

Management Response to the Evaluation - Mid-Term Evaluation of GCP/SRL/063/GEF: Rehabilitation of Degraded Agricultural Land in Central highlands of Sri Lanka.

Date – 04 March 2020

The overall response to the evaluation

Find below our management response to the mid-term evaluation of GCP/SRL/063/GEF: Rehabilitation of Degraded Agricultural Land in Central highlands of Sri Lanka project, conducted by the evaluation Mission that took place between 21 July and 03 August 2019 in Sri Lanka.

In preparing this response, inputs were also sought from all parties to whom specific evaluation recommendations were addressed including FAO's Lead Technical Unit (LTU), stakeholders including supportive organization like Department of Agriculture, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) etc.

The FAOR and our partners in the Government of Sri Lanka find the evaluation report as a useful input into the difficult process of implementing this complex project. It has drawn attention to areas where successes have been achieved and where failures occurred. It has made specific suggestions on how to further consolidate the gains with the limited resources remaining before project closure. These were fully discussed in the Review Meeting held with the Ministry of Environment and wildlife resources on 10th December 2019 in FAO representation, Colombo at which the contents of this report were almost agreed. In general, we fully understand the analysis by the MTR report especially of the constraints and achievements. As mentioned in the MTR report, this project is very complex in terms of its inter-sectoral collaboration and its ambitious objectives and outputs.

We found the recommendations quite useful as indicated below and our response to each recommendation is indicated in the matrix below.

Response by recommendation

Box 1. Management response matrix¹

Management response to the (Evaluation Title)					Date
Evaluation Recommendation (a)	Management response (b) Accepted, partially accepted or rejected	Management plan			
		Actions to be taken, and/or comments about partial acceptance or rejection (c)	Responsible unit (d)	Timeframe (e)	Further funding required (Y or N) (f)
Insert title of section, if any					
<i>Strategic relevance</i>					
Recommendation 1 In addition to emphasising the benefits of SLM to restore degraded lands and increase economic benefits of agriculture, the project team (also FAO Sri Lanka and GoSL partners) should continually highlight to all stakeholders (land users and project partner agency staff) how the project activities contribute to CCA and CCM to increase land users' interest in SLMs – also considering introducing the concept of climate smart agriculture (CSA) (Conclusion 1). [Timescale – for the remainder of the project]	<i>Accepted,</i>	Already the project is highlighting the contribution of project activities towards CCA and CCM. With the Knowledge management activities and FFS materials and training implementation, will further emphasize the concepts of climate-smart agriculture	PMU, NRMC, Technical partners	The remainder of the project	N
<i>Outcome 2: Appropriate technologies for rehabilitation of degraded lands demonstrated and scaled up by strengthened networks of training and extension institutions</i>					

¹ Each column is cross-referenced to the bullet letters above.

<p><i>Recommendation 2</i> The project team (and FAO Sir Lanka more widely) should highlight corporate social responsibility (CSR) and awareness-raising on all sides to dispel GoSL informants' nervousness of involving private sector under the PPPs (they believe private companies will urge land users to apply more agrochemicals and are only interested in profits, which does not seem to be the case in the project's work to-date). Further, the PMU needs to undertake whatever FAO due diligence is required before entering formal agreements (Conclusion 3). [Timescale – for the remainder of the project]</p>	<p><i>Accepted,</i></p>	<p>The project already promoted the private sector involvement on SLM. The project supports the farmers while promoting the private sector and government partners' engagement for extension, certification, and marketing. FOAR and AFAOR have already discussed with headquarters and regional FAO office about the modality of working with the private sector and agreed to go with an informal agreement based on the consideration of practical difficulties in the formal agreements</p>	<p>FAOR/PMU/ DOA/ TSHDA/</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>N</p>
<p><i>Recommendation 3</i> Activities should refocus for the remainder of the project on using the well-proven farmer field school (FFS) approach. The MTR team recommends that the project use FFSs as a vehicle to catalyse wide-scale adoption of SLM technologies, particularly focusing on less labour intensive technologies than those promoted to-date (e.g. to restore soil organic matter content thus enhancing resilience to the impacts of extreme weather events / CC, with reduced tillage / composting / green manures, also value addition and value chains). This will require involvement of FFS experts from elsewhere in the region FAO (e.g. via FAO Bangkok) and training of trainers (ToTs). (Note - FFSs were advocated in the ProDoc and this is agreed with the LTO.) (Conclusion 5) [Timescale – for the</p>	<p><i>Accepted,</i></p>	<p>Action initiated and International expert on FFS has already been hired. LOA with supporting organization has almost been finalized.</p>	<p>FAOR/ PMU</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>N</p>

remainder of the project]					
<i>Outcome 3: Capacity of developing innovative funding mechanisms established in both the public and private sector</i>					
<p><i>Recommendation 4</i></p> <p>There should be a serious review of the Outputs of the IUCN work under Outcome 3 at the end of their current contract (Feb to Nov 2019) by the PMU and PSC and consideration given as to whether it is worthwhile to continue Activities towards this Outcome under the project or to re-focus the remaining budget on the FFSs under Outcome 2 and communications under Outcome 4. The MTR recommend the latter (Conclusion 6). [Timescale – Nov / Dec 2019]</p>	<i>Accepted,</i>	PMU with IUCN had a serious review on this activity and eco system evaluation and innovative financing guideline would be conducted under the limitation of budget allocation to LOA with IUCN. Remaining budget would be allocated for promoting private sector engagement for SLM and GAP implementation and the FFS training. Also unrealistic innovative financing target has to be reduced	FAOR, PMU	Already changed budget and allocated for GAP program and encouraging private sector involvement on SLM	N
<i>Outcome 2: Appropriate technologies for rehabilitation of degraded lands demonstrated and scaled up by strengthened networks of training and extension institutions</i>					
<p><i>Recommendation 5</i></p> <p>Some resolution is urgently needed to compensate land users who are awaiting for promised payments, but for the future, to be sustainable and equitable, the project approach must be to work alongside land users to catalyse adoption of SLMs through supporting them to appreciate that these will</p>	<i>Accepted,</i>	Payment for land users has already been completed. The project would support value addition and value chain development through FFS	FAOR/ PMU	Ongoing	N

<p>bring win-win-win benefits to them in the mid- to long-term, raising yields and reducing yield variability (becoming less reliable due to the impacts of CC). The project should also support value addition and value chains to enable land users to market their surplus produce. {Although land users in the project area are often described as subsistence, most are not strictly subsistence as they are tea growers so are already involved in the cash economy.} (Conclusion 7) [Timescale – by Dec 2019]</p>					
<p><i>Factors Affecting Performance</i></p>					
<p><i>Recommendation 6</i></p> <p>Local informants proposed and the MTR team concur that it would be beneficial if the PMU contract an NGO in each district to supervise on the ground implementation of the farmer field schools and free-up the Project Manager, Project Officer and Field Coordinator to enable them to focus on planning and assume more supervisory roles over the wide project area (Conclusion 8). [Timescale – by Dec 2019]</p>	<p><i>Accepted,</i></p>	<p>Due to lack of funds, one NGO would be hired for implementing FFS for three districts.</p>	<p>FAOR/PMU</p>	<p>March 2020</p>	<p>N</p>
<p><i>Recommendation 07</i></p> <p>Given the many delays which have beset the project (Conclusion 8), provided the PSC agree, FAO should apply to the GEF for a no-cost extension for the project for a period on 12 months from 1 July 2020 to 30 June</p>	<p><i>Accepted,</i></p>	<p>FAO will apply the no-cost extension for one year period.</p>	<p>FAOR</p>	<p>March 2020</p>	

<p>2021. The recommended extension will allow for the completion of the many activities that have been delayed but most importantly will enable the project to use the FFS methodology to enhance the rate of adoption of SLM technologies. [Timescale – decision agreed and documented by Feb 2020]</p>					
<i>Monitoring and Evaluation / Sustainability</i>					
<p>Recommendation 08 The project should retrofit baseline data and monitor the indicators for the Environment and Development Objectives [EO Indicator 1: 50,000 ha under SLM / Indicator 2: Soil loss reduced by 25 % on agricultural land also DO Indicator 1: 10% improvement in soil productivity / Indicator 2: Improved food security for 18,000 households] (Conclusion 9). [Timescale – for the remainder of the project]</p>	<i>partially accepted,</i>	<p>With the delay in implementation and the nature of the soil management, reaching the same target like 10% productivity improvement is not realistic, But the baseline will be prepared for the ongoing sites and the FFS implementation sites. University would be hired to prepare the baseline and final evaluation of FFS and ongoing program.</p>	PMU/LTO	April 2020	N
<p>Recommendations 09 Field staff should introduce participatory M&E for use in all activities with land users (i.e. in the FFSs) to enhance land users' appreciation of the win-win-win (local, national and global) benefits of SLM and encourage uptake – particularly monitoring crop yields with and without SLMs (Conclusion 9). [Timescale – for the remainder of the project]</p>	<i>Accepted,</i>	<p>The participatory monitoring system will be developed for analyzing progress and convince the beneficiaries on</p>	April 2020 onwards		

<p><i>Outcome 4: Enhanced national knowledge base for SLM and project implementation based on results-based management</i></p>					
<p>Recommendation 10</p> <p>The project should increase emphasis on Outcome 4 (currently only 15% of the budget has been spent) with priority given to ensuring that all project knowledge products are prepared in Sinhala and Tamil to ensure wide understanding – possibly also in pictorial / comic book format for people with low levels of literacy – then in English for upload onto for example HIMCAT and WOCAT. For increased community engagement (including children), using drama to act out activities would also be worth-while. To do this, the staff of the already over-stretched PMU should be augmented with a communications officer (perhaps part-time) or consultant (Conclusion 10). [Timescale – for the remainder of the project]</p>	<p><i>Accepted,</i></p>	<p>The project will hire the communication consultant to support for developing communication materials and organizing other events. But instead of full-time communication consultant, he would be handed over further responsibilities on monitoring and documentation.</p>	<p>April 2020</p>		
<p>Recommendation 11</p> <p>The team propose and the MTR endorse that the national SLM website being developed under Outcome 1 is used for knowledge management, awareness raising and dissemination of best practices under Outcome 4 – in Sinhala, Tamil and English, with links to established sites (to avoid re-</p>	<p><i>Accepted,</i></p>	<p>Already done</p>	<p>PMU</p>	<p>Done</p>	<p>N</p>

inventing the wheel) (Conclusion 10). [Timescale – for the remainder of the project]					
<i>Cross-cutting dimensions</i>					
Activities on the ground should include many particularly designed to focus on the needs and interests of women (i.e. tailored for them) and others particularly to attract young people (Conclusion 11). [Timescale – for the remainder of the project]	<i>Accepted,</i>	In the FFS implementation in the home garden, women societies would be encouraged, and youth would be further encouraged with the GAP certification in commercial agriculture.	PMU	Already initiated.	N