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Transboundary Agro-Ecosystem Management Programme for the Kagera River Basin (Kagera TAMP) - GCP /RAF/424/GFF

Management response to the Mid-term evaluation report

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**Transboundary Agro-Ecosystem Management Programme for the Kagera River Basin
(Kagera TAMP) - GCP /RAF/424/GFF**

Management Response to the Mid-Term Evaluation of the FAO-GEF Project

1 Overall Response

The mid-term evaluation report prepared on this GEF-funded project is comprehensive, balanced and covers all aspects and components of the project. The project management congratulates the consultants on their in-depth evaluation of the complex project activities carried out during a tight mission schedule in the four riparian countries of the Kagera river basin, Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

The overall message that emerges from this report is, that the project is on target and aligned with the the GEF Land Degradation focal area's strategic objectives. It is relevant to the sub-region and embedded in the regional policy context of the Kagera river basin.

The project management agrees with the evaluation team, that project targets are very ambitious and will propose a review of the targets to the next Regional steering committee, especially under the presently low level of cofinancing and additional time required to demonstrate environmental and developmental impacts. The project management acknowledges that the slow start-up phase, which is not unusual for such a complex, multi-stakeholder project has limited the results available at the time of the evaluation, but would like to stress that implementation is accelerating. Especially, the strong and enthusiastic involvement of land users (farmers, herders, communities, FFS groups) is now building the basis for wider adoption of good SLM practices and provides convincing arguments for local and national level decision-makers for upscaling of SLM. The project management would have liked to see more guidance from the MTE on how to effectively address the current shortfall of cofinancing (required by the GEF) as a major limitation for scaling up of SLM in the Kagera river basin and the achievement of the overall objectives.

In order to ensure the replicability and mainstreaming of the achievements, the project management welcomes the MTE recommendation to extend the project, and proposes a no-cost extension until 28 February 2015, i.e. six months including the growing season 2014/15, and still falling within the last reporting cycle of the GEF Implementing Agency (PIR 2014-15).

The project management is aware of the difficulties and limitations for mainstreaming and replicating its achievements and agrees with most of the findings and recommendations detailed below. The MTE provides a good basis for the orientation and work planning for the remainder of the project. Project activities and the next workplanning process will be focused accordingly.

List of Acronyms

BI	Burundi
FFS	Farmer Field School
LOA	Letter of Agreement (subcontract)
LTU	Lead Technical Unit
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NPM	National Project Manager
NRL	Land and Water Division (FAO)
PES	Payments for Ecosystem Services
RPC	Regional Project Coordinator
RW	Rwanda
SCM	Steering Committee Meeting (National/Regional)
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
TOR	Terms of Reference
TZ	Tanzania
UG	Uganda

2 Response by Recommendation

Management response to the Mid-Term Evaluation of the FAO-GEF Project: “Transboundary Agro-Ecosystem Management Programme for the Kagera River Basin (Kagera TAMP)” - GCP /RAF/424/GFF					Date: Feb. 2014
Evaluation Recommendation	Management response Accepted, partially accepted or rejected and comment on the Recommendation	Management plan			
		Action to be taken	Responsible unit	Timeframe	Further funding required (Y or N)
Recommendation 1: Three reviews should be conducted before the end of the project: a) Investigate the effectiveness of the LADA-WOCAT methodologies; b) Document the innovative and successful FFS approach used by the project; c) Document the full extent of the area covered by SLM/SLaM under the project.	a) Partially accepted The LADA-WOCAT tools are already validated in collaboration with a large number of countries and institutions. However, a review of their effectiveness in this project can be done, but requires differentiation as tools are several and scope is different (see action) b) Accepted c) Accepted	a) Review through Regional technical workshop with experts, RPSC and other actors - <i>LUS/QM</i> during and after handover with national institutions - <i>QA/QT</i> and <i>LADA-Local</i> through national workshops to review experiences for baseline, and monitoring and documentation of case studies also to agree on content of draft Kagera publication (existing and other innovative/new T/A s to document) b) Technical paper on process , challenges and benefits + training manual on FFS on SLM and success stories for wider dissemination through Kagera TAMP and other FFS programmes. c) Improve records through data on beneficiaries and digitalisation of area reached by project and information from cofunding partners.	NRL/LTU in consultation with RPC, NPMs and relevant consultants	2 nd RPSC and technical workshop by October 2013 LUS/QM hand-over by Feb. 2014. QA/QT documentati on by April 2014. b) SLM publication by end 2014 c) throughout remaining project life	No
Recommendation 2: More focus needs to be given to developing the capacity of related organizations and of an enabling environment to provide the adequate policy, legislation and governance frameworks	Accepted	Better document achievements in capacity building so far in terms of results. Focus in final year will be based on guidance of Regional and National Steering Committees on creating effective policy briefs/reviews with decision makers at basin and national levels, byelaws and their replication and application modalities + local governance e.g. empowerment of catchment/watershed committees.	NRL/LTU in collaboration with RPC, NPMs	Throughout 2014	No

<p>Recommendation 3: A planning exercise should be conducted, including the development/ refinement of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) A replication/scaling-up strategy where entry points and specified activities are identified; b) A work plan for the entire remaining implementation period with the associated budget; c) A project exit strategy; particularly for disengagement of support in demonstration sites 	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>National and Regional Steering Committee Meetings will guide this exercise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) LTU to undertake field visit to district teams, national authorities and partner programmes to better advise on replication strategy and scale (catchment approach, priority areas...). b) RPC and NPMs will prepare detailed workplan with budgetary needs in consultation with NRL/LTU. c) Leverage cofinancing, support development of or incorporation in national SLM strategy of lessons learnt. Support transition from FFS groups to farmers' cooperatives with viable business plans 	<p>NRL/LTU in collaboration with RPC, NPMs</p>	<p>Throughout the remaining project life, new workplan approved by Jan 2014</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Recommendation 4: Specific project activities should be managed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) No new PES activities be established; b) The LUS and QM maps be handed over through a three step process; c) The potential for an informal GEF partnership be investigated in Uganda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Accepted b) Accepted c) Accepted (but outcome uncertain; see action) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Only sensitisation and awareness of stakeholders on PES in all 4 countries and opportunities for future interventions will be supported In Rwanda and Burundi has started preliminary work on documenting feasibility of possible PES schemes. This ongoing work will further be analysed through targeted hydrological monitoring to raise awareness of SLM impacts on water resources for key water users, with the aim to contribute to exit strategy that engages key water users to continue to support HM and SLM upscaling. b) Institutions for handover of data and maps will be identified on basis of capacity (institution and expertise developed by project) and under guidance from national/regional PSC. A collaborative process with responsible national institution will be supported to agree on how to publish and showcase LUS-QM applications. Institutional capacity building may be required in some countries c) Have tried unsuccessfully since start of project with MAAIF (Mr. Muwaya) and 	<p>NRL/LTU in collaboration with RPC, NPMs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) by end of 2013 b) by Feb.2014 c) during 2013-14 	<p>No</p>

		UNDP to link Kagera TAMP with GEF funded national SLM investment strategy. Will require additional/ high-level support to make such a partnership effective.			
Recommendation 5: The project period should be extended, if the budget permits	Accepted	At the next Regional PSC (Oct.2013) LTU will propose 6 months no-cost extension until end of February 2015 to allow fullscale operations with partners until end of rainy season and plan final evaluation early 2015 and closure.	NRL/LTU and Budget Holder	Nov. 2013	No
Recommendation 6: FAO should decentralize decision-making, including financial approval, in countries and provide accurate and timely financial information by outcome to project managers	Accepted , with the following comment: It should be noted, that FAO offices in all four countries adhere to the same financial and budgetary rules and regulations and have since project start been given <u>equal authority for decentralized operations and decision making</u> from FAO-HQ and LTU/Budget Holder (in consultation with the NPMs and in line with the approved workplan). However, <u>implementation modalities</u> (subcontracts, LOAs with districts, ARI, NGOs, FFS grants,) may vary based on the choices taken by the NPMs and the capacity of local partners (district authorities, NGOs, etc). There is a need to consider different operational capacities and situation in countries (distance from capital FAOR offices in UG and TZ). The NPM in TZ has specifically requested direct HQ involvement for contracts (LOA) with NGOs as financial and implementation capacity at district level has proven to be very limited. The FAO corporate financial system has limitations in the reporting by GEF project outcome components, especially for the distribution of costs when activities are over split more than one component as well as the retroactive recording after year-end closure.	Decision making should be driven by project managers but this requires leadership and proactive planning (which is not always there). It is suggested to encourage RPC and NPMs to take the lead to implement agreed workplan endorsed by PSCs with support of LTU. It is expected, that the roll-out of FAO's <u>new corporate financial system (GRMS)</u> during 2013 will enhance financial and budgetary monitoring, and facilitate timely approval of funds at country level. LTU/Budget holder will liaise with FAOR offices to avoid delays in implementation. Limitations of the corporate systems are addressed by the Budget Holder, eventually through separate records on spreadsheets.	NRL/LTU and Budget Holder in consultation with NPM	Throughout remaining project life	No

Recommendation 7: Backstopping from FAO HQ should focus more on general progress and support, and less on technical training sessions at this stage of the project	Accepted Comment: HQ participation in Regional SCM and supervision missions will be required to adhere to IA responsibilities and to ensure targets are monitored and met.	Future technical support missions will respond to demand in the field and to improve technical performance/quality. GEF prodoc and budget require specific TOR for technical support by LTU and FAO/HQ.	NRL/LTU in consultation with RPC, NPMs and relevant consultants	Throughout remaining project life	No
Recommendation 8: The engagement of stakeholders should be urgently improved through more cross visits for intra-national and regional learning at all levels and through more frequent RPSC and NPSCs meetings, starting with a RPSC to review the MTE findings and its recommendations	Accepted	A coherent plan for all levels of exchanges (FFS groups, local/district authorities, technical sectors, national and basin wide policy level, SC members) will be developed by NPMs and RPC in cooperation with cofounding partners and included in the next workplan. The next Regional SCM will review and appreciate the MTE findings and recommendations	NRL/LTU in consultation with RPC, NPMs	by Dec 2014 October 2013	No
Recommendation 9: The set of performance indicators needs to be revised; including the identification of a few specific capacity indicators and all related targets used to measure the progress of the project	Accepted The monitoring of activities and outputs were collected by the NPMs through their reporting. The M&E of outcomes and impacts is now the focus. A draft SLM impact assessment protocol was developed and shared with the NPMs to assess the environmental benefits, and the carbon assessment method was reviewed and shared with the NPMs for its implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The set of performance indicators and related targets at outcome level will be revised and submitted to the Regional SCM for endorsement - Capacity development indicators will be identified and add to this set. - Impact indicators will be monitored through on farm SLM benefits assessment (soil erosion, water retention, productivity, biodiversity, livelihoods), FFS member survey, and hydrolo monitoring of water quality/sediment loads in a representative sample of catchments. - Moreover a carbon assessment using the GEF method will be conducted in 1 catchment/country 	NRL/LTU in consultation with RPC, NPMs and M&E consultant	By Oct 2013 Monitoring throughout project life Assessment during summer 2014	No