and CITES-designated authorities. In terms of gender representations, 45.6% of the participants (26 individuals) were male, while 35.1% (20 participants) were female. Additionally, 9 respondents did not disclose their gender. The MTR sought to gain a better understanding of the project's impact on skills development, community engagement, and the effectiveness of conservation practices. A synthesis of the responses is provided below:

Experiences and insights on the project: -
The MTR notes that majority of the respondents (73.6%) have been involved in the project for at least two years. This suggests that the insights gathered come from participants with experience in the project. The survey results identified the aspects of the project that participants value the most, particularly highlighting the enhancement of community livelihoods and effective wildlife management. The most highly regarded aspect is "wildlife management of the monitored species," which was selected by 73.7% of participants. Other important aspects include awareness of the illegal wildlife trade (64.9%) and the improvement of community livelihoods (61.4%). The survey data shows that respondents were trained in wildlife monitoring, conservation techniques, law enforcement, community engagement, and e-permitting system. These results indicate that the project prioritizes practical, field-based skills, particularly, which align closely with the project's goals of managing and protecting wildlife through active community and law enforcement involvement.

The majority of respondents (87.7%) reported positive experiences with the project, highlighting both personal and professional growth. A key theme was acquiring skills and knowledge in wildlife conservation and heightened awareness of the importance of protecting nature. Respondents mentioned several practical benefits, including training in skills like wildlife disease monitoring, fence maintenance, first aid, and ranger leadership. The introduction of tools like the online permitting system also streamlined processes and facilitated legal wildlife trade. The EMs expressed pride in contributing to reduced poaching rates, increased community safety, and engaging with local communities to build a greater sense of responsibility toward conservation.

The project's impact on job opportunities was highlighted, showing that it has helped improve EMs' economic status. Many respondents valued the decrease in poaching and human-wildlife conflicts, crediting these successes to enhanced environmental monitoring and community involvement. Several individuals described a sense of purpose from their conservation roles, with some expressing a newfound passion for the field and a desire to further their studies and careers in conservation.

Challenges experienced working on the project
Many respondents expressed concerns about safety, particularly due to threats from armed poachers and encounters with dangerous wildlife like elephants and buffalos, which often breach the fence and damage farms, leading to tensions with local communities. The lack of protective equipment and firearms further heightens their vulnerability in these situations. Resource limitations, such as shortages of tools, equipment, transportation, and uniforms, were also noted as significant obstacles. Participants highlighted the need for better support systems, including additional training for Environmental Monitors and maintenance of the fence, which is frequently damaged by wildlife and occasionally stolen by illegal traders.

Challenges related to interpersonal relationships and community dynamics were reported. EMs faced criticism and threats from community members who blame them for wildlife-related issues. They also dealt with conflicts arising from people illegally entering the park for firewood or engaging in poaching activities. Additionally, there were administrative and operational issues, such as inconsistent reporting templates and initial problems with the e-permitting system, which were noted as minor but ongoing challenges. Overall, the responses indicate a need for improved safety measures, better resource allocation, and enhanced community engagement strategies to address these difficulties.

Proposed additional skills and/or knowledge needed
Respondents expressed a strong desire for additional skills and knowledge that would enhance their effectiveness in wildlife conservation and management. Many participants are interested in gaining field ranger training, including advanced ranger courses, firearm handling, and certification as qualified rangers to protect wildlife more effectively. This desire for field-oriented skills is often tied to the need for better protection in dangerous situations, such as encounters with poachers or wild animals. Some also expressed interest in technical skills related to biodiversity conservation, including species identification, conservation biology, and understanding the broader environmental impacts of conservation work, such as climate change.

In addition to technical and field skills, respondents also highlighted the importance of community engagement and educational skills. They wish to gain knowledge that would enable them to better communicate the importance of conservation to local communities, aiming to reduce human-wildlife conflicts and discourage illegal activities like poaching. Other desired skills include leadership, law enforcement, health and safety, and opportunities for learning exchanges with other African countries to share strategies on combating wildlife crime and promoting community involvement. This feedback underscores a comprehensive approach to capacity-building, where both practical field skills and community engagement capabilities are seen as critical for effective conservation.

Suggestions on what the project should concentrate on more going forward
The feedback indicates that many participants believe the project should focus more on enhancing training and providing accredited educational opportunities. There is a strong desire for training that builds specific skills useful for wildlife conservation, particularly training that offers recognized certifications, which could help participants in applying for permanent positions. Respondents also suggest increasing the number of EMs and providing additional resources, such as bicycles for patrolling and equipment to enhance their efficiency and safety in the field. Permanent employment and clearer role definitions are also frequently mentioned, as many participants hope for more job stability and growth opportunities within the project.

In addition to skills development, respondents emphasize the importance of deeper community engagement and education on wildlife conservation. Many suggest that the project should involve local communities more directly, teaching them about the value of protecting wildlife and promoting sustainable practices. Some participants recommend working with youth and community leaders to cultivate long-term conservation values and understanding of ecosystem benefits. There are also calls for the project to address specific issues, like illegal fishing and poaching, by collaborating with local law enforcement and creating community-based anti-poaching initiatives. By focusing on both capacity-building and community outreach, participants feel the project could foster a more sustainable and collaborative approach to wildlife conservation.

Recommendations to enhance the project
Survey respondents offered valuable recommendations to enhance the project's impact and sustainability. Many emphasized the need for more targeted training and skills development, particularly in field ranger duties, wildlife protection, and firearms handling, to better equip team members for their roles. They also suggested technological upgrades, such as integrating smart sensors, AI-driven analytics, and high-definition cameras for better monitoring and early detection of breaches, along with regular security audits and improved communication systems to boost response times. Several respondents advocated for more community engagement initiatives, particularly educational outreach in schools, to raise awareness about wildlife conservation from a young age. Enhanced community involvement was seen as critical for building local support and reducing poaching.

Other recommendations included increasing financial resources to expand the team and improve compensation, making the positions permanent, and fostering collaboration with key stakeholders like local police. Some respondents called for additional features in the project's permitting system, such as a Payment Gateway and GIS functions, to streamline administrative tasks and support more accurate data collection. They also expressed gratitude for the opportunity to work in conservation, noting that the project has had a positive impact on both their personal livelihoods and their communities. Long-term sustainability was highlighted, with calls for securing diverse funding sources, scaling successful initiatives, and establishing contingency plans for future challenges. Overall, participants viewed the project as a valuable initiative that could be strengthened further through ongoing training, enhanced technology, and deeper community involvement.