Mid Term Review of

Mount Elgon Regional Ecosystem Conservation Programme (MERECP)

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institutional support for such legislation/ regulations. Institutions must have comparable visions, goals, competence and capacity.

park. This include park boundary management, the importance of non-timber products for local communities, improvement in agricultural practices, access to ecosystem goods and/or services such as firewood, fruits and berries, medicinal plants and other non-timber products, revenue opportunities e.g. via tourism and related activities, local peoples' attitudes to conservation and the park.

MERECP has so far merely paid "lip service" to the local communities' park revenue sharing and to their possible involvement in park ecotourism. Local communities in Uganda are to receive 20% of gate fees only, i.e. 9.864.025 Ush, or USD 5.978, which is 0.07 of the total park income. It is an opportunity and a challenge for UWA to enhance local community support by allocating e.g. 80% of all park income, and with no

The MTR has, as of its TOR, described and provided details for an exit strategy for IUCN. The MTR recommends that LVBC takes over IUCN’s current roles and responsibilities for management, coordination and disbursement of funds. An officer, who shall be fully responsible for MERECP affairs, should be recruited and based at LVBC. Details and time frame for such a transfer has to be discussed and planned with MCC, EAC, LVBC and other relevant stakeholders. These have to agree on a time-frame

1.0 Introduction

This is a report of the Mid Term Review (MTR) of the Mt. Elgon Regional Ecosystem Conservation Programme funded by the Royal Norwegian Embassy, co-funded by the Swedish Embassy and implemented by the East African Community (EAC). The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is the facilitator of the programme.

The MTR has assessed the implementation of the Mount Elgon Regional Ecosystem conservation Pogramme (MERECP). It is anticipated that the recommendations made by the review will among other things inform the programme work-plan in the remaining programme period under the current funding arrangements. Specifically the purpose and objective of the mid-term review has been to:

a) Assess overall progress, results achieved compared to the Vision, Goal, Purpose and Objectives, as well as risks, challenges and constraints encountered in the process of programme implementation; and
b) Provide strategic guidance for the remaining programme period.

See Chapter 1.2. for details.

1.1 The background of MERECP

Mt Elgon has been identified by the EAC Secretariat and partner states as a trans-boundary ecosystem that need to be managed through a regional programme of conservation and sustainable development. This was meant to commence during the 2001-2005 EAC Strategic Plan. Accordingly, MERECP was developed in response to the need for a regional approach to the management of this important trans-boundary ecosystem as a water catchment for the Lake Victoria, the Nile and Lake Turkana. The basic objective of the MERECP is underpinned by the challenges of managing the shared ecosystem of Mt. Elgon between Uganda and Kenya. During the years of IUCN assisted national activities in the forests and other protected areas on both sides of the international border in Kenya and Uganda, it was recognized that both an ecosystem approach and a regional, bilateral approach were needed to ensure the continuation of the ecological and development benefits and services provided by the mountain ecosystem – both directly to the local peoples of the area, the remote users of Mt Elgon products and the biodiversity that is of local, national, regional and global significance.

MERECP was designed by IUCN over a period of almost four years (2000-2004) that involved many local, national and regional discussions and the interaction of a range of stakeholders including the EAC, the governments of Kenya and Uganda through relevant national government agencies, local government/districts, user groups, NGOs, the private sector, local communities and concerned conservationists and researchers. Through these processes, it was agreed that MERECP should be a regional programme for the good of the ecosystem and the ecosystem users and inhabitants.

MERECP was thus based on these national activities as well as achievements of the concluded Integrated Conservation and Development Projects (ICDPs) on both sides of the mountain to address conservation and development issues that require regional

<u>Other stakeholders:</u>
East African Community (EAC), Arusha *
Lake Victoria Basin Commission (LVBC), Kisumu *
Norwegian Embassy, Kampala *
Swedish Embassy, Kampala *

1.2.5 Field Observations

Field observations were carried out by the reviewers during the execution of the evaluation and recorded. This information was used in triangulation of data sourced from the literature review, FGDs and key informant interviews. It was also used in determining the impact of the project.

1.2.6. Comparison with findings and recommendations in 2002 and 2005.

Protected area to be

Lack of ecological coherence and resilience, necessary for both biodiversity conservation and sustainable development;
Lack of cross-border management and ecological monitoring and law enforcement;
Lack of ecosystem approach competence and capacity for TBNRM;
Lack of access of ecosystem goods and/or services (non-timber products) for local communities;
Lack of financial planning and funds for TBNRM;
Improvement of informal stakeholders' partnerships for the management of the Mt. Elgon ecosystem needed, including public information, community awareness, education and research
Communication challenges, which include common radio frequency; equipment e.g. repeater stations and gadgets; and internet connectivity.
Inadequate institutional arrangements/structures, key among which are the following:

- No formal institutional collaboration arrangements between the two countries;
- Unclear stakeholders roles and responsibilities;
- Lack of manpower for joint management of the ecosystem;

Inadequate policy and legal frameworks for joint management which include the following:

- No provision for joint management and joint monitoring and protection within the wildlife and forest Acts of the two respective countries;
- Differential application of user rights and responsibilities of stakeholders (e.g. local communities);
- No formal provision for intelligence information sharing by the protected areas institutions; and
- Un-harmonized immigration procedures.

To-date only a few of the above mentioned challenges are being addressed by MERECP. Processes such as preparation of joint management plan and joint protection and monitoring plan as well as sorting out communication challenges are some of the few being considered in the programme. A lot needs to be done if Mount Elgon is to be managed as a transboundary ecosystem.

2.0 Main Findings

2.1. Assessment of the performance of EAC/ LVBC in fulfilling its obligations to MERECP

The roles of the EAC Secretariat for MERECP are:

a) Oversee MERECP implementation, supervision, co-ordination and reporting for MERECP.
b) Ensure that MERECP budget is reflected in the EAC Secretariat plans, budgets and accounts.
c) Contract IUCN to provide technical and management backstopping to MERECP.
d) Integrate MERECP into the LVBC Programme.
e) Work closely with IUCN and the partner institutions to ensure efficient and harmonious implementation of the programme.
f)

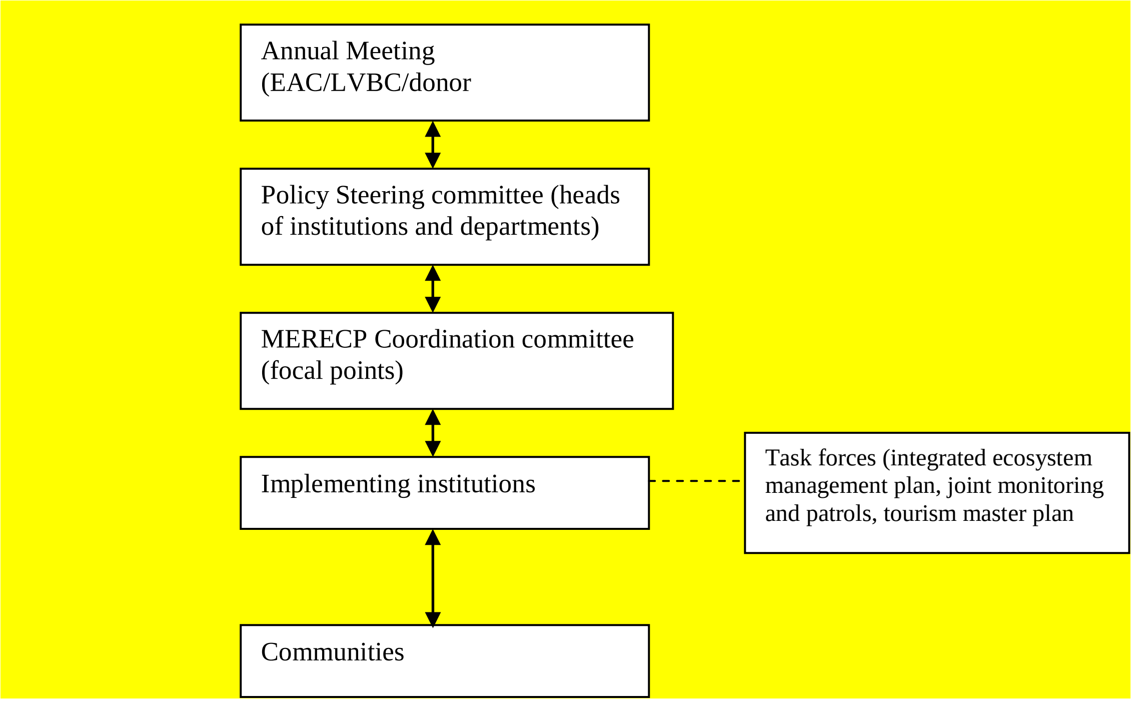

Fig. 1: MERECP institutional structure.

On the face of it, the structure of MERECP appears logical but at the same time it is complex due to many levels of decision-making, authority, and responsibility. A Number of stakeholders indicated that this is inevitable and expected if everyone is to be brought on board. The MTR has made the following specific observations on the MERECP structure;

Too many implementing institutions have implied heavy bureaucracy with consequent delays.

Co-ordination of too many structures in MERECP is not cost-effective and ultimately reduces budgets which could otherwise meaningfully support activities that enhance livelihoods.

The structure has tended to concentrate management and implementation responsibility at the districts level instead of village levels. It may well be that it is easier for bureaucrats to deal with formal structures at district level rather than amorphous structures characteristic of community and village level organisations. But local communities are left out of important consultations and decision-making processes.

Even in instances where districts have the desire to involve local communications in management and implementation they have been hampered by weak extension service structures and weak local ENR sector as is evident from low budgets allocated to the sector.

Although actors at various levels in the MERECP institutional structure cumulatively contribute to the success of the program there is still need to rank contribution of institutions. Such grading can be used as criteria when it becomes necessary to off-load some institutions as is already becoming evident.

Now that LVBC is operational, the role of EAC will become clearer and stronger because it can concentrate on what it can do best at the strategic broad policy level.

There needs to be more emphasis on the communication between the implementing institutions and the communities who, with reference to MERECP's vision, goal and overall objectives, are the most important target groups.

The MERECP Implementation Manual (MIM) is a useful tool, which seeks to harmonise implementation procedures across the board. The implementing institutions must internalize the MIM, and they have been trained on this. MIM is however different from local government management and financial procedures, and it took a long time for the implementing institutions to understand and apply the MIM. This has caused delays for implementation of activities at the district level. The MIM needs to acknowledge the different procedures across countries, e.g. that opening of bank accounts by government institutions in Kingu[(us)-1(t)hent(i)-2(ng)10(ui)-2(nBbeqqu[(us t)-280(u0.004 r(10()4(r)38(-6(r)3(n8 ( )Tj E
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