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Groundwater Governance: A Global Framework for Country Action GCP/GLO/277/GFF

Management Response to the Mid-term Review

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Office of Evaluation (OED)

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Overall Response to the Review

1 Introduction

1. The project ‘Groundwater Governance: A Framework for Country Action’ (hereafter ‘the project’) is being undertaken because “the governance of subsurface water remains largely uncharted in spite of the large and increasing importance of groundwater use”. Groundwater is not as visible as surface water, but plays a crucial role in irrigation, urban and rural water supplies and in sustaining ecological systems and services.

2. The independent Mid-Term Review (MTR) was undertaken in order to determine progress being made towards the achievement of outcomes and to identify course correction if needed. The MTR focused on the effectiveness, efficiency and timeliness of project implementation; highlighted issues requiring decisions and actions; and presented initial lessons learned about project design, implementation and management. Findings of the MTR have been incorporated as recommendations for enhanced implementation during the final period of the project term.

2 General response to the review

3. In summary, the MTR found the project to be highly relevant and timely, successfully bringing together five very important organizations (FAO, GEF, IAH, UNESCO-IHP and the World Bank), around the theme of groundwater governance. The project is on track and has generated considerable material as a sound knowledge base, including the unearthing of a large number of previously little known good case studies.

4. The MTR identified an emerging and very useful outcome of the project as the strengthening of links within the community of persons concerned about groundwater management, through the cooperation of main partners and exchange of experiences and ideas at the regional consultations. This outcome was exemplified by the results of a survey of the PCM members carried out by the reviewer: the exchange of ideas ranked most frequently as the main achievement so far.

5. The MTR posits that the main challenge for the second phase of the project – the Global Diagnostic, Vision and Framework for Action – is “to make strong links between groundwater governance and the main players and themes in ‘the rest of the world’: for instance in land use planning, urban development, mining, food security and economic development”. In this second phase the MTR encourages the partners to create a process with magnetic pull and the energy to set in place a number of activities that will lead to better groundwater governance at the political level.

6. Overall, the Project Steering Committee (PSC) considers that the MTR has done an excellent job drawing out the essence of the project from the very large amount of raw information in the form of thematic papers, case studies, consultation reports, discussions with project partners and a survey of members of the Project Consultation Mechanism (PCM). The MTR has achieved a thorough and comprehensive overview of the project within very tight timeframes. The recommendations are clear, useful and timely and the suggestions

regarding the ‘plan of work’ for each recommendation contain some innovative ideas and solutions that have been carefully considered by the PSC as specified in the following section.

3 Response to specific plan of work suggestions

7. ***Recommendation 1: Make the Vision and Framework process widely-connected by scheduling it alongside and linked into other activities.*** NRL and the PSC accept Recommendation 1 and have already started its implementation.

8. With regard to the specific ‘plan of work suggestions’:

- (1a) The Vision and Framework for Action (FFA) process has started and was further developed at the 5th Regional Consultation in the Hague, in March 2013, where a small ‘Core Drafting Group’ (CDG) of eminent groundwater experts was approached in order to gauge their willingness to be involved. Discussions with the CDG regarding detailed terms of reference and work plan are ongoing. The discussions from the plenary and group sessions in The Hague will be fed into the Vision and FFA. The private sector roundtable that took place during the said Consultation enabled a very open and constructive discussion and a follow-up roundtable with the sector will take place in the second half of 2013.
- (1b) While the project budget may prevent the hosting of events alongside all of those listed in the MTR, the project Vision and FFA will be heavily disseminated through a variety of medium, including the hosting of side-events at meetings and conferences carefully selected for maximum possible impact.
- (1c) The project will continue its close collaboration with the OECD water governance Initiative.
- (1d and 1f) The project objectives and preliminary findings will be presented at the Budapest Water Summit in October 2013. In addition to serving for disseminating the project findings, this Summit also provides an excellent opportunity to explore options for incorporating groundwater in the SDGs.
- (1e) The PSC is currently discussing the optimum vehicle for promotion of the project materials – a special issue of the IAH Publications Series or Hydrogeology Journal and other options are being assessed.
- (1f) The project objectives and preliminary findings will also be presented at the World Water Week 2013 through a Workshop on “Cooperation Across and within Jurisdictions and Levels for Good Water Governance - Local to Global”.
- (1g) The High-Level Water-Related Governmental Institutions (Member States’ representatives of the UNESCO IHP Intergovernmental Council) that have supported and participated in the organization of the five regional consultations have been informed about the preparation of the Vision and the Framework for Action and requested to give due consideration to these documents when available.

9. ***Recommendation 2: Adequately resource and plan the organization of the Vision and FFA process.*** NRL and the PSC accept Recommendation 2 and have already commenced its implementation activities.

10. With regard to the specific ‘plan of work suggestions’:

- (2h) A project extension request has been made by FAO as suggested.
- (2i) The timetable, as suggested by the MTR, will be adjusted slightly to accommodate the decisions made at the PSC meeting in The Hague, the availability of the CDG members and the new extended deadline.
- (2j) It was not envisaged that the budget or any of the agencies would be able to afford full-time dedicated staff over the life of the project. Agencies have responded with in-kind co-financing to cover the staffing requirements and this is part of the overall integration of the initiative into agency activities. Agency co-financing from FAO and UNESCO in particular has been increasing as resources for the regional consultations needed to be increased. The project partners will also endeavour to mobilize additional synergies with other projects from their existing networks.
- (2k) The Core Drafting Group has been selected by the project partners on the basis of expertise as well as familiarity with, and understanding of, the core project objectives and values. The CDG will operate under the close supervision and support of the PSC and will prepare documents for events as requested and in accordance with the communication activities of the partner agencies. The partner agencies will also engage the PCM in the process, for example via online discussions, with the support of the CDG as needed. Other parties including the advisory panel of experts and the organizations that have been involved at different stages of the project will also be engaged.
- (2l) All documents related to the project and results of the consultations are available on the website. This wealth of information will be synthesised and repackaged in a series of communication products - including factsheets, info graphics, short briefs, etc. - to reach the media and decision makers. A Groundwater Governance bulletin – including news updates, statements on groundwater issues and solutions, projects products and findings, etc. - will be launched in spring 2013 and circulated through a number of list services and partners’ networks. A series of short video interviews with experts and stakeholders held during the regional consultations as well as the Groundwater Talks prepared and financed by UNESCO IHP will also be used to highlight regional challenges and solutions. The website also includes a password-protected section for the PCM members where online thematic consultations and e-forums will be hosted.
- (2m) A high-profile (media-oriented) panel was considered during the project formulation, but the costs of running such a panel are high and unpredictable (even if personalities give their time for free). The budget was only able to make a very modest provision for the advisory committee. As an alternative, a competent panel of some of the world’s best groundwater experts was agreed and selected. The PSC is currently considering ways in which to encourage greater engagement of this panel in the second phase of the project.

- (2n) Active engagement of the PCM is a critical element of the second phase of the project. Activities under consideration include the hosting of thematic discussions, requesting comments on drafts, presenting webinars and organizing debates. IAH networks and the IW-LEARN Community of Practice will be utilized as appropriate.
- (2o) Rather than creating a large mailing list, the project will utilize the PCM to connect with and engage ‘people on the ground’. All regional consultation attendees have been invited to join the PCM and the PCM remains open to new entrants. The PSC will discuss new ways to enlarge membership (via emails to UN country offices, for example) and engagement of the PCM will be increased in the project’s second phase as planned.

11. ***Recommendation 3: Agree on the content of the Diagnostic, the Vision and the FFA document, make sure that they have ‘teeth’ and weight and communicate expected heavy output and spin off widely.*** NRL and the PSC accept Recommendation 3.

12. With regard to the specific ‘plan of work suggestions’:

- (3p) Global Diagnostic (GD): As suggested, the synthesis paper is being updated and the GD will be produced as rapidly as possible. The PSC has decided that the GD will be based on five regional diagnostics that will be prepared on the basis of an in-depth review of all the materials collected at each regional consultation. The MTR suggests collating a number of key messages in order to show urgency, generate excitement, garner media attention and highlight some of the more successful case studies.
- (3q) The Vision: Will be a short, sharp document written in a style that is easily understood by non-specialists.
- (3r) The FFA: Will be endorsed by the project partners. The PSC will also seek the support of relevant organizations, such as OECD, as appropriate. The tangible outputs suggested in the MTR – particularly the Code of Conduct for Groundwater Governance for which the need has already become evident – will be assessed and given due consideration by the PSC and the CDG in due course, pending resource availability.
- (3s) As the CDG and the PSC move through the process of developing the GD, Vision and FFA, the activities to take place beyond 2014 will also be discussed and further developed.

Response by Recommendation

Management response to the Independent Mid-term Review of the project Groundwater Governance: A Global Framework for Country Action					17/04/2013
Evaluation Recommendation	Management response <i>Accepted</i> , <i>partially accepted</i> or <i>rejected</i> and comment on the Recommendation	Management plan			
		Action to be taken	Responsible unit	Timeframe	Further funding required (Y or N)
To the project, on its Vision and Framework Process					
Recommendation 1: Make the Vision and Framework Process widely-connected by scheduling it alongside and linked into other activities.	<i>Accepted</i>	<p>Disseminate project results at relevant events (via side-events, poster sessions, presentations, etc.) in accordance with the events calendar drafted by the communications team (Stockholm Water Week, Budapest Water Summit, 7th World Water Forum 2015, etc.).</p> <p>Enhance the visibility and availability of the thematic papers (special edition of a relevant journal, website links, etc.)</p> <p>Organize a second private sector roundtable in order to: follow-up on the discussions commenced in The Hague, solidify communication channels and improve linkages with the sector.</p>	<p>Communications (FAO and UNESCO with PSC support)</p> <p>PSC</p> <p>UNESCO with support of the PSC</p>	<p>Ongoing until project end</p> <p>Q2-Q4 2013</p> <p>Q3-Q4 2013</p>	<p>N</p> <p>UNESCO co-finance</p>
To the project, on resources and plans					
Recommendation 2: Adequately resource and plan the organization of the Vision and Framework for Action Process	<i>Accepted</i>	<p>Review the work plan and budget in accordance with the decisions made at the 4TH PSC meeting.</p> <p>Finalize ToRs and contracts for the CDG.</p>	<p>FAO (NRL)</p> <p>FAO (NRL) with support from the PSC.</p>	<p>Q2 2013</p> <p>Q2 2013</p>	<p>N</p>

		Raise publicity by activating the PCM via the hosting of thematic discussions, requesting comments on drafts, organizing webinars and debates.	PSC	Ongoing till project end	
To the project, on contents					
Recommendation 3: Agree on content of the Diagnostic, the Vision and Framework for Action document, make sure they have 'teeth' and weight and communicate the expected heavy output and spin-off widely	Accepted	<p>Finalize regional diagnostics</p> <p>Begin drafting the GD</p> <p>Develop messages “with teeth” to help increase visibility and impact of the GD.</p> <p>Develop draft project Vision and conduct wide consultations for enrichment and endorsement</p> <p>Develop the FFA and seek endorsement by partners and other organizations</p>	<p>UNESCO (with PSC support)</p> <p>CDG (with PSC support)</p> <p>CDG (with PSC support)</p> <p>CDG (with PSC support)</p> <p>CDG (with PSC support)</p>	<p>June 2013</p> <p>July 2013</p> <p>Q2-end of project</p> <p>Q3- Q42013</p> <p>Q1 – Q4 2014</p>	N