

MID-TERM REVIEW

Project ID:	9539
Project Name:	Enhancing Sustainability of Protected Area Systems and Stabilizing Agro-production in Adjoining Areas through Improved IAS Management
Countr(ies):	Malawi
Implementing Agency:	UNEP

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I. Overview

A. Description

Project name

Enhancing Sustainability of Protected Area Systems and Stabilizing Agro-production in Adjoining Areas through Improved IAS Management

Country

Malawi

GEF ID
9539

Implementing Agency
UNEP

Executing Entity

Environmental Affairs Department, Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy and Mining

Trust Fund
GET

Project Type
MSP

Objective

To prevent new invasions and reduce the current impacts of invasive alien species (IAS) in protected areas and adjoining agro-ecosystems in Malawi

B. Key Dates

CEO Endorsement/Approval
3/15/2018

Agency Approval
4/11/2018

Implementation Start
7/10/2018

First Disbursement
7/10/2018

Expected MTR
1/30/2023

MTR Submission
1/23/2026

Actual MTR
1/31/2023

Expected Completion
5/31/2024

II. PROGRESS STATUS AND ISSUES

A. Main MTR Findings

Overall Finding: Despite some challenges, the Project has made varying degrees of progress across areas of outcomes, but the overall progress can be invariably rated as Satisfactory, and that some areas need additional time for improvement to ensure attainment of the end-of-project targets for greater impacts.

Strategic Relevance: The project strategy is relevant with regards to both global and local contexts. The project has clear linkage to sub-programme 4 of GEF-6, the UN Environment Sub-programme(s) on Health and Productive Ecosystems (2020-2021), and the GEF-7 Biodiversity Strategy. Implementation is progressing consistent with UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy (2022–2025), and the programme of work (POW) and budget (2022–2023) which also focus on responding planetary crises - biodiversity and nature loss, among others. In addition, the IAS project address the Malawi NBSAP and the Strategy for Managing Invasive Species in Africa (2021-2030). The participation of UNEP and CABI is ensuring the maintenance of linkages to the overall GEF-6 subprogram with sound technical attention. The strategic relevance is thus rated Highly Satisfactory (HS).

Gender mainstreaming: The project factored gender considerations under each of the three project components. For example, the cost-benefit analysis of three 'conflict' species under Component 1 will assess gender-specific impacts and costs, and the role of women in their management and control of IAS through agricultural practices. The recruitment of students for training to undertake the studies considered 1 female and 2 males. Overall progress on gender integration reveals low participation of women, although exception is noted under Component 3 which achieved almost 58% participation. As for, the training of PA staff in identification of IAS only 25% (29 women 57 men) was reported. It was observed that, large number of PA staff are men (89%). This limits the pool of women who could have participated in training sessions. Unfortunately, even in labour related activities, women directly working in the two PAs constitute only 14%, but then this was attributed to the harsh terrain and working environment that necessitate absence from homes for days which obviously does not favor women. All awareness activities have engaged women to the level of 40%. On a technical level, the MTR established that the Project Coordinator, and the Chair of the PSC are both ladies. Deliberate effort has been made to bring a lady as an Environmental, Social and Gender expert. Rating is Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU).

Environmental and Social safeguards: The MTR confirms that gender as much as ESS were both considered in the project design. Women participation was integrated across the three components, but implementation was inadequate. Less than 40% of the target for women participation was missed at the time of MTR. On ESS, the PIU prepared an Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMP). The field mission did not confirm availability of the ESMPs although the PIU suggested that it is only implementation that has been limited. Contrary, MTR raises concerns over, the lack of health and safety precautions, unavailability of HIV and AIDS awareness materials, absence of site grievance redress committees, littering inside PAs, among other issues. To be more proactive, formation of site-specific committees should be encouraged. Consideration for ESS and gender is thus Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU) and urgent response is required.

Effectiveness: The MTR examined progress over output delivery, attainment of direct outcomes and likelihood of impact under this criterion. Results confirm movement towards the right direction although delays overturn attainment of greater effectiveness. Interestingly, all the four outcomes and 11 outputs are delivered within the provisions of the log-frame. Notably, at the time of project inception, Malawi did not have an IAS policy. The development of the NISSAP has culminated into its adoption as a comprehensive national IAS instrument. Progressively, the Project is bringing together various stakeholders in management of IAS in the country through the national and local project committees. MEPA has also established a national coordination unit to collaborate and coordinate among different Government agencies, the private sector, and NGOs. Ongoing activities are promising to have impact in reduction of the IAS impacts in and around PAs. However, the Project requires more time to achieve Component 3 on Knowledge Management, for field trials to generate conclusive results as planned.

Outputs 1 & 4 are the only ones with progress of activities within or below the completion level of 50% while the rest of the outputs (Nine outputs are way above 50% and some have reached 100%). The emergency of COVID19 which limited travel of the International Advisor, limited technical capacity of staff undertaking field trials. Overall, the MTR finds that the achievement of output-level results is Satisfactory based on recognizing of the need for more time than the planned period of project completion.

Financial Management: The MTR found that, the rate of spending is consistent with the project's period of implementation. Delays have been observed against the agreed workplan and the delivery of some outputs including this MTR report, the slow procurement procedures and more. Consultations with UNEP suggested that financial reporting has been consistent and to adequate standards. The MTR confirms that financial management structures and processes were adequately set before the start of the project and are followed in the implementation process. There was a procurement plan in place at the onset of the project but existing procurement procedures are too bureaucratic. In terms of co-financing, at the time of the review (June 2022) the total co-financing received was \$3,815,909. This has increased compared to the \$1,386,538 of June 2020. This is against the planned co-financing of US\$ 5,164,147. Thus, the review established that co-financing arrangement is working beyond expectation but delays in procurement has implications in the overall project performance. Hence, the rating is Moderately Satisfactory.

Sustainability: Sustainability of the project was scrutinized on financial and economic, socio-economic, and environmental dimensions. The findings reveal areas of uncertainty for sustainability although preliminary observation suggest movement towards the right direction.

Economic and Financial Sustainability: The MTR field mission has established that, IAS have gained attraction from both NGOs and the private sector having long-term interests in watershed conservation and biodiversity. There is likelihood of financial and economic resources being available once the GEF assistance ends. However, these stakeholders depend on donor support as well as their business environment which are often characterized by many uncertainties. The level of revenue generation in the two PAs is currently unreliable. Hence, the MTR rates the financial and economic component of sustainability as Moderately Likely. The MTR does not find potential political or social risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outcomes. On the contrary, FGDs suggested that the level of project acceptance has progressively increased among the adjoining PA communities. Although government funding in PAs is limited, the integration of IAS activities into PA Management Plans is the right direction. The Communication and Outreach Strategy, and its implementation is expected to increase the level of awareness of IAS. However, it is not clear as regards to documentation of lessons learned on a continuous basis. The integration of IAS into college curriculum targeting mid-career professionals working in PAs is a healthy intervention for sustainability. However, socio-economic change takes time and demands dedication of resources which PAs have been grappling to meet, hence Moderately Likely.

Environmental Risks to Sustainability: Successful restoration of IAS impacted areas is has been observed during the field missions. But continuity of success is contingent upon comprehensive understanding of additional environmental determinants. Observation in the field saw the engagement of labourers in firebreak making and the MTR affirms that, this will enhance outcomes and results, so far achieved in restoration. However, in the long-term, civic education programme around PAs on the dangers of uncontrolled fire will be required besides undertaking prescribed fire operations to reduce potential impacts in the event its occurrence. Replanting of indigenous species in MMFR will require understanding favorable climate as well. Studies to guide successful ways of restoration on the mountain are required given that some replanted Mulanje Cedar trees are dying, and field discussions attributed this to the combined effects climatic changes and other unknown environmental risks. The rating for environmental sustainability is Moderately Likely considering observed environmental uncertainties.

Efficiency: The project management display strong evidence of satisfactory technical and financial oversight. CABI has been ensuring quality of outputs while UNEP and EAD are efficiently managing a large group of project partners ensuring timely delivery despite stringent procurement procedures. The MTR has also gathered evidence suggesting the use of effective means to achieve project results, such as the use of country partners for co-financing and engagement of NGOs with valued added and comparative advantage in working with local contexts. NGOs are used to disseminate information reaching multiple local communities beyond those living adjacent PAs. Local consultants are used as they are relatively familiar with local contexts, yet at the same time, they are inexpensive. This component is rated Satisfactory.

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- The study established that, the project has lagged behind in terms of indicators on restoration of degraded areas although removal of IAS has progressed to the extent of overachieved.

B. Stakeholder Engagement

They involvement of stakeholder has seen arrangements for co-financing emerging and public awareness contributed to the progress towards achievement of project objectives. The problem of IAS is widespread in adjoining areas of our PAs. Although awareness campaigns have reached far, there limitations to reach beyond the surround communities. The long-term approach will require embedding awareness activities into existing PAs education and outreach activities.

C. Gender Equality

The project factored gender considerations under each of the three project components. For example, the cost-benefit analysis of three 'conflict' species under Component 1 will assess gender-specific impacts and costs, and the role of women in their management and control of IAS through agricultural practices. The recruitment of students for training to undertake the studies considered 1 female and 2 males. Overall progress on gender integration reveals low participation of women, although exception is noted under Component 3 which achieved almost 58% participation. As for, the training of PA staff in identification of IAS only 25% (29 women 57 men) was reported. It was observed that, large number of PA staff are men (89%). This limits the pool of women who could have participated in training sessions. Unfortunately, even in labour related activities, women directly working in the two PAs constitute only 14%, but then this was attributed to the harsh terrain and working environment that necessitate absence from homes for days which obviously does not favor women. All awareness activities have engaged women to the level of 40%. On a technical level, the MTR established that the Project Coordinator, and the Chair of the PSC are both ladies. Deliberate effort has been made to bring a lady as an Environmental, Social and Gender expert.

Rating is Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU).

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D. Knowledge Management

Component 3 of the project is solely pursued to improve knowledge management and broader adoption of developed strategies in PAs. Through our inspection combined with the KIIs, the MTR established that activities under this component have made progressing in generating some important knowledge products. for

example, two MSc students are in the final stages of defending their theses on cost-benefit analysis of selected invasive plants. results from these studies are expected to inform decisions on the management of the species in and around PAs. While stakeholders raised quality issues regarding the studies, the MTR confirms this to be a good starting point given the limited baseline number of IAS studies and awareness in the country.

In addition to the studies, the project has also produced the NISSAP which also raises critical knowledge issues and proposed studies to understand IAS in the country. The MCFW has developed IAS Training Module and the college has also an integrated IAS content into existing curriculum. From a practical view, the project has produced an IAS Field Guide, a Communication Strategy, Newspaper articles, awareness materials (banners, calendars, jingles) among others. There have been several programs on TV, radio, local newspapers that have been aired on the project including community radios. The MTR part of deskwork has revealed that, the project collaborated with other conservation programmes to disseminate IAS messages to International Border and Customs staff in Malawi through a workshop. In summary, the MTR has inspected availability of the following knowledge products (i) Two draft theses on Cost-Benefit Analysis of IAS (ii) The National Invasive Species Strategy and Action Plan (iii) Introductory Module on IAS (iv) Preliminary Reports on IAS field Trials (v) Invasive Alien Species Field guide (vi) National IAS Communication Strategy.

III. Core Indicators

Indicator 1 Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
	370000	370000	

Indicator 1.1 Terrestrial Protected Areas Newly created

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 1.2 Terrestrial Protected Areas Under improved Management effectiveness

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
	370000	370000	

Name of the Protected Area	WDP A ID	IUCN Category	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)	METT score (Baseline at CEO Endorsement)	METT score (Achieved at MTR)	METT score (Achieved at TE)
Mulanje Mountain Forest Reserve	33177	Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources		60,000.00	60,000.00		61.00	70.00	
Nyika National Park	779	Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources		310,000.00	310,000.00		63.00	72.00	

Indicator 3 Area of land and ecosystems under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
	300	2326.51	

Indicator 3.1 Area of degraded agricultural lands under restoration

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
Cropland		100.00	115.70	

Indicator 3.2 Area of forest and forest land under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
	100.00	1,641.21	

Indicator 3.3 Area of natural grass and woodland under restoration

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
Woodlands		100.00	569.60	

Indicator 3.4 Area of wetlands (including estuaries, mangroves) under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

	0.00	0.00	
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Indicator 11 People benefiting from GEF-financed investments

	Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)
Female		80	80	
Male		200	200	
Total	0	280	280	0

IV: Co Financing

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Anticipated at CEO(\$)	Materialized at MTR(\$)
Recipient Country Government	Environmental Affairs Department	Grant	Investment mobilized	187,500.00	112,497.00
Recipient Country Government	Environmental Affairs Department	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	365,500.00	219,300.00
Recipient Country Government	Department of National Parks and Wildlife	Grant	Investment mobilized	60,000.00	
Recipient Country Government	Department of National Parks and Wildlife	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	450,000.00	
Recipient Country Government	Department of Agricultural Research Services	Grant	Investment mobilized	100,600.00	614,525.00
Recipient Country Government	Department of Agricultural	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	457,700.00	792,485.00

	Research Services				
Recipient Country Government	Department of Land Resources Conservation	Grant	Investment mobilized	92,200.00	
Recipient Country Government	Department of Land Resources Conservation	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	595,500.00	
Recipient Country Government	Forest Research Institute of Malawi	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	354,052.00	
Recipient Country Government	Department of Forestry	Grant	Investment mobilized	178,800.00	1,754,019.00
Recipient Country Government	Department of Forestry	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	503,800.00	2,804,730.00
Recipient Country Government	National Herbarium and Botanical Gardens	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	235,800.00	235,800.00
Recipient Country Government	Museums of Malawi	Grant	Investment mobilized	191,000.00	191,000.00
Recipient Country Government	Museums of Malawi	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	110,000.00	110,000.00
Recipient Country Government	Peace Parks Foundation	Grant	Investment mobilized	355,000.00	
GEF Agency	United Nations Environment	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	100,000.00	
Other	Mount Mulanje Mountain Conservation Trust	Grant	Investment mobilized	100,000.00	

Other	Mount Mulanje Mountain Conservation Trust	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	200,000.00	
Other	Nyika Vwaza (UK) Trust (NVT-UK)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	65,000.00	
Other	Nyika Vwaza (UK) Trust (NVT-UK)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	75,000.00	
Other	Total Land Care (TLC)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	60,000.00	
Other	Queensland Biosecurity, Australia	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	76,695.00	
Other	Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International (CABI)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	250,000.00	
Total Co-financing				5,164,147.00	5,095,549.00

Comments

V: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS

Overall Project/Program Risk Classification

PIF	CEO Endorsement/Approval	MTR	TE
		Low	

Measures to address identified risks and impacts

Successful restoration of IAS impacted areas depends on both technical skills as much as environmental factors. Fruitful replanting of Mulanje Cedar on MMFR is contingent on favorable climate as well as fire management. Observation in the field saw the engagement of labourers in firebreak making. This will enhance outcomes and results, so far achieved. However, in the long-term, civic education

activities around the PAs on the dangers of uncontrolled fire will be required besides undertaking prescribed fire operations to reduce potential impacts in the event of its occurrence.

VI. ANNEX

Uploaded Document

Document Category	Prefix	Title
M and E Document	Mid-term Review (MTR)	Midterm review report for Malawi IAS GEF ID9539