

## Feedback from IUCN

### Final Report - Process oriented evaluation of the third phase of Mangroves for the Future (MFF Evaluation)

30 March 2020

#### **Summary comments:**

The report is an improvement on the first draft, including some revisions in response to comments provided by MFF/IUCN. However, it lacks a holistic view of the MFF, and there continues to be a dominant focus on negative aspects with less attention given to the positive achievements of the programme.

That said, there are important findings that MFF/IUCN should consider, including the suggestions to:

- Adopt a more targeted focus on resilience and a few specific themes in target areas;
- Support larger and

effort to support learning under the programme. However, in other sections of the report, there

communications, outreach and policy influence, social and gender competence, and resilience and development expertise) would be either more efficient or effective, especially in a programme that encompasses 11 countries.

**There are recommendations to increase the scope, membership and roles of the NCB that could be questioned in terms of effectiveness and efficiency.** Whilst there are several learnings from the NCBs in MFF, many positive, the Team recommends a more diverse representation. This can be considered, however, it should be acknowledged that there is a limit to the size of NCBs in order to keep them efficient and effective. It should also be noted that the NCBs, in part and in many countries, did serve the roles mentioned as needing improvement by the Team, e.g. having gender focal points.

**At times, relatively minor findings are emphasized in the report.** For example, the Regional Secretariat and its communications are described as top-down and included posing ad-hoc and last-minute changes. This seems rather subjective and likely based on the opinion of only a few respondents rather than an observation of the majority of MFF stakeholders/partners.

The membership of the NCBs is also criticised as being only 44% civil society versus a target of 50%, and is therefore said not to be representative. Yes, the NCBs did not reach 50% civil society participation, but in the circumstances, 44% is a very good result and seems hardly worth criticising given the scope of the MFF Programme.

Also the statement, A certain disinclination or inability to operate outside the IUCN scientific focus and the lack of gender/community development expertise seems to have been a common theme, pg42 of the main report, is from one country (Sri Lanka) but made as if to refer to MFF entirely.

**The analysis and interpretation of data gathered during the evaluation could be improved.** For example, the analysis of responses to questionnaires issued by the Team to beneficiaries in the four target countries, pg48-50. In Figure 10, it is worth noting that almost all scores are above 4 on a scale of 1-6, that the vast majority of beneficiaries thought that these aspects of the MFF Programme were well above average. The same can be said of the results presented in Figure 11 where only one data point was below the median score of 3. Similarly the results in Figure 13, where

possible that th

It is questionable whether the difference between responses by men and women would be statistically significant since all are in the range of approximately 4.2 and 5.7 out of 6. Again, these results suggest that the overwhelming performance, and the benefits to their knowledge and livelihoods, as resoundingly positive. Furthermore, the small difference in responses between men and women could just as well be attributed to how they perceive benefits differently, and also be influenced by gender dynamics in local communities.

**Despite comments/guidance provided by MFF on the first draft, there continue to be inaccuracies presented in the report.** For example, on pg25 of the main report the fact that in some member countries, for instance Bangladesh, Seychelles and Thailand, the MFF projects and initiatives have received money contributions, but the rate and amount

of cash contributions have been limited to 2.35% of the donor funding. referring to the source material mentioned in this paragraph (<sup>36</sup>Based on figures presented in the report of RSC-15 in Bali, c.f. Table 1, Grant Implementation Status RSC-15 WP 1.1.) this statement is clearly incorrect. As presented in the table in WP1.1., the amount of donor funding contributed to MFF small grants was USD 2,366,033, and the co-financing in cash for small grants was USD 526,472. Using the method outlined by the Team to calculate the percentage, clearly the cash co-financing is 22% of donor funding, not 2.35%.

In the next paragraph (pg For almost all member countries, MFF has considered these cash and in-kind contributions as amounts leveraged by the programme. This is also incorrect. MFF has not regarded these amounts as leveraged funds but rather exactly as they are presented, as co-finance. Leverage funds are calculated and presented separately to co-finance, and clearly shown in WP 1.1.

It is reported by MFF that these investments have leveraged a total of 3.0 million USD worth of investment by others, but the leverage linkages are not evident. rect. In the Final Report for Phase 3, MFF has clearly indicated the source of leveraged funds, what they were used for, and how they served to build on current or previous MFF funded projects. Yes, more details could have been provided for a few cases of leveraged funds, and this is something IUCN/MFF can improve in the future, however, it is incorrect to say that the leverage linkages are not evident.

### **Feedback regarding financial aspects of the report**

The report states that Phase 3 of the MFF programme was initially budgeted at USD 25.7m; ultimately, however, Phase 3 was implemented with expenditure totalling USD 14.75m - only 57% of the original budget. This clearly shows that a high level of financial efficiency was maintained during programme implementation.

In respect to staff costs, almost all organizations have policies to establish standards for recording and charging staff time. For IUCN, this is the Time Management Policy, which has previously been shared with Sweden. IUCN recommends , since the latter gives a different impression.

MFF was implemented over a total period of 12 years. However, at no time did IUCN have secure funding that spanned the duration of the programme. Even when the programme had

that so many issues related to cost efficiency have been raised by the evaluation team and that they form such a large proportion of the narrative in the evaluation report.

Whilst the report questions the financial efficiency of the programme, IUCN concludes that the outputs and objectives of the programme were successfully achieved, and with significantly less funding than initially budgeted. Nonetheless, IUCN will take on board the learnings from the report and consider how to integrate them into future programmes and projects to ensure that financial efficiency is maintained.

**Additional Comments:**

Upon reviewing responses from the Team to comments provided by MFF/IUCN on the first draft of the report, IUCN is disappointed that the Team has criticised the previous reviews of MFF