MID-TERM REVIEW

Project ID:	9551
Project Name:	Capacity Development in Reducing Illegal Wildlife Trade and Improving Protected Area Management Effectiveness in South Sudan
Countr(ies):	South Sudan
Implementing Agency:	UNEP

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I. Overview

A. Description

Project name Capacity Development in Reducing Illegal Wildlife Trade and Improving Protected Area Management Effectiveness in South Sudan	
Country South Sudan	
GEF ID 9551	Implementing Agency UNEP
Executing Entity Ministry of Wildlife Conservation and Tourism (MWCT), International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)	
Trust Fund GET	Project Type FSP
Objective To combat illegal wildlife trade by strengthening PA legislative and management systems through institutional strengthening, improved information management and monitoring, and community empowerment through both national and site level actions.	

B. Key Dates

CEO Endorsement/Approval 12/12/2019	Agency Approval 9/9/2021
Implementation Start 3/9/2020	First Disbursement 9/17/2020
Expected MTR 9/30/2024	MTR Submission 2/23/2026
Actual MTR 10/7/2025	Expected Completion 6/30/2027

II. PROGRESS STATUS AND ISSUES

A. Main MTR Findings

Based on the findings from this MTR and considering initial delays, the project now demonstrates overall performance at a 'Moderately Satisfactory' level, with a prospect of moving to 'Satisfactory' should the current momentum be maintained and consolidated during the remainder of the project implementation period (and should the country's security situation remain stable). The rating takes into consideration the slow start as well as the operational capacity being gradually acquired by the MWCT and MoEF, and the current positive momentum of project activities.

The project has demonstrated satisfactory performance in the areas of adaptive management, development of policy and legislation, preparations for accessing international conventions, and training needs assessments (Component 1). Activities under Components 2 and 3 in target protected areas are behind the original schedule; however, these are now taking first steps and gaining significant momentum.

The MTR's assessment of ongoing preparatory work is satisfactory. However, it is way too early to adequately assess the project's impact on the ground in the target Protected Areas. Project success will largely depend on steps taken in the coming year to deploy trained staff, essential facilities, and operational capacity at field sites. Areas that would benefit from further attention by the project team and enhanced support by UNEP include: Capacity development and Training; Partnerships; Gender Mainstreaming and Human Rights; Knowledge Management; Communications and Reporting; Execution Arrangements, Administration & Fund Management; Monitoring & Evaluation; resources mobilization and sustainability post-project. Specific recommendations are provided below for each of these areas.

B. Stakeholder Engagement

The overall project performance at the project's mid-point regarding stakeholders' engagement can't be fully evaluated. Component 1 (legislation and institutional strengthening, at the national level) has achieved substantive progress and has engaged a wide range of stakeholders at the central level in various government departments in Juba. However, components 2 and 3, which envisage activities with local communities and stakeholders' engagement in the five target protected areas, are only taking first steps at the time of the MTR. However, the MTR assessed 'moderately satisfactory' progress considering the initial delays (largely outside of the project team's control) and the satisfactory preparation for the roll-out of components 2 and 3, which entails the participatory development of management plans for the target protected areas, representing a first test for the project team.

C. Gender Equality

Gender mainstreaming into project activities was assessed as moderately satisfactory during the MTR. Several women are engaged in the project team at various levels, and women's groups are being engaged at community meetings in target protected areas. However, these aspects appear to require continued attention and improvement. Therefore, a specific recommendation on enhancing gender-responsive measures is included in the MTR as Recommendation n.4

D. Knowledge Management

The aspects related to Knowledge and Learning Deliverables (e.g., website/platform development), Knowledge Products/Events, and Communication Strategy were found to be well below expectations, and current levels of attention to all these tasks have been suboptimal. This may have been due to the team's effort focusing on execution in very complex circumstances; however, this also resulted in the poor visibility of the project's otherwise good results and initial impact. The MTR

includes a whole cluster of three Recommendations on this aspect of implementation. Ref.: Recommendation Cluster 7 on Knowledge Management, Communications and Awareness (Recommendations 7.1, 7.1 and 7.3).

With Regards to Lessons Learned and Good Practice, and Adaptive Management Actions, the project team has demonstrated excellent capacity to learn from experience and adjust course in the initial (very complex) stage of the project. It is thanks to this demonstrated adaptive management capacity that the project is now gradually delivering initial results and hopefully gaining momentum.

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)
	1270583	1270583	

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)
		Others		0.00	0.00	

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)
	1270583	1270583	

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA 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)
Nimule	904	National Park		41,000.00	41,000.00		27.00	51.00	
Fanyikang	555583106	Habitat/Species Management Area		48,000.00	48,000.00		12.00	12.00	

Meshra	10738	Habitat/Species Management Area		444,583.00	444,583.00		12.00	56.00	
Shambe	1372	National Park		62,000.00	62,000.00		12.00	57.00	
Zeraf	1368	Habitat/Species Management Area		675,000.00	675,000.00		12.00	56.00	

Indicator 4 Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectares; excluding protected areas)

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

Indicator 4.1 Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity (hectares, qualitative assessment, non-certified)

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

Indicator 4.2 Area of landscapes under third-party certification incorporating biodiversity considerations

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

Type/Name of Third Party Certification

Indicator 4.3 Area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems

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

Indicator 4.4 Area of High Conservation Value or other forest loss avoided

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

Indicator 4.5 Terrestrial OECMs supported

Name of the OECMs	WDPA-ID	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)

Documents (Document(s) that justifies the HCVF)

Title

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		2,000	650	
Male		1,924	950	
Total	**0**	**3,924**	1600	**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	Ministry Wildlife Conservation and Tourism (MWCT)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	3,000,000.00	289,400.00
Civil Society Organization	International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	2,500,000.00	
Civil Society Organization	International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)	Grant	Investment mobilized	500,000.00	

Civil Society Organization	Wildlife Conservation Society(WCS)	Grant	Investment mobilized	3,000,000.00	
Civil Society Organization	Wildlife Conservation Society(WCS)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	500,000.00	
Other	Institute for Development, Ecology, Conservation & Cooperation (IDECC)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	26,000.00	
Recipient Country Government	Bureau of Statistics (BoS)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	176,000.00	
Other	SS Nature Conservation Organization (SSNCO)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	200,000.00	
Other	South Sudan Wildlife Society (SSWsoc)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	250,000.00	
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MEF)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	2,000,000.00	
Recipient Country Government	Ministry Wildlife Conservation and Tourism (MWCT)	Grant	Investment mobilized		265,330.00
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MEF)	Grant	Investment mobilized		
Total Co-financing				**12,152,000.00**	**265,330.00**

Comments

V: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS

Overall Project/Program Risk Classification

PIF	CEO Endorsement/Approval	MTR	TE
		High or Substantial	

Measures to address identified risks and impacts

The overall project performance at the project's mid-point against the original SES Plan can't be fully evaluated as only component 1 (legislation and institutional strengthening, at the national level) has achieved substantive progress, while components 2 and 3 which envisage activities with local stakeholders and impact in the five target protected areas are only taking first steps at the time of the MTR. Based on mission findings, a specific MTR Recommendation (n.5) was provided for the inclusion of Human Rights Principles in all training programmes implemented by the project. The implementation of this recommendation has already started, as witnessed by the MTR consultant during the national training workshop on Illegal Wildlife Trade held in Juba on 4-7 March 2025, organised by the project.

VI. ANNEX

Uploaded Document

Document Category	Prefix	Title
M and E Document	Mid-term Review (MTR)	MTR Main Report-South Sudan IWT - FINAL clean - 23 October 2025