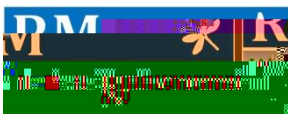


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Report to The Swiss Confederation, represented by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, acting through Embassy of Switzerland in Myanmar

April 2020



RM Wetlands & Environment Ltd
6 Ladman Villas
Littleworth
Oxfordshire
SN7 8EQJ

PR13/R1.0/F

Executive Summary

the future legacy of the project and the considerable investment of resources. The main concern is that the project is not focused sufficiently on the sustainability of natural resources and the conservation of the unique biodiversity of the GoM. The MTR suggests that there needs to be a rebalancing of emphasis, away from livelihoods and governance towards conservation and wise use. This rebalancing is critical at village level where too often the local conservation groups are inactive or poorly represented.

- xi. There is a significant concern regarding the wise use of the Ramsar Site and the long-term maintenance of its ecological character. The project needs to build on the existing GoM Management Plan and develop an integrated and coherent management plan for the extended Ramsar Site which will also incorporate wider land-use zonation and disaster risk reduction strategies. It is essential that the management plan is developed by all stakeholders so that there is a strong sense of ownership and empowerment. To achieve this, it is essential that the project works with local stakeholders to create an appropriate body which has the clear mandate to manage the Ramsar Site.
- xii. In parallel with the development of a robust management plan for the Ramsar Site, the project needs to establish a sustainable financing mechanism to underpin future conservation and site management-related activities. The ambition for the financing mechanism must transition away from donor-dependency.
- xiii. The developing university-based research activities and the potential mobilisation of the local conservation groups at the village level, should be coordinated in order to provide both baseline data on the ecological character of the Ramsar Site and also to support long-term monitoring and management activities.
- xiv. The body responsible for overseeing the Ramsar Site needs to be fully integrated within the established governance structure. Furthermore, efforts also need to be made to ensure that the different components within the governance structure are sustainable beyond the life of the project. To achieve this, it is important that the project decreases its visibility and works towards local ownership and identity.
- xv. As part of working towards future sustainability, the project needs to develop approaches for extending beyond the project villages and embedding the knowledge and lessons learned with the wider communities around the GoM. This could involve working through the project villages as knowledge-transfer hubs. However, before this outreach commences the project needs to evaluate further the impact of skill training and alternative income generation to ensure that the ambition to enhance these livelihoods is achievable and sustainable in the long term.
- xvi. The MTR has identified a range of recommendations, and suggestions for taking them forwards. These need to be considered by the project team and integrated within the project activities over the remainder of the project.
- xvii. Overall, as the project moves towards completion, it needs to carefully consider its achievements in terms of both outputs and outcomes. The delivery of outputs is not a guarantee of outcomes and the desired impacts. There also needs to be cultural and subliminal transfer away from promoting the idea of 'the project' towards invisibility and local ownership, otherwise there is a risk that the much of the goodwork will struggle to continue after the project is completed.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Project contextual background

- 1.1.1. The Gulf of Mottama (GoM) is one of the most extensive and important intertidal ecosystems in the world. Located in the southwest of Myanmar and bordering the Andaman Sea, the dynamic and evolving coastline of the GoM extends for some 300 km and links the Yangon and Bago Regions in the west to Mon State in the east. The funnel-shaped gulf receives inputs of water and sediments from the Salween, Sittoung, and Yangon Rivers in the north and exchanges energy, water and sediments through the powerful incoming tides from the south.
- 1.1.2. The GoM supports approximately 150,000 waterbirds, is a vitally important habitat for the Critically Endangered Spoon-billed sandpiper *Calidris pygmaea* and also supports a huge diversity of fish, crustaceans and other fauna and flora. As a result of the ecological value of the area, the north eastern portion of the GoM was designated as Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar Site) in May 2017. The designated area was extended from 42,500 hectares (ha) to 161,030 ha in early 2020, to include a greater area of this unique estuarine environment.
- 1.1.3. The areas of Bago and Mon State surrounding the GoM are generally low-lying, flat, rural and predominantly un-developed. The tidal dynamics result in a shifting shoreline which can adversely affect livelihood patterns and increases the vulnerability of local, coastal communities. The combination of weak governance, overexploitation of natural resources, limited infrastructure and saltwater intrusion, allied to the natural dynamics of the coastal system creates a coastal community with an impoverished economy and limited resilience to environmental change.

project reflects the global conservation value of the GoM and the opportunity to implement the GdMMP.

- 1.1.7. The overall goal (or impact) of the GoMP is underpinned by a series of desired outcomes, objectives, outputs and activities. These are summarised in Appendix 2. Each activity is underpinned by inputs, specific beneficiaries and assumptions and risks.
- 1.1.8. In addition to the information detailed in Appendix 2, the overall success of implementing the GoMP also depends on other factors including:
 - x Integration within and among outcomes
 - x Ensuring gender equality and social equity
 - x Considering climate change related issues
 - x Upscaling from site level
 - x Delivering sustainable interventions
 - x Managing resources efficiently
 - x Monitoring risks
 - x Providing adequate reporting
 - x Developing an appropriate exit strategy

1.2. Purpose of the Mid -Term Review

- 1.2.1. In keeping with the SDC

- x Are the consortium cooperation framework, capacities and collaborations conducive to efficiently deliver expected results?
- x Is the project on track to producing desired impact and reaching the specific project objective?

1.2.4. In conducting the MTR, the ToR stipulate that the review shall follow the OECD DAC evaluation criteria and include the assessment grid for the evaluation of SDC projects/programmes as an annex. This assessment grid should consider a standard set of key evaluation questions focussed on context, relevance, sustainability, gender and social equity, effectiveness, efficiency and impact. However, in developing the final methodology, these key questions have been subject to refinement in order to collect specific information germane to the review process

Effectiveness

- 2.2.4. In order to evaluate whether the GoMP is being effective, ~~or~~ "doing things right", this criterion needs to evaluate the project's institutional approaches, how progress to date has been made towards outcomes and outputs as stated in the logframe and whether there are any changes recommended or required to enhance effectiveness of delivery. The review of effectiveness must also consider different perspectives including inter alia those of potential beneficiaries, such as village communities, knowledge providers, such as universities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), as well as the project consortium.

Efficiency

- 2.2.5. The efficiency criterion considers whether the project's resources (human and financial) are being used efficiently and is the project achieving value for money. The review also considers whether the project is delivering any added value and how well economies of scale are being considered through optimisation of synergies with wider SDC and other donor-funded projects within the GoM.

Sustainability

- 2.2.6. Sustainability is at the core of the overall objectives of the project. Therefore, this criterion seeks to evaluate whether the project is contributing to social, ecological and economic sustainability, both individually and collectively. The evaluation further evaluates whether the project is set up in such a way that institutional sustainability can be achieved. Specific consideration has been given as to whether the Coastal Resource Management Committees (CRMCs) are the right institutions to assure institutional sustainability for a sustainable management of natural resources in the GoM, and what should be the role of the private sector and civil society in the future governance of the natural resources of the GoM?

Gender and social equity

- 2.2.7. This evaluation criterion considers whether the project is reaching out to the disadvantaged parts of the population in the GoM, and appraises whether the gender, ethnic and religious composition of the population in the GoM have been adequately considered in project design and implementation.

Impact

- 2.2.8. The success or otherwise of the project, will be measured by the impact of its outcomes, not simply by its outputs. This criterion evaluates whether the project is likely to reach the desired impact

detailed information from different consultees or from documentation interrogated. The evaluation questions and subquestions, the methods and data sources, and an overall summary score for each element of a criterion are provided in Appendix 4.

3.2. Institutional limitations

- 3.2.1. The consultation programme arranged by the Project Coordination and Implementation Unit (PCIU) was comprehensive. However, through no fault of the PCIU, it was not always possible to meet all Government representatives, especially those comprising members of the CRMCs or the National Coastal Resource Management Committee (NCRMC). It is acknowledged by the Consultants that Government officials have challenging

4. Results

4.1. Evaluation

- 4.1.1. Building on the CLCMGoMP, the GoMP has delivered some significant results to date. The project team comprise many knowledgeable and dedicated individuals that are working hard to ensure that the project meets its desired objectives. This is demonstrated by the fact that considerable progress has been made towards the outputs 5R is detn 4.1.1.

challenges which fail to be addressed in the long term resulting in a gradual decline in the state of the Site.

- 4.1.7. The current GoM Management Plan was published in May 2019, approximately eight months prior to the extension of the Ramsar Site. The GoM Management Plan states that: "The Myanmar government is committed to put in place a management framework for this Ramsar site. The designation of the GoM Ramsar site is of special significance because it is the first in Myanmar that many other wetlands of global importance that merit Ramsar status but are not in designated

nature of the environment, potentially important areas of mudflats in excess of 1,000 ha are already outside of the extended Ramsar Site boundary, and this dynamic situation is expected to continue. Boundary considerations need to be set within the context of wider integrated coastal zone management.

- x Consideration needs to be given to the existing zoning developed by the project (such as the management fishing zones and the criteria used for their delineation and management) and ensuring positive synergies with wider strategies for inter alia land use allocation, food production, disaster risk management, tourism and fishing.

4.1.10. Another crucial aspect is to ensure that there is local ownership and responsibility for the Ramsar Site. At all of the other four Ramsar Sites in Myanmar there is clear signage and distinct Ramsar branding. Currently, there are no signs that acknowledge the presence of the Ramsar Site. Additionally, there are no boundary markers to physically identify the Site on the ground. The visibility, identity and branding of the Site is highly important and should be a key CEPA (communications, capacity building, education, participation and awareness) activity which includes the local communities and government representatives. It is noted that the current GoM Management Plan does not include either the Ramsar Convention's logo or the logo of any organisation responsible for the Site, rather, the Plan is presented as clearly part of the GoMP and reads like an advocacy piece for the project. This is considered wholly inappropriate and a barrier to local ownership and empowerment.

4.1.11. Integrating with BT /F3 100.34 466.15 Tm 0 g 0 G [(-)2() T

natural resources in the GoM. Within this governance framework, the project is targeting disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies. The project activities in Mon State are commensurate with the geographical focus, but arguably the activities in Bago Region may lie beyond the core

conservation

- x The project has invested considerably in enhancing rice farming at the project villages. However, the rice farming profitability is fragile with a benefit-cost ratio (BCR) near to 1. It is not clear how much this would change, and particularly over the long-term, if all project costs were included and a thorough assessment

4.1.34. A further disparity is clear within the university environment. As is reflected elsewhere in

- 4.1.41. Ostensibly, Outcome 2 is making good progress against the indicators. However, closer inspection suggests that this might not be the case. The appropriateness of the locations of the fishing areas needs to be more rigorously and transparently assessed. The results of such an assessment then need to feed into a robust consultation exercise for the entire Ramsar Site. Secondly, Outcome 2 conflates the GoM Management Plan (produced in 2019) with annual action plans. Currently, no evidence of annual action plans has been provided or is reported in the Annual Progress Report (P2Y2). Work on the status of threats, key species and critical habitats has been limited and, whilst there is some good input to CEPA activities, there seems to be limited practical translation of the results of surveys into proactive management activities. The MTR acknowledges that the project has made good progress towards the elimination of shorebird hunting. However, the production of a report (an output) should not be conflated with a successful outcome. The project needs to ensure that the LCGs actively engage in the elimination of shorebird hunting and enforcement is provided by the government.
- 4.1.42. The governance structure established has cemented progress towards Outcome 3. The structure is good, but the project recognises the need to strengthen vertical and horizontal linkages. A key shortcoming is the lack of a single body responsible for the Ramsar Site. This situation is further confused by the updated RIS which specifies that "Local governance and integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) mechanisms will be developed after designation and will involve the Mon state relevant Ministries". Whilst the project has promoted ideas for future management of the Ramsar Site through the CRMCs, efforts need to be made over the final phase of the project to clarify the situation and to establish and constitute an appropriate body to address this shortcoming over the long-term.
- 4.1.43. The project is also generating a variety of information from numerous sources. However, the project needs to evaluate better whether the form of communication is appropriate to effect changes in behaviour. The vision for CEPA within the context of the Ramsar Convention is "People taking action for the wise use of wetlands— f f

5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

- 5.1.1. The overall conclusion of the MTR is that the project making significant progress towards both its outputs and outcomes. Almost two thirds of the evaluation criteria were classed as 'very good'. The evaluation reflects the considerable efforts of the project partners to ensure that they are working towards their collective goal across wide ar

Recommendation 4

Promote and demonstration how the project is contributing to wider policy frameworks in order to enhance institutional buy-in.

Suggestions

- 5.2.4. Establish standing agenda items for the CRMCs which seek policy updates from the various government departments on the relevant policies.
- 5.2.5. Produce CEPA material that highlights the contribution of the project outcomes to different policy initiatives.

Recommendation 5

Align GoMP and any exit strategy to natural resource governance, with a particular emphasis on the Ramsar Site, to ensure delivery under the Swiss Cooperation Programme Myanmar 2019-2023.

Suggestions

- 5.2.6. If a third tranche of funding is sought from SDC, the emphasis of the project needs to focus on future governance of the Ramsar Site as a way to deliver sustainable and equitable livelihoods and protect critical natural resources.

Recommendation 6

Improve the emphasis on biodiversity conservation and the wise use of natural resources within the GoMP.

Suggestions

- 5.2.7. Expand the role and profile of the LCGs at village level. This could be through the redeployment of BANCA, as they are a well-known and respected organisation, or through other civil society organisations (CSOs).
- 5.2.8. Through the development of the Ramsar Site management plan, identify key research questions and possible citizen science programmes so that both universities and the LCGs respond to genuine management needs.

Recommendation 7

Conduct a robust evaluation of the skill training activities and develop clear recommendations ()3(c)-4(pr1 265.22 Tm

Suggestions

- 5.2.10. In developing the Ramsar Site management plan, baseline data will be required on the species and habitats present. Work with universities, other donor-funded projects and through citizen science to develop and disseminate knowledge of species and habitats.

Recommendation 9

Develop collaborative fishery research priorities to be conducted by/inter alia the CRMCs, Department of Marine Science, Depar

use to assist with capacity building in non-project villages. Engage with non-project villages throughout the development of the Ramsar Site management plan.

Recommendation 1 4

Work with appropriate government institutions, and through the project governance structure, to ensure long-term access to markets

Suggestions

- 5.2.15. Provide evidence to the CRMC on the costs and benefits of enhancing access to markets for both fishing and farming communities.

Recommendation 1 5

Conduct a more rigorous evaluation of the benefits of the project and particular the multiplicity of values.

Suggestions

- 5.2.16. As part of the project evaluation, but also to inform other policy frameworks and CEPA activities, consider integrating an ecosystem services evaluation with more recent thinking on multiple values as promulgated by Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) in order to fully recognised the return on the investment across the GoM.

Recommendation 1 6

Undertake a systematic review of the RF governance, prioritization criteria and beneficiaries to ensure that the financing mechanisms are equitable and reach the most vulnerable members of society.

Recommendation 1 7

2.2 Practise inclusive co
management of CNR at the vill
township, district and State/Re:
levels

Main Tasks and Activities of the Assignees

The mid-term review shall

- x Familiarize itself with relevant policies on national and state/region level and other guiding documents such as the previous and new Swiss Cooperation Programme Myanmar
- x Review relevant project documentation and existing reports
- x Develop relevant assessment methodology and tools
- x Attend a briefing meeting with SDC and the project implementers
- x Carry out interviews as relevant with SDC, Coastal Resource Management Committee members, Project Coordination and Implementation Unit, consortium partners, field team members, partners and peers
- x Survey a sample of relevant primary stakeholders in consideration of gender inclusion
- x Organize a preliminary in person briefing with consortium partners and SDC
- x Produce a draft report with prioritized recommendations for consultation with SDC and consortium members
- x Review comments and produce a final report.

For International Consultant

- x Overall responsibility for managing the team, consolidating the inputs and ensuring the quality of the review report, findings and recommendations.
- x Tasks as to be defined between the national and international consultant

For Local Consultant

- x Tasks as to be defined between the national and international consultant
- x Support to logistical arrangements for MTR team as appropriate

Working methodology

- x Strategy, process focused and results oriented
- x Desk review
- x Participatory and multi-stakeholder approach
- x Combination field visit and in person interviews: individual and/or focus group
- x Mapping, analysis, reporting taking into account socio-political context and enabling environment

Time Frame of the assignment

- x February-April 2020 assessment and draft report; April 10, 2020 final report
- x 17 total days according to final mission schedule technical proposal
- x MTR team will develop the details work plan (mission program) together with project team and to be agreed by SDC

Programme/Mission Schedule

Dates/ timeframe	Activity	Number of days
1 By Mar 4	Desk Review	1
2 By Mar 5	Development of assessment tools	1
3		

SDQMid-

Impact				
	Is the project likely to reach the desired impact?	Is the project delivering on both outputs and outcomes?	Very good	Desk review of reports and information, particularly the logframe and Annual Progress Report Synthesis of multiple interviews
	Are there corrective measures to be taken to the desired impact, particularly at beneficiary level?	Are there any significant challenges in delivering on individual output indicators? If so, what needs to be considered to address these challenges? How are new project villages and wider communities going to be integrated in the long term?	Fair	Desk review of reports and information, particularly the logframe and Annual Progress Report Synthesis of multiple interviews Institutional and contextual knowledge of context
	In view of a short (2.5 years) final phase of the project with a reduced budget, what is the view from the midterm review with regard to focus and priorities to reach maximum impact and sustainability?	What do stakeholders consider to be the greatest needs over the remaining period beyond the end of the project?	Fair	Desk review of reports and information, particularly the logframe and Annual Progress Report Synthesis of multiple interviews Institutional and contextual knowledge of context

¹ The evaluation score is based on the summary categories in the table below. Wherever possible, the justification and explanation of the score is cross referenced to the section in the main report text which is based on the summary

Appendix 5: Schedule for in-country assessment

Date	Activity	Location
Sunday 1 st March 2020	Briefing meeting for SDC / HELVATAS	Yangon
Monday 2 nd March 2020	Travel to Mawlamyine; meeting at HPCU Office	Mawlamyine
Tuesday 3 rd March 2020	Meetings Mawlamyine University Point Fashion & Beauty Employer Training Mawlamyine Fisheries Holding Company	Mawlamyine
Wednesday 4 th March 2020	& H U W L I L H G H P S O R \ H U W U D L	Ywar Lut village, Chaungzora Township
	Mon State CRMC Meeting	Mawlamyine
	Fisheries Training Centre meeting	Thaton
Thursday 5 th March 2020	Crab production farm observation	Gyoe Hpyu Kone village, Th Township
	Village meetings; income generation beneficiaries, ice a certified fashion owner/beneficiary observation	Aung Kan Tha village, Thaton Township
	Vision Fund Myanmar meetings	Thaton
Friday 6 th March 2020	Village meetings; rice nursery cultivation observation	Zwe Ka Lar village, Bin Township
	Village meetings; Seed bank, livestock beneficiary observation	Mu Thin village, Bin Township
Saturday 7 th March 2020	Village meetings; clean water system observation	Kha Wa Chaug village, Kyau Township, MON STATE
	Village meetings; water storage pond observation	Ah Loke village, Wundwin Township, BAGO REGION
	Seed bank observation; Village meetings	Tha Nat Tan village, Thanat Township
Sunday 8 th March 2020	Erosion area observation/Village meeting	Mi Lau village, Kawa Township
Monday 9 th March 2020	Village meetings; water storage pond observation	Aung Kan Hlaing village, Kawa Township
Tuesday 10 th March 2020	Meetings Bago Region CRMC; Bago University	ECD office and Bago University Bago
Wednesday 11 th March 2020	Meeting Department of Fisheries; meeting NAG	Nay Pyi Taw
Thursday 12 th March 2020	Meeting Forest Department meeting IUCN/Travel back to Yangon	Nay Pyi Taw
Friday 13 th March 2020	Meeting (virtual) IUCN; meeting BANGALAMPUR debrief meeting	Yangon
Saturday 14 th March 2020	Debriefing to SDC/ Helvetas and NAG	Yangon

Zwe Kar Village Development Committee, Bilin Township, Mon State	Village
Tha Pyay Kone Village, Bilin Township, Mon State	Village
Ngwe Thaug Yan Village, Bilin Township, Mon State	Village
Shan Chaung Village Development Committee, Bilin Township	Village
Kar Wa Chaung Village Development Committee, Kyaukse Township, Mon State	Village
Moke Kha Mawt Village Development Committee, Kyaukse Township, Mon State	Village
Kha Ywae Village Development Committee, Kyaukse Township, Mon State	Village
Bo Ya Gyi Village Development Committee, Kyaukse Township, Mon State	Village
Ah Loke Village Development Committee, Mawlaikya Township, Bago Region	Village
Tha Nat Tan Village Development Committee, Thabeatpin Township, Bago Region	Village
Kha Lat S Village Development Committee, Thabeatpin Township, Bago Region	Village
Aung Bon G Village Development Committee, Thabeatpin Township, Bago Region	Village
Kyuun Kone Village Development Committee, Thabeatpin Township, Bago Region	Village
Pha Yar Lay Village Development Committee, Thabeatpin Township, Bago Region	Village
Ma Mauk Village Development Committee, Kawa Township, Bago Region	Village
Sar Hphu Su Village Development Committee, Kawa Township, Bago Region	Village
Ta Dar V Village Development Committee, Kawa Township, Bago Region	Village
Mi Lau Village Development Committee, Kawa Township, Bago Region	Village
Aung Kan Hlai Village Development Committee, Kawa Township, Bago Region	Village
Aung Naing G Village Development Committee, Kawa Township, Bago Region	Village

¹ The CRMC consultees included representatives from different Government line departments including inter alia State/Region Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation Ministers, Forest Department

Appendix 7: Fishing effort

Any fisheries management planning will only be as good as the data collected. It is essential that the project leaves in place a systemic and accurate data collection and evaluation protocol. Estimates of the catch per unit effort (CPUE) are already being made as part of the project and integrated into data collection approaches, such as through the use of mobile phone applications and fishing log book distributed to the fishermen.

It is recommended that in addition to the information already collected in the fishing log books, the following information