



**Final Mid-Term Review (MTR) Report
Sustainable Management of Peatland
Ecosystems in Mekong Countries
(Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar)**

December 2023

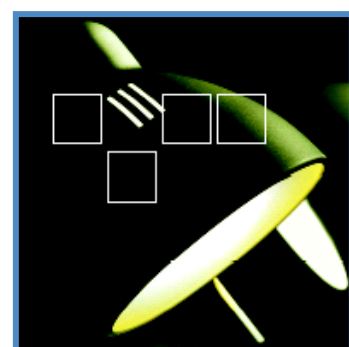
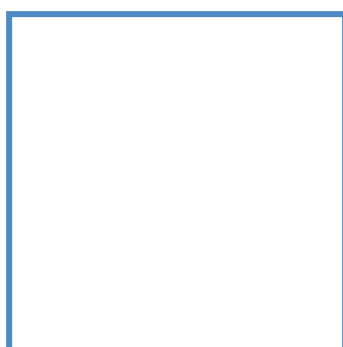
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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AATHP	ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution
ADB	Asian Development Bank
APSMPE	ASEAN Programme on Sustainable Management of Peatland Ecosystems
APMS	ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASMC	ASEAN Specialized Meteorological Centre
ATFP	ASEAN Task Force on Peatlands
AWP	Annual Work Plan
BCC	Biodiversity Conservation Corridor
BKN	Beung Kiat Nong
BSNP	Botum Sakor National Park
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CCCSP	Cambodia Climate Change Strategic Plan
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CPA	Community Protected Area
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DFWC	Department of Freshwater and Wetlands Conservation
DWR	Department of Water Resources
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
ESMP	Environmental and Social Management Plan
ESMS	Environmental and Social Management System
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United
FREDA	Forest Resource Environment Development and Conservation Association
GDNPA	General Directorate of Natural Protected Area
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEC	Global Environment Centre
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
HH	Households
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IKI	German International Climate Initiative
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation

MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
MoE	Ministry of Environment
MoNRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
MONREC	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation
NAPP	National Action Plans on Peatlands
NAPA	National Adaption Programme of Action
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NEA	National Executing Agency
NEAP	National Environmental Action Plan
NESAP	National Environmental Strategy and Action Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPC	National Project Coordinator
NPD	National Project Director
NSC	National Steering Committee
NUoL	National University of Laos
NWRS	National Water Resource Strategy
PA	Protected Area
PKWS	Peam Krasop Wildlife Sanctuary
PPG	Project Preparation Grant
PIF	Project Identification Form
RBA	Rights-Based Approach
RCU	Regional Coordination Unit
RHRD	Research and Human Resource Development
RS	Remote Sensing
SEApeat	Sustainable Management of Peatland Forests in Southeast Asia Project
SME	Department of Small and Medium Enterprises
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society
WHO	World Health Organisation
WRI	World Resources Institute
WWF	World Wildlife Fund



A Peatland Site in Cambodia

SECTION - 1

Executive Summary

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Project Information Table

To provide an overview of the project, the table below summarizes the facts of the project. Furthermore, the project background and content are described.

Project Title: Sustainable Management of Peatland Ecosystems in Mekong Countries ("Mekong Peatlands Project")	
Project Number (GEF ID / IUCN ID): 9332	
Country: Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar	Country Region: Mekong Region
Implementing Partner: IUCN Lao PDR	GEF focal areas: Biodiversity, Land Degradation, Climate Change
PIF Submission Date: July 31, 2015	GEF CEO Endorsement Date: March 14, 2018
PIF Approval Date: April 01, 2016	Project Closing Date: December 31, 2023
Project Duration: 54 Months	Midterm Review Completion Date: November 30, 2023
MTR Inception Presentation Date: September 26, 2023	Project Financing: Total: US\$ 11,908,747 consisting of: a) GEF Financing: US\$ 1,548,300 b) Co-financing: US\$ 1,0360,447

1.2 Project Description

The Mekong Peatlands project, initiated in 2019 across Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar, is dedicated to the sustainable management of peatland ecosystems. These ecosystems are pivotal for biodiversity conservation and contribute to mitigating climate change. Recognizing the vulnerability of peatlands to degradation and unsustainable land use practices, the project aims to reverse these trends and safeguard the associated benefits in terms of biodiversity, carbon storage, and livelihoods.

With an original end date set for June 2023, the project has been extended until December 2023. However, it faced suspension in Myanmar. The overarching goal of the project is to assess and document peatland ecosystems, enhance capacity, establish enabling policy frameworks, and demonstrate sustainable management practices. The project aligns with regional agreements such as the ASEAN Programme on Sustainable Management of Peatland Ecosystems and the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution, reinforcing its commitment to regional environmental strategies.

Structured into four components:

Component 1: Assessment and documentation of peatlands in targeted countries

Component 2: Capacity development and policy and legal frameworks

Component 3: Development and demonstration of sustainable peatland management

Component 4: Regional cooperation

The project addresses key aspects of peatland conservation, including comprehensive assessment, capacity building at various levels, policy and legal framework development, and on-the-ground demonstrations of sustainable practices. The Mekong Peatlands project plays a crucial role in contributing to the broader ASEAN strategies for peatland management and environmental sustainability in the region.

1.3 Concise summary of conclusions

Relevance

The Mekong Peatland project is highly relevant due to its holistic approach, addressing peatland ecosystem degradation and rural development through three impact pathways.

The project's alignment with multiple Sustainable Development Goals reflects a strategic commitment to broader sustainable development objectives. Notably, the project prioritizes

gender considerations and equity, emphasizing inclusivity in decision-making and implementation bodies. The effective use of tools and instruments contributes to robust project monitoring and evaluation, showcasing the project's strategic design and commitment to positive impact in peatland conservation and broader sustainable development goals.

Effectiveness

The effectiveness of the Mekong Peatland project is underscored by its comprehensive structure, encompassing ground-level training to national policy strengthening for a well-rounded approach to peatland conservation.

The presence of clearly defined roles and responsibilities within key units and committees contributes to robust project governance, ensuring accountability and coordination. The project's governance structure, including regional and national steering committees, coordination units, and management units, fosters efficient oversight and implementation.

Regular coordination meetings, exchange visits, and workshops promote continuous stakeholder engagement, emphasizing inclusivity in gender and regional representation for enhanced collaboration and knowledge sharing. Despite implementation challenges, such as delays and budget cuts due to external factors like the COVID-19 pandemic, the project's adaptability and resilience underscore its commitment to achieving objectives.

Efficiency

The efficiency of the Mekong Peatland project is challenged by unforeseen obstacles, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic and political disturbances, impacting both technical and financial resource utilization and causing significant delays in project timelines, field visits, and project outcomes, prompting necessary adjustments. While financial expenditure is well-tracked, careful planning is required to ensure sufficient resources for project completion and post-project activities. Although the overall expenditure is below the budget, there is a concern about inadequate funds for monitoring and evaluation, potentially affecting project closure.

The analysis of the project's financial performance reveals varying levels of efficiency in resource utilization across components, with Component 2 (100% progress) demonstrating the most efficiency. Other components while showing reasonable progress exhibit lower delivery rates - Components 1 (77% progress with 89% of fund expenditure), 3 (66% progress with 61 % of budget spent), and 4 (70% progress with 54% of budget expenditure; suggesting room for improvement in resource management.

Despite reduced co-funding after the suspension of the Myanmar component, continued collaboration with partners contributes to the project's sustainability efforts. Efforts to translate materials and exceed policy targets contribute to the project's continued benefits beyond its end. Addressing these efficiency challenges and optimizing resource management across all components will be crucial for the project's ultimate success.

Network and Linkages

The Mekong Peatland project strategically prioritizes stakeholder engagement, creating a collaborative and inclusive approach to peatland management. By actively involving stakeholders in annual meetings and fostering collaboration with regional entities, NGOs, and international organizations, the project builds a robust network for knowledge exchange and coordination. Country-level stakeholders, including local communities, government agencies, NGOs, and research institutions, play a vital role in providing oversight to project planning, fostering a sense of ownership and inclusivity.

The project's emphasis on regional collaboration, aligning with initiatives like the ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy and the Mekong WET project, enhances its potential for success by leveraging regional expertise and resources. Learning from similar projects, particularly through collaboration with the SUPA project and exchange visits, enhances the project's capacity and effectiveness, contributing to valuable knowledge transfer.

1.4 MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table

Component	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Component 1	Satisfactory (S)	- Utilizing remote sensing, peatland areas were identified in project locations, in Lao PDR and in Cambodia. - Validation of these identified peatland areas is pending, awaiting field surveys and submission of reports by the Project Management Units (PMUs) for scrutiny by the Global Environment Centre (GEC). - The Terminal Evaluation will verify the outcome of the peatland identification survey, ensuring a validated and comprehensive understanding of the project's achievements in this regard.
Component 2A	Highly Satisfactory (HS)	- A total of 607 participants engaged in awareness-raising activities, with 130 in Cambodia and at least 477 in Laos, as documented in the activity completion reports. - Communication materials on peatland assessment and management, comprising a booklet, trifold, and grievance mechanism poster, were developed to support capacity building and awareness initiatives within the project.
Component 2B	Highly Satisfactory (HS)	- In Laos, efforts are underway to strengthen three legal/regulatory documents, comprising one strategy, one management plan, and one policy. - In Cambodia, four legal/regulatory documents have been reinforced, with the Protected Area Amendment now integrated into the Environmental and Natural Resources Code (KH).
Component 3A	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	- The reported demarcation of peatland areas, totaling 5,587 Ha (611 Ha in Laos and 4,976 Ha in Cambodia), was found to be misreported during the Mid-Term Review. In Cambodia, the actual demarcated area is 587 hectares within the core zone of KKRS, while the reported 4,976 Ha represents the total PKWS peatland area, pending validation through peat surveys. - For Lao PDR, under the Mekong Peatland Project, approximately 92 Ha of peatland has been demarcated, those areas consisting of 72 ha for Beung Baphat (BBP), and 20 Ha for Beung Papaiyai (BPPY), and approximately 25.43 Ha of peatland areas were mapped in BBP, and 13.46 Ha of peatland areas were mapped in BPPY. - Cambodia: An awareness-raising event in August 2022 targeted primary and secondary students and local communities in Koh Kong province. Additionally, in February 2023, a workshop in Kep and Kampot Province focused on promoting, training, and increasing awareness regarding the importance of the Peatland Ecosystem for local authorities. - Lao PDR: Consultations conducted in April 2022 involved three communities—Thongxay, Kala, and Kaeng Nang Ang Villages—raising awareness about peatlands' values and functions in and around Beung Kiat Ngong. Villagers and District/Provincial officers actively participated in these awareness sessions.

		The first awareness raising on importance of peatland in Lao PDR have been conducted during 26-30 April 2022 with total participants of 136 peoples consisting of district officers for 25 people, and the villagers in 3 target villages of 111 people. the second awareness raising have been conducted during the celebration of World Peatland Day in June 2023, with total number of participants of 117 people, with 56 females. And the awareness raising/capacity development on importance of peatland ecosystem at community level will be conducted in 3rd week of December and expected that 100 of participants will be joining the event. In total 353 people.
Component 3B	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	- Livelihood support activities are in progress in both Lao PDR and Cambodia. However, the available reports indicate that activities are more advanced in Laos, while there is limited information to verify the completion of livelihood activities in Cambodia. - As of the Mid-Term Review activity completion report of only the livelihoods consultations with the 96 households was reviewed, for Lao PDR. - However, for Cambodia, only concept notes were accessible, lacking specific details such as the total number of households participating in the program. - Verification challenges in both Lao and Cambodia were highlighted by the absence of the final activity completion report and is expected only after the completion of livelihood activities in December 2023, while Lao PDR identified 21 households in concept note prepared in July 2023 for participating in cattle fattening and handicraft activities . - From July – December 2023, in total 9 households are actively participated in cattle fattening program in Ban Thongxay, and Keang Nang Ang, the grass/feed for cattle have been planted.
Component 4	Satisfactory (S)	- The indicator has exceeded the target of conducting 4 regional meetings; 5 regional meetings have been held till date. 1st exchange visit was conducted in October 2022 in Malaysia and 2nd is planned in November 2023 in Thailand. - The project's Inception Workshop was held on 26 November 2019 in Bangkok followed by the 1st Regional Project Steering Committee Meeting held on 29 November 2019 in Bangkok. 2 regional project steering committee meetings have been conducted online - 2nd RPSC in 2020 and 3rd RPSC in 2021. And 6 trainings were conducted online by GEC in Cambodia and Laos in 2020 and 2021. - In Nov 2021, the CTA presented an overview of the project at the Peatlands Pavilion at the COP 26 event in Glasgow (through an online live presentation). - Key stakeholders from the Mekong Peatland Project participated at 7th annual ATRP meeting in Singapore in 2022 to present the update on project progress and outcomes of the 4th PSC meeting.

		In Q4 December 2022, Mekong Peatlands participated in an online meeting of the Knowledge Coordination Group organized by ASEAN Secretariat and contributed to verifying local language translations for the ASEAN country peatland conservation guidelines for Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.
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1.5 Recommendations

Relevance

Recommendations for the relevance of the project include refining the results framework for consistent indicator definition, strengthening advocacy for sustainable peatland management aligned with SDGs, , and sustaining stakeholder engagement beyond the project's duration.

Moreover, addressing field-level capacity gaps through targeted training, diversifying communication methods for broader outreach, mitigating unintended violations through awareness campaigns, and ensuring ongoing integration with national policies for sustained alignment with evolving priorities. These measures aim to enhance the project's coherence, visibility, long-term impact, adaptability, and alignment with national objectives.

Effectiveness

Recommendations for the effectiveness of the project include adaptive project management to address delays and budget resilience with clear contingency plans.

- For Component 1, the focus is on strengthening capacity building at the provincial level, addressing staff turnover, and accelerating report compilation.
- Component 2 emphasizes sustainability measures, cross-country collaboration, and expanding public awareness initiatives.
- Component 3 highlights the importance of regular reporting and building on the success of training programs.
- For Component 4, recommendations include fostering expert input, expediting lessons learned documentation, and strengthening project coordination and monitoring meetings.

These measures aim to ensure the sustainability and long-term impact of peatland conservation efforts in the Mekong Region.

Efficiency

Efficiency recommendations for the project include developing contingency plans for unexpected challenges, conducting a detailed financial assessment, and exploring funding avenues.

Moreover, strengthening co-funding monitoring, verifying, and finalizing reported peatland areas through surveys, and reviewing gaps in project activity implementation are crucial for credibility and effectiveness.

The recommendation to request a no-cost extension emphasizes efficiency improvements in each project component. This includes enhancing efficiency in resource utilization for Component 1, addressing execution gaps for Component 3, and optimizing resource allocation for Component 4 to ensure successful project completion.

Network and Linkages

Strategic resource allocation, considering budget constraints, can ensure maximum impact on peatland conservation.

Documenting lessons learned can contribute to continuous improvement, and exploring scale-up opportunities with successful components ensures a broader impact on peatland management in the Mekong region. Addressing these recommendations enhances the project's effectiveness, sustainability, and collaborative impact.

1.6 Structure of the MTR report

The MTR report is divided into **six sections**. The **first section** presents an executive summary of the MTR project including a brief project description, project progress summary and a concise summary of MTR ratings and achievements, conclusion, and recommendations.

The **second section** provides an account of the Mekong Peatlands Project background and implementation strategy including the description of the development context, problems that the project sought to address, key stakeholders, and project timing and milestones.

The **third section** provides the introduction to the MTR Approach & Methodology including an overview of the purpose and scope of the MTR project, the collection methods and MTR project limitations.

The **fourth section** presents the MTR findings. based on the following five criteria: Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Network and Linkages.

The **fifth section** presents in detail the conclusions and recommendations highlighting the strengths, weaknesses, and results of the Sustainable Management of Peatland Ecosystem in the Mekong Countries project and proposing future corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the project.

The **sixth section** compiles the list of annexes and operational documents including list of persons interviewed, used for undertaking the MTR mission.



Thongsay Village Peatland Site, Lao PDR

SECTION - 2

Introduction

2. Background Context and Project Description

2.1 Brief Overview

Peatlands play significant roles in each of the three project target nations and are highly valuable ecosystems from the perspectives of biodiversity and climate change mitigation. Peatlands provide numerous and critical ecosystem services that include water storage and regulation, flood control, habitat to support unique species enhancing the world's biodiversity, carbon sequestration and storage, and the provision of food and other goods and services to local communities.

In Southeast Asia, peatlands cover an estimated 25 million hectares, or roughly 7% of the total area of the world's organic soil. However, they account for 50% of carbon emissions from peatlands worldwide (Hooijer et al., 2006), largely due to their clearance, burning and drainage for agricultural uses.

Cambodia's peatlands are unique in the ASEAN region and have been identified across significant areas of coastal mangrove forests supporting a high level of biodiversity. Moreover, globally threatened bird and mammal species can be found in the Peam Krasop Wildlife Sanctuary in Koh Kong Province, in southern Cambodia.

Peatlands are located in several locations in the central and southern Lao PDR; despite their relatively small size, they support significant degree of biodiversity, serve as a carbon sink, and provide essential advantages for the local population. In the southern Lao PDR, the Beung Kiat Ngong terrain is home to a number of vulnerable and endangered species. Some of the rarest ecosystems in the Mekong region are the forested peatlands of Beung Kiat Ngong, which have a great deal of potential for localized endemics.

However, the lack of recognition of these peatlands across the three countries makes them extremely vulnerable to degradation and potential loss of critical biodiversity. The peatland ecosystems are threatened by conversion and degradation due to unsustainable land use practices.

The project identifies substantial opportunities to reverse the loss of peatlands and safeguard associated biodiversity, carbon, and livelihood benefits in the three countries by supporting improved recognition and management of the peatlands.

In Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar, the Mekong Peatlands project—also known as the Sustainable Management of Peatland Ecosystems in Mekong Countries Project is in operation. With the initial end date of June 2023, it started in August 2019 in Cambodia, May 2020 in Laos, and October 2020 in Myanmar. Nevertheless, the project's completion date has been moved up to December 2023. The project was suspended in Myanmar in March 2021 due to the political upheaval.

2.2 Development Context

As stated in the project document and observed during document review, field survey and interviews with key stakeholders, the Project is aligned well with the two governments, IUCN's and GEF's strategies and priorities.

Cambodia

Historically, peatlands in Cambodia have not been categorized as a distinct land type, resulting in the absence of a centralized authority responsible for peatland-related decisions. Various ministries and agencies are involved in peatlands management, with the main ones outlined below:

- The Ministry of Environment (MoE), including the General Directorate of Natural Protected Area (GDNPA), the Department of Coastal and Marine Conservation, the Department of Freshwater Wetlands Conservation (DFWC), and the Department of Climate Change.
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries including the Forest Administration (FA) and the Fisheries Administration (FiA).

- Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction (MLMUPC), which implements the Land Administration, Management, and Distribution Program (LAMDP).
- Ministry of Tourism.

Peatlands play a critical role in Cambodian community development, biodiversity conservation, and environmental preservation. The currently existing coastal mangrove ecosystems within Cambodia, covering regions in both PKWS and BSNP, are functioning mangrove habitats that support essential biodiversity and coastal environments.

Peatlands, however, are not specifically covered by any national laws or regulations. Rather, their usage is regulated by several sector-specific laws, such as those pertaining to agriculture, fisheries, forests, environmental preservation, and nature conservation.

At the moment, there is no one policy for managing peatlands in Cambodia. Here is a list of some of the relevant policies that are pertinent to peatland management in Cambodia:

- Royal Decree on the Creation and Designation of Protected Areas (1993);
- Law on Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Management of the Kingdom of Cambodia (1996);
- National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) 1998-2002;
- DRAFT National Environmental Strategy and Action Plan (NESAP) 2020-2023 and Law (1992 and 2001);
- Forestry Law (2002);
- Fisheries Law (2006);
- Cambodia National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) (2006);
- Water Resources Management Law (2007);
- Protected Areas Law (2008);
- Cambodia National Strategic Development Plan (2014-2018);
- Cambodia Climate Change Strategic Plan (2014-2023);
- Cambodia National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2016);
- Cambodia's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) (2015).

Lao PDR

In Lao PDR, peatlands are not specifically categorized for land management in policy, although they are considered as part of the broader wetlands category. Due to their lack of specific recognition, there is no single coordinating agency for peatland-related decisions. Instead, multiple departments and agencies, primarily falling under the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment (MoNRE) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), share responsibilities for peatland management. These sectors include land administration, agricultural and rural development, fisheries, forestry, environmental protection, hydrology, and mineral management.

Lao PDR is a participant to both the ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy (APMS) and the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution. However, mainly because of budgetary limitations and inadequate institutional and technical capacities, the nation has found it difficult to carry out its responsibilities under these accords, including the creation of a National Action Plan on Peatlands (NAPPs) by 2020. The goal of this project is to directly assist Lao PDR in creating its NAPP and fulfilling its obligations under these ASEAN accords.

Peatlands in Lao PDR have not been managed as distinct ecosystems with unique needs. While some conservation efforts exist, such as the Beung Kiat Ngong Ramsar Site, they are often integrated into broader wetland management initiatives. These activities involve raising awareness about ecosystems and biodiversity, as well as supporting local community development in partnership with the Lao government and international donors.

The majority of peatlands in Lao PDR, except those at Beung Kiat Ngong, have not received attention for sustainable management. With no specific regulations in place, villagers have unrestricted access to these peatlands, leading to activities like peat extraction for organic

fertilizer production, agricultural encroachment, livestock grazing, and overharvesting of species, causing further degradation.

Despite peatlands' significance in providing essential ecosystem services like water storage, flood mitigation, biodiversity preservation, and climate change mitigation, there are no dedicated laws or harmonized approaches for their sustainable management in Lao PDR. Instead, various sector-specific policies related to forest management, agricultural development, environmental protection, and biodiversity conservation govern peatland use.

2.3 Problem that the project sought to address: Threats, root causes and barriers

While similar factors like fires, extensive logging, and land conversion contribute to peatland degradation in mainland Southeast Asia, the causes in the target countries differ due to the smaller peatland areas and diverse ecological conditions.

2.3.1 Threats

Cambodia:

Cambodia faces significant threats to its peatlands, including:

- Small-scale peat extraction for organic fertilizer production.
- Small-scale encroachments for agriculture and aquatic species collection.
- Small-scale mangrove cutting for charcoal production.
- Large-scale sand mining is causing land erosion and coastal ecosystem damage.
- Economic land concessions for various commercial purposes like plantations.
- Aquaculture practices.

Lao PDR:

In Lao PDR, the major threats to peatlands are as follows:

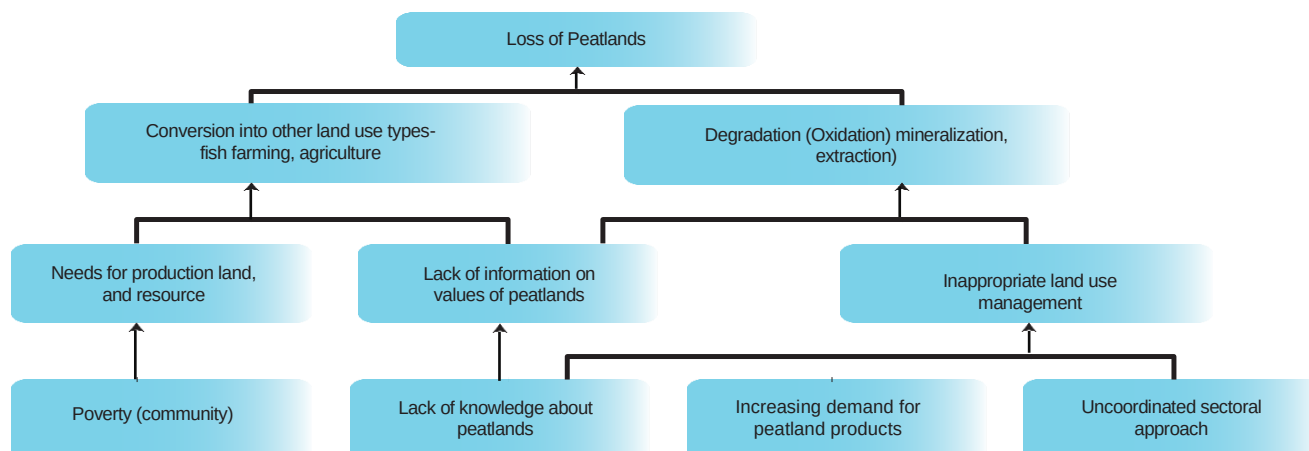
- Human-induced conversion of peatland areas, as seen in Beung Kiat Ngong, where forests have been cleared through fires and draining for agriculture or plantations.
- Overfishing and overgrazing.
- Use of chemical fertilizers.
- Peat extraction for organic fertilizer production.
- Increased incidence of drought and fires

2.3.2 Root causes

Root causes for the degradation and unsustainable management of peatlands includes:

- Inadequate understanding of the characteristics and prevalence of peatland ecosystems in the three countries.
- Absence of dedicated policies and institutional frameworks for peatland management.
- Growing local and global demand for goods sourced from peatland regions.
- Poverty and a dearth of sustainable livelihood opportunities for indigenous communities.

A visual representation of the fundamental reasons for peatland degradation and unsustainable management in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar is illustrated in the diagram below:



2.3.3 Barrier's analysis

Obstacles to addressing threats and underlying causes can be categorized into three main groups: limited resources, inadequate political emphasis, and technological hindrances.

- a) **Limited resources allocated to the conservation efforts of peatlands:** Limited resources pose a significant challenge. There is a lack of financial support for identifying peatlands at the national level in the three countries. Site-level awareness and funding for peatland management are also lacking. Local communities often face difficulties accessing investment capital and require external assistance and training, especially for ventures like ecotourism. The project aims to overcome these resource limitations by investing in surveys, capacity building, and awareness-raising.
- b) **Insufficient political prioritization and lack of a peatlands management plan integrated with local planning:** Although there is high-level commitment to ASEAN agreements on peatlands in all three countries, political prioritization and interagency cooperation are lacking without external support. Knowledge limitations affect local and national planning, and it's crucial for stakeholders to understand the long-term implications of sustainable peatland management. Planning tends to be sector-specific, with limited coordination between agencies responsible for peatlands, agriculture, and climate change. The project aims to address this by building awareness and enhancing capacity across different sectors and levels.
- c) **Technological barriers:** Technological barriers primarily concern access to remote sensing technology, including satellite imagery, and the need for a skilled workforce for image processing and data interpretation in comprehensive peatland surveys. Expertise requires knowledge in remote sensing, GIS technologies, soil science, and wetland hydrology. To overcome this, the project plans to utilize regional resources and knowledge and build the capacity of government counterparts at the national level through collaboration with regional experts.

2.4 Project Description and Strategy

The project identifies the overall objective *to sustainably manage the peatland ecosystems in Mekong countries and to conserve biodiversity and reduce GHG emissions*.

The Project objective will be achieved through four mutually interconnected components, which will be achieved through several Outputs as presented below in Table 1.

Table 1: Project Outcomes and Outputs Project

Project Objective	To sustainably manage the peatland ecosystems in Mekong countries and to conserve biodiversity and reduce GHG emissions.
Component 1	Assessment and documentation of peatlands in targeted countries
Outcome 1	Peatland ecosystems are better documented in the three target countries supporting enhanced recognition and management
Output 1.1	Surveys to identify peatland ecosystems in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar undertaken
Output 1.2	Important peatland sites assessed and documented
Component 2	Capacity development and policy and legal frameworks
Outcome 2	Capacity and policy/legal frameworks for sustainable peatland management strengthened
Output 2.1	Key stakeholders at various levels trained on peatland assessment, rehabilitation and management and their awareness and understanding of the functions and importance of peatland ecosystems enhanced
Output 2.2	National strategies and/or action plans for protection and sustainable use of peatland ecosystems prepared and peatlands mainstreamed into national and sub-national policies and regulations

Component 3	Development and demonstration of Best Management Practices
Outcome 3	Integrated sustainable management of peatland ecosystems in the targeted countries demonstrated, with an emphasis on conserving biodiversity, reducing GHG emissions and strengthening sustainable livelihoods for local communities
Output 3.1	Protection and sustainable use of the peatlands in Peam Krasop Wildlife Sanctuary enhanced
Output 3.2	Protection and sustainable use of the peatlands in the Beung Kiat Ngong landscape enhanced
Output 3.3	Protection and sustainable use of the peatlands in Inle Lake Watershed enhanced
Component 4	Regional Cooperation
Outcome 4	Regional cooperation among countries in peatland sustainable management is enhanced
Output 4.1	Experiences and best practices for peatland assessment and management in Mekong countries documented and shared
Output 4.2	Technical project implementation support and coordination provided

2.5 Project Implementation Arrangements

The specific arrangements for implementing the project are provided in a summarized form in Figure below.

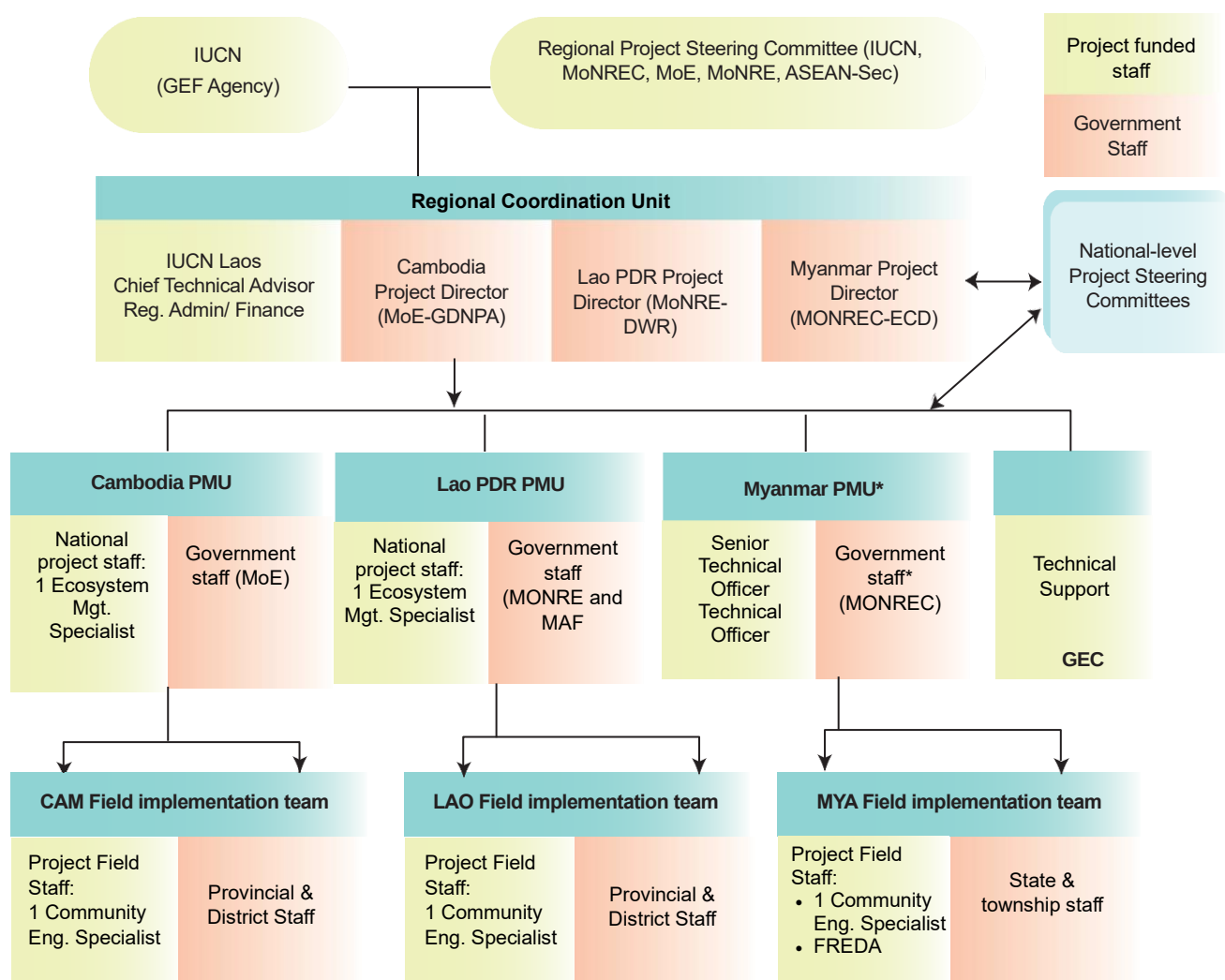


Figure: Project implementation structure (adapted from Project Document)

*After the suspension of the project in Myanmar all the project activities were halted in Myanmar. With the involvement of MONREC-ECD in the project only as observer status in the RPSC.

2.5.1 Roles & Responsibilities

Implementing agency

IUCN serves as the Implementing Agency or GEF Agency for the project. In this role, IUCN is responsible for the project's management, which includes overseeing its implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting to the GEF, as well as ensuring the project's successful completion.

Executing Agencies

The Lead Executing Agencies/ Partners for the project are:

- The Ministry of Environment (MoE) in Cambodia, represented by the General Directorate of Natural Protected Area (GDNPA),
- The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE) in Lao PDR, represented by the Department of Water Resources (DWR), and
- The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (MONREC) in Myanmar, represented by the Environmental Conservation Department (ECD) (Observer Status).

Project Steering Committees

Project steering committees are established at both regional and national levels to offer supervision and direction for project execution.

Regional Project Steering Committee

The Regional Project Steering Committee serves as the central authority for overseeing project progress and results, reviewing, and approving financial reports, annual work plans, and budgets at the regional level. It also plays an important role in organizing, coordinating, and implementing the project, facilitating collaboration among the Project Management Unit, Executing Agencies, and various partners.

The committee offers valuable guidance on ongoing activities, fostering collaboration with other initiatives in the region. Furthermore, it ensures the timely provision of co-financing support, contributing to the project's effective execution and achievement of its goals.

As outlined in the project document, the regional level project steering committee is composed of the following members:

- IUCN (Implementing Agency)
- General Directorate of Natural Protected Area, MoE Cambodia
- Department of Water Resources, MoNRE Lao PDR
- Environmental Conservation Department, MONREC Myanmar (Observer status)
- ASEAN Secretariat

National Steering Committees

The National Steering Committee is entrusted with essential responsibilities, including overseeing project progress and the attainment of planned results at the national level. They review project progress, financial reports, annual work plans, and budgets, and oversee the project's organization, coordination, and implementation. The committee fosters cooperation among the Project Management Unit, country-specific Executing Agencies, and various partners. Additionally, they provide guidance on ongoing and planned activities, promoting collaboration with other in-country programs and projects. As outlined in the project document, the National Steering Committee is composed of the following members:

Cambodia National Project Steering Committee	Lao PDR National Project Steering Committee
General Directorate of Natural Protected Area (GDNPA)	Department of Water Resources (MoNRE)
Department of Freshwater Wetlands Conservation (MOE)	Department of Planning and Finance (MoNRE)

Department of Southern Boeung Tonle Sap Terrestrial Protected Area Conservation	Department of Natural Resources and Environment of Champasak Province (PoNRE)
Department of Marine and Coastal Conservation	Vice Governor of Pathoumphone District
Department of Northern Boeung Tonle Sap Terrestrial Protected Area Conservation	Department of Natural Resources and Environment of Pathoumphone District
Department of Environment, Koh Kong Province	Director of Natural Resources and Environment of Pathoumphone District
Royal University of Agriculture	
IUCN Cambodia Country Office	
Pannasastra University of Cambodia	

Project Management Unit

The project is delivered through a Regional Coordination Unit (established at the regional level) and a national Project Management Unit (PMU) set in each of the three countries.

Regional Coordination Unit (RCU)

The RCU's role involves key activities including project coordination including day-to-day project issues and requirements, information and reporting management, meeting and workshop organization, work plans and budgeting, and reporting and documentation on the project progress.

The RCU is managed on a day-to-day basis by the Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) and the three National Project Directors assigned (on a part-time basis) by the lead executing agencies in the three countries.

National Project Management Units (PMUs)

The national PMUs serve as the secretariat to national steering committees. The role involves handling daily project matters, managing field operations in close collaboration with lead agencies and partners, contributing to project monitoring and knowledge management, preparing biannual progress reports, coordinating project activities with other ongoing initiatives, promoting inter-institutional collaboration, and ensuring timely delivery of inputs.

Additionally, the role includes organizing workshops and annual meetings, developing detailed work plans and budgets for approval, and assisting in the preparation of project reports and evaluations.

The national PMUs will be overseen by the National Project Director (NPD) in each country and will be managed on a day-to-day basis by an Ecosystem Management Specialist, who acts as the National Project Coordinator.

Project execution support partners

The Regional Coordination Unit (hosted by IUCN Laos) and the Global Environment Centre (GEC) offer support for the execution of the project to the Executing Agencies.

2.6 Project Timing and Milestones

PIF submitted	31 st July 2015
PIF approved	01 st April 2016
GEF CEO Endorsement submission date	14 th Mar 2018
Project document signed	01 st Mar 2019
Mid Term review	August to November 2023

The Project had a long development process of more than four years between the submission of the PIF (July 2015) and the signing of the Project Document (March 2019).

Thus, the MTR took place approx. 2.5 years after the effective start, whereas it is 3.5 years into the formal project period. The operational closing date of the project is stated as

December 2023, leaving less than a year between the MTR and the terminal evaluation unless the project is extended.

2.7 Main stakeholders: summary list

- Global Environment Facility (GEF) Agency
- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
- Global Environment Centre (GEC).

Cambodia

- The Ministry of Environment (MoE) – Cambodia
- General Directorate of Natural Protected Area (GDNPA), MoE – Cambodia
- Department of Freshwater Wetland Conservation (DFWC) – Cambodia
- Koh Srolao community and Boeung Kachhang community – Cambodia.

Lao PDR

- The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE) - Lao PDR
- Provincial Office Natural Resources and Environment (PoNRE) – Lao PDR
- District Office of Natural Resources and Environment (DoNRE) – Lao PDR
- Kala community, Kangnangsang community, Thongxay community – Lao PDR.

Myanmar

- The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (MONREC) – Myanmar
- Environmental Conservation Department (ECD), MONREC.



A Mangrove Site in Cambodia

SECTION - 3

Approach and Methodology

3. Approach and Methodology

3.1 Purpose and Scope of Evaluation

As per the Terms of Reference (ToR) agreed between IUCN and Lochan & Co, the Mid Term Review's (MTR) main goal was to evaluate the *Sustainable Management of Peatland Ecosystems in Mekong Countries Project, or the Mekong Peatlands Project's* performance in terms of achieving its goals and producing the intended results, identify areas for improvement in its execution, assess the likelihood of the project achieving its objectives, and delivering its intended outputs, within the current timeframe. The ToR is attached as **Annexure 1**.

Purpose of evaluation:

- Enhancing Project Strategy and Workplan
Examine how the project's experiences can inform improvements in the project strategy and workplan, ensuring the successful achievement of project outputs.
- Adjusting Project Design Elements
Conduct a systematic and in-depth review of progress in relation to the initial objectives and expected results, allowing for necessary adjustments to key elements of the project design, in accordance with Project Steering Committee approval and Project Management Unit agreement.
- Adapting to Changing Context
Evaluate whether modifications to project results, strategies, and fund allocation between activities are warranted due to changes in the contextual factors and country structures.
- Extracting Valuable Lessons
Extract significant lessons learned from the project's implementation, contributing to the enhancement of program quality.
- Monitoring Progress and Corrective Actions
Continuously assess project progress and identify necessary corrective measures to enhance project delivery for the remaining project duration, as well as potential extensions.

Scope of evaluation:

- Performance Assessment
Evaluate the project's progress concerning planned activities and intended outputs and assess if another extension is necessary for the project.
- Stakeholder Reflection and Lesson Learning
Engage with the project team and other stakeholders to reflect on the project, its activities, and accomplishments to date. This includes gathering lessons learned, encompassing aspects like project design, technical, and social outputs.
- Resource Optimization
Determine the most critical objectives to be achieved within the remaining project timeframe, considering the available resources.
- Project Design Review
Assess the necessity for any adjustments related to project design and implementation arrangements which may include activities, outputs, milestone dates, budget allocations, and other elements.

3.2 Approach & Methodology

The MTR evaluation methodology includes development of checklists for data collection, undertaking data collection activities (through document review, site visits, and interviews), and an assessment of project outcomes and indicators. The aim was to gauge the progress of the project activities, identify lessons learned during project implementation and provide recommendations for the remaining implementation period.

3.2.1 Evaluation Criteria

The MTR includes a detailed examination of the project, with a particular emphasis on the following five key areas in accordance with the OECD DAC evaluation criteria:

- **Relevance:** The MTR has assessed the project's relevance by examining the extent to which it has contributed to policies and programs. It also identifies areas for improvement to better address the needs and demands of stakeholders and evaluate the relevance of the tools, instruments, and inputs applied to create an enabling policy environment.
- **Effectiveness:** Effectiveness is a critical aspect of the MTR. The evaluation of the effectiveness has covered four key components as mentioned in the project document: 1) Assessment and documentation of peatlands in targeted countries, 2) Capacity development and policy and legal frameworks, 3) Development and demonstration of Best Management Practices, and 4) Regional cooperation. Each component has been rigorously assessed to determine the project's effectiveness in achieving its objectives.
- **Efficiency:** The MTR has analyzed the efficiency of the project, including the utilization and allocation of technical and financial resources. It also evaluates the mechanism followed to monitor the resources, the role of the project steering committee, and considers both qualitative and quantitative aspects of management. Additionally, the level of stakeholder participation has also been examined to ensure efficient project execution.
- **Linkages:** The participation of various stakeholders in the project's execution is closely examined, encompassing government, civil societies, indigenous groups, local communities, academic and research institutions, and others. The MTR also evaluates how well the project is aligned with other related projects, assessing its linkages and collaborations within the broader context.
- **Lessons Learned:** The MTR identified areas within program planning that can be improved, focusing on aspects such as target setting, institutional relevance, and capacity for project decision making and delivery. Lessons and conclusions drawn from the project's implementation are presented, with a specific emphasis on its effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and networking.

Based on this evaluation criteria an evaluation matrix was developed (Attached in **Annexure 2**), the key evaluation questions included in the evaluation matrix are provided in section 3.3 below.

3.2.2 Data Collection Methods

The MTR Team adopted various data collection methods to collect secondary data (through documentary review) and primary data (through field visits direct observations, individual and group interviews using questionnaires, with the key stakeholders), to verify achievements of the project to date. The Interview Guide along with the detailed questionnaires are attached as **Annexure 3**.

To ensure that the data collected is representative of the project's progress & performance the MTR team adopted a participatory approach that included all the stakeholders involved in the implementation of this project. We interacted not only with IUCN but also with the governments (PMUs) of the countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar) as well as the beneficiaries and other parties involved in the execution of the project.

A. Stakeholder Consultations

We identified the key stakeholders involved in the project, including the project team, implementing partners, government agencies, and local communities. This helped us to develop a stakeholder engagement plan which ensured that all relevant stakeholders were included in the review process.

We conducted a stakeholder consultation process to gather input and feedback on the project's performance and outcomes. The consultation process involved engaging with key

stakeholders, including the project team, implementing partners, government agencies, and local communities in Cambodia and Laos.

The stakeholder consultations included key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and community meetings. The community meetings were conducted with the local communities (particularly the project beneficiaries) during the field visit to understand the benefits, impact, and the feedback on the different project activities (Livelihood training, workshops, awareness raising exercise etc.). In total 8 community meetings were conducted, 2 in Cambodia and 6 in Laos. The MTR Mission Itinerary for the field visits in Cambodia and Lao PDR is attached as **Annexure 4**.

B. Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews involved conducting interviews with key stakeholders in the project including Task Manager (IUCN GEF), Project Executing Partner (GEC), Project Director / Project Manager (GIZ SUPA project), Myanmar Contacts.

- Dr. Andrew Wyatt, CTA, IUCN Regional Coordination Unit.
- Mr. Anshuman Saikia, Task Manager, GEF.
- Mr. Faizal Parish, Director, GEC, and Ms. Lew Siew Yan (Serena) Programme Manager, GEC.
- Ms. Seint Sann Zaw, Head of Office, IUCN Myanmar.
- Mr. Htain Lin, Project Manager, GIZ SUPA Project.

Moreover, key informant interviews were conducted with central and provincial PMU staff in Laos, target community members, and other relevant stakeholders. The interviews were conducted to obtain insights into the project's implementation, outcomes, and impacts. In total, 16 key stakeholders involved in the project were interviewed mentioned in **Annexure 5**. The link containing the recordings of key informant interviews is also embedded in Annexure.

C. Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions were particularly useful in understanding the perspectives of project stakeholders and beneficiaries by discussing project specific topics that included challenges faced by the project, factors contributing to the successful implementation of different project activities (like awareness raising on peatland management and livelihood programmes). Focus group discussions were conducted at three levels – central, district & provincial, and community level. In total, 10 focus group discussions (including community meetings) were conducted, 4 in Cambodia and 6 in Lao PDR.

D. Document Review

Document review served as an efficient data collection method. This involved reviewing relevant project documents, such as project reports, annual work plans, budget reports, and other project-related documents mentioned in **Annexure 6**. These documents provided valuable insights into the project's design, implementation, and performance.

3.2.3 Assessment Approach

The MTR team reviewed the log frame indicators against progress made towards the end-of-project targets using the colour code progress in a “traffic light system” based on the level of progress achieved.

Indicator Assessment Key

Green = Achieved	Yellow = On target to be achieved	Red = Not on target to be achieved
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The MTR team used a 6-point scale provided in Table 1 below to rate the project's progress towards each project outcome. These standard ratings will be used to complete the column “Progress Rating”.

Table 1: Progress Towards Results Rating Scale

Highly Satisfactory (HS)	The objective/outcome has achieved or exceeds all its end-of-project targets, without major shortcomings. The progress towards the objective/outcome can be presented as “good practice”.
Satisfactory (S)	The objective/outcome has achieved most of its end-of-project targets, with only minor shortcomings.
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	The objective/outcome has achieved most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings.
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	The objective/outcome has achieved its end-of-project targets with major shortcomings.
Unsatisfactory (U)	The objective/outcome has achieved most of its end-of-project targets.
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	The objective/outcome has failed to achieve its targets.

3.2.4 Principles of MTR

We adhered to a set of principles and criteria for conducting interviews and field visits during the MTR.

First, we ensured that the identified stakeholders were relevant to the project's objectives, outcomes, and outputs. This involved interviewing key stakeholders who had been involved in the project, such as beneficiaries, partners, and implementing agencies.

Second, we focused on diversity in our MTR process. This entailed considering factors such as gender, age, and geography, as well as examining the project's impact on different groups, including women and youth.

Third, we gave priority to interviewing stakeholders who could provide valuable information about the project's progress, achievements, and challenges. The selected stakeholders had been involved in the project since its inception, including the GEF task manager, GEC Manager, and GIZ SUPA Project Director/Manager.

3.3 Evaluation Questions as per ToR

I. Relevance
Is the project relevant to global, national, and regional policies and programs?
To what extent can project development and execution be improved?
How relevant are the tools, instruments, and inputs employed by the project in creating an enabling policy environment?
How does the project address the needs and demands of stakeholders?
II. Effectiveness
What factors contributed to the project's success?
What factors failed to contribute effectively to the project's success?
How well is the project structure understood?
Are the roles and responsibilities within the project clearly defined?
How effective has the coordination and collaboration been among project teams, units, and ministries?
Have the project activities been implemented in alignment with the project plan?
Have the project outputs been assessed in terms of their contribution to project objectives?
Component 1: Assessment and documentation of peatlands in targeted countries

Output 1.1. Surveys to identify peatland ecosystems in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar undertaken
Are there harmonized training modules on peatlands survey and assessment available in national languages?
How many maps have been produced through a process that includes national capacity building?
How many peatland surveys have been conducted in the targeted geographic areas within Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar?
Output 1.2. Important peatland sites assessed and documented
How many rapid assessments have been conducted for significant peatland areas in the target countries?
How many reports have been prepared?
Component 2: Capacity development and policy and legal frameworks
Output 2.1. Key stakeholders at various levels trained on peatland assessment, rehabilitation and management and their awareness and understanding of the functions and importance of peatland ecosystems enhanced
How many key stakeholders at the national, sub-national, and local levels have received training in peatland assessment, rehabilitation, and management?
Is there harmonized information and training materials on peatlands available in national languages for use at the national, sub-national, and local levels?
Output 2.2. National strategies and/or action plans for protection and sustainable use of peatland ecosystems prepared and peatlands mainstreamed into national and sub-national policies and regulations
Is there guidance available for mainstreaming peatlands into national policies and plans suitable for the Mekong region, based on ASEAN experience?
How many national or sub-national plans, policies, or strategies have incorporated peatland conservation provisions, following consultations with relevant stakeholders, including women and local communities?
Component 3: Development and demonstration of Best Management Practices
Output 3.1. Protection and sustainable use of the peatlands in Peam Krasop Wildlife Sanctuary enhanced
How many pilot sites have been established to demonstrate best management practices for peatlands?
How many community members have been trained in sustainable livelihood practices, with gender disaggregation?
Are the peatland conservation provisions included in the PKWS management plan?
Output 3.2. Protection and sustainable use of the peatlands in the Beung Kiat Ngong landscape enhanced
How many pilot sites have been established to demonstrate best management practices for peatlands?
How many community members have been trained in sustainable livelihood practices, with gender disaggregation?
Are the peatland conservation provisions included in the Beung Kiat Ngong Management Plan?
Component 4. Regional Cooperation
Output 4.1. Experiences and best practices for peatland assessment and management in Mekong countries documented and shared
Are there harmonized guidelines available for the conservation and sustainable use of peatlands?

How many documents capturing lessons learned have been produced and shared at the regional level?
How many key stakeholders, disaggregated by gender, have participated in exchange visits?
Output 4.2. Technical project implementation support and coordination provided
How many key stakeholders, disaggregated by gender, have participated in the regional project inception workshop and annual PSC meetings?
How many key stakeholders, both women and men, have taken part in the regional workshop on peatlands during the final year of the project cycle?
How many national and local level project coordination and monitoring meetings, including inception meetings and NSC meetings, have been held?
Have the co-funding arrangements been effectively assessed?
III. Efficiency
Are technical and financial resources readily available?
How efficiently are the funds being utilized?
Have unforeseen problems been identified, and were the solutions effective?
What processes are in place for self-monitoring, assessment, reporting, and reflection?
Is there a plan for ensuring continued benefits after the project concludes?
To what extent are key stakeholders involved in the project?
IV. Network/linkages
How extensive and representative is the participation of various stakeholders in the project's execution, including government, civil societies, indigenous groups, local communities, academic and research institutions, etc.?
To what extent is the project aligned with other projects, and can you identify connections and opportunities for achieving the project's goals?
V. Lessons Learnt/Conclusions
What areas in program planning can be improved, particularly regarding target setting, institutional relevance, and capacity for project decision making and delivery?
What are the significant lessons or conclusions that can be drawn from the project in terms of its effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and networking?

3.4 Limitations to the MTR

Although the MTR team faced certain limitations, we ensured that these limitations are fundamentally mitigated, and that the assessment provides a comprehensive and accurate picture of the project's progress.

Our team had anticipated that communicating with the local team would be an issue due to foreign language, thus we made arrangements of recruiting facilitators and interpreters during the field visits for interviews and focus group discussions. Also, the presence of the female facilitator was assured in the team to maintain gender balance by interviewing female beneficiaries.

The project sites were in two different countries; therefore, we organized two teams and conducted field visits simultaneously in both countries. The Project Management Units (PMUs) from each country also accompanied us during the field visits.

We maintained regular follow-ups with the PMUs/ IUCN to obtain the project data and information necessary for conducting the MTR.



Champasak Peatland in Lao PDR

SECTION - 4

Findings

4. Findings

This section presents the results of the midterm review in accordance with the ToR for this assignment and IUCN guidelines for midterm review of projects funded by the GEF, results of this review consist of five parts:

4.1) Overall assessment of the Project

- 4.1.1 Relevance
- 4.1.2 Effectiveness
- 4.1.3 Efficiency
- 4.1.4 Network /linkages

4.2) Assessment for Cambodia

- 4.2.1 Relevance
- 4.2.2 Effectiveness
- 4.2.3 Efficiency
- 4.2.4 Network /linkages

4.3) Assessment for Lao PDR

- 4.3.1 Relevance
- 4.3.2 Effectiveness
- 4.3.3 Efficiency
- 4.3.4 Network /linkages

4.4) Assessment for Myanmar

The indicators mentioned in Table 2 below give the list of 21 indicators that were evaluated for assessing the project's progress under the attribute of effectiveness as part of the MTR assessment.

Table 2: Project Outcomes, Outputs, and Indicators

Project Objective: To sustainably manage peatland ecosystems in Mekong countries and to conserve biodiversity and reduce GHG emissions
Component 1: Assessment and documentation of peatlands in targeted countries
Outcome 1. Peatland ecosystems are better documented in the three target countries supporting enhanced recognition and management
Indicator 1 Area of peatland identified and assessed
Output 1.1. Surveys to identify peatland ecosystems in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar undertaken
1. Indicator 1.1 A Availability of harmonized training modules on peatlands survey and assessment in national languages.
2. Indicator 1.1 B Number of maps produced in a process that involves national capacity building.
3. Indicator 1.1 C Number of peatland surveys undertaken in target geographic areas within the countries of Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar.
Output 1.2. Important peatland sites assessed and documented
4. Indicator 1.2 A Number of rapid assessments conducted for significant peatland areas in the target countries (including analysis of the functions and values related to habitats, biodiversity, and carbon storage).
5. Indicator 1.2 B Number of reports produced.
Component 2: Capacity development and policy and legal frameworks
Outcome 2. Capacity and policy/legal frameworks for sustainable peatland management strengthened

Output 2.1. Key stakeholders at various levels trained on peatland assessment, rehabilitation and management and their awareness and understanding of the functions and importance of peatland ecosystems enhanced

6. **Indicator 2.1 A** Number of key stakeholders at national, sub-national and local level trained in peatland assessment, rehabilitation and management. (disaggregated by gender)

7. **Indicator 2.1 B** Availability of harmonized information and training materials on peatlands in national languages (for use at national, sub-national and local levels).

Output 2.2. National strategies and/or action plans for protection and sustainable use of peatland ecosystems prepared and peatlands mainstreamed into national and sub-national policies and regulations

8. **Indicator 2.2 A** Availability of guidance for mainstreaming peatlands into national policies and plans suitable for the Mekong region based on ASEAN experience.

9. **Indicator 2.2 B** Number of national or sub-national plans, policies or strategies that incorporate peatland conservation provisions, based on consultations with relevant stakeholders (including women and local communities).

Component 3: Development and demonstration of Best Management Practices

Outcome 3. Integrated sustainable management of peatland ecosystems in the targeted countries demonstrated, with an emphasis on conserving biodiversity, reducing GHG emissions and strengthening sustainable livelihoods for local communities

Output 3.1. Protection and sustainable use of the peatlands in Peam Krasop Wildlife Sanctuary enhanced

10. **Indicator 3.1 A** Number of pilot sites established demonstrating best management practices of peatlands.

11. **Indicator 3.1 B** Number of community members (disaggregated by gender) trained in sustainable livelihood practices.

12. **Indicator 3.1 C** Availability of peatland conservation provisions in PKWS management plan.

Output 3.2. Protection and sustainable use of the peatlands in the Beung Kiat Ngong landscape enhanced

13. **Indicator 3.2 A** Number of pilot sites established demonstrating best management practices of peatlands.

14. **Indicator 3.2 B** Number of community members (disaggregated by gender) trained in sustainable livelihood practices.

15. **Indicator 3.2 C** Availability of peatland conservation provisions in Beung Kiat Ngong Management Plan.

Component 4. Regional Cooperation

Outcome 4. Regional cooperation among countries in peatland sustainable management is enhanced

Output 4.1. Experiences and best practices for peatland assessment and management in Mekong countries documented and shared

16. **Indicator 4.1 A** Availability of harmonized guidelines for conservation and sustainable use of peatlands

17. **Indicator 4.1 B** Number of lessons learned documents produced and shared at the regional level

18. **Indicator 4.1 C** Number of key stakeholders (disaggregated by gender) participating in exchange visit

Output 4.2. Technical project implementation support and coordination provided

- | |
|---|
| 19. Indicator 4.2 A Number of key stakeholders (disaggregated by gender) participating in regional project inception workshop and annual PSC meetings. |
| 20. Indicator 4.2 B Number of key stakeholders (women and men) participating in regional workshop on peatlands (during the last year of the project cycle) |
| 21. Indicator 4.2 C Number of national/local level project coordination and monitoring meetings (including inception meetings, NSC meetings) |

*The detailed assessment for each of the components/ outcomes/ indicators basis which the below findings have been developed is attached as **Annexure 8**.*

4.1 Overall Assessment of the Project

4.1.1 Relevance

Project Design

The overall objective of the project is *to sustainably manage peatland ecosystems in targeted countries and to conserve biodiversity and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions*. The project aims to achieve the objective through the sustainable peatland management approach, consisting of three pathways, namely, (i) Assessing and documenting peatland ecosystems in the three countries; (ii) Strengthening the capacity and the enabling policy and legal framework for sustainable peatland management at local, national and sub-regional levels; and (iii) Demonstrating sustainable peatland management practices that conserve biodiversity, reduce GHG emissions and strengthen sustainable livelihoods for local communities.

No doubt, the three impact pathways chosen by the project/ stakeholders, along with the emphasis on regional cooperation are extremely important for the region (and the selected countries as a whole). This has allowed the countries to address the problems of peatland ecosystem degradation and rural development in a more holistic, effective, and integrated manner rather than only through land-based interventions and approaches.

The project has been developed on a very sound foundation laid by several ongoing Peatland management projects in the region and is well designed to achieve the goals it has set for itself. The Project document mentions several projects and programs including the GEF funded ASEAN Peatland Forests Project (APFP) and European Union funded Sustainable Management of Peatland Forests in Southeast Asia (SEApeat) project, whose learnings have been incorporated into the design of this project.

In particular, the project has worked closely with the ASEAN Programme on Sustainable Management of Peatland Ecosystems 2014 - 2020 (APSMPE), the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (AATHP), and the ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy 2006-2020 (APMS). Moreover, the Mekong WET project's regional collaboration focus on Ramsar site management has also provided opportunities for this GEF Project to leverage co-funding, knowledge management, and experience sharing aspects.

The Mekong Peatland project design draws significant association with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in addition to the IUCN's Global Results, Sub-Results, and Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The project has helped in initiating mechanisms for the establishment and effective management of peatland areas, which are of high biodiversity value and important carbon stores and are also important for people's livelihoods. The key SDGs that the project contributes to include SDG 2, 3, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17.

The Project Preparation Grant (PPG) exercise clearly indicates that the project was designed through very extensive consultations with stakeholders and potential partners at all levels. All the significant stakeholders at the regional level, national level and district level have been incorporated in the Regional Project Steering Committee and the National Project Steering Committee respectively, the latter institution playing a crucial role in project planning and implementation at the national level. Thus, it can be easily interpreted that all stakeholders had a say in the decisions and implementation of the project.

Several academic and research institutions were consulted as part of the project preparation phase that provided support in all the three countries, provided inputs during the project inception meetings, and were involved with the peatland survey activities.

Moreover, the emphasis of the project on gender issues and equity is reflected throughout the project-related documentation and the results framework clearly requires that the project outputs provide gender disaggregated data. Focus group discussions with women during project formulation and the significant presence of women in the project implementation bodies indicate a conscious approach to empower and involve women in project implementation.

The project adequately uses various tools and instruments including the GEF Tracking Tool, Environmental and Social Management Plans, Safeguard Tools, and Portfolio Monitoring and Tracking Tool which tracks and measure the project progress in achieving the impacts and against the established outcomes.

The project results framework (or log frame) could have been designed in a better way as for some components the indicators are divided based on the overall outcome, however, for others (components) the indicators are defined on the basis of country. For instance, Component 2 – Output 2.1 corresponds to Outcome Indicator 2A and Output 2.2 corresponds to Outcome Indicator 2B. While Component 3 – Output 3.1 requires the assessment of both indicators 3A and 3B at the country level. This is breaking the overall consistency of the project results framework.

Given that peatlands are extremely valuable ecosystems, both from a biodiversity and climate change mitigation perspective, and play important roles in all three of the project's target countries, a sustainable peatland management approach aimed at strengthening the capacity and enabling the policy and legal framework for sustainable peatland management at local, national, and sub-regional levels, that conserve biodiversity, reduce GHG emissions and strengthen sustainable livelihoods for local communities, serves eminent purpose.

4.1.2 Effectiveness

Project Structure

The project's overall structure is highly comprehensive, addressing a wide range of conservation practices. It encompasses activities from ground-level training manual development for peatland identification to the strengthening of policy frameworks at the national level.

Roles & Responsibilities

Key units and committees within the project have clear roles and responsibilities. The Regional Project Steering Committee oversees project progress and co-financing, while National Steering Committees monitor and approve reports and budgets, coordinate activities, and advise on collaboration.

The Regional Coordination Unit manages project coordination, information, and communication. The National Project Management Units handle field operations, partner collaboration, and event organization.

Before the project's suspension in Myanmar, FREDa supported field operations and capacity building. The GEC is responsible for peatland activities and knowledge sharing.

Coordination Among Project Teams, Units, and Ministries

In Lao PDR, there is effective communication and collaboration due to partners being based in the country. In Cambodia, local focal points are established in villages, benefiting from local leadership, which aligns with the socio-political culture and fosters good communication between Phon Phen agents in local areas and the local community.

The CTA maintains communication with various PMUs through instant-messaging platforms, enabling discussions on concept notes and project-related matters.

Project Implementation

Project implementation has faced various challenges, including a delayed government approval, compounded by external factors like the COVID-19 pandemic and the coup in Myanmar. Efforts have been made to catch up, but budget cuts led to changes in the position of the project's CTA. In Lao, managing multiple projects has made it challenging to secure the attention of project directors, and peatland survey reports are pending, with GEC awaiting validation.

The Cambodia National Action Plan, a major deliverable, has been altered, with Cambodia shifting towards the creation of a Coastal Action Plan instead of a National Action Plan. The SUPA project has provided support for the completion of a nationwide peat assessment, which includes field surveys conducted in both Lao and Cambodia. However, as a result of the SUPA project's delays, related initiatives like the NAPP in Laos have also been delayed. Field surveys in both Lao and Cambodia have been delayed due to ongoing projects. This delay will impact the drafting of the national action plan in Lao PDR.

Achievement of outputs and its contribution to project objectives

The project has been working towards achieving the end term targets. The concept notes have been prepared for most of the activities mentioned in the Prodoc/ log-frame. Confirmation of completion of activities is awaited.

Availability of guidance for mainstreaming peatlands into national policies and plans suitable for the Mekong Region, based on ASEAN experience

The guidance is available for mainstreaming peatlands into national policies and plans suitable for the Mekong Region, based on ASEAN experience. The Guidance Document for mainstreaming peatlands was developed by GEC, and the final document was produced in May 2023. This document serves as a valuable resource for incorporating peatland considerations into national policies and plans within the Mekong Region, drawing on the experience and expertise of the ASEAN context.

This document offers an outline of sustainable peatland management measures for a country to embrace. Government agencies are the primary target audience. These guidelines are designed to assist decision-makers, planners, and managers in comprehending the array of policy and management alternatives, offering guidance for the integration of peatlands into national or local policies and plans.

4.1.3 Efficiency

Availability of Technical and Financial Resources

Technical Resources Utilization

The technical resources are moderately sufficient in carrying out the project plans effectively, as the project is facing significant delays in meeting the project timelines, primarily due to unforeseen challenges including the COVID 19 and the political disturbances in Myanmar.

Initially the project faced limitation of reduced RCU technical support to NEAs with the recurrent changes in CTA position. The frequent change in the position of CTA impacted the project efficiency in terms of utilization of resources (as the services of the CTA remain critical to the overall coordination and successful completion of the project).

Although, now as the project is towards the end, and as reported by the current CTA, the project does not require heavy technical support, especially as the CTA and RCU played a significant role in execution on behalf of the Myanmar PMU in the suspended Myanmar component; whereas in Lao and Cambodia, most of the activities are executed by the two government PMUs.

The long startup period of a year followed by delays from COVID 19 and the political disturbance in Myanmar, all the while the CTA was employed on a full-time basis, meant that the CTA budget would have been used up well before project. Thus, currently the CTA role has been filled on a part-time basis by the IUCN Deputy Head of Lower Mekong Sub-Region.

Moreover, due to COVID 19 the training for certain practical aspects like remote sensing that required on ground training and assessment was conducted through online mode. The

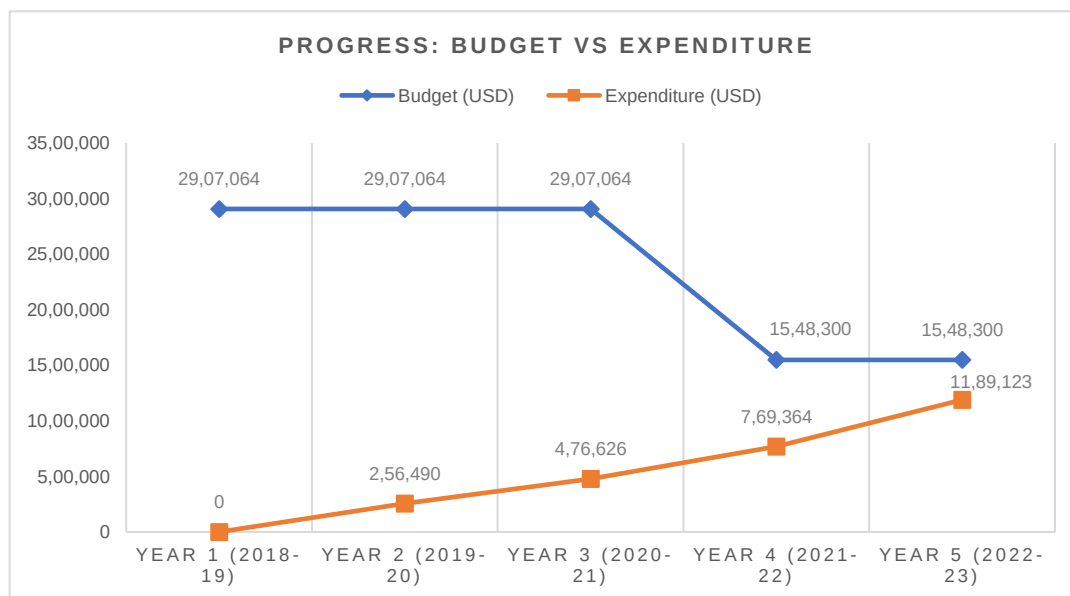
challenge was further exasperated due to lack of human resources in the government officials that lacked a strong background in remote sensing.

These challenges limited the practical understanding, efficiency of the activities, and delayed the implementation of project activities.

Financial Resource Utilization

Overall, the project expenditure as per the consolidated financial report to June 2023 was USD 1,189,123 equivalent to 77% of the total revised project budget of USD 1,548,300.

The graph below represents the progress of the expenditure vs budget over time.



By component, overall expenditure, including activity and personnel as of June 2023 was as follows:

- Component 1: total expenditure is USD 483,428, equivalent to 89% of the total budget of USD 540,789.
- Component 2: total expenditure is USD 269,583, equivalent to 84% of the total budget of USD 321,794.
- Component 3: total expenditure is USD 190,552, equivalent to 61% of the total budget of USD 312,173.
- Component 4: total expenditure is USD 141,563, equivalent to 54% of the total budget of USD 261,149.

The RCU expenditure was USD 636,603, equivalent to 83% of the USD 767,320 budget allocated to be managed by RCU.

The detailed cumulative breakup of component wise budget (activities and project staff) and expenditure along with country wise expenditure for Cambodia, Laos and the RCU is attached as **Annexure 9**.

The total project expenditure is below the project budget. Further, there are other cost saving steps undertaken as part of the project to put towards the MTR, Terminal Evaluation and external financial audit are being achieved that include redirecting most of the remaining funds for the second exchange visit to Thailand, other savings from reduced travel costs by the CTA, and remaining unspent funds from the PMU budgets. .

Co-funding Arrangements

The overall project design relies heavily on a co-financing arrangement. There has been significant support from other stakeholders to supplement the project with technical and financial resources. It is envisaged that the co-funding was used for capacity-building

initiatives, training project staff, and local communities that contributed to enhanced project impact.

The Mekong Peatland Project established connections with several other organizations, fostering collaboration allowing for the execution of a broader range of activities and initiatives as a result of the increased the financial resources available for the project.

Co-funding has also contributed to greater stakeholder engagement enhancing project support and ownership. For instance, the first and second exchange visit to Malaysia and Thailand are jointly supported by three projects/programme that includes the Mekong Peatlands Project, SUPA Project and MAHFSA Programme.

As estimated by the CTA, after the suspension of the Myanmar Component, the co-financing has been reduced by 41.5% to USD 6,060,601 against the initial budget of USD 10,360,447, which had significant impact on the project activities and will require adjusting the co-financing amount. As it is anticipated that the co-funding can contribute towards the sustainability efforts, ensuring that project impacts endure beyond the project's duration.

However, as per the communication with the CTA, the RCU has not been successful in responding to the 2nd Supervision Mission directive by the IUCN GEF Agency that the RCU begin to collect the co-financing data. Thus, this task remains to be undertaken and recommend that it be completed as a priority by the RCU by the end of the project.

Fund Management

The delivery rate for each component (against the budget allocated to it) shows how effectively the resources are being utilized.

The project allocated budgets and corresponding delivery rates for each component are as follows: Component 1 had a total expenditure of USD 483,428 (89% of the budget) with a delivery rate of 77%, Component 2 had a total expenditure of USD 269,583 (84% of the budget) with a delivery rate of 100%, Component 3 had a total expenditure of USD 190,552 (61% of the budget) with a delivery rate of 66%, and Component 4 had a total expenditure of USD 141,563 (54% of the budget) with a delivery rate of 70%. These figures provide an overview of the financial utilization and progress achieved in each project component based on the Project Implementation Reports (PIR) Report No. 6.

Identification of Challenges and Mitigation Measures

Due to Myanmar component suspension, the overall project budget was reduced by 53% from USD 2,907,064 to USD 1,548,301. However, the budget for Government Implementing Partners for Laos and Cambodia remained unchanged, only the budget for the Myanmar Government Implementing Partner was suspended.

Moreover, the delays in the project due to unforeseen challenges have resulted in enhanced consumption of funds, especially for the RCU. Due to budget constraints certain project management components can be said to have been compromised such as a full time CTA.

To date the project has faced major challenges, the RCU has undertaken steps towards mitigating those challenges. The project was to be completed by June 2023, however due to delays a no cost extension to December 2023 was requested by the PMUs and approved by GEF Agency.

As a response to the COVID 19 challenge a Project Continuity plan was developed that identified component wise challenges due to COVID 19, Mitigation strategy/changes to implementation approach, revised timelines, and co-ordination strategy with ASEAN Secretariat and other Peatland Partners.

Self-Monitoring, Assessment, Reporting and Reflection

Monitoring and Evaluation of Resources

As part of the project a monitoring and evaluation plan was developed by the RCU in consultation with National PMUs and the IUCN that describes the main M&E activities, responsible parties, timeframe, and budget.

The project has a regular monitoring and evaluation mechanism planned however, due to certain unforeseen challenges including the COVID-19 and suspension of the Myanmar component, there have been delays in completing the necessary monitoring and evaluation requirements of the GEF including the Mid-Term Review and the Terminal Evaluation.

Two annual supervision missions have been conducted since the inception of the project. The project held its first Project Supervision Mission (PSM) in November 2020 and the second PSM was conducted in September 2022.

The project also provides for the preparation of annual PIRs and bi-annual country progress reports that document and report on project technical and financial progress against agreed project activities, outcomes, and targets.

There is regular reporting on the financial progress of the project made by the project team. Additionally, the project supervision mission report and the PIR present a review of financial management and procurement. There is a regular mechanism of tracking fund utilization. However, an external project audit is yet to be undertaken.

Qualitative and Quantitative aspects of Management

Quantitative data related to the inputs provided by the project

The project has established mechanisms for regular monitoring of quantitative aspects related to its inputs that includes tracking budget allocation and expenditure, the number of equipment items, and staff time hours dedicated to technical assistance. This suggests that the project has a structured system in place to assess and document the quantitative dimensions of its operations. This monitoring process enables the project team to maintain a detailed record of resource allocation, utilization, and overall progress, contributing to effective project management and accountability.

Quality and Effectiveness of the Management Inputs

The project follows a multi-level management structure as described in the project document. IUCN serves as the Implementing Agency or GEF Agency for the project, is responsible for the project's management, which includes overseeing its implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting to the GEF, as well as ensuring the project's successful completion. Project steering committees are established at both regional and national levels to offer supervision and direction for project execution.

Qualitative Indicators and their Impact on Project Outcomes

There are certain qualitative indicators specifically in component 2 and component 3 relating to policy and legal frameworks like the availability of harmonized information and training materials on peatlands in national languages (for use at national, sub-national and local levels) and the availability of guidance for mainstreaming peatlands into national policies and plans suitable for the Mekong region based on ASEAN experience.

While these targets may be achieved as part of this project, but their impact can be measured only via a supplementary study that evaluates the usefulness and usage of these policy documents and frameworks.

Timeline and Quality of Reporting

- MTR was delayed: Because of the COVID-19 related late implementation of most activities between mid-2020 and Q1 2022, the MTR was delayed to Q1 2023 to ensure that the project had sufficient time to have generated measurable results.
- Outcome 3 with its focus on community livelihood implementation has been the most affected component from the COVID-19 restrictions. The preparatory planning and detailed consultations over livelihood designs and beneficiary identification have all taken time with actual livelihood implementation only beginning in Q3 2023.
- The peatland surveys and mapping are catching up on the delays caused by the COVID-19 restrictions which affected field access in both countries.

- Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, the field visits were delayed. However, the project has made significant progress in this reporting period to accelerate outcomes delayed by the COVID restrictions that ended in Q1-Q2 2022.

Continued Benefits after the Project End

To ensure continued sustainability and a positive impact, the project should emphasize the importance of developing National Action Plans on Peatlands (NAPPs), incorporating peatlands into related policies and programs, and establishing/ strengthening institutional and financing mechanisms for peatland management. Strengthening capacity, raising awareness, and engaging local communities in peatland management are also highlighted as key measures. Key activities undertaken as part of the project that are envisioned will contribute to the sustained project benefits include:

- Information and communication materials have been translated into the local language and shared with government agencies, aiming for long-term availability.
- The governments of both countries have exceeded their targets by translating the sustainable issue into national policies.
- It is important to finalize and enforce the policies and plans to ensure sustainable peat treatment, while also monitoring their implementation in accordance with the guidelines.
- Monitoring and enforcing policies and laws are crucial for achieving sustainable outcomes.

4.1.4 Network and Linkages

Participation of stakeholders in the project's research, development, or execution phases

Active participation of various stakeholders during the project's research, development, and execution phases is ensured through collaborative efforts in the Mekong Peatland Project. An annual meeting organized by ASEAN serves as a platform for stakeholders to gather, present project progress, share ideas, exchange feedback, and collectively address challenges.

Additionally, GEC took the lead in developing training modules and provide GIS and RS training, while the RCU (while it was in Myanmar created communication materials for all three countries. These materials were subsequently translated into local languages by each country, facilitating widespread engagement and understanding among local stakeholders.

These efforts help engage and inform various stakeholders involved in the project's research, development, and execution phases.

The Project Document and the Project Implementation Manual provide for detailed description of roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders at different levels. Moreover, to ensure active participation of different stakeholders (including national, district and provincial officers, civil society organizations (CSOs), academic institutions and local community members) in the project activities; a detailed summary of stakeholder participation describing the Interest of stakeholder (SH) in the project, Influence of SH on the project, Impact of the project on SH, and Role of SH in project or other forms of engagement has been presented in the Project Document.

The project planning process involves different stakeholders at various levels:

Global/Regional Level:

- *IUCN Asia Regional Office*: Oversees project preparation and maintains links with other IUCN projects in the three countries.
- *Global Environment Centre (GEC)*: Acts as the technical and operational support partner for the ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy. They actively reviewed draft documents and participated in workshops.
- *ASEAN Secretariat*: Coordinates the implementation of the ASEAN Programme on Sustainable Management of Peatland Ecosystems and ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy. They organize meetings of the ASEAN Task Force on Peatlands.

- *IFAD*: Supports the regional project on Measurable Action for Haze-Free Southeast Asia (MAHFSA), which is linked to component 4 of the project.
- *Asian Development Bank (ADB) Greater Mekong Sub-Region Environment Operations Centre*: Is consulted to explore potential linkages with ADB projects, including GEF projects.
- *GIZ / EU SUPA project*: Plays an executive role in coordinating grants channeled directly to the countries.
- *Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative (IBRRI)*: Acts as a regional platform under the Ramsar Convention to promote its effective implementation in five countries.
- *Mekong River Commission (MRC)*: Focuses on sustainable management and development of water and related resources for mutual benefit and people's well-being. They exchange lessons learned.
- *Mekong Wetlands University Network (MWUN)*: Provides an annual training on Wetlands Management in the Mekong Basin and exchanges key knowledge products and information.

Country-Level Stakeholders in Cambodia:

Various stakeholders were involved during the project preparation phase, including local villagers, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), International NGOs (INGOs), international organizations, research institutions, universities, and government agencies at both the national and provincial levels. These stakeholders provided input, support, knowledge sharing, and contributions to the project's planning and implementation in Cambodia.

Country-Level Stakeholders in Lao PDR:

Similarly, various stakeholders were involved during the project preparation phase in Lao PDR. These stakeholders included local villagers, INGOs, international organizations, research institutions, universities, and government agencies at both the national and provincial levels. They contributed to the project's planning and implementation with their input, support, and knowledge sharing.

These stakeholders play a crucial role in providing oversight, feedback, and contributions to the project planning process, ensuring a collaborative and comprehensive approach to peatland management in the region.

Role of different stakeholders in providing oversight and feedback in the project planning and implementation process

The regional project steering committee and the National Steering Committees that comprises of various stakeholders that includes the project heads of other regional project and national level ministry directors, provide oversight of project progress and achievement of planned results for the overall project at the regional level and at the national level.

Alignment with other similar projects

The efforts to build awareness around the importance of peatlands conservation through projects such as SEApeat and SUPA, and specific government policies and plans that promote such conservation are in progress in the ASEAN countries that includes the three target countries under the project (Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar). Significant work has been undertaken towards protecting and managing peatlands in the two countries (Cambodia and Lao PDR) within existing protected areas through management approaches that happen to capture peatlands appropriately.

The project coordinates with existing initiatives by utilizing its Executing Partners and the Project Steering Committee. Consistent meetings within ASEAN, such as the ASEAN Task Force on Peatlands, along with its working groups focused on biodiversity and climate change, that serves as a foundation for working together with other GEF projects in the region and the designated countries. Additionally, IUCN and GEC actively participate in multiple projects and facilitate collaboration and synchronization with them.

As GEC is closely involved with the execution of the GEF/ International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) peatland projects in Malaysia and Indonesia, therefore it plays an important role in ensuring linkages among the peatland initiatives in the region.

Common stakeholders or beneficiaries with other related projects

SUPA project is working closely with the Mekong peatland project and is also helping with logistics but hasn't worked too much with the RCU and the Cambodian government officials.

In Cambodia, the project was managed by their own government officials, except in Lao PDR, the government officials in Lao have lower capacity to manage the project. So, SUPA does a lot of work in Lao PDR.

The Mekong peatland project is not officially categorized as an ASEAN project since it encompasses only three countries. However, there is a coordination and support mechanism from ASEAN for the project. This coordination allows the involved countries to be acquainted and collaborate, fostering a network and shared understanding among the nations involved in the project. The project shares common stakeholders and beneficiaries with other related projects. For instance, after the project activities had commenced, there were engagements with the SUPA project aimed at making necessary adjustments and forming partnerships, particularly in the context of training activities to be conducted as part of the Mekong Peatland Project.

Official annual meetings are organized where the project's progress and plans are presented to the stakeholders, fostering collaboration, idea exchange, and feedback resolution. Additionally, internal meetings are held to address project-related matters. This collaborative approach ensures the engagement of stakeholders and beneficiaries in the planning and decision-making processes of the project.

Opportunities for resource sharing, such as personnel, equipment, or funding, with other projects

There are opportunities for resource sharing, including personnel, equipment, or funding, with another project supported by IFAD and GIZ. For instance, the MAHFSA project (led by IFAD and ASEAN Secretariat) are engaged in co-funding and organizing exchange visits between Lao PDR, Cambodia, and Thailand to facilitate learning from the Thai community. Most of the co-funding for the Mekong Project collaboration comes from GIZ and IFAD which are involved in supporting and coordinating the Mekong project activities. However, as per the interviews, the funds for this collaboration have not yet been disbursed, and there are constraints due to limited funds, which might impact the extent of resource sharing.

Experiences and lessons learnt from other similar projects

The project can learn from the experiences and lessons of other similar projects, particularly in the context of peatland management. While the Mekong Peatland Project is described as a short-term initiative, there is an effort to facilitate learning and capacity building. SUPA is actively engaged in providing support for Cambodia and Lao PDR to align their practices with those of Malaysia and Indonesia. The collaborative efforts include activities such as capacity building, road mapping, inventory, and ground checking. By sharing experiences and insights with ongoing projects in other regions, the Mekong Peatland Project benefits from established best practices and enhances its effectiveness in peatland management.

Challenges/conflicts arisen due to overlaps with other projects

The project has faced challenges, particularly in the realm of fieldwork, where flexibility is essential. A notable challenge arises from the complexity of GIZ procedures, making fieldwork a difficult task. The interaction between the need for adaptability in the field and the intricacies of GIZ procedures has created difficulties.

Additionally, there seems to be a lack of awareness or understanding about the procedures of IUCN among the project managers of other projects (such SUPA), as discussed during the key informant interviews. Addressing these challenges may require streamlining procedures or enhancing communication between project partners to ensure a smoother workflow and better coordination in field activities.

Collaborative efforts have been established with other project implementers in ASEAN countries, including the peatland project, the Measurable Action for Haze-Free Southeast Asia (MAFSA) project, which shares similarities with the peatland project, and the Mekong wetland project (part of IBRRI). These joint initiatives aim to address common issues and shared goals, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange among projects working on related environmental and conservation themes in the region.

Opportunities for scale-up or replication of successful project components in collaboration with other projects

There are opportunities for the scale-up or replication of successful project components in collaboration with other projects. The government staff requires improvement in various areas and is in need of technical support. While there is interest from the government, the limitation lies in the budget available for support. Additionally, there is potential for collaboration on policy and documentation at the ASEAN level, especially given the recent adaptation of the ASEAN peatland management policy. This collaboration extends to projects like the Peatland project and the MAFSA project, which is funded by IFAD.

Partnerships with other national institutions, NGOs and the private sector and development partners to sustain the attained results

Partnerships with other national institutions, NGOs, the private sector, and development partners play a crucial role in sustaining the attained results. In the case of GIZ_SUPA, a contract was signed with IUCN to provide support in managing the project, especially in Lao PDR where there is limited capacity. This collaboration involves activities such as ground survey¹, sampling, technical support, and assessment. These partnerships contribute to the overall success of the project by leveraging the expertise and resources of various organizations and entities.

4.2 Assessment for Cambodia

4.2.1 Relevance – Cambodia Overview

In Cambodia, peatlands are mentioned in some reports, such as the SUPA Cambodia project has been carrying out surveys in areas (Tonlé Sap) other than those covered under the Mekong Project. Under SEApeat (2014 & 2015) and based on satellite interpretation in combination with field surveys, considerable areas of peatlands were recorded and mapped in Peam Krasop Wildlife Sanctuary (PKWS) and Botum Sakor National Park (BSNP) within the coastal mangrove forests of Koh Kong Province. A portion of PKWS is also recognized as the Koh Kapik and Associated Islets Ramsar Site, with a total area of 120 km².

The existing coastal mangrove ecosystems in Cambodia, which encompass areas within both PKWS and BSNP, represent a uniquely existing mangrove habitat/ecosystem in the Gulf of Thailand mangroves ecoregion, supporting critical biodiversity and coastal habitats. The coastal peatlands found under PKWS, and the Koh Kapik Ramsar Site are primarily covered with mixed-species mangroves.

The peatlands in Cambodia play an important role in absorbing significant amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere to mitigate the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, they provide vital functions related to flood control and mitigation of the increasingly erosive tidal forces associated with rising sea levels.

Peatlands in Cambodia have a comparatively small area (as compared to its regional neighbors) that are not concentrated in large continuous expanses but are scattered across various coastal locations. The GEF funded Mekong Peatland project in Cambodia offers for an important opportunity for the inventory of Cambodia's peatlands, which is crucial for their identification, sustainable management, and reinforcement of the country's national policies regarding peatlands.

¹ Peat surveys (SUPA in Laos is designed to synergize with Mekong Peatland by funding surveys and assessments in other locations not covered by the Mekong Peatland Project).

The primary threats to peatlands in Cambodia encompass a range of activities, including small-scale peat extraction for organic fertilizer, agricultural encroachments, and aquatic species collection, as well as mangrove cutting for charcoal production. Additionally, large-scale sand mining within peatlands contributes to land erosion and degradation of coastal ecosystems. Economic land concessions for various commercial purposes, such as plantations, pose a significant threat, as do aquaculture practices. These threats collectively challenge the conservation and sustainable management of Cambodia's peatland ecosystems.

Relevance of the Tools / Instruments / Inputs applied by the Project for enabling Policy Environment

Tools

The project team is employing various tools to facilitate effective information sharing and policy dissemination. They make use of instant messaging platforms like WhatsApp and Telegram channels to share information and keep stakeholders updated on project progress and implementation in real-time. For more formal updates, such as reports and formal meetings, they rely on email communication.

This combination of communication methods allows for both quick updates and in-depth, structured communication to ensure that project-related information is disseminated efficiently. Furthermore, frequent meetings are scheduled when the project is facing challenges, fostering mutual support among team members.

Instruments

Several instruments like surveys and assessments have been used as part of the project contributing towards the policy environment in Cambodia. The assessment on Koh Kapik Ramsar Site Management Effectiveness conducted using R-METT approach, the Rapid Assessment on Ecosystem Services and the Socio-Economic Surveys provided valuable insights into the site's ecological and socio-economic aspects.

Inputs

There are academic and research institutions participating in the project activities such as the Royal University of Agriculture in Cambodia, the University of Copenhagen, and the Royal University of Phnom Penh. These academic and research institutions are actively contributing insights and expertise to shape relevant policies and regulations, with a strong focus on research and knowledge sharing.

Relevance to the National Policies and Programs

The project design adequately draws and supports the national policy and agenda in Cambodia. Peatland is a new topic, but it is included in the Law of Protected Areas environmental and resource code, whitepaper on Environment and Natural Resources (currently undergoing GEF decision review), and the new Cambodian pentangular strategy. The objective is to convince others of the usefulness of Peat, which can lead to planning and requesting funds from international funding institutions like GEF.

Relevance of Project Development and Execution

The project faced various challenges, primarily due to the impact of COVID-19. Several planned activities had to be postponed, and travel restrictions were imposed. In response to these constraints, the project adapted by using online meetings as an alternative means of communication and collaboration, demonstrating flexibility in achieving its targets.

The project encountered capacity-related challenges within the institutions responsible for implementation. Specifically, there is a need for additional capacity building in the area of research assessment.

Relevance to Needs and Demands of Stakeholders

The project has a positive impact on local communities and indigenous groups through two programs: the livelihood program and the peatland training and awareness raising program. These programs increase community awareness about the benefits of peatland and promote sustainable livelihood practices that enhance biodiversity.

With these activities the community is now involved in piloting projects, such as chicken raising, vegetable farming, crab, and shrimp cultivation. The project provides funds and technical training to diversify the community's income sources, reducing their dependence on fisheries. This is important to prevent overfishing, especially during storms, which can lead to invading mangrove areas and the peatlands.

The project does not have any negative impacts on the communities. However, to ensure long-term success, it is important for the project to extend beyond its current duration. This is because education and awareness raising activities are ongoing processes that require sustained efforts over time. By prolonging the project's duration, the continuity of these activities can be ensured, ultimately leading to more effective mitigation of potential negative impacts.

At the provincial level, the livelihood program and awareness-raising activities are structured in a way that aligns with the local socio-economic conditions. By focusing on improving livelihoods and providing comprehensive knowledge to the villagers, the project aims to foster a natural inclination towards peatland protection. When the villagers have better livelihoods and a deeper understanding of the importance of peatlands, they are more likely to engage in conservation efforts voluntarily.

4.2.2 Effectiveness

In Cambodia, at the central level, the successful implementation of the project activity is attributed to effective collaboration among technical experts from regional to community levels. Modern communication tools and strong collaboration between national, provincial, and local entities also played crucial roles. However, staff turnover at the regional level was identified as a key factor in project delays. Collaboration and coordination among team members and stakeholders were highly rated by the central level officials in Cambodia.

At the provincial and district levels, the success of the project activities hinged on collaboration between provincial and national entities and active involvement of community beneficiaries in consultation workshops. Challenges leading to the project outcomes falling short included the lack of technical expertise and tools at the provincial level, hampering effective implementation.

Component 1: Assessment and documentation of peatlands in targeted countries

Availability of harmonized training modules on peatlands survey and assessment in national languages

The project shows good progress in the development of harmonized training modules on peatlands survey and assessment, that includes the four training modules that have been developed by GEC in English and translated in Khmer.

- Module 1: Peatland Identification - Covers foundational knowledge for identifying peatlands, including definitions, characteristics, hydrology, carbon storage, and climate change impact.
- Module 2: RS and Peatland Mapping - Focuses on remote sensing basics, spectral response, image interpretation, and data preparation for mapping.
- Module 3: Field Verification - Prepares for field surveys, involving map creation, rapid assessments, GPS usage, and the importance of combining remote sensing and ground-truthing.
- Module 4: Peatland Degradation and Management - Addresses degradation causes, consequences, assessment methods, protection, sustainable use, and restoration.

Number of maps produced in a process that involves national capacity building

Preliminary maps have been generated as part of the project's activities; however, their accuracy and reliability have not been confirmed due to the unavailability of survey reports at the time of the MTR.

Several potential peatland areas were initially identified along the Cambodian coast by conducting a preliminary analysis of satellite image interpretation and related secondary

data. This identification process involved the outlining of three distinct zones for further analysis and calculation: Botum Sakor - Arae Ambel, Sihanoukville, and Kampot. It's worth noting that the Peam Krasop Area in Koh Kong had already been identified in earlier surveys. These potential peatland areas are not concentrated in large continuous expanses but are scattered across various coastal locations, thus the plan to prepare a National Action Plan was revised to prepare a Coastal Action Plan for Cambodia.

The analysis involved the use of several sources of satellite imagery, including Sentinel-2 satellite images and multi-temporal satellite images from Landsat and Spot dating from 1978 to 2021, all accessible through Google Earth.

Sentinel-2 satellite images, with resolutions of both 10 meters and 20 meters, were specifically employed in the identification of potential peatlands. The analysis relied on key visual features of image objects, including texture, shape, and, notably, spectral reflectance color, to examine and categorize polygons that showed potential for being peatland areas. For image processing and GIS mapping, various software tools were utilized, including ENVI version 4.7 @2009, ESRI's ArcGIS version 10.8, and MapInfo version 10.5, along with simulation models.

To effectively conduct the field surveys for identifying and documenting the peatlands in Cambodia the Remote Sensing and GIS training event was organized by GEC on September 30, 2020, at the Ministry of Environment. The objective was to enhance the capabilities of the Cambodian project team in the field of remote sensing and offer localized assistance in the analysis and mapping of potential peatland areas within Cambodia.

The training workshop resulted in the following outcomes:

- Enhanced remote sensing and GIS skills among all participants and the national project team.
- The provision and installation of recommended hardware and software for the project team.
- Recognition of varying capacities among participants, leading to the design of tailored training modules.
- Active engagement of participants, who are now designated as the project team responsible for interpreting satellite images for potential peatland areas after the training.

Number of peatland surveys undertaken in target geographic areas within Cambodia

In Cambodia, three distinct peatland surveys were carried out in specific targeted geographic areas to assess and collect valuable information about the peatland ecosystems in the region. The following surveys took place in different provinces and districts, each with its unique characteristics and significance:

- Preah Sihanouk Province - Ream National Park (January 9-14, 2023): This survey was conducted in the Ream National Park, located in Preah Sihanouk Province.
- Koh Kong Province – Srae Ambel District (July 10-16, 2022): The survey in Koh Kong Province, particularly in Srae Ambel District, was conducted in the southwestern part of Cambodia.
- Kampot Province – Srae Ambel District (March 18-19, 2022): Another survey was carried out in the Srae Ambel District of Kampot Province. This district is recognized for its coastal location and proximity to significant peatland areas.

These surveys were crucial for collecting data to prepare the maps, understanding the peatland ecosystems, and identifying potential areas for conservation and management. While the fieldwork is completed, the final reports and findings are still in the process of being compiled at the time of the MTR.

Number of rapid assessments conducted for significant peatland areas in Cambodia

Several key activities related to the assessment and management of the Koh Kapik Ramsar Site have been carried out as part of the project that includes the following:

1. A final report assessing the management effectiveness of the Koh Kapik Ramsar Site using the **Ramsar Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (R-METT)** has been

produced. This report provides an overview of the outcomes of the R-METT assessment conducted at the Koh Kapik Ramsar Site (KKRS). According to the R-METT findings, KKRS exhibits a relatively low level of key threats to biodiversity damage and community people.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that there are some minor threats of concern, including instances of minor illegal activities, disturbances caused by human activities like boat usage, issues related to erosion, as well as the presence of household and plastic waste, among others.

The R-METT yielded a score of 47%, signifying a moderate level of site management. This suggests that there are opportunities for enhancements, primarily in two principal aspects, namely inputs and processes.

Numerous possible suggestions were put forward to enhance site management. These encompass the creation of a management plan for KKRS, backing for financial and technical endeavors, the development of human resources, additional research and exploration, and the establishment of a waste management system in the region.

2. **A rapid assessment of wetland ecosystem services** within the Koh Kapik Ramsar Site was conducted on 23-24 August 2022 and a final report was produced in December 2022.

This report aimed to comprehensively explore the ecosystem services (ES) of the KKRS reserve, their interconnections, and the factors influencing these services. The study involved local communities in assessing the benefits of ES, highlighting the significance of various ES categories for these communities.

This report offers valuable insights into the relationship between ES benefits and community characteristics through the RAWES approach. The approaches applied and developed in this study provide evidence based on science, enabling policymakers to consider ES and human needs in wetland conservation and management.

Furthermore, it recommends that there is a need to assess how future environmental changes, such as alterations in habitat cover/area, may impact ES and the livelihoods of local communities, thereby affecting the scale of ES benefits.

3. **Socio-economic surveys** have been conducted, and a technical report was produced in December 2021. These surveys are valuable for understanding the social and economic dynamics within and around the Koh Kapik Ramsar Site.

The research yields several essential findings that should be taken into account when formulating livelihood strategies to aid local communities and devising a management plan for peatland ecosystems in the study regions. Key findings include:

- Fishery is the primary source of livelihood for most community members, but heavy reliance on this income source makes their livelihoods vulnerable to environmental changes, highlighting the need for income diversification.
- Promoting sustainable livelihoods and preventing encroachment of peatland areas can be achieved through improved aquaculture and the establishment of a community-market network connecting fishermen and aquaculture farmers directly with consumers. However, a better understanding of current seafood and aquaculture supply and demand is necessary to design an appropriate business model.
- The studied community has low awareness of the value of peatland ecosystems in supporting their livelihoods, despite their heavy reliance on these natural resources. This lack of awareness results in low accountability for environmental protection and natural resource conservation.
- To enhance community participation in environmental protection and conservation, an awareness program is urgently needed.
- The willingness to participate in environmental protection and conservation is associated with how community members perceive the impacts of environmental

concerns and natural hazards, as well as the importance of peatlands, rather than factors such as income source, income level, or education.

- Household decision-makers significantly impact a household's willingness to contribute to resource conservation programs, emphasizing the importance of considering who controls household decisions when planning community engagement for livelihood and conservation programs.

These activities reflect the project's commitment to conducting thorough assessments and evaluations to inform the effective management of the Koh Kapik Ramsar Site, with a focus on both ecological and socio-economic aspects.

Component 2: Capacity development and policy and legal frameworks

Number of key stakeholders at the national, sub-national, and local levels have received training in peatland assessment, rehabilitation, and management in Cambodia

The project has undertaken several training initiatives aimed at building the capacity of key stakeholders in Cambodia in the areas of peatland assessment, rehabilitation, and management. A completion report is available for the remote sensing and GIS training event organized on September 30, 2020, at the Ministry of Environment. This training involved 13 participants, with 3 of them being female.

The meeting with the Preah Sihanouk Provincial Department of Environment was conducted from 27th to 29th December 2022 to discuss and request coordination and support for the on-ground survey in Preah Sihanouk Province. The meeting also aimed to disseminate the definition and ecosystem value of peatlands to the Preah Sihanouk Provincial Department of Environment. A total of 18 participants attended the meeting.

Training on all four modules of peatland assessment was conducted virtually by GEC. The participation details for each module are as follows:

- For Module 1, 21 people participated, including 13 males and 8 females.
- For Module 2a, 33 people participated, consisting of 19 males and 14 females.
- Module 2b saw the participation of 21 individuals, with 13 males and 8 females.
- Modules 3 & 4 had 35 participants in total, with 20 males and 15 females.

Availability of harmonized information and training materials on peatlands in national language (for use at national, sub-national and local levels)

Along with the 4 training modules prepared as part of the project to undertake training (described in Component 1 above), there are harmonized information on peatlands available in national languages for use at the national, sub-national, and local levels in Cambodia. These materials include the development and translation of booklets, trifold documents, and a grievance mechanism poster.

Booklet: It defines what peatlands are, discusses the types of peatlands, emphasizes the importance of peatlands, and explains their role in the ecosystem. The booklet also provides insights into the various types of peatlands in Cambodia, which are found across the country. These include mangrove peatlands, lakeshore, and floating peatlands, as well as buried and infilled lake/pond peatlands. Additionally, it gives a brief on the implementation of the project and the stakeholders involved.

Trifold: It provides a brief overview of the Mekong Peatland Project, defines peatlands and their various types, underscores the importance of peatlands for the environment, and emphasizes the significance of peatland conservation in reducing the risk of haze fires.

Grievance Mechanism Poster: It defines grievances as any issues or concerns connected to the planned or ongoing activities carried out by the project. The poster underscores the significance of reporting grievances, particularly within the context of the project's mission to support communities residing in and around peatland ecosystems. It encourages individuals to report issues they encounter, ensuring that the project's work genuinely benefits these communities rather than causing harm. The poster also introduces the concept of a

grievance mechanism, assuring those affected by adverse project impacts that they will receive timely assistance and a responsive ear. Importantly, the poster emphasizes that anyone influenced by the project's work has the right to report a grievance, promoting transparency, accountability, and community involvement in the project's activities.

It describes the following steps to lodge complaint:

Step 1: submission of complaint: Information provided will be confidential.

Step 2: Registration and investigation of complaint: investigation of report within a month.

Step 3: Resolving the problem: finding a solution within 7-14 days after initial response.

Step 4: Reporting: After resolving the problem, a brief report will be provided.

Additionally, other awareness-raising materials, such as a peatland video, a peatland sketch storybook, and a peatland kids' song, have been developed and finalized. These resources are crucial for disseminating information about peatlands and promoting understanding and awareness at various levels in Cambodia.

The above materials were prepared by IUCN Myanmar and shared with the Cambodian government. It was recommended to incorporate the communication materials in other activities and to make them available to wider stakeholders as per the 2nd supervision report (October 2022).

As per the PIR report the peatland storybooks and the peatland song, which were created during the previous reporting period, were distributed to schools in the local communities. In the fourth quarter of 2022, training and awareness sessions about peatlands were conducted for local authorities and rangers in Preah Sihanouk Province. This was followed by similar training and awareness programs for local authorities and relevant departments in Kep and Kampot during the first quarter of 2023.

Number of national or sub-national plans, policies or strategies that incorporate peatland conservation provisions, based on consultations with relevant stakeholders (including women and local communities)

The project has exceeded the target of incorporating two peatland conservation provisions in the national or sub-national plans, policies, guidelines, or strategies for Cambodia. Four legal and regulatory documents have incorporated peatland conservation provisions following consultations with relevant stakeholders, including women and local communities. These documents include:

Law:

- The Law of Protected Areas – Cambodia (draft amendment) has been incorporated into the Environmental and Natural Resource Code.

Policies:

- The draft Cambodian Environment and Natural Resource Code was approved by the National Assembly in May 2023 and reviewed by the Senate in June 2023.
- The draft Cambodian White Paper on Environment and Natural Resources was prepared in December 2022.

Plans:

- Cambodian Pentangular Strategy – Phase 1 was prepared in August 2023.
- A draft Action Plan for Coastal Peatlands Conservation and Management was prepared for Cambodia in 2023.

Component 3: Development and demonstration of Best Management Practices

The project is on its way towards completion. However, many of the project activities under Component 3 are still in the initial stage and are under way to be implemented.

Number of pilot sites established demonstrating best management practices of peatlands in Cambodia

As per the PIR report, the amount of demarcated area in Cambodia has been misreported. The 4,976 ha is actually the total PKWS peatland area (to be validated by the peat surveys). The demarcated area is actually 587 ha of the core zone of KKRS.

As communicated by the CTA, there has been a question as to whether we should be using the demarcation area as the indicator of improved management (not stipulated) rather than the updated draft KKRS 10-year management plan that applies to 20,000 ha of area.

Arguably, the peatlands inside KKRS will be better managed for peat conservation since it now has the identified peatland area, explanation of importance and function of peatlands, and a 10-year government budget of 290K USD for “Management actions for the conservation of peatland Habitats” for the first time.

The Coastal Action Plan for Peatlands which is also presently being drafted by the project arguably will also place a much larger area of Cambodia’s coastal peatlands under better management for peatland conservation since management actions and indicative government budgets are being identified within the Action Plan. Therefore, as of the available information, we cannot say whether the pilot sites for demonstrating best management practices for peatlands have been established in Cambodia.

Training and awareness activities have also taken place where a workshop was conducted in February 2023 in Kep and Kampot Province. The workshop was based on promoting, training, and raising awareness on the importance of peatland ecosystem for local authorities in Kep and Kampot Province.

Number of community members (disaggregated by gender) trained in sustainable livelihood practices

A concept note for developing sustainable livelihood practices related to the sustainable use of Peatlands was prepared in December 2022. This concept note is linked to an improvement program involving 75 households. However, the completion report on livelihood implementation activities and the livelihood plan for these households, which were completed in Q1, is still pending. As a result, the specific number of community members trained, and their gender disaggregation cannot be confirmed at this time.

Availability of peatland conservation provisions in PKWS management plan

The inclusion of peatland conservation provisions in the Peam Krasop Wildlife Sanctuary (PKWS) management plan for Cambodia is a planned activity.

Two consultation workshops were organized to gather information and knowledge to be incorporated in the management plan. The first consultation workshop was conducted on 6th April 2023 in Koh Kong Province and the second consultation workshop was conducted on 5th May 2023 in Phnom Penh.

However, no draft management plan incorporating peatland conservation measures is available to confirm whether the management plan has been successfully revised to include peatland conservation measures.

4.2.3 Efficiency

Availability of Technical and Financial Resources

In Cambodia total expenditure to date (June 2023) is USD 288,874.97, equivalent to 78% of the total budget of USD 370,980 allocated to be managed by DFWC.

By component, overall expenditure, including activity and personnel as of June 2023 was as follows:

- Component 1: total expenditure is USD 81,685.32, equivalent to 96% of the total budget of USD 85,200.
- Component 2: total expenditure is USD 61,905.80, equivalent to 77% of the total budget of USD 80,000.
- Component 3: total expenditure is USD 114,792, equivalent to 68% of the total budget of USD 168,400.
- Component 4: total expenditure is USD 7,214, equivalent to 53% of the total budget of USD 13,700.

Identification of Challenges and Mitigation Measures

During the project's course, several unforeseen challenges emerged in Cambodia. In response to the unexpected challenges posed by the emergence of COVID-19 and the need for field-based training for peatland identification, the project took several actions and measures. Recognizing the limitations imposed by the Pandemic, the project shifted its focus to remote sensing. This adaptation involved the development of training modules and online sessions for peatland identification.

One of the challenges was related to the project team's limited background in remote sensing, which made it difficult to fully harness the tools and technologies necessary for peatland assessment. The local team faced difficulties in fully utilizing remote sensing training. To address this issue, the project made the strategic decision to transfer the responsibility for conducting remote sensing and mapping in Cambodia to the Global Environment Centre (GEC).

Additionally, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted field work, leading to difficulties caused by limited internet connectivity while team members worked from home.

Despite these challenges, Cambodia made significant strides in assessing and mapping peatlands within the Coastal Zone Mangroves. These accomplishments were made possible with crucial support from GEC, which played a pivotal role in bolstering these efforts. Furthermore, GEC continued its support to Cambodia by conducting two field visits aimed at verifying the peatlands identified through remote sensing.

As of now, according to GEC approximately 90% of the verification process has been completed, and the presence of peatland has been confirmed on the ground, approximately 20,000 to 25,000 Ha of peatland has been identified in the coastal areas of Cambodia (these regions included Kampot Province, Kep Province, Preah Sihanouk, and Koh Kong Province).

These unforeseen challenges and the subsequent measures taken to address them highlight the project's adaptability and resilience in the face of unexpected obstacles.

Self-Monitoring, Assessment, Reporting and Reflection

Reflective Practices

The project's practice for reflection and analysis of self-monitoring and assessment findings differs from the traditional formal evaluation approach. Instead of conducting a formal evaluation study report, they have chosen to utilize field reports provided by internal technical experts, who are part of the national project team, for reflection and analysis of self-monitoring and assessment findings.

This approach suggests that the project places emphasis on the expertise and insights of these technical experts in assessing project progress and outcomes. These experts likely play a central role in providing in-depth insights, observations, and analysis based on their knowledge of the project's activities and goals. This method may facilitate more flexible and immediate feedback, allowing for timely adjustments and improvements, but it should also be supplemented with formal evaluations to ensure a comprehensive and objective assessment of the project's overall performance and impact.

Role of Project Steering Committee

The National Project Steering Committee (NPSC) has played a crucial role within the project's governance structure. Its primary responsibilities include:

- **Providing Feedback and Input:** The PSC serves as a forum for discussion and collaboration, offering valuable feedback and input to the technical team. This feedback is instrumental in shaping the project's direction and addressing community-related issues.
- **Assisting in Issue Resolution:** The committee is actively involved in identifying and addressing challenges or problems that may arise in the community sites. It plays a significant role in finding effective solutions to these issues.
- **Representation from MOE Departments:** The PSC comprises members from various departments within the Ministry of Environment (MOE), including the Department of Climate Change, Conservation, and Protected Area, among others. These departmental

representatives bring their expertise and perspectives to the committee, contributing to well-rounded decision-making.

Overall, the Project Steering Committee serves as a vital link between the technical team and the community sites. It provides guidance, fosters collaboration, and leverages the expertise of various MOE departments to ensure the project's successful implementation and address any challenges that may arise.

Timeline and Quality of Reporting

It seems that at the central level, there have been no significant challenges or obstacles encountered in meeting reporting timelines or maintaining report quality. However, at the provincial level, the absence of reports has been noted. To address this challenge, progress updates and communication with the national level have been maintained through various means, including a Telegram channel, face-to-face meetings, and online meetings, particularly during travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Stakeholder Involvement

The key stakeholders have actively collaborated and supported each other since the beginning of the assessment study through consultation workshops. They have conducted training sessions, sharing sessions, and learned from one another in Thailand and Vietnam, indicating strong engagement among various stakeholders.

The project employs a variety of mechanisms and strategies to involve stakeholders effectively. These include:

- *Regular Technical Expert Visits:* National-level technical experts frequently visit the project site to monitor performance and conduct field visits. This hands-on approach ensures that experts are closely engaged with project activities.
- *Capacity Building in Thailand:* Capacity building activities in Thailand contribute to the effective involvement of stakeholders. These activities provide training and knowledge exchange opportunities, enhancing expertise in peatland management.
- *Educational Videos and Films:* The production of educational videos and films is used to educate students in primary schools. This multimedia approach helps raise awareness about peatland conservation and management among the younger generation.
- *Study Tours:* Study tours play a crucial role in involving stakeholders. For instance, organizing exchange visits to Malaysia in October 2022 and to Thailand in November 2023, focusing on the link between peatland, SUPA, and MAHFSA projects, enhances knowledge sharing and collaboration among stakeholders.

These mechanisms and strategies demonstrate a proactive approach to stakeholder involvement, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange for the project's success.

4.2.4 Network and Linkages

Participation of stakeholders in project, discussions, and decision-making processes

During the project preparation phase in Cambodia, a diverse array of stakeholders actively participated in the project that included local villagers, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), International NGOs (INGOs), international organizations, research institutions, universities, and government agencies at both the national and provincial levels. Their involvement significantly contributed to the planning and implementation of the project, emphasizing a collaborative and comprehensive approach to address various aspects of the project.

Local stakeholders have been identified and actively engaged in project participation, discussions, and decision-making processes. They have participated in peatland training, assessment, and consultation workshops, where their input and insights are put forward. This indicates that the project has taken steps to involve relevant stakeholders and ensure their participation in shaping project activities and decisions. It is essential to continue this inclusive approach to maximize the project's impact and ensure that the diverse perspectives of local stakeholders are heard and integrated into the project's implementation.

Collaboration with other organizations, government agencies, and stakeholders

The project has collaborated with other organizations like GIZ and ASEAN, central and provincial government agencies (Department of Freshwater Wetlands Conservation, Department of Terrestrial Protected Areas Conservation, Department of Marine and Coastal Conservation, MOE, etc.), and other stakeholders (research institutions, universities, and local communities) by maintaining frequent communication. These organizations have provided training to core team members, community council, and community members. This collaboration and communication approach aligns with the project's goal of capacity building and engagement of various stakeholders.

At the provincial level, the project collaborated with such organizations by using communication tools such as Telegram channels. This allowed for the efficient sharing of project updates, feedback, and facilitated communication among various stakeholders. By using such technology, the project ensured that relevant parties were informed and engaged, enhancing overall project implementation.

Opportunity for indigenous groups and local communities to voice their concerns and preferences

Indigenous groups and local communities have been provided with the opportunity to voice their concerns and preferences in the consultation workshops conducted during the project awareness activities. This engagement is essential to ensure that the project considers the specific needs and perspectives of these groups, contributing to more effective and locally relevant project outcomes. It's a positive sign of the project's commitment to inclusivity and community engagement.

The interest of the local communities, particularly Boeung Kachhang Village and Koh Kapik Village in Bak Klong Commune, Peam Krasop Commune, Toul Korki Krom, Toul Korki Leu in, as well as Andoung Teuk Commune inside Botum Sakor National Park, varies from high to moderate level in the project, as the activities directly relate to their daily lives, aiming to support sustainable livelihoods. All community members express a keen interest in learning more about peat and its importance.

The influence of stakeholders on the project varies across different communities. Boeung Kachhang Village and Koh Kapik Villages demonstrate high influence due to a strong and active Community Protected Area (CPA) committee which will help to guarantee implementation and monitoring. Peam Krasop commune, Toul Korki Krom commune, and Andoung Teuk Commune exhibit a moderate level of influence, primarily being involved in the consultation process when proposed changes to the management plan are discussed.

Moreover, these communities play a pivotal role in showcasing effective strategies for the sustainable management of peatlands. The stakeholders in Bak Klong Commune and Koh Kapik Commune serve as a designated demonstration site for implementing best management practices in the project. On the other hand, stakeholders in Peam Krasop Commune, Toul Korki Krom Commune, and Andoung Teuk Commune are identified as potential beneficiaries of upscaling and awareness-raising activities. Although these villages have not been chosen as demonstration sites, they actively participate in the participatory process of defining demarcations/ restrictions. This approach emphasizes community engagement and participation in decision-making processes related to the project.

Contribution of CSOs/academic and research institutions to the project

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Cambodia have actively collaborated to address the needs of citizens and the environment. This provided a significant opportunity for the project to leverage collaborations by finding synergies, offering capacity development, and aligning information sharing. For instance, existing structures like the ecotourism-based community committee in the Peam Krasop Wildlife Sanctuary, present an opportunity for valuable insights and collaboration in the context of peatland-related ecotourism activities. This indicates a potential for cooperative efforts to enhance community engagement and sustainable practices in the region.

There is mutual benefit for the project to collaborate with such organizations and to build upon the knowledge that has already been gained through their consultations on threats to

ecosystems. At the same time, the project can provide management recommendations that would further support better protection of peatlands.

Academic and research institutions, such as the Royal University of Agriculture in Cambodia, the University of Copenhagen, and the Royal University of Phnom Penh, are actively engaged in the project. They have expressed high interest in survey results and have already collaborated on research activities, including work on rare evergreen swamp forests and patrolling efforts with indigenous groups.

Connections and Opportunities for alignment with other similar projects

Common stakeholders/beneficiaries with other related projects

All stakeholders and beneficiaries have been involved in the project from the beginning, including assessment and consultation workshops. However, it is important to note that only the community council and chief are involved in planning and decision-making at the regional level. This suggests that the planning and decision-making process may not fully engage all stakeholders and beneficiaries, potentially limiting the inclusivity of project-related decisions. It would be beneficial to consider broader engagement in planning and decision-making to ensure diverse perspectives are taken into account.

Other projects/initiatives (external to this project) that share similar objectives/outcomes

Peatland management is partly addressed in Koh Kong Province as part of several recent and ongoing projects on nature conservation, forest management, and socio-economic development for communities living in and around peatland areas. Specifically, there have been some international activities in the coastal peatland mangrove areas, particularly in the Peam Krasop Wildlife Sanctuary.

In 2011, in the most recent management plan that was prepared – prior to peatland survey/identification – most of the peatland areas were designated to fall within Sustainable Use and Community zones.

In 2014, IUCN led the Building Resilience to Climate Change Impacts in Coastal Southeast Asia (BCR) project. This involved building the capacity of managers and local government staff at PKWS and initiating community livelihood projects for those living in and around the coastal mangrove areas.

Recently, Research and Human Resource Development (RHRD) also carried out a project related to the mangroves in Peam Krasop. This project focused on sustainable livelihood development and on improving the integrity of the mangrove ecosystem area. The project also contributed to improving the living conditions of the Toul Kouki Community Protected Area (CPA) (within PKWS) as well as to the sustainable management of the mangrove ecosystem.

Apart from this, a list of projects related to mangrove peatlands in Koh Kong Province is provided on Pg 39 of the Project Document.

4.3 Assessment for Lao PDR

4.3.1 Relevance – Lao PDR

Overview

In 2015, the SEApeat project conducted surveys and confirmed that roughly 500 ha of the Beung Kiat Ngong Ramsar Site are peatlands, comprising the largest peatland area identified in Lao PDR to date. In addition, numerous smaller areas have been identified as *potential peatlands* scattered throughout the landscape and in close proximity to the Ramsar site.

The Beung Kiat Ngong wetlands are located in the Champasak Province of southern Lao PDR are made up of a large freshwater marsh and a seasonal wetland with a number of scattered ponds and paddy fields. The site is especially important for fish, which rely on the permanent wetlands for survival and spawning during the dry season.

During the PPG inception mission in Vientiane in December 2016, key stakeholders from central government indicated an interest in selecting pilot sites outside of the Ramsar site to avoid overlap with other donor-funded projects already focused there. However, due to the known importance and relative size of the Beung Kiat Ngong peatlands coupled with the financial constraints of the project, it was decided to keep the focus on areas around the Ramsar site.

The villagers from the chosen communities regularly visit Bung Naphat for fishing and various other activities. Furthermore, the villagers from the other non-selected community expressed interest in exploring alternative livelihood options indicates a recognition of the importance of diversifying their sources of income and supporting the overall development of their community.

This reflects that the project has been effective in impacting villagers' adaptability and willingness to engage in activities that can contribute to their community's well-being. It also underscores the potential for projects or initiatives that align with the villagers' aspirations for sustainable community development, including those that harmonize with the conservation and responsible use of other peatland areas like Bung Naphat and its resources.

The primary threats to peatlands in Lao PDR encompass various human-induced activities, including the conversion of peatland areas through deforestation via anthropogenic fires and land drainage for agriculture or plantations. Overfishing, overgrazing, and the use of chemical fertilizers are additional challenges, as is peat extraction for organic fertilizer. Furthermore, the increased occurrence of droughts and fires further exacerbates the vulnerability of peatland ecosystems in the region. Addressing these threats is crucial for the conservation and sustainable management of Lao PDR's peatlands.

Relevance of the Tools / Instruments / Inputs applied by the Project for enabling Policy Environment

Tools

Like Cambodia, the project team in Lao PDR is also employing several tools to facilitate effective information sharing and policy dissemination. Instant messaging platforms like WhatsApp and Telegram channels are used at the field level to share project-related information and keep stakeholders updated on project progress and implementation in real-time. For more formal updates, such as reports and formal meetings, email communication is used.

Instruments

In Lao PDR, various assessments and surveys have been conducted as part of the project. Rapid biodiversity assessments have been finalized at the project's peatland sites, with the findings detailed in a technical report. Additionally, a water balance assessment began in the second quarter and is scheduled for completion in the third or fourth quarter. Furthermore, socio-economic surveys were conducted, and a corresponding technical report was produced in August 2022, contributing valuable insights into the project's ecological and socio-economic dimensions.

Inputs

There is potential for continued involvement of research and academic institutions like the National University of Laos (NUoL) and Champasak University in future surveys, suggesting that they are actively contributing insights to help shape relevant policies and regulations related to peatland management and conservation.

Relevance to the National Policies and Programs

The project has taken steps to ensure the successful mainstreaming of its agenda into national and provincial policy and government action. This includes the inclusion of BKN Ramsar site management in the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment's management plan, where peatland monitoring is a recognized component.

Furthermore, the project has integrated the National Water Resource strategy for peatland management into the ministry's activities, indicating a proactive approach to policy alignment

and government engagement. Also, the draft for ministerial policy on management and monitoring of wetlands has been prepared under this project.

Relevance of Project Development and Execution

According to the interviews the MTR team conducted with the central level officials of the NPSC, the targets set for the project were realistic and achievable, primarily due to the availability of resources, strong cooperation from partners and communities, effective technical capabilities, coordinated efforts, and mutual exchange.

However, the capacity of institutions to effectively implement the project faced some challenges at the field level. Peatland-related work was relatively new, with insufficient expertise (for instance, the field teams struggled to make use of the GIS and remote sensing techniques), necessitating training in peatland research and analysis supplemented by the SUPA project. Resource limitations hindered data analysis and research. Furthermore, the project experienced delays due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 disease, affecting its progress.

Nonetheless, the support provided by IUCN and regional partners, along with increased awareness and active participation at all levels, are hoped to contribute to the successful achievement of project goals.

Relevance to Needs and Demands of Stakeholders

The project is making a positive impact on local communities and indigenous groups by increasing awareness of the importance of peatlands. The community has become more responsible for the management and conservation of these vital ecosystems. This awareness has led to better living conditions, improved waste management, and a clear understanding of the necessity to protect and manage peatlands effectively. Overall, the project has had a demonstrable positive effect on the quality of life for local communities and indigenous groups, enhancing their understanding and responsibility for peatland conservation.

The project's negative impact on the communities appears to be minimal, primarily among those who have not fully grasped the project's regulations and its significance in Peatland conservation. These individuals may not fully grasp the significance of peatlands, leading to occasional violations of project regulations. Mitigation efforts may include increasing awareness and education among community members to reduce unintended violations and promote better adherence to project guidelines.

The project design is considered relevant to the socio-economic and ecological context of the project area. It includes activities aimed at generating income for the community through the sustainable use of natural resources and has a structured ecosystem management framework. Furthermore, the project aligns with the local development plan of the province and effectively serves the local economy.

4.3.2 Effectiveness

In Lao PDR, at the central level, several factors contributed to the successful implementation of the project. These included government support, the integration of peatland management into national policy, and active involvement of local communities. Essential technical skills, particularly in land surveying and GIS systems, played a crucial role in the project's accomplishments. However, challenges arose from budget delays and deviations from the initial project plans. Collaboration and coordination among team members and stakeholders were generally considered good, fostering the project's progress. For future projects, there was a shared desire for longer project durations and additional professional training opportunities for communities.

At the provincial level, steering committees, joint planning, and teamwork were key factors behind successful project implementation. While project design and mechanisms were well-coordinated from central to local levels, limited technical knowledge, especially in GIS systems, and community participation remained challenges. To enhance future projects, it is important to promote sustainable community-based opportunities, increasing community participation, and consolidating similar activities into a single project to avoid complications.

Component 1: Assessment and documentation of peatlands in targeted countries

Availability of harmonized training modules on peatlands survey and assessment in national languages

Four training modules have been developed by GEC in English. And translated into Lao.

- Module 1: Peatland Identification - Covers foundational knowledge for identifying peatlands, including definitions, characteristics, hydrology, carbon storage, and climate change impact.
- Module 2: RS and Peatland Mapping - Focuses on remote sensing basics, spectral response, image interpretation, and data preparation for mapping.
- Module 3: Field Verification - Prepares for field surveys, involving map creation, rapid assessments, GPS usage, and the importance of combining remote sensing and ground-truthing.
- Module 4: Peatland Degradation and Management - Addresses degradation causes, consequences, assessment methods, protection, sustainable use, and restoration.

Number of maps produced in a process that involves national capacity building

Preliminary maps have been generated as part of the project's activities; however, their accuracy and reliability have not been confirmed due to the unavailability of survey reports at the time of the MTR.

In Lao, potential peatland areas were mapped in the Pathoumphone district of Champasak province. These maps were generated using Sentinel2 Imagery, a valuable tool for identifying potential peatlands.

These maps were prepared via the analysis of Sentinel 2 imagery but no ground truthing was conducted. The data source from the Ministry of Home Affairs, Lao PDR was used. No mapping preliminary assessment report before ground survey was available at the time of MTR.

National training on remote sensing and GIS analysis was conducted from 18th February to 5th March 2021. The objective of the training was to build capacity of Lao project team and taskforce on remote sensing and GIS for potential peatland mapping in Lao PDR.

There were *certain challenges* that were faced during the training sessions such as:

The project encountered several challenges throughout its implementation. Language barriers were one notable issue, making effective communication and understanding complex topics difficult. Another challenge was the extensive content covered in one-day training sessions, which sometimes overwhelmed participants, hindering their ability to absorb the information effectively.

Additionally, there was confusion surrounding colour combinations used to identify entities or objects and how they corresponded to the original bands in ArcGIS. This created difficulties in image interpretation and classification. Participants also faced challenges in selecting regions of interest for different classes, particularly distinguishing between potential peat or potential floating peatland and other categories like water bodies or vegetation.

Classifying the images proved challenging, with instances of overclassification or misclassification, particularly for the target class, potential peatland. Lastly, the technical aspect of the project encountered errors, such as difficulties in saving signature files and occasional software interruptions, which disrupted the workflow. These challenges required ongoing efforts to address and improve the project's effectiveness for instance through additional remote sensing training in the SUPA project.

Number of peatland surveys undertaken in target geographic areas within Lao PDR

The final combined survey reports are still being drafted by the PMUs and will not be available for the MTR. This information was confirmed through communication with the CTA. Consequently, the results from these ongoing surveys could not be verified.

However, Concept Notes have been prepared to conduct on-the-ground surveys across Laos in Xiengkhuang province (under the SUPA Project) and Champasak provinces (for the

second and last batch of surveys in Champasak supported by Mekong Peatland), signed by the PMU and RCU in March 2023.

These concept notes indicate the project's intent to conduct surveys in these specific provinces, and the signing of some of these notes demonstrates progress in the planning and preparation of survey activities.

Number of rapid assessments conducted for significant peatland areas in Lao PDR

In Lao PDR, the project has made notable progress in assessing the conditions of peatland areas.

1. A **rapid biodiversity assessments report**, conducted in January 2022, represents a step towards understanding the ecological diversity and potential conservation needs within these regions.

The surveyed peatlands in Vientiane and Champasak provinces are used by the public for various activities, leading to unsustainable resource extraction. Villagers rely on natural resources for their basic needs, including hunting and fishing, which are sometimes practiced unsustainably, raising concerns about illegal activities.

Although many villagers are aware of the illegality of hunting protected species, weak law enforcement prevails. The use of electric fishing gear poses a significant threat to fish populations, despite being illegal under national and local regulations. Without conservation efforts, many plant and wildlife species may face the risk of local extinction.

Ongoing challenges affecting peatlands and wetlands include the hunting of wildlife, encroachment by private landowners, deforestation for agriculture, cassava cultivation expansion, peat soil extraction for fertilizer, paddy field expansion, and uncontrolled illegal fishing, which is particularly destructive to aquatic ecosystems in Pathoumphone district.

Some recommendations include:

- Revision of land use planning and demarcate boundaries of peatlands to prevent encroachment, maintaining ecological health and benefits to local livelihoods.
 - Enforcement of national laws to control illegal fishing and hunting of wildlife species of conservation significance.
 - Raising awareness about the conservation significance of peatlands and their link to local livelihoods and climate resilience.
 - Controlling the expansion of invasive species such as giant mimosa and giant sensitive plant.
 - Implementing ways to control the population of invasive species like the Golden apple snail.
 - Establishing fish reservation zones for foraging, breeding, and refuge, protecting fish habitats and aquatic animals.
 - Implementing community-based fishery management and enforce regulations against illegal fishing.
 - Establishing a captive breeding program for high-value turtles like *Heosemys annandalii* in peatlands.
 - Conducting botanical surveys focusing on key species in unique peatland habitats like swamp forests and mangroves in Nong Phipum and Beung Bahphat.
2. The **water balance assessment**, initially planned to start in May 2022 and conclude by the end of the same year, has experienced delays. According to information from the Chief Technical Advisor (CTA), the report is currently in the drafting stage and will not be available for the Mid-Term Review (MTR).
 3. The **socio-economic surveys** have also been completed and technical report produced in August 2022. The socio-economic survey highlights the community's reliance on primary education and traditional livelihoods, primarily centered around farming and animal raising. Recommendations include training for efficient rice production, regulation

for sustainable wetland management, and financial support through the development fund.

Livelihood improvement activities concentrate on cattle breeding, poultry, pig farming, and handicrafts. The community's self-use of underground water necessitates a management system, and there is a call for solar energy adoption. Emphasis is placed on environmental awareness campaigns for waste management and sustainable agricultural practices, alongside disaster preparedness training. The overall goal is to enhance education, livelihoods, financial stability, and community resilience while promoting sustainable environmental practices.

The combination of these assessments reflects the project's dedication to conducting comprehensive evaluations of peatland conditions in Lao PDR, considering both ecological and hydrological aspects. These assessments will lay the foundation for informed decision-making and the development of strategies to ensure the long-term sustainability of peatland ecosystems.

Component 2: Capacity development and policy and legal frameworks

Number of key stakeholders at the national, sub-national, and local levels have received training in peatland assessment, rehabilitation, and management in Lao PDR

The project has actively engaged key stakeholders in Lao PDR through a series of training initiatives related to peatland assessment, rehabilitation, and management. These efforts have aimed to build the necessary knowledge and skills to ensure the sustainable conservation and use of peatland ecosystems in the country.

Two virtual training sessions were conducted in February and March 2021, focusing on "Introduction to Peat and Peatland Types" and "Remote Sensing (RS) and Geographic Information System (GIS) for Peatland Mapping." These training events provided participants with a foundational understanding of peatland ecosystems and equipped them with practical skills for peatland mapping using advanced technologies.

Additionally, a mini symposium presentation was held in January 2022, which likely offered stakeholders the opportunity to exchange knowledge and insights related to peatland conservation and management.

Concept notes were prepared for training on peatland survey, indicating a commitment to enhancing the expertise of stakeholders in this area. While the number of participants who benefited from these initiatives is awaited from the Lao PMU.

Moreover, it is evident that efforts have been made to train and engage key stakeholders at various levels within Lao PDR; at district and village level in the target villages (Ban Thongxay, Ban Keng Nang Ang, and Ban Kala). This included conducting a mini symposium in January 2022 and celebration of World Peatland Day on 2nd June 2023 to raise awareness on importance of peatland and peatland management. These steps represent a positive step towards fostering the capacity needed for effective peatland management in the country.

Availability of harmonized information and training materials on peatlands in national language (for use at national, sub-national and local levels)

Yes, there are harmonized information on peatlands available in the Lao language for use at the national, sub-national, and local levels in Lao PDR. These materials include booklets, trifold documents, and a grievance mechanism poster that have been developed and translated, making them accessible to a wider audience and facilitating better understanding of peatland-related issues in the country.

Booklet: It defines what peatlands are, discusses the types of peatlands, emphasizes the importance of peatlands, and explains their role in the ecosystem. The booklet also provides insights into the various types of peatlands in Lao PDR, which are found across the country. These include floating peatlands, infilled lake/ pond peatlands, and buried, or partially buried peatlands. These peatlands are influenced by seasonal flooding and receive inputs of sediment from the surrounding landscape and rivers.

Trifold: It provides a brief overview of the Mekong Peatland Project, defines peatlands and their various types, underscores the importance of peatlands for the environment, and emphasizes the significance of peatland conservation in reducing the risk of haze fires. It also describes the peatlands in Lao PDR.

Grievance Mechanism Poster: It defines grievances as any issues or concerns connected to the planned or ongoing activities carried out by the project. The poster underscores the significance of reporting grievances, particularly within the context of the project's mission to support communities residing in and around peatland ecosystems. It encourages individuals to report issues they encounter, ensuring that the project's work genuinely benefits these communities rather than causing harm. The poster also introduces the concept of a grievance mechanism, assuring those affected by adverse project impacts that they will receive timely assistance and a responsive ear. Importantly, the poster emphasizes that anyone influenced by the project's work has the right to report a grievance, promoting transparency, accountability, and community involvement in the project's activities.

It describes the following steps to lodge complaint:

Step 1: Submission of complaint: Information provided will be confidential.

Step 2: Registration and investigation of complaint: investigation of report within a month.

Step 3: Resolving the problem: finding a solution within 7-14 days after initial response.

Step 4: Reporting: After resolving the problem, a brief report will be provided.

The above materials were prepared by IUCN RCU (based in Myanmar at that time) and shared with the Lao PDRPMU. It was recommended to incorporate the communication materials in other activities and to make them available to wider stakeholders as per the 2nd supervision report (October 2022).

Number of national or sub-national plans, policies or strategies that incorporate peatland conservation provisions, based on consultations with relevant stakeholders (including women and local communities)

In Laos, the target of incorporating two peatland conservation provisions in the national or sub-national plans, policies, guidelines, or strategies has been tremendously exceeded. Four legal and regulatory documents have been/are in process to be developed to incorporate peatland conservation provisions following consultations with relevant stakeholders, including women and local communities. The status is as follows:

- **National Water Resources Strategy:** Peatland issues and action plans have been integrated into the National Water Resources Strategy following the 2nd Consultation workshop conducted in March 2021. A strategy for the management and use of natural water resources until 2030 has been formulated. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment developed this strategy, and it was completed in July 2023.
- **Beung Kiat Ngong Ramsar Site Management Plan:** In August 2023, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment prepared the management plan for the BKN Ramsar site. This plan outlines comprehensive strategies and guidelines for the sustainable management and conservation of the Ramsar site, covering aspects such as biodiversity preservation, ecosystem health, and community engagement.
- **Ministerial Decision on Wetlands Management:** A Ministerial Decision on Wetlands Management in Lao PDR was completed on August 4th, 2023. The decree lays down the principle, regulations and measures regarding the management and monitoring of peatland.
- **Lao PDR National Action Plan for Peatlands (NAPP):** Moreover, as per the communication with CTA and GEC, the Lao PDR National Action Plan for Peatlands (NAPP) is in the process of being drafted.

Component 3: Development and demonstration of Best Management Practices

Number of pilot sites established demonstrating best management practices of peatlands in Lao PDR

Under the Mekong Peatland Project, approximately 92 ha of Beung Baphat (BBP) and Beung Papaiyai (BPPY) has been demarcated, those areas consisting of 72 ha for BBP, and 20 ha for BPPY, and approximately 25.43 ha of peatland areas were mapped in BBP, and 13.46 ha of peatland areas were mapped in BPPY. the report and maps to verify the area is available.

The first awareness raising on importance of peatland in Lao PDR have been conducted during 26-30 April 2022 with total participants of 136 peoples consisting of district officers for 25 people, and the villagers in 3 target villages of 111 people. the second awareness raising have been conducted during the celebration of World Peatland Day in June 2023, with total number of participants of 117 people, with 56 females. And the awareness raising/capacity development on importance of peatland ecosystem at community level will be conducted in 3rd week of December and expected that 100 of participants will be joining the event. In total 353 people.

A consultation meeting with the project team has been organized at PONRE, Champasak Province. At the meeting, the objectives of the meeting have been presented, and then the progress report of the Component 3 has been presented, and then the evaluation team and project team had chance to discuss and exchange ideas on comments to elaborate the implementation of the component 3 before conducting the field visit in the following days.

Consultation activities have taken place with local communities in Thongxay, Kala, and Kaeng Nang Ang Villages regarding livelihood development alternatives (June 2023) and raising awareness about the values and functions of peatlands (April 2022) in and around Beung Kiat Ngong. These consultation activities involved participants from the villages and District/Provincial officers.

Number of community members (disaggregated by gender) trained in sustainable livelihood practices

A total of 96 participants, with at least 50 women, have been trained in sustainable livelihood practices in the selected target villages as part of the livelihood implementation. Additionally, 111 people, including 55 women, participated in raising awareness among local communities about the values and functions of peatlands in and around Beung Kiat Ngong. These participants included villagers and District/Provincial officers. The training was conducted with gender disaggregation in mind.

Availability of peatland conservation provisions in BKN management plan: The 2nd Five-Year Management Plan for Beung Kiat Ngong Ramsar Site, published in August 2023, incorporates twenty-four targeted management actions related to peatland conservation. These provisions reflect a commitment to conserving and sustainably managing the peatland areas within the Ramsar site. This plan is the second management plan for the site and replaces the first management plan (2019 - 2023) for the succeeding the management period.

In addition, the Regulation on natural resources utilization in peatland areas has been developed in participatory manner with the villagers and approved by the district governor to use as a guideline for what villagers can and cannot do for natural resources utilization in the peatland areas, especially at BBP and BPPY. After that, the community patrolling teams have been set up in Ban Thongxay and Ban Kaelae to follow up and ensure the regulation compliance among the local communities surrounding the peatland areas.

Awareness on solid waste management of the villagers have been raised during June 2025, emphasizing on waste separation and turning waste to resources, and the Recycle Bank has been set up in Kaelae Secondary school as a mechanism for managing the recyclable waste, and the community land fill is constructing in Ban Thongxay will be finished by the end of December 2023, and the regulation on community landfill management will be finalized in December 2023 as a guideline for community landfill operation and management.

Cattle fattening and Ton Kha handicraft development have been promoted as alternative livelihood development in 3 target villages of Thongxay, Kala, and Keang Nang Ang. Though 14 households had expressed their interest in cattle fattening in Ban Thongxay and Keang Nang Ang, up to now 9 households in two villages have been actively participated in cattle

fattening practices. Training on cattle fattening practices had been provided to the groups and community vets of 8 core villages of BKN Ramsar site also been invited to join the training program during November 2023. Up to now 18 cattle have been initiated fattening from October 2023, and 5 cattle were sold, generated income to the group of 21,100,000 LAK. TOT training program on handicraft products development has been provided to 22 households in Kala villages, and up to now about 20 mats, and 15 sticky rice boxes have been produced and sold to the market and generated income to the group of 3,320,000 LAK.

Water supply via solar energy is under preparation for construction in Ban Thongxay and expect to be finished by end of December 2023 or in case delay will be by end of January 2023. This will provide source of reliable water supply to the community and will also contribute to the ground water system management by collectively reducing the scattered borewells digging by individual households in the peatland areas.

The land use map for Thongxay, Kala, and Keang Nang Ang have been reviewed and updated. This will significantly contribute to the natural resources protection and management in peatland areas.

The latest version of BKN Management Plan (2021-2025) has been officially approved by the Minister of Natural Resources and Governor of Champasak Province in August 2023. The meeting on mainstreaming peatland management in to BKN management plans has been organized in December 2021. As a result, peatland management has been mainstreamed into BKN Management Plan (2021-2025) in the activity 1.1, and 1.2 in the action plan No. 1.

4.3.3 Efficiency

Availability of Technical and Financial Resources

In Lao PDR, the total expenditure to date (June 2023) is USD 263,646, equivalent to 64% of the total budget of USD 410,000 allocated to be managed by DWR. By component, overall expenditure, including activity and personnel as of June 2023 was as follows:

- Component 1: total expenditure is USD 151,063, equivalent to 82% of the total budget of USD 185,100.
- Component 2: total expenditure is USD 33,690, equivalent to 59% of the total budget of USD 57,500.
- Component 3: total expenditure is USD 42,593, equivalent to 38% of the total budget of USD 110,900.
- Component 4: total expenditure is USD 16,651, equivalent to 47% of the total budget of USD 35,700.

Identification of Challenges and Mitigation Measures

Several unforeseen problems and challenges have arisen during the project in Lao PDR, which were not originally anticipated in the project plans.

As reported in the second PSM Report, in response to instructions issued at ministerial level in Lao PDR, no project staff were permitted to be hired as outlined in the Project Document. Budget for project staff was reallocated to support implementation of activities.

However, existing staff within the NEA at the time had limited experience in many technical aspects related to the project and as such building internal capacity, whilst certainly desirable, has taken time and happened as the project has proceeded and no doubt contributed to some of the delays overall.

Challenges in Remote Sensing

Detecting peatlands using remote sensing methods was challenging in Lao PDR, despite the technical training provided by Mekong Peatland (GEC) and then GIZ SUPA. The lack of human resources with the required technical expertise in government officials may have hindered the project's progress.

These unforeseen challenges may have affected the project's timeline and implementation approach, necessitating adaptability and coordination to overcome them effectively. It highlights the importance of having contingency plans and strategies in place to address unexpected issues that can arise during project implementation.

Self-Monitoring, Assessment, Reporting and Reflection

Reflective Practices

The project's practice for reflecting on and analysing self-monitoring and assessment findings involves organizing conferences where stakeholders can come together and share their lessons and insights. This collaborative approach allows for a collective analysis of the project's progress, challenges, and achievements, fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

The process of gathering lessons learned and insights from reflection involves active collaboration and the generation of solutions. By engaging in exchange and open dialogue, the project team collectively identifies areas that require adjustment and fine-tuning. These lessons and insights serve as valuable inputs for decision-making and guide the project towards improvements. The team works together to adapt their working methods, ensuring better quality and effectiveness in project implementation.

Role of Project Steering Committee

The NPSC played a crucial role in overseeing and supporting the project's governance structure. Their responsibilities involve monitoring and encouraging activities at different levels of the project.

At the central level, the PSC is responsible for monitoring the work carried out in the provinces. They provide guidance and support to ensure that project activities align with the overall objectives. In the provinces, the PSC takes on the role of monitoring the work at the district level. They ensure that activities within the provinces are on track and meeting the project's goals.

At the district level, project staff work closely with villagers to implement and manage various activities. This collaborative approach encourages monitoring and participation by different stakeholders, enhancing the success and impact of the project.

The PSC encourages the monitoring of various activities, ensuring that all stakeholders are actively engaged in the project's implementation and progress. This collaborative approach helps maintain transparency and accountability, ultimately contributing to the project's success.

Timeline and Quality of Reporting

There have been some challenges and obstacles encountered in Lao PDR that impacted the project timeline and reporting:

- *Technical Limitations:* There have been technical limitations that impacted the reporting process. These limitations may have included challenges related to data collection, analysis, or reporting tools.
- *Language and IT Skills:* Challenges related to language and IT skills have been observed. Non-proficient English communication skills and limited IT proficiency hindered the preparation and submission of reports.
- *COVID-19 Impact:* The COVID-19 pandemic posed significant challenges for the project timeline. This global health crisis disrupted work routines, made face-to-face communication and data collection difficult, and required adjustments to project activities and reporting schedules.

Stakeholder Involvement

As reported by the all-key stakeholders, including local communities, government agencies, project partners, and other relevant entities, have been diligently engaged in the project. This engagement has been characterized by a collaborative approach, where responsibilities have been assigned to each stakeholder, fostering active participation in project activities. Additionally, stakeholders have worked together to exchange lessons learned, jointly plan, and implement project initiatives.

Stakeholders were actively involved through a range of mechanisms, including invitations for discussions, collaborative surveys, and joint organization of seminars. These strategies facilitated their efficient engagement in project activities.

4.3.4 Network and Linkages

Participation of stakeholders in project, discussions, and decision-making processes

Various stakeholders (including central and provincial government agencies, research institutions & universities, CBOs and NGOs, and other relevant stakeholders) were actively involved in project participation, discussions, and decision-making processes. They utilized meetings and collaborative planning sessions to ensure that all stakeholders had a voice in shaping the project's implementation.

Additionally, stakeholders participated in discussions, fieldwork, and provided valuable input and feedback on the various activities related to their roles within the project. This collaborative approach helped in effective decision-making and engagement of relevant entities.

Collaboration with other organizations, government agencies, and stakeholders

At the central level the project fostered collaboration and cooperation with other organizations, government agencies, and stakeholders like Department of Environmental Quality Promotion (DEQP), MoNRE, GEC, SUPA by actively working together within the project area. This involved the allocation of budgets and the joint execution of activities in a participatory manner. This collaborative approach helped in achieving the project's goals effectively by leveraging the combined resources and expertise of various entities.

Opportunity for indigenous groups and local communities to voice their concerns and preferences

Indigenous groups and local communities were actively involved and given the opportunity to voice their concerns and preferences. The project ensured that feedback from the communities was consistent and actively sought their participation. This engagement provided them with the opportunity to express their opinions and propose factors that needed to be unified in the project's implementation, ensuring that their concerns and preferences were taken into consideration.

The stakeholders' interest in the project varies across communities. The stakeholders in Ban Thongxay, Ban Kaeng Na'ang (Naang), and Ban Kala demonstrate a high interest in the project. This is attributed to the fact that the activities directly relate to the daily life of these communities, aligning with the project's objective to support sustainable livelihoods. Moreover, the community members have expressed a keen interest in learning more about peat and understanding its importance.

On the other hand, stakeholders in Ban Saming, Ban Khontheat, and Tong Kalong village exhibit a low to moderate interest. While not selected as a demonstration site, these communities still benefited from outreach and awareness-raising activities associated with the project. The moderate interest level suggests a potential for increased engagement and understanding as the project progresses.

Like Cambodia, the influence of stakeholders on the project varies among different communities in Lao PDR. The villagers in Ban Thongxay, Ban Kaeng Na'ang (Naang), and Ban Kala communities are actively participating in the ADB's Biodiversity Conservation Corridor (BCC) project. They have established a committee to manage their Village Development Fund (VDF), offering a robust mechanism for implementing and monitoring the project's sustainable livelihood activities. This high level of involvement positions them as influential contributors to the project's success. On the other hand, the influence of stakeholders from Ban Saming, Ban Khontheat, and Tong Kalong village is relatively low, primarily centered around activities aimed at increasing awareness about the project.

The role of village communities is significant in terms of showcasing effective strategies for the sustainable management of peatlands. For instance, the stakeholders in Ban Thongxay, Ban Kaeng Na'ang (Naang), and Ban Kala are designated as a demonstration site for implementing best management practices in the project. On the other hand, stakeholders in

Ban Saming, Ban Khontheat, and Tong Kalong village are identified as potential beneficiaries of upscaling and awareness-raising activities.

This approach emphasizes the diversity of engagement strategies based on the roles and characteristics of each community.

Contribution of CSOs/academic and research institutions to the project

Multi-stakeholder participation in Lao PDR is largely achieved through “mass organizations” and local CSOs rather than international NGOs. Key mass organizations/CSOs include the Lao Front for National Construction (also responsible for ethnic affairs) and the Lao Women’s Union (LWU).

These organizations are extended to the local level, with branches and representatives at provincial, district, and village levels. The LWU is particularly active, well organized and represented at all levels: its members often take part in Ramsar related activities and are usually suggested as members for committees and working groups by other provincial, district and village authorities.

Both the National University of Laos (NUoL) and Champasak University, as members of the Mekong Wetland University Network (MWUN), have shown a moderate level of interest in collaborating on peatland surveys and exchanging lessons learned. These universities have also exhibited a moderate influence as stakeholders on the project, drawing from experiences with previous surveys. Moreover, the project has had a moderate impact on NUoL and Champasak University, notably by increasing their capacity in relevant wetland management areas.

Connections and Opportunities for alignment with other similar projects

Common stakeholders/beneficiaries with other related projects

The project actively engaged common stakeholders and beneficiaries who were involved in the planning and decision-making processes for related activities conducted jointly.

At the provincial level, the project collaborated with various organizations, government agencies, and stakeholders to achieve its goals by:

- Cooperating with Ramsar at the District level.
- Collaborating with the Department of Agriculture, Agriculture and Forestry at the provincial level.
- Engaging with the Agricultural Sector, particularly in livestock farming.
- Coordinating with the provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office.

These collaborations and partnerships with different entities and sectors helped the project in its efforts to achieve its objectives.

Other projects/initiatives (external to this project) that share similar objectives/outcomes

There have been various projects that have focused on improving wetlands management in the Lao PDR. Initially, IUCN had worked with the local government to develop a management plan for the Beung Kiat Ngong Ramsar site in 2013, which refers to the issue of peat extraction from the site but does not prescribe specific peatland management or rehabilitation measures.

Lower Mekong Basin Wetland Management and Conservation Project (2016-2020) funded by KFW, project focused on the management and conservation of wetlands in the Lower Mekong Basin.

The Biodiversity Conservation Corridor Project (BCC) (2012-2019) funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), includes livelihood improvement initiatives in communities near the Ramsar site, specifically in Ban Thongxay and Ban Saming.

The Mekong WET: Building Resilience of Wetlands in the Lower Mekong Region (2017-2020) project funded by IUCN, aimed to enhance the resilience of wetlands in the Lower Mekong Region, contributing to broader conservation efforts.

These projects collectively address various aspects of peatland conservation, including biodiversity, livelihood improvement, and overall wetland resilience in the region. Apart from these projects, a list of projects related to peatlands in Lao PDR/ Beung Kiat Ngong is provided on Pg 40 of the Project Document.

4.4 Findings for Myanmar

Activities conducted before suspension:

Several other project-related activities were conducted as part of the project:

- *GIS Assessment, Mapping, and Reporting:* A comprehensive GIS assessment was carried out, resulting in the production of maps and a detailed report. These resources were made accessible through a shared drive folder.
- *Translation of Training Modules:* Efforts were made to translate Training Modules 1 and 3. However, the technical nature of Training Module 2, specifically related to GIS, posed challenges, and resources were insufficient for translation. Module 4 was also not translated.
- *Communication Material Production:* Communication materials were developed for all three countries involved in the project. Each country was tasked with translating these materials into their respective local languages.
- *GIS Map Production:* GIS maps were generated as part of the project's activities.

These diverse initiatives aimed to enhance understanding, communication, and documentation within the project, contributing to its overall objectives.

Translation of Training Modules on Peatlands Survey and Assessment

While the training modules on peatlands survey and assessment have been developed by GEC in English, efforts have been made to translate the modules into Myanmar to make these resources more accessible. Specifically, translations have been completed for modules 1 (Peatland Identification - Covers foundational knowledge for identifying peatlands, including definitions, characteristics, hydrology, carbon storage, and climate change impact) and module 3 (Field Verification - Prepares for field surveys, involving map creation, rapid assessments, GPS usage, and the importance of combining remote sensing and ground-truthing), allowing for a broader audience and facilitating a more inclusive learning experience in the national language.

Production of National Maps

The mapping process in Myanmar involved the identification of potential peatlands across multiple states and regions, including Kachin, Kayin, Sagaing, Taninthayi, Bago, Magwe, Mandalay, Mon, Rakhine, Yangon, Shan, and Ayeyarwady. The extensive mapping effort utilized a total of 128 Sentinel-2 L1C images, covering the entire country. These images, incorporating multispectral data, were analyzed through various band combinations to identify peatlands.

Additionally, Google Earth Pro was employed to access timeline images for evaluating historical moisture-related characteristics of peatlands in specific areas of interest. While ground truthing was not conducted, field data collection on peatlands occurred in various regions, and the results were cross verified using the Myanmar National Wetland Inventory data. This comprehensive mapping process contributed to a better understanding of potential peatland distribution in Myanmar.

Impact of suspension on the project and the stakeholders involved

The suspension of the project significantly impacted its implementation, involving major stakeholders such as the Environmental Conservation Department (ECD) and the Global Environment Centre (GEC) for technical support. The project aimed to engage with the local organization FREDa (experienced with Peatland Assessment and Conservation). However, challenges arose, particularly with the implementation agreement, which took more than two years to be signed, even preceding the political coup in February 2021.

Despite the agreement with ECD being signed in October 2020, there was limited implementation progress. The ground implementation partner, FREDa, did not have a signed

agreement either. Nevertheless, the project received valuable technical support from GEC, assisting in the development of training modules. Myanmar team (including IUCN RCU based in Myanmar at the time) played a crucial role in translating these modules and organizing GIS training.

Two training sessions were planned, with the first occurring in January 2021. However, the second training, scheduled for February 2021, had to be cancelled due to the political upheaval resulting from the coup. These challenges underscored the complexities and uncertainties faced during the project, emphasizing the need for adaptable strategies and efficient collaboration with stakeholders.

Evolving Interactions and Adaptability of the Peatland Project in Myanmar

Following the coup, discussions, and interactions regarding the peatland project in Myanmar underwent notable changes:

- *Communication Material Sharing:* Drafts and communication materials were shared with the government, but confirmation of their utilization remains uncertain. The extent to which these materials have been incorporated into government activities cannot be confirmed through the MTR exercise.
- *FREDA and GEC MAHFSA (Measurable Action for Haze-Free Sustainable Land Management in Southeast Asia) Program:* All training modules were shared with FREDA through the GEC MAHFSA program. Despite the political changes, both FREDA and the MAHFSA program, being ASEAN-related, have continued their work in Myanmar. ASEAN has maintained recognition of the current Myanmar government.
- *Continuation of ASEAN-Related Projects:* Projects affiliated with ASEAN, including the MAHFSA project involving GEC, have persisted. However, the specific impact and utilization of the training modules by FREDA is unknown.

These developments highlight the project's adaptability to external political changes and efforts to sustain engagement and activities within the constraints imposed by the post-coup situation.

Other Plans or Considerations for Peatland Conservation

In the current situation, advancing peatland conservation initiatives has faced considerable challenges due to the focus of funding agencies on humanitarian and health issues. Securing financial support for biodiversity and environmental conservation has proven difficult amid these circumstances. The prevailing emphasis on urgent and pressing matters has led to a shift in funding priorities, posing obstacles to sustained efforts in peatland conservation.

Current Interaction among Cambodia, Lao PDR, and the Myanmar Team:

The ongoing interaction among the Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar teams is primarily facilitated through their participation in ASEAN activities, particularly in regional meetings addressing peatland haze-related issues. The teams receive invitations to these regional gatherings, providing a platform for collaboration and information exchange. Notably, Myanmar's Environmental Conservation Department (ECD) is actively involved, acting as an observer in RPSC meetings and participating as a guest in APTF meetings. These interactions play a crucial role in fostering regional cooperation and coordination, allowing the teams to stay informed about developments in peatland management and conservation efforts across the ASEAN region.

4.5 Component 4: Regional Cooperation (for all countries)

Availability of harmonized guidelines for the conservation and sustainable use of peatlands

Harmonized guidelines for the conservation and sustainable use of peatlands are in the process of being developed. A Concept Note was prepared and signed in August 2023 to outline the framework for creating these guidelines. While this is a positive step, the actual guidelines are still in the development stage, and more information would be required to assess their content and comprehensiveness.

Number of lessons learned documents produced and shared at the regional level

No documents capturing lessons learned have been produced and shared at the regional level up to the time of the Mid-Term Review (MTR). The creation of lessons learned documents is scheduled for completion by December 2023, indicating that this is an ongoing process. It is important to note that this indicator will be assessed as part of the Terminal Evaluation.

Number of key stakeholders (disaggregated by gender) participating in exchange visit The first knowledge exchange visit occurred in October 2022 and involved a total of 23 participants. This group was comprised of 11 individuals from Cambodia, including 6 females, and 12 participants from Lao PDR, with 3 being female. The exchange visit served as an opportunity for stakeholders from these two countries to interact, share knowledge, and learn from each other's experiences related to peatland management and conservation.

The second exchange visit is currently in the planning stage and is anticipated to take place in November 2023, based on the concept note prepared by GEC. Such exchange visits are valuable for fostering collaboration, promoting the exchange of ideas, and enhancing regional cooperation among key stakeholders working on peatland-related initiatives.

Number of key stakeholders (disaggregated by gender) participating in regional project inception workshop and annual PSC meetings

The project's inception workshop, held on November 26, 2019, in Bangkok, saw the participation of six key stakeholders. This group included 2 female participants and 4 males. From this, four key stakeholders were representing Cambodia, with one being female, while two were from Lao PDR, with one female participant. A comprehensive project inception report was subsequently produced in March 2020, documenting the outcomes and discussions of the workshop.

For the first Regional Project Steering Committee (RPSC) meeting on November 29, 2019, four key stakeholders attended. Among these, there was one female participant, and three males. The meeting included two key stakeholders from Cambodia, with no female representation, and two from Lao PDR, with one female participant. The 2nd RPSC meeting took place in November 2020 (virtually), with 12 key stakeholders participating. Of these, 3 were from Cambodia, including 2 females, 3 from Laos, with 1 female participant, and 6 from Myanmar, with no male representation. The 3rd RPSC meeting was held in June 2021 (virtually), and it had 9 key stakeholders in attendance. This group comprised 4 from Cambodia, with 2 females, 3 from Laos, with 1 female participant, and 2 from Myanmar, with 1 female. The 4th RPSC meeting occurred in September 2022 in Singapore and involved the participation of 5 key stakeholders. These participants included 3 from Cambodia (no female representation) and 2 from Laos (no female).

As for the 5th RPSC meeting held in July 2023 in Lao PDR, the final report is pending, and details of participants are yet to be confirmed.

These RPSC meetings serve as crucial platforms for key stakeholders to convene, discuss project progress, and make strategic decisions related to peatland management and conservation.

Number of key stakeholders (women and men) participating in regional workshop on peatlands (during the last year of the project cycle)

Throughout 2020-2022, the Regional Coordination Unit (RCU) and Project Partners were engaged in several online events and activities organized by the ASEAN Secretariat and other regional peatland programs. These engagements played a crucial role in building capacity, sharing knowledge, and fostering collaboration. However, a detailed list of these online training seminars and meetings is awaited.

Furthermore, during the 1st exchange visit that took place in October 2022 in Malaysia, a regional workshop on mainstreaming peatlands into policy and plans was conducted. The specific workshop, dedicated to the mainstreaming of peatlands into policy and plans for Laos and Cambodia, was held on October 14, 2022. In this workshop, a total of 23 key stakeholders participated, with 8 of them being women. These stakeholders included 11

participants from Cambodia and 12 from Lao PDR. The workshop provided a platform for discussing and advancing peatland-related policies and plans.

The engagement of key stakeholders, both women and men, in these regional activities demonstrates the commitment to peatland conservation and the collaborative efforts made during the final year of the project cycle. The experiences and insights gained from these activities are expected to contribute to the project's overall objectives and impact.

Number of national and local level project coordination and monitoring meetings, including inception meetings and NSC meetings held

Up until the MTR, each country involved in the project has conducted at least one annual project coordination and monitoring meeting. In Myanmar, a national consultation meeting took place in 2020. In Lao PDR, one annual coordination meeting occurred on January 15, 2021, as part of the project's inception. However, there is no record of annual project coordination meetings in Cambodia for 2021, despite the inception workshop conducted in 2020.



A Peatland Site Cambodia

SECTION - 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

5.1.1 Relevance

Holistic Approach: The project's emphasis on a holistic and integrated approach, addressing peatland ecosystem degradation and rural development through three impact pathways. This comprehensive strategy allows for a more effective and integrated response to the challenges contributing to peatland degradation faced by the targeted countries.

Regional Collaboration: Leveraging regional collaborations, drawing on the experiences of ongoing projects, and aligning with regional strategies such as the ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy demonstrate the importance of regional cooperation in addressing shared challenges.

The project's strong integration with regional programs and strategies enhances its potential for success. Collaborations with ASEAN initiatives and the Mekong WET project demonstrate a commitment to leveraging regional expertise and resources.

Incorporation of Stakeholder Inputs: The extensive stakeholder engagement during the project's preparation, involving various levels (from regional to local levels) of stakeholders, ensures a well-rounded and inclusive approach to project planning and implementation. The thorough stakeholder engagement is likely would have contributed to a sense of ownership and inclusivity in decision-making.

Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): The project's alignment with multiple SDGs reflects a strategic approach to contributing to broader sustainable development objectives, emphasizing the interconnectedness of environmental, social, and economic goals.

Gender and Equity Considerations: The project's emphasis on gender considerations and equity demonstrates a commitment to social inclusivity and recognizes the importance of diverse perspectives in achieving project objectives. The project's conscious focus on gender issues, evidenced by gender disaggregated data requirements and the inclusion of women in implementation bodies, highlights the importance of promoting equity and inclusivity in conservation and development initiatives.

Utilization of Tools and Instruments: Effective use of tools and instruments such as the GEF Tracking Tool, Environmental and Social Management Plans, Safeguard Tools, and Portfolio Monitoring and Tracking Tool contributes to robust project monitoring and evaluation, enhancing the project's ability to track progress and adapt to changing circumstances.

In conclusion, the Mekong Peatland project exhibits strong foundations, strategic design, and a commitment to collaboration and inclusivity. The lessons learned and conclusions highlight the project's potential for positive impact, both in terms of peatland conservation and broader sustainable development goals.

5.1.2 Effectiveness

Overall

Comprehensive Project Structure: The project's structure, covering ground-level training to national policy strengthening, ensures a holistic approach. This comprehensive structure allows for a multi-faceted response to peatland conservation, acknowledging the importance of addressing issues at various levels (central, provincial and community).

Clear Roles and Responsibilities: Clearly defined roles and responsibilities within key units and committees contribute to effective project governance, ensure accountability and coordination among various units and committees. Moreover, the project's governance structure and oversight mechanisms contribute to effective implementation. The existence of regional and national steering committees, coordination units, and management units ensures efficient oversight and implementation.

Effective Coordination: The project illustrates the importance of adapting coordination strategies to specific contexts. Local focal points at community level and communication through instant-messaging platforms demonstrate the project's ability to effectively align with socio-political cultures for improved collaboration.

Regular coordination meetings, exchange visits, and workshops ensure continuous stakeholder engagement in the project. Inclusivity, both in terms of gender and regional representation, are key steps taken towards enhancing collaboration and knowledge sharing as part of project activities.

Adaptability in Project Implementation: The project faced challenges in implementation, including delays due to external factors like the COVID-19 pandemic and political events. The project's ability to adapt to challenges such as delays, and budget cuts demonstrates resilience. This adaptability is crucial for navigating uncertainties in project implementation. The ability to adapt and make efforts to catch up underscores the project's resilience and commitment to its objectives.

Component-wise findings for Effectiveness

Component 1: Assessment and documentation of peatlands in targeted countries

Cambodia

The project in Cambodia has demonstrated commendable progress in various aspects, particularly in the collaboration among technical experts, the development of training modules, and the execution of surveys and assessments. However, there are identified challenges and areas for improvement, notably concerning staff turnover at the regional level, technical expertise at the provincial level, and the compilation of final reports.

Lao PDR

In Lao PDR, the project has made commendable progress in various areas, including government support, integration into national policy, and community involvement. Technical skills at the central level have played a crucial role in project success. However, challenges related to deviations from initial plans and technical difficulties in training sessions have been encountered. The project has successfully developed training modules, conducted preliminary mapping activities, and initiated surveys and assessments. Despite ongoing challenges and incomplete reports, the project has demonstrated a commitment to comprehensive evaluations and the sustainable management of peatland ecosystems.

Component 2: Capacity development and policy and legal frameworks

Cambodia

The project in Cambodia has effectively engaged key stakeholders through training initiatives, with a diverse set of modules covering peatland assessment. Harmonized information and training materials, including booklets, trifold documents, and a grievance mechanism poster, have been developed and translated into the national language, fostering wider awareness, and understanding. The project has exceeded the target of incorporating peatland conservation provisions in national and sub-national plans, policies, guidelines, or strategies, demonstrating significant success in influencing legal frameworks and policies.

Lao PDR

The Mekong Peatland Project has demonstrated effectiveness in building capacity and influencing policy and legal frameworks in Lao PDR. Key stakeholders at various levels, including national, sub-national, and local, have actively participated in training sessions, indicating a commitment to enhancing knowledge and skills in peatland assessment, rehabilitation, and management. Harmonized information and training materials, including booklets and trifold documents, are available in the Lao language, promoting wider accessibility and understanding. The incorporation of peatland conservation provisions in multiple national and sub-national plans, policies, and strategies showcases significant progress in aligning legal frameworks with peatland conservation goals.

Component 3: Capacity development and policy and legal frameworks**Cambodia**

The project in Cambodia is still in progress, and certain activities under Component 3 are at the initial stage. Challenges in reporting accurate figures for the demarcated area and the lack of a clear indicator for improved management make it difficult to assess the establishment of pilot sites for demonstrating best management practices. However, positive steps have been taken, such as the inclusion of peatland conservation provisions in the Peam Krasop Wildlife Sanctuary (PKWS) management plan. Training and awareness activities, including a workshop, have been conducted, indicating a commitment to building capacity and raising awareness.

Laos

In Laos, the project has made progress in establishing pilot sites and conducting consultation activities. The Beung Kiat Ngong Ramsar Site's management plan includes targeted actions related to peatland conservation, demonstrating a commitment to sustainable management. Training and awareness activities have been successfully conducted, with gender disaggregation considered, reflecting a positive engagement with local communities.

Component 4: Regional Cooperation

Knowledge Transfer and Guidance: The availability of guidance documents and the ongoing development of harmonized guidelines indicate a commitment to knowledge transfer and the establishment of best practices in peatland conservation.

Challenges in Project Implementation: The project is affected by several external factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic and political events including delays in government approval, budget cuts impacted project implementation. These challenges highlight the project's adaptive approach for contingency planning in complex and dynamic environments.

Effective Platforms for Stakeholder Engagement: Regional Project Steering Committee (RPSC) meetings serve as strategic platforms for key stakeholders to convene, discuss progress, and decision-making. The composition and engagement of stakeholders in these meetings play a vital role in steering the project towards its objectives. These engagements foster collaboration and decision-making at various levels.

Inclusivity in Exchange Visits and Workshops: The engagement of key stakeholders, including women in regional activities, exchange visits and workshops reflects a commitment to gender inclusivity. These events provide opportunities for knowledge exchange, collaboration, and capacity building. This inclusive approach contributes to a diversity of perspectives and experiences in the project's outcomes.

In conclusion, the project demonstrates effective governance, adaptability, and a commitment to stakeholder engagement. Challenges are acknowledged, and efforts are made to address them, turning obstacles into opportunities for learning and improvement. The ongoing commitment to guidance development and knowledge sharing enhances the project's potential for long-term impact.

Myanmar (for all Components)

The Myanmar component of the peatland project demonstrated significant efforts in various project-related activities before its suspension. However, the suspension had a substantial impact on the project's implementation, affecting major stakeholders and leading to uncertainties, particularly in the signing of implementation agreements. The political upheaval following the coup further disrupted planned training sessions, emphasizing the challenges of executing projects in complex environments. Nevertheless, the project showcased adaptability by maintaining interactions through ASEAN-related avenues, sustaining engagements, and sharing materials with relevant partners.

Despite the ongoing challenges, the Myanmar team exhibited resilience in continuing discussions on peatland conservation. The shift in funding priorities towards urgent issues posed hurdles, yet the team actively participated in regional meetings, contributing to the

broader ASEAN collaboration on peatland management. The current situation underscores the importance of flexibility and perseverance in navigating obstacles to advance environmental conservation efforts.

5.1.3 Efficiency

Technical and Financial Resources Utilization

Technical Resource Utilization: The project has faced delays due to unforeseen challenges affecting technical resource utilization. Unforeseen challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and political disturbances, have significantly impacted project timelines and resource utilization.

Financial Resources Utilization: While expenditure is tracked well, careful financial planning is required to ensure adequate resources for project completion and post-project activities. The overall expenditure is below the budget, insufficient funds remain for monitoring and evaluation, potentially impacting project completion.

Fund Management and Project Progress

The analysis of the project's financial performance, as reflected in the delivery rates for each component, indicates varying levels of effectiveness in resource utilization and progress. Component 2 stands out as the most efficient component with a 100% delivery rate of activities with 84% of fund utilization, demonstrating optimal use of allocated funds and successful achievement of project objectives. Components 1 (77% progress with 89% of fund expenditure), 3 (66% progress with 61 % of budget spent), and 4 (70% progress with 54% of budget expenditure), while showing reasonable progress, exhibit lower delivery rates, suggesting room for improvement in resource management.

Timeline and Quality of Reporting

COVID-19-related delays impacted reporting timelines, requiring adjustments. Field visits and project outcomes were delayed due to travel restrictions, affecting the quality and timelines of reporting. Moreover, the unforeseen challenges affected monitoring and evaluation timelines. Although two annual supervision missions have been conducted, external project audit and comprehensive evaluation activities are pending.

Co-funding Arrangements

The project's heavy reliance on co-financing has contributed to enhancing stakeholder engagement and broadens the scope of activities. Despite a reduction in co-funding after the suspension of the Myanmar component, continued collaboration with partners (including GEC and SUPA) has contributed to sustainability efforts of the project.

Continued Benefits after Project End

Efforts to translate awareness materials and exceed policy translation targets have contributed to sustained project benefits. Sustainability measures, such as translating materials and developing national action plans, are critical for continued benefits of the project activities.

5.1.4 Network and Linkages

Stakeholder Engagement: The project actively engages stakeholders at various levels, fostering collaboration, idea exchange, and feedback resolution. The involvement of stakeholders in annual meetings and collaborative efforts ensures a comprehensive and inclusive approach to peatland management.

Network and Linkages: The project establishes strong linkages with regional entities, NGOs, and international organizations, contributing to a network that facilitates knowledge exchange, collaboration, and coordination. These linkages are essential for aligning the project with regional strategies and leveraging expertise.

Role of Country-Level Stakeholders: Stakeholders at the country level, including local villagers, government agencies, NGOs, and research institutions, play a crucial role in

providing oversight, feedback, and contributions to the project planning process. Their involvement ensures a contextually relevant and informed approach.

Alignment with other Projects: The project aligns with existing initiatives, such as SEApeat and SUPA, fostering collaboration and synchronization. The coordination with ASEAN meetings and working groups provides a foundation for working together with other GEF projects in the region.

Resource Sharing Opportunities: While there are opportunities for resource sharing with another IFAD-supported project, constraints due to limited funds may impact the extent of collaboration. Exploring avenues for resource sharing, including personnel, equipment, and funding, could enhance project outcomes.

Learning from Similar Projects: The project recognizes the importance of learning from experiences and lessons of similar projects, enhancing its capacity and effectiveness. Collaborative efforts with the SUPA project and the engagement of key stakeholders in exchange visits has potential contribute to knowledge transfer.

5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 Relevance

Results Framework Refinement: The project's results framework could benefit from a more consistent structure. Ensuring uniformity in indicator definition, especially across different components, will enhance the overall coherence and effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation process. This adjustment will contribute to a clearer assessment of the project's impact.

Sustainable Peatland Management Advocacy: The project's focus on peatland management aligns with global agendas and contributes to multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Strengthening advocacy efforts at national and regional levels, emphasizing the project's alignment with SDGs, will enhance its visibility and reinforce its relevance in the broader context of sustainable development.

Continuous Stakeholder Engagement: Sustaining stakeholder engagement beyond the project duration is vital for long-term success. Ensuring continuous involvement of local communities, indigenous groups, and relevant institutions will contribute to the project's lasting impact. The project's duration could be extended to support ongoing education and awareness initiatives.

Adaptation to Changing Circumstances: The project has demonstrated adaptability in the face of challenges, such as the impact of COVID-19. This flexible approach should continue, with a focus on adapting to evolving circumstances and incorporating lessons learned. Regular reviews and adjustments to the project's strategies will enhance its resilience and effectiveness.

Addressing Field-Level Capacity Gaps: Acknowledging the identified capacity challenges at the field level, targeted training programs (based on the prerequisite skills and knowledge of the learners) can be implemented. This will empower field teams with the necessary skills, especially in GIS and remote sensing techniques, ensuring effective peatland research and analysis.

Communication Diversity: While the project utilizes various communication tools, exploring additional avenues for information dissemination, such as social media platforms, can enhance outreach. Diversifying communication methods will cater to different stakeholder preferences and improve the overall effectiveness of knowledge sharing.

Mitigating Unintended Violations: For those who may not fully grasp the project's regulations, continued awareness campaigns and education initiatives can minimize unintended violations. This targeted approach will foster better adherence to project guidelines and ensure that community members fully understand the importance of peatland conservation.

Integration with National Policies: The project's design should continue to align with and support national policies and agendas. Ongoing collaboration with governmental bodies will ensure that project activities remain relevant to the evolving needs and priorities outlined in the national context.

5.2.2 Effectiveness

Adaptive Project Management: Given the challenges faced, particularly delays caused by external factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic and political unrest in Myanmar, the project should continue to employ adaptive management strategies. Regularly assess the project timeline and allocate resources efficiently to address delays and ensure timely completion of activities.

Budget Resilience and Contingency Plans: In light of budget cuts leading to changes in the position of the project's CTA and potential impacts on project activities, establishing clear contingency plans is crucial. This includes exploring alternative funding sources and ensuring flexibility in budget allocation to accommodate unforeseen circumstances.

Component 1: Assessment and documentation of peatlands in targeted countries

Cambodia – Conduct market assessment and diversify livelihood strategies: In order to create effective livelihood strategies linking fishermen and aquaculture producers with consumers for the current seafood livelihoods based on dried products, a complete assessment of the supply and demand for seafood and aquaculture should be conducted. Conduct a thorough assessment of seafood and aquaculture supply and demand to design an appropriate business model connecting fishermen and aquaculture farmers with consumers.

Encourage diversification of livelihood strategies for communities dependent on fisheries, considering the vulnerability of this income source (dependent on peatland area) to environmental changes.

Lao - Acting on Technical Assessments: Take action towards implementing and monitoring recommendations from rapid biodiversity assessments, including law enforcement, awareness campaigns, and conservation efforts. Accelerate the water balance assessment to provide timely insights into hydrological conditions.

General Recommendations for Both Countries:

Strengthen Capacity Building: Strengthen technical knowledge, particularly in GIS systems, at the provincial level to enhance project effectiveness. Address language barriers and optimize training sessions to ensure effective communication and understanding.

Address the lack of technical expertise and tools at the provincial level to facilitate effective implementation. This may involve targeted training programs or resource allocation.

Offering tailored training modules based on varying capacities among participants, can ensure effective utilization of hardware and software provided.

Address Staff Turnover: Develop strategies to mitigate the impact of staff turnover at the regional level, ensuring continuity and preventing delays in project activities at the national level.

Ensure Report Compilation: Accelerate the compilation of final reports from surveys and assessments to validate the accuracy and reliability of generated maps, allowing for informed decision-making. Ensure timely compilation and verification of survey reports to validate the accuracy and reliability of generated maps.

Component 2: Capacity development and policy and legal frameworks

Cambodia - Monitoring and Evaluation: Establish a robust monitoring and evaluation system to track the implementation and impact of legal provisions incorporated into national and sub-national plans.

Lao PDR - Documentation of Participants: Ensure comprehensive documentation of participants in training initiatives to track the reach and impact of capacity-building efforts.

General Recommendations for Both Countries:

Sustainability Measures: Develop strategies to ensure the sustainability of capacity-building efforts and policy changes beyond the project's duration. Sustain engagement with stakeholders through regular training sessions, workshops, and awareness programs to reinforce and expand their understanding of peatland conservation. Provide sustainable community-based opportunities and increase community participation for the long-term success of projects.

Emphasize the adoption of sustainable practices through environmental awareness campaigns and training initiatives. Establish a feedback mechanism to continuously improve training materials and sessions based on the experiences and needs of stakeholders.

Cross-Country Collaboration: Facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration between Lao PDR and Cambodia to leverage best practices and enhance the overall effectiveness of peatland conservation initiatives in the region.

Expand public awareness initiatives, including the distribution of materials to schools and conducting training and awareness sessions for local authorities and communities.

These recommendations aim to strengthen the impact of the project, ensuring that capacity-building efforts and policy changes lead to sustainable and long-term benefits for peatland conservation in both Lao PDR and Cambodia.

Component 3: Capacity development and policy and legal frameworks

Cambodia - Complete Reports: Ensure timely completion and submission of completion reports on livelihood implementation activities and livelihood plans for households to provide a comprehensive understanding of community training initiatives.

Laos - Documentation and Transparency: Ensure proper documentation and transparency in reporting to facilitate accurate assessment and understanding of project activities. Implement a robust monitoring system to track the establishment of pilot sites and the effectiveness of best management practices in peatland conservation.

General Recommendations for Both Countries:

Regular Reporting: Establish a systematic reporting mechanism to ensure timely and accurate reporting of project activities and progress. Regularly evaluate project activities, assess challenges, and make necessary adjustments to enhance the effectiveness of peatland conservation initiatives.

Build on Success: Leverage the success of training and awareness programs to further engage and empower local communities in sustainable practices.

Component 4: Regional Cooperation

Foster Expert Input: Encourage collaboration with experts and organizations with experience in peatland conservation to contribute to the development of robust and effective guidelines. Collaborate closely with stakeholders to ensure the guidelines are comprehensive, practical, and adaptable to the diverse contexts of the Mekong Region.

Lessons Learned Documentation: Expedite the production of lessons learned documents, ensuring timely sharing of experiences and insights. These documents can be valuable for improving project implementation strategies and informing future peatland conservation initiatives. Establish a platform for continuous sharing of lessons learned, both regionally and globally, to contribute to the broader knowledge base on peatland management.

Project Coordination and Monitoring Meetings: Strengthen the coordination and monitoring mechanisms at both national and local levels. Ensure regular annual project coordination meetings in all participating countries, providing a forum for detailed discussions on project progress, challenges, and solutions.

Document and disseminate the outcomes of these meetings, ensuring that stakeholders are well-informed about the project's trajectory and can contribute effectively to its success.

5.2.3 Efficiency

Developing Contingency Plan: Develop contingency plans for unexpected challenges and maintain clear communication channels to address and adapt to changing circumstances promptly. Specifically with regards to financial assessment, it is required to conduct a detailed financial assessment (including co-financing), allocate resources strategically, and explore avenues for additional funding to cover monitoring, evaluation, and audit costs.

Strengthen Co-funding Monitoring: There is an urgent requirement to strengthen efforts to collect co-financing data promptly, enabling effective tracking and reporting and emphasize engagement with diverse stakeholders for sustained impact.

Verification and Finalization of Peatland Area: The Mid-Term Review identified a notable inconsistency in the reported demarcation of peatland areas as outlined in the Project Implementation Report (PIR). In Cambodia, the initially reported 4,976 ha demarcation was clarified to represent the total peatland area of the PKWS, with the actual demarcated area being 587 ha within the core zone of KKRS. However, it's important to highlight that these figures require validation through peat surveys to ensure accuracy.

Similarly, in Lao PDR, the area of 611 Ha was misreported in the PIR; however, 92 ha of Beung Baphat and Beung Papeoyai Wetlands consisting of 39 ha of peatland have been participatorily demarcated.

This underscores the importance of maintaining comprehensive documentation for transparent and accountable project reporting. The findings emphasize the need for robust verification processes to ensure reported project outcomes align with actual on-the-ground implementation, promoting credibility and effectiveness in achieving the project goal of identifying peatland.

Review of gaps in project activity implementation: Conduct a comprehensive review of each project component, identify bottlenecks, and allocate resources strategically to improve delivery rates where needed. Moreover, as the project is moving towards the completion deadline it is required to emphasize the finalization and enforcement of plans, monitor policy implementation, and identify opportunities to collaborate with local stakeholders for long-term project impact.

Request for Extension for completing project activities:

Although the project has been progressing towards the targets, many of the activities in each component remain to be completed, thus a no-cost extension would be required to finalize the activity results. Following are the component-wise recommendations towards a no-cost extension:

Component 1 - Enhance Efficiency: Evaluate the factors contributing to the 23% gap between project progress and 11% of the allocated budget and actual expenditure. Identify areas where resource utilization can be optimized without compromising project goals. Implement measures to streamline processes, reduce costs, and improve the delivery rate.

Component 3 - Address Project Execution Gaps: Investigate the factors leading to the 34% difference in project progress against 34% funds. Develop strategies to enhance financial efficiency without compromising the quality of project outcomes. Implement measures to bridge the gap and ensure more effective budget utilization.

Component 4 - Optimize Resource Allocation: Examine the reasons behind the 30% gap in project progress against 46% funds remaining. Identify opportunities for reallocating resources to areas where they can have a more significant impact. Implement measures to optimize resource allocation and improve the overall delivery rate.

5.2.4 Network and Linkages

Streamlining Procedures: Address challenges related to complex procedures, particularly those of GIZ and IUCN, to ensure smoother workflows and better coordination in field activities. Streamlining processes can enhance adaptability and efficiency.

Strategic Resource Allocation: Given budget constraints, strategically allocate resources to maximize impact. Prioritize activities that align with the project's objectives and contribute significantly to peatland conservation and sustainable management.

Continued Stakeholder Engagement: Maintain active stakeholder engagement throughout the project lifecycle. Regularly assess the evolving needs and expectations of stakeholders to ensure their ongoing commitment and contribution to project goals.

Documentation of Lessons Learned: Initiate the documentation of lessons learned from project activities. This documentation can serve as a valuable resource for future projects and contribute to the continuous improvement of peatland management strategies.

Exploring Scale-Up Opportunities: Identify successful project components that have the potential for scale-up or replication. Collaborate with other projects, institutions, and partners to extend the impact of successful interventions beyond the project's current scope.

By addressing these recommendations, the project can enhance its effectiveness, sustainability, and collaborative impact on peatland conservation in the Mekong region.



A Mangrove Peatland Site in Cambodia

SECTION - 6

Annexes

MTR ToR

Sustainable Management of Peatland Ecosystems in Mekong Countries (GEF Mekong Peatlands project - GEF Project ID: 9232)

Terms of Reference for Mid Term Review

1. Background

Peatlands are extremely valuable ecosystems and play important roles, both from a biodiversity and climate change mitigation perspective. However, the lack of recognition of these peatlands makes them extremely vulnerable to degradation and potential loss of critical biodiversity. The peatland ecosystems are also threatened by conversion and destruction due to unsustainable land use practices. There is a significant opportunity to reverse the loss of peatlands and safeguard associated biodiversity, carbon and livelihood benefits by supporting improved recognition and management of the peatlands.

The Sustainable Management of Peatland Ecosystems in Mekong Countries Project, or the Mekong Peatlands project, is operating in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar since August 2019 (Cambodia), May 2020 (Laos), October 2020 (Myanmar) ending in June 2023. The project has been extended to end in December 2023 and this MTR will further consider whether another extension is warranted. The project has been suspended in Myanmar. The objective of the project is to sustainably manage peatland ecosystems in targeted countries and to conserve biodiversity and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, by:

- Assessing and documenting peatland ecosystems in the three countries.
- Strengthening the capacity and the enabling policy and legal framework for sustainable peatland management at local, national, and sub-regional levels; and
- Demonstrating sustainable peatland management practices that conserve biodiversity, reduce GHG emissions and strengthen sustainable livelihoods for local communities.

The project contributes to the ASEAN Programme on Sustainable Management of Peatland Ecosystems 2014-2020 (APSMPE) endorsed by the ASEAN Environment Ministers in 2013, the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (AATHP), and the ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy 2006-2020 (APMS).

The project has four components: Component 1: Assessment and documentation of peatlands in targeted countries; Component 2: Capacity development and policy and legal frameworks; Component 3: Development and demonstration of sustainable peatland management; and Component 4: Regional cooperation.

The Mid Term Review (MTR) for GEF Mekong Peatlands project will be conducted in Laos and Cambodia in June 2023. The project has suffered from several un-expected delays including COVID-19, suspension of Myanmar components, etc, therefore the review is being undertaken at a very late stage in the project. The MTR aims to assess progress and identify corrective measures if required to enhance project delivery for the remaining project duration and possible extensions (Cambodia: August 2019 to December 2023, Laos: May 2020 to December 2023). The corrective measures could include changes if required to some aspects of the project design, implementation arrangements and/or institutional structure. The MTR will assess the progress of the project against the approved Project proposal document including the log-frame. It will also highlight issues and challenges affecting effective and efficient implementation of outputs and their contribution to project outcomes and impact and recommend whether results obtained thus far warrant any changes in project design and period.

The principal purposes of the MTR are to:

- examine how the experiences of the Project can be used to improve project strategy and workplan to ensure delivery of the outputs;

- based on a systematic and in-depth review of progress in relation to original objectives and expected results, identify, and make provisions for adjustments in the key elements of the project design as approved by the Project Steering Committee and agreed in the Project Management Units.
- assess whether modification in the project results, strategies, distribution of funds between activities, the project are warranted as a result of the changing context of countries' structure.
- derive major lessons learned so as to improve the quality of programme implementation.

The mid-term review will be undertaken through an appreciative enquiry process rather than using a traditional evaluative process, which will facilitate collaborative reflection and learning.

The mid-term review process involves the following components:

- A stocktaking of how the project is performing against the planned activities and outputs.
- Reflections with the project team and other stakeholders on the project, its activities and achievements to date, the lessons learned so far (including on project design, technical and social outputs);
- Consideration of what is most important to achieve within the remaining project timeframe with the available resources.
- Consideration of what (if anything) needs to change in relation to project design (including activities, outputs, milestone dates, budget allocations etc).

The review will involve the following processes:

- Desk based review of project documents, including preparing an updated table of progress against the planned activities, information on capacity building activities and any relevant output reports (done before the review) The project document, contracts and related agreements: Annual workplans and budgets, Progress Reports, Technical reports and Project supervision report.
- Mid-Term Review interviews in Laos and in Cambodia with implementing partners and major stakeholders. The interviews will focus on gauging project's progress, involve presentations of activities, interim results and any issues under each of the three components, discussion of the project team's reflections, work towards reaching agreement on desired achievements, and identify preliminary recommendations.
- Field visits (area to be determined) to gain understanding of the implementation of project field activities, Provincial and District stakeholders.
- Preparation of a Draft Mid-Term Review report.

2. **Key Focus Areas**

The MTR Mission will assess the GEF Mekong Peatlands project in line with the OECD² DAC³ Evaluation criteria, as elaborated below.

Relevance

- To what extent is the project contributing to the policies and programs?
- What needs to be done to make things work better?
- Analyze whether the project's approach addresses the needs and demands of the stakeholders.;
- Assess the relevance of the tools / instruments / inputs applied by the project for enabling policy environment.

Effectiveness

- What has worked well and not worked well as expected?
- Are the activities implemented in accordance with the project plans? If not, why?
- What outputs have been achieved? To what extent do they contribute to the objectives?
- How effective are the approaches and structures in delivering the desired outputs? How can they be improved?

² OECD: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

³ DAC: Development Assistance Committee

- Do collaborative organizations work together effectively? Is the structure effective in achieving the desired outputs?
 - Review whether the project has accomplished its outputs. In particular the reviewers should review outputs delivery of:
 - Component 1: Assessment and documentation of peatlands in targeted countries;
 - Component 2: Capacity development and policy and legal frameworks;
 - Component 3: Development and demonstration of sustainable peatland management;
 - Component 4: Regional cooperation.
 - Assess the performance of the project so far with particular reference to qualitative and quantitative achievements of outputs and targets as defined in the project documents and work-plans;
 - Assess the effectiveness of the co-funding arrangements;
 - Based on the progress so far and ground situations, suggest / recommend any changes to the above criteria.

Efficiency

- Are the available technical and financial resources adequate to fulfil the project plans? Assess whether the project has utilized project funding as per the agreed work plan to achieve the projected targets.
- Are the funds being spent in accordance with project plans and using the right procedures?
- Have there been any unforeseen problems? How well were they dealt with?
- Is there an effective process, built into the management structure for self-monitoring and assessment, reporting and reflection?
 - Analyse the role of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and whether this forum is optimally being used for decision making;
 - Assess the timeline and quality of the reporting followed by the project;
 - Assess the qualitative and quantitative aspects of management and other inputs (such as equipment, technical assistance and budgetary inputs) provided by the project vis-à-vis of achievement of outputs and targets;
 - Identify factors and constraints which have affected project implementation including policy related, technical, managerial, organizational, institutional and socio-economic issues in addition to other external factors unforeseen during the project design.
- Is the approach used likely to ensure a continued benefit after the end of the project?
- Are all key stakeholders sufficiently and effectively involved? Are their expectations met and are they satisfied with their level of participation?
- Are alternative or additional measures needed and, if so, what is required to ensure continued sustainability and a positive impact?
 - Assess preliminary indications of the degree to which the project results are likely to be sustainable beyond the project's lifetime (both at the community and government level), and provide recommendations for strengthening sustainability;
 - Assess the sustainability of the project interventions in terms of its effect on policy, capacities and awareness.

Network /linkages

- Evaluate the level, degree and representation by the stakeholders, (government and civil societies, indigenous groups and local communities, academic and research institutions etc.) in the execution of the project;
- Assess the alignment of the project with the other projects and identifying linkages and opportunities for achievement of objectives/targets.

Lessons learnt/ Conclusions

- Analyse areas for improved programme planning, especially with respect to setting targets, relevance and capacity of institutions for project decision making and delivery;
- Identify significant lessons or conclusions which can be drawn from the project in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and networking.

3. **Reviewers**

The review will be conducted jointly by a three members team of consultants comprising of two (2) national reviewers (one for Lao PDR and one for Cambodia) and an international reviewer (preferably based in Lao PDR or Cambodia).

The national reviewers (one for Lao PDR and one for Cambodia) will be responsible for the following tasks:

- Analysis of project context and progress over the lifespan of project execution;
- Identification of key lessons learned;
- Overall findings from the Mid-Term Review;
- Articulation of the recommendations from the Mid-Term Review interviews and field work.

The International Reviewer will be responsible for the following tasks in the mid-term review:

- Review and analysis of project reports and papers completed to date;
- Reflections on the appropriateness of the original project design and approaches;
- Consideration of the project methodologies in policy;
- Engagement of partners and key stakeholders in project activities;
- Reflection on the expected impact pathway for project activities;
- Identification of approaches and systems used in this project that might have future implications.

4. **Outputs**

The mission will complete and submit a draft final report in both hard and soft copy at the end of the mission in English language. Only one report is expected, with separate chapters per countries. A presentation is expected to be done by the team at the end of the mission. IUCN, the representatives of Cambodia and Lao Government will provide feedback on the draft report before its finalization. The national consultant will finalize the report addressing all the comments provided on the draft report. The key outputs of the MTR are:

- Draft Report Template format:
 - Title page including project identification details;
 - Executive Summary (including at a minimum the methodology, findings and recommendations);
 - Table of Contents;
 - List of Abbreviations and Acronyms;
 - A short introduction to project/programme – context and description;
 - Purpose of the Evaluation;
 - Evaluation Issues and Questions;
 - Methodology (including approach to data analysis);
 - Preliminary findings - organized according to the key evaluation questions;
 - Conclusions and lessons learned;
 - Recommendations – actionable recommendations clearly linked to findings and lessons.
- The MTR Draft and Final Report: The report should be logically structured, contain evidence-based findings, conclusions, lessons and recommendations, and should be free of information that is not relevant to the overall analysis. The report should respond in detail to the key focus areas described above. It should include a set of specific recommendations formulated for the project, and identify the necessary actions required to be undertaken, who should undertake those and possible time-lines (if any).

5. **Time Frame**

The review will be undertaken over a 15-day period.

6. **Knowledge, Skills and Abilities of Reviewers**

The three experts will have complementary skills covering programme design and implementation, programme review and have specialization in natural resources management especially policy and institutional processes. The reviewers should have at least a Master's

degree with minimum fifteen years of experience at both field and policy level and good understanding of participatory natural resource management and environmental policy. Additionally, past experience in monitoring and evaluation will be necessary.

7. **Selection of Service Providers**

The ToR's will be shared through open call for proposal for interested service providers to prepare and submit the proposal. The proposal will be evaluated based on Quality Cost Based Selection (QCBS). The technical proposal that cross 70% will qualify for financial proposal assessment. The composition of full proposal is as follows:

- Technical Proposal – 80%
- Financial Proposal – 20%

The Technical proposal will be assessed on following criteria:

I. Approach and Methodology		15
A	Quality of Approach	5
B	Personnel Schedule	5
C	Proposal Presentation	5
II. Organizational Experience in biodiversity, natural resources management, agriculture, environment, policies related review and monitoring		15
III. CV of Reviewers		70
A	Team Leader – International (preferably Lao or Cambodia based)	30
B	Technical Expert - Lao	20
C	Technical Expert - Cambodia	20

8. **Maximum Available Budget**

The maximum available budget is USD 20,000, excluding travel costs.

9. **How to Apply**

The project management unit reserves the rights to reject any or all applications. Interested applicants/institutions should send their application by the 31/05/2023.

- If firm then, Registration Certificates (Organization/ Firm, VAT and Tax Clearance), Firm/Organization track record (profile);
- Approach and Methodology;
- Curriculum Vitae of proposed reviewer team.

The interested applicants / firm / organization should submit Technical and Financial Proposal either:

- In hard copies, in separate sealed envelopes and a cover letter explaining their interest for the consultancy service to the IUCN Lao Country Office 391/24 Bourichan Rd, Naxay village, Sayssetha district, Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR;
- Or
- In soft copies, in separate PDF files and a cover letter explaining their interest for the consultancy service, by e-mail at the following address:
 - Lithida.Rokham@iucn.org
 - Andrew.Wyatt@iucn.org

MTR Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Issues and Questions

Criteria	Indicators/criteria	Evaluative questions	Data sources	Methodology
I. Relevance				
Global/national and regional policies and programs	Evaluate the project's relevance to the global/national and regional policies and programs	- How does the project ensure to successfully mainstreams its agenda into national and provincial policy and government action? - Did the project foster international or regional collaboration in peatland conservation and management?	- Legal documents such as law, strategy, management plan and policies - KII interviews	- Document review and analysis - Stakeholder Consultation
Scope of improvement in project development and execution	Assessing the scope of improvement in project development and execution	- Were the targets realistic and achievable given the available resources and constraints? - Were there any bottlenecks or limitations in the capacity of institutions to implement the project effectively?	- Project Document - PIR Report - Supervision report - KII interviews	- Document review - Stakeholder Consultation with central and provincial level officials.
Tools / instruments / inputs applied by the project for enabling policy environment	Assess the relevance of the tools / instruments / inputs applied by the project for enabling policy environment	- Does the project design draw association to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and relevant targets and indicators for the area being evaluated? - Are the tools / instruments applied to the project relevant to the subject and purposes of the evaluation, and are they supported by evaluation evidence? - Are academic and research institutions offering insights to shape relevant policies or regulations? - Is the project team utilizing any best practices and tools for effective communication and policy dissemination?	- Project Document - Project Implementation Report	- Document review and analysis. - Interviews with project partners and stakeholders
Project's approach to address the needs and demands of the stakeholders	Analyze the project's approach to address the needs and demands of the stakeholders	- How is the project positively impacting local communities and indigenous groups? - Are there any negative impacts of the project on these communities, and how are they being mitigated?	- Project document - Field visit data at the community level	- Document review and analysis - Community consultations (e.g. focus groups, community meetings)

Criteria	Indicators/criteria	Evaluative questions	Data sources	Methodology
		To what extent is the project design relevant to the socio-economic and ecological context of the project area?		Stakeholder interviews (e.g. interviews with community leaders, civil society organizations, government officials)
II. Effectiveness				
Factors contributing to the success of the implementation of project activities	Factors that worked well	- In your opinion, what were the key factors that contributed to the successful implementation of the project activity? - Were there any skills or expertise within the team that were crucial for the project's success?	Stakeholder Consultation at both Central and Provincial level.	Review and analysis of the data received from stakeholder consultation and field visit.
	Factors that did not worked well	- If the project activity did not achieve its intended outcomes, what do you believe were the main contributing factors? - How would you rate the level of collaboration and coordination among team members and stakeholders during the project's execution? - What recommendations do you have for improving the implementing of similar project activities in the future?	Stakeholder Consultation at both Central and Provincial level.	Review and analysis of the data received from stakeholder consultation and field visit.
Effectiveness of the project structure in achieving the desired outputs	Understanding of Project Structure	- Are the project goals and objectives clearly defined and have they been communicated to you? - What according to you is the overall project objective? Do you think that the project structure is in line with the project objectives? If not, please explain why? - How would you describe the overall structure of the project, including the roles and responsibilities of key team members or units?	- Document review (Prodoc and PIM) - Interviews with stakeholders at provincial and district level	Review and analysis of the data received from field visit and desk review.
	Clear definition of Roles & Responsibilities	- Do you think that all the team members have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities within the project structure? - How effective is the communication flow between different levels of the project structure?	- Document review (Prodoc and PIM) - Interviews with IUCN focal point and PMUs of the two countries.	Review and analysis of the KII interviews and desk review.

Criteria	Indicators/criteria	Evaluative questions	Data sources	Methodology
		Are there mechanisms in place to ensure quick decision-making and issue resolution within the project structure?		
	Coordination & collaboration among Project Teams/Units/Ministries	- How do different teams or units or Ministries within the project structure collaborate and coordinate their efforts? - Are there regular meetings or communication channels that facilitate information sharing and coordination among different parts of the project? - Are there specific performance indicators or metrics that are regularly assessed to determine the effectiveness of the project structure?	Interviews with IUCN focal point, PMUs and officials at provincial and district level.	Review and analysis of the KII interviews and Field visit data.
	Implementation of project activities in accordance with project plan	- Does the project plan contain all the project related activities to be implemented under the project? - Is the project plan easily accessible to all the field-level staff/ stakeholders involved. - Were there any discrepancies between the actual implementation of activities and the project plan's scope, objectives, or deliverables? - How were these deviations communicated to stakeholders, and what actions were taken to mitigate their impact? - Were these deviations from the project plan documented and analysed for their impact on project outcomes? - Were there any unexpected challenges or obstacles encountered during activity implementation that deviated from the project plan? If yes, how were they dealt with? - Were there any delays in activity implementation, and if so, what were the primary causes of these delays? - Were changes in external factors, such as regulations or market conditions, responsible for deviations from the project plan? How were these accounted for during the project implementation?	- Document review (Prodoc and PIR,) - Interviews with IUCN focal point and officials at district and provincial level.	Document review and analysis of the KII interviews and Field visit data.

Criteria	Indicators/criteria	Evaluative questions	Data sources	Methodology
Achievement of outputs and its contribution to project objectives	Assess the achievement of outputs and its contribution to project objectives	- What specific outputs/targets mentioned in the project document have been achieved so far? - Can you provide a brief description of each of these achieved outputs? - To what extent do you believe these achieved outputs contribute to the overall objectives and goals of the project? - Can you describe the link between each output and its contribution to project objectives?	Document Review (Prodoc, PIR, activity completion reports, concept notes etc.)	Review and analysis of the documents.
Component 1: Assessment and documentation of peatlands in targeted countries				
Output 1.1. Surveys to identify peatland ecosystems in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar undertaken	Output Indicator 1.1 A: Availability of harmonized training modules on peatlands survey and assessment in national languages.	- Have harmonized training modules on peatland survey and assessment been developed for stakeholders at different levels? - Have these training modules been translated into national languages for accessibility?	- KII interviews - Document Review (GEC training modules in English and translated versions for each country)	Document review and key informant interviews.
	Output Indicator 1.1 B: Number of maps produced in a process that involves national capacity building.	- How many maps of peatland ecosystems have been produced in a process that involved national capacity building? - Were these maps prepared via the analysis of satellite imagery and ground-truthing surveys?	- Preliminary assessment reports of each country - Training reports for Lao and Cambodia	Review and analysis of the documents.
	Output Indicator 1.1 C: Number of peatland surveys undertaken in target geographic areas within the countries of Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar.	- How many detailed field-based surveys have been undertaken by project team and sub- group of local representatives? - Were these surveys conducted in alignment with the defined target areas and criteria?	Survey completion report of Cambodia and concept notes from Laos	Review and analysis of the survey reports and stakeholder consultation.

Criteria	Indicators/criteria	Evaluative questions	Data sources	Methodology
Output 1.2. Important peatland sites assessed and documented	Output Indicator 1.2 A: Number of rapid assessments conducted for significant peatland areas in the target countries	- How many rapid assessments have been conducted for significant peatland areas in the target countries? - Were these assessments conducted in accordance with some predetermined criteria or guidelines? - Was an analysis conducted for the functions and values related to habitats, biodiversity, and carbon storage during the assessments? - Can you describe the key findings or insights from this analysis? - Were there any challenges or difficulties encountered during the assessments, and how were they addressed? - Are there any recommendations for improving the process or outcomes of future assessments of peatland areas?	- Cambodia: - R-METT report from Cambodia - RAWES Report - Socio-economic report - Laos: - Rapid assessment report - Socio-economic survey report	Review and analysis of the final reports.
	Output Indicator 1.2 B: Number of reports produced.	- Has a final report been produced for each of the target countries, summarizing the results of the national peatlands functions and values assessments? - Can you provide details about the content and scope of these final reports? - What were the key findings / insights as presented in the final reports? - Were there any significant trends or patterns identified? - How were priorities for conservation and restoration of peatlands determined based on the assessment results presented in the final reports? - What were the specific criteria or factors considered when identifying these priorities? - How have the final reports, including the identified priorities for conservation and restoration, been utilized by relevant stakeholders? - Is there a central repository or database where these reports are stored for easy access to the relevant stakeholders?	Not assessed as part of the MTR	Not assessed as part of the MTR

Criteria	Indicators/criteria	Evaluative questions	Data sources	Methodology
Component 2: Capacity development and policy and legal frameworks				
Output 2.1. Key stakeholders at various levels trained on peatland assessment, rehabilitation and management and their awareness and understanding of the functions and importance of peatland ecosystems enhanced	Output Indicator 2.1 A: Number of key stakeholders at national, sub-national and local level trained in peatland assessment, rehabilitation, and management.	- How many key stakeholders at the national, sub-national, and local levels have been trained in peatland assessment, rehabilitation, and management? - Were the numbers of trained stakeholders disaggregated by gender? If so, could you provide the gender-specific breakdown of the training?	Training reports/sessions	Review and analysis of the training reports and concept notes.
	Output Indicator 2.1 B: Availability of harmonized information and training materials on peatlands in national languages (for use at national, sub-national and local levels).	- Could you provide details on the types of training materials that have been made available, including their content and format? - How accessible are these training materials at the national, sub-national, and local levels for stakeholders involved in peatland assessment, rehabilitation, and management? - Have efforts been made to ensure that these materials are readily available and utilized by the intended audience? Is the training material available in national languages?	- Communication products - Supervision reports - PIR	- Review and analysis of the communication products, PIR and supervision reports. - Analysis of the KII interviews and data from field visit.
Output 2.2. National strategies and/or action plans for protection and sustainable use of peatland ecosystems prepared and peatlands mainstreamed into national and sub-national	Output Indicator 2.2 A: Availability of guidance for mainstreaming peatlands into national policies and plans suitable for the Mekong region based on ASEAN experience.	- Has a guidance document been developed for mainstreaming peatlands into national policies and plans, specifically tailored for the Mekong region, drawing from the experience of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)? - How many guidance documents have been developed at regional level so far? - To what extent has this guidance been utilized in the development or revision of national/ regional policies and plans related to peatland management within the Mekong region? - Can you provide examples of how the guidance document has influenced policy decisions or planning processes?	Guidance documents	Review and analysis of the document.

Criteria	Indicators/criteria	Evaluative questions	Data sources	Methodology
policies and regulations	Output Indicator 2.2 B: Number of national or sub-national plans, policies or strategies that incorporate peatland conservation provisions, based on consultations with relevant stakeholders (including women and local communities).	- Were there any challenges or obstacles encountered in mainstreaming peatlands into policies and plans? - How many national or sub-national plans, policies, or strategies now incorporate peatland conservation provisions? - Can you provide details on the consultation process with relevant stakeholders, including women and local communities, that contributed to the incorporation of peatland conservation provisions in plans, policies, or strategies? Were these consultations inclusive and participatory?	- Legal/ regulatory documents (Law, strategy and policy) - KII interview	Review and analysis of the documents and KII interviews.
Component 3: Development and demonstration of Best Management Practices				
Output 3.1. Protection and sustainable use of the peatlands in Peam Krasop Wildlife Sanctuary enhanced	Output Indicator 3.1 A: Number of pilot sites established demonstrating best management practices of peatlands.	- How many pilot sites have been established to demonstrate best management practices for peatlands? - How have these pilot sites been utilized for showcasing and testing best management practices? - Have there been any measurable improvements or impacts in peatland management as a result of these pilot sites?	- Concept notes for demarcation - Report/ concept notes on best management practices	- Document analysis - Key informant interviews - Focus group discussions
	Output Indicator 3.1 B: Number of community members (disaggregated by gender) trained in sustainable livelihood practices.	- How many community members have been trained in sustainable livelihood practices? - Were the trainings provided had involvement of both male and female community members? What was the gender ratio for these training courses? - What specific sustainable livelihood practices were included in the training programs for community members? - Can you provide examples of how these practices have been implemented by the trained community members?	- Concept note/ report on livelihood practices - Training completion reports and sessions	- Document analysis - Key informant interviews - Focus group discussions

Criteria	Indicators/criteria	Evaluative questions	Data sources	Methodology
	Output Indicator 3.1 C: Availability of peatland conservation provisions in PKWS management plan.	- Could you provide details on the peatland conservation provisions that have been included in the PKWS management plans? - How are these peatland conservation provisions being implemented within the PKWS management plans? - Have there been any noticeable improvements or impacts on peatland conservation within the protected areas as a result of these provisions? - Were there any challenges or obstacles encountered in establishing pilot sites, training community members, or incorporating peatland conservation provisions?	Consultation workshop reports to manage peatland and incorporate provisions	- Document review and analysis
Output 3.2. Protection and sustainable use of the peatlands in the Beung Kiat Ngong landscape enhanced	Output Indicator 3.2 A: Number of pilot sites established demonstrating best management practices of peatlands.	- How many pilot sites have been established to demonstrate the best management practices for peatlands? - How have these pilot sites been utilized for showcasing and testing best management practices? - Have there been any measurable improvements or impacts in peatland management as a result of these pilot sites?	Consultation report with community members (three villages - Thongxay, Kala, and Kaeng Nang Ang Villages)	- Document review and analysis - Focus group discussions
	Output Indicator 3.2 B: Number of community members (disaggregated by gender) trained in sustainable livelihood practices.	- How many community members have been trained in sustainable livelihood practices? - Were the trainings provided had involvement of both male and female community members? What was the gender ratio for these trainings? - What specific sustainable livelihood practices were included in the training programs for community members? - Can you provide examples of how these practices have been implemented by the trained community members?	- Concept notes - Awareness raising reports - Livelihood consultation report	- Document review and analysis - Key informant interviews - Focus group discussions
	Output Indicator 3.2 C: Availability of peatland conservation provisions in Beung	- Could you provide details on the peatland conservation provisions that have been included in the Beung Kiat Ngong management plans? - How are these peatland conservation provisions being implemented within the Beung Kiat Ngong management plans?	Document review (5-year management plan for the BKN Ramsar site).	Document review and analysis

Criteria	Indicators/criteria	Evaluative questions	Data sources	Methodology
	Kiat Ngong Management Plan.	- Have there been any noticeable improvements or impacts on peatland conservation within the protected areas as a result of these provisions? - Were there any challenges or obstacles encountered in establishing pilot sites, training community members, or incorporating peatland conservation provisions?		
Component 4. Regional Cooperation				
Output 4.1. Experiences and best practices for peatland assessment and management in Mekong countries documented and shared	Output Indicator 4.1 A: Availability of harmonized guidelines for conservation and sustainable use of peatlands	- Have the guidelines for conservation and sustainable use of peatland resources developed and translated into national languages? - Does this guideline have a common regional definition of peatlands that can be consistently applied across assessments? - How have these guidelines utilized by relevant stakeholders? - Have there been any specific examples of how these guidelines have influenced peatland management practices or policy development?	Draft guidance document	Review and analysis of the document
	Output Indicator 4.1 B: Number of lessons learned documents produced and shared at the regional level	- How many lessons learned documents have been produced and shared at the regional level? - What were the key topics or themes covered in the lessons learned documents? - How have these documents been disseminated and shared with relevant stakeholders?	No document available with the MTR team. This is a part of the end-term evaluation.	No document available with the MTR team. This is a part of the end-term evaluation.
	Output Indicator 4.1 C: Number of key stakeholders (disaggregated by gender) participating in exchange visit	- How many key stakeholders have participated in exchange visits, and has this participation been disaggregated by gender? What was the gender ratio for these trainings? - What were the primary objectives of the exchange visits for key stakeholders? - Can you provide examples of the knowledge or experiences that stakeholders gained through these visits?	Final report of the Exchange visit in Malaysia.	Document review and analysis

Criteria	Indicators/criteria	Evaluative questions	Data sources	Methodology
Output 4.2. Technical project implementation support and coordination provided	Output Indicator 4.2 A: Number of key stakeholders (disaggregated by gender) participating in regional project inception workshop and annual PSC meetings	- How many key stakeholders have participated in exchange visits, and has this participation been disaggregated by gender? What was the gender ratio for these trainings? - What were the primary objectives of the exchange visits for key stakeholders? - Can you provide examples of the knowledge or experiences that stakeholders gained through these visits?	- Inception workshop report - Regional Project Steering Committee (RPSC) meeting reports	Review and analysis of final reports and documents.
	Output Indicator 4.2 B: Number of key stakeholders (women and men) participating in regional workshop on peatlands (during the last year of the project cycle)	- How many key stakeholders, including women and men, participated in this regional workshop on peatlands? - What were the primary objectives and topics covered during the regional workshop on peatlands? - Can you provide examples of the knowledge or experiences that stakeholders gained through this workshop?	- KII Interviews - Supervision reports - Exchange visit report	Review and analysis of final reports and documents.
	Output Indicator 4.2 C: Number of national/local level project coordination and monitoring meetings (including inception meetings, NSC meetings)	- How many national and local-level project coordination and monitoring meetings were held during the project cycle? - Did key stakeholders actively participate in these national and local-level project coordination and monitoring meetings? - Were these meetings effective in facilitating communication and coordination among project stakeholders? - Were there any challenges or obstacles encountered in organizing and conducting these project meetings and workshops?	Annual project coordination and monitoring meeting report	Review and analysis of final reports and documents.
Effectiveness of the co-funding arrangements	Assess the effectiveness of the co-funding arrangements	- Were the contributions from co-funding partners aligned with the specific goals and activities of the project? - Did the co-funding partners have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities within the project?	Interview with the GEF agency and the IUCN Focal point	Analysis of the KII interviews.

Criteria	Indicators/criteria	Evaluative questions	Data sources	Methodology
		- To what extent and in what ways did the co-funding contributions enhance the project's overall impact and reach? - Were there any specific project outcomes or milestones directly attributable to the co-funding partners' contributions? - Were there any delays or issues related to the disbursement of funds from co-funding partners? - Did the co-funding partners express a commitment to supporting project sustainability beyond its initial phase?		
III. Efficiency				
Availability of Technical and Financial resources	Technical Resources Utilization	- In your judgement (based on the supervision/assessment missions undertaken), do you believe that the current technical resources (e.g., expertise, technology, equipment) are sufficient to carry out the project plans effectively? - Are there any specific technical resource gaps or limitations that you have identified within the project?	- Supervision report - PIR Report	Review of various project reports to assess if the actual project expenditures align with the budgeted expenditures
	Financial Resource Utilization	- Do you consider the available financial resources (e.g., budget, funding) to be adequate for implementing the project plans as intended? - Have there been any financial resource constraints or challenges that have affected the project's progress or outcomes?	- Supervision report - PIR Report	Review of various project reports to assess if the actual project expenditures align with the budgeted expenditures
	Allocation of Resources	- How effectively have the technical and financial resources been allocated and managed to support project activities? - Have there been any instances where resources were not optimally utilized or where adjustments were needed?	- Supervision report - Desk review	Analysis of project reports and financial records to assess efficiency of resource allocation.
	Monitoring & Evaluation of Resources	Is there a monitoring and evaluation mechanism in place to regularly assess the adequacy and effectiveness of technical and financial resources?	- PIR Report - Supervision report	Analysis of project reports and financial records.

Criteria	Indicators/criteria	Evaluative questions	Data sources	Methodology
		• If resource gaps or inadequacies have been identified, what strategies or measures have been taken or are planned to address these gaps and ensure the project's success? • Have there been any collaborations or partnerships established to supplement resources? • What challenges have you encountered in managing and optimizing technical and financial resources for the project? • Are there any recommendations for improving resource management and allocation in future projects or initiatives?		
Utilization of Funds	Financial Procedures	• Are the project funds being used in accordance with the established financial and procurement procedures? • Can you describe the financial procedures and guidelines that are in place to ensure that project funds are managed effectively and transparently? • Are these financial procedures consistently followed by the project team and relevant stakeholders? • Are regular financial reports generated and shared to provide transparency on fund utilization? • Is there a monitoring and evaluation mechanism in place to track fund utilization and assess compliance with project plans and procedures? • Have there been any challenges or issues related to fund utilization and adherence to project procedures? • What corrective measures or actions have been implemented to address any identified issues?	• Project initial plan • Budget/ expenditure reports • Supervision reports	• Review of project document • Analysis of budget/ expenditure data •
	Fund Management	• What strategies or plans are in place to ensure that funds will continue to be spent in accordance with project plans/ procedures and budget throughout the project duration? • Can you give any recommendations for improving fund management and procedures in future projects or initiatives?	• Project initial plan • Budget/ expenditure reports • Supervision reports	• Review of project document • Analysis of budget/ expenditure data

Criteria	Indicators/criteria	Evaluative questions	Data sources	Methodology
Identification of unforeseen problems and effectiveness of solutions	Problem Identification	- Have there been any unforeseen problems or challenges encountered during the course of the project that were not originally anticipated in the project plans? Can you describe the nature and scope of these problems? - How were these unforeseen problems assessed and evaluated to determine their potential impact on the project's goals and objectives? - What actions or measures were taken to address and resolve the unforeseen problems identified in the project? - Were these actions guided by a structured problem-solving process or strategy?	- KII interviews - Field visit data - PIR Report - Supervision report - Peatland continuity plan	- Stakeholder consultation at central, provincial and district level. - Field survey data
	Effectiveness of the Solutions	- How did the implemented solutions or actions mitigate the impact of the unforeseen problems on the project? - Were there any unintended consequences or trade-offs associated with the chosen solutions? - What strategies or measures are now in place to enhance project preparedness for unforeseen problems in the future? - Can you give some recommendations for improving the project's ability to handle unexpected challenges in future initiatives?	- KII interviews - Desk review	Review and analysis of the stakeholder consultation and desk review documents.
Self-monitoring, Assessment, Reporting and Reflection	Reflective Practices	- Is there a practice for reflection and analysis of self-monitoring and assessment findings? - How are lessons learned and insights from reflection used to inform decision-making and project improvements?	- KII interviews - Desk review - Interviews with key stakeholders	Review and analysis of the stakeholder consultation and desk review documents.
	Role of Project steering committee	- Could you describe the role and responsibilities of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) within the project's governance structure? - Have there been any challenges or obstacles in the functioning of the PSC as a decision-making forum?	- Project Document - PIM report - RPSC report - KII interviews	- Analysis of the documents - Stakeholder consultations

Criteria	Indicators/criteria	Evaluative questions	Data sources	Methodology
	Timeline and Quality of Reporting	- Is there any predefined reporting timeline for the submission of the reports? Has the project adhered to these timelines? - Have there been any challenges or obstacles encountered in meeting reporting timelines or maintaining report quality? - How have these challenges been addressed?	- Supervision reports - Project document - KII Interviews - Peatland continuity document	- Analysis and review of the documents - Analysis of the KII interviews
	Qualitative and Quantitative aspects of Management	- Can you provide quantitative data related to the inputs provided by the project (e.g., budget allocation, number of equipment items, technical assistance hours, etc.)? - How do these quantitative measures correlate with the achievement of project outputs and targets? - How would you assess the quality and effectiveness of the management inputs and technical assistance provided by the project? - Are there specific qualitative indicators used to evaluate the impact of these inputs on project outcomes?	- Progress Reports - Component wise budget allocation	- Analysis of the budget and expenditure reports - Analysis of the KII information
Continued benefit after the end of the project	Approach to ensure a continued benefit after the end of the project	- Does the project employ an approach or strategy designed to ensure that the benefits generated by the project will continue to be realized after the project's completion? - Could you describe the key components of this approach for sustaining benefits?	- KII interviews - Budget reports - PIR reports	- Analysis of the progress reports - Analysis of the KII interviews - Review and analysis of the desk review insights
Involvement of key stakeholders	Stakeholder Involvement	- Are all key stakeholders identified and engaged in the project, including local communities, government agencies, project partners, and other relevant entities? - Could you describe the mechanisms or strategies used to involve these stakeholders effectively? - Have the expectations and needs of key stakeholders been clearly identified and documented at the outset of the project?	- Stakeholder consultations and feedback - PIM	- Analysis of stakeholder feedback and internal reviews - Analysis of the KII interviews and desk review of documents

Criteria	Indicators/criteria	Evaluative questions	Data sources	Methodology
	Level of Stakeholder Participation	- Do stakeholders express satisfaction with their level of participation and influence in project decision-making and activities? - Are there specific instances or areas where stakeholders feel their participation could be improved? - Is there a structured communication process in place to keep stakeholders informed about project progress, challenges, and achievements? - How is feedback from stakeholders collected and used to adapt project strategies and activities?	- KII interviews and PIR report - Supervision mission reports	Analysis of the KII interviews and the various documents such as PIR and supervision mission report
IV. Network/linkages				
Representation and extent of participation of various stakeholders in project implementation	Analyze the representation and extent of participation of various stakeholders in project execution including (government and civil societies, indigenous groups and local communities, academic and research institutions etc.)	- How is it ensured during the project execution that different stakeholders actively participate in the project's research, development, or execution phases? - How are various stakeholders entities involved in project participation, discussions and decision-making processes? - How are the different stakeholders involved in the project planning process and do they have a role in providing oversight and feedback? - How diverse and inclusive is the group of stakeholders involved in the project - Are marginalized or underrepresented groups adequately represented among the stakeholders? - Is there a mechanism in place for reporting on the stakeholders contributions and knowledge sharing? - Have indigenous groups and local communities been given the opportunity to voice their concerns and preferences? - How are civil society organizations/academic and research institutions contributing resources, such as funding, manpower, or expertise, to the project? - Are the benefits and impacts of the project being communicated transparently to all stakeholders?	- Key Informant Interviews - Field visit data - Project Document - PIR - Activity Completion reports like RPSC meetings, exchange visit, etc.	- Review and analysis of stakeholder engagement data with provincial and central stakeholders - Document analysis - Finding insights from KIIs

Criteria	Indicators/criteria	Evaluative questions	Data sources	Methodology
Project alignment with other projects for achieving project goals	Examine how well the project is aligned with other projects, and identify connections and prospects for achieving project goals	- How did the project collaborate with other organizations, government agencies, and stakeholders to achieve its goals? - What other projects or initiatives (external to this project), share similar objectives or target similar outcomes? - Are there common stakeholders or beneficiaries between this project and other related projects, who are engaged in the planning and decision making for this project? - What efforts have been undertaken to coordinate or collaborate with these other projects or initiatives that share similar objectives or target similar outcomes? - Are there opportunities for resource sharing, such as personnel, equipment, or funding, with other projects? - In what ways can the project learn from the experiences and lessons of other similar projects, and vice-versa? - Have any challenges or conflicts arisen due to overlaps or competition with other projects, and how were they addressed? - Have any joint initiatives or working groups been established to address common issues or goals? - What kind of partnerships exist with other national institutions, NGOs and the private sector and development partners to sustain the attained results? Are there any opportunities for scale-up or replication of successful project components in collaboration with other projects? - Do academic and research institutions plan to continue their collaboration after the project's conclusion?	- Key Informant Interviews - Field visit data - Project Document - PIR	- Review and analysis of stakeholder engagement data with provincial and central stakeholders - Document analysis - Finding insights from KIIs
V. Lessons Learnt/Conclusions				
Areas for improved programme planning	Assess areas for improved programme planning, especially with respect to setting targets, relevance,	Were the project's objectives and targets well-defined and aligned with the program's overall goals?	KII interviews – provincial and central	- Review of project documents - Stakeholder interviews and surveys

Criteria	Indicators/criteria	Evaluative questions	Data sources	Methodology
	and capacity of institutions for project decision making and delivery	- How was the relevance of the program periodically assessed to ensure it remained aligned with changing circumstances? - Were clear lines of authority and decision-making processes established within the institutions? - Did the institutions responsible for program delivery have the necessary infrastructure, resources, and personnel? - How effectively did the institutions involved in program decision making and delivery respond to changes, challenges, and unexpected developments during the program? - What steps have been taken/ could be taken to strengthen exit strategies and sustainability in order to support project beneficiaries as well as marginalized groups? - To what extent do national partners have institutional capacities, including sustainability strategies for project decision making and delivery? - What is the mechanism for sharing knowledge and best practices with the project team? - What is the mechanism to monitor the project progress and quality against the project plan? - Are there procedures for handling change requests and scope adjustments in the initial project plan?	- Project Document - Progress Reports	- Finding insights from KIIs - Site visits and observations
Lessons or conclusions which can be drawn from the project	Identify significant lessons or conclusions which can be drawn from the project in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and networking	- To what extent are lessons learned documented by the project team on a continual basis and shared with appropriate parties who could learn from the project? - Were the project outcomes in line with the initial project goals and expectations? - How well did the project address the identified problems or needs? Did the project have a measurable impact on the target beneficiaries or the broader community? - What measures were taken to ensure that the resources (financial, human, and technological) allocated efficiently?	- KII interviews – provincial and central - Project Document - Progress Reports	- Review of project documents - Stakeholder interviews and surveys - Finding insights from KIIs - Site visits and observations

Criteria	Indicators/criteria	Evaluative questions	Data sources	Methodology
		• What long-term benefits and impacts has the project achieved for the community or environment? • Were there strategies in place for the ongoing monitoring and maintenance of project outcomes? • How did the project engage with local communities and stakeholders to ensure sustainability? • Did the project promote sustainable practices and address potential future challenges? • What lessons were learned regarding the integration of sustainability principles into the project? • What role did partnerships and networking play in the project's success? • In what ways can the project's networking and collaboration efforts be improved for future initiatives?		

Interview Guide

Sample Interview Questions: Government Officials, Partner Ministries/Departments

Name		Gender	
Organization		Designation:	
Place of Interview		Date of Interview:	
Name of Interviewer			

S. No	Question	Answers
1.	What is the role of your Organisation in the sustainable Peatland Project?	
2.	Does your organization get regular updates on project performance?	
3.	Do you think the project beneficiaries will continue the land management practices introduced by the project beyond the project period?	
4.	In what ways do you think the activities/outcomes of the project will make a significant improvement in the condition of the peatlands in the country?	
5.	Do you think the Government will be interested in continuing the project activities beyond the project period?	
6.	Do you have any suggestions to improve the performance of the project?	

A list of questionnaires for different levels is attached in the below file:



Final Questionnaire
MTR Mekong Peatland

MTR Mission Itinerary

Cambodia

Date	Time	Description	Participants	Venue
10/2/2023	Morning 09:00 - 11:30	Meeting with National Officials	1. Dr. Srey Sunleang, DDG of GDNPA, Project Director 2. Mr. Yoeung Visal, Chief of Office of DFWC 3. Dr. Hak Danet, Project CES 4. Mr. Taing Porchhay, Project EMS and Coordinator 5. Mr. Phon Nalin, Financial Officer 6. Ms. Un Dane, Admin Assistant 7. Phon Rasy, Vice Cheif of Office, SUPA 8. Pon Chanthida, SUPA, FS	Meeting Room (TBC) Ministry of Environment
10/2/2023	Afternoon 13:30 - 18:00	Travel from Phnom Penh to Koh Kong	Coordinator, IUCN, MTR Consultant	By arrange van
10/3/2023	08:00-08:30	Travel to boat jetty	Coordinator, IUCN, MTR Consultant	By arrange van
	08:30-09:00	Travel by boat to Koh Sralau Community	Coordinator, IUCN, MTR Consultant, rangers	By arrange boat
	09:00-11:00	Visit Koh Sralau Community	1. Chief Community CPA 2. Villagers	Koh Sralau Community
	11:00-11:30	Travel by boat to Boeng Kachhang Community	Coordinator, IUCN, MTR Consultant, rangers	By arrange boat
	11:30-13:30	Lunch	All	Boeng Kachhang Community
	13:30-15:00	Visit Boeng Kachhang Community	1. Chief Community CPA 2. Villagers	Boeng Kachhang Community
	15:00-15:30	Travel by boat to ranger station	Coordinator, IUCN, MTR Consultant, rangers	By arrange boat
	15:30-16:30	Interview Provincial Department of Environment	1. Mr. Veth Sonim, Deputy Director of Koh Kong DoE 2. Mr. Ou Ran, Koh Kapik Ramsar Site Manager 3. Rangers	Ranger station
	16:30-17:00	Back to town	Coordinator, IUCN, MTR Consultant	By arrange van
10/4/2023	Morning 08:00-13:00	Travel back from Koh Kong to Phnom Penh	Coordinator, IUCN, MTR Consultant	By arrange van
10/4/2023	Afternoon 14:30 - 16:00	Debrief Meeting	1. Dr. Srey Sunleang, DDG of GDNPA, Project Director 2. Mr. Yoeung Visal, Chief of Office of DFWC 3. Dr. Hak Danet, Project CES	Meeting Room (TBC) Ministry of Environment

Date	Time	Description	Participants	Venue
			4. Mr. Taing Porchhay, Project EMS and Coordinator 5. Mr. Phon Nalin, Financial Officer 6. Ms. Un Dane, Admin Assistant 7. Phon Rasy, Vice Cheif of Office, SUPA 8. Pon Chanthida, SUPA, FS	

Lao PDR

Date	Time	Description	Participants	Venue
10/2/2023	Whole Day	Interview Central Officials	1. Dr. Inthavy Akkharath, DG of DWR, Project Director, Chair of PSC 2. Mr. Kingkham Manivong, DDG of DWR, Deputy Project Director, Vice Chair of PSC 3. Mr. Singthong Phanthamala, Director of Division, Project Manager 4. Mr. Phingsaliao Sithiengtham, National Project Coordinator 5. Mr. Pinthong Saluemsay, Project member 6. Ms. Phoukham Keosihoun, Project Financial Officer	DWR Office
10/3/2023	7:50-9:10	Fly to Pakse	DWR team, IUCN, Consultant	
	10:00-12:00	Meeting with PONRE and DONRE	DWR, PONRE, DONRE, IUCN, Consultant	Champasak PONRE Meeting Room
	12:00-13:30	Lunch	All	Pakse
	13:30-16:30	Interview Provincial and District Offials	1. Dr. Korlakanh Khammavong, Deputy Director of CPS PONRE, PSC Member 2. Mr. Sengsoulianh Souliyachak, Provincial Coordinator 3. Mr. Vongsinpasak Vonginkham, Field Officer 4. Dr. Duangmany Luangmany, District Coordinator 5. Mr. Vilaxay Xaysimeuang, DONRE staff	Champasak PONRE Meeting Room
	16:30-18:00	Travel to Pathoumphone District	DWR, PONRE, DONRE, IUCN, Consultant	Pathoumphone District
10/4/2023	7:30-9:30	Travel to target villages	DWR, PONRE, DONRE, IUCN, Consultant	
	9:30-12:00	Visit Thongxay Village and BeungBaphat wetland	DWR, PONRE, DONRE, Village authorities, IUCN, Consultant	Thongxay Village

Date	Time	Description	Participants	Venue
	12:00-13:30	Lunch	DWR, PONRE, DONRE, Village authorities, IUCN, Consultant	Village
	13:30-16:00	Visit Kala and Kaengnangang Villages	DWR, PONRE, DONRE, Village authorities, IUCN, Consultant	Kala and Kaengnangang villages
	16:00-18:00	Travel back to Pakse	DWR, PONRE, DONRE, IUCN, Consultant	Pakse
10/5/2023	9:50-11:00	Travel to Vientiane	DWR, PONRE, DONRE, IUCN, Consultant	
	13:30-16:00	Wrap up	DWR, PONRE, DONRE, IUCN, Consultant	DWR Office

List of Persons Interview

Project Stakeholders:

Organization/ Authority	Persons Interviewed	Designation
IUCN Regional Coordination Unit	Dr. Andrew Wyatt	Chief Technical Advisor
GEF	Mr. Anshuman Saikia	Task Manager
	Mr. Alex McWilliam	Ex-Task Manager
GEC	Mr. Faizal Parish	Director
	Ms. Lew Siew Yan	Manager, Peatland Programme
IUCN Myanmar	Ms. Seint Sann Zaw	Head of Office
GIZ SUPA Project	Mr. Htain Lin	Project Manager

Cambodia

GDNPA	Dr. Srey Sunleang	DDG of GDNPA, Project Director
DFWC	Mr. Yoeung Visal	Chief of Office of DFWC
Project Members	Dr. Hak Danet	Community Engagement Specialist
	Mr. Taing Porchhay,	EMS and Coordinator
	Ms. Un Dane	Admin Assistant
SUPA	Phon Rasy	Vice Chief of Office
	Pon Chanthida	SUPA, FS
District/ Province	Mr. Veth Soknim	Provincial Department of Environment, Vice President
	Mr. UL Ran	Department of Sanctuary wildlife, President
	Mr. Ly Heng	Department of Community Development Engagement, President
	Heng Phairath	Peam Krasop Wildlife Sanctuary, Ranger
Community	Mr. Tuy Veng	Head of Koh Sralao Community
	Mr. Lorn Rith	Head of Boeung Kachhang Community

Lao PDR

DWR	Mr. Kingkham Manivong	DDG of DWR, Deputy Project Director, Vice Chair of PSC
	Mr. Singthong Phanthamala	Sector Agronomist Mugina Sector
Project member	Mr. Pinthong Saluemsay	Project member
District/ Province	Mr. Sengsoulianh Souliyachak	Provincial Coordinator
	Mr. Vongsinpasak Vonginkham	Field Officer
	Dr. Korlakanh Khammavong,	CPS PONRE, PSC Member, Deputy Director
Community	Mr. Boala	Head of Kala Village
	Mr. Simon	Head of Kangnangang village
	Mr. Kengia	Head of Thongxay village

Link for recordings of key informant interviews:

[Interview Recordings MTR - GEF Mekong Peatlands Project](#)

List of Documents Reviewed and Key References

1. Project Identification Form (PIF)
2. Project Implementation Manual (PIM)
3. Project Implementation Reports (PIR)
4. IUCN Project Document
5. Supervision Mission Reports
6. Progress Reports and budgets
7. Activity Completion Report and Concept Notes
8. Legal documents such as law, strategy, management plan and policies
9. GEC Training Modules
10. Communication products (Booklets, Brochure and trifold)
11. Preliminary, draft, and final assessment reports
12. Guidance document for mainstreaming peatlands into national policies and plans
13. Project site location maps
14. Project Management Documents
15. Project Output Documents
16. Exchange visit report
17. RPSC Meeting reports
18. Inception workshop Report
19. Annual project coordination report
20. Budget/ expenditure reports
21. Peatland Continuity Plan Document

MTR Ratings

The MTR team reviewed the log frame indicators against progress made towards the end-of-project targets using the colour code progress in a “traffic light system” based on the level of progress achieved.

Indicator Assessment Key

Green = Achieved	Yellow = On target to be achieved	Red = Not on target to be achieved
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The MTR team used a 6-point scale provided in Table 1 below to rate the project’s progress towards each project outcome. These standard ratings will be used to complete the column “Progress Rating”.

Table 1: Progress Towards Results Rating Scale		
6	Highly Satisfactory (HS)	The objective/outcome has achieved or exceeds all its end-of-project targets, without major shortcomings. The progress towards the objective/outcome can be presented as “good practice”.
5	Satisfactory (S)	The objective/outcome has achieved most of its end-of-project targets, with only minor shortcomings.
4	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	The objective/outcome has achieved most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings.
3	Moderately Unsatisfactory (HU)	The objective/outcome has achieved its end-of-project targets with major shortcomings.
2	Unsatisfactory (U)	The objective/outcome has achieved most of its end-of-project targets.
1	Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	The objective/outcome has failed to achieve its targets.

Annexure 8

Progress Towards Results Matrix

Component 1: Assessment and documentation of peatlands in targeted countries						
Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline	End of project Target	Result to Date (from project start to 30 th June 2023)	Midterm Assessment (October 2023)	Progress Rating (HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU)
Outcome 1. Peatland ecosystems are better documented in the three target countries supporting enhanced recognition and management	Area of peatlands identified and assessed	No systematic inventory or documentation	28,000ha Note: The identified peatland target of 28,000 ha was a combined 3 country target, and it was anticipated that greater than 10,000 ha of new peatland would have been identified in Myanmar, leaving less than 18,000 ha to be identified in Cambodia and Lao PDR.	A total of 13 new peatland areas, totalling 95ha, have been confirmed in Lao PDR from surveys. Survey data from Q2-Q3 2023 surveys indicate an additional 500 ha of peatland area may have been identified but cannot be confirmed as of this report. Approx. 13,820 ha of potential peatlands have been identified in the coastal region of Cambodia. To date, the estimated new peatland identified in Cambodia and Lao PDR is a little over 14,000 ha though this remains to be validated or confirmed - 77% of the target. Surveys completed but mapping and final quantified area still to be validated.	The reported figures of the identified peatland area (95 Ha in Lao PDR and 13,820 Ha in Cambodia) are based on the interim peatland maps developed of the project locations using remote sensing techniques. As communicated by the CTA, these maps require validation by GEC after the completion of the field surveys and the submission of the PMU peat survey reports. However, even though as per the PIR, the peatland identification survey was planned to be undertaken in the Q2-Q3 2023; to date, GEC has not received these consolidated peatland reports from Cambodia & Laos and the PMUs are still drafting the reports. Thus, as communicated by the CTA, the Survey is still in the process, and it will be for the Terminal Evaluation to verify the Outcome.	Satisfactory (S)
Outputs	Indicators	Baseline	End of project Target	Result to Date (from project start to 30 th June 2023)	Midterm Assessment (October 2023)	Implementation Status (%)
Output 1.1. Surveys to identify peatland ecosystems in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar undertaken	Indicator 1.1 A Availability of harmonized training modules on peatlands survey and assessment in national languages.	In Cambodia, SEApeat (2014, 2015) estimates 10,000 ha of peatlands in Koh Kong Province based on their initial peatlands survey; NCSD (2016) indicates there are potential peatlands in the Tonle Sap swamp forests, along the Mekong	Target 1.1 A Training modules on peatlands survey and assessment developed at regional level and translated into national languages.	1.1A: Four training modules have been drafted and reviewed. All four training modules finalized and translated into Khmer and Lao. Two Modules were translated to Burmese before suspension.	1.1A: Four training modules have been developed by GEC in English. Module 1: Identification of peatlands (Final version, Dec 2020) Module 2: Remote Sensing (RS) and Peatland Mapping (Final version, Oct 2020) Module 3: Field Verification (Final Version, May 2021) Module 4: Peatland Degradation and Management Issues (Final Version, Oct 2021).	100%

		River, and more extensively through coastal wetlands. In Lao PDR, SEApeat (2015) confirmed about 570 ha of peatlands in and around Beung Kiat Ngong Ramsar wetlands site and roughly 100 ha in Vientiane Province. Additional, and potentially significant, peatlands are likely to occur within both Vientiane and Champasak Provinces.			<u>Cambodia:</u> All four modules translated into Khmer. <u>Lao PDR:</u> All four modules translated into Lao. <u>Myanmar:</u> Translated module 1 and 3.	
	Indicator 1.1 B Number of maps produced in a process that involves national capacity building.	In Myanmar, SEApeat (2012-2015) confirmed significant areas of peatlands including > 10,000 ha in Shan State and roughly 500 ha around Htu Lake in Myan Aung Township of the Ayerwaddy Region. Other areas where peatlands have been found but require additional survey include: Pyin Oo Lwin Township of Mandalay Region, Bokpin and Palaw Townships of the Thanintharyi Region (southern Myanmar), Indawgyi Lake in Kachin State (northern Myanmar) and Kyaukme Township of Northern Shan State.	Target 1.1 B Three indicative national maps of peatland distribution in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar.	1.1B: Preliminary maps of potential peatlands in targeted areas have been developed for each country, which have been used to prioritise peatland surveys. National maps are being completed by SUPA 1 project in Lao PDR and Cambodia in Q3-Q4 2023. SUPA 1 support is for areas not covered by Mekong Peatlands.	1.1B: Preliminary indicative maps have been produced for both Lao PDR and Cambodia however they have not been validated as the peatland identification survey reports are not available till the time of MTR. Cambodia: Potential peatlands identified in coastal area. Three zones were separated for analysis and calculation: Botum Sakor – Arae Ambel, Sihanoukville, and Kampot. Moreover, the Peam Krasop Area in Koh Kong was already identified in earlier surveys. Lao PDR: Maps of potential peatland identified in Pathoumphone district, champasak province using Sentinel2 Imagery. Myanmar: Potential peatlands identified in the following states/ region- Kachin, Kayin, Sagaing, Taninthayi, Bago, Magwe, Mandalay, Mon, Rakhine, Yangon, Shan and Ayeyarwady.	100% (3 indicative maps to be produced in three countries). After suspension of Myanmar component, only 2 indicative national maps to be produced).
	Indicator 1.1 C Number of peatland surveys undertaken in target geographic areas within the countries of Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar.		Target 1.1 C A minimum of 11 field surveys (3 in Cambodia, 3 in Lao PDR, and 5 in Myanmar) undertaken and maps to show locations and boundaries of identified peatlands produced at appropriate scale after the surveys.	1.1C: The number of field surveys has exceeded the Target of 3 field survey in Lao PDR with 20 peatland sites surveyed. Cambodia has achieved its target of 3 surveys. <u>Cambodia:</u> Peatland surveys have been undertaken in all 3 coastal areas of Cambodia that have been prioritised for ground surveys.	1.1C: The Survey Completion report has been prepared for Cambodia for 5 Districts, however the survey completion report is not available for Laos till the time of MTR, as the Survey is still ongoing (as per the communication with CTA). <u>Cambodia:</u> Survey was conducted in Preah Sihanouk Province – Ream National Park on 9-14 January 2023.	25% (Under this target, the two main tasks were to be accomplished in Cambodia and Lao PDR: – Survey (50%) – Maps (50%) The survey is completed in Cambodia only and the maps were not produced in either of

				Map validation to be completed in Q3-Q4 2023 <u>Lao PDR:</u> In Lao PDR, extensive on-ground surveys have been undertaken across Champasak Province including 159 sites in 20 potential peatland areas where soil profiles have been logged.	- Survey was conducted in Kong Kong Province – Srae Ambel District on 10-16 July 2022. - Survey was conducted in Kampot Province Tuek Chhou District on 18-19 March 2022, Phnom Tuek from 26-29 March 2022, and in Kampong Trach and AngKol District in 19-23 April 2023. <u>Lao PDR:</u> Concept Notes were prepared to conduct on-the-ground surveys across Laos in Xiengkhuang and Champasak province signed by PMU and RCU – March 2023.	the two countries. Hence, allotted 25%.
Output 1.2. Important peatland sites assessed and documented	Indicator 1.2 A Number of rapid assessments conducted for significant peatland areas in the target countries (including analysis of the functions and values related to habitats, biodiversity, and carbon storage).	No functions and values evaluations conducted yet. Rapid surveys were conducted for some peatlands under SEApeat and other projects. In Cambodia, mangrove peatlands along coastal areas of Koh Kong Province confirmed by SEApeat to be of regional significance. Limited surveys completed in other areas. In Lao PDR, peatlands within and around Beung Kiat Ngong were confirmed by SEApeat to be of national significance. Limited surveys completed in other areas.	Target 1.2 A A total of three detailed multi-disciplinary assessments with reports undertaken at targeted sites (under component 3) to guide management actions and identify priorities.	1.2A Socio-economic surveys have also been completed for the project sites in both countries and will form part of the values and functions assessment report <u>Cambodia:</u> - An assessment on Koh Kapik Ramsar Site Management Effectiveness was conducted between 05-08 March 2023 using R-METT approach. - In Cambodia the Rapid Assessment on Ecosystem Services in Koh Kapik Ramsar Site was conducted between 23-28 August 2022. <u>Laos:</u> - Rapid biodiversity assessments have been completed in Lao PDR at the	1.2A 3 multi-disciplinary assessments were conducted in Cambodia (Rapid assessment on Ecosystem Services, socio-economic survey, and the R-Mett assessment). However only two assessments were completed in Lao (Rapid biodiversity assessment and socio-economic survey) the water balance assessment report is still being drafted and won't be available for the MTR. (as per the communication with CTA). <u>Cambodia:</u> - Final report of assessment on Koh Kapik Ramsar Site Management Effectiveness using R-METT has been produced. - Rapid Assessment on Ecosystem Services in Koh Kapik Ramsar Site was conducted between 23-28 August 2022, and the final report was produced in December 2022 - Socio-economic surveys have also been completed and technical report produced in Dec 2021. <u>Laos:</u> - Rapid biodiversity assessments report has been completed in Lao PDR in January 2022	83% (6 reports to be prepared in total for Cambodia and Lao PDR. 5 reports are completed so far: 3 for Cambodia and 2 for Lao PDR. A water balance assessment report is due in Lao PDR. It is currently under preparation as communicated by the CTA).

		In Myanmar, peatlands within Inle Lake Watershed were confirmed by SEApeat to be of regional significance. Limited surveys completed in other areas.		project's peatland sites and detailed in a technical report. In Lao PDR a water balance assessment got underway in Q2 and is to be completed Q3/Q4.	- A water balance assessment was expected to commence in May 2022 and to be completed by the end of 2022. However, as per the information from the CTA, this report is still being drafted and won't be available for the MTR. - Socio-economic surveys have also been completed and technical report produced in August 2022.	
	Indicator 1.2 B Number of reports produced.			A final values and functions assessment report is to be completed by end of project	Not assessed as part of the MTR as this needs to be undertaken by end of project by Dec 2023.	

Component 2: Capacity development and policy and legal frameworks						
Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline	End of project Target	Result to Date (from project start to 30 th June 2023)	Midterm Assessment (October 2023)	Progress Rating (HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU)
Outcome 2. Capacity and policy/legal frameworks for sustainable peatland management strengthened	Indicator 2 A Number of people with increased capacity and/or awareness of sustainable peatlands management	Limited awareness of peatlands and knowledge of sustainable management practices	Target 2 A At least 225 people across the three countries have increased capacity and/or awareness of sustainable peatlands management.	2A: A total of 314 persons have participated in awareness raising events on peatland assessment and management in Cambodia and Lao PDR. Note: The combined total of trained stakeholders is now 314 key stakeholders. The target of 225 stakeholders was estimated during design validation to have consisted of 2 workshops each in Lao PDR and Cambodia with 35 participants each. This equates to 140 stakeholders without the inclusion of Myanmar targets. Therefore, Lao PDR and Cambodia has exceeded their combined targets by 224%.	2A: A total of 607 (130 in Cambodia and 477 in Laos) people participated in various awareness raising activities in Cambodia and Laos as confirmed by the activity completion reports. Moreover, to facilitate the capacity building and awareness raising activities communication material on peatland assessment and management that includes booklet, trifold, and grievance mechanism poster were prepared as part of the project.	Highly Satisfactory (HS)
Outputs	Indicators	Baseline	End of project Target	Result to Date (from project start to 30 th June 2023)	Midterm Assessment (October 2023)	Progress Rating (HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU)
	Indicator 2 B Number of policy/legal frameworks improved/strengthened		Target 2 B At least two policy/legal frameworks per country improved/strengthened	2B: The target of 2 policy/legal frameworks per country has been exceeded. A total of 8 laws, plans, policies, guidelines, or strategies have been strengthened. <u>Lao:</u> Lao PDR has strengthened 3 legal/regulatory documents: one strategy; one management plan; and one policy. <u>Cambodia:</u> Cambodia has strengthened 5 legal/regulatory documents: one law; two policies, and two plans.	2B: The result to date progress indicates that a total of 7 laws, plans, policies, guidelines, or strategies have been strengthened (3 in Laos and 4 in Cambodia). However, further information/documents are required to confirm the progress. <u>Lao:</u> Strengthening of the 3 legal/regulatory documents is in progress in Laos that includes one strategy, one management plan and one policy. <u>Cambodia:</u> 4 legal/ regulatory documents were strengthened in Cambodia. The previously reported Protected Area Amendment has now	Highly Satisfactory (HS)

					been incorporated into the Environmental and NR Code (KH).	
Outputs	Indicators	Baseline	End of project Target	Result to Date (from project start)	Midterm Assessment (October 2023)	Implementation Status (%)
Output 2.1. Key stakeholders at various levels trained on peatland assessment, rehabilitation and management and their awareness and understanding of the functions and importance of peatland ecosystems enhanced	Output Indicator 2.1A Number of key stakeholders at national, sub-national and local level trained in peatland assessment, rehabilitation and management. (disaggregated by gender)	There is limited knowledge around peatlands, e.g., their definition and why they are important; this lack of awareness occurs at national, sub-national, and community levels Prior trainings on peatlands assessment and management were conducted under SEApeat. More trainings are needed to include additional stakeholders, particularly at the district and local level in key geographic areas	Target 2.1 A 225 key stakeholders from national and sub-national levels have been trained in peatland assessment, rehabilitation and management of peatland ecosystems.	2.1A: <u>Cambodia</u> - At least 11 people (4 Female) from national level attended the RS online training course. - At least 21 people (8 Female) from national government, NGOs and academy attended the online training on peatland assessment which was conducted by GEC. - An additional 14 local authorities and rangers participated to the training and awareness raising about peatlands in Preah Sihanouk Province on 28 December 2022. <u>Lao PDR</u> 18 persons participated in the training on peatland survey in July 2021.	2.1A: <u>Cambodia:</u> - The remote sensing and GIS training was organized on 30th September 2020 at The Ministry of Environment Cambodia. There were 13 Participants (3 female). - Training was conducted by GEC virtually, for all the four modules on peatland assessment. - For module 1 – 21 people participated (13 male and 8 females). - For modules 2a- 33 people participated (19 male and 14 females). - For module 2b – 21 people participated (13 male and 8 females) - For module 3 & 4 – 35 people participated (20 male and 15 females) - The Meeting with Preah Sihanouk Provincial Department of Environment was conducted from 27-29 December 2022 to discuss and request for coordination and support with the on-ground survey in Preah Sihanouk Province and to disseminate peatland definition and ecosystem value to Preah Sihanouk Provincial Department of Environment. A total of 18 participated in the meeting. - Moreover, in Cambodia a workshop on Promoting, Training and Raising Awareness on the Importance of Peatland Ecosystem for Local Authorities in Kep and Kampot Province was conducted in February 2023, in which 78 people participated, as verified by the MTR team through the list of participants provided in the final workshop report. <u>Lao PDR:</u> - The training on remote sensing and GIS took place between 18th Feb 2021 to 5th March 2021. 22 people participated in the training including 7 females.	100% More than 140 key stakeholders from national and subnational levels have been trained. (Total no. of participants in Cambodia = 13 +21+18+78 = 130. In Laos = 22. So total no. of participation = 130+22 = 152)

				57 persons participated in the Mini Symposium on Peatland in Lao PDR in January 2022 - On 18 March 2023, an additional 200 people had their awareness raised by participating in the world peatland day celebration hosted by the project in Lao PDR.	- Based on the agenda document and photographs it can be said that the Mini symposium Presentation was conducted in January 2022. However, the number of participants could not be confirmed as the final report is not available with the MTR team. - Awareness raising on importance of peatlands and peatland management in 4 target villages in Pathoumphone District in peatland areas of Champasak Province in Lao PDR was conducted as part of celebration of 3rd World Peatlands Day on 2nd June 2023. However, the MTR Team could not verify the number of participants for the world peatland day celebration in Lao PDR in 2023.	
	Output Indicator 2.1B Availability of harmonized information and training materials on peatlands in national languages (for use at national, sub-national and local levels).		Target 2.1 B Develop stakeholder specific training and awareness raising materials on peatlands and translate into national languages.	2.1B: <u>Cambodia</u> - The Booklet, trifold and grievance mechanism poster were developed and translated. - Other awareness raising materials such as peatland video, peatland sketch story book and peatland kid song were developed and finalized. Those materials were used for the training and awareness raising activities. <u>Lao PDR:</u> Brochure, poster, and booklet have been developed and translated into Lao language	2.1B: <u>Cambodia:</u> - The Booklet, trifold and grievance mechanism poster were developed and translated. - Other awareness raising materials such as peatland video, peatland sketch story book and peatland kid song were developed and finalized. <u>Lao PDR:</u> The Brochure, poster, and booklet have been developed and translated into Lao language.	100%
Output 2.2. National strategies and/or action plans for protection and sustainable use of peatland ecosystems prepared and peatlands	Output Indicator 2.2A Availability of guidance for mainstreaming peatlands into national policies and plans suitable	Peatlands are not currently included in regulatory frameworks in the target countries; there is limited protection of these ecosystems outside of national protected areas	Target 2.2 A General guidance document for mainstreaming peatlands developed at regional level.	2.2A: Guidance document completed.	2.2A: The Guidance Document for mainstreaming peatlands was developed by GEC and the final document produced in May 2023.	100%

mainstreamed into national and sub-national policies and regulations	for the Mekong region based on ASEAN experience.	(PAs), and within PAs there is not sufficient mention of peatlands in management plans or enforcement of regulations. While all three countries are in draft stage of wetland guidelines, strategies, and/or action plans, to date there is limited consideration around peatlands specifically in these documents.				
	Output Indicator 2.2 B Number of national or sub-national plans, policies or strategies that incorporate peatland conservation provisions, based on consultations with relevant stakeholders (including women and local communities).	All three countries are part of the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution and have endorsed the ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy (APMS) requiring each country to produce a National Action Plan on Peatlands by 2020. However, the countries need additional technical support in order to be able to develop their NAPPs.	Target 2.2 B At least two national or sub-national plans, policies, guidelines or strategies per country incorporate peatland conservation provisions.	2.2B: <u>Lao:</u> The Lao PDR has strengthened 3 legal/regulatory documents: • One strategy: A 4th and 5th consultation workshop to finalise National Water Resources and Strategy for Lao PDR was completed. • One management plan: The Beung Kiat Ngong Ramsar Site Management Plan - Lao PDR was approved in April 2023 • One policy: A Ministerial Decision on Wetlands Management in Lao PDR (under SUPA project in Lao PDR) • NAPP: Lao PDR National Action Plan for Peatlands (NAPP) still to be drafted.	2.2B: <u>Lao:</u> Strengthening of the 3 legal/regulatory documents is in progress in Laos: • One strategy: One strategy prepared for management and use of natural water resources until 2030. The strategy was prepared by the Ministry of natural resources and environment in July 2023. • One management plan: Management plan prepared for BKN Ramar site by Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment in August 2023 • One policy: A Ministerial Decision on Wetlands Management in Lao PDR was completed on August 4th, 2023. The decree lays down the principle, regulations and measures regarding the management and monitoring of peatland. • As per the communication with CTA and GEC, the Lao PDR National Action Plan for Peatlands (NAPP) still needs to be drafted. As of now concept note has been prepared for drafting the NAPP.	100%
				<u>Cambodia:</u> Cambodia has strengthened 5 legal/regulatory documents: • One law: The Law of Protected Areas – Cambodia (draft amendment) • Two policies: i) Draft Cambodian Environment and Natural Resource Code and ii) Draft Cambodian White Paper on Environment and Natural Resources	<u>Cambodia:</u> 4 legal/ regulatory documents were strengthened that include the following: • One law: The Law of Protected Areas – Cambodia (draft amendment) has been incorporated into the Environmental and NR Code. • Two policies: i) Draft Cambodian Environment and Natural Resource Code was approved by the national assembly in May 2023 and reviewed by the senate in June 2023.	

				• Two plans: i) Draft Cambodian Pentangular Strategic Plan and ii) Cambodian Coastal Peatland Action Plan (instead of the NAPP) to be finalised.	ii) Draft Cambodian White Paper on Environment and Natural Resources was prepared in December 2022. • Two plans: i) The Cambodian Pentangular Strategy – Phase 1 was prepared in August 2023. ii) Draft Action Plan for Coastal Peatlands Conservation and Management prepared for Cambodia in 2023.	
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Component 3: Component 3 – Development and demonstration of Best Management Practices						
Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline	End of project Target	Result to Date (from project start)	Midterm Assessment (October 2023)	Progress Rating (HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU)
Outcome 3. Integrated sustainable management of peatland ecosystems in the targeted countries demonstrated, with an emphasis on conserving biodiversity, reducing GHG emissions and strengthening sustainable livelihoods for local communities	Outcome Indicator 3A Area of peatland under improved management	Limited specified management of peatland ecosystems in protected area management plans and related sustainable livelihoods	Target 3A 14,600 ha of peatland under improved management	3A: - A combined total of 5,587 (611 in Lao and 4,976 in Cambodia) ha of peatland area has been participatorily demarcated to date. - Awareness raising on peatland conservation objectives have been completed within the communities in both Lao PDR and Cambodia.	3A: As per the PIR a combined total of 5,587 (611 in Lao and 4976 in Cambodia) Ha of peatland area was supposed to be participatorily demarcated. However, as communicated by the CTA and cross checking the Demarcation document, the MTR team found that the actual demarcated area was misreported. The country-wise demarcation details are below. <u>Cambodia:</u> The demarcated area is 587 ha of the core zone of KKRS. The 4,976 ha is actually the total PKWS peatland area (to be validated by the peat surveys). <u>Lao PDR:</u> 92 ha of Beung Baphat and Beung Papeoyai Wetlands consisting of 39 ha of peatland have been participatorily demarcated. As part of the project various activities related to raising awareness on peatland conservation have been undertaken within the communities in both Lao PDR and Cambodia. <u>Cambodia:</u> - In August 2022, an awareness-raising event was held in Koh Kong province for primary and secondary students and local communities. - In February 2023, a workshop on promoting, training, and raising awareness about the importance of the Peatland Ecosystem for local authorities took place in Kep and Kampot Province, Explained in 3.1 A below. <u>Lao PDR:</u> - Consultations were conducted with three communities, namely Thongxay, Kala, and Kaeng Nang Ang Villages in April 2022 on raising awareness among local communities about the values and functions of peatlands in and around Beung Kiat Ngong. These consultations included participation from	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)

					villagers and District/Provincial officers. Explained in the 3.2 A below.	
	Outcome Indicator 3B Number of community members who have adopted sustainable livelihood practices that allow for sustainable management and use of peatland areas		Target 3 B 500 community members (at least 250 women) have adopted sustainable livelihood practices	3B: Livelihoods implementations are on track to be completed by end of project. A total of 96 households (96 women) are now participating in the livelihoods program. Note: the target of 500 community members (250 women) includes Myanmar. Community members here is taken to mean households (HHs). The targets for Lao PDR and Cambodia are 100 households (50 women) for each country project site. Cambodia will meet 75% of the target and Lao PDR 21%.	3B: The livelihood implementation activities are underway in both the countries, however, as per the available reports the livelihood support activities are more advanced in Laos as there is limited information available to verify for livelihoods activities completion in Cambodia. Till the time of MTR only concept notes and not the final report for the livelihood development activities were available for Cambodia, whereas for Laos the final report for livelihood activities has been prepared, however the number of households (96 households) participating in the livelihoods program for both countries could not be verified due to availability of only the concept notes for Cambodia that do not mention the total number of households selected for the project. For Laos 14 households have been identified in concept note for cattle fattening prepared in July 2023. Explained in detail in 3.1 B (for Cambodia) and 3.2 B (for Laos).	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)
Outputs	Indicators	Baseline	End of project Target	Result to Date (from project start)	Midterm Assessment (October 2023)	Implementation Status (%)
Output 3.1. Protection and sustainable use of the peatlands in Peam Krasop Wildlife Sanctuary enhanced	Output Indicator 3.1A Number of pilot sites established demonstrating best management practices of peatlands.	Alternative aquaculture development identified as a need during inception mission Ecotourism development identified as priority during inception mission There are various past and current projects in Koh Kapik (e.g., BCR, MFF, dolphins, Mekong WET, etc.).	Target 3.1 A - Two pilot sites established within PKWS (Boeung Kachhang and Koh Kapik); - Identification and demarcation of important peatland areas around these sites;	3.1 A In Cambodia, participatory demarcation of a total 4,976 ha of peatland area was completed in the reporting period. Two pilot sites established within PKWS (Boeung Kachhang and Koh Kapik); identification and demarcation of important peatland areas around these sites; At least 10 demarcation posts were installed in the core area of the PKWS for local communities to be aware of the core area boundary.	3.1 A The amount of demarcated area in Cambodia has been misreported. The 4,976 ha is actually the total PKWS peatland area (to be validated by the peat surveys). The demarcated area is actually 587 ha of the core zone of KKRS.	75% (Allocated 50% for demarcation/ establishment of the pilot sites and another 50% for awareness raising around the areas). For demarcation/ establishment of the pilot sites, we have received the report for the Koh Kapik Ramsar site but not for the Boeung Kachhang site. Hence, we have allotted 25% achievement for demarcation/ establishment of the pilot sites.

		The current management plan for PKWS does not have specific provisions for peatlands	Creation of awareness around these areas.	Creation of awareness around these areas.	- Awareness raising activity was conducted among primary and secondary students and local communities in Koh Kong province on 19th august 2022. - A workshop on Promoting, Training and Raising Awareness on the Importance of Peatland Ecosystem for Local Authorities in Kep and Kampot Province was conducted in February 2023, in which 78 people participated as verified by the list of participants provided in the final workshop report.	Further, since the awareness raising activities have been conducted around the nearby areas, the entire 50% is allotted.
	Output Indicator 3.1B Number of community members (disaggregated by gender) trained in sustainable livelihood practices.		Target 3.1 B 100 community members (at least 50 women) trained in sustainable livelihood practices in the selected target villages of Koh Kapik and Boeung Kachhang within PKWS.	3.1 B: Socio-economic surveys and Stakeholder Engagement Plans completed. Livelihoods plan was completed in Q1 and livelihoods implementation began in Q2 and is ongoing through Q3-Q4. At the two sites in PKWS, 75 households are participating in the livelihood's improvement program.	3.1 B: The Socio-economic survey for Cambodia was completed in December 2021 and Draft stakeholder engagement Plan Prepared in June 2020. Moreover, a Social Impact Assessment (for both countries) was also completed in 2017 before the start of the project. - Before the preparation of the livelihood plan a concept was prepared in December 2022 to undertake the feasibility study for developing the proposed livelihood strategy. - Further, a concept note for developing sustainable livelihood plan of Peatlands was prepared in May 2023. - Till the time of MTR, only concept notes were prepared; No training/ activity completion reports were available to confirm the participation of community members trained in sustainable livelihood practices in PKWS.	20% (The socio-economic survey was carried out with the objective to identify the current socio-economic situation of the community members in KKRS. The survey was able to identify 263 people out of which 172 were women. No training was conducted but the stakeholders were identified, and their socio-economic situation assessed. Hence, allotted 20%)
	Output Indicator 3.1C Availability of peatland conservation provisions in PKWS management plan.		Target 3.1 C Peatland conservation incorporated into PKWS management plan.	3.1 C Two consultation workshops were organized, and the draft management plan incorporating peatland conservation measures was developed in the reporting period.	3.1 C Two sub-national consultation workshops were conducted to gather information in order to revise the management plan to incorporate provisions related to peatlands. The first consultation workshop was conducted on 6th April 2023 in Koh Kong Province and the second consultation workshop was conducted on 5th May 2023 in Phnom Penh.	50% (The first workshop aimed to assess the current management action at KKRS. 32 people participated in the first workshop. The second workshop aimed to obtain the inputs for drafting the management plan. 62 people participated in the second workshop.)

Output 3.2. Protection and sustainable use of the peatlands in the Beung Kiat Ngong landscape enhanced	Output Indicator 3.2A Number of pilot sites established demonstrating best management practices of peatlands.	Current threats to peatlands in and around Beung Kiat Ngong include agricultural encroachment and drainage, peat extraction, burning, over-fishing, and over-hunting. Current management plan for Beung Kiat Ngong does not have specific provisions for peatlands.	Target 3.2 A One pilot site established around Bung Naphat, a peatland located outside of the BKN Ramsar site to the northeast. The focus will be on three communities: Ban Thongsay; Kala, and Na'ang.	3.2 A 92 ha of Beung Baphat and Beung Papeoyai Wetlands consisting of 39 ha of peatland have been participatorily demarcated. - Consultations with the three communities (Thongxay, Kala, and Kaeng Nang Ang Villages) have been carried out during the reporting period.	3.2 A - No documents available with the MTR Team to assess the indicator (including the number of pilot sites) and the 92 ha of Beung Baphat and Beung Papeoyai Wetlands consisting of 39 ha of peatland that have been participatorily demarcated. - Consultation with the three communities (Thongxay, Kala, and Kaeng Nang Ang Villages) have been carried out on i) Raise awareness of local communities about the values and functions of peatlands in and around Beung Kiat Ngong in April 2022. Participants included villagers and District/Provincial officers.	50% (Consultation with the three communities were conducted in the BKN Ramsar site)
	Output Indicator 3.2B Number of community members (disaggregated by gender) trained in sustainable livelihood practices.		Target 3.2 B 100 community members (at least 50 women) trained in sustainable livelihood practices in the selected target villages.	3.2 B: Socio-economic surveys and Stakeholder Engagement Plans completed. - Livelihoods plan was completed in Q1, and livelihoods implementation began in Q2 and is ongoing through Q3-Q4. 21 households are participating in the new livelihoods program at BKN. 111 villagers (55 women) in the three targeted villages participated in the awareness raising on sustainable peatland utilisation and management, and livelihoods.	3.2 B: - The Socio-economic survey in Laos was conducted and the report was prepared in August 2022. - The Stakeholder Engagement Plan for Laos was prepared in September 2021. - Concept note to undertake livelihood activities in Q3-Q4 has been prepared. However, the livelihood action plan that was prepared in Q1 could not be verified as the final plan was not available with the MTR team. - As part of the training in sustainable livelihood practices, consultation was conducted with 3 target villages on livelihood practices related to sustainable use of peatlands (based on communities' potentials) 96 people participated of which at least 50 were women. 111 people (55 women) participated in raising awareness activity conducted in April 2022 for local communities about the values and functions of peatlands in and around Beung Kiat Ngong that included villagers and District/Provincial officers.	100% (a total of 207 (96 + 111) people trained in sustainable livelihood practices, out of which 105 (50 + 55) were women.)
	Output Indicator 3.2C Availability of peatland conservation		Target 3.2 C Peatland conservation and sustainable management incorporated into	3.2 C A 5-year management plan for the Beung Kiat Ngong Ramsar Site incorporating peatland conservation measures has	3.2 C A Five Year in August 2023, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment prepared the 5-year management plan for the BKN Ramsar site.	100%

	provisions in Beung Kiat Ngong Management Plan.		Beung Kiat Ngong management plan.	been finalized and officially approved.		
Output 3.3. Protection and sustainable use of the peatlands in Inle Lake Watershed enhanced	Output Indicator 3.3A Number of training and awareness-raising workshops conducted for relevant government departments and local communities.	Current threats to significant mound springs, peat domes and other terrestrial peatlands within the Inle Lake basin include water extraction for community water use, peat extraction, erosion from upland farming practices, and agricultural encroachment Threats to floating peatlands within Inle Lake include conversion to floating gardens, excessive chemical fertilizer and pesticide use, routine burning, and cutting and removal for waterway construction	Target 3.3 A At least three training and awareness-raising workshops conducted.	No project activities have commenced in or around Inle Lake – Myanmar activities on hold.	This indicator is not being assessed as the project is suspended in Myanmar.	
	Output Indicator 3.3B Number of pilot sites established demonstrating best management practices of peatlands.	Current management plan for Inle Lake WS does not have specific provisions for peatlands.	Target 3.3 B - One pilot site established within the community of Taung Po Gyi (northwest shore of Inle Lake), for conservation of their mound spring peatland and development of alternative livelihood strategies that minimize impacts to peatlands. - Additional pilot sites established within five villages of Inle		This indicator is not being assessed as the project is suspended in Myanmar.	

			Lake that are participating in a preliminary project with the Agricultural Department related to reduced-chemical farming of floating peat areas. • Demonstration of relevant agroforestry practices in upland areas of Let Maung Kway village tract.			
	Output Indicator 3.3C • Formation of an Inle Lake Peatlands Task Force in collaboration with the Inle Lake Wildlife Sanctuary Office and the Committee on Inle Lake Sustainability to address basin-wide issues relevant to the sustainable management of peatlands at the basin scale.		Target 3.3 C • Inle Lake Peatlands Task Force established. • Peatland regulations and recommendations incorporated into at least two existing frameworks. • At least three actions implemented to support basin-level management.		This indicator is not being assessed as the project is suspended in Myanmar.	

	• Number of peatland regulations and recommendations incorporated into existing frameworks, including the Inle Lake Management Plan. • Number of actions to support basin-level management (development of alternative biofertilizer options, training on fire management, development of best management practices for waterway construction)					
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Component 4: Regional cooperation						
Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline	End of project Target	Result to Date (from project start)	Midterm Assessment (October 2023)	Progress Rating (HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU)
Outcome 4. Regional cooperation among countries in peatland sustainable management is enhanced	Outcome Indicator 4A Number of mechanisms used to support regional cooperation		Target 4 A At least four regional meetings and exchanges held	4A - One regional face to face event was held in Bangkok during 2019; - At least 5 regional meetings and trainings have taken place online during 2020, 2021, and 2022. - The project participated at the COP 26 event in Glasgow (2021), through an online presentation at the Peatlands Pavilion. - In Q3 2022, Mekong Peatlands reported progress and shared information at the 7th annual AFTP meeting in Singapore. - In Q4 2022, Mekong Peatlands participated in an online meeting of the Knowledge Coordination Group organised by	4A The indicator has exceeded the target of conducting 4 regional meetings; 5 regional meetings have been held till date (explained in detail in indicator 4.2A below). Two exchange visits have been planned as part of the project (explained in detail in 4.1C below). 1st exchange visit was conducted in October 2022 in Malaysia and 2nd is planned in November 2023 in Thailand. - The project's Inception Workshop was held on 26 November 2019 in Bangkok followed by the 1st Regional Project Steering Committee Meeting held on 29 November 2019 in Bangkok. 2 regional project steering committee meetings have been conducted online - 2nd RPSC in 2020 and 3rd RPSC in 2021. And 6 trainings were conducted online by GEC in Cambodia and Laos in 2020 and 2021. - In Nov 2021, the CTA presented an overview of the project at the Peatlands Pavilion at the COP 26 event in Glasgow (through an online live presentation). - Key stakeholders from the Mekong Peatland Project participated at 7th annual AFTP meeting in Singapore in 2022 to present the update on project progress and outcomes of the 4th PSC meeting. - In Q4 December 2022, Mekong Peatlands participated in an online meeting of the Knowledge Coordination Group organised by ASEAN Secretariat and contributed	Satisfactory (S)

				ASEAN Secretariat and other Regional Peatland Programmes. Mekong Peatlands contributed to verifying local language translations for the ASEAN country peatland conservation guidelines for Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.	to verifying local language translations for the ASEAN country peatland conservation guidelines for Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.	
Outputs	Indicators	Baseline	End of project Target	Result to Date (from project start)	Midterm Assessment (October 2023)	Implementation Status (%)
Output 4.1. Experiences and best practices for peatland assessment and management in Mekong countries documented and shared	Output Indicator 4.1A Availability of harmonized guidelines for conservation and sustainable use of peatlands	Best management practices for peatland management have been implemented in pilot projects in Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines; information has been shared via ASEAN workshops and meetings.	Target 4.1A Guidelines for conservation and sustainable use of peatland resources developed and translated into national languages.	4.1A: The development of guidelines for sustainable use of peatlands commenced in Q2 with the drafting of an outline and table of contents. To be completed by Dec 2023.	4.1A: The draft has not progressed much beyond the outline that is described in the Concept Note that was prepared and signed in August 2023 for the development of guidelines for conservation, rehabilitation, and sustainable use of peatland resources. As per the communication from the CTA, there are plans to hold discussions during the Thailand Exchange visit when the whole team is together with GEC. This draft won't be available for the MTR to review.	25% (Only the concept note is available with the MTR team)
	Output Indicator 4.1B Number of lessons learned documents produced and shared at the regional level	Regional exchanges occur via ASEAN task force meetings and other exchanges related to the regional reduction of transboundary haze	Target 4.1B At least one lessons learned document produced per country and shared at the regional level	4.1B No lessons learnt have been developed. Scheduled for Dec 2023.	4.1B This indicator will be part of the Terminal Evaluation as no lessons learnt have been developed till the time of MTR and are scheduled for completion by Dec 2023.	Not applicable, as this would be evaluated at the Terminal Evaluation.
	Output Indicator 4.1C Number of key stakeholders (disaggregated by gender) participating in exchange visit		Target 4.1C A total of 40 key stakeholders participates in exchange visits to other Mekong country(ies)	4.1C The first knowledge exchange visit was held in October 2022 to Malaysia. 23 key stakeholders participated in the exchange visit including 8 women. A second exchange visit is planned for Thailand in Q3 or Q4 2023 with similar number of participants.	4.1C First knowledge exchange visit was held in October 2022 in Malaysia. Total number of participants were 23 including 9 females (11 from Cambodia (6 female) and 12 from Lao PDR (3 female)). Second exchange visit yet to take place in November 2023 according to Concept note prepared by GEC.	58% (out of 40 key stakeholders only 23 participated)

Output 4.2. Technical project implementation support and coordination provided	Output Indicator 4.2A Number of key stakeholders (disaggregated by gender) participating in regional project inception workshop and annual PSC meetings.	Regional exchanges occur via ASEAN task force meetings and other exchanges related to the regional reduction of transboundary haze	Target 4.2 A Support participation for 9 key stakeholders (3 per country) at a regional project inception workshop and annual PSC meetings.	4.2A • Six key stakeholders (two female and four male) participated in the project's inception workshop and first RPSC during 2019. • 12 key stakeholders from the three countries (six female and six male) participated in the project's 2nd RPSC meeting (2020) • 9 key stakeholders from the three countries (five male and four female) participated in the project's 3rd RPSC meeting (2021). • 10 key stakeholders from the Lao (2 persons) and Cambodian (3 persons) PMUs, ASEAN Secretariat and partner GEC participated in the 4th RPSC held in Singapore on 6 Sept 2022, back-to-back with the 7th annual ATFP meeting which Mekong Peatland also participated in.	4.2A • Six key stakeholders (two female and four male) participated in the project's inception workshop held on 26 November 2019 in Bangkok. The participants included 4 key stakeholders from Cambodia (1 female) and 2 from Laos (1 female). Final project inception report produced in March 2020. • 4 key stakeholder (one female and three male) participated in the 1st Regional Project Steering Committee (RPSC) meeting that was held in Bangkok on 29 November 2019. The participants included 2 key stakeholders from Cambodia (no female) and 2 from Laos (1 female). • The 2nd RPSC meeting was held in November 2020 (virtual). 12 key stakeholders (3 from Cambodia (2 female) and 5 from Laos (no female), and 4 from Myanmar (no male)) participated. • The 3rd RPSC meeting was held in June 2021 (virtual). 9 key stakeholders (4 from Cambodia (2 female) and 3 from Laos (1 female), and 2 from Myanmar (1 female)) participated. • The 4th RPSC meeting was held in September 2022 (Singapore). 5 key stakeholders (3 from Cambodia (no female) and 2 from Laos (no female)) participated. • The 5th RPSC meeting was held in July 2023 (Lao PDR).	100% (6 key stakeholders participated in the inception workshop and 4 in 1st RPSC meeting, 12 in 2nd RPSC meeting, 9 in 3rd RPSC meeting and 5 in 4th RPSC meeting)
	Output Indicator 4.2B		Target 4.2 B 18 key stakeholders (6	4.2B • The RCU and Project Partners have participated	4.2B • As per the information gathered through key informant interviews,	100%

	Number of key stakeholders (women and men) participating in regional workshop on peatlands (during the last year of the project cycle)		per country) (women and men) participate in regional workshop on peatlands management.	in numerous on-line training workshops and meetings held by the ASEAN Secretariat and other regional peatland programmes, throughout 2020-2022. - The project held its first Project Supervision Mission in November 2020, and in 2021 held Project Progress meetings with Cambodia and Lao PDR teams. The third PSM was conducted in Sept 2022. - The project held a regional workshop on mainstreaming peatlands into policy and plans in October 2022 in Malaysia. 23 key stakeholders (11 from Cambodia and 12 from Lao PDR) participated in the workshop including 8 women.	throughout 2020–2022, the RCU and Project Partners took part in several online training seminars and meetings hosted by the ASEAN Secretariat and other regional peatland programs. - The first Project Supervision mission was conducted in November 2020. In June 2021, a regional project steering committee meeting was held. Further, the second supervision mission was conducted in September 2022. - This activity was part of the 1st exchange visit that was conducted in Malaysia from 10 -15 October 2022. The workshop on mainstreaming peatlands into policy and plans (for Laos and Cambodia) was held on 14th October 2022. 23 key stakeholders (11 from Cambodia and 12 from Lao PDR) participated in the workshop including 8 women.	
	Output Indicator 4.2C Number of national/local level project coordination and monitoring meetings (including inception meetings, NSC meetings)		Target 4.2 C Organise at least one annual project coordination and monitoring meeting per country	4.2 C Annual project coordination meetings have been held in Myanmar during 2020, Cambodia in 2020 and 2021, and in Lao PDR during 2021.	4.2 C Till the time of MTR one annual project coordination and monitoring meeting per country has been conducted. Cambodia: No record of annual project coordination meeting that were held in Cambodia in 2021. Although inception workshop was conducted in 2020. Lao PDR: Till date one annual coordination meeting held in Lao (inception meeting held on 15 th January 2021). Myanmar: A national consultation meeting was held in Myanmar during 2020.	66% (One annual coordination meeting was held in Laos but no record of such meeting for Cambodia is available)

Table 2: Budget and Expenditure
(Up to 30 June 2023)

Cumulative

Component	Total budget ¹	Total expenditure			Balance	Delivery rate (%)
		current period ²	to end of previous period	to date		
Component 1: Assessment and documentation of peatlands in targeted countries						
Activities	261,989	70,121	147,330	217,451	44,538	83%
Project staff and consultancies	278,800	11,450	254,527	265,977	12,823	95%
Sub total	540,789	81,571	401,857	483,428	57,361	89%
Component 2: Capacity development and policy and legal frameworks						
Activities	117,294	18,618	53,465	72,083	45,211	61%
Project staff and consultancies	204,500	19,838	177,662	197,500	7,000	97%
Sub total	321,794	38,456	231,127	269,583	52,211	84%
Component 3: Development and demonstration of Best Management Practices						
Activities	173,573	32,674	36,129	68,803	104,770	40%
Project staff and consultancies	138,600	18,260	103,489	121,749	16,851	88%
Sub total	312,173	50,934	139,617	190,552	121,621	61%
Component 4: Regional Cooperation						
Activities	103,149	8,327	49,395	57,723	45,426	56%
Project staff and consultancies	158,000	13,052	70,788	83,840	74,160	53%
Sub total	261,149	21,379	120,184	141,563	119,586	54%
Project management costs	112,395	18,919	85,078	103,997	8,398	93%
Total	1,548,300	211,260	977,863	1,189,123	359,177	77%

Cambodia

Component	Total budget ¹	Total expenditure			Balance	Delivery rate (%)
		current period ²	to end of previous period	to date		
Component 1: Assessment and documentation of peatlands in targeted countries						
Activities	51,139	10,762	35,923	46,685	4,454	91%
Project staff and consultancies	35,000	-	35,000	35,000	0	0%
Sub total	86,139	10,762	70,923	81,685	4,454	95%
Component 2: Capacity development and policy and legal frameworks						
Activities	42,744	11,925	15,033	26,958	15,786	63%
Project staff and consultancies	35,000	-	34,948	34,948	52	0%
Sub total	77,744	11,925	49,981	61,906	15,838	80%
Component 3: Development and demonstration of Best Management Practices						
Activities	62,673	12,648	13,562	26,210	36,463	-
Project staff and consultancies	105,300	18,260	70,322	88,582	16,718	0%
Sub total	167,973	30,908	83,884	114,792	53,181	68%
Component 4: Regional Cooperation						
Activities	15,249	-	7,214	7,214	8,035	47%
Project staff and consultancies	-	-	-	0	0	0%
Sub total	15,249	-	7,214	7,214	8,035	47%
Project management costs	23,875	3,914	19,364	23,278	597	97%
Total	370,980	57,509	231,366	288,875	82,105	78%

Laos

Component	Total budget ¹	Total expenditure			Balance	Delivery rate (%)
		current period ²	to end of previous period	to date		
Component 1: Assessment and documentation of peatlands in targeted countries						
Activities	185,100	58,222	92,841	151,063	34,037	82%
Project staff and consultancies	-	-	-	0	0	0%
Sub total	185,100	58,222	92,841	151,063	34,037	82%
Component 2: Capacity development and policy and legal frameworks						
Activities	57,500	4,676	29,014	33,690	23,810	59%
Project staff and consultancies	-	-	-	0	0	0%
Sub total	57,500	4,676	29,014	33,690	23,810	59%
Component 3: Development and demonstration of Best Management Practices						
Activities	110,900	20,026	22,567	42,593	68,307	-
Project staff and consultancies	-	-	-	0	0	0%
Sub total	110,900	20,026	22,567	42,593	68,307	38%
Component 4: Regional Cooperation						
Activities	35,700	3,307	13,344	16,651	19,049	47%
Project staff and consultancies	-	-	-	0	0	0%
Sub total	35,700	3,307	13,344	16,651	19,049	47%
Project management costs	20,800	4,111	15,539	19,650	1,150	94%
Total	410,000	90,342	173,304	263,646	146,354	64%

RCU

Component	Total budget ¹	Total expenditure			Balance	Delivery rate (%)
		current period ²	to end of previous period	to date		
Component 1: Assessment and documentation of peatlands in targeted countries						
Activities	25,750	1,137	18,566	19,703	6,047	77%
Project staff and consultancies	243,800	11,450	219,527	230,977	12,823	95%
Sub total	269,550	12,587	238,093	250,680	18,870	93%
Component 2: Capacity development and policy and legal frameworks						
Activities	17,050	2,018	9,417	11,435	5,615	67%
Project staff and consultancies	169,500	19,838	142,714	162,552	6,948	96%
Sub total	186,550	21,856	152,132	173,988	12,562	93%
Component 3: Development and demonstration of Best Management Practices						
Activities	-	-	-	-	-	-
Project staff and consultancies	33,300	-	33,167	33,167	133	100%
Sub total	33,300	-	33,167	33,167	133	100%
Component 4: Regional Cooperation						
Activities	52,200	5,020	28,838	33,858	18,342	65%
Project staff and consultancies	158,000	13,052	70,788	83,840	74,160	53%
Sub total	210,200	18,072	99,626	117,698	92,502	56%
Project management costs	67,720	10,895	50,176	61,071	6,649	90%
Total	767,320	63,410	573,193	636,603	130,717	83%

Pictures from the Field Visit



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