

MID-TERM REVIEW

Project ID:	9671
Project Name:	Effective Management of Wadi El-Rayan and Qarun Protected Areas
Countr(ies):	Egypt
Implementing Agency:	UNEP

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. OVERVIEW	3
A. Description	3
B. Key Dates	3
II. PROGRESS STATUS AND ISSUES	3
A. Main MTR Findings	3
B. Stakeholder Engagement	5
C. Gender Equality	5
D. Knowledge Management	5
III. CORE INDICATORS	5
IV: CO FINANCING	6
V: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS	7
VI. ANNEX	7

I. Overview

A. Description

Project name

Effective Management of Wadi El-Rayan and Qarun Protected Areas

Country

Egypt

GEF ID

9671

Implementing Agency

UNEP

Executing Entity

IUCN Regional Office for West Asia

Trust Fund

GET

Project Type

MSP

Objective

To improve the management effectiveness of the Wadi El-Rayan and Lake Qarun protected areas through community involvement and capacity building

B. Key Dates

CEO Endorsement/Approval

12/14/2018

Agency Approval

12/14/2018

Implementation Start

6/20/2019

First Disbursement

9/26/2019

Expected MTR

1/31/2024

MTR Submission

8/5/2025

Actual MTR

10/1/2023

Expected Completion

12/31/2025

II. PROGRESS STATUS AND ISSUES

A. Main MTR Findings

The strategic relevance of the project was rated Highly Satisfactory. The project is well aligned with UNEP's programme of work: The Ecosystems sub-programme contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Vision 2030, particularly SDGs 6 and 15. It is consistent with UNDAF-Egypt and is aligned to NBSAP 2015-2030. The project works closely with other projects, such as the Egyptian-Italian Environmental

Cooperation Programme (EIECP) III project, to ensure that the work is complementary and not duplicative. The project further complements UNDP/GEF Strengthening Protected Area Financing and Management Systems (SPAFAM) to establish a sustainable protected area financing system.

The project design was rated Highly Satisfactory. The project design was comprehensive, showing a strong alignment and relevance to UNEP/GEF, SDGs and national priorities. The design has a thorough stakeholder analysis and clarifies challenges in the context. The design is robust with elaborate governance and supervision arrangements, risk identification and social safeguards, detailing strategies for sustainability/replication and catalytic effects and identification of project design weaknesses gaps, which led to modifying some outputs.

Nature of External Context - The main issues that affected the project were delayed internal clearance by the government of Egypt, for one year, hence delayed project start, the COVID-19 lockdown, which resulted in a travel ban for one year and limited physical activities, and high inflation rate, making procurement more costly than budgeted for.

Overall, effectiveness was rated Satisfactory. Under effectiveness, the MTR assessed the project achievement in attaining the programme outputs and milestones. Availability of outputs was rated Satisfactory, and achievement of project outcomes was rated Satisfactory, while the Likelihood of impact was rated Likely. The main milestones to influence the sustainable attainment of outcomes were achieved.

Availability of outputs - While assessing the availability of outputs, the achievement rates were based on the UNEP Criterion Rating Matrix as follows: Highly Satisfactory = 100% of the planned outputs delivered fully, Satisfactory = 81-99%, Moderately Satisfactory = 61-80%, Moderately Unsatisfactory = 41-60%, Unsatisfactory = 21-40%, Highly Unsatisfactory = 20% and below of the planned outputs delivered fully. This exercise, being an MTR, measured achievement against mid-term targets. ***Availability of outputs was rated Satisfactory.*** The project had 4 outputs, and 3 out of 4 were satisfactory.

The achievement of outcomes was rated Satisfactory based on the UNEP Rating Criterion Matrix. The project had 7 outcome indicators, of which 2 (28.6%) had fully achieved mid-term targets, 2 (28.6%) had achieved 61-80%, while 3 (42.9%) had not yet been measured due to postponed national assessments, as shown below. Important to note is that some indicators had not yet been measured. These include I) Increase in condition measured by the Ecosystem Health Index (EHI) of critical biodiversity habitat as a result of improved management focused on the conservation of targeted species; II) Stable or increase in populations or habitat size of threatened species in the PAs and III) Sustainable use of biological resources is increased.

Financial management was satisfactory. The Executing Agency (EA) largely complied with UNEP's financial policies, regularly analysed expenditure against budget, and kept spending within approved limits. Annual audits (2019-2022) received clean opinions. The EA submitted legal documents and agreements, and maintained good communication with UNEP staff. However, in the project's early years, expenditure reports were delayed. Discrepancies were noted between subcontractor agreements and reported expenditures, and no cash transfer forms were provided, limiting financial verification. Only two of four co-financing partners submitted reports.

Efficiency was rated moderately satisfactory. The project leveraged the IUCN's global expertise and location since the IUCN already has ongoing work in Fayoum. The IUCN provided quality reports and accounted for all their money. During the period of January to November 2022, IUCN pre-financed the project as they waited for the money from UNEP to avoid lagging behind. The project has had one no-cost extension due to delays in project implementation caused by i) the COVID-19 lockdown and ii) the long process required for acquiring the Egyptian government permits /approvals. As a result of the no-extension, IUCN submitted a minor budget reallocation without affecting the overall budget of the project and USD 45,000 was reallocated from the subcontractor's component to cater for the increase in personnel and consultants' costs. Whereas the overall project expenditure is at 60%, some project expenses like personal (80%) and travel on official business (77%) have already escalated, yet the project still has 18 months to completion, and the project personnel will continue to support the project to the end and need to be paid. Co-financing realised only 22% of the planned amount.

Sustainability was rated likely. Strong socio-political support, high stakeholder commitment, and government-led implementation (via EEAA) favor the continuation of project outcomes. The PSC is government-chaired,

and EECG is expected to sustain activities post-project. National initiatives like the Water-Energy-Food Nexus programme and the National Biodiversity Strategy may provide ongoing support. Robust governance structures, policies, legal frameworks, and tools like management manuals, CEPA, and a surveillance plan further enhance sustainability prospects.

Monitoring design and Reporting were rated highly satisfactory. All project narrative reports were submitted on time; however, not all the quarterly financial reports and annual co-finance reports were submitted. Monitoring of project implementation was highly satisfactory. The PSC meetings were held, with the last one on June 2023 and signed minutes were availed to the consultant.

B. Stakeholder Engagement

The project engaged all relevant key stakeholders, including NGOs, implementers of complementary projects, community members and government officials at different levels. The stakeholder engagement was rated Satisfactory.

C. Gender Equality

Gender mainstreaming was well incorporated into the Prodoc, but the actual implementation faced challenges. For instance, almost all PA managers and staff are male due to the distant nature of the job and the culture that doesn't encourage women to work away from their homes Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality was rated Moderately Satisfactory

D. Knowledge Management

The Communications, Education and Public Awareness. was developed but was yet to be implemented. The Community Environmental Educational Centre to be used for Community awareness activities was still under construction. Communication and public awareness was rated Moderately Satisfactory.

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)

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)

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)
Lake Qarun	555547984	Protected Landscape/Seascape					21.00	62.00	
Wadi El-Rayan	555547985	Protected Landscape/Seascape					21.00	62.00	

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	Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA)	In-kind		2,000,000.00	511,097.00
Recipient Country Government	Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA)	Grant		1,200,000.00	2,091,161.00
Civil Society Organization	International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)	In-kind		300,000.00	237,830.00
Donor Agency	Italian Development Cooperation - EIECP-III	In-kind		2,000,000.00	1,540,000.00
Other	Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE)	In-kind		3,000,000.00	328,934.00
Civil Society Organization	International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)	Grant			125,636.00

Total Co-financing		8,500,000.00	4,834,658.00
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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

The project seeks to address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss through improved management and infrastructure of the protected area network, including the development. The project will work very closely with regulatory authorities to ensure compliance with environmental and social safeguards as provided in various statutory regulations. The ESS was rated Highly Satisfactory.

VI. ANNEX

Uploaded Document

Document Category M and E Document	Title MTR Report - Egypt Wadi Ryani L
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