

Mid-Term Review of the UNEP-GEF Project

“Establishing the National Framework and Operational Capacity for Implementing the Nagoya Protocol in Timor-Leste”, GEF ID 9703

2019 – 2022





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This mid-term review report has been prepared by an external consultant and is a management-led process to assess performance at the project's mid-point. 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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Establishing the National Framework and Operational Capacity for
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The review consultant hopes that the findings, conclusions, and recommendations will contribute to the successful finalisation of the project, formulation of a next phase and to the continuous improvement of similar projects in other countries and regions.

ABOUT THE REVIEW

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Brief Description: This report is a management-led Mid Term Review of a UNEP/GEF6 project, implemented between 2019 and 2022 (but extension required). The project's overall development goal was to implement the Nagoya Protocol through an access and benefits-sharing framework in Timor Leste and to begin bioprospecting. 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 country.

Key words: Small Island Developing States; SIDS; Nagoya Protocol; ABS; FPIC, Timor Leste, mid-term review

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABS	Access and benefits-sharing
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CNA	Competent National Authority
FPIC	Free prior informed consent
GEF	Global Environment Facility
MAGNT	Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (Australia)
MAT(s)	Mutually agreed terms (of an ABS contract)
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTR	Mid Term Review
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NP	Nagoya Protocol
PMU	Project management unit (in Dili)
Prodoc	Project Document
SC	Steering committee
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
MSME	Micro, small, and medium enterprises
SSE	State Secretary for Environment of Timor Leste
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TL	Timor Leste
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNTL	Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e (or National University of Timor-Leste)

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION TABLE

Table 1. Project Summary

UNEP Sub-programme:	4	UNEP Division/Branch:	Ecosystems Division GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit Biodiversity and Land Branch
Expected Accomplishment(s):	'Institutional capacities and policy and/or legal frameworks enhanced to achieve internationally agreed environmental goals, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs'	Programme of Work Output(s):	Produce and ABS framework, database and CHM. Produce bio-community protocols Produce model agreements Present to parliament. Do a national outreach campaign Begin bioprospecting. Assess bioprospecting opportunity.
SDG(s) and indicator(s)	<p>SDG 1 (No Poverty): Encourage greater cooperation between ministries at all levels, including collaborative research with UNTL on issues holding back the eradication of poverty.</p> <p>ii) SDG 2 (Zero Hunger):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academics, especially UNTL and Victoria University need to do research to identify local varieties and species of seeds and establish seed banks for genetic resources and seed saving programs in every community based on their local seeds calendar. • Need to establish laboratory to test and analyse nutrition value of local food production in Timor-Leste. <p>iii) SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing): Value traditional methods and carry out research on traditional medicines to determine their efficacy.</p> <p>iv) SDG 4 (Quality Education):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is recommended that the government increase financial resources to support tertiary education, both public and private, and invest in appropriate infrastructure i.e. libraries and IT infrastructure for higher education (National Research and Education Network) to improve quality and increase numbers of graduates and timely graduations. • 'Institutional partnerships' are recommended to the universities with institutions in other countries, to facilitate access to resources such that every university has a library, shares research experience etc. <p>v) SDG 15 (Life on Land): Change attitudes and protect biodiversity; Concentrate and promote local knowledge.</p>		
GEF Core Indicator Targets	GEF6/BD-3 Program 8		
Dates of previous project phases:	N/A	Status of future project phases:	N/A

FROM THE PROJECT PIR REPORT (2022):

Project Title:	Establishing the National Framework and Operational Capacity for Implementing the Nagoya Protocol in Timor-Leste
Executing Agency:	National Directorate of Biodiversity - State Secretary of Environment (SSE)
Project partners:	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF); Centre for Climate Change and Biodiversity (CCCB), National University of Timor-Leste; Conservation International (CI);

	European Union (EU); Nimura Genetic Solutions, Ltd;
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Geographical Scope:	Timor Leste
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Participating Countries:	Timor Leste
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GEF project ID:	9703	IMIS number:	
Focal Area(s):	Biodiversity	GEF OP #:	
GEF Strategic Priority/Objective:	GEF6/BD-3 Program 8	GEF approval date*:	7-08-2018
UNEP approval date:	16-08-2018	Date of first disbursement*:	January 20, 2019
Actual start date:	19-10-2019 (first allocation January 2022)	Planned duration:	4 years 2019-2023
Intended completion date*:	December 2024	Actual or Expected completion date:	Unknown
Project Type:	Mid-sized	GEF Allocation*:	US\$ 1,319,863
PPG GEF cost*:		PPG co-financing*:	
Expected MSP/FSP Co-financing*:	US\$ 4,050,000	Total Cost*:	US\$ 5,369,863
Mid-term Review (planned date):	January 2022	Terminal Review/Evaluation (planned date):	N/A
Mid-term Review (actual date):	February-March, 2023	No. of revisions*:	2
Date of last Steering Committee meeting:	January 19, 2023	Date of last Revision*:	April 10, 2023
Disbursement as of 30 June 2022*:	\$200,000	Date of planned financial closure*:	December 2024 (original)
Date of planned completion*:	December 2024	Actual expenditures reported as of 30 June [2022]:	\$164,061
Total co-financing realized as of 31 December 2022	\$89,000 as of June PIR	Actual expenditures entered in IMIS as of 31 December 2022:	\$170,160
Leveraged financing:	None		

Project background

1. This UNEP-led project was funded to establish an access and benefits-sharing framework in Timor Leste, as a part of the GEF Programme 8 to improve the application of the Nagoya Protocol in developing countries. The project is being executed by the State Secretary for Environment of Timor Leste, Biodiversity Directorate. The project also aims to apply the ABS framework in two pilot communities, where initial bioprospecting activities are to occur as a demonstration of the value of implementing the Nagoya Protocol in the country. A major outcome would be Timor Leste acceding to the Nagoya Protocol. GEF has provided >\$1.3 million for this project.

This Review

2. The purpose of this mid-term review (MTR) is to assess the achievements of the project after 2 years (in 2023 actually 3+ years), to determine the challenges, successes, and tasks remaining to ensure project completion, determine any potential risks to sustainability, and to suggest ways and means to complete the project as efficiently and effectively as possible during the final project period. The MTR is meant to assist the stakeholders and GEF to understand the potential for project sustainability and to expedite achieving the outcomes.

Key findings

3. The project is well-aligned with UNEPs programme of work and its Mid-Term Strategy. Globally the project address multiple SDGs and at the regional level is supported by the Timor Leste NBSAP and Biodiversity Decree Law.
4. The theory of change was well-developed and required little change, while the review has suggested several technical changes to the activities listed in the Project Document (prodoc) to conform with the Nagoya Protocol. The quality of the prodoc was rated as 'satisfactory' using the GEF rating tool.
5. More than 80% of the planned activities remain to be started in February 2023. The project has been slow to implement its activities, with initial funding in January of 2020, an inception meeting not until 10 months later, followed by the resignation of the project leader with no replacement until October of 2022. The lack of implementation was also substantially affected by the Covid-19 pandemic during 2021. While progress has been rated in the review as 'unsatisfactory', the new project leader has made considerable progress in just three months and the project is now moving forward as would be expected.
6. At MTR, progress has been made toward two outputs with some early bio-prospecting and compiling of traditional knowledge accomplished by Nimura Genetic Solutions (NGS) at both pilot communities and information materials provided to Parliament towards acceding to the Nagoya Protocol (NP). Efficiency was rated as 'unsatisfactory'.
7. Given the tardy implementation, the project will need to work specifically towards its main outcomes, likely at the expense of not accomplishing some activities as originally planned. In particular, the basis for the ABS framework is required (including the planned database and the clearing house mechanism (CHM) along with the bio-community protocols, training of staff and the competent national authorities (CNAs) about ABS and the framework, and some bioprospecting

accomplished under MATs and FPIC at the two pilot communities. To complete this work the project will require a no-cost extension, which needs to be requested soon the NEA of the project to UNEP.

8. The review found that many of the main partners, who had promised large in-kind commitments to this project, had forgotten those commitments, and in some cases their associated projects were either completed or about to finish.
9. The project is considerably underspent at this late mid-term point, with just over \$170,000 expended by December 2022 for few accomplishments. Financial reporting has been unsatisfactory, requiring extensive input from UNEP, the absence of in-kind reports, and no audits have been done. This situation has largely been resolved, once the new project leader was in place. Expenditures were efficient, however, and there were no complaints noted from suppliers or contractors.
10. Despite the tardy implementation, and assuming that the project can accomplish its main objectives (see para 7 above) the legacy of the project was rated as 'likely' to be sustainable. The rating was based on the stated commitment by senior staff of the executing agency (SSE) to support staff in the biodiversity laboratory and to maintain the CHM and the biodiversity database. Further, presentations to Parliament have resulted in clearer understanding among politicians and improved the likelihood of Timor Leste acceding to the Nagoya Protocol
11. Project management needs greater attention, especially by SSE, as suggested by the long period taken to hire a replacement for the project manager, to replace the biodiversity specialist, engage other experts, and the overall slow progress. Moving forward, there is considerable scope for both executing and implementing agencies in seeking solutions to project issues, such as hiring of staff, in a more expeditious manner and in building a good working relationship.
12. Environmental and social safeguards are in place and monitored satisfactorily; the project is fully aware of gender-related issues and has provided disaggregated data.

Conclusions

13. Timor Leste is motivated to establish an ABS framework for implementing the Nagoya Protocol and this project will enable them to accomplish that objective.
14. Based on the findings from this review, the project demonstrates performance at the 'moderately unsatisfactory' level (a table of ratings against all review criteria is found in the Conclusions section). The project has been hampered by the Covid-19 pandemic, a need for closer more careful management, and the lack of a project leader, a biodiversity specialist and an ABS adviser for >1.5 years.
15. During the review period, the project accomplished two important aspects: developed a series of communication materials about the NP and the proposed ABS framework, and provided these to the Minister and to the Council of Ministries prior to presenting to the Parliament during early 2023, and second, began initial bioprospecting and collection of traditional knowledge at the two pilot communities.
16. The project is currently benefitting from the diligent work by the new project leader (hired October 2022) and other members of the project team. Work has begun towards accomplishing many of the outputs, including through the hiring of a biodiversity expert, a contract to Conservation International (CI), advertising for an ABS specialist, and holding the first meeting of the Steering Committee (January 2023).
17. The project would benefit from an assessment of the capacity and willingness of the original project stakeholders to participate and contribute their in-kind

commitments from 2018. The review found that after the inception meeting no partner had been approached and most had forgotten their commitment to the project. Scoping for other partners with relevant programmes could also be beneficial to the project.

18. If the project can proceed as planned, concentrating on the most important aspects including developing the ABS framework, developing bio-community protocols, staff training, and with further bioprospecting under proper MATs and FPIC, the sustainability and impact are likely to be high.

Lessons Learned

19. Lesson 1: Expeditious replacement of key staff is essential to project implementation. Not doing so has placed this project far behind where it should be at mid-term.
20. Lesson 2: Constant communication with major partners (including with UNEP) is essential to maintain their support, participation, and interest in the project. Communication is crucial to maintaining good relationships among partners and project site visits by the implementing agency can foster good working relationships with government.

Recommendations

21. Recommendation 1: The ToR for the international and national ABS experts should require completion of a full ABS framework by also including the documents noted in this review as missing from the original project document (TK guidelines, ABS user guidelines, user's code of ethical conduct, application form, sectoral guidelines and model clauses).
22. Recommendation 2: The prodoc only requires Steering Committee meetings once per year. However, it will be important to organize another Steering Committee earlier than required to re-establish project direction, re-gain support for the project from partners, and to evaluate membership on the Steering Committee both for conflict of interest and members' current relevance. The project should consider forming a 'technical committee' to assist with advice on project direction.
23. Recommendation 3: Given the delay in the project, conduct an immediate scoping and assessment of potential new partners and projects that may be relevant to assisting and contributing to an ABS framework. It will also be important to clarify with partners their linkages and roles in this project to ensure actual contributions to the results.
24. Recommendation 4: Review the planned activities and realign priorities to focus on the most essential activities for establishing an ABS framework and conducting biodiscovery trials that can be accomplished relative to the remaining budget and seek approval from UNEP for the choices.
25. Recommendation 5: Management at SSE needs to provide improved support to this project to enhance its sustainability and enable the implementation of an ABS framework.

I. INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT OVERVIEW

1. Following from the needs expressed by the post-2010 CBD COPs to improve the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol, one of the main focal areas under GEF 6 was to provide funding to develop the ABS regimes required by the Protocol, especially among developing nations. A successful application to GEF6 Program 8 by UNEP (the implementing agency) was developed to work with the Government of Timor Leste (TL) (executing agency) to lay the groundwork for implementing an ABS regime, and work towards the formal ratification of the Nagoya Protocol by the Government. The 4-year project began with initial funding transferred in January 2020, and an inception workshop in October 2020.

2. Hence, the Government of Timor-Leste, through its National Directorate for Biodiversity under the State Secretary for Environment (SSE), is currently implementing this medium-sized project funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The project is entitled: "Establishing the National Framework and Operational Capacity for Implementing the Nagoya Protocol in Timor-Leste". The project objective is to establish the conditions enabling sustainable access to the genetic resources of Timor-Leste under a legal access and benefits sharing (ABS) framework, which will deliver fair and equitable benefits to its people, while protecting legal and customary ownership and traditional knowledge.

3. To obtain adequate central government support for acceding to the Nagoya Protocol, it is important to demonstrate the potential benefits of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge for national sustainable development, in particular through stimulating research and business interests by building capacity and starting investments in biodiversity research, bio-prospecting, and possibly product development. Through a partnership with Nimura Genetic Solutions (NGS) and supporting by Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) and Ministry of Health, the project aims to build laboratory and research capacity for bio-prospecting, which is expected to deliver monetary and non-monetary benefits to the country and thereby support the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in Timor-Leste in the long term.

4. The project is working with Conservation International (CI) to establish Community Protocols, Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC), and Mutually Agreed Terms (MATs) with local communities at two pilot sites. The establishment of a national database on biodiversity, genetic resources, and associated traditional knowledge, a national ABS clearing house mechanism (CHM), and the development of international partnerships. For the latter, data exchange and capacity building are being developed, according to the project document (prodoc), through partnerships with Centre for Climate Change and Biodiversity, Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e (CCCB-UNTL), EU (through GIZ – Germany), Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT), and Northern Territory Herbarium (NT).

5. UNEP and GEF required a mid-term review (MTR) of this medium-size project (GEF allocation: US \$1,319,863, with \$3.25 million of in-kind support), designed to facilitate the implementation of an ABS framework under the Nagoya Protocol in Timor Leste. The purpose of this MTR is to assess the achievements of the project after 2 years (in 2023, actually 3+ years), to determine the challenges, successes, and tasks remaining to ensure project completion, determine any potential risks to sustainability, and to suggest ways and means to complete the project as efficiently and effectively as possible during the final project period. The MTR is meant to assist the stakeholders and GEF to understand the potential for project sustainability and to expedite achieving the outcomes.

6. This project is behind schedule, largely it appears owing to two issues: the Covid 19 pandemic that reduced the ability of international personnel to work on the project curtailed

within-country work and secondly, the lack of a project leader for a 1.5-year period starting in late 2020 owing to difficulties in replacing this position. The project manager was replaced in October 2022. To enable sustainability, the project may have to be delivered in a compressed timeframe, although GEF has recognized that the pandemic has slowed project deliveries globally, regardless, a no-cost extension is requested. The project needs to carefully assess how the remaining deliverables can be accomplished relative to the remaining budget.

II. PROJECT RESULTS FRAMEWORK

7. The project goal is the establishment of an ABS regime/framework and the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol in Timor Leste. The project was expected to assist the passing into law of the proposed Biodiversity Decree Law, which would more fully support an active ABS regime in the country. This law was passed regardless, in 2022. The project design calls for capacity building on ABS within government and in two selected pilot communities. These latter two communities are planned as locations where models for PIC and MAT agreements can be developed. An international biodiscovery company, NGS, has agreed to work with the project to undertake an assessment of plant species, based on traditional knowledge, that may provide the basis for biochemical product development.

8. There are two project components:

Component 1: Establishment of national legal and institutional framework on ABS, including Traditional knowledge

9. The project will establish the national regulatory and institutional framework for Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) – by not only developing the necessary regulations, guidelines and protocols based on existing procedures and mandates, but also by building awareness and capacity as well as high-level support from policy makers and parliamentarians for acceding to the Nagoya Protocol. Once adopted, the framework will provide the necessary governing regulations and procedures for ABS implementation, and thereby provide legal clarity on access to genetic resources and benefit sharing in Timor-Leste.

10. This component is designed to enable the development of a functioning ABS regime in Timor Leste

11. *Component 2: Operationalization of the Nagoya Protocol on research and monitoring for sustainable utilization of genetic resources*

12. The project will develop the country's capacity for research and monitoring of biological and genetic resources through the establishment of a national database on biodiversity, genetic resources, and associated traditional knowledge (TK), a National ABS Clearing House Mechanism and the development of international partnerships for data exchange and capacity building.

13. This second component was designed to improve the laboratory facilities available for plant testing in Timor Leste, along with developing some of the necessary digital components to maintain information about biodiversity, TK, how an ABS system will operate in the country. In addition, the project is designed to develop an active working relationship with NGS, to help in developing MATs and FPIC and to begin initial genetics research on promising plant species.

14. The full suite of outcomes, outputs and activities (logical framework) are included in the review framework as Annex VI.

15. Original timeline for the project delivery:

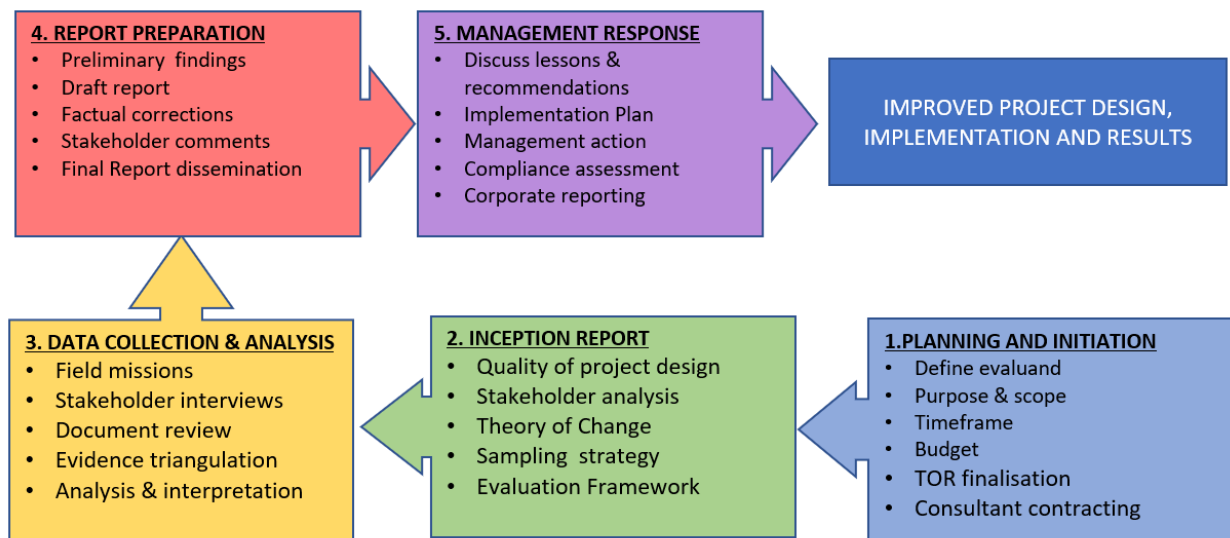
- Proposal to GEF 6: 2017
- GEF endorsement: 2018
- Initial implementation: August, 2019
- First funding allocation: January, 2020
- Inception workshop: October, 2020
- Mid-term review (MTR): February 2023
- Proposed project closing: to be determined with an extension required (original dates Dec. 2022 for technical delivery closure, and financial closure in 2025)

III. REVIEW METHODS

16. This review was conducted following GEF and UNEP protocols (including the project logframe – Annex VI, and using standardised tools - Annex VII and VIII) The review conducted a desk review of the relevant project documents (Annex III), interviews with UNEP staff (and former staff) in Bangkok , a field visit with pre-arranged interviews with project personnel, interviews of contractors, an interview with the biodiscovery company involved in the project, and a community visit to one of the two model communities where ABS protocols (MATs, and FPIC) are being established (Annex II). All interviewees were assured that statements made would not be attributed in the report and that they could speak confidentially if required. Throughout this review process and in the compilation of the Final Review Report efforts will be made to represent the views of both mainstream and more marginalised groups. Data will be collected with respect for ethics and human rights issues. Pictures were taken, and other information gathered at the community was done so after prior informed consent from people, and all discussions remained anonymous, with all information collected according to relevant UNEP guidelines and UN standards of conduct. The MTR followed a participatory approach and made every effort to reach and record the perspectives of all relevant stakeholders. The main stakeholders were consulted on the evaluation process and kept informed of progress throughout the MTR.

17. Quality of project design, nature of external context, effectiveness of implementation, financial management, efficiency, monitoring and reporting, sustainability, and any issues affecting overall project performance were all important components of the MTR. The project was assessed against each of these and rated in accordance with the defined requirements for performance described by the Evaluation Office of UNEP and by the appropriate GEF rating tools, where applicable. The UNEP review criteria rank each section on a six-point scale as: Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Moderately Satisfactory (MS), Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), or Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability and likelihood of impact are rated from: Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU) and nature of external context is rated from Highly Favourable (HF) to Highly Unfavourable (HU). The ratings against each criterion are 'weighted' to derive the Overall Project Performance Rating.

Figure 1. The UNEP review process:



18. The most important aspect of the review was to determine the effectiveness of delivery of outputs and outcomes, likelihood of project success, including the probability of sustainability. To assess financial management, the review assessed whether or not the rate of spending was consistent with the project’s length of implementation at the MTR, the agreed workplan and the delivery of outputs, and if financial reporting and/or auditing requirements were met and to adequate standards. The criteria included an assessment of whether UNEP’s financial management policies and the GEF standards were met. Financial management issues that affected the timely delivery of the project or the quality of its performance were noted. The financial assessment also examined the cost-effectiveness and timeliness of project execution, where cost-effectiveness is the extent to which an intervention achieved, or was expected to achieve, its outputs at the lowest possible cost. The MTR examined the current vs. original budget to determine major changes and their justification.

19. The MTR assessed whether appropriate measures were taken to address any apparent issues in the project design or respond to changes that took place between project approval, the securing of funds, and project mobilisation. In particular, the MTR considered the level of engagement with stakeholder groups at the model communities, the confirmation of partner capacity and development of partnership agreements, awareness within government, and any problems with staffing and financing arrangements. The review noted 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 as for ABS and determined considerations of gender equality.

20. The MTR assessed monitoring and reporting across two sub-categories: monitoring of project implementation, and project reporting. This included a review of the project monitoring plan and if the quality of the information generated by the monitoring system is being used to adapt and improve project execution, achievement of the outcomes, and ensure sustainability. This assessment included examining the quality of the interim reports and the economic reports.

21. Within country, the review determined the degree of engagement by Government agencies in the project and likelihood of Government sustaining the outcomes in the future. Government leadership and involvement is essential for impact and sustainability and so, the MTR asked if the project has an appropriate exit strategy, government willingness to sustain an ABS framework, and measures to mitigate risks to sustainability.

22. Project oversight and leadership are provided by UNEP for this project. The review assessed its effectiveness with regard to: providing leadership towards achieving the planned outcomes, managing team structures, maintaining productive partner relationships (including with SSE, Steering Committee, etc.), maintaining project relevance, communication and collaboration with the PMU, risk management, use of problem-solving, project adaptation to altered circumstances, and overall project execution. The planned role played by the project Steering Committee in advising the project was reviewed against what a steering committee should do and has done including: providing direction and advice, oversight of project delivery, setting timelines and budget review, and evaluate risks.

23. The MTR assessed the extent to which the project is suited to the priorities and policies of the GEF as the main donor and to the recipient Government, as well as the relevance to UNEP's mandate and strategies at the time of project approval, including to UNEP's mid-term strategy and programme of work, and any linkages to other UN regional programmes. Under strategic relevance, an assessment of the complementarity of the project with other current projects addressing the needs of the same target groups was made. Relevance to the UN-SDGs (Agenda 2030) was noted.

IV. STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

24. Stakeholders for this project, as well as for ABS in Timor Leste more generally, were fully identified in the prodoc (Table 2) and the major stakeholders include:

25. 1. National Government (several relevant departments including: SSE, Fisheries, Agriculture, Industry, Health, Customs), including the Centre of Climate Change and Biodiversity)

26. The main functions of these departments will be to develop appropriate policies to implement the new ABS framework, maintain contact with the ABS Focal Point, and in some cases to appoint and train CNAs. At the MTR stage, it was apparent that SSE and the Biodiversity Directorate are aware and supportive of the project at the highest levels in the Department. Overall, the SSE is aware of the need to obtain supportive results from the project, and as a part of their push to see Government ratify and accede to the Nagoya Protocol, they see the development of an ABS framework as essential. The Department has replaced the project leader (October 2022), the project accountant (February 2023), and the biodiversity expert (February 2023), all of which are positive steps toward improved implementation of this ABS project.

27. Other ministries and departments showed a willingness to collaborate on the project and to comply with a broader ABS framework once it is in place. These departments (Agriculture and Fisheries, Health, Education) had little knowledge about the project specifically, or about the Nagoya Protocol. All departments will require training and this is particularly true of the newly appointed ABS Focal Point in Environmental Licencing, who currently has only cursory knowledge about the NP or her role as focal point.

28. Overall, the government departments require training to become more familiar with the NP and an ABS framework, once it is designed. All ministries implicated in the project design (SSE, Fisheries and Agriculture, Health, Education) indicated a continued willingness to work with the project, including conducting research, once they receive some clear direction, but at the time of this MTR no direction had been given.

29. 2. Local government

30. Local Secretary of State for Environment staff have accepted their support roles to assist project implementation at communities, and travelled with the plant collection visits by NGS, as well as with the review consultant to interview the project community members.

A key role of local government staff is to assist in translating from Tetum to either Portuguese or English and to help explain ABS to communities.

31. As with the head office staff, a small number of regional or district staff will require training on ABS in order to be able to deal with biodiscovery projects that are planned for their areas and to assist in ensuring that the correct protocols are followed.

32. 3. Local communities and indigenous people

33. As providers of TK and other information about local genetic resources, community members/indigenous peoples will ultimately have to receive basic information about the expectations under the NP, including aspects pertaining to FPIC and to developing MATs. The project will work with two communities to develop bio-community protocols, but over time, all communities will need to be informed about ABS and how they should participate.

34. The two pilot communities selected for this project were well-chosen based on past work in both areas and their familiarity with partners on this project. Both were very open to the biological collecting done by government staff and NGS during the two visits to each community, and granted permission for the collecting. It was clear from the discussions held at Larisula that the community is interested in the ABS project but was somewhat disappointed in the lack of training so far.

35. 4. University researchers

36. Research staff from the Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e (National University of Timor-Leste - UNTL) were originally included in the project design. However, it appears that two changes have occurred that have affected their role. A university professor who was the ABS Focal Point for Timor Leste over many years was informed that he had been replaced by a government staff. The unintended consequence of this has been that the professor is no longer interested in working with the project, thereby eliminating university presence on the project Steering Committee, at CCCB, and in the field. Secondly, the project was originally in discussion with UNTL as a possible location for the biodiversity lab facility to be partly funded under the project. SSE has, however, decided to maintain the laboratory in house, including providing funding for construction of a new building. It is highly unlikely that the UNTL will participate further on this project.

37. 5. Nimura Genetic Solutions (NGS)

38. Relevant industries (represented in this project by Nimura Genetic Solutions) include pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, natural products, among others, and relevant micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME). The role of NGS in this project is to provide training to government staff on how to collect plant specimens, visit communities to collect plant specimens, develop MATs and FPIC agreements with two pilot communities, comment on the ABS framework, provide lectures on bioprospecting, and participate on the steering committee. NGS's (Dr. Nimura) expert advice remains important to the project completion as does the actual development of agreement with the communities that represent trial cases. NGS does stand to benefit from the project and if they continue on the steering committee, need to recuse themselves during relevant discussions.

39. Once a framework is in place relevant industries and MSMEs should be contacted to ensure compliance with the NP and the newly established framework.

40. 6. The Museum and Art Gallery of Northern Territory (MAGNT - Australia), Charles Darwin University, and Northern Territory Herbarium

41. These three institutions were expected to assist with Component 2, primarily with collections and advising on database development. Their participation as of February 2023 is still uncertain, however, owing to the lack of previous or ongoing communication between the project and any of these groups. The project manager has made one attempt to contact MAGNT and intends to follow-up. Working with any or all of these Australian-based

institutes would benefit the project and staff through the provision of technical assistance and expertise.

42. 7. UNEP

43. UNEP is the project implementing agency and source of the prodoc for this project. The original project supervisor from Bangkok retired in December 2022, and a new person (Dr. Kavita Sharma) will fill the role as of March 1, 2023. UNEP's main role is to provide advice as required towards improving implementation, attend Steering Committee meetings, maintain good relations with the implementing agency, and oversee project implementation.

44. 8. European Union (EU)

45. The EU was originally included in the proposal and on the steering committee as providing a large in-kind support through existing relevant programmes. Unfortunately, the programmes in question ended in 2022, with new projects starting late in 2023. The EU is still willing to participate but clarity on linkages with new projects will need to be determined before the extent of participation can be determined and formalised. These changes may have implications for the level of in-kind support and continued participation on the project.

46. 9. Conservation International (CI)

47. CI was proposed as a project partner, steering committee member, and contractor. CI has a strong presence in Timor Leste, and has experience working with communities; as a result, they are a valuable project stakeholder. They are fully interested in the project, although had forgotten the details of their commitment by 2023, owing to the long delay in project implementation. At the time of the MTR, they had agreed to a contract with the project manager to fulfil their described roles for working at the community level to develop bio-community protocols. Given that they are directly benefitting from the project, they most likely should not be a member of the Steering Committee, could recuse themselves during relevant discussions.

48. 10. Other groups noted as stakeholders in the prodoc

49. Other organisations noted as stakeholders in the prodoc are potential sources of information and advice, and are not actual stakeholders with any interest in the project. These include Universidade Da Paz, Dili University, Herbarium Bogoriense, Bogor Zoology Museum, Bogor Botanical Gardens, IPR, University of Singapore, University Leiden, Universities in Portugal, World Vision Timor-Leste, and With One Seed, UNDP, JICA, GIZ (except through the EU), civil society organisations, Friends of the Earth, RAEBIA, and NaTerra. There has been no contact with these organisations so far and most are unlikely to become involved, in large part because of the compressed time remaining. Future work on databases and collections may, however, may wish to discuss collaboration with some of these organisations.

Table 2. Stakeholder diagram

Stakeholder	Power position in the project results/ implementation and the level of interest	Participation in the project design	Roles and responsibilities in project implementation	Changes in behaviour expected through implementation of the project
Type A: <i>High power / high interest = Key player</i>				
Secretary of State for Environment (SSE)	Provides project management through the PMU, high level of in-kind support in-country Major investment in the project	Strong co-operator in project development	In-country support through office space, vehicles, staff, and finances the laboratory; database and CHM, appoints CNAs	Provides post-project support to and implements the new ABS framework
Nimura Genetic	Trainer on collections and is	Provided direct	Trains SSE and MAF	None, although can

Stakeholder	Power position in the project results/ implementation and the level of interest	Participation in the project design	Roles and responsibilities in project implementation	Changes in behaviour expected through implementation of the project
Solutions	essential for the bioprospecting component, on Steering committee	technical advice to development	staff on collecting and bioprospecting	benefit from bioprospecting
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF)	Provides in-kind support for field work with communities, provides genetic data for tree species	Provided direct technical advice to development	Works with CI at the community level, supports collections and identification of species, research on plant genetics, provides technical advice	Greater attention to genetic resources through application of the NP within the Department
University of Timor Leste	Strong interest in the NP and development of an ABS framework	Provided information on the NP and advice on project direction	Technical advice and assist in collections (but see discussion above)	Original site of laboratory and renewed interest in bioprospecting
Local communities	Strong power over agreeing to participate as pilot communities for this project	Agree to participate	Sites for bio community protocols	Stand to benefit from bioprospecting
<i>Type B: High power/ low interest over the project =Meet their needs</i>				
Conservation International (CI)	Contractor to develop bio-community protocols, appointed to steering committee	Minimal	Work with communities to develop the MATs and FPIC and to develop the community protocols	None
EU	Large level of in-kind support	Provided advice and direction	Coordinate projects with this project to increase ABS relevance of the EU work	None, but does impact the effectiveness of their programmes in forests
<i>Type C: Low power/ high interest over the project= Show consideration</i>				
Centre for Climate Change and Biodiversity (CCCB)	Expected to be involved in supporting database development	Provided advice with respect to database	Support for database (but see discussion above)	None
<i>Type D: Low power /low interest over the project= Least important</i>				
Ministry of Health	Interest in the ABS regime	None	None	Will have a CNA and will have to understand the NP
Ministry of Education, Department of Museums, National Directorate of Arts and Culture	Low interest, provide expertise only	None	Assist with collections	None
Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) and Charles Darwin University	Low interest, provide expertise only	None	Assist with collections and advise on database	None
Northern Territory Herbarium	Low interest, provide expertise only	None	Assist with collections	None

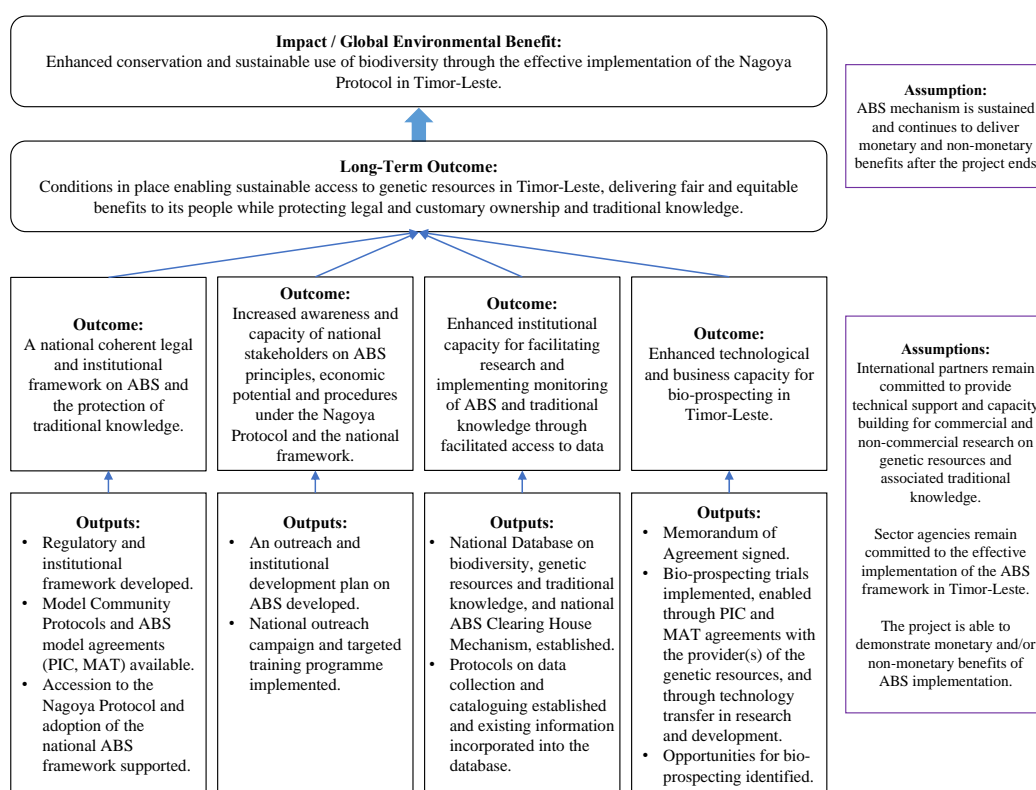
V. THEORY OF CHANGE

50. The prodoc theory of change (ToC) was well-designed and the intended changes to be developed through the project are clearly described in the outcomes and outputs. As a

result the ToC has not been altered, although a word model has been provided that includes aspects of an ABS framework that should be included in the project. The basis for implementing an ABS regime under the Nagoya Protocol is that traditional knowledge is protected but may be made available in a fair and open manner under a contract (MATs) between a user and a provider and with access granted (FPIC). If that knowledge can be used to produce biochemicals, cosmetics, better crop species, etc. then the holders of the knowledge and/or the owners of the land on which the resource was extracted should be compensated fairly. For this to occur, there needs to be a legal system and a framework in place, an understanding of how that system functions, agreements that intellectual property should be rewarded if made available, willing suppliers and users, and confirmed access to the genetic resources.

51. Government has ceded control over genetic resources to communities on their managed and traditional lands, while government owns the resources on public lands. This is an excellent starting point because, in many other countries, governments have claimed ownership of all genetic resources and are in conflict with the communities on this issue.

Figure 3. Theory of change diagram from the prodoc:



52. By including elements missing in the development of a full ABS framework (see Quality of Project Design below), a text only and slightly revised theory of change for this project is suggested as follows:

- If government is willing to put in place policies under the existing laws to support implementing the Nagoya Protocol, and
- If staff and communities receive sufficient training to understand the policies and laws, and the NP itself, and
- If holders of TK feel secure enough to make their knowledge available and understand that their knowledge is valuable, and

- If that TK and information on local biodiversity can be made available through an ABS database for users, but where applicable confidentiality is still protected, and
- If government and communities can agree on a system of FPIC and bio-community protocols, and
- If government, communities, and industries can agree on general sets of MATs specific to the key sectors, that can be revised through negotiation, depending on purpose and individual community, for access and benefits-sharing, and
- If governments produce a code of ethics for researchers, TK guidelines for users, model clauses and sectoral guideline, and application forms, and
- If successful bioprospecting can be demonstrated as having potential for economic gain by NGS, and
- If government can develop and implement a process by which users can apply to conduct biodiscovery under an ABS framework, with instructions for application in an ABS users' manual which refers applicants to other resources, **then:**
- The Nagoya Protocol can be implemented in Timore Leste under a fully supported (by all stakeholders) and legal ABS regime, with Government accession to the NP.

VI. REVIEW FINDINGS

A. Strategic Relevance

Alignment to UNEP's UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (PoW) and Strategic Priorities

53. UNEP has no separate or distinct strategy to implement the Nagoya Protocol. Nevertheless, the project is relevant to the UNEP MTS, aligning with the strategy to sustainably manage resources in a way that benefits local communities. A proper ABS framework in Timor Leste and elsewhere can result in substantial benefits to local communities for careful use of their traditional knowledge about local genetic resources. The project also fits with the 'operating principle' that "UNEP will work with other entities to integrate environment-related, normative frameworks in their respective thematic and/or functional areas", in this case the CBD's Nagoya Protocol; as well as with the principle to develop "strategic regional presence" in Southeast Asia, where many environmental issues need to be resolved and managed.

54. The project is a key contributor to the UNEP objective to "promote policy coherence and strong legal and institutional frameworks to achieve environmental goals in the context of sustainable development". Implementing a framework for ABS ensures and promotes the sustainable use of genetic resources, in a manner that benefits countries and communities. This outcome contributes to enhancing the institutional capacity and policy and/or legal frameworks of Timor Leste to achieve internationally agreed environmental goals, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals – a major outcome for UNEP's MTS.

Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partners Strategic Priorities

55. The project as designed fully meets the GEF-6 Programme 8 component to improve the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol in developing countries. GEF is the only financial donor to the project.

Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Priorities

56. At the global level, project is about environmental governance, indigenous people, local communities, resource management, and poverty reduction, and therefore relates directly to Agenda 2030 SDGs: Targets: 1.4, 10.2, 11.6, 12.4, 14.c, 15.6, 15.8, 15.9, 15.a, 15.c 16.3, 16.6-7, 16.b, 17.9, 17.14 and 17.16. It is fully consistent with the Nagoya Protocol and to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Section 15.

57. Regionally and globally, Timor-Leste harbours significant ecosystems including tropical rainforest, mangroves, wetlands (e.g., Lake Iralalaru basin), and agricultural and marine ecosystems. Approximately 59% of the land area has some type of forest cover, but only 1.7% remains as primary forest, found mainly in Lautem and Covalima municipalities. The Malesian region, to which Timor-Leste belongs, is recognised as a region of high plant biodiversity, with an estimated 41,000 plant species, including 70% of species endemic to that region (Timor Leste NBSAP, 2015). About 10.3% of Timor's flora is thought to comprise endemic species, which is surprisingly high for the relatively small land surface. Timor-Leste's position within Wallacea and the high degree of endemism of its fauna and flora, make the country an attractive location for investigations of biodiversity for science and for natural biologically active substances for medicinal, cosmetic, pharmaceutical, agricultural, and other uses. Timor-Leste is well known to be rich in agricultural crop diversity (or agrobiodiversity), with >500 agricultural crops identified and recorded. Nonetheless, many species or varieties remain unidentified, primarily plant species. Some recorded crops include well-known local varieties of black rice, millet, sweet potato, black mung bean, coffee, and black soybean.

58. Nationally, the country became a party to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in 2003, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2006, and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 2007. In 2011, it published its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) and its Fourth National Report to the CBD, and in 2015, its Fifth National Report to the CBD, as well as a revised edition (2015) of the NBSAP 2011-2020. The government of Timor-Leste is, therefore, committed to address the environmental and conservation challenges facing the nation, and to achieve global environmental benefits.

59. Although Timor-Leste has not yet acceded to the "Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization", the country has taken important steps towards its implementation. In particular, the NBSAP includes Strategic Action 16 on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS); the recently approved Biodiversity Decree Law (2017), in its Chapter 7 on 'Genetic resources and traditional knowledge', lays the legal foundation for the development of the national ABS framework. Nevertheless, the human and institutional capacities to develop and implement ABS in Timor-Leste are still limited, and the country wishes to move ahead by implementing ABS in line with its NBSAP and the Biodiversity Decree Law, and hence the importance of this project.

60. Biodiversity loss is occurring in the country, and given the significance and uniqueness of the endemic biodiversity, this project is aimed at assisting local communities to derive some value from the resources that they conserve. Few investments are being made in Timor-Leste in biodiversity conservation and biodiversity-friendly businesses, including bio-prospecting for genetic resources, owing to the combined lack of basic knowledge on access and benefit sharing mechanisms, technology/capacity, and 'proof-of-concept' regarding the economic opportunities, value and sustainable development potential of biological resources.

61. The Biodiversity Decree Law (2022) establishes the authorities and duties for the relevant Ministries to regulate access to genetic resources, and provides guidance on benefits sharing, including authorization for the establishment of a permit system. The

detailed regulations, policies, and other institutional arrangements for the implementation of these provisions still need to be developed, and are the focus of this project.

Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence

62. The GEF has supported two projects that preceded and provided impetus for this project. One of these projects is the 'Support to GEF Eligible Parties (LDCs & SIDs) for the Revision of the NBSAPs and Development of Fifth National Report to the CBD - Phase II'. This project started in 2011 and completed the revised NBSAP in February 2015, along with the Fifth National Report to the CBD. The other project is the completed UNEP-GEF-ASEAN Project: 'Building Capacity for Regionally Harmonized National Processes for Implementing CBD Provisions on Access to Genetic Resources and Sharing of Benefits'. In Timor-Leste, this project focussed on promoting awareness and capacity building on ABS. It generated multi-stakeholder interest in the concept of ABS and also provided background reviews of the legislative and regulatory requirements for its implementation. The main findings from these activities have been incorporated in the background review for this document and also in the design of the increment in the alternative scenario, including continuing collaboration with the key national partners under this project.

63. This project is in parallel with the GEF-funded project 'Securing the long-term conservation of Timor-Leste's biodiversity and ecosystem services through the establishment of a functioning National Protected Area Network and the improvement of natural resource management in priority catchment corridor', to be executed by Conservation International through MAF and SSE. The project aims to establish a functional National Protected Area Network, including through PES mechanisms to monetarise the protection and sustainable use of genetic resources, as well as its output on business plans for protected areas, which could include national modalities for access to and development of genetic resources held in these high biodiversity areas. The project also aims to strengthen the management of catchment areas as pilot sites to demonstrate how to manage protected areas and corridors outside PAs, by building the capacity of local communities to manage their own resources in accordance with the collaborative management requirements of the country. The proposed ABS project will extend the knowledge base upon which this PA project is to be built, incorporating traditional knowledge and providing incentives for a national biodiversity conservation strategy that recognizes the need for sustainable use of the intrinsic values of land and ecosystems as a complement to the PA system.

64. The other relevant GEF project is the USD 1.45 million GEF-UNDP project on 'Strengthening targeted national capacities to improve decision-making and mainstream global environmental obligations into national development priorities', starting in 2018. This Cross-Cutting Capacity Development project will be executed in collaboration with SSE and has several linkages with this GEF ABS project. In particular, the project aims to strengthen systems and processes for managing key environmental data and information across key ministries, to enhance coordination of technical directorates, to mainstream global environmental obligations into sectoral policies and programmes, and to enhance public awareness of the value of the global environment and the Rio Conventions. The ABS project will coordinate closely with this project, in particular with regard to the development of information management systems, capacity building, awareness raising on the Rio Conventions – specific to ABS, and the legal and regulatory framework.

65. The ABS project is also engaging with several other projects, in particular for their knowledge and research on native tree and crop varieties and on sea life, as well as market access for any biodiscoveries made under the GEF project. These include the 'Sustainable Agriculture Productivity Improvement Project (SAPIP)', funded through the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP), with World Bank, the 'National Community Forestry Programme', which aims to strengthen Community-Based Natural Resource Management

(CBNRM) in part to address biodiversity loss and forest degradation. The main expected outcome of the latter programme is strengthened national forest policy by promoting nationwide implementation of community forestry. The 'With One Seed Project' will be consulted on the development of model Community Protocols and other project activities; the Coral Triangle Center (CTC) is implementing the project "Establish and Scale-up Atauro Island Marine Protected Area, Timor-Leste", working with local partners to create a series of five marine protected areas surrounding the island and to create a functioning network. As part of this effort, CTC is undertaking a large awareness campaign to sensitize local communities to the value of their marine resources. Atauro is one of the two communities selected under this ABS project. 'AI-Com' is a collaborative research programme between the Timor-Leste Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the National University of Timor-Leste, World Vision Timor Leste, and the University of Western Australia. That project was designed to improve agricultural productivity and profitability in communities in Timor Leste by (a) addressing technical and social impediments to annual crop intensification, and (b) establishing fodder tree legumes and sandalwood as sustainable options for income and land management. The European Union is funding, jointly with the German BMZ, the 'Partnership for Sustainable Agro-Forestry (PSAF) project', a 5-year project starting in 2018 and implemented by GIZ. The PSAF aims to "contribute to a peaceful, inclusive and sustainable development in Timor-Leste through improved rural access, the creation of employment, economic and domestic revenue opportunities, and a durable reduction in food insecurity and malnutrition in rural areas". Linkage here is with respect to improving community livelihoods. While that project is soon ending, a follow-up programme is planned, with which the project will form linkages. Similarly, both UNDP and JICA have ongoing community resources management projects, with which the project can develop partnerships.

66. The project design was well-aware of, and related directly to complementary programmes in Timor Leste. During the inception stage, other projects and realignments with projects mentioned in the prodoc were brought forward and noted then as possibly relevant. With the 2+ years that have passed since inception, several of the relevant projects have either ended or soon will. The project will need to look closely at the current partnerships as described in the prodoc and in the logframe to determine their current relevance, remaining possibility for cooperation, and possibly look elsewhere for new partnerships that could be fostered, for example the ongoing work in community-based resources management under UNDP and JICA.

Rating for Strategic Relevance: Highly satisfactory

B. Quality of Project Design

67. The original project document (prodoc) contained well-researched background material on Timor Leste and is well-written. The proposed outcomes, outputs and required activities were clear and contained some of the main technical aspects for an ABS management programme. There are, however, several important aspects for a full ABS framework that were not included in the project design. Moving forward, the project would be considerably stronger if it included the following key aspects for implementing an ABS regime in Timor Leste: Traditional Knowledge Guidelines, researcher's code of ethics, best practices manual, sectoral guidelines (for key industries – pharmaceuticals, agriculture, and biotechnology), model ABS clauses by main sectors, a biodiscovery narrative, a guidance for intellectual property rights, an ABS user's manual, ABS permit application form, and a design for a certificate of compliance. If the project engages an international ABS specialist, these documents could be included as a part of that contract. The local clearing house mechanism (CHM) is valuable but not required by the Protocol, and it is not meant nor required to be linked to the CBD's CHM. The prodoc refers to "competent sector authorities",

but this is not a term used in the NP; therefore, it is unclear to what activity 1.1.1.4 refers. It is conceivable that this activity could refer to sectoral 'Competent National Authorities', which is an available option (i.e., >1 CNA) under the NP. Finally, there is no mention of the requirement for a formal "publishing authority" to be appointed, or a mechanism to appoint formally the CNA(s). A staff member within SSE can easily be appointed as publishing authority. The missing/required documents could be produced by the (inter)national ABS expert to be contracted by the project and should be written into that ToR, with the exception that a TK expert should be engaged on a short contract to write the required TK guidelines. Activities 1.1.1.8, 1.1.1.9, 1.1.2.4, 1.1.3.2, and 2.1.1.4 have been re-written slightly to more correctly reflect the requirements and language used by the Nagoya Protocol (see Annex VI). Guidance for intellectual property rights should also be provided.

68. The proposal placed two organisations, termed "partners", and shown as providing in-kind support, but both also stand to benefit monetarily from the project. Placing these two groups (NGS and CI) on the Project Steering Committee represents a certain level of conflict of interest because, while they are partners, that Committee will be involved in deciding how much funding each might receive in contracts or other benefits from the project. As a result, project governance at the time of review was rated as 'unsatisfactory'. This situation can be readily remedied by the PMU by changing the official Steering Committee membership, or by ensuring that both groups recuse themselves during discussions at SC meetings pertaining to their involvement.

69. All relevant safeguards were noted in the prodoc and are reviewed here (Section G, Annex VII).

70. The overall project design was rated as 'satisfactory' with a score of ca. 5.0 at inception. This assessment did not change appreciably as a result of the work on the MTR and field visit (Tables 4 and 5).

Table 4. Project design notes and scores

A.	Operating Context		YES/NO	Comments/Implications for the review design	Section Rating: <i>(see footnote 2)</i>
1	Does the project document identify any unusually challenging operational factors that are likely to negatively affect project performance?	i) Ongoing/high likelihood of conflict?	No		6
		ii) Ongoing/high likelihood of natural disaster?	No		
		iii) Ongoing/high likelihood of change in national government?	Yes	Not seen as a major problem	
B.	Project Preparation		YES/NO	Comments/Implications for the review design	Section Rating: <i>(see footnote 2)</i>
2	Does the project document entail clear and adequate problem and situation analyses?		Yes		5
3	Does the project document include a clear and adequate stakeholder analysis, including by gender/minority groupings or indigenous peoples?		No	Yes the analysis is comprehensive. Many groups are included as stakeholders but are only possible advisors. There is no specific mention of gender among stakeholders but gender considerations are prominent throughout the prodoc.	
4	<i>If yes to Q3: Does the project document provide a description of stakeholder consultation/participation during project design process? (If yes, were any key groups overlooked: government, private sector, civil society, gendered groups and those who will potentially be negatively affected)</i>		Yes	Meetings either bilateral or group were held. More need to be held to regain support.	
5	Does the project document identify concerns with respect to human rights, including in relation to sustainable development? (e.g. integrated approach to human/natural systems; gender perspectives, rights of indigenous people).		Yes	ABS is mostly about improving human rights.	
C	Strategic Relevance		YES/NO	Comments/Implications for the review design	
6	Is the project document clear in terms of its alignment and relevance to:	i) UNEP MTS, PoW and Strategic Priorities (including Bali Strategic Plan and South-South Cooperation)	Yes	The prodoc mentions south cooperation and describes meshing with appropriate UNEP policies.	6

		ii) GEF/Donor strategic priorities	Yes	GEF6, Programme 8	
		iii) Regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities?	Yes	Well considered in the prodoc	
		iv. Complementarity with other interventions	Yes		
D	Intended Results and Causality		YES/NO	Comments/Implications for the review design	Section Rating:
7	Are the causal pathways from project outputs (Availability of goods and services to intended beneficiaries) through outcomes (changes in stakeholder behaviour) towards impacts (long lasting, collective change of state) clearly and convincingly described in either the logframe or the TOC? <i>(NOTE if there is no TOC in the project design documents a reconstructed TOC at Review Inception will be needed)</i>		Yes	Yes, but the project is missing key ABS elements as described in the text	5
8	Are impact drivers and assumptions clearly described for each key causal pathway?		Yes		
9	Are the roles of key actors and stakeholders, including gendered/minority groups, clearly described for each key causal pathway?		Yes		
10	Are the outcomes realistic with respect to the timeframe and scale of the intervention?		Yes		
E	Logical Framework and Monitoring		YES/NO	Comments/Implications for the review design	Section Rating:
11	Does the logical framework ...	i) Capture the key elements of the Theory of Change/ intervention logic for the project?	Yes	Yes but missing key elements for ABS	4
		ii) Have appropriate and 'SMART' results at output level?	Yes		
		iii) Have appropriate and 'SMART' results at outcome level?	Yes		
		iv) Reflect the project's scope of work and ambitions?	No	Mostly, but missing several important ABS framework components	
12	Is there baseline information in relation to key performance indicators?		Yes		
13	Has the desired level of achievement (targets) been specified		Yes		

	for indicators of outputs and outcomes?			
14	Are the milestones in the monitoring plan appropriate and sufficient to track progress and foster management towards outputs and outcomes?	Yes		
15	Have responsibilities for monitoring activities been made clear?	Yes		
16	Has a budget been allocated for monitoring project progress?	Yes		
17	Is the workplan clear, adequate and realistic? (e.g. Adequate time between capacity building and take up etc)	Yes		
F	Governance and Supervision Arrangements	YES/NO	Comments/Implications for the review design	Section Rating:
18	Is the project governance and supervision model comprehensive, clear and appropriate? (Steering Committee, partner consultations etc.)	No	The SC includes two members who stand to benefit from the project, at the time of the MTR, roles of some partners are unclear.	2
19	Are roles and responsibilities within UNEP clearly defined? (If there are no stated responsibilities for UNEP Regional Offices, note where Regional Offices should be consulted prior to, and during, the evaluation)	Yes		
G	Partnerships	YES/NO	Comments/Implications for the review design	Section Rating:
20	Have the capacities of partners been adequately assessed? (CHECK if partner capacity was assessed during inception/mobilisation where partners were either not known or changed after project design approval)	Yes		4
21	Are the roles and responsibilities of external partners properly specified and appropriate to their capacities?	No	Connections to several partners were unclear in terms of impact on an ABS regime or this project at the time of MTR	
H	Learning, Communication and Outreach	YES/NO	Comments/Implications for the review design	Section Rating:
22	Does the project have a clear and adequate knowledge management approach?	Yes		6
23	Has the project identified appropriate methods for communication with key stakeholders, including gendered/minority groups, during the project life? If yes, do the plans build on an analysis of existing communication channels and networks used by key stakeholders?	Yes		
24	Are plans in place for dissemination of results and lesson sharing at the end of the project? If yes, do they build on an analysis of existing communication channels and networks?	Yes/yes		

I	Financial Planning / Budgeting	YES/NO	Comments/Implications for the review design	Section Rating:
25	Are the budgets / financial planning adequate at design stage? <i>(coherence of the budget, do figures add up etc.)</i>	Yes	Budget was revised and approved by UNEP	4
26	Is the resource mobilization strategy reasonable/realistic? <i>(E.g. If the expectations are over-ambitious the delivery of the project outcomes may be undermined or if under-ambitious may lead to repeated no cost extensions)</i>	No	There is uncertainty pertaining to exact contributions by partners, in particular associated government agencies (MAF, Health) and the EU	
J	Efficiency	YES/NO	Comments/Implications for the review design	Section Rating:
27	Has the project been appropriately designed/adapted in relation to the duration and/or levels of secured funding?	No	As described, the project has missed some key aspects of a full ABS strategy.	5
28	Does the project design make use of / build upon pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. to increase project efficiency?	No	Models of other ABS projects could have been used	
29	Does the project document refer to any value for money strategies (i.e. increasing economy, efficiency and/or cost-effectiveness)?	Yes	Bioprospecting needs to be done under MAT and FPIC	
30	Has the project been extended beyond its original end date? <i>(If yes, explore the reasons for delays and no-cost extensions during the evaluation)</i>	Yes	Main factors: Covid-19, inability to engage a project leader, ineffective communication between UNEP and SSE, poor QERs.	
K	Risk identification and Social Safeguards	YES/NO	Comments/Implications for the review design	Section Rating:
31	Are risks appropriately identified in both the TOC/logic framework and the risk table? <i>(If no, include key assumptions in reconstructed TOC at Evaluation Inception)</i>	Yes		6
32	Are potentially negative environmental, economic and social impacts of the project identified and is the mitigation strategy adequate? <i>(consider unintended impacts)</i>	Yes		
33	Does the project have adequate mechanisms to reduce its negative environmental foot-print? <i>(including in relation to project management and work implemented by UNEP partners)</i>	Yes	Some risks were reassessed by the new PL	
L	Sustainability / Replication and Catalytic Effects	YES/NO	Comments/Implications for the review design <i>(e.g. questions, TOC assumptions and drivers, methods and approaches, key respondents etc)</i>	Section Rating:

34	Did the design address any/all of the following: socio-political, financial, institutional and environmental sustainability issues?	Yes		4
35	Was there a credible sustainability strategy and/or appropriate exit strategy at design stage?	Yes	Could have been more clear as to departmental roles	
36	Does the project design present strategies to promote/support scaling up, replication and/or catalytic action? <i>(if yes, capture this feature in the reconstructed TOC at Review Inception)</i>	Yes	Concern expressed by CI about how to get information to the many other communities	
M	Identified Project Design Weaknesses/Gaps	YES/NO	Comments/Implications for the review design	Section Rating:
37	Were recommendations made by the PRC adopted in the final project design? If no, what were the critical issues raised by PRC that were not addressed.	yes		
38	Were there any critical issues not flagged by PRC? (If yes, what were they?)	Yes	Missing elements of an ABS framework	2
N	Gender Marker Score	SCORE	Comments	No rating applicable
39	<p>What is the Gender Marker Score applied by UNEP during project approval? <i>(This applies for projects approved from 2017 onwards)</i></p> <p>UNEP Gender Scoring: 0 = gender blind: Gender relevance is evident but not at all reflected in the project document. 1 = gender partially mainstreamed: Gender is reflected in the context, implementation, logframe, or the budget. 2a = gender well mainstreamed throughout: Gender is reflected in the context, implementation, logframe, and the budget. 2b = targeted action on gender: (to advance gender equity): the principle purpose of the project is to advance gender equality. n/a = gender is not considered applicable: A gender analysis reveals that the project does not have direct interactions with, and/or impacts on, people. Therefore, gender is considered not applicable.</p>		2a	

71. Note that the ratings in the above and the summary table below differ slightly from those of the inception report. These minor changes reflect better information based on the MTR. As noted in the inception report the two areas requiring improvement can readily be accomplished by the international ABS expert and the project leader.

Table 5. Summary table for the design quality rating

	SECTION	SELECT RATING	SCORE (1-6)	WEIGHTING	TOTAL (Rating x Weighting/10)
A	Operating Context	Highly Satisfactory	6	0.4	0.24
B	Project Preparation	Satisfactory	5	1.2	0.6
C	Strategic Relevance	Highly Satisfactory	6	0.8	0.48
D	Intended Results and Causality	Satisfactory	5	1.6	0.8
E	Logical Framework and Monitoring	Moderately Satisfactory	4	0.8	0.32
F	Governance and Supervision Arrangements	Unsatisfactory	2	0.4	0.08
G	Partnerships	Satisfactory	5	0.8	0.4
H	Learning, Communication and Outreach	Highly Satisfactory	6	0.4	0.24
I	Financial Planning / Budgeting	Moderately Satisfactory	4	0.4	0.16
J	Efficiency	Satisfactory	5	0.8	0.4
K	Risk identification and Social Safeguards	Highly Satisfactory	6	0.8	0.48
L	Sustainability / Replication and Catalytic Effects	Moderately Satisfactory	4	1.2	0.48
M	Identified Project Design Weaknesses/Gaps	Unsatisfactory	2	0.4	0.08
				TOTAL SCORE	4.76

C. Effectiveness

Availability of Outputs

72. This project is substantially behind the original schedule for delivery owing to several factors including the Covid-19 pandemic, lack of a project leader for an extended period, communications between agencies, poor quality of some of the early QERs, a biodiversity expert who could not provide the required deliverables (in part because of Covid-19 travel restrictions), and the absence of a project leader. No Steering Committee meetings (required at least annually) were held until January 2023, at which point, given the time that had past and low level of accomplishments, the Committee members needed to be reminded of their commitments to, and roles in supporting the project. This also meant that no advice was provided by that committee. As a result of all these issues, only a few of the outputs have been partially accomplished. Most of the activities (36 of 46 planned) remain to be started, and several activities were given a lower % accomplishment rating in this MTR (by the project leader) than was reported in the June 2022 PIR (Annex VI).

73. On the positive side, work was begun by NGS towards completing output 2.1.2 by sampling some of the vegetation and compiling traditional knowledge at the two pilot communities. Preferably, this should have come after the MATs and FPIC were in place at both locations. However, given that the project is behind, the communities freely gave permission, and staff received important training, the informality of these visits accomplished some of the project main activities. The fieldwork was done with an MOU in place that closely resembles a MAT agreement, but it was between NGS and Government, and not with the two communities. Any future collections and use of TK should preferably occur with MAT and FPIC agreements in place, as was required in the project design. NGS visited both pilot communities twice after signing the MOU with the SSE, and provided some training to government staff. There was no work plan provided to the project, but community ABS and plant collection workshops were conducted in 2022 at Suco Larisula with 33 participants (11 women), and at Suco Macadadi, Atauro Municipality with 33 participants 33 (16 women). Plant collecting was done with the permission of the communities. There were excellent results from the collections with the development of printed booklets illustrating plant species collected from the both communities. 56 species were collected in Suco Larisula, and another 51 species were collected in Suco Macadadi. Staff reported that they received excellent instruction. Overall, the presence and potential to learn about bioprospecting from NGS continues to be important to the delivery of this project.

74. A main activity of output 1.1.4 is to have Timor Leste accede to, and implement the Nagoya Protocol. Towards that end, the Minister and some parliamentarians have been made aware of the importance of establishing an ABS framework through presentations by PMU staff. The new ABS Focal Point has these informational materials and is currently working towards providing further presentations to parliament and individual politicians. The Secretary of State for the Environment will share and present these materials to the Council of Ministries prior to presenting to the Parliament during Q1, 2023. The Biodiversity Decree Law was passed in 2022, with explicit support for such a framework. There are indications from senior SSE staff that the Government will move to accede to the Nagoya Protocol in 2023, although they did note that there is an imminent election and some of this work to educate parliamentarians would need to start again if the government changes.

75. A new project leader for the project was hired in October 2022. The new person is well-qualified, highly motivated, and has moved quickly to assemble a project team, including replacing the financial officer, holding an initial Steering Committee meeting in

January 2023, revising some aspects of the risk framework, hiring a biodiversity expert, formalising the human resources plan, developing the monitoring plan and procurement plan, and developing a budget for the 2023-24 workplan. Further, she has arranged the important contract with CI to work directly with the communities to develop the bio-community protocols, as well as to develop the model MATs and FPIC agreements. A project staff member is now working on the communications plan and a communications expert will be hired in 2023. The replacement biodiversity expert will be on staff in March, 2023 and the ToR has been advertised for an international ABS consultant. As a result of these recent efforts, the project has made significant advances during the past 3 months.

76. The project has also made some progress with possible partners and held the first Steering Committee meeting in January 2023. For example, the project leader has extensively communicated with the Sarawak Biodiversity Centre, and SSE and PMU staff visited there in early March to learn first-hand about a biodiversity database and how NGS assisted its development. Preliminary efforts to re-contact MAGNT were done but no concrete actions have occurred. From the initial Steering Committee meeting in January 2023 and in-person interviews for the MTR, it was clear that most stakeholders had forgotten about their commitments to the project because so much time has passed between the inception meeting and contact from the PMU. The project will need to reaffirm these in-kind commitments and ensure current relevance to the ABS project.

77. The project needs to move forward quickly by focussing on the most important aspects of developing an ABS framework for Timor Leste. These aspects include:

- Holding another early meeting of the Steering Committee in early 2023 (despite only an annual requirement), with UNEP presence, specifically to provide improved project direction and determine realistic in-kind contributions from partners, or
- consider appointing a 'technical committee' that would meet as required to provide direction to the project;
- developing the MAT and FPIC models for the two pilot communities, along with the appropriate bio-community protocols,
- producing the key support documents for an ABS framework (model clauses, ABS guidelines, code of ethics, application forms, protocols, TK guidelines, etc),
- educating the two trial communities about ABS and further bioprospecting collections with MATs and PIC agreements in place,
- completing the biodiversity laboratory, and training the laboratory staff,
- training trainers within the SSE main and local offices about ABS, so that they can inform other communities,
- training the ABS Focal Point on the requirements and duties required by the Nagoya Protocol,
- appointing and training the country's CNA(s),
- reaffirming and formalising the support of original or possible new relevant project partners with respect to their participation and contributions (specifically the EU, the Departments of Forestry and Agriculture) and discussing possible linkages to ongoing work of JICA and UNDP,
- Developing the ABS database and a CHM at SSE, and

- Re-affirming commitment and obtaining assistance and advice from MAGNT and the NT Herbarium.

78. Ultimate effectiveness, sustainability, and impact rests on accomplishing these most crucial aspects (drivers) of the project design. To achieve this, a no-cost project extension will be required and the project manager will need to reallocate the remaining funding resources to focus on the main activities, while eliminating some of the less important planned activities in the prodoc (see Annex VI). Based on the criteria provided, the rating for output achievement by January 2023 is “unsatisfactory”. The GEF ABS Tracking Tool, which indicates progress towards full implementation of the NP, rated the project/country as scoring 5 (vs. perfect score of 15, and vs. 4 at inception).

Achievement of Project Outcomes

79. At the MTR stage, it is not possible to assess the possible achievement of the project outcomes because there has been only minimal progress on most of the outputs. Most certainly, however, an ABS framework for Timor Leste can be developed with the remainder of the funding, now that a project team is in place and functioning as a unit. Based on the GEF criteria provided, the rating for achieving project outcomes is “moderately unsatisfactory”.

Achievement of Likelihood of Impact

80. At the MTR stage, impact at the community level was achieved through the efforts of NGS and SSE staff, and through the training provided to several SSE staff by NGS. Impact was also achieved through briefings to the Minister and some politicians, with documents provided by the PMU to the Ministry of Institutional Reform and Parliamentarian Affairs, informing of the needs to accede to the NP and the value of an ABS framework. SSE staff are reasonably confident that the country will sign onto the NP, even if there is a change in government later this year. These accomplishments represent partial outcome achievement.

81. Many of the drivers for high impact are not yet in place although these are now in the planning stages and the theory of change still holds. The main project drivers that have been implemented include information provided to politicians, the contract to CI, the ToR for the ABS database development, the ToR for the international ABS specialist, the work of NGS on collecting and training, hiring the new biodiversity specialist, and certainty about constructing and staffing the biodiversity laboratory, including purchase of supplies and equipment. Assuming GEF and UNEP grant the appropriate extension, remaining drivers towards impact can be achieved if the ABS framework is completed along with the development of a database, the CHM, model MATs and FPIC, appointing the CNAs, and staff training. With those aspects completed, the project will have accomplished its most important outputs for the country. These outputs can be accomplished with time appropriately allocated relative to the remaining funding, suggesting that project impact can still be substantial and leave a formal sustainable legacy.

82. At MTR and based on the criteria provided, the rating for likelihood of impact can only be ranked as “unlikely”. This rating, however, does not reflect the level of commitment and hard work within the current PMU, which has elevated the likelihood of long-term impact, nor does it indicate the commitment of Government to establish its ABS framework.

83. Using the GEF tool “Rating the likelihood of impact”, provided a rating of ‘Moderately likely’ to achieve impact. This rating reflected directly the lack of outputs achieved by the MTR stage, which is strongly influential for the tool. This result too, however, should not be confused with the significantly increased likelihood of impact under the project’s new leadership.

Rating for Effectiveness: Unsatisfactory

D. Financial Management

Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures

84. Evidence was found for several issues related to adherence to UNEP's policies and procedures because most QERs were not satisfactory and did not fulfil the requirements. The only contractor, project staff, and the expenses for trips undertaken by NGS were all paid as required, however the trips were more expensive than planned, owing to a large number of SSE staff attending, for which UNEP raised concerns. Budget revisions were approved by UNEP, including up to 2023. Some financial reports were completed, although for 2021, the quarterly report was a single annual document, there were two reports missing from 2022, no co-financing reports were available, and no audits have been done as required up to 2023. Problems with the quality with many of the QERs required corrections to be done, with these reports ultimately written by UNEP instead of by the finance officer, and so resulted in delays in submission. Adherence to UNEP requirements was rated as "unsatisfactory". Certain large changes in budget from the original plan to that in 2023 reflected the increased salary for the project manager and higher than planned travel costs for NGS and contractor salaries; these changes were approved by UNEP.

Completeness of Financial Information

85. The financial information is mostly complete as of December 2022, but there were no co-financing reporting after (or prior to) July 2022 where the single figure of 89K was reported. There was also no project auditing done, as required under the prodoc. Report completion was as a result on UNEP having to re-write most of these reports.

86. The project is considerably underspent at this late mid-term point (Table 6) and there has been minimal co-financing expended under the project (Table 7). The first financial audit will be conducted in early 2023 (Table 8). Financial reporting is rated as "unsatisfactory" based on the GEF criteria provided, and the missing reports are noted here.

Table 6. Expenditure by Outcome/Output at MTR (data covers to December 2022*, and 'planned' assumes that the project should have ended in Dec. 2022)

Component/sub-component/output <i>All figures as USD</i>	Estimated cost at design**	Actual Cost/ expenditure***	Expenditure ratio (actual/planned)
Component 1 / Outcome 1	294,000	22,170	0.07
Component 1 / Outcome 2	221,400	31,170	0.06
Component 2 / Outcome 1	244,000	64,650	0.26
Component 2 / Outcome 2	440,475	52,170	0.12

*From M&E spreadsheet by project leader and 2022 QER

**From the file: "Appendix 4, 1, 2, 6 and 12–Timetable, Budget, Co-financing, M&E Plan and Procurement Plan_Version 21 June 2018-Clean.xls"

*** In the absence of a December 2022 QER, these are approximate values based on the data available to the review; PMU staff salaries were apportioned equally across the 4 outcomes

Table 7. Co-financing Table* (expenditures taken from the PIR 2022, to June 2022 only)

Co-financing (Type/Source)	UN Environment own Financing (US\$1,000)		Government (US\$1,000)		Other** (All co-financing sources to be identified) (US\$1,000)		Total (US\$1,000)		Total Disbursed (US\$1,000)
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	
- Grants			800				800		
- Loans									
- Credits									
- Equity investments									
- In-kind support	100		1,246		1,904		3,250		89 (Gov't only)
- Other (**)									
-									
Totals	100		2,046		1,904		4,050		89

*From the file: "Appendix 4, 1, 2, 6 and 12–Timetable, Budget, Co-financing, M&E Plan and Procurement Plan_Version 21 June 2018-Clean.xls"

** CI = 454,000 in kind, NGS = 250,000 in kind, EU = 1,100,000 in kind, UNTL = 100,000 in kind, Government 1,346,000.

Table 8. Financial Management Table

NON-GEF AND GEF PROJECTS			
Financial management components:		Rating	Evidence/ Comments
1. Adherence to UNEP's policies and procedures:		U	UNEP re-wrote most of the QERs and the in-kind reports are missing; not audits done until 2023
Any evidence that indicates shortcomings in the project's adherence ¹ to UNEP or donor policies, procedures or rules		Yes	As above
2. Completeness of project financial information ² :		S	Based on the criteria below and as a result of UNEP redoing reports
Provision of key documents to the reviewer (based on the responses to A-H below)			
A.	Co-financing and Project Cost's tables at design (by budget lines)	Yes	Clearly presented in an Excel spreadsheet for component costs
B.	Revisions to the budget	Yes	Reallocations were made to several line items in the revised Aug '22 budget
C.	All relevant project legal agreements (e.g., SSFA, PCA, ICA)	Yes	
D.	Proof of fund transfers	Yes	QERs show incoming funds

¹ 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.

² See also document 'Criterion Rating Description' for reference

NON-GEF AND GEF PROJECTS			
Financial management components:		Rating	Evidence/ Comments
E.	Proof of co-financing (cash and in-kind)	Yes	Office space, travel, staff, vehicles etc. but gov't only
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	Spreadsheet provided based on August 2022 budget
G.	Copies of any completed audits and management responses (<i>where applicable</i>)	No	UNEP approval for QERs, budget adjustments, shown but no audits
H.	Any other financial information that was required for this project (list):		Uncertain in-kind contributions from partners as of Feb 2023
3. Communication between finance and project management staff		HS	
Project Manager and/or Task Manager's level of awareness of the project's financial status.		HS	
Fund Management Officer's knowledge of project progress/status when disbursements are done.		HS	
Level of addressing and resolving financial management issues among Fund Management Officer and Project Manager/Task Manager.		U	
Contact/communication between by Fund Management Officer, Project Manager/Task Manager during the preparation of financial and progress reports.		S	Delays owing to communication issues
Project Manager, Task Manager and Fund Management Officer responsiveness to financial requests during the review process		U	Many difficulties noted by UNEP in quality of reports
Overall rating		MS	

Communication Between Finance and Project Management Staff

87. There was an extended period in this project with no project manager (late 2020 to October 2022); at that time the Director of Biodiversity must have assumed control over the project, along with the oversight by UNEP, and so that office bore the responsibility for proper reporting. The QERs submitted to UNEP required corrections for most of the reports, including video calls to explain requirements, but the time for corrections to be made was apparently lengthy owing to a lack of a project leader, time for email exchanges, and gaps in understanding the requirements and formats. After the new project manager was hired in October 2022, communications with the financial officer improved and there were no recent issues with financial reporting mentioned during interviews. The financial officer was replaced, however, in February 2023. Overall, no complaints were found over payments to suppliers of equipment, the biodiversity specialist, or to NGS for their fieldwork. Communication up to October 2022 are rated as "moderately satisfactory", and after that as "Highly satisfactory".

Rating for Financial Management: Moderately unsatisfactory

E. Efficiency

88. The QER to March 2020 showed no money yet spent on this project, although an Excel spreadsheet provided by the project manager indicated otherwise, with funds expended in both 2019 and 2020, for salaries and equipment. During the time period from the departure of the project leader in 2020 and the hiring of a replacement 1.5 years later, the project was essentially stalled, except for paying the biodiversity specialist, and \$30K for the NGS

fieldwork and staff training at the two communities. Expenses for those latter activities were efficient. Other expenditures were for project staff (financial officer) and office equipment. The only contracted staff, the biodiversity specialist, was terminated July 1, 2021 because his work was deemed ineffective by SSE. The alternative to the protracted period of slow progress was to have facilitated as quickly as possible the hiring of a new project leader, to have made a distinct effort to enable the biodiversity specialist to enter the country, even during Covid, or to have replaced the position immediately in 2021 post-covid, and to have hired the international ABS expert. During the time without a project leader, the project spent approximately \$170,000 (13% of the allocation), mostly on salaries, the work by NGS, and some equipment but fulfilled few of the planned activities. Based on the GEF criteria, financial efficiency has been rated as “moderately unsatisfactory”.

89. The timeliness of project implementation has not been efficient. Factors resulting in inefficiency have been noted above; more importantly, the project now has an effective leader and the project has operated efficiently during the past 3 months. Total efficiency overall at MTR, however, can only be rated as “unsatisfactory”.

90. When the new project leader assumed the position in October 2022, the efficiency level markedly changed and the project accomplishments since that time have also been listed above. At the time of the MTR, current efficiency is rated as “highly satisfactory” but only from October 2022 to present.

Rating for Efficiency: Unsatisfactory 2020-Oct 2022, Highly satisfactory Oct 2022-Jan 2023

F. Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring Design and Budgeting

91. At the prodoc stage, there was a monitoring plan in place, and this plan was revised by the new project leader in late 2022 to comply with UNEP/GEF requirements. All elements for required monitoring have been budgetted sufficiently and planned in advance, as noted in the January 2023 budget update from the project leader. The indicators and milestones for the activities and outcomes were all well done and continue to apply as the project moves forward. At project launch and after October 2022, the monitoring plan is rated as “highly satisfactory”.

Monitoring of Project Implementation

92. Oversight of project implementation appears to have been limited, as indicated by the substantive lack of progress and the protracted period with no project leader, a situation that should have been more quickly resolved. SSE stated that they attempted five times to replace the leader and that they were only successful on the sixth attempt after a better salary was cleared by UNEP and offered for the position. Project expenditures were monitored via the QERs, although co-financing information was not included in those reports, nor was auditing done.

93. There is a current monitoring plan in place based on the original prodoc plan, updated to 2023. There is also a revised workplan that is now operational, including a plan for human resources and appropriate budgetting to cover the activities until at least June 2024. Revised plans were all designed with solid indicators. Existing baseline data are only those as specified in the prodoc, while new baseline data are to be collected according to activities 1.1.1.3, 1.1.1.5, 1.1.1.6 (which could all be delayed to post-project), and 1.2.2.2.

94. Information generated under the project from 2020 to 2022 has been used to adapt the current project direction, moving forward by improving the budget, determining the most essential planned activities, and revising the human resources plan in late 2022.

95. The rating indicated for monitoring of implementation is “moderately unsatisfactory”.

Project Reporting

96. Many of the required reports have been submitted (Table 9), although two reports from 2021 were not available (PIR and semi-annual report), there were no project audits for 2020 and 2021, and there are no co-financing reports for all years, presumably owing to the lack of a project manager for a year and a half. Most of the QERs were not well done and these took time to correct. The reviewer noted that the QER for 2021 was an annual report, while for 2022 the QERs were filed semi-annually. Since October 2022, when the current project manager was hired, reporting is either complete or soon will be, including the first project audit due in April 2023. Rating for project reporting is “moderately unsatisfactory”, primarily because of the missing reports.

Table 9. Available project reports, as required in Annex 7 of the Prodoc.

Reporting requirements	Due date	Reports submitted at MTR	Responsible Party
Procurement Plan	2 weeks before project inception meeting	Included in Prodoc and updated in 2020, and to 2023-24	SSE
Project inception report and meeting	1 month after project inception meeting	Complete	SSE
Preparation of project work plans and budgets	Annually as part of the SC meetings	In Prodoc and updated to 2023-24 Revised budget Aug 2022 and January 2023	SSE
Quarterly Expenditure Report with appropriate notes (QER)	Quarterly on or before 30 April, 31 July, 31 October, 31 January	Jan-Dec 2020 (4 reports) Jan-Dec 2021 (as 1 single rept) Jan-Dec 2022 (2 half yr repts)	SSE
Cash Advance request and details of anticipated disbursements (to be submitted along with the expenditure reports)	Quarterly or when required	At beginning of project and October 2022.	SSE
Semi-Annual Progress Report	Half-yearly on or before 31 January, 31 July	Dec 2020 Dec 2022	SSE
Audited report for expenditures for year ending 31 December	Yearly on or before 30 June	None done, auditor hired in Feb. 2023, report in April 2023	SSE
Inventory of non-expendable equipment	Yearly on or before 31 January	Feb 2023	SSE
Co-financing report (in the quarterly expenditure reports)	Yearly on or before 31 July	None available (reported only in the 2022 PIR)	SSE
Project implementation review (PIR) report	Yearly on or before 15 July	2021 2022	SSE
Minutes of PSC meetings	Yearly	January 2023 only (1 st meeting)	SSE
Final Report	2 months after project closure / technical completion	N/A	SSE
Final inventory of non-expendable equipment	2 months after project closure/ technical completion	N/A	SSE
Equipment transfer letter	2 months after project closure/ technical completion	N/A	SSE

Reporting requirements	Due date	Reports submitted at MTR	Responsible Party
Final expenditure statement	3 months from project completion date	N/A	SSE
Mid-Term Review	Midway through project	Current – March 2023	UN Environment
Final audited report for expenditures of project	6 months from project completion date	N/A	SSE
Independent Terminal Evaluation report	At the end of project or 6 months from project completion date	N/A	UN Environment

Rating for Monitoring and Reporting: Moderately unsatisfactory

G. Sustainability

Socio-political Sustainability

97. This project aims to support the development of the national framework and operational capacity to implement the Nagoya Protocol in Timor-Leste. The country has ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the most recent NBSAP includes Strategic Action 16 on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS). Most importantly, the new Biodiversity Decree Law (2022) provides, in its Chapter 7 on 'Genetic resources and traditional knowledge', direct support for a legal framework to implement the NP.

98. A formal discussion was initiated with the Secretary of State for Environment about an ABS framework for Timor Leste. The project prepared an official letter signed by His Excellency Secretary of State for Environment that was submitted to the Minister of the Ministry of Institutional Reform and Parliamentarian Affairs, to provide support on the implementation Nagoya Protocol in Timor-Leste. This was followed-up on April 2022, when the letter has reached to the Councils of the Ministries' office and awaiting the date to debate in the parliament. In addition, the project has prepared an informational materials package that will be presented to parliamentarians by the National Focal Point. SSE staff noted that there will be an election in 2023 and that, if the current government has not acceded to the NP and is replaced, the educational efforts will have to be repeated. They did not suggest, however, that the outcome would necessarily differ. The exit strategy for the project is for SSE to continue to maintain the ABS framework through the focal point, the CNAs, the database, CHM, and the laboratory. Commitments are in place for SSE to support these roles as stated by all three senior SSE staff during the MTR interviews.

99. Discussions about ABS at the two pilot communities clearly showed enthusiastic support for an ABS framework, indicating the likelihood of support in other communities as well.

100. Based on these observations, the rating for social-political sustainability is that the project is "likely" to be sustainable.

Financial Sustainability

101. Once an ABS framework has been established there is no long-term requirement for major funding (other than salaries), a need for small sums for educating communities as user's seek access, which can be accomplished with the project-trained local staff. Two staff, the publication authority, and the technician with responsibility for the maintaining CHM and the biodiversity database, as well as the laboratory technician will be full-time SSE

staff. The focal point and CNAs are also full-time staff who require no funding to conduct their responsibilities. Financial sustainability is “highly likely”.

Institutional Sustainability

102. Discussions during the MTR interviews with senior SSE officials indicated that there will be continued strong support within government for implementing an ABS framework across Timor Leste, following project closure. For example, the SSE, with assistance from the project is constructing a biodiversity laboratory to be staffed by SSE personnel, and the project legacy will include a database, CHM, a trained focal point and CNA(s), an ABS framework and suggested policy statement. The Biodiversity Decree Law (2022) fully supports an ABS framework providing a firm basis for institutional stability. The rating for this criterion is “Highly likely”.

Rating for Sustainability: Likely

H. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

Preparation and Readiness

103. An inception meeting was held (for an unknown reason reported as a “pre-inception workshop”), in October 2020, a year after project approval in October of 2019 and 10 months after the first funding allocation. One of the objectives for this meeting was as a stakeholder forum to obtain clarification about the project, and to make any necessary adjustments to activities. The meeting ended following extensive clarification of intent and about partner roles, but with no specific proposal from the participants for any changes to the project design. Based on the December 2020 semi-annual report, the first allocation to the project was in January 2020. The rating, following GEF criteria, after inception was “moderately satisfactory”, which at that point (2020) seems an unfair rating, with the inception meeting done and most other criteria met, including an annual workplan in place, confirmation of participation by partners, staffing mobilisation, safeguards, no requirement to alter the project plan. As a result, by late 2020, the project was well-prepared and ready to initiate the activities.

Quality of Project Management and Supervision

104. The project took 10 months before holding an inception meeting, lost its project manager in 2020, and then was essentially stalled for >1.5 years until a new project leader was hired and could familiarise herself with the project and begin to make effective advances. Further the biodiversity expert had produced only a lengthy and undocumented species list, prior to his termination in July 2021. There has also been a gap in understanding the reporting requirements that necessitated many communications between the executing and implementing agencies that created delays, as expressed by several staff at SSE and by UNEP. This was particularly with regards to the preparation of the financial reports and staffing issues for the PMU. Covid 19 prohibited travel during much of 2020 and into 2021, certainly making any site visit by UNEP difficult. Although email exchanges occurred, lengthy email exchanges are not always an effective management tool owing to the potential for misunderstanding, especially in a second or even third language. The project leader position was advertised many times and eventually after a change in salary level, a new project manager was hired and the project is now advancing as would be expected. Communications and supervision, however, will improve in the future, as the new project leader has a strong understanding of the project requirements. The reviewer recognizes the difficulties faced by UNEP in the absence of a country office in maintaining good relations with governments, as possibly contributing to the level of rapport with local governments.

105. There were no Steering Committee meetings until January 2023 in the absence of a project manager, although there should have been at least three previous meetings based on the prodoc. UNEP was not represented at the January meeting (in person or virtually) and a staff member has not visited the project office, although a staff member did attend the inception meeting in 2020. The lack of a project manager (and a biodiversity expert, or an ABS expert) for such a protracted period on this project is difficult to understand (even under Covid-19 restrictions). Issues pertaining to staffing should have been resolved much more quickly between the management and implementing agency. Moving forward from the MTR, there is considerable scope for both agencies in seeking solutions to project issues, such as hiring of staff and reporting, in a more expeditious manner and in building a good working relationship.

106. Based on the UNEP/GEF criteria, if the steering committee is not functioning, management must be ranked at one of the three unsatisfactory levels. Therefore, overall project management has been rated as 'moderately unsatisfactory'. Currently, and for the past 4 months (Oct-Feb), the rating is 'moderately satisfactory' and will rate higher following more meetings of the Steering Committee (or with a functioning technical committee – see recommendation 2) and the hiring of project staff, including the biodiversity expert and the ABS experts.

Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation

107. At the inception meeting, there was a clear understanding and willingness to participate among all relevant stakeholders. This, however, dissipated entirely with the glacial progress of the project to the point that most stakeholders had even forgotten that commitments were made to this project. No apparent effort was made in the absence of a project leader to contact or begin to work with project partners, especially those with large in-kind contributions. Moving forward, an essential and challenging step for the project manager, and the Steering Committee, will be to realign stakeholders to the project, possibly bringing in other more relevant stakeholders who may have recently started relevant projects and perhaps dropping those who are no longer relevant. NGS did manage to make site visits, provided some capacity building, and began biodiversity collections and their future participation is essential.

108. The main stakeholder for this project is the SSE itself. Senior staff are fully aware of the project and the fact that it is severely behind schedule, but have been excessively slow to re-staff the necessary positions. They have committed to building a biodiversity laboratory that will be equipped from this project. The current PMU is located in an exceptionally small space that is very cramped and not conducive to a good working environment. It is clear that staff would prefer to work under less difficult conditions and this is especially the case when contract staff are on-site, whereupon two staff have to share a single desk.

109. Stakeholder participation can only be ranked as 'unsatisfactory' at the time of this MTR.

Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality

110. With limited results to date, it is difficult to assess this criterion. ABS is, to a large extent, about protecting human rights, traditional knowledge held by disadvantaged people in rural communities, including women. The prodoc was clearly written with respect to the need to include disadvantaged groups, including women, during implementation. This project does not include any Core Indicators for gender except the number of female beneficiaries, which are shown as expected values in the prodoc (Annex VI). There is no specific budget assigned for gender.

111. Data collected to date have been disaggregated. The two pilot communities represent disadvantaged groups and training and community project discussions involved about 66

people, among which 27 were women. The project design ensured that opportunities for both women and men to provide their perspectives on potential activities and priorities could occur at local communities. In these communities, by collecting the genetic resources with associated TK, women have played important roles in sustaining this TK, for example, as medicines for delivering the babies, toothache, stomach-ache and for dyeing of cloth. Local community members made the point during the meetings that there is lack of the attention and action by the Government to recognize and protect TK, which speaks broadly to the importance of this ABS project.

112. The staff associated with the project, with SSE and the PMU are close to gender-balanced, the PMU has 3 women among 4 staff, and the National ABS Focal Point is a woman. The prodoc was clear on these issues and as the project progresses attention will continue to be paid to disadvantaged persons and to assure equal participation. The current gender score is 2a (from the GEF gender tool), and the rating for this criterion at MTR is "highly satisfactory".

Environmental and Social Safeguards

113. Environmental and social safeguards were identified in the prodoc and in each of the project reports (PIRs and semi-annual reports) (see Annex VII). This project is about providing environmental benefits to local communities and indigenous people, protecting their rights, and fully recognizes that FPIC and a formal contract are in place prior to accessing genetic resources on their lands.

114. Prior to the initial collecting being done, the local communities in both rural areas (Larisula and Macadade) were contacted to assure they were willing, ready, and accepting to engage with the project and at their own terms - especially related to sharing information on TK. CI is working on developing MATs and FPIC protocols for the two pilot communities.

115. Care was taken to protect the environment and plant populations by restricting the number of plants collected and carefully selecting good quality samples - while not wasting, as well as to take any plants/specimens based on the guidelines of the local guides with the communities. Further, the project tried to support communities by buying local handicraft products to sustain their daily life as well as give back to the communities instead of only taking (information and samples). by selling them to the market. A small contribution may have a significant benefit to them. A recent risk (not in the prodoc) identified in the 2022 PIR "Challenged Project Management capacity or low attention by executing agency impacting progress and impact of the GEF project" has been obviated with the hiring a strong leadership of the current project manager.

116. The project has identified the risks associated with environment and possible social impacts and has direction in place to eliminate these risks. Implementing an ABS framework has few inherent risks, and is about providing environmental benefits to local communities and indigenous people through a series of guidelines and requirements for users of genetic resources (Annex). Safeguards are being regularly monitored.

117. The rating for safeguards is "highly satisfactory".

Country Ownership and Driven-ness

118. At inception, including during the inception meeting, all relevant government agencies took an active role in developing the project direction, endorsing the need for the ABS framework, and providing in-kind funding and assistance, to the extent of agreeing to take on new activities. With the extremely slow start to the project, the shutdown of activities during the covid pandemic, these agencies have forgotten their roles and expected contributions. The project now needs to re-develop this agency ownership among its partners. To that end, the first Steering Committee meeting was held in January 2023, and other meetings are

forthcoming. When interviewed for this review, all agencies did confirm that they were still interested in assisting, but that they need to understand again the project expectations and how this may fit within current programmes.

119. At inception the rating was “highly satisfactory”, but at MTR stage the rating is “unsatisfactory”. This latter rating can change rapidly however and the project begins to initiate activities and confirm the involvement of these agency partners.

Communication and Public Awareness

120. There is no public awareness of the project except in the two pilot communities, where project members have visited twice. Public awareness will be raised as a part of the new communications plan and it a planned outreach component of this project.

121. The current rating for communications and awareness at MTR is “unsatisfactory”.

Rating for Factors Affecting Performance and Cross Cutting Issues: Moderately unsatisfactory

VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions

122. Timor Leste wishes to institute an access and benefits sharing (ABS) framework to implement the Nagoya Protocol and this GEF6-funded project was designed to enable that framework to be put in place. The project was also designed to implement early bioprospecting as a template for future work in the country. The project started well, with a fully attended inception meeting that resulted in lengthy discussions among partners, but required no changes to the outcomes, outputs, or planned activities, after the project was sufficiently explained. All partners and other interested stakeholders were willing to participate as originally agreed. (cf. Table 1)

123. During the review period, the project accomplished two important aspects, including developing a series of communication materials about the NP and the proposed ABS framework, and provided this to the Minister and to the Council of Ministries prior to presenting to the Parliament during early 2023. These educational documents and presentations are part of the process to have Timor Leste accede to the NP. The second aspect was early bioprospecting and collecting of plants at the two pilot communities, with training of several staff on methods of collecting and fundamental bioprospecting methods. The NGS team also introduced the NP to the two communities at meetings attended by 39 men and 27 women. (Cf. paras 73-77)

124. The review observed that there were some components for a full ABS framework that were not required in the prodoc and some inconsistencies in terminology with the NP. There also appeared to be some conflict of interest for two members of the proposed steering committee. Both these issues can be readily corrected and otherwise, the prodoc was well-built and the theory of change diagram does not require alterations, although a slightly altered word version was provided here. (Cf. paras 24-27, 54-55, Tables 4 and 5)

125. The advances noted above represented a small number of activities, therefore a major portion of this project must be accomplished to deliver the planned outcomes. No outputs were completed at the time of the MTR. Overall project rating was ‘moderately unsatisfactory’ (Table 10). The project was stalled for a protracted period from late 2020 with the resignation of the project leader until October 2022 when a new project leader was hired. During this period, the activities above (para 122) were accomplished including a minor submission by the biodiversity expert, who was eventually terminated for lack of

productivity. Further, Covid-19 resulted in a ‘work from home’ regimen in much of 2021 and halted most travel to the country and within country, causing delays to the project. At the review period, the project had spent >\$170,000 but accomplished only a small number of activities. There appears to have been ineffective communication between the implementing and executing agencies that resulted in delays in project reporting and in the long period with no project leader. Partly, this was the result of poor reporting by the PMU, possibly because of gaps in understanding the requirements, and the need for more attention to the project by both agencies (CF. para 72, 104, Table 10).

126. Since the new project leader assumed her responsibilities late in 2022, the project has moved ahead quickly by hiring a replacement biodiversity expert, contracting with CI to work with the two communities, revising the project budget and work plan, tendering for the ABS expert, replacing the finance officer, and holding the first meeting of the Steering Committee. Nevertheless, the project will need to work in a highly effective and efficient manner to accomplish its main objectives within a compressed timeframe. (cf. para 72, 77, 87, 88)

127. This review noted the urgent need for the project to revisit the commitments of the project partners to the project. In some cases, partners had forgotten that they had large in-kind contributions to this project. This situation has resulted from the long delay in implementation, while concurrent partner projects were progressing and even terminating. As a result, regardless of the project’s current advances and as noted in the recommendations below, the project will need to re-engage with important stakeholders who have forgotten their commitments to this project, and possibly seeking out other possibly partners who have more recently begun relevant projects. (Cf. para 72, 107)

128. This project, even if only implemented to the 70-80% level, can potentially have a high impact, by establishing a functioning ABS framework that is fully legally supported by the Biodiversity Decree Law (2022) and with proper policies in place. If this can be accomplished, the project’s overall goal of Timor Leste acceding to the NP is very likely. At MTR and based on the criteria provided, the rating for likelihood of impact can only be ranked as “unlikely”. This rating, however, does not reflect the high level of commitment within the current PMU, which has elevated the likelihood of long-term impact, or the commitment of Government to establish its ABS framework. (cf. para 80-83)

129. If the project can proceed as planned, concentrating on the most important aspects including developing the ABS framework, developing bio-community protocols, and with further bioprospecting under proper MATs and FPIC, the sustainability will be high. The SSE is committed to staff associated positions for the lab and database after the project ends and only a small amount of funding is required to administer the framework. (cf. 97-102, 117)

Table 10. Summary of assessment of the project

Review criteria	Rating	Score	Weight	Weighted Score
Strategic Relevance	Highly Satisfactory	5.58	6	0.3
<i>Alignment to UNEP's MTS, POW and strategic priorities</i>	Highly Satisfactory	6	0.5	
<i>Alignment to Donor/Partner strategic priorities</i>	Highly Satisfactory	6	0.5	
<i>Relevance to regional, sub-regional and national issues and needs</i>	Highly Satisfactory	6	2.5	

<i>Complementarity with existing interventions</i>	Satisfactory	5	2.5	
Quality of Project Design	Satisfactory	5	4	0.2
Effectiveness	Moderately Unsatisfactory	2.67	45	1.2
<i>Availability of outputs</i>	Unsatisfactory	2	5	
<i>Achievement of project outcomes</i>	Moderately Unsatisfactory	3	30	
<i>Likelihood of impact</i>	Unlikely	2	10	
Financial Management	Moderately unsatisfactory	3.00	5	0.2
<i>Adherence to UNEP's policies and procedures</i>	Unsatisfactory	2		
<i>Completeness of project financial information</i>	Moderately unsatisfactory	3		
<i>Communication between finance and project management staff</i>	Moderately Satisfactory	4		
Efficiency	Unsatisfactory	2	10	0.2
Monitoring and Reporting	Moderately Satisfactory	4.00	5	0.2
<i>Monitoring design and budgeting</i>	Highly Satisfactory	6		
<i>Monitoring of project implementation</i>	Moderately Unsatisfactory	3		
<i>Project reporting</i>	Moderately Unsatisfactory	3		
Sustainability	Likely	5.00	20	1.0
<i>Socio-political sustainability</i>	Highly Likely	6		
<i>Financial sustainability</i>	Highly Likely	6		
<i>Institutional sustainability</i>	Likely	5		
Factors Affecting Performance	Moderately Unsatisfactory	3.50	5	0.2
<i>Preparation and readiness</i>	Moderately Unsatisfactory	3		
<i>Quality of project management and supervision</i>	Moderately Unsatisfactory	3.50		

<i>UNEP/Implementing Agency</i>	Moderately Unsatisfactory	3		
<i>Partner/Executing Agency</i>	Moderately Unsatisfactory	3		
<i>Stakeholder participation and cooperation</i>	Unsatisfactory	2		
<i>Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity</i>	Highly Satisfactory	6		
<i>Environmental, social and economic safeguards</i>	Highly Satisfactory	6		
<i>Country ownership and driven-ness</i>	Unsatisfactory	2		
<i>Communication and public awareness</i>	Unsatisfactory	2		
			100	3.45
				Moderately Unsatisfactory

Table 11. Summary text for GEF portal for the MTR

GEF portal requirement	Text
Project performance vs. GEF Core Indicators	None of the post-GEF6 core indicators apply to this project
Progress, challenges and outcomes regarding engagement of stakeholders	Initially in 2020, there was excellent commitment and progress for engaging stakeholders. However, as the project implementation essentially stopped in late 2020 in the absence of a project leader, work with partners halted, except for community work and collections done by NGS. By late 2022, stakeholders had forgotten their commitments and some of their relevant projects had ended. Moving forward, it will be essential for the PMU to reconnect with stakeholders to determine current project relevance, and possibly seek out other partners whose ongoing projects may be more relevant.
Progress, challenges and outcomes regarding gender-responsive measures	The project has maintained its responsiveness to gender by ensuring that there are female project staff and that work in the communities involves the full participation of women.
Experiences against the Safeguards Plan	All safeguards are in place and monitored.
Progress, challenges and outcomes regarding the implementation of the project's Knowledge Management Approach, including: Knowledge and Learning Deliverables	The project has three main knowledge components: 1.) training of staff, CNAs, and the National focal point, 2.) training at model communities, and 3.) informing the general public about the NP and its ABS framework. At the MTR, only some training on bioprospecting has been provided to staff, as well as some

	<p>information given to the two communities about ABS. Currently, CI has a planned contract (March 2023) to begin training in communities. The PMU is working on a communications plan and a communications expert will be hired. Similarly, the process is in place to hire the ABS experts, where the ToR includes training of staff, CNAs, and the Focal Point within 2023.</p>
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B. Lessons learned

Lesson Learned #1:	<p>Expeditious replacement of key staff is essential to project implementation. Not doing so has placed this project far behind where it should be at mid-term.</p>
Context/comment:	<p>Aside from the Covid-19 pandemic, the main reason that this project is so far behind schedule is the lack of a project leader for 1.5 years, termination and non-replacement of the biodiversity expert, and the lack of ABS expertise. These problems could have been quickly resolved by management at SSE. Similarly, if the biodiversity expert was not able to conduct his work, a decision to either terminate or hold in abeyance the contract earlier would have saved funding. Following from the first Steering Committee meeting, January 2023, UNEP may wish to swiftly re-engage and look for opportunities to provide inputs to this project, since it was not represented at that latter meeting. (see para 104-105, 108)</p>

Lesson Learned #2:	<p>Constant communication with major partners is essential to maintain their support, participation, and interest in the project. Communication is crucial to maintaining good relationships among partners and project site visits by the implementing agency can foster good working relationships with government.</p>
Context/comment:	<p>Lack of communication between SSE (or a PMU) and the local project partners for almost 2 years has resulted in altered priorities of some partners, possible loss of interest, and the need to re-establish linkages to determine their current relevance to this project. (para 76-77)</p>

C. Recommendations

Recommendation #1:	<p>The ToR for the international and national ABS experts should require completion of a full ABS framework by also including the documents noted as missing from the original project document (e.g., TK guidelines, ABS user guidelines, user's code of ethical conduct, sectoral guidelines and model clauses).</p>
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Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Fully develop a viable and informed ABS framework
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation:	Technical implementation
Responsibility:	PMU and consultant experts
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Within 2023 or early 2024 at the latest

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

Section IV. paras 71, Table 4, and Annex VI

Recommendation #2:	The prodoc only requires Steering Committee meetings once per year. However, it will be important to organize another Steering Committee earlier than required to re-establish project direction, re-gain support for the project from partners, and to evaluate membership on the Steering Committee both for conflict of interest and members' current relevance. The project should consider forming a 'technical committee' to assist with advice on project direction.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	<p>The project has not communicated or engaged with key partners, including most implementing partners, for 2 years and, as a result, partners and members of the Steering Committee have largely forgotten their commitments and roles.</p> <p>This recommendation includes communicating with non-Steering Committee partners, such as MAGNT, and including appropriate members on a 'technical committee', which could be formed.</p> <p>Two current members of the Steering Committee stand to benefit from the project (CI and NGS), while their input is valuable, this is a conflict of interest. Options are recusing themselves during discussions that directly affect them, or non-participation.</p>
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	Management
Responsibility:	PMU and partners
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Immediate within the next 2 months.

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

Section IV. para 25, Section VI. 73, 77, 78

Recommendation #3:	Given the delay in the project, conduct an immediate scoping and assessment of potential new partners and projects that may be relevant to assisting and contributing to an ABS framework. It will also be important to clarify with partners their linkages and roles in this project to ensure actual contributions to the results.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The long delay in project implementation has resulted in some partner projects ending, while other non-partner agencies have likely implemented relevant projects. Over the past 2.5 years, some projects, such as those at the EU may have terminated and can no longer be linked to the project. Other agencies may now have relevant programmes. For example, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries were unclear about how they can be linked to the project.
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	Technical implementation
Responsibility:	PMU
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Within 1 month

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

Section VI. paras 73, 77, 78, and 105.

Recommendation #4:	Review the planned activities and realign priorities to focus on the most essential activities for establishing an ABS framework and conducting biodiscovery trials that can be accomplished relative to the remaining budget and seek approval from UNEP for the choices.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	About 15% of the budget has been expended and there are certain unavoidable remaining costs for PMU salaries, both of which will result in a compressed timeframe and reduced budget with which to deliver the originally planned activities
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	Technical implementation

Responsibility:	PMU/UNEP
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Within 1 month

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

Section VI. para 78

Recommendation #5:	Management at SSE needs to provide improved support to this project to enhance its sustainability and enable the implementation of an ABS framework.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	While the project is small by development standards, lack of proper implementation will have a negative influence on further funding from the GEF. The project is far behind schedule as a result of not immediately staffing the necessary positions for implementation. The project staff are housed in an exceptionally tiny space, not conducive to good work and with no space for storing samples or new staff. SSE has also indicated that they will build and staff a laboratory and implement the ABS framework, and needs to follow through for the project to be sustained.
Priority Level:	High
Type of Recommendation	Management
Responsibility:	SSE
Proposed implementation time-frame:	By mid-2023.

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

Section VI. paras 78, 104, 105, 108.

ANNEX I. RESPONSE TO STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

Response to stakeholder comments received but not (fully) accepted by the reviewer, where appropriate

Page Ref	Stakeholder comment	Reviewer Response

ANNEX II. PEOPLE CONSULTED DURING THE REVIEW

Table 5: People consulted during the Review

Organisation	Name	Position	Gender
UNEP	Peerayot Sidonrusmee,	Programme assistant	M
	Ms, Makiki Yashiro	UNEP project office	F
	Mr. Max Zieren	Programme manager	M
Government	Mr. Riu dos Reis Pires	Director of biodiversity	M
	Mr. Demetrio Carvalho	Secretary of State for Environment	M
	Mr. Joao Carlos	Director General of Environment (EFF focal point)	M
	Mr. Augusto Pinto	Director of Climate Change	M
	Mr. Pedro de Costa	President of the NDA	M
	Me. Bernadette Fonseca	Project manager (Oct. 2022-present)	F
	Ms. Delicia Chang	Former project financial officer	F
	Mr. Raimundo Mau	Director of Forestry	M
	Mr. Jorge Ribiero	Director of ALGIS Lab	M
	Mr. Pedro Pinto	Director of Protected Areas	M
	Ms. Martinha da Concicão	ABS Focal Point	F
EU	Ms. Dulce Gusmao	Program manager	F
CI	Mr. Manuel Mendes	Country Director	M
NGS	Mr. Nimura	Company principal	M

ANNEX III. KEY DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

Project planning and reporting documents:

- Original UNEP project document, PIF, and the GEF final submission document
- Available PIRs - latest available, June 2022
- Annual workplan, (2020 and revised 2023) GEF MTR documents and guidelines
- All QERs (Latest: Jan-June 2022)
- Spreadsheet from project leader with HR plan, revised budget, procurement plan, workplan 2023, revised risks, staffing plan
- Excel Budget sheet: “Appendix 4, 1, 2, 6 and 12–Timetable, Budget, Co-financing, M&E Plan and Procurement Plan_Version 21 June 2018-Clean.xls”
- Available annual workplans
- Semi-annual progress report July-Dec 2020
- Procurement plan 2021

Project outputs

- (Pre-)Inception workshop report (2020)
- ABS MOU between NGS and Government
- Biodiversity Specialist report Jun 2021
- Field trip reports and booklets for Arturo and Larisula
- Excel spreadsheet Final Biodiversity list for Timore Leste – Edwin Pardana
- Information documents prepared for Minister and politicians

Reference documents

- Letter of concern from UNEP to SSE, Jul 2021
- SSE response to letter of concern
- TL Biodiversity Decree Law, 2022

ANNEX IV. BRIEF CV OF THE REVIEWER

Name

Profession	Consultant and scientist
Nationality	Canadian
Country experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Europe: Germany, Netherlands, France, Great Britain, Switzerland• Africa: Ghana, Tanzania, Cameroun, DRC• Americas: USA, Canada, Chile, Brazil, Peru, Guatemala, Costa Rica• Asia: Thailand, Japan, Viet Nam, Cambodia, Bangladesh• Oceania: Timor Leste
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ph.D. (Queen's University, Ontario, Canada)

Short biography:

Mr. I. Thompson is an independent environmental consultant.

Key specialties and capabilities cover:

- Biodiversity, forestry, ABS, REDD, and climate change

Selected assignments and experiences:

Independent reviews/evaluations:

- Mid-term programme evaluation of the ITTO-CITES Endangered Tree Species Programme (global – 14 countris)
- Ex-post review of the UNDP Inle Lake Management project (Myanmar)
- Ex-post review of the UNDP SEAD Project (Myanmar)
- EX-post review of the AFoCO Sustainable Forest Management Programme in Southeast Asia (6 countries)
- Ex-post review of the AFoCO project "Facilitating community forest management in Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand"
- Ex-post review of the ITTO Programme "Improving sustainable forest management in sub-Saharan Africa" projects (6 countries)

ANNEX V. REVIEW TORS (WITHOUT ANNEXES)

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

Terms of reference

Job Opening number	:	22-United Nations Environment Programme-195296-
Consultant Job Title	:	Mid-Term Reviewer – Timor Leste ABS project (GEFID 9703)
General Expertise	:	Environmental Affairs
Category	:	Environment Planning and Management
Department/ Office	:	United Nations Environment Programme
Organizational Unit	:	UNEP ODED DEPI BLB GEF BLDU

Purpose

The GEF-Biodiversity and Land Degradation unit is seeking to recruit a consultant (Level C) to conduct the Midterm Review of the project to assess the overall achievements of the project at midterm, the challenges faced and engage with project counterparts to overcome the issues through effective corrections in project activities and outputs, M&E, resource allocations and related GEF and co-financing. This consultancy post is located in UNEP / Ecosystems Division / GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation unit. The Review Consultant will work from home as well as conduct a field assessment mission to Timor Leste, under the overall guidance of the Task Manager (GEF TM - based in Bangkok) and will report directly to the GEF TM or Portfolio Manager of the GEF Biodiversity Unit based in Nairobi.

Duties and Responsibilities

Inception phase:

- preliminary desk review and introductory interviews with project staff;
- prepare the review framework in line with UNEP's evaluation guidelines;
- identify stakeholders;
- develop the interview/questions matrix;
- plan the review schedule;
- prepare the Inception Report;

Data collection and analysis phase of the review, including:

- conduct further desk review and in-depth interviews with project implementing and executing agencies, project partners and project stakeholders;
- Conduct a field assessment mission to Timor Leste – approximately 10 days, including visiting one of the two project sites;
- regularly report back to the Task Manager on progress and inform of any possible problems or issues encountered and;

Reporting phase, including:

- Prepare a MTR Inception report with main tasks, timelines, and institutions, staff and project beneficiaries to be involved in the MTR,
- draft the MTR Review Report, ensuring that the review report is complete, coherent and consistent with the ToR as well as Task Manager guidelines both in substance and style;
- liaise with the Task Manager on comments received and finalize the MTR Review Report, ensuring that comments are taken into account until approved by the Task Manager
- prepare a Response to Comments annex for the main report, listing those comments not accepted indicating the reason for the rejection; and

Managing relations, including:

- maintain a positive relationship with stakeholders, ensuring that the review process is as participatory as possible but at the same time maintains its independence;
- communicate in a timely manner with the Task Manager on any issues requiring its attention and intervention.

The consultant will prepare the following documents, in consultation and collaboration with the Project team:

1. Inception Report: containing an assessment of project, project stakeholder analysis, review framework and a tentative review schedule.
2. 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.
3. Draft and Final Review Report: containing an executive summary that can act as a stand-alone document; detailed analysis of the review findings organized by review criteria and supported with evidence; lessons learned and recommendations and an annotated ratings table.

The consultancy will be home-based with one field visit to Timor Leste.

Ultimate result of service

Mid-term review Report of the "Establishing the National Framework and Operational Capacity for Implementing the Nagoya Protocol in Timor-Leste"

Travel Details

Travel will be organized by UNEP.

Output/Work Assignments

Tentative schedule for the review Milestone and Indicative Time frame:

- MTR review: 4 months, 1 Jan 2023 - 1 May 2023
- Inception report & work plan by 10 January 2023
- Regular e-mail updates to UNEP/PMU by 1 Jan 2023 - 1 May 2023
- Draft consolidated Mid Term Review Report (ver.1) by 25 February 2023
- Draft final summary on Findings and Recommendations/PowerPoint presented to Project PSC by 15 March 2023 (virtual meeting, organized by project, including minutes on response by Project Steering Committee)
- Final 2nd Draft Consolidated MTR Report (ver.2), by 25 March 2023
- Final Consolidated MTR Report to UNEP (ver.3 Final) by 20 April 2023
- Consultancy completion report (max 3 pages) by 30 Apr 2023

Funding

Source of Funds Regular Budget Extra-budgetary X

Budget Line

M99/11207/14AC0003/S1-32GFL-000618-14AC0003-11207- SB-012424.04

Contract Duration

Overall Contract Duration: 4 months Estimated amount of actual time to worked (days, weeks, months): 4 months

Regular Working Hours

(if applicable): N/A

Qualification Requirements/Evaluation Criteria

Education:

- Minimum of a least MSc level or equivalent degree in biology, agronomy, botany, bio-chemistry/bio-technology, and/or other relevant environmental sciences training, involving biodiversity inventories, chemistry or pharmacology research analysis and applications; and/or applied biology, natural resources management, or equivalent fields is required.

Language:

Fluency in oral and written English is required.

JFQ/JSQ:

- At least 10 years of experience in: natural resources management, or botany, bio-chemistry/bio-technology and one or more subjects related to mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation including e.g. ABS is required.
- Proven experience in ABS projects and the Nagoya Protocol, capacity building; and biodiversity inventories is desirable.
- A track record of a minimum of 6 years of project development and evaluation experience, including internationally funded projects (experience in the evaluation of GEF funded projects is desirable).
- Knowledge of the UN system; preferably including the work of UNEP is desirable.

ANNEX VI. REVIEW FRAMEWORK – OUTCOMES (A) AND ACTIVITIES (B)

A. Outcomes table:

Outcome	Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term expectation	Evaluation
1.1 National legal and institutional framework on ABS and the protection of traditional knowledge developed and facilitated towards adoption in accordance with the Biodiversity Decree Law	Number of policies, regulations and procedures developed as part of the national ABS framework and facilitated towards adoption	Nil	At least 3 developed (1 policy or regulation, 1 PIC/MAT procedure, 1 Community Protocol procedure).	Biodiversity Decree Law passed with section planned for ABS. 0 PIC/MATs 0 community protocols
1.2 Increased awareness and capacity of national stakeholders on ABS principles, economic potential and procedures under the Nagoya Protocol and the national framework.	Number of national stakeholders (women/men) expressing increased awareness on ABS principles, economic potential and procedures under the Nagoya Protocol and the national framework.	Limited awareness	At least 20 stakeholders (with at least 40% women).	Still limited awareness, although the CI and EU staff were fully aware, while forestry staff were not
	Number of staff of relevant national agencies (women/men) participating in the implementation of actions related to the national ABS framework	nil	At least 10 staff (with at least 40% women).	Project staff is 75% women (3 of 4, including the project leader), and biodiversity staff also partly involved are both women.
2.1: Institutional capacity enhanced for enacting Article 17 on 'monitoring' and Articles 8a & 23 on 'promoting research' for sustainable use through consolidation of inventory, cataloguing and fair access to national and internationally held records on biodiversity, genetic resources and traditional knowledge of Timor-Leste	Number of staff (SSE, MAF and UNTL) trained in and applying established protocols for collecting and cataloguing information for the National Database.	None. Various biodiversity surveys conducted in the past, but limited data sharing and integration.	At least 10 (with 50% women).	22 SSE staff for bioprospecting and plant collection and preservation (10 women) (numbers from NGS), at the university 3 staff trained (1 woman)
	Number of agencies (CNA, CSAs) accessing and updating information on permits granted under the	None	At least 2	0

Outcome	Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term expectation	Evaluation
	ABS regulations on the national ABS Clearing House Mechanism.			
	Number of entries in the National Database on biodiversity, genetic resources and traditional knowledge	Database of 35 forest and agroforestry species under the GCCA project, 500 species/varieties under the Agro-biodiversity Project.	0	0
2.2 Enhanced technological and business capacity for bioprospecting in Timor-Leste, in compliance with the Nagoya Protocol on sustainable use of genetic resources	Number of staff (women/men) participating trained in bio-prospecting, laboratory management, and product trials.	None. Existing laboratories at UNTL and MAF but no bioprospecting capacity available.	At least 6 (of which 50% women).	22 for bioprospecting and plant collection and preservation (10 women), 0 for lab management or product trials
	Number of resources identified through genetic and/or chemicals screening towards potential commodity development for food, medical, cosmetic or other applications.	None. Existing laboratories at UNTL and MAF but no bioprospecting capacity available.	0	0

B. Activities table:

Outputs/Activities	Original expected completion date	Implementation status as of 30 June 2022 (%)	Implementation status (%) at MTR and level of progress
<p>Output 1.1.1: National regulatory, policy and institutional framework developed and facilitated towards adoption by the government for implementation of the Nagoya Protocol through a process of national consultations, a government brief and National Operational Guidelines.</p>			
<p>Activity 1.1.1 Organise a project inception workshop to build broad support and develop a common understanding of the project.</p>	October 2020	100%	Completed
<p>Activity 1.1.1.2 Establish a task force for the development of the national framework, involving SSE, MAF, UNTL, the Ministry of Health, Conservation International and a local NGO/community representation.</p>	2020	10%	10%, Underway but no meetings, ToR established and membership selected.
<p>Activity 1.1.1.3 Under the guidance of the task force, a national and an international ABS expert will carry out a gap analysis of the existing legislative and institutional framework related to ABS in Timor-Leste (building on previous assessments), including analysis of local-level legislation and mandates of sector agencies.</p>	2021	0	0, This activity is likely not necessary because the Biodiversity Decree Law explicitly deals with ABS – the ABS expert will determine if needed.

Outputs/Activities	Original expected completion date	Implementation status as of 30 June 2022 (%)	Implementation status (%) at MTR and level of progress
<p>Activity 1.1.1.4 Under the guidance of the taskforce, the national and the international ABS expert will draft required instructions and regulations on ABS for Timor-Leste based on the regulatory scheme proposed in earlier reports and following the current legislation (in particular the Biodiversity Decree-Law, the General Forestry Regime, the National Seed Policy and the Special Regime for the Ownership of Immovable Property).</p> <p>Propose the designation of a Competent National Authority (CNA), a National Focal Point (NFP), and technical sector agencies that will act as Competent Sector Authorities (CSAs) in line with their mandates. Define roles and responsibilities, including a national coordination mechanism. The proposed institutional framework should be designed to be realistic, and should not add unnecessary complexity; it should be flexible enough to be able to incorporate lessons learned from the implementation at a later stage. Approval and monitoring processes should be as simple and effective as possible.</p>	2021	0	0, Requires taskforce and ABS expert to be working
<p>Activity 1.1.1.5: Hold a national consultation workshop to discuss the proposed regulatory and institutional framework. Ensure adequate representation of (and inputs from) women, local community representatives and youth.</p>	2020	0	0, Likely will have to be deleted for this project
<p>Activity 1.1.1.6: Hold separate consultations, as needed, with different interest groups including women, local community representatives, youth, and the private sector.</p>	2020	0	0
<p>Activity 1.1.1.7: Under the guidance of the task force, the national and the international ABS expert will prepare a government brief on the proposed regulatory and institutional framework, outlining the costs and benefits of ABS implementation for Timor-Leste, with a focus on highlighting the economic potential and value of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge for the country's sustainable development agenda (based on experience from other countries), and explaining that the approved Biodiversity Decree-Law already includes clauses related to ABS.</p>	2020-2021	30 (apparent incorrect entry)	0

Outputs/Activities	Original expected completion date	Implementation status as of 30 June 2022 (%)	Implementation status (%) at MTR and level of progress
<p>Activity 1.1.1.8: The national and the international ABS expert will prepare National Operational Guidelines that can be used as a reference document (outlining the relevant procedures for ABS implementation, including on granting and monitoring access to genetic resources, as well as to traditional knowledge, and on stimulating research partnerships and related investments). The framework must include a TK guidelines, a researcher's code of ethics, an ABS User's Manual, ABS application form, ABS certificate of compliance, a best practices manual, and model clauses for MATs.</p>	2021	0	0
<p>Activity 1.1.1.9: Work towards the adoption of the proposed regulatory and institutional framework, including the National Operational Guidelines, through a series of consultations within government and other stakeholders.</p>	2021	0	0
<p>Output 1.1.2: Nationally agreed model Community Protocols guidelines developed based on local indigenous practices, beliefs and customary law to guide access to traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources.</p>			
<p>Activity 1.1.2.1: Analyse local government by-laws and community customs and practices in two pilot communities (one terrestrial site in Baucau and one marine/coastal site on Atauro Island) with respect to their relevance for the national ABS framework.</p>	2021	0	20%, Work plan in place, contract and ToR with CI completed, budget approved

Outputs/Activities	Original expected completion date	Implementation status as of 30 June 2022 (%)	Implementation status (%) at MTR and level of progress
<p>Activity 1.1.2.2 In consultation with local stakeholders (community leaders and Suco councils, community members including women, men and youth, resource users, local businesses, administrative posts) in the two pilot communities, CI (with SSE, MAF and UNTL staff) will draft model Bio-Community Protocols to outline a process for obtaining Prior Informed Consent and access to traditional knowledge that is in line with local socio-cultural conditions. The Bio-Community Protocols will be drafted based on experience from other countries (made available by UN Environment through former or ongoing GEF ABS projects), and using the Timor-Leste “Guidelines for Establishing Co-Management of Natural Resources in Timor-Leste” as a model. They should take into account the specific needs and priorities of local communities, in particular women. An independent legal expert will be made available to the communities by the project team to provide independent advice and guidance to the communities. A provision has been made in the project budget to fund this expert.</p>	2020	0	0
<p>Activity 1.1.2.3: Review and, as needed, revise Community Protocols based on the lessons learned from the activities implemented under Outcome 2.2.</p>	2022	0	0
<p>Activity 1.1.2.4: Work towards the adoption by the communities of the model Bio-Community Protocols as an integral element of the national, formally agreed ABS framework and procedures. Community Protocols should be flexible enough to be able to incorporate specificities of different ethnic groups when applied to different communities.</p>	2022	0	0
<p>Output 1.1.3: National specific ABS model agreement guidelines (PIC, MAT, TK guidelines, etc.) developed that facilitate the negotiation of monetary and non-monetary benefits between users and providers of genetic resources.</p>			

Outputs/Activities	Original expected completion date	Implementation status as of 30 June 2022 (%)	Implementation status (%) at MTR and level of progress
<p>Activity 1.1.3.1: Under the guidance of the task force and based on inputs from relevant stakeholders (government, civil society, academia, community representation and private sector), the national and the international ABS expert will develop model agreements (PIC, MAT) that facilitate the negotiation of monetary and non-monetary benefits between users and providers of genetic resources (for commercial and non-commercial uses). As a first step, the project will focus on the PIC/MAT needed for two pilot communities under Outcome 2.2. The model PIC/MAT will be drafted with guidance from UN Environment and NGS based on experience from other countries (e.g., India and Malaysia) and based on existing materials such as the ABS Management Tool. The model agreements should take into account the specific needs and priorities of local communities, in particular women, and ensure that any benefits are available to both women and men. The agreements should also ensure the respect of any (individual and community) property rights.</p>	2020	0	10%, CI hired on contract, in March 2023, ToR for ABS expert completed
<p>Activity 1.1.3.2The project will provide model mutually agreed terms/clauses for three sectors: agriculture, pharmaceuticals, and biotechnology to include in the national ABS framework.</p>	2022	0	0, This activity was re-written in red font
<p>Activity 1.1.3.3: Hold consultation workshop to discuss and finalise the model agreements.</p>	2022	0	Suggest dropping this activity and accomplish during the validation workshop.
<p>Activity 1.1.3.4: Develop ABS model agreement guidelines (PIC, MAT) as an integral element of the national, formally agreed ABS framework and procedures.</p>	2023	0	This activity is unclear as to who will “adopt” the model agreements. These are just included as a part of the national framework. Suggest delete activity
<p>Output 1.1.4: High-level dialogue established with policy makers and Parliament to make the case for the Nagoya Protocol and the national ABS framework, emphasising their potential for adding value through research & development, and their contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).</p>			

Outputs/Activities	Original expected completion date	Implementation status as of 30 June 2022 (%)	Implementation status (%) at MTR and level of progress
<p>Activity 1.1.4.1: Hold regular high-level consultations such as seminars and outreach sessions with parliamentarians and policymakers to build the case for acceding to the Nagoya Protocol, for adopting the national ABS framework as well as allocating funding for ABS implementation. This will be done by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the awareness materials developed under Output 1.2.1. • Discussing the information presented in the government brief (see Output 1.1.1), which outlines the proposed national ABS framework and the costs and benefits of ABS implementation for Timor-Leste, and highlights the economic potential and value of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge for the country's sustainable development agenda. • Presenting the results of the report on bio-prospecting opportunities elaborated under Outcome 2.2. • Inviting speakers from other countries in the region (e.g., Malaysia, India, Indonesia) to present their experiences with ABS implementation to policymakers in Timor-Leste. 	2022	47%	90%. Presentations were made and documents provided to the Minister and the ABS Focal Point. However, no foreign speakers were invited as was planned.
<p>Output 1.1.5: Information required for formal accession to the Nagoya Protocol made available to the Government of Timor-Leste and accession process started.</p>			
<p>Activity 1.1.5.1: The international ABS expert will support the compilation of the information, data and documents required for the formal accession to the Nagoya Protocol, and provide training to SSE staff, ABS focal point, and CNAs on the ABS framework.</p>	2022	0	10%, The ToR for the ABS expert was completed
<p>Activity 1.1.5.2: Conduct training and briefing sessions which are useful to enable the accession process.</p>	2022		Redundant
<p>Output 1.2.1: An outreach and institutional development plan on ABS issues prepared in Tetum language based on needs assessments.</p>			

Outputs/Activities	Original expected completion date	Implementation status as of 30 June 2022 (%)	Implementation status (%) at MTR and level of progress
Activity 1.2.1.1: Conduct national (capacity, awareness) survey and hold consultation workshop to discuss stakeholder participation, awareness and capacity building needs.	2020	0	0
Activity 1.2.1.2: Develop outreach and institutional development plan defining actions to build awareness and capacity on ABS issues, tailored to the needs of different stakeholders (government agencies, research institutions/academia, ILCs, private sector, media; women and youth). The plan should take into consideration linkages with the NBSAP and the National Strategic Development Plan. The links between ABS and biodiversity conservation, as well as its contribution to sustainable development, should be made explicit. The project will coordinate closely with the awareness and capacity building activities that will be implemented under the UNDP-GEF Cross-Cutting Capacity Development (CCCD) project starting in 2018. The outreach and awareness activities should also help to build awareness among communities on the importance of sharing any benefits among both women and men and on the important role played by women in preserving and passing on traditional knowledge.	2021	0	30%, materials were developed for politicians including the minister and a communications plan is in development. Contact with UNDP has been initiated; a website is under development for biodiversity and genetic resources conservation..
Activity 1.2.1.3: Prepare training and awareness materials in the Tetum language (by reviewing and updating materials from previous projects and making use of the National Operational Guidelines and the government brief developed under Outcome 1.1). The materials should be tested with targeted stakeholders (women, men and youth) before being finalised. The outreach materials should also highlight the economic potential and value of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge for the country's sustainable development agenda (based on experience from other countries). They should help to build the case on the benefits of bio-prospecting, product development and marketing, in order to inform and help to convince parliament to invest in ABS as well as support the accession to the Nagoya Protocol.	2021	0	0
Output 1.2.2: National outreach campaign implemented on the provisions of the Nagoya Protocol, the evolving national ABS framework, and the role of ABS for genetic resource-based innovation and adding value in meeting the SDGs.			

Outputs/Activities	Original expected completion date	Implementation status as of 30 June 2022 (%)	Implementation status (%) at MTR and level of progress
<p>Activity 1.2.2.1: Implement outreach and awareness activities as defined in the outreach and institutional development plan.</p> <p>This may include, but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing/reviving a national multi-stakeholder network on ABS with political, civil society and industry leaders as well as local representatives; • Establishing a Biodiversity Working Group to discuss and follow up on activities related to biodiversity, including genetic resources; • Outreach sessions with parliamentarians and policymakers (see Output 1.1.4); • Distribution of leaflets to raise awareness of ABS among different sector agencies and other stakeholders; • Information sessions for local stakeholders, in particular facilitating the participation of women and youth and preparing and facilitating for community engagement towards the development of Community Protocols, PIC/MAT and traditional knowledge inventories under Outcomes 1.1. and 2.2; • Broadcast on national television or radio stations; • Workshops for local media and small and medium enterprises; and • Distribution of education materials at seminars and conferences. • Validation workshop 	2022	0	10%, A biodiversity working group has been established and a communications plan is in development
<p>Activity 1.2.2.2: Assess levels of awareness through a survey at inception and end-of-project targeting the multi-stakeholder network.</p>	2023	0	10%, this activity is being planned

Outputs/Activities	Original expected completion date	Implementation status as of 30 June 2022 (%)	Implementation status (%) at MTR and level of progress
<p>Activity 1.2.2.3: Develop measures to ensure that the capacity building activities are sustained after the project ends (e.g., designating champions in each sector agency, allocating budget and adjusting terms of reference of relevant agencies).</p>	2023	0	30%, senior SSE staff assured this review that support for the ABS framework post-project will be available, including plans to train trainers on ABS, appointing CNAs, appointing the publication authority, maintaining the proposed laboratory, and educating the ABS Focal Point
<p>Output 2.1.1: Consolidated National Database on biodiversity, genetic resources and traditional knowledge, and national ABS Clearing House Mechanism, established.</p>			
<p>Activity 2.1.1.1: Establish Memorandum of Agreement between SSE and MAGNT/NT Herbarium on technical assistance, data exchange and capacity building to support Outcome 2.1.</p>	2022	0	0, the Project leader is attempting to contact MAGNT to advance these activities.
<p>Activity 2.1.1.2: The concerned agencies (SSE, MAF, and UNTL with technical assistance by MAGNT, the NT Herbarium and CI) will then discuss and agree on the design of a National Database on biodiversity, genetic resources and traditional knowledge. The design of the database will be coordinated with any environmental information systems to be developed under the GEF-UNDP Cross-Cutting Capacity Development (CCCD) project. It will also be discussed with the EU/GIZ's Partnership for Sustainable Agro-Forestry (PSAF). The potential integration with the ALGIS system administered by MAF, and with the future national ABS Clearing House Mechanism, will be analysed and discussed. The National Database is expected to have the following sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual library of specimens (including photography/video and GIS data, as well as ethnobotanical information such as traditional uses of the biota); • Open access research data; • Restricted access research data; and • Links to related existing national and international databases. 	2020	15%	10%, this activity seems to have been incorrectly assessed in 2022, although a ToR for the database design and development has been started. There has as yet been no advice from MAGNT or the NT Herbarium

Outputs/Activities	Original expected completion date	Implementation status as of 30 June 2022 (%)	Implementation status (%) at MTR and level of progress
<p>Activity 2.1.1.3: Discuss and agree on the design of a National ABS Clearing House Mechanism, with information on the national ABS framework and on permits granted under the ABS regulations, and with different levels of access for different user groups and adequate security protocols (including restricted access for confidential information). The design of the ABS CHM will be done with guidance from the UN Environment, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity and the CBD Secretariat. The national CHM will be the ‘information checkpoint’ for monitoring the fair access and sustainable use of genetic resources following the institutional framework defined under Outcome 1.1.</p> <p>The CHM can be finalized after the national framework has been developed. The possibility of linking this with the national CBD CHM will also be analysed.</p>	2022	0	0, note that national CHMs do not link to the global CHM
<p>Activity 2.1.1.4: Establish clear responsibilities, assign professional staff and allocate budget for the maintenance and update of the National Database and the national ABS Clearing House Mechanism in the medium and long term. The National ABS Focal Point will have the main responsibility for the ABS CHM; the Competent National Authorities (CNAs) to be designated under the national ABS framework will be responsible for updating the sections relevant to their mandates.</p>	2022	25%	<p>0%, this activity was incorrectly assessed in 2022. It is more likely that the national database will not be maintained by the CCCB owing to the lack of a biodiversity expert. Instead, the plan now is to house the database at the SSE Biodiversity Directorate of SSE.</p> <p>Note the corrected language for this activity.</p>
<p>Activity 2.1.1.5: With the technical assistance by MAGNT and the NT Herbarium, an IT company (and/or a database specialist) will then be hired to develop the National Database and national ABS CHM.</p>	2022	15%	0, no current contact has been made with either institution
<p>Activity 2.1.1.6: Provide on-the-job training on the functional aspects (data entry, maintenance and update) of the National Database and ABS CHM to relevant administrators in MDIR/MAF/UNTIL (training on technical aspects included in Output 1.2.2).</p>	2022	0%	0

Outputs/Activities	Original expected completion date	Implementation status as of 30 June 2022 (%)	Implementation status (%) at MTR and level of progress
<p>Output 2.1.2: Protocols established for the National Database and the national ABS Clearing House Mechanism on collecting, cataloguing, permitting and monitoring of fair access to scientific records and traditional knowledge in Timor-Leste, and existing information incorporated into the database.</p>			
<p>Activity 2.1.2.1: With the support of CI, MAGNT and NT Herbarium, develop simple protocols on running the National Database and the ABS CHM for:</p> <p>a. The collecting, cataloguing, permitting and reporting of digital records of biological and genetic resources;</p> <p>b. The conduct of biological surveys (including ensuring that future investigations share reference collections and leave new documentation and benefits in the country);</p> <p>c. The documentation of oral history and other approaches to documenting and using traditional knowledge;</p> <p>d. The curation of these data in the National Database; and</p> <p>e. The operation of the national ABS CHM and monitoring of access permits.</p>	2023	10%	0%, no contact has been made as of 02/02/2023
<p>Activity 2.1.2.2: Provide on-the-job training to assist key stakeholders, including students, university and government staff, to understand and be able to follow such protocols.</p>	2022	20%	0, incorrectly assessed in 2022

Outputs/Activities	Original expected completion date	Implementation status as of 30 June 2022 (%)	Implementation status (%) at MTR and level of progress
<p>Activity 2.1.2.3: The Biodiversity Specialist (project staff) will lead a major effort to collect existing information, publications and other records on biodiversity, genetic resources and traditional knowledge of Timor-Leste and incorporate it into the new database system. The information will be collected from a variety of national and foreign sources. The priorities for this undertaking will be established in discussion with NGS in order to advance the identification of opportunities for bio-prospecting trials under Outcome 2.2. The focus will be on ethnobotanical information, which is critical to the success of bio-prospecting. The likely sources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous surveys, reference collections and scientific publications by foreign institutions and researchers, including from Australia, Indonesia, Singapore, Portugal and the Netherlands. • Specimens held at zoological museums and herbaria collections (e.g. Australia, Indonesia, Singapore, Portugal and the Netherlands); • Data collected under past and ongoing projects such as GIZ’s Agro-Biodiversity Project, the Global Climate Change Alliance Programme, the Seeds of Life project, the SAPIP project and ACIAR-led projects. • Data collected by different government agencies, in particular the Biodiversity Directorate under the Ministry of Development and Institutional Reform (MDIR) and the Research Directorate, the Forestry Directorate and the Fisheries Directorate under the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF). • Data collected by UNTL and other universities/institutions in Timor-Leste. • Open access sources such as ebird.org and Nature in Timor-Leste. 	2022	50%	<p>25%, (the June report overstates the activity) the original biodiversity specialist only provided internet-search based species list and did no/or could not visit the country during Covid. He was terminated and a new specialist was hired as of March 1, 2023. As a result of filed visits by NGS, some early collections have been made, specimens preserved and plant species booklets produced from the two model communities. Most work on this activity will be accomplished in 2023 by the new specialist.</p>
<p>Output 2.2.1: Memorandum of Agreement on Technical Collaboration signed between SSE/MAF/UNTL and Nimura Genetic Solutions (NGS Japan) on multiple year collaborative research and capacity building for bio-prospecting.</p>			

Outputs/Activities	Original expected completion date	Implementation status as of 30 June 2022 (%)	Implementation status (%) at MTR and level of progress
Activity 2.2.1.1: Hold meetings to discuss and prepare a Memorandum of Agreement between SSE/MAF/UNTL and NGS, and with the Ministry of Health/National Health Laboratory. This will also involve the provision of an endorsement letter or license agreement by the government that can serve as PIC while the formal ABS framework is yet to be established and formally adopted. The agreement will establish clear terms and safeguards for the conduct of the bio-prospecting activities based on experiences from other countries	2020	100%	100%, agreement is completed.
Activity 2.2.1.2: Organise a visit to the Sarawak Biodiversity Centre in Malaysia for the key decisionmakers of Timor-Leste to learn first-hand from stakeholders in Malaysia how matters were agreed with NGS.	2022	15%	100%, this visit is taking place in early March, 2023.
Activity 2.2.1.3: Sign Memorandum of Agreement.	2021	100%	100%, Completed
Output 2.2.2: Bio-prospecting trials implemented, enabled through PIC and MAT agreements with the provider(s) of the genetic resources, and through technology transfer in research and development.			
Activity 2.2.2.1: Following the establishment of the model Community Protocols (Output 1.1.2) and the drafting of model agreements (Output 1.1.3), CI (with MDIR, MAF and UNTL staff) will support NGS in establishing PIC/MAT in these two communities by conducting community consultations. This will also involve an agreement on traditional knowledge inventories. An independent legal expert will be made available to the communities by the project team to provide independent advice and guidance to the communities.	2022	15%	0%, this activity cannot occur until CI completes its work in the two communities.

Outputs/Activities	Original expected completion date	Implementation status as of 30 June 2022 (%)	Implementation status (%) at MTR and level of progress
<p>Activity 2.2.2.3: Based on opportunities identified under Outcome 2.1 (collection of information on biodiversity and genetic resources of Timor-Leste), the traditional knowledge inventories and analysis and interest from the industry, CI and researchers from UNTL, NGS will then collect specimens of interest-based on guidance from NGS. The organisms targeted for bio-prospecting/screening for useful compounds, properties or characteristics may include, among others, flowers, marine sponges, microalgae, and microbes.</p>	2022	45%	50%, NGS visited the two model communities, but without PIC or MATs. Permission to do collecting was granted by the communities and some TK was exchanged. NGS trained government staff on collection techniques. However, there was no formal workplan in place. Reports were produced for the two visits as were picture booklets of the specimens collected. Future visits should require formal agreements with the communities as described under 2.2.2.1, as well as a workplan.
<p>Activity 2.2.2.4: A team of around six researchers from MAF, the National Health Laboratory and UNTL, through collaboration with NGS staff fielded for short assignments in Timor-Leste, will then start the laboratory screening process at the MAF and Health laboratories. The laboratories will provide the opportunity for on-the-job training provided by NGS to staff from MAF, the National Health Laboratory, UNTL and other institutions, such as the Dili Institute of Health Science, to undertake chemical compound screening for potential products for marketing possible commercial development.</p> <p>Capacity-building activities will include short-term visits by international professionals, exchange arrangements for specialist training overseas (e.g., with Indonesia, Malaysia), and in-service training on-site at the laboratories with external specialists – specifically by the Nimura Genetic Solutions team. The selection of technical staff for international exchanges will be done in consultation with the Project Steering Committee members and based on predefined criteria (including technical qualifications and adequate representation of women).</p>	2022	20%	0%, This activity was incorrectly rated in 2022. No screening work has been accomplished and no lab training has been provided as yet.

Outputs/Activities	Original expected completion date	Implementation status as of 30 June 2022 (%)	Implementation status (%) at MTR and level of progress
<p>Activity 2.2.2.5: As part of the bio-prospecting trials and based on interest from the industry, NGS through its partners will provide marketing support to national entities for further product development and commercialisation (through collaborative agreements with international industry players, where relevant). This could also involve providing training for communities/cooperatives/small and medium enterprises on the potential commercialisation of genetic and biochemical compounds of interest to national and international industries.</p>	2022	0	0
<p>Activity 2.2.2.6: The assessments of medicinal or other uses of plant or animal genetic resources at the two model communities and the associated TK will be based on approved work plans that will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved methodologies for specimen preservation and cataloguing, photography and tissue sampling where applicable for taxonomic or bio-prospecting purposes (ensuring sustainable harvesting practices and the safe disposal of chemical waste from laboratory activities); • Agreed processes on traditional knowledge, including documentation, testing the depth and veracity of traditional knowledge, and assessment of proprietary rights, including customary rights; • Protocols for sharing of knowledge and other matters related to potential benefit-sharing mechanisms consistent with local customs; and • Established PIC/MAT procedures to ensure that any benefits from the bio-prospecting trials and potential marketing and commercialisation will be fairly and equitably shared with the providers of genetic resources. 	2021	20%	20%, instructions on methods for collecting were provided by NGS and some early collecting done prior to any PIC or MAT in place. Future visits should require formal agreements with the communities and accomplished with an approved (by the project leader) work plans.
<p>Output 2.2.3: Existing and new opportunities for bio-prospecting projects in e.g., the agricultural, crop protection, food/beverage, botanical, cosmetics or pharmaceutical industries identified.</p>			

Outputs/Activities	Original expected completion date	Implementation status as of 30 June 2022 (%)	Implementation status (%) at MTR and level of progress
Activity 2.2.3.1 A national and/or international expert will record and assess existing opportunities (through secondary research and consultations), as well as new opportunities (emerging from Output 2.2.2). These can be opportunities in, e.g., the agricultural, crop protection, food/beverage, botanical, cosmetics or pharmaceutical industries.	2021	0	0, a replacement biodiversity and bioprospecting expert was contracted and will begin work in March 2023
Activity 2.2.3.2: Organize workshop to discuss main opportunities and elaborate long-term plan to pursue these (including funding).	2023	0	0, suggested post-project activity as this can be accomplished later
Activity 2.2.3.3: Produce and disseminate a report on bio-prospecting opportunities, partnership and marketing in Timor-Leste	2022	0	0

ANNEX VII. EVALUATION TOOLS

Identification of Safeguard Standards deemed relevant to the project

Safeguard Standards (SS) deemed relevant to the project	Identified at project design ³	Identified at project implementation ⁴	Identified at review	Notes
	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N	
SS 1: Biodiversity, Ecosystems and Sustainable Natural Resource Management	Y	Y	Y	
SS 2: Climate Change and Disaster Risks	Y	Y	Y	
SS 3: Pollution Prevention and Resource Efficiency				Not applicable
SS 4: Community Health, Safety and Security				Not applicable
SS 5: Cultural Heritage	Y	Y	Y	
SS 6: Displacement and Involuntary Resettlement				Not applicable
SS 7: Indigenous Peoples	Y	Y	Y	
SS 8: Labour and working conditions				Not applicable

³ E.g. Project document, CEO Endorsement, etc.

⁴ E.g. GEF Project Implementation Report (PIR), Progress Report, Mid-term Review, etc.

SS 1: Biodiversity, Ecosystems and Sustainable Natural Resource Management

<i>Did the project involve or lead to:</i>	Identified at project design (Y/N)	Identified at project implementation (Y/N)	Identified at review (Y/N)	Notes
1.1 conversion or degradation of habitats (including modified habitat, natural habitat and critical natural habitat) or losses and threats to biodiversity and/or ecosystems and ecosystem services?	N	N	N	
1.2 adverse impacts specifically to habitats that are legally protected, officially proposed for protection, or recognized as protected by traditional local communities and/or authoritative sources (e.g. National Park, Nature Conservancy, Indigenous Community Conserved Area, (ICCA); etc.)?	N	N	N	
1.3 conversion or degradation of habitats that are identified by authoritative sources for their high conservation and biodiversity value?	N	N	N	
1.4 activities that are not legally permitted or are inconsistent with any officially recognized management plans for the area?	Y	Y	Y	Under ABS regimes FPIC is required prior to collecting plants or animals for their genetic resources
1.5 risks to endangered species (e.g. reduction, encroachment on habitat)?	Y	Y	Y	Project understands this risk and consults expertise as required
1.6 activities that may result in soil erosion, deterioration and/or land degradation?	N	N	N	
1.7 reduced quality or quantity of ground water or water in rivers, ponds, lakes, other wetlands?	N	N	N	
1.8 reforestation, plantation development and/or forest harvesting?	N	N	N	
1.9 support for agricultural production, animal/fish production and harvesting	N	N	N	

1.10	introduction or utilization of any invasive alien species of flora and fauna, whether accidental or intentional?	N	N	N	
1.11	handling or utilization of genetically modified organisms?	N	N	N	
1.12	collection and utilization of genetic resources?	Y	Y	Y	The project will develop proper protocols

SS 2: Climate Change and Disaster Risks

<i>Did the project involve or lead to:</i>					
	Identified at project design (Y/N)	Identified at project implementation (Y/N)	Identified at review (Y/N)	Notes	
2.1	improving resilience against potential climate change impact beyond the project intervention period?	N	N	N	
2.2	areas that are now or are projected to be subject to natural hazards such as extreme temperatures, earthquakes, extreme precipitation and flooding, landslides, droughts, severe winds, sea level rise, storm surges, tsunami or volcanic eruptions in the next 30 years?	Y	Y	Y	Noted as a potential risk to project success but low likelihood
2.3	outputs and outcomes sensitive or vulnerable to potential impacts of climate change (e.g. changes in precipitation, temperature, salinity, extreme events)?	Y	Y	Y	Concern for climate changes to capacity of species to adapt
2.4	local communities vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and disaster risks (e.g. considering level of exposure and adaptive capacity)?	N	N	N	
2.5	increases of greenhouse gas emissions, black carbon emissions or other drivers of climate change?	N	N	N	
2.6	Carbon sequestration and reduction of greenhouse emissions, resource-efficient and low carbon development, other measures for mitigating climate change?	N	N	N	

SS 5: Cultural Heritage				
<i>Did the project involve or lead to:</i>	Identified at project design (Y/N)	Identified at project implementation (Y/N)	Identified at review (Y/N)	Notes
5.1 activities adjacent to or within a Cultural Heritage site?	N	N	N	
5.2 adverse impacts to sites, structures or objects with historical, cultural, artistic, traditional or religious values or to intangible forms of cultural heritage (e.g. knowledge, innovations, practices)?	N	N	N	
5.3 utilization of Cultural Heritage for commercial or other purposes (e.g. use of objects, practices, traditional knowledge, tourism)?	Y	Y	Y	The project is designed to protect TK
5.4 alterations to landscapes and natural features with cultural significance?	N	N	N	
5.5 significant land clearing, demolitions, excavations, flooding?	N	N	N	
5.6 identification and protection of cultural heritage sites or intangible forms of cultural heritage?	Y	Y	Y	Project is designed to inform government if this occurs and required under MATs for access

SS 7: Indigenous Peoples				
<i>Did the project involve or affect:</i>	Identified at project design (Y/N)	Identified at project implementation (Y/N)	Identified at review (Y/N)	Notes
7.1 areas where indigenous peoples are present, or uncontacted or isolated indigenous peoples inhabit or where it is believed these peoples may inhabit?	Y	Y	Y	Project is about protecting indigenous people's rights
7.2 activities located on lands and territories claimed by indigenous peoples?	Y	Y	Y	Project identifies FPIC as requirement

7.3	impacts to the human rights of indigenous peoples or to the lands, territories and resources claimed by them?	Y	Y	Y	Project identifies FPIC as requirement
7.4	the utilization and/or commercial development of natural resources on lands and territories claimed by indigenous peoples?	Y	Y	Y	Project identifies FPIC as requirement, and ownership of GR already assigned to communities
7.5	adverse effects on the development priorities, decision making mechanisms, and forms of self-government of indigenous peoples as defined by them?	N	N	N	
7.6	risks to the traditional livelihoods, physical and cultural survival of indigenous peoples?	N	N	N	
7.7	impacts on the Cultural Heritage of indigenous peoples, including through the commercialization or use of their traditional knowledge and practices?	Y	Y	Y	Project identifies FPIC as requirement

ANNEX VIII. OTHER TOOLS REQUIRED

1. GEF weighted rating table
2. Likelihood of impact table
3. ABS evaluation tool
4. Tracking tool for capacity building

**EARLY CONCEPTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM THE MID-TERM REVIEW OF
“ESTABLISHING AN ABS FRAMEWORK TO
IMPLEMENT THE NP IN TIMOR LESTE”**

Ian Thompson

UNEP consultant

Feb. 16, 2023

Focus and purpose of a mid-term review

- To assess progress for outputs and outcomes vs. the proposed plan
- To examine the technical aspects of the original proposal (in this case relative to requirements under the NP)
- To assess budget accuracy and reasons for any changes
- To examine reporting relative to requirements (PIRs, QERs)
- To indicate modifications as required to improve likelihood of successful delivery
- To indicate sustainability of project outcomes
- To suggest priorities for moving project forward

Project is substantially delayed (this is not news!)

Several issues and causes:

- Covid resulted in shutdown for at least 18 months
- Inability to hire new project leader after position became vacant in 2020 for 1.5 years
- No UNEP project office in TL, results in communication delays (partly language, partly time to deal with any issues)

Corrections to the project design

- Several important components of an ABS framework were overlooked in the prodoc: TK guidelines, researcher code of ethics, ABS users' manual, application form, etc.
- The Steering Committee was designed to include two parties that stand to benefit from the project
- The proposal talks about "competent sector authorities", but there is no such term in the NP
- A national clearing house mechanism is not linked to the CBD's International ABS CHM
- Several of the activities need to be re-written

Positive aspects

- Awareness of issues among senior SSE staff, and a desire to see ABS framework in place
- Strong leadership from current project leader and dedicated PMU staff
- Good advances in revised planning documents
- Willingness of partners to collaborate if given clear direction
- Larisula enthusiastic to participate fully – v. positive response
- TK booklets with photos from NGS fieldwork – excellent deliverable

Identified issues to be improved

- There needs to be improved communication among partners (UNEP, SSE, MAF, and EU) and Ministry of Health should be a partner
- Clear linkages to partner programmes needs to be developed (MAF: Agriculture, Forestry and Fish, EU, SSE, etc.)
 - need several meetings soon to accomplish these linkages
- CI fieldwork needs to start ASAP – major importance to project
- Bio-community protocols, model MATs and FPIC need to be in place before more collecting of specimens, including for export
- Contributions by NGS needs to be formalised by contract with a plan
- Some members of the steering committee stand to benefit from the project (so, conflict of interest)

Apparent irreconcilable issue with UNTL

- Removal of Dr. Macal Gusmao as National ABS focal point has had the unintended effect of losing UNTL as a partner
- Therefore the activities associated with UNTL will have to be modified:
 - Change in Steering Committee membership
 - Training of lab and bio-prospecting staff
 - Research and collection teams
 - Design of database
 - Home for the database

Priorities/recommendations for moving forward (1)

1. Ensure GEF extension and decide on a maximum time
2. Early SC meetings to develop clear project linkages with partners (Note: mainly for coordinating with MAF and EU)
3. Baseline knowledge survey (activity 1.2.2.2)
4. Hire ABS expert for key products and staff training
5. Confirm ToR and issue CI contract, put pressure on them to produce methods and budget report as inception
6. Bring new UNEP manager (Ms. Sharma) to the project office to form a positive working relationship as soon as possible
7. The project will have to be shortened, given the time frame and funds remaining; concentrate on the key elements: ABS framework, ABS training, lab expertise, and community protocols (MATs, FPIC)

Priorities/recommendations for moving forward (2)

8. Work on and implement communication and training plans
9. Database is essential – should be held in Biodiversity Directorate
10. Taskforce and ABS expert to develop the ABS framework and protocols within this year
11. Appoint CNA(s) as soon as possible and provide training
12. Early training for the new ABS focal point is essential
13. MAGNT is implicated in several activities – reaffirm interest soon
14. Realign the steering committee to agency contributions and remove conflict-of-interest members