

Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation into Production Systems

in the

Juniper Forest Ecosystems

Mid-Term Review
October-November 2009

Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation into Production Systems in the Juniper Forest Ecosystems

1. Introduction

The Project

The project titled 'Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation into Production Systems in the Juniper Forest Ecosystems' (The project) introduces and tests a community-based approach to biodiversity conservation in the Juniper forests of Ziarat District in Balochistan. The complementary GEF-supported biodiversity project has the potential to help government to reform and strengthen the ways in which nature conservation, natural resource management, resource-based livelihoods and rural development are organized and supported across the country.

Juniper forests in Ziarat are spread over a steep, rugged terrain reaching up to 3,350m, in an arid climate with 250-320mm rainfall and high summer and low winter temperatures. The largely sandy loam soils are shallow, fragile and highly calcareous. The Juniper ecosystem forms the basis of much of the socioeconomic activity. The juniper trees fulfil most of the energy needs (almost all before the supply of gas to Ziarat valley) and the construction material (wood and bark). Goat and sheep grazing has been the dominant human activity for centuries, with summer pastures lying in or near the Juniper forests and winter pastures in the rangelands at lower altitudes. Nomadic tribes also migrate seasonally through the region adding stress to the already overburdened rangelands. Juniper forests are also the important watersheds protecting the soil and water resources.

Steering Committee

Mid -Term Project Evaluation

Mid-Term Evaluation mission was organized in October 2009 as a comprehensive independent review and assessment of project performance. This report reviews and evaluates the project concept and design; the arrangements made for project management, administration and financing; and progress and achievements over the first two years of project implementation. The report makes recommendations for the remaining period of project implementation and draws a number of preliminary lessons to guide future conservation efforts.

The Terms of Reference for the MTR are given in Annex 1. The midterm project evaluation is a UNDP requirement for a GEF full-size and medium-size projects and is intended to provide an independent and objective assessment of the project and its implementation: to identify potential project design and implementation problems; assess progress towards the achievement of planned objectives, including the generation of global environmental benefits; identify and document lessons learned (including lessons that might improve design and implementation of other UNDP projects including GEF-financed projects); and to make recommendations regarding specific actions that might be taken to improve project implementation and the sustainability of impacts, including recommendations about replication and exit strategies.

The MTR is also expected to serve as a means of validating or filling the gaps in the initial assessment of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency obtained from regular project monitoring. The midterm evaluation thus provides an opportunity to assess early signs of ultimate project success or failure and prompt necessary adjustments in project design and management. UNDP also views the midterm evaluation as an important opportunity to provide donors, government and project partners with an independent assessment of the status, relevance and performance of the project with reference to the Project.

For the Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation into Production Systems in the Juniper Forest Ecosystems project, the Mid-Term Evaluation involved review and assessment of project design documents and progress reports, administration arrangements, budget financing and expenditure, and activities on the ground. The evaluation team visited the project office in Ziarat, the four valleys where the project has made interventions, UNDP offices in Islamabad and IUCN and government offices in Quetta. The overall itinerary achieved and organizations and individuals consulted by the mission are detailed in Annex 2 and 3 respectively.

Workshop decided to achieve eight (8) outputs as follows:

Output 1.1: Organizational structure in villages selected valleys

Output 1.2: Social and needs assessment of selected valleys, including

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statements are however insufficiently SMART to serve as the key summary plan for the manager to implement the project. The targets even though set in the wake of baseline (Assessment studies) are too specific and would be difficult to achieve e.g. [change in land use reduced to 15% as against 18%, deforestation rate is reduced to 5% as against 7%, rate of ground water depletion reduced to 12% as against 15%]. A precise assessment based on "(primary) data collected through interviews, personal observations, focus group discussions and meetings with data sources" is also questionable.

It would be helpful if the overall Project Objective was more strategically focused: instead of the imprecise aim 'to make production activities in the Juniper forest ecosystem the objective of this project should be an effective collaborative conservation management system in Juniper forest ecosystems in Balochistan, with the Indicator being community and local government institutional arrangements in place for the Juniper forest ecosystem in valleys where interventions have been made.

The Component outputs are however clear and address the issues being faced in the Juniper forest ecosystems.

3. Project Management, Administration and Implementation

Project formulation

UNDP Pakistan used the GEF Project Development Facility to formulate the current project, 1998-2000, which was eventually approved in 2003. The project titled 'Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation into Production Systems in the Juniper Forest Ecosystems – a four year Medium sized GEF Project with UNDP as the GEF Implementing Agency, the Forest & Wildlife Department of the Government of Balochistan as Executing Agency and UN as the project implementing agency.

Project implementation

A project office and management team was established at Ziarat in April 2007, and procured vehicles and field equipment to operate in four valleys. Full project operations started in April 2007 and thus by the time of the Mid-term Evaluation the project had been running for about 2 1/2 years.

The team responsible for implementation of the project comprises the Project Manager, 5 technical staff (two Community Development officers, one Social Organizer, one Admin. and Finance Assistant and one M&E officer) and five support staff. The project team has good working relationship with the Balochistan Forest & Wildlife Department, Irrigation Department and other related organizations.

During the evaluation mission the MTR observed that the project has a skilled, dedicated project team.

Project supervision arrangements

The IUCN office Quetta administers the project and the project team. The project team works in close collaboration with the Baluchistan Forest & Wildlife Department (BFWD). The Project Steering Committee (PSC) and Project Implementation Committee (PIC) are both located at Quetta, the former under the chairmanship of Additional Chief Secretary Planning & Development Department and the latter under the chairmanship of the Secretary Forests and Wildlife. The Committees' meetings are regularly held and appropriate guidance is given at appropriate levels.

The composition of the committees shows that there is no representation of the Environment, Agriculture and Irrigation Departments who could be considered the main stakeholders in the context of livelihood enhancement and environmental concerns. Whereas district government representative has been included in the PSC, there is no representation of public representatives (district government) in PIC. The project recommends that [1] the composition of the committees may be revised to give representation to the important stakeholders. **The project now plans to discuss it in the forthcoming PSC meeting.**

~~The decision (for the 3rd phase) led (and is) (project) - (to) (in) (a) (from) Rural Devel-10(im(l)-2 3p~~

government services (notably education, health and infrastructure). The MTR that recommendation [6] for the remainder of the project, a greater proportion of the energies of the project management and partner agencies should be devoted to attracting the essential development services into project areas; using the project to create an integrated conservation and development programme. The Project agreed to pursue it more vigorously.

The expenditure made against Component Outcomes is also skewed. Whereas 67% expenditure has been made against

- ò For addressing the CCOs felt needs 19 schemes have been implemented in water supply channels (13) and reservoirs lining (4). This aspect is a part of “addressing community felt needs” but can be shown here as well.
- ò Medicinal plant survey for both fall (2007) and spring (2008) season conducted and report completed.
- ò A study for valuation of goods and services in progress.
- ò For establishment of medicinal plant centre a building is being renovated

Output 1.3: Measures to mainstream biodiversity into livestock sector developed and implemented

- ò Five grazing management trainings conducted wherein 78 CCO members participated.
- ò For protection of livestock against contagious diseases 19,000 animals vaccinated.
- ò Treated 19,000 animals for ecto and endo parasites.
- ò Under livestock production 164 animals put to lamb/kid fattening
- ò Three stock water ponds constructed for provision of drinking water to the livestock.
- ò A community range reserve established in Koshki Valley.
- ò

- Construction of water harvesting structures
- Training of 26 CCO members in watershed management
- ò Renovation of tourist huts is in progress.

Output 1.6: Measures to combat die off developed and implemented

- ò Assessment survey report finalized by expert on assessment of Mistletoe and dieback problems.
- ò Maintenance of 50,000 seedlings nursery.
- ò Conducted training of 25 CCO members in propagation and cultivation of medicinal plants.
- ò Balochistan Forest and Wildlife Department facilitated in management and protection of Juniper forests.

Output 1.7: Linkages established with private sector in select sectors

- ò Linkages established with the Agribusiness Park in livestock and agriculture sectors.
- ò Linkages established with UNDP's Mass Awareness for Water Conservation project, who have facilitated the project in capacity building of CCO members in water sector. They are also planning to extend the cooperation in installation of high efficiency system in project CCOs

Output 1.8: Highlight the significance of Juniper Forest Ecosystem at local, regional and global level

- ò Posters of Juniper printed and disseminated.
- ò Printing of project brochures is in progress.
- ò "Ziarat Fact Booklet" compiled and would be published soon.

Outcome 2: Mechanisms for replicating and disseminating the sustainable utilization regimes across the entire Juniper forest ecosystems of Balochistan evolved

Output 2.1: Community and government jointly recommended approach and lessons from each selected valley under outcome 1

- ò For strengthening capacities of government line department staff, NGO and CSO members in biodiversity conservation a 3 day training session was organised.

Output 2.2: C

The Mission's viewpoint “More than distributing stoves it is important to train the communities and motivate them to construct the stoves themselves.

Please try patronizing LPG cylinders. Technology is now in much more advanced stage”.

Output 1.5: Measures to mainstream biodiversity into hunting, watershed management, construction and/or tourism sectors identified, developed and initiated

Hunting: The project has reported that the first stage of wildlife survey has been completed but no report was provided to the MTR. The parameters of the survey are also not known. It is recommended that [1] the wildlife surveys may be completed at the earliest and the reports may be made available. The surveys should also include the wildlife species hunted (even though illegally), their population, hunting pressure, status of legislation and the production potential

The MTR mission was impressed particularly with both the quantity and quality of the groundwork constructions for water management in the landscape and for domestic and

Whereas ecotourism plans have been formulated, the requirement is to implement these.

Output 1.6: Measures to combat die off developed and implemented

Whereas survey report has been made available no effort seems to have been made to take measures to control die off of Juniper. The report states that the hotspots for the Juniper Mistletoe are Chasnak, Sasnamana and Saleh Sakubi areas, the area that have not been selected by the project for interventions. Dieback even though is not considered a disease but its incidence is rather alarming. The survey report suggests that there has been a reduction in the incidence of the disease also seems to be on the lower side. It is recommended based on the available data measures may be adopted to address the disease and die back issues at least in the project valleys. **The Project viewpoint** "The project was mandated to assess the status of dieback and Mistletoe infestation and the Balochistan Forest and Wildlife Department will take the remedial measures".

A plant nursery has been established but its objective has not been made clear.

Output 1.7: Linkages established with private sector in select sectors

Whereas linkages were to be established with private sector in ecotourism, energy, water, agriculture and livestock sectors, linkage has only been established with Agribusiness Pakistan in agriculture and livestock sectors and even in this case parameters of coordination have not been made known. It is recommended that [4] efforts be made in earnest to develop linkages with the private sector in all sectors of study, MoUs signed and ToRs established, and operationalised.

Output 1.8: Highlight the significance of Juniper Forest Ecosystem at local, regional and global levels

The project is in the process of producing and distributed some good quality printed material relevant to biological diversity, environmental impact of human actions, and nature conservation specific to Juniper forest ecosystems. The common difficulty with awareness raising as a project activity is that the endpoint is not specified. It is not clear when the significance of Juniper forest ecosystems to the target audiences has been highlighted sufficiently. It is recommended that [4] the project should not aim to highlight the significance of Juniper forest ecosystems to the target audiences in any general sense; it does not have the time or resources to have an impact in this area. The project team should instead a small number of awareness raising/ information/ education actions with precise objectives to contribute to this Output. **The Project viewpoint** "The project is addressing both kind of audience, local as well as general. Various awareness activities and products have been and are being prepared keeping these audience in consideration.

Since Junipers are of global and regional significance, there is merit to advocate it at the higher levels. If national/provincial and district authorities recognized its importance then maybe there is hope beyond the project life.

This issue also needs to be linked back to the promotion of a shared vision for the future of the Juniper Forests (see Output 2.3 below)

The documentary planned to be made must also be made earliest

Outcome 2: Mechanisms for replicating and disseminating the sustainable utilization regimes across the entire Juniper forest ecosystems of Balochistan evolved

Output 2.1: Community and government jointly recommended approach and lessons from each selected valley under outcome 1

The project plans to expose the stakeholders in the Juniper forest to the project interventions to motivate them for replication. Except for a three day workshop at Quetta no such initiative seems to have been taken

Output 2.2: Capacity for up-scaling, replication and dissemination strengthened, notably in government departments

No intervention has so far been made. A realistic and feasible replication/dissemination plan may be prepared with the help of all stakeholders: recommendation [15]

Output 2.3: Successful approaches from outcome 1 available for replication across all the Juniper forest ecosystems in Balochistan

The project has helped in the formation of the Integrated District Development Vision (IDDV) for Ziarat wherein the successful approaches from Outcome 1 have been built in.

Output 2.4: Where appropriate, successful approaches from outcome 1 disseminated across Pakistan and countries with similar threats and ecosystems

The information on the project findings has been updated on IUCN website.

Earthquake Rehabilitation Initiatives

UNDP had allocated additional US\$ 78,000 for assisting the affected communities after severe earthquake in 2008. Through this initiative, 8 rehabilitation schemes related to water resources and flood protection are in progress.

6. Project Monitoring and Evaluation

The Project Document describes the planned arrangements for project monitoring and evaluation. These are based on the prepared project plan with performance indicators, and reporting against that plan in accordance with UNDP, GEF and government requirements. Under these arrangements, the project management is required to submit a quarterly Progress Report to the government and UNDP, and to compile an annual Project Implementation Review for UNDP and the GEF, and an Annual Project Report to the Patriotic Review body. The project implementing agency UNJ, is required to report to the Project Implementation Committee and Project Steering Committee, at project inception and bi-monthly intervals. Two independent evaluations are also scheduled, the current MTR and the other at the close of the project.

The reporting schedule is being adhered to. However it has been observed that the reports record activities but do not enable project managers, supervisors or evaluators to evaluate progress towards planned objectives. The Project viewpoint is because of specific reporting formats of UNDP which are more quantitative. UNDP needs to be apprised of this limitation”.

The revised LFA provides performance indicators and a baseline situation report for each proposed Outcome and Output. The progress reports have not been evaluated on the basis of this LFA. MTR recommendation [16] is that a simple system of information management should be introduced across the project, consisting of routine recording of the data needed to monitor progress towards each Output. The data recording should be a simple part of the working routine of each project staff member, using a standard structure provided by the logical framework to prepare detailed activity plans, reports and activity reports. Each quarter, the information system would provide a succinct note of progress towards each Output. These would be compiled straightforwardly into quarterly and annual progress reports, in the required formats (APR, PIR), which would be linked directly back to the project logical framework plan.

7. Lessons learnt

Through the MTR instances were noted of good and poor practices that had especially helped or hindered the project towards achieving its objectives. These are drawn together here as lessons for future comparable efforts.

Adaptive management, project design, inception and MTR

The project formulation process: project implementation and monitoring are likely to be assisted by having a complete, carefully thought through and precise logical framework that is readily understood, owned and used by the project team.

