United Nations Environment Programme

Piloting Integrated Processes and Approaches to Facilitate National Reporting to Rio Conventions (FNR_Rio)

UNEP Programme ID: GFL/2328-2713-4810

Terminal Evaluation

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Contents

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COP	Conference of the Parties
EA	Expected Accomplishments
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency (Liberia)
FMO	Funds Management Officer
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GPC	Global Project Coordinator
IR	Integrated Reporting
MENDU (changed to MESD)	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (Mauritius)
MLWE	Ministry of Lands, Water and Environment (Eritrea)
MTS	Medium Term Strategy
NEA	National Executing Agency
NEPA	National Environmental Protection Agency (Afghanistan)
NFP	National Focal Point
NPA	National Project Assistant
NPC	National Project Coordinator
NSC	National Steering Committee
OERC	Office of Environmental Response and Coordination
PoW	Programme of Work
PSC	Project Steering Committee
SBSTTA	Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound
SNC	Second National Communication
TOC	Theory of Change
TWG	Technical Working Group
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP-WCMC	World Conservation Monitoring Centre
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WREA	Water Resources and Environment Administration (Lao PDR)

Project Identification Table

Table 1: Project Summary of FNR Rio as updated for the Terminal Evaluation

GEF project ID:	3707	IMIS number:	GFL/2328-2713-4B10
UNEP Sub-programme:	Environmental Governance, Resource efficiency	UNEP Expected Accomplishment(s):	SP4 EA(a)-(d)
UNEP approval date:	September 2009	UNEP PoW Output(s):	2010- 2011
GEF Focal Area(s):	Multifocal areas: Biodiversity, Climate Change, Land Degradation	GEF Strategic Priority/Objective:	CB2
Implementing Agency	UNEP	Project Type:	MSP
Executing Agency	UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC)	Countries	Afghanistan, Eritrea, Mauritius, Palau, Lao PDR, Liberia
Actual start date:	January 2010	Actual or Expected completion date:	December 2013
Project Type:	MSP	GEF Allocation*:	US$840,000
PPG GEF cost:	US$30,000	PPG co-financing:	US$20,000
Expected MSP/FSP Co-financing:	US$775,880	Total Cost:	US$957,000 (including Agency fee)
No. of revisions:	1	Date of last Revision:	July 2013
Date of last Steering Committee meeting:	16 November 2013	Date of financial closure:	March 2014
Total co-financing realized:	USD 611,351.00	Actual expenditures reported:	USD 840,020.84
First Disbursement:	USD 150,000 (January 2010)	Actual expenditures entered in IMIS:	USD 840,020.84
Mid-term review/ evaluation	N/A	Terminal Evaluation (actual date):	March 2016

Executive Summary

A. Introduction

1.   The medium-sized project 'Piloting Integrated Processes and Approaches to Facilitate National Reporting to Rio Conventions (FNR_Rio')' was implemented through the UNEP, and executed by UNEP World Conservation and Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), in coordination and partnership with six countries and the Rio Conventions Secretariats. The participating countries included Liberia, Eritrea, Mauritius, Afghanistan, Lao PDR and Palau.

2.   The overall objective of the FNR_Rio was to **'pilot nationally-driven integrated processes and approaches to reporting to the three Rio Conventions'**. The project aimed to develop integrated approaches to data collection and information management and contribute to planning and decision-making processes at the country level.

3.   A terminal evaluation is an important component that takes place after project completion. The major objective of this Terminal Evaluation is to assess project performance, determine its outcomes and impacts as well as their sustainability, and identify valuable lessons learnt through the process of implementing FNR_Rio.

B. Evaluation findings and conclusions

4.   *Strategic Relevance:* The project was strongly aligned to global and national environmental (and financial, in terms of cost-efficiency) needs. The FNR_Rio was consistent with the GEF Focal Areas, the UNEP mandate, the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (2010-2013) and its related Programmes of Work, as well as the Bali Strategic Plan. Stakeholder participation was a strong element of this project from design through to implementation. Strategic relevance was rated as Satisfactory.

5.   *Achievement of outputs:* Virtually all of the outputs, with one exception, achieved. Output 2.4 i.e. the Assessment report of the quality of national reports was subsumed into the national manuals as recommendations instead. An additional (large) output was added mid-way through the project at the specific request of the GEF Secretariat, which necessitated budget re-shuffling and put additional pressure on the already limited resources and time of the project. However, the project managed to achieve this output in time. The achievement of outputs was rated as Satisfactory.

6.   *Effectiveness - Attainment of Objectives and Planned Results*: For the purpose of the evaluation and the Theory of Change, the six original project outcomes were reformulated into the following:

   a) Increase in knowledge on the synergies and linkages of convention reporting at national level;

   b) Enhanced country capacity and stakeholder numbers in the ability to identify cross-convention programmes for cost-effective implementation leading to greater streamlining and less duplication;

   c) Improved informed decision-making at national and global level of opportunities to integrate reporting (more countries interested in integrated reporting).

7.   While the outcomes may have been generally achieved within the timeframe of the project, some smaller components were a challenge. Overall, the FNR_Rio laid a strong foundation towards more integrative and collaborative reporting and most countries would agree that the exercise was helpful.

8.   Two of the most obvious outcomes from the project in terms of the TOC and path to impact were (i) that institutions were strengthened towards the implementation and reporting to MEAs in general, creating a centralised point *vis a vis* data collection and coordination for the Focal Points, and (ii) stakeholder relationships were forged and/or strengthened throughout the project process creating a sustainable mechanism for sharing of information (especially among national Focal Points).

9.   Onus needs to be given to the importance laid on getting Focal Points connected through the project, an important element that had linkages to all the outcomes. Through the project interventions, the Focal Points could clearly see the benefits of finding synergies and linkages in convention reporting.

10.   Two of the main aspects that depend on assumptions holding (see TOC) are the sustainability of data management mechanisms and continued enhancing capacity among stakeholders. In addition, the interest of stakeholders in participating in the collaboration processes of integrative reporting is an important assumption to make, and did not necessarily always hold (as per comments from in-country stakeholder interviews).

11.   It must be recognised that the realisation of project impact requires continued investment into testing and much more support from the Rio Convention Secretariats themselves, and prioritisation at higher level in-country for different institutions to share separated but mutual responsibilities.

12.   The *likelihood of achievement of project impact* (Implementation of Rio Conventions and other MEAs enhance ecosystems health and human wellbeing through a systems approach - *connected and harmonized implementation and reporting vastly improves through stakeholders working together with systems thinking at the core*) is examined using the ROtI analysis and TOC. A summary of the results and ratings of the ROtI can be found in Table 6.

13.   The project's intended outcomes were delivered and had catalytic elements to each outcome so that these would feed into Intermediate states. For instance, the global situational analysis is definitely a helpful tool beyond the project, but also supported the development and understanding of the subsequent national reports. These worked towards better understanding barriers and solutions towards collaborative and integrative reporting. The fact that the national Focal Points realised the benefits of such reporting gives an indication of its higher level prioritisation. The project was a pilot, which aimed to create an enabling environment toward national collaborative and integrative reporting. However, next steps were not directly injected into the design. More effort was placed on project implementation, and less on communication *per se* horizontally and vertically to embed the integration more deeply (both nationally and globally), which meant that there was a lack, generally, of real champions at all levels, to bring this forward in a coherent way, without external support. Given the starting of other projects, especially those focusing on mainstreaming the biodiversity MEAs that are now in process, with feedback from the FNR_Rio integrated into upcoming projects, gives an indication of the uptake more globally of the work towards the overall impact. Although not directly aligned to the FNR_Rio, these offshoots do provide extra steps towards the impact of the reconstructed TOC. Based on country visits and interviews, it is clear that the FNR_Rio laid a strong foundation towards integrated reporting and systems thinking

towards implementing the conventions, but there are still many more steps to take before impact is reached, and these steps have not necessarily been laid down.

14.   The purpose of the project was to create an enabling environment for countries to test approaches towards integrative and collaborative reporting, through identifying country-based needs to improve data access and stakeholder collaboration. The hope for the project, in terms of realizing long-term impact, was that recommendations made by each country in their national manuals were realised through country actions (although this is difficult when resources are limited).

15.   Given that this was a pilot, the project did achieve its project goal and planned objective. In the same vein, there needed to have been more clear "next steps" for implementation, which was not necessarily made clear through the project interventions. Nevertheless, the project's achievements and interventions certainly provided a very strong foundation on which to build next steps towards long-term impact. The overall rating on Effectiveness is Satisfactory.

16.   *Sustainability and replication:* The project did not retain as many results at national level as was hoped, mostly because a lot of these require more financial resources and capacity building. The institutional framework was definitely strengthened as a result of the project. The FNR_Rio had several catalytic impacts at country level. The project has substantial potential for replication, but more could be done on awareness and communication of results. The rating for sustainability is Moderately Satisfactory.

17.   *Efficiency:* Both time and cost-efficiency was highly relevant and achieved in the FNR_Rio project. Rated as Highly Satisfactory.

18.   *Factors affecting project performance:* The project was well designed and planned. Implementation was adaptive (especially given the challenges) and generally well regarded by project partners. The project had strong elements of stakeholder participation and engagement. While, given the budget, there was sufficient awareness on the project and these met the required targets of the logframe, given the potential for replication this could have been more. The country ownership was strong, mostly due to national manual development. Supervision and technical backstopping was highly regarded by project partners. The project had relatively good monitoring and evaluation processes.

C. Conclusions

19.   In terms of FNR_Rio's purpose, it laid a **strong foundation**, according to country respondents in some countries (with the exception of Afghanistan and Eritrea), toward integrative and collaborative reporting to Rio Conventions. It was the first of its kind in all of the six countries, and most countries really appreciated the experience and learned a lot on the synergies and harmonisation of efforts to substantially decrease their reporting burdens.

20.   Generally, respondents in all countries did find that through the project implementation they found ways to have more efficient use of their own resources and found that the project did make a substantial impact on cost- and time-effectiveness towards their reporting obligations.

21.   In Liberia, the biggest achievements were that the project contributed to improved overall planning and decision-making and that it helped the Focal Points understand the need for synergies. It also laid the ground work towards instituting a MEA unit, and to a lesser extent did contribute to an improved national data mechanism. Resource mobilisation remains the key barrier to instituting some of the recommendations from the national manual.

22.   No feedback was attained from Eritrea two years post-project so it is impossible to ascertain whether any of the initial steps taken right after the project have been sustained (e.g. developing national legislation). One of the recommendations was also the establishment of a separate institution with a clear mandate over data collection and management. Eritrea was not involved during the last months of the project and did not attend the final project meeting, nor were any responses given during the Evaluation. As a result, it is questionable how many of the recommendations from the national manual have indeed been taken up.

23.   Mauritius had several achievements through the project, including its enhanced capacity, enhanced collaboration among stakeholders, and some implementation of the recommendations of the national manual (like the high level MEA committee - which only just met for its first time in November 2015 to work on a common template for all MEAs, targeted investment e.g. through prioritisation of climate change, dealing with cross-cutting issues jointly). According to respondents, communication continues to be a barrier to effective collaboration, the Muelex database (which was hoped to become the central database for reporting) did not come to fruition as hoped, and lack of resources are cited as the main barrier.

24.   In Afghanistan, a focus was largely on capacity building towards standardized data collection and within institutions responsible for national reporting. It, with Mauritius and Eritrea, also was working towards developing legislation towards improved data mechanisms. According to the one respondent, however, not much was done in terms of improved collaboration or an improved data mechanism, mainly because not enough interest was built within the responsible institutions. It is also questionable whether any of the recommendations were taken up (despite there being promise of more capacity building), no response from NEPA meant that this could not be verified by the Evaluator.

25.   In Lao PDR, general remarks from the respondent that the project did contribute to an improved data mechanism as well as increased stakeholder engagement is a small testament to some forms of project sustainability. Ongoing processes include setting up the mechanism to support the implementation of the recommendations of the manual within the existing reporting structure, but lack of financing continues to be the major challenge.

26.   In Palau, recent reorganisation of institutional frameworks (not as a result of the project *per se*) for reporting has led to strengthening of such frameworks and more effective stakeholder engagement. The recommendations from the manual have recently been used to guide the improvement of OERC's services; so in effect some of these have been implemented post project. However, as with the other countries, lack of funding continues to limit progress.

27.   Laying its foundation, the FNR_Rio had a **catalytic effect** through its outputs at national level and even at international level, with lessons learnt being integrated into new MEA synergy projects. As a pilot, the project did not have a clear pathway for "what-next" steps and this, despite some offshoots (like the MEA synergy projects, or some of the recommendations from the national manuals minimally implemented), there remains little to no replication or roll-out.

28.   Possibly its strongest catalytic effect was the establishment and/or strengthening of institutional arrangements and frameworks in Liberia, Mauritius and Lao PDR. A few respondents from these countries mentioned that before the project was implemented, institutions were working independently, but during project implementation they understood the importance of collaboration and integration. For instance, in Liberia a MEA division was set up in the EPA. In Mauritius, legal frameworks have included data collection as a strong mandate. On this note, and in all countries, it helped Focal Points realise the need and benefits of synergy and the project had a catalytic effect in this regard too (e.g. in Liberia for the SNC development all Focal Points were

engaged in the process). Even in Eritrea and Afghanistan there were steps taken toward developing national legislation for data mechanisms. However, how far this came is questionable as no response from Eritrea meant that no follow up could be made on the progress there, and the respondent from Afghanistan mentioned that the project did not have an effect on strengthening the institutional arrangements in-country.

29. Another catalytic effect the project had was on **stakeholder engagement**. The project implementation process at national level was very inclusive in all countries, and this was enhanced in the years following the project e.g. in Lao PDR and Mauritius. Some respondents (especially from Mauritius), however, did mention that while stakeholders were invited and the process was inclusive, some stakeholders did not always show interest in attending or directly engaging, and did not have a lasting effect on collaboration like in e.g. Afghanistan). One of the National Steering Committee members in Mauritius also noted that the NSCs were engaged in the beginning but not all were continuously engaged.

30. In terms of **implementation arrangements**, virtually all respondents from all countries highlighted the effectiveness and appropriateness of UNEP-WCMC in coordinating this project, being a highly organised and relevant institution with regards MEA synergies. The Global Project Coordinator went out of his way to get countries on board, especially when initial challenges and difficulties were facing the project. The UNEP Task Manager had strong oversight and all key respondents were appreciative of the support and structure given by UNEP with regards implementation.

31. Financial resources were very tight during the project, and it seems that countries went out of their way to compensate with in-kind contributions (especially work hours); despite this, the project achieved its outputs and more within the tight budget. This is a testament as to what can be achieved with comparatively little money. In terms of catalysing funding through high level ownership (as outlined in the TOC), there was not enough that has been catalysed in this regard neither through national budgets (in any of the countries) nor through international support. A few respondents in Mauritius and Liberia did mention the difficulty of getting dedicated budgets and the fact that the work is not sufficiently prioritised at higher level. It was clear that financial independence was not achieved through this project, nor was that the aim, but neither did enough financial resources open up, leaving a large dependence on external support. In addition, one of the respondents (from Liberia) mentioned that there was hope that based on the results of the pilot there would be more support for implementation of what was achieved.

32. With regards to **sustainability**, one of the components that should have come out stronger was communication and awareness, both within the countries as well as more globally, on the project results. Especially given the high level global interest from GEF, and the unique experience and lessons from the project, it is disappointing to see that not more has been taken up. At national level, there were some broader awareness activities (e.g. in Liberia with journalists), and generally there was good awareness created among stakeholders on synergies in Mauritius. However, most respondents (from Mauritius) said that duplication still occurs and just between ministries there is not enough communication on efforts and actions (this is a general problem that this project alone could not fix though). This was the case also for Lao PDR, Palau and Afghanistan (no response from Eritrea). While quite a number of international events were presented at, a few communication materials were put together, and all relevant lessons and stories can be found on the UNEP-WCMC website, there seems to still be a disconnect between having enough levels of awareness and action. A few respondents mentioned that they hoped that there would have been even more presence at side events of COPs so that more countries could buy into the idea and push for more support.

33.   The data collection mechanism was an important part of the project that did not sustain as well as hoped in any of the countries, in terms of enhancing and strengthening data sharing and access through centralising. Several steps need to still be put in place, and even in countries where access is generally and comparatively good, like in Mauritius, there are still many challenges before a central access point can be established (like improving Muelex for instance). Most of these shortcomings in all the countries were attributed mostly to a lack of dedicated staff and financial resources.

34.   The project was **efficient** in producing its outputs (including a large output added mid-way through the project) given the resources and time available.

35.   Most respondents (sentiment shared by all countries) mentioned that more capacity building was needed, although the interventions more than met their targets. This is testament to the continued need to build capacity in the countries with regards synergies.

36.   What has been noted is the lack of strong support and presence from some of the Rio Conventions Secretariats in the project implementation. The UNCCD was supportive and present at meetings, and the CBD showed some support although could not make most of the Project Steering Committee meetings (mostly due to conflicting schedules). Most of the side events occurred during the CBD related events. UNFCCC were not involved at all and were not at any of the PSC meetings. Their absence may be accounted to other priorities within the conventions. This reflected negatively on the country partners, most of whom mentioned that the Secretariats' involvement would have done a lot to the impact the project had on the national level. A few respondents mentioned that the most crucial thing is for the Secretariats to agree on a platform and improve their coordination amongst themselves to simplify reporting at national level. The UNCCD has continued to show strong support post-project.

37.   The overall rating for the FNR_Rio is **Satisfactory**. The ratings for the individual criteria are given in Table 8. Most of the administrative elements and achievement of outputs were very strong, despite low budgets and various challenges. The sustainability of the project could be much stronger and there are certain steps that need to be taken that have not since project closure two years ago. There are certainly still many steps to take to have real impact.

Table 2 Summary assessment and ratings by evaluation criterion for the FNR_Rio project

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Rating
A. Strategic relevance	The project objective is consistent with global environmental needs. At national level the resource efficiency element had a strong prioritisation. The FNR_Rio was aligned to the GEF Focal Areas, the UNEP mandate, its MTS and relevant PoWs, as well as the Bali Strategic Plan. Its gender component could have been stronger, as well as the south-south cooperation element.	S
B. Achievement of outputs	Virtually all outputs were achieved with the exception of one small task, which was subsumed into the national manuals. An additional output was added on mid-way through the project at the request of the GEF-Sec which added considerable pressure to project implementation; despite this, the project managed to get everything done as planned, and more.	S
C. Effectiveness: Attainment of project objectives and results		S
1. Achievement of direct outcomes	Overall, the project outcomes were intended to catalyse change from a segregated approach to reporting to a harmonised, systems-thinking approach. While the outcomes were generally achieved from the project in terms of the TOC, some smaller components were a challenge. Overall, the FNR_Rio laid a strong foundation towards more integrative and collaborative reporting.	S

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Rating
2. Likelihood of impact	The project's intended outcomes were delivered and had catalytic elements that would feed into Intermediate states. The project created an enabling environment towards national collaborative and integrative reporting, but there could have been more communication and awareness raising to create more champions. Generally there is some slow uptake of the processes from this pilot project.	Moderately Likely (BC)
3. Achievement of project goal and planned objectives	Given that this was a pilot, the project did achieve its project goal and planned objective.	S
D. Sustainability and replication		MS
1. Financial	It seems that the continuation of various outputs have not necessarily been sustained, mostly due to a lack of financial resources. At national level, some resources have been made available for implementation and integrative reporting. At the global level financial resources are certainly available to take next steps but don't appear to be prioritised.	ML
2. Socio-political	Given the countries involved and their volatile political and social situations, there are many factors that may influence project results. Despite this there are still varying levels of commitment to project results and their sustainability.	MU
3. Institutional framework	The FNR_Rio laid a strong foundation towards institutional strengthening and embedding of a more harmonised and collaborative approach to reporting, but the sustainability in terms of reporting is slightly lacking.	MU
4. Environmental	Generally, there are no project outputs that would have a negative impact on the environment if sustained. Up-scaling of the project can only have long-term positive benefits on the environment, especially if awareness creation is an important element.	HL
5. Catalytic role and replication	The project had a number of strong catalytic elements. Given the strong foundations laid by the project, and the potential for replication, not enough was done on future planning on how and when to do such replication.	ML
E. Efficiency	The project was generally well-executed in the timeframe. Given the small budget, the project achievements were substantial. The project steps were well planned.	HS
F. Factors affecting project performance		
1. Preparation and readiness	The project was well designed with clear stakeholder consultations in the PPG phase, with capacities of partners outlined. Not enough risk analysis was done at design phase.	S
2. Project implementation and management	Implementation was executed according to plan. Project was highly adaptive. A couple constraints were country level implementation in some countries, and the absence of Rio Convention representatives at PSC meetings.	MS
3. Stakeholders participation and public awareness	Project had a strong element of pre-planning *vis a vis* stakeholder engagement. Collaborations were effective. The results of the project clearly promoted participation of stakeholders.	S
4. Country ownership and driven-ness	Country ownership was very strong, mostly through the development of the national manuals, and the obvious benefits from the project.	MS
5. Financial planning and management	Financial reporting from WCMC was good, reporting from countries was often delayed. According to the reporting, co-financing did not materialize as planned. However, this may be due to underestimating the costs incurred by countries in terms of overheads and other in-kind. Some resources have been further leveraged, but there is still need for external support.	MS
6. UNEP supervision and backstopping	Respondents were very clear on the strong coordination and management by UNEP-WCMC. Supervision and technical backstopping was very strong in this project.	HS
7. Monitoring and evaluation		MS
a. M&E Design	Detailed costed M&E plan well laid out in Project Document. Lacked a strong risk analysis.	MS
b. Budgeting and funding for M&E activities	Clearly costed.	S
c. M&E Plan Implementation	No Mid Term Review as the project was on track. Some SMART indicators not measurable, but most were and well implemented. Yearly PIRs written, clear risk analysis and mitigation in these.	MS
Overall project rating		S

D. Lessons Learned

38.	There were various lessons documented at project closure (in the Project Final Report) which are valid and aligned to this evaluation. These will not be repeated here. Instead these will be built on where the Evaluator felt necessary. Especially the lesson on joint reporting outlined in the final report was clearly articulated and need not be repeated again here. It must be noted, both here, and with regards the recommendations, that the lessons and recommendations should be relevant also to harmonising reporting and implementation across the multiple biodiversity-related conventions, particularly in light of the importance put on integrating strategies and actions relating to other (than CBD) biodiversity-related conventions into the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans.

Lesson 1: Strong/good leadership is important for project sustainability

39.	In most projects the notion that champions are needed to integrate and own the project's sustainability is an important one. It was noted by some respondents that even after the project there was a lack of real ownership at the higher level of this project. Many respondents highlighted that it's the people who make things work, not the institutions. More results were sustained in countries where there is strong leadership and ownership of the results of the project. More effort should be placed at design phase during stakeholder analysis to identify possible champions at the onset, especially when conducting a pilot. In addition, more horizontal and vertical (strategic) communication could have gone a long way to further integrate the notion of synergies, especially when it comes to the who and how of the next steps.

Lesson 2: Improving collaboration and coordination among Focal Points increases cost- and time-effective synergies

40.	Improving coordination among the Focal Points, especially in countries where the Focal Points are housed in completely different institutions or even Ministries (e.g. Afghanistan) became a key area for recommendations in each country's manual and at the final PSC meeting. This project helped the Focal Points see the need and benefits of synergy and some countries have even used the collaborations for their reporting (e.g. Liberia and its SNC). For instance, the consultant responsible for the SNC in Liberia made it a point to see all three Focal Points separately, and then together as a team. This in turn caused a team atmosphere to build between the Focal Points where synergies were easily seen. Because of this (and of course the MEA unit where they all now sit in the same office block) created a collaborative atmosphere. A meeting of MEA high level staff in Mauritius to discuss combined reporting and how it can be done is another step towards collaboration that has been effective (although in its initial stages). Regular meetings and intra- and inter-institutional communication also improves collaboration and decreases duplication of efforts (and causes a team spirit if work is shared and used by all).

Lesson 3: Providing strong platforms for effective stakeholder engagement forges sustainable relationships for collaboration...in some cases - what are these?

41.	Based on the country visits to Mauritius and Liberia, it was found that relationships forged during project implementation have stayed strong two years on, and this has increased synergies and collaboration. Stakeholders are required (e.g. NGOs, research bodies, community groups) for an effective implementation of the Rio (and other related) Conventions and therefore need to be involved for reporting processes. Through this project the countries started to forge strong relationships with stakeholders for processes of data and information collection and the analysis and writing of national reports. This was not the case in all countries so it begs the question - why was it so effective in some, and not in others? The reasons for this are alerted to in Lesson 2 above. In Mauritius, continued active engagement that is routinely managed and coordinated through the

MESD makes a large impact on sustaining relationships (especially if the same people come to the meetings every time). If there is also less turn over in staff then there will also be more opportunity to meet the same figures responsible and thus forge stronger relationships.

Lesson 4: Building and maintaining an effective data collection and access mechanism continues to be vitally important in streamlining reporting

42.   Based on country visits two years on after project closure, it was noted that data mechanisms were not effectively built and sustained. There was a lot of mention especially of grey literature that has not been effectively collected. Access continues to be a problem. This needs to be a priority as this access is vital to effective reporting. The Final Project Report made it clear in one of its key lessons that facilitating access to global data sets may help address some issues and be a useful interim tool while country data is being organised (and even for data that is just not available in-country). Suggestions to reduce barriers to data access have been widely captured in international decision documents. In the long-term there needs to be the development and promulgation of a relatively simple set of guidelines on how countries can manage data and information to implement the MEAs in a more coherent manner.

Lesson 5: Capacity-building at national level continues to be very important

43.   It was noted strongly by many respondents that capacities still have gaps and there is a strong need for continued support in this arena. This was also particularly emphasised in the final PSC meeting. Countries like Lao PDR and Afghanistan were prioritising capacity building towards harmonisation in reporting. Capacity building continues to be an important component generally in convention implementation.

Lesson 6: Stronger support and guidance (and integration among conventions) provided by conventions would go a long way in improving country reporting

44.   A strong sentiment reflected from the evaluation was the need for more guidance and support from the Rio Convention Secretariats, including more synergies amongst the conventions themselves in terms of reporting (e.g. reporting cycles, templates). Convention Secretariats could learn a lot from the FNR_Rio project. The project also developed recommendations for improved integration of the reporting processes between the conventions at the global level, which have elements of previously used tools such as UNCCD PRAIS, as well as other online reporting systems.

Lesson 7: Work on providing clearer guidance on how to assess and report co-financing for future projects

45.   As discussed in Section IV.F under financial planning and management, it is the Evaluator's opinion, based on interviews and reporting, that countries may have underestimated the amount of co-financing they contributed during the process of the project. This is not a situation that is necessarily unique to this project, but it bodes well to think about this for future projects and how countries (and project partners) can better assess and report their co-financing contributions.

Lesson 8: Conducting a Terminal Evaluation too long after a project has ended poses limitations on the quality of the evaluation

46.   This evaluation was conducted two years after the project ended. As a result, many of the project partners and implementers had moved on and were no longer contactable. This had limiting factors on the evaluation. On another note, it was helpful to look at the project sustainability two years on to see how many of the activities have actually 'stuck' in the long term. There should be some thought given to projects that have ended and how important it is to either assess project

performance generally and have a direct link still to project partners, or assess the effectiveness and impact the project has had in the long term.

E. Recommendations

47.   Based on the lessons learnt, a few recommendations for improving the system of national reporting to conventions, as well as towards next steps that need to be taken, are given below. It must be noted that the Final Project Report, as well as a recent paper published by Fazel *et al.* (2015)[1] already gave some strong and productive recommendations, these were synthesised and built onto the evaluation recommendations below. Seeing as the project has closed more than 2 years ago, and there was no planned roll-out/follow-on project, the Evaluator makes recommendations to harness lessons learnt and to create momentum around the results of the project for possible revival of this project (and a resultant push by other countries) upwards to Convention Secretariat level. In addition, it is equally important to harness these recommendations across the biodiversity-related conventions too.[2]

(A) More communication and awareness of project results and lessons learned

48.   The experience of the pilot countries with this approach needs to be shared. It is clear from the few side event presentations that were given that there is country interest. Speaking to respondents from Liberia, it was clear that several other countries confronted them with interest on the project (e.g. Mali, Guinea, Senegal). There needs to be much more wide sharing of the experiences at COP-level events to gain interest from countries for them to push for more of this type of testing at national level. Discussion by convention bodies, including through the Joint Liaison Group of the Rio Conventions, will be useful as a means by which to make use of the results of the project. More dissemination needs to be made on various platforms to the conventions to utilise the wealth of experience gained from the project. **Who?** Wider sharing of experiences needs to be done by countries (governments/reporting institutions) themselves as presentations or possible working sessions as a side event (with support by UNEP and UNEP-WCMC). **When?** At the upcoming Rio (and other) conferences in the coming three years.

(B) Continue engaging stakeholders and supporting enhanced inter-agency communication at national level

49.   One of the very successful results of the project was the forging of relationships between Focal Points as well as stakeholders in reporting to conventions. Virtually all respondents gave positive feedback about the project having made impact on improved relationships. Through enhancing the communication channels between national Focal Points of different conventions, as well as important stakeholders such as research bodies and universities, greatly reduce the duplication of reporting. Engaging stakeholders also raises awareness of the ideas and logic behind each convention and creates a supportive atmosphere toward its implementation. There needs to be continued engagement (this can be done at low cost) by the countries who were involved to enhance the collaboration. **Who?** The reporting agencies / NFPs' institutions need to coordinate improved engagement and delegation of responsibilities. **When?** Continuous and long-term.

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[1] See footnote 5
[2] This sentiment was shared by the project countries (during interviews with project partners) as well as UNEP-WCMC

(C) Continue and/or strengthen capacity building interventions

50.   Capacity continues to be a challenge for the countries when undertaking reporting, both in terms of human resources, skills and technical capacity of staff, as well as resources to monitor and report on the state of the environment. This was reflected by most respondents during the evaluation (especially e.g. Afghanistan, Liberia, Lao PDR). Building capacity should also improve wider implementation of the conventions, and reduce pressure on the current over-committed few. This recommendation needs to be tied in to recommendation (A) above in terms of gaining more momentum again in turn to increase targeted funding towards enhancing capacity. **Who?** Country governments with funding sourced through improved communication of results to international donors, as well as communication upwards to improve prioritisation of national budgeting towards capacity development. **When?** Within next three years.

(D) Improving data mechanisms at national level for collection and access

51.   Respondents indicated that data mechanisms remained a huge gap in improving their reporting. This would be multifaceted and would require a step by step process. Step 1 would include providing interim solutions through providing parties access to global data sets (**Who?** Support from Convention Secretariats to allow countries to access global data sets. **When?** As soon as possible). In the long-term there needs to be the development and promulgation of a relatively simple set of guidelines on how countries can manage data and information to implement the MEAs in a more coherent manner. Step 2 would be to develop guidelines for countries on how to manage data and information for MEA reporting (**Who?** UNEP to push for this process with the Rio Convention Secretariats with international donor funding (e.g. EU? Or as an output for next project design) **When?** In the design phase of similar project, depending when funding can be sourced as part of a larger project). Step 3 would necessitate that conventions align and streamline data requests (**Who?** Convention Secretariats come together **When?** As soon as Step 2 is completed). Step 4 would be to support improvements to national environmental systems (**Who?** Depends on which countries want to be involved - tied to Step 2 as a test. **When?** When Step 3 is completed).

(E) Promote a consistent approach from Rio Conventions (and MEAs generally) in their reporting process

52.   Building on the FNR_Rio, and the work of the Rio Conventions, GEF and UNEP, there needs to be more promotion of synergies among the conventions themselves. Throughout Section IV, it is discussed how countries maintain they would have appreciated more interest and support from Convention Secretariats themselves. This would reduce the dissimilarities in existing reporting templates. The project also developed recommendations for improved integration of the reporting processes between conventions at the global level, which have elements of previously used tools such as UNCCD PRAIS, as well as other online reporting systems. If Convention Secretariats could show more interest in the results of this project, and in turn uptake the lessons learnt and recommendations, there would be much higher level support. There should be some means of 'flagging' GEF projects of particular and direct need for Secretariat engagement and discussing, already at design phase, how that engagement can be secured. This would then filter down to the countries.[3] **Who?** The Rio Convention Secretariats (and biodiversity related MEAs, where relevant) **When?** As soon as possible.

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[3] See paragraph 154

I.   Introduction

A.   The FNR_Rio Project

1.   The medium-sized project 'Piloting Integrated Processes and Approaches to Facilitate National Reporting to Rio Conventions (FNR_Rio)' (GEF Project ID: 3707; IMIS number: GFL/2328-2713-4810) was implemented through the UNEP, and executed by the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC), in coordination and partnership with Rio Conventions Secretariats and National Governments of six participating countries.

2.   The overall objective of the FNR_Rio project was to **'pilot nationally-driven integrated processes and approaches to reporting to the three Rio Conventions (UNCBD, UNCCD, UNFCCC)'**. More specifically, the project aimed to (1) develop integrated approaches to data collection/analysis and information management of relevance to the three Rio Conventions, (2) increase synergies in the process of reporting to the three conventions without compromising COP decisions in this regard, and (3) contribute to improved overall planning and decision-making processes at the country level related to the implementation of these three conventions.

3.   The GEF allocation to the project totalled USD 840,000.00, with planned co-financing from the six pilot countries totalling USD 775,880.00. The project duration was from January 2010 to December 2013. Budget revisions were later undertaken to extend the project on request by UNEP-WCMC to allow final country outputs to be completed and a global level workshop to be held. The budget revision was also needed to re-phase the unspent funds from year 2010 to be used in 2013. The revised project budget was USD 840,000.00 from GEF and USD 800,880.00 from additional in-kind and cash co-financing from UNEP-WCMC and the pilot country governments (USD 725,880 and USD 50,000 by UNEP-WCMC).

4.   A Project Steering Committee (PSC) composed of participating countries, UNEP, UNEP-WCMC, and Rio Convention Secretariats, and co-chaired by UNEP/GEF, was established to provide guidance on project implementation issues such as adaptive management and monitoring of project progress. The six Government institutions involved included the National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) for Afghanistan, the Ministry of Land, Water and Environment (MLWE) for Eritrea, the Water Resources and Environment Administration (WREA) for Lao PDR, the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) for Liberia, the Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit (MENDU) for Mauritius, and the Office of Environmental Response and Coordination (OERC) for Palau. A National Steering Committee was maintained by each country to provide guidance to the project and to monitor progress and performance. At the country level, various stakeholders, both government and non-government, were involved in project implementation.

B.   The FNR_Rio Terminal Evaluation

i.   Objective and Scope of Evaluation

5.   In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy[4], the UNEP Programme Manual and the UNEP Evaluation Manual[5], a terminal evaluation is a vital element that needs to be undertaken after project completion. This is usually to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency) and determine outcomes and impacts stemming from the project, with

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[4] http://www.unep.org/eou/StandardsPolicyandPractices/UNEPEvaluationPolicy/tabid/3050/language/en-US/Default.aspx
[5] http://www.unep.org/eou/StandardsPolicyandPractices/UNEPEvaluationManual/tabid/2314/language/en-US/Default.aspx

sustainability at the core. More detail of the evaluation principles and criteria can be found in Annex 1 (Evaluation Terms of Reference).

6. The FNR_Rio Terminal Evaluation has two main objectives:

    (i) To provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and

    (ii) To promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP and its main project partners, namely the GEF, UNEP-WCMC, the Environmental Protection Agency of Liberia, the Ministry of Land, Water and Environment of Eritrea, the Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit of Mauritius, the Water Resources and Environment Administration of Lao PDR, and the Office of Environmental Response and Coordination of Palau. In this regard, this evaluation will identify lessons of operational relevance for future project development and implementation.

7. The Terminal Evaluation focuses on a set of key questions, based on the project's intended outcomes:

    (i) How successful was the project in providing guidance and support to parties for national reporting, including the development of an integrated approach to data collection, analysis, and information management between the six pilot countries?

    (ii) To what extent was the FNR_Rio successful in creating an enabling environment for preparation of national reports to the three Rio Conventions, in terms of: technical, systemic, institutional and individual capacity; data collection, analysis and monitoring procedures; knowledge management for environmental database systems; best practices, communication and outreach?

    (iii) To what extent did the pilot countries contribute to: (a) improved overall planning and decision-making processes at the country level related to the implementation of these three conventions, and (b) improved national mechanisms for collecting, managing and using data?

    (iv) How successful was the project in enhancing national ownership of the Rio Conventions and were institutional frameworks for integrated reporting to Conventions established and/or strengthened as a result?

    (v) To what extent did the project succeed in engaging stakeholders outside the government system (i.e. NGOs, universities and research bodies, indigenous, business, and local community groups) throughout the process of national reporting to the Rio Conventions?

    (vi) To what extent was the FNR_Rio successful in supporting collaboration between pilot countries, and in improving communication between national Focal Points of different conventions in order to reduce duplication and identify synergies?

ii. Overall Approach of Evaluation

8. The evaluation was conducted by an independent consultant (herein after referred to as the 'Evaluator') between September 2015 and March 2016 under the overall responsibility and management of the UNEP Evaluation Office in Nairobi, and in consultation with the UNEP-WCMC and the UNEP Project Manager. Inception was conducted remotely via Skype with the UNEP Evaluation Team and the UNEP Project Manager.

9.   In line with the TOR, the FNR_Rio was assessed with respect to a minimum set of evaluation criteria grouped into five categories:

   (i)   **Strategic Relevance:** focuses on whether the project objectives are consistent with global, regional and national priorities.

   (ii) **Achievement of outputs**: assessing, for each component, the project success in producing the programmes outputs and milestones as per the logical framework.

   (iii) **Effectiveness: Attainment of objectives and planned results:** assessment of effectiveness of outputs achieved and the review of outcomes to impacts.

   (iv) **Sustainability and replication:** looks at the financial, socio-political, institutional and environmental sustainability of project outcomes, and also assesses efforts and achievements in terms of replication and upscaling of project lessons and best practices.

   (v)   **Factors and processes affecting project performance:** covers project preparation and readiness, implementation approach and management, stakeholder participation, cooperation and partnerships, communication and public awareness, country ownership and driven-ness, financial planning and management, supervision and backstopping, and monitoring and evaluation.

10.   In addition, the quality of the project design was assessed in the Inception Report. As per UNEP guidance, the evaluation ratings for the criteria are on six-point scale.[6]

11.   One of the key foreground questions at each step of the evaluation was the **Why?** question.

12.   Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to evaluate the project achievements against the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts, and consisted of:

   - <u>Desk Review:</u> A desk review of all the key project documentation supplied by UNEP and project staff, country partners and UNEP-WCMC, as well as the website (a list of documents reviewed can be found in Annex 2).

   - <u>Country Visits and Face to Face Meetings</u>: Of the six participating countries, two were visited, namely Mauritius and Liberia. Face to face meetings were conducted with the National Coordinators and their Assistants in both countries; the National Consultant in Liberia; and a number of key stakeholders in Mauritius. Video and photographic documentation was taken where possible. The list of people contacted and the itineraries of the country visits can be found in Annex 3.

   - <u>Skype Interviews:</u> Skype interviews took place with key project staff, including the UNEP Project Manager, the Global Project Coordinator, UNEP-WCMC key staff, and the International Consultant, among others. A list of people contacted and interviewed can be found in Annex 3.

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[6] Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability is rated from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU).

- Questionnaire Distribution and Email Interaction: A questionnaire was distributed among the country coordinators (including those visited in-country) and key stakeholders.

- Feedback mechanisms: Through face to face discussions, the Reconstructed Theory of Change was presented and discussed in-country with key stakeholders (in Mauritius, during a stakeholder meeting, breakout groups were conducted for this process) in order to get feedback. Debriefing sessions were held via Skype with UNEP-WCMC in which the Evaluator presented in-country experiences and evaluation results. In-country, short feedback sessions were held face-to-face with the national coordinators (for Mauritius and Liberia) in which evaluation results from country visits were discussed (last day of country visit).

iii.   Limitations to the Evaluation

13.   There were a few limitations to the Evaluation that hindered attaining more detailed, country specific context information. These are discussed below.

14.   **Delay in evaluation of project after project completion.** Two years have passed since the closing meeting of the project that took place in Nairobi in December 2013. In this time (and even during the project implementation it seems), many of the key people had moved on and are no longer working in the same positions (this is true for UNEP-WCMC as well as at country level). This made it difficult to track some people down, as well as expect them to take time to review the project and take part in interviews. The Evaluator was able to contact most of them, but because of the time frame, some answers may have lost their depth.

15.   **Slow/No response from participating countries.** Elaborated on below, responses to the questionnaire by the four countries not visited was either very slow or non-existent. As mentioned above, this may be due to turnover in staff at country level as well as delay in evaluation after project. Of course this posed limitations to data gathering during the evaluation. The UNEP evaluation team supported this process as best they could, as did UNEP-WCMC, and this support caused the limited responses the Evaluator did get in the end (e.g. one respondent each for Afghanistan, Palau, Lao PDR, and none for Eritrea).

16.   **Only two of the six countries were visited in person.** Generally, terminal evaluation budgets only allow for visits to a sample of implementation countries, and this is understandable, both in terms of cost and time efficiency. However, it does handicap the evaluation slightly because much more qualitative information is gained from face to face consultations.

17.   **Even for in-country-visits, it was not possible to see all key stakeholders**. For instance, in Liberia, two of the Rio Convention Focal Points were unavailable (e.g. UNFCCC FP was at COP-21, UNCCD FP was not available), and some meetings were organised too late (e.g. in Liberia) resulting in some stakeholders not being available. In Mauritius, although a very strong effort was made to see as many stakeholders as possible, the National Consultant was not available. These factors are generally out of our control, especially in a project that has ended so long ago. However, it does have implications on the sample size of high quality opinions and experiences by stakeholders of the project.

II.   The Project

A.   Context

18.   The three Rio Conventions, namely the CBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC, all born out of the Rio 1992 Summit, are intrinsically linked and operating in the same system with basic overlapping foundational principles. A number of COP decisions and articles have underlined the importance of improved collaboration between the conventions to enhance synergy and avoid duplication of efforts at implementation and reporting.

19.   A number of processes starting in 1998 explored how the conventions can work together to streamline national reporting and thus reduce the reporting burden at national level. This led to a UNEP conducted study in four pilot countries (Ghana, Indonesia, Panama, Seychelles), with various lessons learned from the process. A number of workshops, meetings and COP decisions led to a response by UNEP to test the approach to facilitate exchanges of information and joint approaches to harmonising and facilitating the reporting requirements by Parties. As a result, the FNR_Rio project was born, and six countries agreed to participate (Liberia, Eritrea, Mauritius, Lao PDR and Palau).

20.   Despite the comparative and similar responsibilities by each country in terms of their being signatory to all three conventions and in terms of their reporting, the geographical scope of the project was vast and gave the project a certain complexity, especially in terms of coordination and knowledge sharing.

21.   The countries fall under either Least Developed Countries (LDCs) or Small Island Developing States (SIDS), which create an additional complexity. However, this is where reporting can be particularly cumber-some. Developing countries, like LDCs and SIDS, with limited institutional and human resource capacities are heavily burdened by reporting requirements from conventions and institutional fragmentation is one of the root causes for cost-inefficiencies and lack of coherence among some of the reports submitted to conventions secretariats.

22.   Some countries also have particularly challenging circumstances to deal with (e.g. previous decades long wars in Afghanistan, Liberia) making it even more difficult to find resources and capacity to implement the conventions they are signatory to.

23.   There was no significant change in project context since its design. The project was set up as a pilot. However, there was no roll out planning done of this pilot post-project. The reporting context was very different pre-implementation of the project, with very little collaboration between Focal Points or collaborative reporting in general. In this sense, the project did set forth good steps toward more collaborative and integrated reporting.

B.   Objectives and Outputs

24.   As stated previously, the objective of the FNR_Rio was to *pilot nationally driven integrated processes and approaches to reporting to the three Rio Conventions*. More specifically, the project aimed to (1) develop integrated approaches to data collection/analysis and information management of relevance to the three Rio Conventions, (2) increase synergies in the process of reporting to the three conventions without compromising COP decisions in this regards, and (3) contribute to improved overall planning and decision-making processes at the country level related to the implementation of these three conventions. The purpose was to increase the efficiency of resource use while enhancing engagement of stakeholders, supporting the development capacity to implement and report on relevant conventions and to monitor environmental trends.

Table 3 Components and expected outputs and outcomes as outlined in the Project Document of the FNR_Rio

Components	Expected Outputs	Expected Outcomes
1. Situational analysis and reporting process design: to find out common reporting elements in terms of process, content and format among the three Conventions with the possibility of exploring benefits to other closely related conventions building on the 'clustering' approach developed by UNEP.	1.1. Inventory and analysis report of convention reporting requirements in terms of institutional arrangement, linkages, content and format is prepared. 1.2. Analysis report of existing data and information management systems at the country level with recommendations for designing more integrated systems is prepared. 1.3. Manual on implementation of integrated reporting approach is produced.	• Improved cost-effectiveness achieved for reporting to Rio Conventions • Linkages and synergies for reporting to the Rio Conventions at national level identified and strengthened • Duplication in reporting processes identified and eliminated
2. Implementation of integrated reporting processes and experimenting options for report design: to design a nationally-driven integrated and coordinated process for integrated reporting without compromising either guidance from the Conventions' COPs on content and format, or quality of reports submitted, and to establish and/or enhance existing national convention-related data and information management systems with the objective of making these systems more integrated, cost-efficient and allowing for more cooperative institutional mechanisms to be established and sustained.	2.1. Institutional frameworks for integrated reporting to conventions is established and/or strengthened. 2.2. National convention-related data collection, analysis and information management systems with agreed standardised collection, and analysis procedures are established or enhanced. 2.3. Capacities (systemic, institutional and individual) of relevant institutions for data collection, analysis and provision of necessary training and computing equipment are enhanced. 2.4. Assessment report of the quality of national reports is prepared.	• Enhanced country capacities to identify cross-convention programmes and projects for cost-effective financing and MEA implementation • A more cooperative environment for information sharing among national institutions involved in convention implementation
3. Sharing of experience and upscaling: to explore upscaling to other countries of integrated reporting processes through sharing o lessons learned and good practices.	3.1. Technical Working Group (TWG) on integrated reporting from countries participating in the project established for information and experience sharing.	• Better informed policy decision-making at the national and global level, supporting efficient and integrated reporting to Rio Conventions

C.   Target areas/groups and Project Partners

25.   The project consisted of six participating LDCs/SIDs, namely Liberia, Eritrea, Mauritius, Lao PDR, and Palau. Because the project focused on reporting to the Rio Conventions, this meant that the key partners were Government institutions who bear the reporting (and coordination of implementation) responsibility.
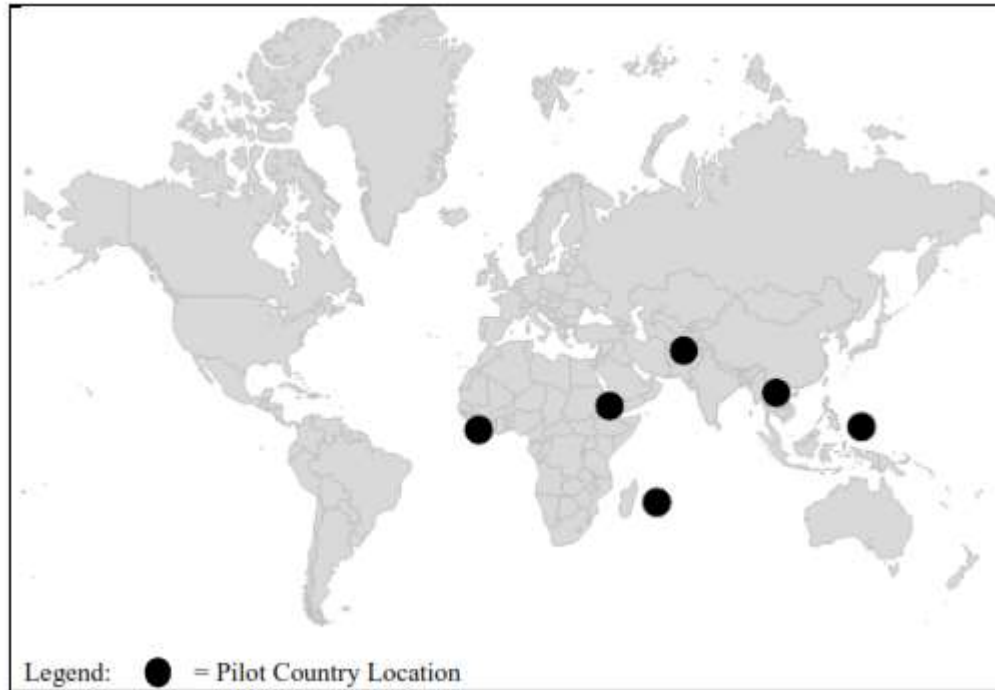
Figure 1 Map illustrating the location of the six participating countries (Source: Fazel *et al.* 2015)[7]

26.   Key target groups in the project included National Focal Points, GEF Focal Points, Rio Convention implementation agencies, organisations and institutions, data and information collection agencies, organisations and institutions. For Afghanistan, the key partner was NEPA, for Eritrea, the MLWE, for Lao PDR, the WREA, for Liberia, the EPA, for Mauritius, MENDU, and for Palau, OERC.

27.   A strong element of the project was to have the key partners involve non-government institutions, such as NGOs, women's, indigenous, and youth groups, universities, research institutions, etc. There was importance placed on that of policy-maker involvement, and convention secretariats were encouraged to support and advise the project, and participate on the Project Steering Committee.

28.   In terms of capacity building, the key target groups were those in the partner institutions and key stakeholders mentioned above.

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[7] Fazel MA, Gibson J, Harrison J, Herkenrath P, Kelly J. 2015. A process for identifying national solutions to challenges faced in developing countries in reporting to environmental conventions: insight from the Facilitating National Reporting to the Rio Conventions (FNR_Rio) Project. *Int J Env Res* 9(4): 1163-1172.

D. Milestones/key dates in project design and implementation

Table 4 Major milestones and dates in project design and implementation of the FNR_Rio Project

Milestone	Date
Approval date	September 2009
Actual start date	January 2010
Intended completion date	December 2012
Planned duration	3 years
Project Inception Meeting	9-11 February 2010
Project Steering Committee Meeting Port Louis	28 January 2011
Project Steering Committee Meeting Tehran	13 March 2012
Project Closing Meeting Nairobi	16 November 2013
Date of completion	December 2013
Date of financial closure	after completion TE (no roll out activity since 2013)
Terminal Evaluation (Completion)	March 2016

E. Implementation arrangements

Table 5 Key implementation roles in the FNR_Rio Project

Name	Role	Participants
Project Implementing Agency	Provide project oversight to ensure all GEF policies and criteria are adhered to and the project meets its objectives and achieves its expected outcomes. Project supervision falls under the UNEP Task Manager and the FMO.	UNEP (Task Manager and FMO)
Project Steering Committee (PSC)	Provide strategic guidance on project implementation issues such as adaptive management and monitor and review progress on an annual basis. It aimed to physically meet once a year.	Participating country coordinators, UNEP, UNEP-WCMC, (GEF Secretariat), Rio Convention Secretariats
Project Executing Agency (EA)	Responsibility for the execution of the project in accordance with the objectives, activities and budget and deliver the outputs and demonstrate its efforts in achieving the project outcomes. (Project Coordination and Management - Host the Management Team).	UNEP-WCMC
National Executing Agencies (NEAs)	Overall responsibility of project implementation at national level; implement in collaboration with other national, provincial and local government agencies, NGOs, private sector and local communities.	Afghanistan: NEPA Eritrea: MLWE Lao PDR: WREA Liberia: EPA Mauritius: MENDU Palau: OERC

Name	Role	Participants
National Steering Committee (NSC)	Provide guidance to the project and monitor progress and performance.	Chaired by the head of the NEA or her/his representative. Made up of key stakeholders and decision-makers.
Global Project Coordinator (GPC)	Provide overall direction for technical and administrative aspects of the project, accountable for overall implementation.	Appointed by UNEP-WCMC.
National Project Coordinator (NPC)	Responsibility for execution of the project at national level.	Appointed at national level by NEA.
National Project Assistant (NPA)	Part-time assistant for day to day management.	Appointed at national level by NEA.

F.   Project financing

29.   The Project Document states that the GEF allocation (including agency fee) as funding support to the FNR_Rio project from the GEF Trust Fund was USD 924,000.00. The total project cost estimated in the Project Document, including co-financing from UNEP-WCMC and the pilot countries was estimated as USD 1,724,880.00, with USD 800,880.00 estimated as in-kind financing (Government of six countries: USD 750,880.00; other (UNEP-WCMC): USD 50,000.00). According to the signed co-financing letters, the contribution by each country was as follows: Afghanistan (USD 75,000.00), Lao PDR (USD 75,000.00), Mauritius (USD 200, 880.00), Liberia (USD 100,000.00), Palau (USD 100,000.00), no letter from Eritrea (although in the Project Document: USD 50,000.00). Actual co-financing was recorded (to an extent) throughout the project life cycle.

G.   Changes in design during implementation

30.   Generally, the project implementation stayed within the constraints of design. However, one major change did occur due to the explicit request of the GEF Secretariat, which had implications on subsequent project implementation.

31.   At the request of the GEF Secretariat, an additional output (Output 1.3b) was added to the project at the approximate mid-point to the project, namely a paper on an assessment of potential options for consolidating and integrating reporting for the three Rio Conventions and the development of a joint reporting format that integrates common information requests of the three Rio Conventions. As a result a joint reporting template was developed by the project around the theme of sustainable land management. This formed a core joint report, which could then be supplemented by annexes that capture convention-specific reporting requirements. This was then tested by five of the six pilot countries. Of these five, three completed a questionnaire about their

experiences with and opinions on the template. This was arguably a useful exercise but added additional pressure on the project.[8]

32.   The assessments of the quality of the national reports were intended as Output 2.4 ('Assessment of the quality of national reports is prepared'), but it was decided at the third Project Steering Committee meeting, to include them in the national manuals. As a result, most national manuals merely had 'recommendations' and not explicit 'assessment of report quality', leaving the output incomplete.

H.   Reconstructed Theory of Change of the project

33.   UNEP evaluations of projects that were designed when the Theory of Change (TOC) was not a prerequisite at design phase, have to reconstruct a TOC and conduct a Review of Outcomes to Impacts (ROtI) to identify and understand the conditions necessary for the outcomes to actually contribute to yielding the overall impact.

34.   The Theory of Change that was reconstructed was initially based on the provided project documentation, which were reviewed in preparation of the Evaluation Inception Report. This initial TOC was then reviewed by a variety of key stakeholders (during country visits, Skype Interviews, and, to a lesser extent, through the Questionnaire). The TOC was subsequently edited as a result of comments received by the project stakeholders.

35.   Outcomes were paraphrased slightly to more clearly illustrate the Theory of Change and its route to impact.

Table 6 Project components, outcomes and objectives, and reworded Outcomes for the Theory of Change of the FNR_Rio Project

Component	Outcomes	Component Objectives	*Reworded Outcomes for ToC*
1. Situational Analysis and Reporting Process Design	1. Cost effectiveness achieved for reporting to Conventions 2. Convention linkages and synergies at the national level identified and strengthened	To find out common reporting elements in terms of process, content and format among the three Conventions with the possibility of exploring benefits to other closely related Conventions building on the "clustering" approach developed by UNEP	*Increase in knowledge on the synergies and linkages of Convention reporting at national level*
2. Implementation of Integrated Reporting Processes and Experimenting Options for reports design	3. Duplication in reporting processes identified and eliminated 4. Enhanced country capacity to identify cross-convention programmes and projects for cost-effective financing and implementation	To design a nationally-driven integrated and coordinated process for integrated reporting without compromising either guidance from the Convention COPs on content and format, or quality of reports submitted, and to establish and/or enhance	*Enhanced country capacity and stakeholder numbers in the ability to identify cross-convention programmes for cost effective implementation leading to greater streamlining and less duplication*

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[8] Based on interviews and discussions with UNEP-WCMC (three skype sessions between October and December 2015, as well as national coordinators during country visits to Mauritius and Liberia); Project Final Report (Dec 2013)

Component	Outcomes	Component Objectives	*Rewarded Outcomes for ToC*
	5. Fewer barriers to, and more cooperative environment for information sharing among national institutions involved in convention implementation making	existing national convention-related data and information management systems with the objective of making these systems more integrated, cost-efficient and allowing for more cooperative institutional mechanisms to be established and sustained	
3. Sharing of Experience and Upscaling opportunities	6. Better informed policy decision-making at the national and global level of opportunities and practicality of integrated reporting to Rio conventions	To explore upscaling to other countries of integrated reporting processes through sharing of lessons learned and good practices	*Improved informed decision-making at national global level of opportunities to integrate reporting (more countries interested in integrated reporting)*

36.   The methodology for the TOC and ROtI analysis is presented in Annex 8 of the TOR. Through the TOC, the Evaluator attempts to identify 'intermediate states/outcomes' that are necessary transition zones for the project's planned outcomes to reach the intended higher-level impact. For the FNR_Rio, the long-term, higher-level impact, is that the 'Implementation of Rio Conventions and other MEAs enhance ecosystem health and human wellbeing through a systems approach', this through 'connected and harmonized implementation (and reporting) vastly improves through stakeholders working together with systems thinking at the core'.

37.   The analysis of the impact pathways was conducted in terms of the 'assumptions' and 'drivers' that underpin the processes involved in the transformation of outputs to outcomes to impacts via the intermediate states. The drivers are the significant external factors that are expected to contribute to the realisation of the intended impacts and can be influenced by the project. The assumptions are external factors that are expected to contribute to the realisation of the intended impacts but are generally beyond the control of the project.

38.   There are four key **drivers** that have been identified through the exercise. Enhancing capacity and skills among stakeholders can increase data availability and access, as well as improve structure and communication network and knowledge transfer, which has an impact on the intermediate state of improved structures and data collection in place for collaborative implementing and reporting. Another key driver for this intermediate state is that data is available to access for the reporting template (through enhanced data mechanism). Creating platforms for effective stakeholder engagement creates a collaborative atmosphere conducive to stakeholders identifying the barriers and solutions to integrative reporting.

39.   The four **assumptions** have a bearing influence on the project and the success of the project depends to varying extents on whether these assumptions held or not. Two assumptions have an influence on whether improved targeted investments and decision-making was enhanced for reporting and implementation. It is assumed that high level support to integrated reporting will improve targeted investments through budget prioritisations, and that financing mechanisms will exist at that level in the first place, both for harmonised reporting, but also for contextual replication to other countries. Stakeholders collaborating and sharing responsibilities over reporting obligations requires that stakeholders are willing to work beyond their mandates to improve collaboration. Contextual replication to other countries assumed that the harmonisation processes and structures are easily replicable to other countries.

40.   The ROtI analysis is detailed under *Effectiveness: Attainment of Objectives and Planned Results* under Part III, Section C.

THEORY OF CHANGE FOR THE FNR-RIO

Outputs

1.1. Inventory and analysis report of convention reporting requirements is prepared

1.2. Analysis report of existing data and info mngmt systems at country level prepared

1.3. Manual on implementation of Integrated Report produced, testing of Joint Reporting Template

2.1. Institutional frameworks for integrated reporting established and/or strengthened

2.2. National convention-related data collection, analysis and info mngmt systems with agreed standardized collection and analysis procedures established

2.3. Capacities of relevant institutions for data collection, analysis and info mngmt institutions through training and computing equipment enhanced

2.4. Assessment report of quality of national reports prepared

3.1. Technical Working group on IR established and met

3.2. International events on lessons learned and best practices held

Outcomes

Increase in knowledge on the synergies and linkages of Convention reporting at national level

Enhanced country capacity and stakeholder numbers in the ability to identify cross-convention programmes for cost effective implementation leading to greater streamlining and less duplication

Improved informed decision-making at national global level of opportunities to integrate reporting (more countries interested in integrated)

Intermediate state/outcomes

Driver
Enhancing capacity among stakeholders increases data availability and access, and creates improved structure and communication network and knowledge transfer, as well as identify multi-purpose of data

Driver
Increased access to useful data for reporting template through enhanced data mechanism

Assumption
Stakeholders are willing to work beyond mandates to improve collaboration

Assumption
Harmonisation processes are easily replicable in other countries

Stakeholders identify the barriers and solutions to collaborative and integrative reporting, recognizing the benefits of an integrated approach

Improved structures and data collection and management in place for collaborative implementing and reporting

Improved targeted investments and decision-making for coherent and aligned reporting and implementation

Stakeholders collaborate, share and integrate differentiated implementation and reporting responsibilities into a cost-effective harmonized reporting process that is replicable in other countries

Driver
Stakeholders collaborating creates exploration opportunities for avenues to increase efficiency and productivity

Assumption
Financing mechanisms will exist at that level for harmonized reporting, as well as upscaling

Driver
Increased collaboration during project period creates sustainable collaboration

Assumption
High level support to IR will improve targeted investments

Driver
Improvements in data access and use leading to improved reporting and implementation

Impacts

Implementation of Rio conventions and other MEAs enhance ecosystems health and human wellbeing through a systems approach

[*connected and harmonized implementation (and reporting) vastly improves through stakeholders working together with systems thinking at the core*]
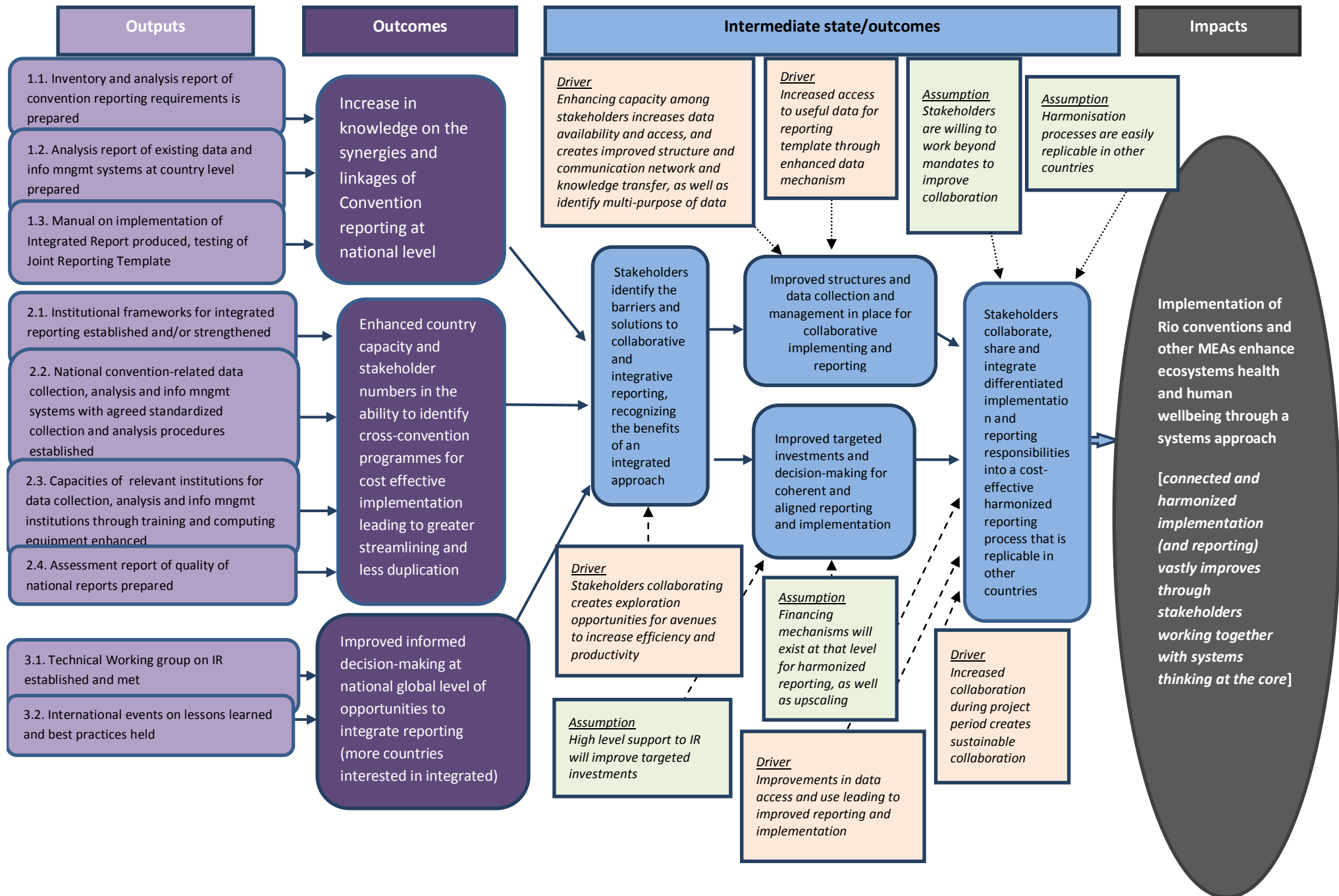
IV. Evaluation Findings

A. Strategic Relevance

41.   The project's objective is strongly aligned to the global environmental needs because they relate directly to the three largest international environmental conventions and link to their improved implementation on a broader scale. Improved implementation also positively affects the regional environmental needs. At the national level (and of course at a global scale when it comes to external funding sources like GEF), the objective of human and financial resource efficiency is consistent with national priorities. Countries have it in their best interest to harmonize their reporting and thus eliminate, or at least lighten, the reporting burden they continuously face, thereby reducing the pressure on already limited capacity.

42.   The FNR_Rio is consistent with the programmatic objectives of the **GEF biodiversity, climate change and land degradation focal areas** because of its high element of capacity building, which is a cross-cutting driving force for sustainability efforts. The project contributes to the focal areas in terms of institutional strengthening for information management, establishing baseline data for enhanced monitoring, and coordination for achieving on the ground results. The project contributed to the implementation of pathways 2, 3 and 4 of the GEF strategic approach to enhancing capacity-building, by building the capacity of government departments, agencies, and non-government stakeholders, in particular research bodies and NGOs, in understanding and addressing requirements for national implementation of (and reporting to) the conventions. An important component is synergy, and systems thinking. The project aimed towards integration and cost-effectiveness across the three focal areas, and thus has systems thinking at its core.

43.   The project directly supports all five inter-related areas of the **UNEP mandate**. The project was developed before the completion of the **UNEP Medium Term Strategy (2010-2013)** and its related **Programmes of Work** (PoW). Nonetheless the project is certainly linked in its achievements to the expected accomplishments outlined in the Strategy. The intended results are consistent with UNEP's programmatic objectives and expected accomplishments under two cross-cutting priorities of its MTS 2010-2013, namely climate change, and environmental governance. Under climate change, it compliments specifically the expected accomplishment that *country policy-makers and negotiators, civil society and the private sector have access to relevant climate change science and information for decision-making.[9]* It does this especially through the outputs under component 3, as well as through stakeholder meetings throughout components 1 and 2 of the project logical framework. The project's intended results compliment all four expected accomplishments under environmental governance.[10] By identifying potential areas of synergy and making recommendations for the improvement of collection, analysis and use of environmental information, the FNR_Rio contributed to these expected accomplishments. In addition, the focus on LDCs and SIDs compliments the POWs by paying special attention to the needs of these country groups as highlighted in these POWs.

44.   **Alignment with the Bali Strategic Plan.** The FNR_Rio directly supported the implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan, which has a strong focus on capacity building in supporting the implementation of environmental conventions.

45.   **Gender balance.** Although not directly made mention to in the project documentation, there were elements of gender balance in terms of the stakeholders involved in the project. The project was highly centralised, thus not applicable to specific community-related interventions. At a higher

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[9] Climate Change Sub-Programme, Expected Accomplishment (e)
[10] http://www.unep.org/PDF/FinalMTSGCSS-X-8.pdf Paragraph 44a- 44d

level, it was evident to the evaluator that there was a gender equity component to the stakeholder cross-section with regards invitations and presence (although whether this was directly a result of project intervention is questionable). This project did not address any vulnerabilities, nor did it deal with access to information as related to gender specifically, nor did it make any effort to focus on any gender-specific issues - this may have been argued as not applicable in the project context. However, it could have been easily addressed.

46.   **Human rights based approach (HRBA) and inclusion of indigenous people's issues, needs and concerns.** Generally, the project has done a considerable job at being as inclusive as possible, and adhering to the standards in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. The project components were not directly affecting and thus did not necessarily need prior and informed consent based on its centralised nature. In addition, what it aimed to achieve was in line with protecting such rights. Whether the inclusion of all community groups and indigenous community voices in the data information collection for the project was taken up at all national levels, is arguable.

47.   **South-south Cooperation**. Because there was a sharing mechanism embedded in the project that dealt exclusively with SIDs and LDCs, there was an intrinsic south-south sharing in place. However, this was limited to meetings and there could have been more, given the circumstances of the project. The project put onus on side event presentations to enhance south-south linkages and knowledge sharing, but this was also limited.

48.   **Stakeholder participation** was increased through this process and has held in terms of sustainability, but is limited to what the conventions try to achieve more efficiently at local and national level.

49.   Given what the project intended to achieve, the overall rating on strategic relevance is **satisfactory**.

B.   Achievement of outputs

OUTPUT 1.1. Inventory and analysis report of convention reporting requirements in terms of institutional arrangement, linkages, content and format is prepared.

50.   This output consisted of a Global Situational Analysis, which was a review of the national reporting requirements to the CBD, UNCCD, and the UNFCCC. A comprehensive review was completed and this informed, at the early stages of the project implementation, the work in the six countries.

51.   The review found various key institutional and organisational requirements for the national Focal Points to take into consideration as they prepare to harmonise their reporting obligations. Requirements included data and information collection, stakeholder involvement and cooperation. It also speaks to taking wider benefits from the reporting process.

OUTPUT 1.2. Analysis report of existing data and information management systems at the country level with recommendations for designing more integrated systems is prepared.

52.   A national analysis study was completed by each of the six countries. The study looked at the baseline status of data and information collection and management and the arrangements for

coordination and collaboration between the National Focal Points in charge of the three conventions.

53.	In support of this document all countries held national project inception meetings. A global inception meeting took place 9-10 February 2010.

54.	As part of the process to develop the national analysis study, each country involved a wide range of stakeholder in their consultations.

OUTPUT 1.3.a. Manual on implementation of integrated reporting is produced

55.	Five of the countries completed their national manual, with Palau submitting a first draft within the project timeframe. It is assumed that the final version was not sent in because the Evaluator was only given access to the draft.

56.	In terms of preparation and dissemination of the national manuals, Eritrea and Mauritius produced the final versions of the manual through the workshops so key stakeholders were made aware of it. Documentation of other country processes are not available, although discussions held with Liberia did yield low level dissemination and awareness creation of the manual.

57.	The national manuals were put together through a stakeholder process, including national workshops, and provide an overview of the national situational analysis and the recommendations for an integrated approach to national reporting to the three conventions. These were the key project outputs at the national level through evolving versions throughout the project timeline. As elaborated in the concluding sections of their national manuals, a number of the countries had begun implementing changes to their approach to the Rio Conventions.

58.	Afghanistan, Eritrea and Mauritius started developing national legislation to provide mandates for data collection. Capacity building interventions continued in four of the countries during the project to address the issues identified relating to the lack of technical capacity. Eritrea and Mauritius began the process of developing a database for environmental information (Mauritius aimed to strengthen its 'Muelex' database[11], although during the country visit, this seemed to have stagnated in the years following project closure). Lao PDR recommended an institutional structure for an integrated reporting framework for the Rio Conventions at national level. In how far these off-shoot activities were sustainable will be discussed in Part IV Section D.

OUTPUT 3.b. Development and testing of joint reporting template

59.	This additional output was included at the explicit request of the GEF Secretariat. Additional tasks included completing the joint report (five countries completed this, all except Palau), and responding to a questionnaire on pilot country experiences with the joint reporting template (Afghanistan, Lao PDR and Mauritius completed this task). The project also developed an assessment of the potential options for consolidating and integrating national reporting to the Rio Conventions. A global synthesis report of the questionnaire responses was completed by the project and shared with project partners. This document not only collects the pilot country experience, but also contains further options for an integrated approach to reporting to the Rio Conventions at global and national level.

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[11] The Muelex database is a web-based platform hosted by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Mauritius that initially gave direct access to all environmental legislation, but was envisaged to also provide access to all reporting-related data for Rio Conventions (and broader environmental data).

60.   Due to insufficient funds, additional training workshops (additional request by GEF-Sec) were not conducted, but the issue was extensively discussed at the third Project Steering Committee meeting.

OUTPUT 2.1. Institutional frameworks for integrated reporting to Conventions is established and/or strengthened

61.   The recommendations for improving the framework for reporting are included in the national manuals. A more detailed report outlining the specific recommendations and the baseline situation was submitted by Afghanistan, Lao PDR and Mauritius.

62.   Some of the recommendation processes were put into action. In Afghanistan, Eritrea and Mauritius all began to develop national legislation for stronger mandates on data collection. Liberia instituted a unit specific to Multilateral Environmental Agreements, which now has its own office. However, two years on, it seems that many of the recommendations have not been done (this to be further discussed in Part IV Section D).

OUTPUT 2.2. National convention-related data collection, analysis and information management systems with agreed standardized collection and analysis procedures are established or enhanced

63.   The recommendations for improved data collection and management were included in the national manuals. As with Output 2.1., a separate paper was written by Afghanistan, Lao PDR, and Mauritius detailing specific recommendations.

64.   These drafts also drew in the recommendations from the global situation analysis; the international consultant advised this process and reviewed the national manuals for each of the countries.

65.   Some countries, like Eritrea and Mauritius, set out to explore the development of environmental information systems. Mauritius set out to strengthen its 'Muelex', however, as previously reported, it doesn't seem to have been a sustainable process (and it is currently purely a portal for environmental legislation, which redirects you to the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development website). Eritrea set out to develop a system, but no response from the country team meant that the Evaluator was unable to ascertain whether this exercise was sustained in the long term, post-project. In Afghanistan, for instance, one of the respondents mentioned that the project could not contribute to an enhanced national data mechanism, there were too many existing gaps in baseline data and information. There was an overall lack of a system for regular monitoring and much larger inputs and capacity building interventions were needed to rectify this.

OUTPUT 2.3. Capacities (systemic, institutional and individual) of relevant institutions for data collection, analysis and information management through provision of necessary training and computing equipment was enhanced

66.   All countries conducted a needs analysis for data collection, analysis and information management, including training and equipment needs, in their national manuals. Afghanistan, Lao PDR and Mauritius submitted separate needs analysis documents, and did a capacity needs assessment, looking at the capacity held at the systemic, institutional and individual levels.

67.   Several successful training workshops were conducted by the countries. Generally these were quite helpful. However, for instance in Liberia, one of the workshops held was for computer software and not necessarily only staff who worked in national reporting. Many respondents felt that there was not enough capacity building conducted.

68.   Presentations delivered by the pilot countries at the Project Steering Committee meetings, particularly at the last meeting in Nairobi in 2013, emphasised that training had been delivered to a wide range of interested people.

OUTPUT 2.4. Assessment report of the quality of national reports is prepared

69.   Mostly in the interest of time (which was pressed as a result of the additional output requested by the GEF-Sec), the development of assessment reports for each country on the quality of reporting to each convention was dropped by the Project Steering Committee. During the third PSC meeting it was decided to instead include them in the national manuals. As a result, most countries merely included recommendations to improve report quality in their manuals, but did not specifically speak to an assessment of report quality. Therefore, this output is incomplete.

70.   It would have been a worthwhile exercise to test the project interventions of harmonised reporting through real-time reporting processes to the three Conventions. However, the different reporting timelines of the three Conventions did not allow for this. During the project period national reports from SIDs and LDCs were due only for UNCCD, there were therefore few opportunities to assess improved report quality as a result of the project's interventions.

OUTPUT 3.1. Technical Working Group (TWG) on integrated reporting from countries participating in the project established for information and experience sharing is established and met

71.   The Technical Working Group meetings at the global project level were held right after each of the first and second Project Steering Committee meetings in 2010 and 2011. Some of the participating countries also formed technical working groups at national level in order to bring stakeholders together for the various tasks of the project (e.g. Mauritius for the manual). Usually the national TWGs included government and non-government stakeholders.

OUTPUT 3.2. International events on lessons learned and best practices for integrated reporting organised and held

72.   According to evaluator-access to side event presentations, presentations took place at three different major events (CBD COP-11, CBD SBSTTA14, and Rio+20). A side event at COP-11 of the CBD in 2012 showcased the project, with the national project coordinator from Liberia providing a national-level experience to accompany presentations from UNEP-WCMC, the CBD and UNCCD. According the project closing report, the project was also introduced at the CBD workshop on 'Capacity-building for Pilot Countries on the Implementation of Synergies among the Rio Conventions' in October/November 2012 in Hanoi, Vietnam. According to the same report, a session at the 11th meeting of the UNCCD Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention that was held in Bonn, Germany in April 2013, also showcased the project. The Director of UNEP-WCMC presented on synergies among MEAs more generally, including the FNR_Rio at the Rio+20; Mauritius gave a presentation on the FNR_Rio experiences at country level.

73.   The final PSC meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, held on 16 November 2015, brought together four of the pilot countries (Afghanistan, Lao PDR, Liberia and Mauritius) to discuss lessons learned from the project and how to disseminate them more widely.

74.   In terms of internet presence and communication, the project website was not operational for a number of months in 2013, and project stakeholders had to access information and discussions on alternative platforms (e.g. google discussion).

75.   The Global Project Coordinator and a few additional authors published a paper[12] on the experience of FNR_Rio in a peer-reviewed journal.

76.   Given the overall challenges in the attainment of outputs, and the no-finance addition of additional reporting at GEF-Sec request, the Achievement of Outputs is rated as **Satisfactory**.

C.   Effectiveness: Attainment of Objectives and Planned Results

77.   The effectiveness of the FNR_Rio is based on three re-formulated outcomes. Assessment of the achievement of outcomes was based on the objectively verifiable indicators described in the logframe, using both annual reports, other documentation, interviews and country visits, to verify the end-of-project targets.

78.   Overall, the project outcomes were intended to catalyze change from a segregated approach to reporting, to a harmonised, systems-thinking approach. This is consistent with the TOC, which is based on the premise that increased knowledge and capacity, as well as platforms for stakeholder collaboration, will improve and increase efficiency in reporting and implementation of the conventions.

OUTCOME 1: INCREASE IN KNOWLEDGE ON THE SYNERGIES AND LINKAGES OF CONVENTION REPORTING AT NATIONAL LEVEL	
Outcomes as per ProDoc	*1. Cost-effectiveness achieved for reporting to conventions* *2. Convention linkages and synergies at the national level identified and strengthened*
Indicators	*1. Average of ratio between quality and cost of reporting (this was never quantified)* *2. Linkages between Conventions are mapped, with areas of under-exploited synergy or overlap highlighted*

79.   As discussed previously, Outcome 1 has been re-formulated out of two outcomes for the purpose of the TOC. Cost-effectiveness is a result of an increase in knowledge on the synergies and linkages to reporting, as is the reduction of overlap and duplication.

80.   Although never quantified through baseline levels, mid-term or end-term targets, it is likely that there was a substantial reduction of the burden to countries regarding costs, but this was not quantifiable in the end.

81.   Through the global synthesis report, as well as the national reports, including discussions between different stakeholders (both at global and at national level) synergies and linkages were clearly defined. A comprehensive map of areas of synergy was produced and distributed to country Focal Points.

82.   Outcome 1 is an important catalyst towards the Intermediate outcome in which stakeholders identify the barriers and solutions to collaborative and integrative reporting, recognising the benefits of an integrated approach. This is the first step to effectively overcoming duplication and unnecessary costs, and increasing overall efficiency in reporting. The project has definitely contributed to overall improved national reporting through the identification of synergies, linkages and overlaps.

OUTCOME 2: ENHANCED COUNTRY CAPACITY AND STAKEHOLDER NUMBERS IN THE ABILITY TO IDENTIFY CROSS-CONVENTION PROGRAMMES FOR COST EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION LEADING TO GREATER STREAMLINING AND LESS DUPLICATION	
Outcomes as per	*3. Duplication in reporting processes identified and eliminated*

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[12] See footnote 5

ProDoc	*4. Enhanced country capacity to identify cross-convention programmes and projects for cost-effective financing and implementation*
	5. Fewer barriers to, and more cooperative environment for, information sharing among national institutions involved in convention implementation making
Indicators	*3. Level of consistency between reports on duplicate/overlap information*
	4.a. Number of staff trained in analysis of cross-convention reporting
	4.b. Number of coordination meetings between national Focal Points, to discuss integration of convention reporting
	4.c. National data stores created, and number of people accessing
	5.a. Number of derivative products created from national reports
	5.b. Number of stakeholders (institutions, agencies or organisations) participating in reporting process

83.   Outcome 2 was re-formulated from the three outcomes in the project document for the purpose of the TOC analysis.

84.   The indicator to measure the level of consistency between reports on duplication was never quantified. Regarding capacity, the end of project target was not only reached, it was excelled in, and several coordination meetings took place and staff were trained. At project closure, data stores were available in at least three of the six participating countries. At least five countries had developed a number of products, e.g. workshop reports, national manuals. There was an average increase of an estimated 25% in the number of stakeholders participating in convention reporting processes.[13]

85.   Outcome 2 has had a catalysing effect on the Intermediate state outcomes, leading also to the improved structures and data collection and management for collaborate implementing and reporting, mainly through its capacity building element. However, this Intermediate state has not come to fruition through the project interventions as the project had hoped. Various challenges still exist in improving data management and access and there are still strides to be made, one of them being interim access to global data sets. Nonetheless, some strengthening of data management has seemed to have occurred For instance, Afghanistan, Eritrea and Mauritius all began to develop national legislation to provide mandates for data collection. Developing databases in e.g. Mauritius and Eritrea, have not moved on as strongly as the project had envisaged at project closure, and Afghanistan, according to the evaluator questionnaire responses, has also not moved forward in this regard.

86.   Enhanced capacity has gone a long way to increase collaboration and identifying cross cutting programmes, as well as identifying solutions and barriers to collaborative and integrative reporting. Capacity building workshops continued to take place in Afghanistan, Lao PDR, Liberia and Mauritius right after the project, although to a much lesser extent, although whether this continues at national level now two years on is arguable. For instance, in Afghanistan, according to one respondent, the project did not in the longer term contribute to increased stakeholder engagement and improved collaboration.

OUTCOME 3: IMPROVED INFORMED DECISION-MAKING AT NATIONAL AND GLOBAL LEVEL OF OPPORTUNITIES TO INTEGRATE REPORTING (MORE COUNTRIES INTERESTED IN INTEGRATED REPORTING)

| Outcomes as per ProDoc | *6. Better informed policy-decision making at the national and global level of opportunities and practicality of integrated reporting to Rio Conventions* |
| Indicators | *6. Number of countries actively incorporating data from reporting into national development planning* |

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[13] UNEP GEF PIR Fiscal Year (1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013) for the FNR Rio Project.

87.   By the end of the project, at least one country had formerly incorporated data from reporting directly into national development planning as a result (Mauritius). Two years later, it appears elements of this is taking place in Liberia and Lao DR too; level of incorporation is unknown for the other four countries.

88.   Level of general uptake into other countries is unknown, although gauging from the interest received during side event presentations at international events during the project lifespan, it is very obvious that there is a large amount of country interest in taking up the integrated reporting approach.

89.   From the country visits it is clear that very little has been taken up into formal budgeting with regards improved target investments into integrated reporting, although at least two countries (Mauritius and Liberia) do have limited budgets made available directly for the integration and collaboration of stakeholders. The evaluator is unsure whether the assumption that financing mechanisms will exist at a higher level for integrated report held through the project, probably only to a lesser extent.

90.   It must be noted that the re-shuffling of budgets to include a large output, at the request of the GEF Secretariat, to conduct an exercise on developing a joint reporting template and have the countries test it and give feedback did not entirely fit into the project framework; and while in hindsight being a relatively useful exercise for some of the countries,[14] did cause large disruption to the flow of the project and fruition of outcomes on a sustainability level. While questionnaires that reflected experiences of countries that undertook this exercise did provide positive feedback at country level on the long-term benefits of such a joint reporting format, the Evaluator is not convinced that this was a useful exercise for the project country partners given the short time frame, adding additional pressure, and given the already stretched expectations from this medium sized project (especially given the fact that there is no evidence that the lessons from the questionnaire have been taken up at global level with Convention Secretariats, or GEF, for that matter). This opinion is given in the context of questionable and unknown next steps in the joint reporting format at a Rio Convention Secretariat level.

DIRECT OUTCOMES FROM RECONSTRUCTED TOC

91.   While the outcomes may have been generally achieved within the timeframe of the project, some smaller components were a challenge. Overall, the FNR_Rio laid a strong foundation towards more integrative and collaborative reporting and most countries would agree that the exercise definitely helped them in increasing efficiency in cost and time when it comes to reporting to the Rio Conventions (and probably MEAs in general).

92.   Two of the most obvious outcomes from the project in terms of the TOC and path to impact were (i) that institutions were strengthened towards the implementation and reporting to MEAs in general, creating a centralised point *vis a vis* data collection and coordination for the Focal Points, and (ii) stakeholder relationships were forged and/or strengthened throughout the project process creating a sustainable mechanism for sharing of information (especially among national Focal Points).

93.   Onus needs to be given to the importance laid on getting Focal Points connected through the project, an important element that had linkages to all the outcomes. Through the project

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[14] The three countries who participated in the questionnaire exercise of the reporting template found that it had been useful; some respondents to the evaluation questionnaire found that it was one of the big successes of the project and hoped that it would be integrated at global level.

interventions, the Focal Points could clearly see the benefits of finding synergies and linkages in convention reporting. This was the case for especially Liberia and Mauritius. This said, some countries did not necessarily get connected through the project in a sustainable manner (e.g. Afghanistan). What was interesting was looking at why some of the countries' Focal Points appreciated the synergy and others didn't. It seems that the biggest barriers for countries who did not take up the collaborations harnessed through the project interventions were connected to institutional structures in which systematic communication is not encouraged and the improving such communication channels was just not prioritised (i.e. business as usual is too entrenched).

94. Two of the main aspects that depend on assumptions holding (see TOC) are the sustainability of data management mechanisms and continued capacity enhancing among stakeholders. In addition, the interest of stakeholders in participating in the collaboration processes of integrative reporting is an important assumption to make, and did not necessarily always hold (as per comments from in-country stakeholder interviews).

95. It must be recognised that the realisation of project impact, requires continued investment into testing, much more support from the Rio Convention Secretariats themselves, and prioritisation at higher level in-country for different institutions to share separated but mutual responsibilities. There was insufficient planning at design phase, and at implementation, for roll-out of the pilot. It was assumed that the countries would take on their own recommendations to improve structures and data mechanisms (including capacity building interventions) on a sustainable manner at their own cost. Of course, realistically, these funds just do not exist, and thus there has been very little real roll-out. At the global level there did not seem to be real uptake of the Rio Conventions or GEF, and although there have a number of lessons from this project drawn into has been spear-headed by UNEP-WCMC.[15]

96. Given this, the rating for achievement of direct outcomes is **Satisfactory**.

LIKELIHOOD OF IMPACT

97. The likelihood of achievement of project impact (Implementation of Rio Conventions and other MEAs enhance ecosystems health and human wellbeing through a systems approach - *connected and harmonized implementation and reporting vastly improves through stakeholders working together with systems thinking at the core*) is examined using the ROtI analysis and TOC. A summary of the results and ratings of the ROtI can be found in Table 7.

98. The overall likelihood that the long term impact will be achieved (for some of the countries, but possibly on a global scale) is rated on a six-point scale as **Moderately Likely (BC)**. This rating is based on the following observations:

(a) The project's intended outcomes were delivered and had catalytic elements to each outcome so that these would feed into Intermediate states. For instance, the global situational analysis is definitely a helpful tool beyond the project, but also supported the development and understanding of the subsequent national reports. These worked towards better understanding barriers and solutions towards collaborative and integrative reporting. The fact that the national

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[15] UNEP-WCMC developed a project with UNEP Nairobi which got EU and Swiss funding to facilitate a process whereby national Focal Points from all global biodiversity-related MEAs and a wide range of countries shared experience on what they were doing in order to increase cooperation and collaboration of MEAs at the national level - the 'Sourcebook of Opportunities for enhancing cooperation among the biodiversity-related conventions at national and regional levels' was the output. UNEP-WCMC also supported UNEP Nairobi in developing GEF project documents for an approved project on 'Mainstreaming biodiversity information into the hear t of government decision-making'.

Focal Points realised the benefits of such reporting gives an indication of its higher level prioritisation.

(b) The project was a pilot, which aimed to create an enabling environment toward national collaborative and integrative reporting. Given the country contexts, the pilot did learn how it created enabling environments in some countries, and not in others. However, next steps were not directly injected into the design. More effort was placed on project implementation, and less on communication per se horizontally and vertically to embed the integration more deeply (both nationally and globally), which meant that there was a lack, generally, of real champions at all levels, to bring this forward in a coherent way, without external support. Prior allocations were not necessarily given with clear next steps, other than those recommendations in the National Manuals, which were, to an extent, followed up on, specifically because these were 'owned' by the countries themselves. If there had been a broader guide developed on how to manage data at the national level in order to implement the MEAs, this would have been helpful as a basis for a clear move to the improved structures and data collection and management Intermediate state (Rating B).

(c) There are a couple projects, especially those focusing on mainstreaming the biodiversity MEAs that are now in process,[16] with feedback from the FNR_Rio integrated into upcoming projects, gives an indication minimal uptake globally of the work towards the overall impact. Although not directly aligned to the FNR_Rio these offshoots do provide extra steps towards the impact of the reconstructed TOC. Based on country visits and interviews, the FNR_Rio did lay some sort of foundation in some of the countries (e.g. in Liberia institutional embedding through an MEA unit, in Mauritius legislation improved, in at least three of the countries - Liberia, Mauritius, Lao PDR - improved collaboration and synergy among Focal Points) towards integrated reporting and systems thinking towards implementing the conventions, but there are still many more steps to take before impact is reached, and these steps have not necessarily been laid down (Rating C).

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[16] Ibid (Footnote 15)

Table 7 Results and ratings of Review of Outcome to Impact (ROtI) Analysis for the FNR_Rio Project (Piloting Integrated Processes and Approaches to Facilitate National Reporting to Rio Conventions)

Project Objective	To pilot nationally-driven integrated processes and approaches to reporting to the three Rio Conventions (CBD, UNCCD, UNFCCC)						
Outputs	**Outcomes (Reformulated)**	**Rating (D-A)**	**Intermediate States**	**Rating (D-A)**	**Impact**	**Rating (+)**	**Overall**
1.1. Inventory and analysis report of convention reporting requirements is prepared 1.2. Analysis report of existing data and info management systems at country level is prepared 1.3. a. Manual on implementation of Integrated Report produced 1.3.b. Testing of Joint Reporting Template	Increase in knowledge on the synergies of Convention reporting at national level	B	Stakeholders identify the barriers and solutions to collaborative and integrative reporting, recognising the benefits of an integrated approach Improved structures and data collection and management in place for collaborative implementing and reporting Improved targeted investments and decision-making for coherent and aligned reporting and implementation	C	Implementation of Rio Conventions and other MEAs enhance ecosystems health and human wellbeing through a systems approach [connected and harmonized implementation (and reporting) vastly improves through stakeholders working together with systems thinking at the core]		BC
2.1. Institutional frameworks for integrated reporting established and/or strengthened 2.2. National convention-related data collection, analysis and info management systems with agreed standardized collection and analysis procedures established 2.3. Capacities of relevant institutions for data collection, analysis and info management institutions through training and computing equipment	Enhanced country capacity and stakeholder numbers in the ability to identify cross-convention programmes for cost effective implementation leading to greater streamlining and less duplication						

Project Objective	To pilot nationally-driven integrated processes and approaches to reporting to the three Rio Conventions (CBD, UNCCD, UNFCCC)						
Outputs	**Outcomes (Reformulated)**	**Rating (D-A)**	**Intermediate States**	**Rating (D-A)**	**Impact**	**Rating (+)**	**Overall**
enhanced 2.4. Assessment report of quality of national reports prepared							
3.1. Technical Working Group on IR established and met 3.2. International events on lessons learned and best practices held	Improved informed decision-making at national and global level of opportunities to integrate reporting (and more countries interested in integrating)						
	Rating Justification: The **B** rating indicates that FNR_Rio's intended outcomes were delivered (mostly), and were designed to feed into a continuing process (e.g. through catalytic country level actions), but with no (real) prior allocation of responsibilities after project funding. Arguably one could say the responsibilities were allocated to the FPs through the NCs, but this		**Rating Justification:** The **C** rating reflects that measures that were designed to move towards Intermediate states have started and have produced only a few results in a few countries, but there is no indication of progressing towards long-term impact (which necessitates more countries getting involved and a much stronger pull from Secretariats).		**Rating Justification:** The **BC** rating corresponds to **Moderately Likely** that the impacts will be achieved, in the long run; given the project was, in some ways, a catalyser for next steps.		

Project Objective	To pilot nationally-driven integrated processes and approaches to reporting to the three Rio Conventions (CBD, UNCCD, UNFCCC)						
Outputs	Outcomes (Reformulated)	Rating (D-A)	Intermediate States	Rating (D-A)	Impact	Rating (+)	Overall
	was not made clear and with the turnover of NCs and other responsibilities, some tasks have been left hanging.						

ACHIEVEMENT OF PROJECT GOAL AND PLANNED OBJECTIVES

99.   The purpose of the project was to create an enabling environment for countries to test approaches towards integrative and collaborative reporting, through identifying country-based needs to improve data access and stakeholder collaboration. The hope for the project, in terms of realizing long-term impact, was that recommendations made by each country in their national manuals were realised through country actions (although this is difficult when resources are limited to unavailable).

100.   Given that this was a pilot, the project did achieve its project goal and planned objective without clear sustainability in some countries (e.g. Afghanistan, Eritrea, Palau). In the same vein, there needed to have been more clear "next steps" for implementation, which was not necessarily done through the project interventions. Nevertheless, the project's achievements and interventions certainly provided a strong foundation (in some of the countries) on which to build next steps towards long-term impact.

101.   The overall rating on Effectiveness is **Satisfactory**.

D.   Sustainability and replication

102.   The evaluation of sustainability and possibility for replication focuses on four aspects of sustainability (socio-political, financial resources, institutional framework, environmental sustainability), and then looks at the catalytic role the project played towards possible upscaling and replication.

Socio-political Sustainability

103.   Given the countries involved and their volatile political and social situations (e.g. Liberia, Eritrea, Afghanistan), there are many factors that may influence project results. For instance, the recent outbreak of Ebola in Liberia has had large implications on the status quo of Government procedures and has also taken away from previous priorities. Eritrea has struggled with years of war, and continues to deal with issues like military conscription and citizens fleeing out of the country. Afghanistan, as a state that has faced war for decades and is only starting to rebuild, also has its own challenges. With more stable political conditions in Mauritius, Lao PDR and Palau, there seems to be a more conducive political environment for project sustainability here, although changes in government structures as well as lacking capacity (both in human and resource) has also had limiting effects on the socio-political sustainability of the project.

104.   In Liberia, enough stakeholder awareness was conducted (both through stakeholder meetings and capacity building sessions) that there was some level of increased interest and commitment amongst stakeholders to collaborate on reporting. According to interviewees (National Coordinator, Assistant, National Consultant), especially Focal Points saw the benefit of collaborating.

105.   In Eritrea, due to meetings and some capacity building sessions (as per project documentation e.g. Project Final Document, PIRs), awareness was created at some level. However, no respondents were available to answer questions and in turn the Evaluator cannot assess the levels of stakeholder awareness or interest post-project. Based on discussions with UNEP-WCMC, Eritrea struggled to really involve themselves in the project (there were staff turn-overs, lack of responses, etc) and they did not participate in the final project meeting.

106. In Mauritius, the Evaluator had the privilege of meeting a variety of different stakeholders from different ministries and institutions. It seems that most, if not already quite collaborative, were made more so through the stakeholder engagement sessions and capacity building sessions through the project interventions (especially through the development of the national manual which was a very participatory process). There is certainly enough interest among technical stakeholders to collaborate, but this (according to stakeholder respondents during face to face discussions in-country) may not have filtered vertically. This said, the first high-level MEA meeting was about to take place just after the Evaluator left Mauritius, which would have included minister-level participation.

107. In Afghanistan, the interventions of the project through enhanced stakeholder participation did not have a lasting effect (this according to one respondent). According to this respondent, there was not enough interest built through the project to create sustained collaboration. No one from the National Environmental Protection Agency responded to the Evaluator on the implementation of the national manual recommendations or if there had indeed been some forms of increased collaboration among stakeholders. Capacity building interventions were identified to be one of the strongest needs in this country.[17]

108. The respondent from Lao PDR maintained that the project contributed to increased stakeholder engagement and that through this it created an enabling environment that was sustainable in terms of collaboration and integrated reporting. In this country there seems to be enough stakeholder interest to integrate data collection and increase synergies. However, the respondent did mention that sustainability of these interventions is restricted by limited budget availability (see under Financial Resources below).

109. In Palau, one respondent mentioned that, without the Office of Environmental Response and Coordination (OERC) increasing their effort (mostly because they do not have the resources to call meetings, etc), there was limited sustainability regarding improved collaboration. However, energy has been focused now on reaching out to partners with regular updates on progress, the National Environmental Protection Council was revived and the effort to engage NGOs and Palauan consultants on reporting has increased. In addition, government structures have changed - OERC has been eliminated, including its four functions, three of which were Focal Points to the three Rio Conventions - as such the respondent asserted that a critical step had been taken because of this reorganisation the positions are no longer vulnerable to political changes, but instead embedded more solidly into the governing structures (thus leading to less staff turnover etc).

110. The Evaluator had the opportunity to visit two countries (Mauritius and Liberia) two years after the project ended, and there are still varying levels of commitment towards integrative and collaborative reporting (as discussed for each country above). This is probably the result of increased awareness among stakeholders on the benefits of collaboration, and the level of country ownership given the national manuals which gave country-specific recommendations.

111. Socio-political sustainability is rated as **Moderately Likely.**

Financial Resources

112. It seems that the continuation of various outputs (e.g. databases in Mauritius and Eritrea, capacity building in Afghanistan) have not sustained as hoped due to a lack of human resources which in turn need to be sustained financially. Generally , a few aspects have continued in some of the countries (such as forged relationships among stakeholders and NFPs - Mauritius, Liberia and Lao

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[17] Source - Final Project Report FNR_Rio.

PDR, institutional strengthening through establishments of structures, e.g. MEA division in Liberia). No- or low-cost sustained outputs (or through day to day alignment with current tasks) have carried on (e.g. through the forged relationships between Focal Points - Liberia and Mauritius, stakeholder meetings in Liberia, Mauritius and Lao PDR). However, there seems to still be strong dependence on external sources for funding and no substantial resources have been secured nationally in all of the countries.[18]

113. In Liberia, despite respondents asserting that there is a strong need for financing the implementation of the recommendations of the national manual, there have been some sustained activities (such as the running of the new MEA unit - which carries staff and resource costs).

114. In Mauritius, resources have been made available through e.g. climate change being highly prioritised in the national budget,[19] which has caused resource flow to the implementation and reporting of the UNFCCC with the other conventions. However, e.g. the Muelex database never came to fruition as was hoped, mainly due to lack of financial resources.

115. No evidence for sustained financing of project results was available from Eritrea due to the lack of response from project stakeholders during the evaluation.

116. There was no response regarding the lack of financial resources in Afghanistan. However, the respondent did highlight the need to follow up on the recommendations of the manual both financially and in terms of capacity (where this would come from was not stated).

117. In Lao PDR, the respondent highlighted the lack of continued funding for the e.g. support to establish an improved database, IT system and financial and human resource support to the focal point offices. It was also asserted that despite trying its best to support the implementation of recommendations from the national manual (these were not elaborated on by the respondent), the biggest challenge is the lack of financing.

118. In Palau, the OERC is understaffed and underfunded and thus severely limited in carrying out the recommendations from its national manual.[20]

119. Financial risks would be expected to be high with regards national budgets, especially in some of the countries with immediate crisis-type problems (for instance war in Afghanistan or political instability in Eritrea, or Ebola in Liberia). However, in-kind costs seem to have sustained sufficiently in at least two of the countries (Mauritius and Liberia), especially as the benefits of integrated reporting are mostly seen through cost efficiency.

120. At the global level, financial resources are certainly available to take next steps, and already some projects are looking into further streamlining and harmonizing reporting for biodiversity conventions.[21]

121. Given that most of the six countries have not been able to implement the recommendations due to financial limitations, financial sustainability to the project is rated as **Moderately Unlikely**.

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[18] It was strongly highlighted in virtually all respondent questionnaires, in many of the face to face interviews as well as meetings during the Evaluation, that the most limiting factor to having the recommendations from the national manuals implemented was lack of financial resources (many elaborated the hope that more funding would come from the outside) - this with exception of Eritrea as no response was received here.

[19] Based on discussions with Ministry of Finance representative during country visit

[20] As per response to questionnaire by the one Palau respondent who answered

[21] E.g. EU funded project as well as an upcoming CBD-led meeting on synergies - both organised by the UNEP-WCMC.

Institutional framework

122. The FNR_Rio has definitely laid a very strong foundation towards institutional strengthening and embedding of a more harmonised and collaborative approach to reporting in some of the countries (e.g. Liberia, Mauritius, Lao PDR).

123. Already these were strong in some instances where NFPs are housed in the same institution like in Palau under the OERC. Since then, the OERC has been dismantled and functions have been spread out through the executive branch's reorganisation. The country has taken a critical step to secure the continuity of capacity and understanding of the individuals who lead this function, because these functions are no longer vulnerable to political changes in government. This was not a result of the project interventions, but does contribute to its sustainability as far as the institutional setting is concerned.

124. The institutional setting was strengthened throughout the project in Liberia, through the institutionalisation of an MEA unit that coordinates reporting to all MEAs the country is signatory to and houses all the Focal Points.

125. In Mauritius, there have been some changes (e.g. the biodiversity focal point is now changed institutions separating itself from the other two Focal Points) since project closure. Despite there being a strong institutional setting for collaboration, respondents mentioned that there is not enough collaboration among the different institutions (leading, still to this day, to duplication of various efforts).

126. It is questionable whether e.g. Eritrea did in fact develop national legislation to provide mandates for data collection or not (difficult to ascertain mainly because of no-response from country). Afghanistan did not have an improved institutional structure.

127. The sustenance of the project results are very dependent on the institutional structures and mandates, but these seem, at least in some of the countries, to have been put in place effectively. However, as mentioned in the catalytic role and replication below, institutional sustainability depends on the people in the institutions, and because there was not planned roll-out, vertical or horizontal communication, or 'real' champions (in most countries), these factors do impede institutional sustainability. Given the strong foundation laid by the project, not near enough has been done to replicate or harness this foundation at the institutional level.

128. As a result of the above, institutional framework is rated as **Moderately Unlikely**.

Environmental sustainability

129. This project focused on efficiency of Convention reporting, so while inherently linked to environmental health, it did not necessarily have direct influence on the environment.

130. That said, the effect of environmental changes may have an impact on the prioritisation of implementing conventions (e.g. adaptation of climate change) and thus have an influence on enhancing efficiency indirectly.

131. Generally there are no project outputs that would have a negative impact on the environment if sustained. Up-scaling of the project can only have long-term positive benefits on the environment, especially if awareness creation is an important element.

132. Environmental sustainability is rated as **Highly Likely**.

Catalytic Role and Replication

133.   *Catalyzing behavioural changes*: The FNR_Rio managed to create an enabling environment for enhancing linkages and relationships between key stakeholders and Focal Points of the Rio Conventions, with Focal Points, especially, realising the benefits of collaboration and integration of convention reporting in Liberia, Mauritius, Lao PDR (according to the Afghan respondent the FNR_Rio did not manage to create and enabling environment in terms of catalyzed behavioural changes because gaps and embedded business-as-usual lack of collaboration was too entrenched i.e. would have needed much more intervention; Palau already had forms of collaboration before the project but has improved this post-project). Capacity building was a strong element of the project and ownership by project stakeholders in Liberia, Mauritius and Lao PDR, was, to some extent, a result of this enhanced capacity.[22]

134.   *Incentives*: A key incentive to contribute to stakeholder behaviour to veer from the business-as-usual approach was the reduction in cost and time, and thus overall reporting burden, on precious and limited human resources. This was the sentiment reflected by all countries who responded during the Evaluation process.[23] The incentives to participate in this project, and sustain results, are clearly strong if based only on this key incentive.

135.   *Institutional changes:* In terms of data management and access, uptake, especially two years down the line, was weaker than project expectations.[24] Institutional changes and structures in terms of political set up has definitely improved as a result of the project, especially in Liberia and Mauritius.

136.   *Policy changes:* There has definitely been a prioritisation of the Rio Conventions in recent years, at a higher level nationally, and a realisation of the benefits of integrative and collaborative reporting. Afghanistan, Mauritius and Eritrea were in the process of developing national legislation to improve their data collection mechanisms,[25] other than in Mauritius, not much progress has been made since project closure.[26]

137.   *Catalytic financing:* At international level, especially in terms of UNCCD support, there seems to be the possibility for further financing of such interventions at a global level to further increase efficiency. There has also been some funding allocated to directly relevant projects developed and managed by UNEP working with UNEP-WCMC.[27] At the national level, some follow on financing has kept a few results sustained in at least two of the countries (Mauritius continues to use stakeholder engagement meetings, Liberia instituted its own MEA unit that is now coordinating all MEA reporting and implementing), but there continues to be dependence on external funding sources as was the sentiment reflected by virtually all countries when asked about implementing the recommendations from their national manuals.[28]

138.   *Champions*: Despite a few instances (e.g. specifically Mauritius), one of the reasons why some of the results of the FNR_Rio were not entirely sustained was due to the turnover of staff throughout the project, and the lack of real champions to pull the project forward. However, it

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[22] Project Documentation (e.g. PIRs, country output reporting); interviews with project proponents face to face in country, questionnaire and email correspondence with Lao PDR

[23] Based on interviews with country stakeholders in Liberia and Mauritius, and questionnaire responses from Mauritius, Afghanistan, Lao PDR and Palau

[24] This was the observation by the Evaluator based on responses from all countries (mostly questionnaires)

[25] Final Project Document FNR_Rio

[26] Based on interviews with project stakeholders in country, questionnaire responses

[27] See footnote 15

[28] Based on interviews in-country as well as questionnaire responses

appears that at the international level, UNEP-WCMC are continuing to explore opportunities for synergies, working in collaboration with UNEP and others, and also supporting the CBD-led processes on synergies.[29]

139.   *Replication*. There are certainly a whole set of experiences and lessons that can be taken from FNR_Rio and contextualised into future endeavours, and that was the project's aim, being first and foremost, a pilot. There are high prospects for replication of this project. It seems that the future steps post-project were not entirely and clearly planned. More should have been done to share the findings of the project and to catalyse the roll out of the pilot. There was certainly no evidence that there was any further step once the pilot had been conducted. Thus project respondents seem to have the feeling that they have been left hanging slightly. There could have been more side-event presentations to get more countries interested and thus further push this on the global arena. Not enough interest came from the Convention Secretariats, and this had a large implication on country confidence as well as future replication. All documentation from the project implementation process is freely available and easy to navigate through the UNEP-WCMC website link.[30] According to the final project closing document, a number of targeted communication documents were created following the final Project Steering Committee Meeting to share the key lessons with relevant bodies. A few projects (as previously mentioned) continue to take lessons from FNR_Rio for use to harmonise the biodiversity related conventions. However, given the strong foundations laid by the project and the potential for replication, not near enough has been done on future planning on how and when to do such replication.

140.   The rating for catalytic role and replication is given as **Moderately Likely**.

141.   The rating for sustainability overall is given as **Moderately Satisfactory**.

E.   Efficiency

142.   *Time:* Despite there being a few delays at national level (e.g. Liberia had some delays at initial start-up and during change of coordinators, Eritrea and Afghanistan required a number of visits from the Global Project Coordinator to get started), the project was well executed within the time frame, with a comparatively short no-cost extension (compared to other GEF projects). One has to also be cognisant of the additional pressure put on the project by the GEF-Sec requested output, which was taken up by a number of the participating countries (all except Palau) despite it being an add-on; the project still managed to complete its outputs on time as per logframe.

143.   *Cost-effectiveness*: This was a medium-sized project with a small budget. The project was also built on previous projects (see elaboration under Stakeholder Participation, Cooperation and Partnerships below). The GEF allocation was just under half, with the other allocation coming in as co-financing (mostly in-kind). At the second Project Meeting in 2012, the minutes stated that the promised co-financing had not yet come to fruition, and there was not sufficient accounting to reflect the (probably high) amount of in-kind contributions made in-country towards the project. At that point there was only USD 160,000.00 left for the project activities. In-kind contributions were undervalued by the countries (and underestimated), with respondents to the evaluation clearly stating they had put more hours into the project than initially planned. If these had been accounted for, the budgetary allocation of in-kind contributions would have reflected significantly higher amounts. However, for the budget, and the fact that an extra output was added with no budget allocation (in fact, the budget had to be reshuffled for this), the project achievements were substantial.

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[29] e.g. the EU-funded project on MEA synergies being carried out by UNEP working with UNEP-WCMC, and the CBD-led process on synergies (source: Correspondence with UNEP-WCMC)

[30] http//old.unep-wcmc.org/integrated-reporting-to-the-rio-conventions_675.html

144.   The project steps were well planned (i.e. global analysis, then national analysis), with gaps in capacity and other needs clearly defined in time for targeted training and technical support. The project in itself was a pilot in cost-effectiveness at national level and it certainly did work towards less duplication, increased efficiency and pooling of resources through collaborative working environments created throughout the project intervention.

145.   The rating for efficiency is **Highly Satisfactory**.

F.   Factors affecting project performance

Preparation and readiness

146.   The project's purpose to test integrated reporting processes to Rio Conventions at national level was relatively realistic within the timeframe and budget, although the communication and country willingness was perhaps a bit optimistic during the design phase, given the difficulties faced by some of the countries regarding project implementation (e.g. Eritrea, Palau).[31]

147.   During the Project Preparation Grant phase, stakeholder consultations were conducted, with more planned during the first year of implementation. This did occur as a result of national inception workshops and manual development workshops. Significant country involvement in terms of ground-truthing, especially the budget, was done, and the six countries committed varying levels of co-financing during the project design.

148.   The Project Document does briefly outline stakeholder mapping and analysis. No gender analyses were done for this project. More could have been done here in terms of analysis to identify champions to sustain project results, as well as a roadmap for steps after the pilot. The problem analysis was clearly articulated with a clear alternative given to counter the business-as-usual situation.

149.   The capacities of the executing agencies were clearly outlined, as were the partnership arrangements and roles and responsibilities. Project management was well articulated at all levels, although when it came to implementation, there were several challenges encountered that the design could not have planned for (e.g. in Liberia, Eritrea, Palau). There was not enough risk analysis conducted during design phase to mitigate the challenges at country level.[32]

150.   The Project Review Committee minutes were not available to the Evaluator so it is unknown whether comments were made regarding challenges faced (such as the ones faced above) and if they were taken up. The final project report does state that regular meetings were held to discuss the various challenges and that these were discussed in full for effective project implementation (e.g. when the additional output was added, budgets had to be reshuffled; when Eritrea was not responding it was decided that the Project Coordinator visit the country).[33]

151.   Preparation and readiness for the project is rated as **Satisfactory**.

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[31] Difficulties discussed with UNEP-WCMC global project coordinator via Skype - Eritrea necessitated multiple visits to get project going (sometimes Visa issues did not allow for this further exacerbating the problem of Eritrea not getting on board initially), Palau lost its main implementing staff during the last year and the project manager had to shuffle to find another person (who ended up being from and NGO).

[32] Risks were not analysed effectively in the Project Document, there were risks that had to be mitigated by the global project coordinator which had not been previously planned for at design phase (Source: Project Document, PIRs, Discussion with Global Project Coordinator)

[33] Project Final Report FNR Rio

Project implementation and management

152.   The project was implemented quite strictly within the envelope of the planning framework. The yearly PIR's give a good indication of progress as planned. The indicators, mostly measureable (although there were a few that were not and thus should have been thoroughly edited at design phase), were adhered to and targets were aimed for. The implementation mechanism adhered to the delivery timelines of project milestones, outputs and outcomes.

153.   The project proved highly adaptive when it was asked to add an additional output (which was a significantly large addition to an already tight time and budget) and managed to deliver that output and all its others within its timeframe. The management team was very responsive and supportive and respondents to the project were very positive towards the overall coordination.

154.   The Project Steering Committee met on several occasions, as planned, and was very effective in its operation.[34] However, a large component of the Steering Committee, the Convention Secretariats (barring UNCCD) were largely absent, which of course set a precedent of deprioritisation by the Conventions themselves in the project. There was an effort made by UNEP-WCMC to discuss this absence with at least two of the Secretariats, and the point was made that input to GEF projects in general was add-on and not part of the daily work and budgets (and given the number of GEF projects they could involve themselves in, it was necessary to prioritise).[35]

155.   The planned executing arrangements at country level in all countries was well thought out in design, but it may have not worked out as hoped during implementation in e.g. Palau and Eritrea.[36] In some countries (e.g. Liberia, Mauritius), the national coordinator and assistant positions spent many more hours on the project than planned.[37] In other countries, there was a turnover of the NC and NAs to an extent that the Global Project Coordinator did not know who was necessarily running the project (e.g. Palau, Eritrea, Afghanistan).[38] Technical Working Groups were set up, and these did fulfil their mandate, at least in Liberia and Mauritius.[39]

156.   One of the bigger constraints is the absence of the Rio Conventions (notably the UNFCCC) at the Project Steering Committee meetings. Respondents felt that this absence did not help towards the need for more and continued support from the Convention Secretariats themselves towards more harmonised and integrated approaches for national reporting, and to alleviate the reporting burden especially felt by SIDs and LDCs. The project, because it was nationally driven, adapted by improving country systems themselves in terms of reporting. However, these will always be limited if the global context does not support this.

157.   The rating given to project implementation and adaptive management is **Moderately Satisfactory**.

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[34] Based on PIRs, Final Project Report, interviews held with country respondents regarding the role of the Steering Committee. Most respondents highlighted the importance of the Steering Committee but the lack of Convention participation

[35] Email correspondence (during final draft review) with UNEP-WCMC

[36] Based on discussions with Global Project Coordinator and National Coordinators - e.g. Eritrea and Palau had turnover in staff issues during the project.

[37] Based on in country interviews with project implementers

[38] Based on interview with Global Project Coordinator

[39] Based on interviews in country

Stakeholder participation, cooperation and partnerships

158.   The project had a strong element of pre-planning when it came to stakeholder engagement. This said, only through implementation did some stakeholders see the benefits of integrated reporting (and in some instances - Afghanistan, Liberia, Mauritius - some stakeholders still did not engage enough despite the project attempts to engage them). The international, regional and national level of engagement was very well planned and realistically reasonably executed.

159.   National-level stakeholder engagement and resultant awareness is discussed for each country, in detail, under 'Socio-political Sustainability' from paragraph 104 to 109.

160.   The collaboration between UNEP-WCMC and UNEP was effective.[40] The collaboration between UNEP-WCMC and the country partners was very good, with in person country visits made by the Global Project Coordinator on several occasions to discuss any challenges that may be hinging on the project success.[41]

161.   The project was built on previous similar interventions (like the biodiversity MEAs synergies piloted in Panama, Seychelles, Ghana and Indonesia) as well as various COP decisions by all three Rio Conventions, which had positive implications on efficiency. This in mind, and the fact that UNEP-WCMC is a strong role player in synergies with conventions, increased the collaborative and learning atmosphere for project lessons update. This project was a relatively unique experience and thus quite novel especially considering the three Rio Conventions in question.

162.   One of the key sustained results of the project was this notion of improved collaboration and forged relationships at national level, especially between the Focal Points and their institutions, but also between government and research institutions, and within governmental departments and ministries. This project laid the foundation for this collaborative atmosphere.

163.   The results of the project definitely promoted the participation of stakeholders. At a more global scale, the amount of side event presentations on the project results brought in quite a bit of interest from other parties, despite there not being enough follow through at a higher level on how these results may be integrated into other country approaches.

164.   Stakeholder participation, cooperation and partnerships is rated as **Satisfactory**.

Communication and public awareness

165.   Broad stakeholder engagement at country level was a strong element of cohesion and collaborative reporting for sustained activities. However, given the potential for the country level activities to really create awareness more broadly about the Conventions and their implementation, this was a missed opportunity. Of course, with the limited budget it can be understood why more awareness was not created at national level. This said, some awareness action did take place. For instance, in Liberia, there were some media-training done for journalists on the conventions.

166.   In terms of more global uptake, a few side event presentations were given at a small number of international convention-related events (e.g. Rio+20, SBSTTTA 14 of CBD, COP11 of CBD). This was followed through as per project logical framework. However, given the lessons learnt from this unique and highly relevant project, there should have been more exposure given to the outcomes,

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[40] This based on discussions with UNEP-WCMC (three respondents) and the UNEP Task Manager
[41] All respondents (questionnaire and face to face interviews, as well as skype sessions) exclaimed that they really appreciated UNEP-WCMC coordination, and felt that the presence and coordination by the Global Project Coordinator was good.

challenges, lessons and successes from the project. After the last Project Steering Committee a number of communication materials sharing best practices and lessons learnt were sent to relevant bodies, like the Rio Conventions and their Parties. A useful tool is the link to all the project document implementation on the UNEP-WCMC website.[42]

167.   Communication and public awareness is rated as **Moderately Satisfactory**.

Country ownership and driven-ness

168.   Mostly through the development of the national manuals, where countries could do a self-assessment and identify their specific priorities, the FNR_Rio had a strong element of country ownership at the onset.

169.   The governments of countries have assumed responsibilities of the tasks that they are able to do given their available national budgets and human resources. Based on the country visits to Liberia and Mauritius, it is clear that this project has laid a strong foundation and that the country has prioritised a more integrated collaborative approach to reporting. The next steps are lacking though and countries still lack the resources to take on many of the recommendations made in their national manuals. One comment made by a stakeholder is that generally the reporting mechanisms are still very re-active, instead of pro-active. Another respondent mentioned that 'to this end, we had demanded that stakeholders in our country and the convention bodies pay particular attention to address [the gaps in our reporting requirements as per the manual recommendations]; however, neither at national nor international level was more effort made to address the gaps that existed'.

170.   The project was very well aligned to country priorities mainly because it aimed to reduce costs and time of staff through integrated reporting, thereby releasing funds and human resources for more important elements, such as implementation.

171. The country ownership and driven-ness, despite country level challenges, is rated as **Moderately Satisfactory**.

Financial planning and management

172.   Generally timing was adhered to and financial reporting was done half yearly and sent in from WCMC. There were issues with getting financial reports from the countries, and at closure of the project, these were still pending. It must be noted that WCMC managed the funds very well, as was reflected by several country respondents.

173.   Co-financing did not completely materialise as was planned. In fact, from the USD 725,880 pledged by the six countries, USD 513,866.24 were provided (See Annex 5 co-financing table). This may have been connected to poor reporting from countries, because the impression from country respondents is that much more in-kind support was given than was planned. This is a common problem for projects, and more often than not countries undervalue the resources (both human and other in-kind) that they provide to a project from their end. Based on discussions with country respondents, this seems to have happened in this project too. This project should illustrate the lesson that in future projects there needs to be clearer guidance on how to assess and report co-financing.

174.   The project has leveraged resources through some government sustainability for countries like Liberia and Mauritius. However, there is still a need for further support.

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[42] Ibid

175. Financial planning and management was **Moderately Satisfactory**.

Supervision, guidance and technical backstopping

176. FNR_Rio was managed by UNEP-WCMC and oversight was given to the UNEP Task Manager. Processes in place for effective supervision and guidance were really strong, both in terms of the Project Steering Committee as well as through the overall coordination by the Global Project Manager of which the respondents highlighted the responsiveness and technical guidance given. Technical backstopping was generally good and well handled given the diversity of countries involved, with dedicated people for different outputs and reporting elements.

177. UNEP-WCMC has had ample experience with international projects such as these,[43] and project reporting in terms of results-based management was conducted effectively and on time.[44]

178. When countries were falling behind, the Project Coordinator would make personal missions to discuss project activities and way forward in person. These visits seemed to have been limited due to funding as well as visa restrictions. Despite this, a concerted effort was made to get countries back on board when they became unresponsive by the Project Coordinator through telephonic contact, face to face meetings, and email correspondence (especially in Afghanistan and Eritrea many meetings were held during the initial stages of implementation to support the project lift-off in these countries).[45]

179. Supervision, guidance and technical backstopping is rated as **Highly Satisfactory**.

Monitoring and Evaluation

180. Because of the lack of a detailed and effective risk analysis in the project document, there were some risks encountered during project implementation that were difficult to manage (e.g. country unresponsiveness). However, risk factor tables were well detailed and managed yearly in the PIRs.

181. A detailed costed M&E plan was developed in the project document. Yearly PIRs tracked the indicators and targets. The project was on track mid-way and it was decided that a Mid-Term Review was thus not necessary. The frequency of monitoring was generally adequate.

182. The project logical framework was clear and well planned for use as a monitoring instrument. Generally, the indicators were 'SMART'. However, a few indicators were not measurable (e.g. indicator for Output 1.1. where baseline values were never assessed and the indicator was not quantifiable, indicator for Output 2.1. where there was an end-of-project target set at 70%, but then the indicator was 'hard to quantify and would require resources that the project does not have').[46] Indicators also did not have baselines, mid-term or end-term targets.

183. The Terminal Evaluation was heavily delayed for unknown reasons. This led to various limiting factors (such as various project partners, including the Global Project Coordinator, have moved on, Focal Points are no longer in place, responses from some countries are non-existent). However, this could also be seen in a positive light because two years is sufficient time to ascertain the actual sustainable results that the project has had and whether it has contributed to the larger impact.

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[43] Have been involved in initial pilots such as the MEA harmonisation in Ghana, Panama, Indonesia and Seychelles, have organised workshops to this effect and continue with projects on MEA harmonisation.
[44] Based on PIR reports, discussions with UNEP Task Manager and Funds Manager
[45] Interview with Global Project Coordinator (December 2015)
[46] UNEP GEF PIR Fiscal Year 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013, UNEP FNR_Rio.

184. Monitoring and Evaluation is rated as **Moderately Satisfactory**.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

A. Conclusions

185.   In terms of FNR_Rio's purpose, it laid a **strong foundation**, according to country respondents in some countries (with the exception of Afghanistan and Eritrea), toward integrative and collaborative reporting to Rio Conventions. It was the first of its kind in all of the six countries, and most countries really appreciated the experience and learned a lot on the synergies and harmonisation of efforts to substantially decrease their reporting burdens.

186.   Generally respondents in all countries did find that through the project implementation they found ways to have more efficient use of their own resources and found that the project did make a substantial impact on cost- and time-effectiveness towards their reporting obligations.

187.   In Liberia, the biggest achievements were that the project contributed to improved overall planning and decision-making and that it helped the Focal Points understand the need for synergies. It also laid the ground work towards instituting a MEA unit, and to a lesser extent did contribute to an improved national data mechanism. Resource mobilisation remains the key barrier to instituting some of the recommendations from the national manual.

188.   No feedback was attained from Eritrea two years post-project so it is impossible to ascertain whether any of the initial steps taken right after the project have been sustained (e.g. developing national legislation). One of the recommendations was also the establishment of a separate institution with a clear mandate over data collection and management. Eritrea was not involved during the last months of the project and did not attend the final project meeting, nor were any responses given during the Evaluation. As a result, it is questionable how many of the recommendations from the national manual have indeed been taken up.

189.   Mauritius had several achievements through the project, including its enhanced capacity, enhanced collaboration among stakeholders, and some implementation of the recommendations o the national manual (like the high level MEA committee - which only just met for its first time in November 2015 to work on a common template for all MEAs, targeted investment e.g. through prioritisation of climate change, dealing with cross-cutting issues jointly). According to respondents, communication continues to be a barrier to effective collaboration, the Muelex database (which was hoped to become the central database for reporting) did not come to fruition as hoped, and lack of resources are cited as the main barrier.

190.   In Afghanistan, a focus was largely on capacity building towards standardized data collection and within institutions responsible for national reporting. It, with Mauritius and Eritrea, also was working towards developing legislation towards improved data mechanisms. According to the one respondent, however, not much was done in terms of improved collaboration or an improved data mechanism, mainly because not enough interest was built within the responsible institutions. It is also questionable whether any of the recommendations were taken up (despite there being promise of more capacity building), no response from NEPA meant that this could not be verified by the Evaluator.

191.   In Lao PDR, general remarks from the respondent that the project did contribute to an improved data mechanism as well as increased stakeholder engagement is a small testament to some forms of project sustainability. Ongoing processes include setting up the mechanism to

support the implementation of the recommendations of the manual within the existing reporting structure, but lack of financing continues to be the major challenge.

192.   In Palau, recent reorganisation of institutional frameworks (not as a result of the project *per se*) for reporting has led to strengthening of such frameworks and more effective stakeholder engagement. The recommendations from the manual have recently been used to guide the improvement of OERC's services; so in effect some of these have been implemented post project. However, as with the other countries, lack of funding continues to limit progress.

193.   Laying its foundation, the FNR_Rio had a **catalytic effect** through its outputs at national level and even at international level, with lessons learnt being integrated into new MEA synergy projects. As a pilot, the project did not have a clear pathway for "what-next" steps and this, despite some offshoots (like the MEA synergy projects, or some of the recommendations from the national manuals minimally implemented), there remains little to no replication or roll-out.

194.   Possibly its strongest catalytic effect was the establishment and/or strengthening of institutional arrangements and frameworks in Liberia, Mauritius and Lao PDR. A few respondents from these countries mentioned that before the project was implemented, institutions were working independently, but during project implementation they understood the importance of collaboration and integration. For instance, in Liberia a MEA division was set up in the EPA. In Mauritius, legal frameworks have included data collection as a strong mandate. On this note, and in all countries, it helped Focal Points realise the need and benefits of synergy and the project had a catalytic effect in this regard too (e.g. in Liberia for the SNC development all Focal Points were engaged in the process). Even in Eritrea and Afghanistan there were steps taken toward developing national legislation for data mechanisms. However, how far this came is questionable as no response from Eritrea meant that no follow up could be made on the progress there, and the respondent from Afghanistan mentioned that the project did not have an effect on strengthening the institutional arrangements in-country.

195.   Another catalytic effect the project had was on **stakeholder engagement**. The project implementation process at national level was very inclusive in all countries, and this was enhanced in the years following the project e.g. in Lao PDR and Mauritius. Some respondents (especially from Mauritius), however, did mention that while stakeholders were invited and the process was inclusive, some stakeholders did not always show interest in attending or directly engaging, and did not have a lasting effect on collaboration like in e.g. Afghanistan). One of the National Steering Committee members in Mauritius also noted that the NSCs were engaged in the beginning but not all were continuously engaged.

196.   In terms of **implementation arrangements**, virtually all respondents from all countries highlighted the effectiveness and appropriateness of UNEP-WCMC in coordinating this project, being a highly organised and relevant institution with regards MEA synergies. The Global Project Coordinator went out of his way to get countries on board, especially when initial challenges and difficulties were facing the project. The UNEP Task Manager had strong oversight and all key respondents were appreciative of the support and structure given by UNEP with regards implementation.

197.   Financial resources were very tight during the project, and it seems that countries went out of their way to compensate with in-kind contributions (especially work hours); despite this, the project achieved its outputs and more within the tight budget. This is testament as to what can be achieved with comparatively little money. In terms of catalysing funding through high level ownership (as outlined in the TOC), there was not enough that has been catalysed in this regard neither through national budgets (in any of the countries) nor through international support. A few respondents in

Mauritius and Liberia did mention the difficulty of getting dedicated budgets and the fact that the work is not sufficiently prioritised at higher level. It was clear that financial independence was not achieved through this project, nor was that the aim, but neither did enough financial resources open up, leaving a large dependence on external support. In addition, one of the respondents (from Liberia) mentioned that there was hope that based on the results of the pilot there would be more support for implementation of what was achieved.

198. With regards to **sustainability**, one of the components that should have come out stronger was communication and awareness, both within the countries as well as more globally, on the project results. Especially given the high level global interest from GEF, and the unique experience and lessons from the project, it is disappointing to see that not more has been taken up. At national level, there were some broader awareness activities (e.g. in Liberia with journalists), and generally there was good awareness created among stakeholders on synergies in Mauritius. However, most respondents (from Mauritius) said that duplication still occurs and just between ministries there is not enough communication on efforts and actions (this is a general problem that this project alone could not fix though). This was the case also for Lao PDR, Palau and Afghanistan (no response from Eritrea). While quite a number of international events were presented at, a few communication materials were put together, and all relevant lessons and stories can be found on the UNEP-WCMC website, there seems to still be a disconnect between having enough levels of awareness and action. A few respondents mentioned that they hoped that there would have been even more presence at side events of COPs so that more countries could buy into the idea and push for more support.

199. The data collection mechanism was an important part of the project that did not sustain as well as hoped in any of the countries, in terms of enhancing and strengthening data sharing and access through centralising. Several steps need to still be put in place, and even in countries where access is generally and comparatively good, like in Mauritius, there are still many challenges before a central access point can be established (like improving Muelex for instance). Most of these shortcomings in all the countries were attributed mostly to a lack of dedicated staff and financial resources.

200. The project was **efficient** in producing its outputs (including a large output added mid-way through the project) given the resources and time available.

201. Most respondents (sentiment shared by all countries) mentioned that more capacity building was needed, although the interventions more than met their targets. This is testament to the continued need to build capacity in the countries with regards synergies.

202. What has been noted is the lack of strong support and presence from some of the Rio Conventions Secretariats in the project implementation. The UNCCD was supportive and present at meetings, and the CBD showed some support although could not make most of the Project Steering Committee meetings (mostly due to conflicting schedules). Most of the side events occurred during the CBD related events. UNFCCC were not involved at all and were not at any of the PSC meetings. Their absence may be accounted to other priorities within the conventions. This reflected negatively on the country partners, most of whom mentioned that the Secretariats' involvement would have done a lot to the impact the project had on the national level. A few respondents mentioned that the most crucial thing is for the Secretariats to agree on a platform and improve their coordination amongst themselves to simplify reporting at national level. The UNCCD has continued to show strong support post project.

203. The overall rating for the FNR_Rio is **Satisfactory**. The ratings for the individual criteria are given in Table 8. Most of the administrative elements and achievement of outputs were very strong, despite low budgets and various challenges. The sustainability of the project could be much stronger

and there are certain steps that need to be taken that have not since project closure two years ago. There are certainly still many steps to take to have real impact.

Table 8 Summary assessment and ratings by evaluation criterion for the FNR_Rio project

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Rating
A. Strategic relevance	The project objective is consistent with global environmental needs. At national level the resource efficiency element had a strong prioritisation. The FNR_Rio was aligned to the GEF Focal Areas, the UNEP mandate, its MTS and relevant PoWs, as well as the Bali Strategic Plan. Its gender component could have been stronger, as well as the south-south cooperation element.	S
B. Achievement of outputs	Virtually all outputs were achieved with the exception of one small task, which was subsumed into the national manuals. An additional output was added on mid-way through the project at the request of the GEF-Sec which added considerable pressure to project implementation; despite this, the project managed to get everything done as planned, and more.	S
C. Effectiveness: Attainment of project objectives and results		S
1. Achievement of direct outcomes	Overall, the project outcomes were intended to catalyse change from a segregated approach to reporting to a harmonised, systems-thinking approach. While the outcomes were generally achieved from the project in terms of the TOC, some smaller components were a challenge. Overall, the FNR_Rio laid a strong foundation towards more integrative and collaborative reporting.	S
2. Likelihood of impact	The project's intended outcomes were delivered and had catalytic elements that would feed into Intermediate states. The project created an enabling environment towards national collaborative and integrative reporting, but there could have been more communication and awareness raising to create more champions. Generally there is some slow uptake of the processes from this pilot project.	Moderately Likely (BC)
3. Achievement of project goal and planned objectives	Given that this was a pilot, the project did achieve its project goal and planned objective.	S
D. Sustainability and replication		MS
1. Financial	It seems that the continuation of various outputs have not necessarily been sustained, mostly due to a lack of financial resources. At national level, some resources have been made available for implementation and integrative reporting. At the global level financial resources are certainly available to take next steps but don't appear to be prioritised.	ML
2. Socio-political	Given the countries involved and their volatile political and social situations, there are many factors that may influence project results. Despite this there are still varying levels of commitment to project results and their sustainability.	MU
3. Institutional framework	The FNR_Rio laid a strong foundation towards institutional strengthening and embedding of a more harmonised and collaborative approach to reporting.	MU
4. Environmental	Generally, there are no project outputs that would have a negative impact on the environment if sustained. Up-scaling of the project can only have long-term positive benefits on the environment, especially if awareness creation is an important element.	HL
5. Catalytic role and replication	The project had a number of strong catalytic elements. Given the strong foundations laid by the project, and the potential for replication, not enough was done on future planning on how and when to do such replication.	ML
E. Efficiency	The project was generally well-executed in the timeframe. Given the small budget, the project achievements were substantial. The project steps were well planned.	HS
F. Factors affecting project performance		
1. Preparation and readiness	The project was well designed with clear stakeholder consultations in the PPG phase, with capacities of partners outlined. Not enough risk analysis was done at design phase.	S
2. Project implementation and management	Implementation was executed according to plan. Project was highly adaptive. A couple constraints were country level implementation in some countries, and the absence of Rio Convention representatives at PSC meetings.	MS

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Rating
3. Stakeholders participation and public awareness	Project had a strong element of pre-planning *vis a vis* stakeholder engagement. Collaborations were effective. The results of the project clearly promoted participation of stakeholders.	S
4. Country ownership and driven-ness	Country ownership was very strong, mostly through the development of the national manuals, and the obvious benefits from the project.	MS
5. Financial planning and management	Financial reporting from WCMC was good, reporting from countries was often delayed. According to the reporting, co-financing did not materialize as planned. However, this may be due to underestimating the costs incurred by countries in terms of overheads and other in-kind. Some resources have been further leveraged, but there is still need for external support.	MS
6. UNEP supervision and backstopping	Respondents were very clear on the strong coordination and management by UNEP-WCMC. Supervision and technical backstopping was very strong in this project.	HS
7. Monitoring and evaluation		MS
a. M&E Design	Detailed costed M&E plan well laid out in Project Document. Lacked a strong risk analysis.	MS
b. Budgeting and funding for M&E activities	Clearly costed.	S
c. M&E Plan Implementation	No Mid Term Review as the project was on track. Some SMART indicators not measurable, but most were and well implemented. Yearly PIRs written, clear risk analysis and mitigation in these.	MS
Overall project rating		S

B. Lessons Learned

204. There were various lessons documented at project closure (in the Project Final Report) which are valid and aligned to this evaluation. These will not be repeated here. Instead these will be built on where the evaluator felt necessary. Especially the lesson on joint reporting outlined in the final report was clearly articulated and need not be repeated again here. It must be noted, both here, and with regards the recommendations, that the lessons and recommendations should be relevant also to harmonising reporting and implementation across the multiple biodiversity-related conventions, particularly in light of the importance put on integrating strategies and actions relating to other (than CBD) biodiversity-related conventions into the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans.

Lesson 1: Strong/good leadership is important for project sustainability

205. In most projects the notion that champions are needed to integrate and own the project's sustainability is an important one. It was noted by some respondents that even after the project there was a lack of real ownership at the higher level of this project. Many respondents highlighted that it's the people who make things work, not the institutions. More results were sustained in countries where there is strong leadership and ownership of the results of the project. More effort should be placed at design phase during stakeholder analysis to identify possible champions at the onset, especially when conducting a pilot. In addition, more horizontal and vertical (strategic) communication could have gone a long way to further integrate the notion of synergies, especially when it comes to the who and how of the next steps.

Lesson 2: Improving collaboration and coordination among Focal Points increases cost- and time-effective synergies

206. Improving coordination among the Focal Points, especially in countries where the Focal Points are housed in completely different institutions or even Ministries (e.g. Afghanistan) became a key area for recommendations in each country's manual and at the final PSC meeting. This project helped the Focal Points see the need and benefits of synergy and some countries have even used the collaborations for the reporting (e.g. Liberia and its SNC). For instance, the consultant responsible for

the SNC in Liberia made it a point to see all three Focal Points separately, and then together as a team. This in turn caused a team atmosphere to build between the Focal Points where synergies were easily seen. Because of this (and of course the MEA unit where they all now sit in the same office block) created a collaborative atmosphere. A meeting of MEA high level staff in Mauritius to discuss combined reporting and how it can be done is another step towards collaboration that has been effective (although in its initial stages). Regular meetings and intra and inter institutional communication also improves collaboration and decreases duplication of efforts (and causes a team spirit if work is shared and used by all).

Lesson 3: Providing strong platforms for effective stakeholder engagement forges sustainable relationships for collaboration...in some cases - what are these?

207.   Based on the country visits to Mauritius and Liberia, it was found that relationships forged during project implementation have stayed strong two years on, and this has increased synergies and collaboration. Stakeholders are required (e.g. NGOs, research bodies, community groups) for an effective implementation of the Rio (and other related) Conventions and therefore need to be involved for reporting processes. Through this project the countries started to forge strong relationships with stakeholders for processes of data and information collection and the analysis and writing of national reports. This was not the case in all countries so it begs the question - why was it so effective in some, and not in others? The reasons for this are alerted to in Lesson 2 above. In Mauritius, continued active engagement that is routinely managed and coordinated through the MESD makes a large impact on sustaining relationships (especially if the same people come to the meetings every time). If there is also less turn over in staff then there will also be more opportunity to meet the same figures responsible and thus forge stronger relationships.

Lesson 4: Building and maintaining an effective data collection and access mechanism continues to be vitally important in streamlining reporting

208.   Based on country visits two years on after project closure, it was noted that data mechanisms were not effectively built and sustained. There was a lot of mention especially of grey literature that has not been effectively collected. Access continues to be a problem. This needs to be a priority as this access is vital to effective reporting. The Final Project Report made it clear in one of its key lessons that facilitating access to global data sets may help address some issues and be a useful interim tool while country data is being organised (and even for data that is just not available in-country). Suggestions to reduce barriers to data access have been widely captured in international decision documents. In the long-term there needs to be the development and promulgation of a relatively simple set of guidelines on how countries can manage data and information to implement the MEAs in a more coherent manner.

Lesson 5: Capacity-building at national level continues to be very important

209.   It was noted strongly by many respondents that capacities still have gaps and there is a strong need for continued support in this arena. This was also particularly emphasised in the final PSC meeting. Countries like Lao PDR and Afghanistan were prioritising capacity building towards harmonisation in reporting. Capacity building continues to be an important component generally in convention implementation.

Lesson 6: Stronger support and guidance (and integration among conventions) provided by conventions would go a long way in improving country reporting

210.   A strong sentiment reflected from the evaluation was the need for more guidance and support from the Rio Convention Secretariats, including more synergies amongst the conventions

themselves in terms of reporting (e.g. reporting cycles, templates). Convention Secretariats could learn a lot from the FNR_Rio project. The project also developed recommendations for improved integration of the reporting processes between the conventions at the global level, which have elements of previously used tools such as UNCCD PRAIS, as well as other online reporting systems.

Lesson 7: Work on providing clearer guidance on how to assess and report co-financing for future projects

211.   As discussed in Section IV.F under financial planning and management, it is the Evaluator's opinion, based on interviews and reporting, that countries may have underestimated the amount of co-financing they contributed during the process of the project. This is not a situation that is necessarily unique to this project, but it bodes well to think about this for future projects and how countries (and project partners) can better assess and report their co-financing contributions.

Lesson 8: Conducting a Terminal Evaluation too long after a project has ended poses limitations on the quality of the evaluation

212.   This evaluation was conducted two years after the project ended. As a result, many of the project partners and implementers had moved on and were no longer contactable. This had limiting factors on the evaluation. On another note, it was helpful to look at the project sustainability two years on to see how many of the activities have actually 'stuck' in the long term. There should be some thought given to projects that have ended and how important it is to either assess project performance generally and have a direct link still to project partners, or assess the effectiveness and impact the project has had in the long term.

C.   Recommendations

213.   Based on the lessons learnt a few recommendations for improving the system of national reporting to conventions, as well as towards next steps that need to be taken, are given below. It must be noted that the Final Project Report, as well as a recent paper published by Fazel *et al.* (2015)[47] already gave some strong and productive recommendations, these were synthesised and built onto the evaluation recommendations below. Seeing as the project has closed more than 2 years ago, and there was no planned roll-out/follow-on project, the Evaluator makes recommendations to harness lessons learnt and to create momentum around the results of the project for possible revival of this project (and a resultant push by other countries) upwards to Convention Secretariat level. In addition, it is equally important to harness these recommendations across the biodiversity-related conventions too.[48]

(A) More communication and awareness of project results and lessons learned

214.   The experience of the pilot countries with this approach needs to be shared. It is clear from the few side event presentations that were given that there is country interest. Speaking to respondents from Liberia, it was clear that several other countries confronted them with interest on the project (e.g. Mali, Guinea, Senegal). There needs to be much more wide sharing of the experiences at COP-level events to gain interest from countries for them to push for more of this type of testing at national level. Discussion by convention bodies, including through the Joint Liaison Group of the Rio Conventions, will be useful as a means by which to make use of the results of the project. More dissemination needs to be made on various platforms to the conventions to utilise the

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[47] See footnote 5
[48] This sentiment was shared by the project countries (during interviews with project partners) as well as UNEP-WCMC

wealth of experience gained from the project. **Who?** Wider sharing of experiences needs to be done by countries (governments/reporting institutions) themselves as presentations or possible working sessions as a side event (with support by UNEP and UNEP-WCMC). **When?** At the upcoming Rio (and other) conferences in the coming three years.

(B) Continue engaging stakeholders and supporting enhanced inter-agency communication at national level

215. One of the very successful results of the project was the forging of relationships between Focal Points as well as stakeholders in reporting to conventions. Virtually all respondents gave positive feedback about the project having made impact on improved relationships. Through enhancing the communication channels between national Focal Points of different conventions, as well as important stakeholders such as research bodies and universities, greatly reduce the duplication of reporting. Engaging stakeholders also raises awareness of the ideas and logic behind each convention and creates a supportive atmosphere toward its implementation. There needs to be continued engagement (this can be done at low cost) by the countries who were involved to enhance the collaboration. **Who?** The reporting agencies / NFPs' institutions need to coordinate improved engagement and delegation of responsibilities. **When?** Continuous and long-term.

(C) Continue and/or strengthen capacity building interventions

216. Capacity continues to be a challenge for the countries when undertaking reporting, both in terms of human resources, skills and technical capacity of staff, as well as resources to monitor and report on the state of the environment. This was reflected by most respondents during the evaluation (especially e.g. Afghanistan, Liberia, Lao PDR). Building capacity should also improve wider implementation of the conventions, and reduce pressure on the current over-committed few. This recommendation needs to be tied in to recommendation (A) above in terms of gaining more momentum again in turn to increase targeted funding towards enhancing capacity. **Who?** Country governments with funding sourced through improved communication of results to international donors, as well as communication upwards to improve prioritisation of national budgeting towards capacity development. **When?** Within next three years.

(D) Improving data mechanisms at national level for collection and access

217. Respondents indicated that data mechanisms remained a huge gap in improving their reporting. This would be multifaceted and would require a step by step process. Step 1 would include providing interim solutions through providing parties access to global data sets (**Who?** Support from Convention Secretariats to allow countries to access global data sets. **When?** As soon as possible). In the long-term, there needs to be the development and promulgation of a relatively simple set of guidelines on how countries can manage data and information to implement the MEAs in a more coherent manner. Step 2 would be to develop guidelines for countries on how to manage data and information for MEA reporting (**Who?** UNEP to push for this process with the Rio Convention Secretariats with international donor funding (e.g. EU; Or as an output for next project design) **When?** In the design phase of similar project, depending when funding can be sourced as part of a larger project.) Step 3 would necessitate that conventions align and streamline data requests. (**Who?** Convention Secretariats come together **When?** As soon as Step 2 is completed). Step 4 would be to support improvements to national environmental systems (**Who?** Depends on which countries want to be involved - tied to Step 2 as a test. **When?** When Step 3 is completed).

(E) Promote a consistent approach from Rio Conventions (and MEAs generally) in their reporting process

218.   Building on the FNR_Rio, and the work of the Rio Conventions, GEF and UNEP, there needs to be more promotion of synergies among the conventions themselves. Throughout Section IV, it is discussed how countries maintain they would have appreciated more interest and support from Convention Secretariats themselves. This would reduce the dissimilarities in existing reporting templates. The project also developed recommendations for improved integration of the reporting processes between conventions at the global level, which have elements of previously used tools such as UNCCD PRAIS, as well as other online reporting systems. If Convention Secretariats could show more interest in the results of this project, and in turn uptake the lessons learnt and recommendations, there would be much higher level support. There should be some means of 'flagging' GEF projects of particular and direct need for Secretariat engagement and discussing, already at design phase, how that engagement can be secured. This would then filter down to the countries.[49] **Who?** The Rio Convention Secretariats (and biodiversity related MEAs, where relevant) **When?** As soon as possible.

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[49] See paragraph 154

Annexes

1. FNR_Rio Terminal Evaluation Terms of Reference (without annexes)
2. List of Documents Reviewed
3. List of respondents and in-country evaluation programme
4. Summary co-finance information and a statement of project expenditure by activity
5. FNR_Rio Terminal Evaluation Brief
6. Brief CV of the Consultant
7. Response to stakeholder comments received but not (fully) accepted by the evaluators

Annex 1. Evaluation TORs (without annexes)

Objective and Scope of the Evaluation

1.   In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy[50] and the UNEP Programme Manual[51], the Terminal Evaluation is undertaken at completion of the project to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability The evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP and the main project partners (i.e. GEF, UNEP-WCMC, relevant ministries, agencies and departments in the six pilot countries). Therefore, the evaluation will identify lessons of operational relevance for future project formulation and implementation of nationally-driven integrated processes and approaches to reporting to the three Rio Conventions.

2.   It will focus on the following sets of **key questions**, based on the project's intended outcomes, which may be expanded by the consultant as deemed appropriate:

   (a)   How successful was the project in providing guidance and support to parties for national reporting, including the development of an integrated approach to data collection, analysis, and information management between the six pilot countries?

   (b)   To what extent was the project successful in creating an enabling environment for preparation of national reports to the three Rio conventions (CBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC), in terms of: technical, systemic, institutional and individual capacity; data collection, analysis and monitoring procedures; knowledge management for environmental data base systems; best practices, communication and outreach?

   (c)   To what extent did the pilot projects contribute to: (i) improved overall planning and decision-making processes at the country level related to the implementation of these three conventions, and (ii) improved national mechanisms for collecting, managing and using data?

   (d)   How successful was the project in enhancing national ownership of the Rio conventions and were institutional frameworks for integrated reporting to Conventions established and/or strengthened as a result?

   (e)   To what extent did the project succeed in engaging stakeholders outside of the government system (i.e. NGOs, universities and research bodies, indigenous, business and local community groups) throughout the process of national reporting to the Rio conventions?

   (f)   To what extent was the project successful in supporting collaboration between the pilot countries, and in improving communication between national Focal Points of different conventions in order to reduce duplication and identify synergies?

Overall Approach and Methods

3.   The Terminal Evaluation of the Project will be conducted by an independent consultant under the overall responsibility and management of the UNEP Evaluation Office in consultation with the UNEP Task Manager and the Sub-programme Coordinators of the Resource Efficiency and Environmental Governance Sub-programmes].

4.   It will be an in-depth evaluation using a participatory approach whereby key stakeholders are kept informed and consulted throughout the evaluation process. Both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods will be used to determine project achievements against the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts. It is highly recommended that the consultant maintains close communication with the project team and promotes information exchange throughout the evaluation implementation phase in order to increase their (and other stakeholders') ownership of the evaluation findings.

5.   The findings of the evaluation will be based on the following:

   (g)   A **desk review** of:
   - Relevant background documentation, inter alia UNEP Medium-term Strategy (MTS) 2010-13 and relevant Programmes of Work (2010-11 and 2012-2013), relevant policies and legislation, including project background information available on publications and websites;
   - Project design documents; Annual Work Plans and Budgets or equivalent, revisions to the project (Project Document Supplements), the logical framework and the project budget;
   - Project reports such as six-monthly progress and financial reports, progress reports from collaborating partners, meeting minutes, relevant correspondence, etc.;
   - Project outputs: inventory reports, analysis reports, quality assessment reports, national manuals and reports, recommendations papers, and presentations.
   - Evaluations/reviews of similar projects

   (h)   **Interviews (individual or in group) with**:
   - UNEP Task Manager
   - Project management team
   - UNEP Fund Management Officer;

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[50] http://www.unep.org/eou/StandardsPolicyandPractices/UNEPEvaluationPolicy/tabid/3050/language/en-US/Default.aspx
[51] http://www.unep.org/QAS/Documents/UNEP_Programme_Manual_May_2013.pdf

- Project partners, including UNEP-WCMC and the relevant agencies in the six pilot countries (NEPA - Afghanistan, MLWE - Eritrea, WREA - Lao, EPA - Liberia, MENDU - Mauritius, OERC - Palau);
- Relevant resource persons;
(i) **Surveys**: the data collection may entail the use of questionnaires or online surveys.
(j) **Field visits:** depending on funds availability, the evaluation will entail missions to 2 or 3 pilot countries to consult with project partners and stakeholders.
(k) **Other data collection tools** as deemed appropriate.

Key Evaluation principles

6. Evaluation findings and judgements should be based on **sound evidence and analysis**, clearly documented in the evaluation report. Information will be triangulated (i.e. verified from different sources) to the extent possible, and when verification was not possible, the single source will be mentioned. Analysis leading to evaluative judgements should always be clearly spelled out.

7. The evaluation will assess the project with respect to **a minimum set of evaluation criteria** grouped in six categories: (1) Strategic Relevance; (2) Attainment of objectives and planned result, which comprises the assessment of outputs achieved, effectiveness and likelihood of impact; (3) Sustainability and replication; (4) Efficiency; (5) Factors and processes affecting project performance, including preparation and readiness, implementation and management, stakeholder participation and public awareness, country ownership and driven-ness, financial planning and management, UNEP supervision and backstopping, and project monitoring and evaluation; and (6) Complementarity with the UNEP strategies and programmes. The evaluation consultant can propose other evaluation criteria as deemed appropriate.

8. **Ratings.** All evaluation criteria will be rated on a six-point scale. Annex 3 provides guidance on how the different criteria should be rated and how ratings should be aggregated for the different evaluation criterion categories.

9. **Baselines and counterfactuals**. In attempting to attribute any outcomes and impacts to the project intervention, the evaluators should consider the difference between *what has happened with,* and *what would have happened without, the project*. This implies that there should be consideration of the baseline conditions, trends and counterfactuals in relation to the intended project outcomes and impacts. It also means that there should be plausible evidence to attribute such outcomes and impacts to the actions of the project. Sometimes, adequate information on baseline conditions, trends or counterfactuals is lacking. In such cases this should be clearly highlighted by the evaluators, along with any simplifying assumptions that were taken to enable the evaluator to make informed judgements about project performance.

10. **The "Why?" Question.** As this is a terminal evaluation and a follow-up project is likely [or similar interventions are envisaged for the future], particular attention should be given to learning from the experience. Therefore, the "*Why?*" question should be at the front of the consultant' minds all through the evaluation exercise. This means that the consultant need to go beyond the assessment of "*what*" the project performance was, and make a serious effort to provide a deeper understanding of "*why*" the performance was as it was, i.e. of processes affecting attainment of project results (criteria under category F – see below). This should provide the basis for the lessons that can be drawn from the project. In fact, the usefulness of the evaluation will be determined to a large extent by the capacity of the consultant to explain "*why things happened*" as they happened and are likely to evolve in this or that direction, which goes well beyond the mere review of "*where things stand*" at the time of evaluation.

11. A key aim of the evaluation is to encourage reflection and learning by UNEP staff and key project stakeholders. The consultant should consider how reflection and learning can be promoted, both through the evaluation process and in the communication of evaluation findings and key lessons.

12. **Communicating evaluation results.** Once the consultant has obtained evaluation findings, lessons and results, the Evaluation Office will share the findings and lessons with the key stakeholders. Evaluation results should be communicated to the key stakeholders in a brief and concise manner that encapsulates the evaluation exercise in its entirety. There may, however, be several intended audiences, each with different interests and preferences regarding the report. The Evaluation Manager will plan with the consultant which audiences to target and the easiest and clearest way to communicate the key evaluation findings and lessons to them. This may include some or all of the following: a webinar, conference calls with relevant stakeholders, the preparation of an evaluation brief, or an interactive presentation.

Evaluation criteria
Strategic relevance

13. The evaluation will assess, in retrospect, whether the project's objectives and implementation strategies were consistent with global, regional and national environmental issues and needs.

14. The evaluation will assess whether the project was in-line with the GEF biodiversity, climate change and land degradation focal areas, strategic priorities and operational programme(s).

15. The evaluation will also assess the project's relevance in relation to UNEP's mandate and its alignment with UNEP's policies and strategies at the time of project approval. UNEP's Medium Term Strategy (MTS) is a document that guides UNEP's programme planning over a four-year period. It identifies UNEP's thematic priorities, known as Sub-programmes (SP), and sets out the desired outcomes [known as Expected Accomplishments (EAs)] of the Sub-programmes. The evaluation will assess whether the project makes a tangible/plausible contribution to any of the EAs specified in the MTS 2010-13. The magnitude and extent of any contributions and the causal linkages should be fully described.

The evaluation should assess the project's alignment / compliance with UNEP's policies and strategies. The evaluation should provide a brief narrative of the following:

1. *Alignment with the Bali Strategic Plan (BSP)*[52]. The outcomes and achievements of the project should be briefly discussed in relation to the objectives of the UNEP BSP.
2. *Gender balance*. Ascertain to what extent project design, implementation and monitoring have taken into consideration: (i) possible gender inequalities in access to and the control over natural resources; (ii) specific vulnerabilities of women and children to environmental degradation or disasters; and (iii) the role of women in mitigating or adapting to environmental changes and engaging in environmental protection and rehabilitation. Assess whether the intervention is likely to have any lasting differential impacts on gender equality and the relationship between women and the environment. To what extent do unresolved gender inequalities affect sustainability of project benefits?
3. *Human rights based approach (HRBA) and inclusion of indigenous peoples issues, needs and concerns*. Ascertain to what extent the project has applied the UN Common Understanding on HRBA. Ascertain if the project is in line with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, and pursued the concept of free, prior and informed consent.
4. *South-South Cooperation.* This is regarded as the exchange of resources, technology, and knowledge between developing countries. Briefly describe any aspects of the project that could be considered as examples of South-South Cooperation.

16.   Based on an analysis of project stakeholders, the evaluation should assess the relevance of the project intervention to key stakeholder groups.

Achievement of Outputs

17.   The evaluation will assess, for each component, the project's success in producing the programmed outputs and milestones as presented in Table 2 above, both in quantity and quality, as well as their usefulness and timeliness.

18.   Briefly explain the reasons behind the success (or failure) of the project in producing its different outputs and meeting expected quality standards, cross-referencing as needed to more detailed explanations provided under Section F (which covers the processes affecting attainment of project results). Were key stakeholders appropriately involved in producing the programmed outputs?

Effectiveness: Attainment of Objectives and Planned Results

19.   The evaluation will assess the extent to which the project's objectives were effectively achieved or are expected to be achieved.

20.   The **Theory of Change** (ToC) of a project depicts the causal pathways from project outputs (goods and services delivered by the project) through outcomes (changes resulting from the use made by key stakeholders of project outputs) towards impact (long term changes in environmental benefits and living conditions). The ToC will also depict any intermediate changes required between project outcomes and impact, called 'intermediate states'. The ToC further defines the external factors that influence change along the major pathways; i.e. factors that affect whether one result can lead to the next. These external factors are either drivers (when the project has a certain level of control) or assumptions (when the project has no control). The ToC also clearly identifies the main stakeholders involved in the change processes.

21.   The evaluation will reconstruct the ToC of the project based on a review of project documentation and stakeholder interviews. The evaluator will be expected to discuss the reconstructed TOC with the stakeholders during evaluation missions and/or interviews in order to ascertain the causal pathways identified and the validity of impact drivers and assumptions described in the TOC. This exercise will also enable the consultant to address some of the key evaluation questions and make adjustments to the TOC as appropriate (the ToC of the intervention may have been modified / adapted from the original design during project implementation).

22.   The assessment of effectiveness will be structured in three sub-sections:

(l)   Evaluation of the **achievement of outcomes as defined in the reconstructed ToC**. These are the first-level outcomes expected to be achieved as an immediate result of project outputs. For this project, the main question will be to what extent the project has contributed to (i) improved cost-effectiveness for reporting to Rio Conventions; (ii) synergies for reporting to the Rio Conventions at national level; (iii) elimination of Duplication in reporting processes; (iv) enhanced country capacities for cost-effective MEA implementation; and (v) enhanced information sharing among national institutions involved in convention implementation.   Additional questions would be to what extent the project has developed integrated approaches to data collection/analysis and information management of relevance to the three Rio Conventions, and contributed to improved overall planning and decision-making processes at the country-level related to the implementation of these Conventions.

(m)   Assessment of the **likelihood of impact** using a Review of Outcomes to Impacts (ROtI) approach[53]. The evaluation will assess to what extent the project has to date contributed, and is likely in the future to further contribute, to [intermediate states], and the likelihood that those changes in turn to lead to positive changes in the natural resource base, benefits derived from the environment and human well-being.

(n)   Evaluation of the **achievement of the formal project overall objective, overall purpose, goals and component outcomes** using the project's own results statements as presented in the Project Document[54]. This sub-section will refer back where applicable to the preceding sub-sections (a) and (b) to avoid repetition in the report. To measure achievement, the evaluation will use as much as appropriate the indicators for achievement proposed in the Logical Framework (Logframe) of the project, adding other relevant indicators as appropriate. Briefly explain what factors affected the project's success in achieving its objectives, cross-referencing as needed to more detailed explanations provided under Section F. Most commonly, the overall objective is a

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[52] http://www.unep.org/GC/GC23/documents/GC23-6-add-1.pdf

[53]   Guidance material on Theory of Change and the ROtI approach is available from the Evaluation Office.

[54]   Or any subsequent **formally approved** revision of the project document or logical framework.

higher level result to which the project is intended to contribute. The section will describe the actual or likely **contribution** of the project to the objective.

(o) The evaluation should, where possible, disaggregate outcomes and impacts for the key project stakeholders.

Sustainability and replication

23.　Sustainability is understood as the probability of continued long-term project-derived results and impacts after the external project funding and assistance ends. The evaluation will identify and assess the key conditions or factors that are likely to undermine or contribute to the persistence of benefits. Some of these factors might be direct results of the project while others will include contextual circumstances or developments that are not under control of the project but that may condition the sustainability of benefits. The evaluation should ascertain to what extent follow-up work has been initiated and how project results will be sustained and enhanced over time. The reconstructed ToC will assist in the evaluation of sustainability, as the drivers and assumptions required to achieve higher-level results are often similar to the factors affecting sustainability of these changes.

24.　Four aspects of sustainability will be addressed:

(p) ***Socio-political sustainability.*** Are there any social or political factors that may influence positively or negatively the sustenance of project results and progress towards impacts? Is the level of ownership by the main stakeholders sufficient to allow for the project results to be sustained? Are there sufficient government and other key stakeholder awareness, interests, commitment and incentives to integrate integrated data collection/analysis and increase synergies in reporting processes?　Did the project conduct 'succession planning' and implement this during the life of the project?　Was capacity building conducted for key stakeholders?

(q) ***Financial resources.*** To what extent are the continuation of project results and the eventual impact of the project dependent on financial resources? What is the likelihood that adequate financial resources[55] will be or will become available to use capacities built by the project? Are there any financial risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project results and onward progress towards impact?

(r) ***Institutional framework.*** To what extent is the sustenance of the results and onward progress towards impact dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance? How robust are the institutional achievements such as governance structures and processes, policies, sub-regional agreements, legal and accountability frameworks etc. required to sustaining project results and to lead those to impact on human behaviour and environmental resources, goods or services?

(s) ***Environmental sustainability.*** Are there any environmental factors, positive or negative, that can influence the future flow of project benefits? Are there any project outputs or higher level results that are likely to affect the environment, which, in turn, might affect sustainability of project benefits? Are there any foreseeable negative environmental impacts that may occur as the project results are being up-scaled?

25.　**Catalytic role and replication**. The *catalytic role* of UNEP interventions is embodied in their approach of supporting the creation of an enabling environment and of investing in pilot activities which are innovative and showing how new approaches can work. UNEP also aims to support activities that upscale new approaches to a national, regional or global level, with a view to achieve sustainable global environmental benefits. The evaluation will assess the catalytic role played by this project, namely to what extent the project has:

(t) *catalyzed behavioural changes* in terms of use and application, by the relevant stakeholders, of capacities developed;

(u) provided *incentives* (social, economic, market based, competencies etc.) to contribute to catalyzing changes in stakeholder behaviour;

(v) contributed to *institutional changes*, for instance institutional uptake of project-demonstrated technologies, practices or management approaches;

(w) contributed to *policy changes* (on paper and in implementation of policy);

(x) contributed to sustained follow-on financing (*catalytic financing*) from Governments, private sector, donors etc.;

(y) created opportunities for particular individuals or institutions ("*champions*") to catalyze change (without which the project would not have achieved all of its results).

26.　***Replication*** is defined as lessons and experiences coming out of the project that are replicated (experiences are repeated and lessons applied in different geographic areas) or scaled up (experiences are repeated and lessons applied in the same geographic area but on a much larger scale and funded by other sources). The evaluation will assess the approach adopted by the project to promote replication effects and determine to what extent actual replication has already occurred, or is likely to occur in the near future. What are the factors that may influence replication and scaling up of project experiences and lessons?

Efficiency

27.　The evaluation will assess the cost-effectiveness and timeliness of project execution. It will describe any cost- or time-saving measures put in place in attempting to bring the project as far as possible in achieving its results within its (severely constrained) secured budget and (extended) time. It will also analyse how delays, if any, have affected project execution, costs and effectiveness. Wherever possible, costs and time over results ratios of the project will be compared with that of other similar interventions.

28.　The evaluation will give special attention to efforts by the project teams to make use of/build upon pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. to increase project efficiency. For instance, was there sufficient information about the assessment capacity of

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[55]　Those resources can be from multiple sources, such as the national budget, public and private sectors, development assistance etc.

collaborating institutions and experts, to limit and target training and technical support to what was really needed, avoiding duplication? Did the project avoid duplication of activities at the national level, through participation of relevant stakeholders? Did it increase cost-effectiveness at the national level, by pooling resources that are currently spread between agencies, processes, and Focal Points in charge of the Rio Conventions and achieve a streamlined approach to national reporting to these Conventions?

Factors and processes affecting project performance

29.   **Preparation and readiness**. This criterion focusses on the quality of project design and preparation. Were project stakeholders[56] adequately identified and were they sufficiently involved in project development and ground truthing e.g. of proposed timeframe and budget? Were the project's objectives and components clear, practicable and feasible within its timeframe? Were the capacities of executing agencies properly considered when the project was designed? Was the project document clear and realistic to enable effective and efficient implementation? Were the partnership arrangements properly identified and the roles and responsibilities negotiated prior to project implementation? Were counterpart resources (funding, staff, and facilities) and enabling legislation assured? Were adequate project management arrangements in place? Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated in the project design? What factors influenced the quality-at-entry of the project design, choice of partners, allocation of financial resources etc.? Were any design weaknesses mentioned in the Project Review Committee minutes at the time of project approval adequately addressed?

30.   **Project implementation and management**. This includes an analysis of implementation approaches used by the project, its management framework, the project's adaptation to changing conditions, the performance of the implementation arrangements and partnerships, relevance of changes in project design, and overall performance of project management. The evaluation will:

(z)   Ascertain to what extent the project implementation mechanisms outlined in the project document have been followed and were effective in delivering project milestones, outputs and outcomes. Were pertinent adaptations made to the approaches originally proposed?

(aa)   Evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of project management and how well the management was able to adapt to changes during the life of the project.

(bb)   Assess the role and performance of the teams and working groups established and the project execution arrangements at all levels.

(cc)   Assess the extent to which project management responded to direction and guidance provided by the UNEP Task Manager and project steering bodies including the Project Steering Committee (composed of participating countries, UNEP DGEF, UNEP-WCMC and Rio Convention Secretariats) and the National Steering Committees (maintained in each country to provide guidance to the project).

(dd)   Identify operational and political / institutional problems and constraints that influenced the effective implementation of the project, and how the project tried to overcome these problems.

31.   **Stakeholder participation, cooperation and partnerships.** The Evaluation will assess the effectiveness of mechanisms for information sharing and cooperation with other UNEP projects and programmes, external stakeholders and partners. The term stakeholder should be considered in the broadest sense, encompassing both project partners and target users (e.g. Parties to the Rio conventions) of project products. The TOC and stakeholder analysis should assist the evaluators in identifying the key stakeholders and their respective roles, capabilities and motivations in each step of the causal pathways from activities to achievement of outputs, outcomes and intermediate states towards impact. The assessment will look at three related and often overlapping processes: (1) information dissemination to and between stakeholders, (2) consultation with and between stakeholders, and (3) active engagement of stakeholders in project decision making and activities. The evaluation will specifically assess:

(ee)   the approach(es) and mechanisms used to identify and engage stakeholders (within and outside UNEP) in project design and at critical stages of project implementation. What were the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches with respect to the project's objectives and the stakeholders' motivations and capacities?

(ff)   How was the overall collaboration between different functional units of UNEP involved in the project? What coordination mechanisms were in place? Were the incentives for internal collaboration in UNEP adequate?

(gg)   Was the level of involvement of the Regional, Liaison and Out-posted Offices in project design, planning, decision-making and implementation of activities appropriate?

(hh)   Has the project made full use of opportunities for collaboration with other projects and programmes including opportunities not mentioned in the Project Document[57]? Have complementarities been sought, synergies been optimized and duplications avoided?

(ii)   What was the achieved degree and effectiveness of collaboration and interactions between the various project partners and stakeholders during design and implementation of the project? This should be disaggregated for the main stakeholder groups identified in the inception report.

(jj)   To what extent has the project been able to take up opportunities for joint activities, pooling of resources and mutual learning with other organizations and networks? In particular, how useful are partnership mechanisms and initiatives, such as Integrated Reporting Processes, to build stronger coherence and collaboration between the participating countries?

(kk)   How did the relationship between the project and the collaborating partners (institutions and individual experts) develop? Which benefits stemmed from their involvement for project performance, for UNEP and for the stakeholders and partners themselves? Do the results of the project (strategic programmes and plans, monitoring and management systems, sub-regional agreements etc.) promote participation of stakeholders, including users, in decision making?

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[56] Stakeholders are the individuals, groups, institutions, or other bodies that have an interest or 'stake' in the outcome of the project. The term also applies to those potentially adversely affected by the project.

[57] [If the ProDoc mentions any opportunities for collaboration with other projects and programmes, present these here in the footnote]

32.   **Communication and public awareness**. The evaluation will assess the effectiveness of any public awareness activities that were undertaken during the course of implementation of the project to communicate the project's objective, progress, outcomes and lessons. This should be disaggregated for the main stakeholder groups identified in the inception report. Did the project identify and make us of existing communication channels and networks used by key stakeholders? Did the project provide feedback channels?

33.   **Country ownership and driven-ness.** The evaluation will assess the degree and effectiveness of involvement of government / public sector agencies in the project, in particular those involved in project execution and those participating in the Project Steering Committee, National Steering Committees, National Executing Agencies, and other partnership agreements.

(ll)   To what extent have Governments assumed responsibility for the project and provided adequate support to project execution, including the degree of cooperation received from the various public institutions involved in the project?

(mm)   How and how well did the project stimulate country ownership of project outputs and outcomes?

(nn)   Did the project adhere to national policy priorities and plans that underpin government programmes, in order to mitigate the risk of a reduction in priority for environment conservation?

34.   **Financial planning and management**. Evaluation of financial planning requires assessment of the quality and effectiveness of financial planning and control of financial resources throughout the project's lifetime. The assessment will look at actual project costs by activities compared to budget (variances), financial management (including disbursement issues), and co-financing. The evaluation will:

(oo)   Verify the application of proper standards (clarity, transparency, audit etc.) and timeliness of financial planning, management and reporting to ensure that sufficient and timely financial resources were available to the project and its partners;

(pp)   Assess other administrative processes such as recruitment of staff, procurement of goods and services (including consultant), preparation and negotiation of cooperation agreements etc. to the extent that these might have influenced project performance;

(qq)   Present the extent to which co-financing has materialized as expected at project approval (see Table 1). Report country co-financing to the project overall, and to support project activities at the national level in particular. The evaluation will provide a breakdown of final actual costs and co-financing for the different project components (see tables in Annex 4).

(rr)   Describe the resources the project has leveraged since inception and indicate how these resources are contributing to the project's ultimate objective. Leveraged resources are additional resources—beyond those committed to the project itself at the time of approval—that are mobilized later as a direct result of the project. Leveraged resources can be financial or in-kind and they may be from other donors, NGO's, foundations, governments, communities or the private sector.

35.   Analyse the effects on project performance of any irregularities in procurement, use of financial resources and human resource management, and the measures taken UNEP to prevent such irregularities in the future. Determine whether the measures taken were adequate.

36.   **Supervision, guidance and technical backstopping.** The purpose of supervision is to verify the quality and timeliness of project execution in terms of finances, administration and achievement of outputs and outcomes, in order to identify and recommend ways to deal with problems which arise during project execution. Such problems may be related to project management but may also involve technical/institutional substantive issues in which UNEP has a major contribution to make.

37.   The evaluators should assess the effectiveness of supervision, guidance and technical support provided by the different supervising/supporting bodies including:

(ss)   The adequacy of project supervision plans, inputs and processes;

(tt)   The realism and candour of project reporting and the emphasis given to outcome monitoring (results-based project management);

(uu)   How well did the different guidance and backstopping bodies play their role and how well did the guidance and backstopping mechanisms work? What were the strengths in guidance and backstopping and what were the limiting factors?

38.   **Monitoring and evaluation**. The evaluation will include an assessment of the quality, application and effectiveness of project monitoring and evaluation plans and tools, including an assessment of risk management based on the assumptions and risks identified in the project document. The evaluation will assess how information generated by the M&E system during project implementation was used to adapt and improve project execution, achievement of outcomes and ensuring sustainability. M&E is assessed on three levels:

(vv)   *M&E Design.* The evaluators should use the following questions to help assess the M&E design aspects:
   • Arrangements for monitoring: Did the project have a sound M&E plan to monitor results and track progress towards achieving project objectives? Have the responsibilities for M&E activities been clearly defined? Were the data sources and data collection instruments appropriate? Was the time frame for various M&E activities specified? Was the frequency of various monitoring activities specified and adequate?
   • How well was the project logical framework (original and possible updates) designed as a planning and monitoring instrument?
   • SMART-ness of indicators: Are there specific indicators in the logframe for each of the project objectives? Are the indicators measurable, attainable (realistic) and relevant to the objectives? Are the indicators time-bound?
   • Adequacy of baseline information: To what extent has baseline information on performance indicators been collected and presented in a clear manner? Was the methodology for the baseline data collection explicit and reliable? For instance, was there adequate baseline information on pre-existing accessible information

on global and regional environmental status and trends, and on the costs and benefits of different policy options for the different target audiences? Was there sufficient information about the assessment capacity of collaborating institutions and experts etc. to determine their training and technical support needs?

- To what extent did the project engage key stakeholders in the design and implementation of monitoring? Which stakeholders (from groups identified in the inception report) were involved? If any stakeholders were excluded, what was the reason for this?
- Arrangements for evaluation: Have specific targets been specified for project outputs? Has the desired level of achievement been specified for all indicators of objectives and outcomes? Were there adequate provisions in the legal instruments binding project partners to fully collaborate in evaluations?
- Budgeting and funding for M&E activities: Determine whether support for M&E was budgeted adequately and was funded in a timely fashion during implementation.

(ww) *M&E Plan Implementation*. The evaluation will verify that:
- the M&E system was operational and facilitated timely tracking of results and progress towards projects objectives throughout the project implementation period;
- PIR reports were prepared (the realism of the Task Manager's assessments will be reviewed)
- Half-yearly Progress & Financial Reports were complete and accurate;
- the information provided by the M&E system was used during the project to improve project performance and to adapt to changing needs.

The Consultant

39.   For this evaluation, the evaluation team will consist of one independent Consultant. Details about the specific roles and responsibilities of the consultant are presented in Annex 1 of these TORs. The following expertise and experience is required:

- Postgraduate qualification in environmental sciences, environmental conservation, environmental governance, climate change, or related field.
- Extensive evaluation experience, including of large, regional or global programmes and using a Theory of Change approach;
- Broad understanding of Multilateral Environmental Agreements; experience with projects in the context of the three Rio conventions - CBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC is desirable;
- Knowledge of the UN system (previous consultancy work with UNEP is desirable);
- Minimum 10 years of professional experience.
- Fluency in both written and oral English[58], and the relevant language(s) of the countries in the cluster selected.[59]

40.   The Consultant will coordinate data collection and analysis, and the preparation of the main report for the evaluation. S/He will ensure that all evaluation criteria and questions are adequately covered.

41.   By undersigning the service contract with UNEP/UNON, the consultant certifies that s/he has not been associated with the design and implementation of the project in any way which may jeopardize their independence and impartiality towards project achievements and project partner performance. In addition, s/he will not have any future interests (within six months after completion of the contract) with the project's executing or implementing units.

Evaluation Deliverables and Review Procedures
Inception Report

42.   The evaluation consultant will prepare an **inception report** (see Annex 2(a) of TORs for guidelines on the Inception Report outline) containing: a thorough review of the project context and project design quality, a draft reconstructed Theory of Change of the project, the evaluation framework, and a tentative evaluation schedule.

43.   It is expected that a large portion of the desk review will be conducted during the inception phase. It will be important to acquire a good understanding of the project context, design and process at this stage. The review of design quality will cover the following aspects (see Annex 7 for the detailed project design assessment matrix):

- Strategic relevance of the project
- Preparation and readiness;
- Financial planning;
- M&E design;
- Complementarity with UNEP strategies and programmes;
- Sustainability considerations and measures planned to promote replication and up-scaling.

44.   The inception report will present a draft, desk-based **reconstructed Theory of Change** of the project. It is vital to reconstruct the ToC *before* most of the data collection (review of progress reports, in-depth interviews, surveys etc.) is done, because the ToC will define which direct outcomes, drivers and assumptions of the project need to be assessed and measured – based on which indicators – to allow adequate data collection for the evaluation of project effectiveness, likelihood of impact and sustainability.

45.   The inception report will also include a **stakeholder analysis** identifying key stakeholders, networks and channels of communication. This information should be gathered from the Project document and discussion with the project team. (see Annex 9)

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[58] Evaluation reports will be submitted in English
[59] The evaluation reports shall be presented in English however the national language of the country being evaluated may be used for stakeholder consultations and surveys as necessary.

46. The **evaluation framework** will present in further detail the overall evaluation approach. It will specify for each evaluation question under the various criteria what the respective indicators and data sources will be. The evaluation framework should summarize the information available from project documentation against each of the main evaluation parameters. Any gaps in information should be identified and methods for additional data collection, verification and analysis should be specified. Evaluations/reviews of other large assessments can provide ideas about the most appropriate evaluation methods to be used.

47. Effective **communication strategies** help stakeholders understand the results and use the information for organisational learning and improvement. While the evaluation is expected to result in a comprehensive document, content is not always best shared in a long and detailed report; this is best presented in a synthesised form using any of a variety of creative and innovative methods. The evaluator is encouraged to make use of multimedia formats in the gathering of information e.g. video, photos, sound recordings. Together with the full report, the evaluator will be expected to produce a **2-page summary of key findings and lessons**.

48. The inception report will also present a **tentative schedule** for the overall evaluation process, including a draft programme for the country visit and tentative list of people/institutions to be interviewed.

49. The inception report will be submitted for review and approval by the Evaluation Office before the any further data collection and analysis is undertaken.

50. **[Optional]** When data collection and analysis has almost been completed, the evaluation team will prepare a short note on preliminary findings and recommendations for discussion with the project team and the Evaluation Reference Group. The purpose of the note is to allow the evaluation team to receive guidance on the relevance and validity of the main findings emerging from the evaluation.

Preparation of the main report

51. The main evaluation report should be brief (around 50 pages – excluding the executive summary and annexes), to the point and written in plain English. The report will follow the annotated Table of Contents outlined in Annex 2. It must explain the purpose of the evaluation, exactly what was evaluated and the methods used (with their limitations). The report will present evidence-based and balanced findings, consequent conclusions, lessons and recommendations, which will be cross-referenced to each other. The report should be presented in a way that makes the information accessible and comprehensible. Any dissident views in response to evaluation findings will be appended in footnote or annex as appropriate. To avoid repetitions in the report, the authors will use numbered paragraphs and make cross-references where possible.

Review of the draft evaluation report

52. The evaluation consultant will submit a **"zero draft"**[60] to the UNEP EO and revise the draft following the comments and suggestions made by the EO. Once a draft of adequate quality has been accepted, the EO will share it with the Task Manager as a "**first draft**" report, who will alert the EO in case the report would contain any blatant factual errors. The Evaluation Office will then forward the first draft report to the executing agencies, project stakeholders and project partners in the six pilot countries, for their review and comments. Stakeholders may provide feedback on any errors of fact and may highlight the significance of such errors in any conclusions. It is also very important that stakeholders provide feedback on the proposed recommendations and lessons. Comments would be expected within two weeks after the draft report has been shared. Any comments or responses to the draft report will be sent to the UNEP EO for collation. The EO will provide the comments to the evaluation consultant for consideration in preparing the final draft report, along with its own views.

53. The evaluation consultant will submit the "**final draft**" report no later than 2 weeks after reception of stakeholder comments. The consultant will prepare a **response to comments**, listing those comments not or only partially accepted by them that could therefore not or only partially be accommodated in the final report. They will explain why those comments have not or only partially been accepted, providing evidence as required. This response to comments will be shared by the EO with the interested stakeholders to ensure full transparency.

54. **Submission of the final evaluation report.** The **final report** shall be submitted by Email to the Head of the Evaluation Office. The Evaluation Office will finalize the report and share it with the interested Divisions and Sub-programme Coordinators in UNEP. The final evaluation report will be published on the UNEP Evaluation Office web-site www.unep.org/eou.

55. As per usual practice, the UNEP EO will prepare a **quality assessment** of the zero draft and final draft report, which is a tool for providing structured feedback to the evaluation consultant. The quality of the report will be assessed and rated against the criteria specified in Annex 3.

56. The UNEP Evaluation Office will assess the ratings in the final evaluation report based on a careful review of the evidence collated by the evaluation consultant and the internal consistency of the report. Where there are differences of opinion between the evaluator and UNEP Evaluation Office on project ratings, both viewpoints will be clearly presented in the final report. The UNEP Evaluation Office ratings will be considered the final ratings for the project.

57. At the end of the evaluation process, the Evaluation Office will prepare a Recommendations Implementation Plan in the format of a table to be completed and updated at regular intervals by the Task Manager. After reception of the Recommendations Implementation Plan, the Task Manager is expected to complete it and return it to the EO within one month. (S)he is expected to update the plan every six month until the end of the tracking period. As this is a Terminal Evaluation, the tracking period for implementation of recommendations will be 18 months, unless it is agreed to make this period shorter or longer as required for realistic implementation of all evaluation recommendations. Tracking points will be every six months after completion of the implementation plan.

Logistical arrangements

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[60] This refers to the earliest, completed main report that will be submitted by the consultant(s) for review by the EO before transitioning to a 'first draft' that meets an acceptable standard and that can be circulated for external review.

58.   This Terminal Evaluation will be undertaken by one independent evaluation consultant contracted by the UNEP Evaluation Office. The consultant will work under the overall responsibility of the UNEP Evaluation Office and will consult with the EO on any procedural and methodological matters related to the evaluation. It is, however, the consultant's individual responsibility to arrange for his/her travel, visa, obtain documentary evidence, plan meetings with stakeholders, organize online surveys, and any other logistical matters related to the assignment. The UNEP Task Manager and project team will, where possible, provide logistical support (introductions, meetings, etc.) allowing the consultant to conduct the evaluation as efficiently and independently as possible.

Schedule of the evaluation

59.   Table 7 below presents the tentative schedule for the evaluation.

Table 7. Tentative schedule for the evaluation

Milestone	Tentative timelines
Consultant recruitment and contracting process	July 2015
Inception and Kick off meetings	September 2015
Final Inception Report	September 2015
Evaluation Missions	October 2015
Telephone interviews, surveys etc.	October 2015
'Zero' draft report	November 2015
First Draft Report shared with UNEP Project Manager	November 2015
[Revised] First Draft Report shared with project team	December 2015
Draft Report shared with external stakeholders	December 2015
Final Report and 2-page summary of key findings and lessons	December 2015 – January 2016

Annex 2. List of respondents and in-country evaluation programmes

Table 1 List of all respondents interviewed or attempted to contact with no response

Name	Role in Project and Affiliation	Email address	Method used
Afghanistan			
Mr Ghulam Mohd Malikyar	NPC, Deputy DG, NEPA	malikyar@gmail.com	Emailed questionnaire 15 November, and 30 November 2015, UNEP Evaluation office emailed again 10 Dec, no response
Prof Nakshband Nasere	NC, Professor at Kabul University	gn_nasere@yahoo.com	Answered questionnaire, gave additional responses
Eritrea			
Mr Mogos Woldey-Yohannes Bairu	GEF, CBD, UNFCCC FP, acting NPC, DG, Department of Environment, Min of Land, Water and Env	mbairu50@gmail.com	Sent questionnaire 15 Nov, 30 Nov and again individually end 30 Nov, UNEP Evaluation office emailed again 10 Dec, no response
Mr Thomas Kitle	NPA, Departm of E, MLWE	envi2009@gmail.com	Sent questionnaire 15 Nov, 30 Nov and again individually end 30 Nov, UNEP Evaluation office emailed again 10 Dec, no response
Lao PDR			
Mr Khampadith Khammounheuang	GEF Operational NFP, Project Manager, Dep fo Env Quality Promotion	khampadith@gmail.com	Emailed questionnaire 15 November, and 30 November 2015, UNEP Evaluation office emailed again 10 Dec, no response
Mr Lankham Atsanavong	NPC, Project Manager, Director of Planning, Dep of Env	lonkhama@yahoo.com	Emailed questionnaire 15 November, and 30 November 2015, UNEP Evaluation office emailed again 10 Dec, no response
Mr Vonephasao Oraseng	NPA, Dep of Env Quality Promotion	vonephasao@gmail.com	Questionnare answered (with team)
Mr Mone Nouansyvong	NC	monenouan@gmail.com	Emailed questionnaire 7 Dec 2015
Liberia			
Mr Benjamin Karmoth	UNFCCC NFP, EPA	benkarmorh@yahoo.com	Questionnaire sent 7 Dec 2015 (he was at COP during my country visit)
Mr Levi Piah	EPA, Executive Director, EPA		Face to face courtesy visit, 27 Nov 2015
Mr Jonathan Davies	NPC, CBD FP	jwdavies.epalib@yahoo.com	Face to Face meeting, 27 Nov 2015

Name	Role in Project and Affiliation	Email address	Method used
Ms Ellen Miller	NPA, EPA	ellen2320092010@hotmail.com	Face to Face meeting, 27 Nov 2015
Mr Varney Conneh	UNCCD FP	varney68@yahoo.com	Questionnaire sent 7 Dec 2015 (he was at COP during my country visit)
Ms Weade Kobbah-Wureh	NC, University of Liberia	wkobbah@yahoo.com	Face to Face meeting, 1 Dec 2015
Mr James Aquoi	Funds Manager, EPA	james.aquoi@yahoo.com	Face to Face meeting, 1 Dec 2015
Mauritius			
Mr Phosun Kallee	NPC	rkkallee@mail.gov.mu	Face to Face Meeting, 9 Nov 2015
Ms Annouchka Ramcharrum	NPA	aramcharrun@mail.gov.mu	Face to Face Meeting, 9 Nov 2015
Mr Jadoo	Permanent Secretary, MESD		Face to Face Meeting, 9 Nov 2015
Mr Jayeshwur Raj Dayal	Minister, MESD	jdayal@gov.mu.org	Face to Face Meeting, 9 Nov 2015
Dr Lalljee Bhanooduth	National Consultant	vinodl@uom.ac.mu	Emailed questionnaire 15 November, and 30 November 2015, UNEP Evaluation office emailed again 10 Dec, no response
Ms Sin Lan NG Yun Wing	Director of Environment, MESD	dirdoe@mail.gov.mu	Face to Face Meeting, 9 Nov 2015
Mr P. Khurun	National Steering Commitee Member, Deputy Conservator of Forest, Ministry of Agro-Industry & Food Security (Forestry Services)	pkhurun@govmu.org	Face to Face Meeting, 10 Nov 2015 (group interview)
Mr D. Prithipaul	Stakeholder, Divisional Environment Officer, Coordination and Project Implementation Division, MESD	dprithipaul@govmu.org	Face to Face Meeting, 10 Nov 2015 (group interview)
Mrs A. Ramcharrun	Stakeholder, Environment Officer, EIA/PER Monitoring Division, MESD	aramcharrun@govmu.org	Face to Face Meeting, 10 Nov 2015 (group interview)
Mr B.M Heetun	Stakeholder, Meteorologist, Meteorological Services	mheetun@govmu.org	Emailed questionnaire 15 November, and 30 November 2015, UNEP Evaluation office emailed again 10 Dec, no response
Mr K. Heeramun	Stakeholder, Divisional Environment Officer, MESD	kheeramun@govmu.org	Face to Face Meeting, 10 Nov 2015 (group interview)
Mr S. Seeruttun	National Steering Committee Member, Ag. PAO, Min of Agro-Industry & Food Security (Agricultural Services)	sseeruttun@govmu.org	Face to Face Meeting, 10 Nov 2015 (group interview), also answered questionnaire

Name	Role in Project and Affiliation	Email address	Method used
Mr J. Seewoobaduth	National Steering Committee Member, Divisional Environment Officer, Climate Change Division, MESD	jseewoobaduth@govmu.org	Emailed questionnaire 15 November, and 30 November 2015, UNEP Evaluation office emailed again 10 Dec, no response
Mr V. Bachraz	NFP for CBD, Deputy Director, National Parcks Concervators Services	vbachraz@govmu.org	Emailed questionnaire 15 November, and 30 November 2015, UNEP Evaluation office emailed again 10 Dec, no response
Mr V. Munbodhe	Stakeholder, Scientific Officer, Ministry of Fisheries (AFRC)	vmunbodhe@gmail.com	Face to Face Meeting, 10 Nov 2015 (group interview)
Mrs I. Ramma	Stakeholder, Principal Research Scientist, FAREI	rmd@farei.mu	Face to Face Meeting, 10 Nov 2015 (group interview)
Mr F Appavou	Stakeholder, Analyst, M/Finance & ED	fappavou@govmu.org	Face to Face Meeting, 10 Nov 2015 (group interview)
Mr R. Ramdhan	Stakeholder, Chief Engineer, Ministry of Public Infrastructure	rramdhan@govmu.org	Face to Face Meeting, 10 Nov 2015 (group interview)
Mr Vikash Tatayah	National Steering Committee Member, Mauritian Wildlife Foundation	vtatayah@mauritian-wildlife.org	Questionnaire answered
Palau			
Mr King Sam	NPC, Special Assistant to the Minister/Program Manager, PA Network, Min NR, E and T	esuroi1@gmail.com	Emailed questionnaire 15 Nov, and 30 Nov, and individually again end 30 Nov 15
Mrs Charlene Mersai	Min NR, E and T	charmersai@gmail.com	Correspondence between 7 January and 13 January, after a few reminders questionnaire responded to
Rio Conventions			
Mr Lijie Cai	CBD	lijie.cai@cbd.int	Emailed 30 Nov 2014 for Skype interview, UNEP Evaluation office emailed again 10 Dec, no response
Mr Massimo Candelori	UNCCD	mcandelori@unccd.int	Emailed 30 Nov 2014 for Skype interview, UNEP Evaluation office emailed again 10 Dec, no response
Mr William Kojo Agyemang-Bonsu	UNFCCC	wagyemang-bonsu@unfccc.int	Jerry Harrison and Asghar Fazel mentioned too much turn over here, no Skype
Global Project Team			
Mr Adamou Bouhari	UNEP Task Manager	adamou.bouhari@unep.org	Brief Skype initial, waiting on Skype meeting FNR Rio
Mr Asghar Fazel	Global Project Coordinator (UNEP-WCMC)	amfazel@gmail.com	Skype, 5 Dec 2015

Name	Role in Project and Affiliation	Email address	Method used
Mr Peter Herkenrath	International Consultant - Rio Reporting	peterherkenrath@yahoo.co.uk	Phone Call, 9 Dec 2015
Mr Jerry Harrison	Project Oversight (UNEP-WCMC)	jerry.harrison@unep-wcmc.org	Two Skype Sessions, 13 Oct 2015 and 8 Dec 2015
Mrs Jessica Jones	Attended Inception Meeting, minor involvement in project (UNEP-WCMC)	Jessica.jones@unep-wcmc.org	Brief Skype 13 Oct 2015
Mr Martin Okun	UNEP Funds Manager	martin.okun@unep.org	Skype 17 December 2015

Table 2 FNR_Rio Scheduled itinerary Mauritius 6 Nov - 11 Nov 2015

Date	Time	Detail	Remarks
Friday, 6 Nov 2015	18:10	Pick up at airport by Mr Kallee	Transport provided
Saturday, 7 Nov 15	13:00-19:00	Site visit - Black River National Park, Sir Seewoosagur Botanical Garden, Roche Noire Cave Trail	Mr Kallee
Sunday, 8 Nov 15	-	Visit the Government Fair	Mr Kallee
Monday, 9 Nov 15	14:00 - 19:00	Working session with Mr Kallee Meeting with Permanent Secretary and Director of MESD Meeting with Hon Minister of ESD Meeting with Annouschka	
Tuesday, 10 Nov 15	10:00-19:00	Workshop with Stakeholders and NSC, debriefing session	Small working groups and interviews in pairs, work through Theory of Change
Wednesday, 11 Nov 15	19:00	Prepare for departure	Public Holiday

Table 3 FNR_Rio Scheduled itinerary Liberia 26 Nov - 1 Dec 2015

Date	Time	Detail	Remarks
Thursday, 26 Nov 2015	17:15	Arrival in Monrovia, Justine taxi to hotel	
Friday, 27 Nov 2015	09:30-16:00	Courtesy visit to Director of EPA Interview with Ellen Miller (NPA) Interview with Jonathan Davies (NPC)	
Weekend, 28-29 Nov 15	-	-	-
Monday, 31 Nov 15		Write up - Public Holiday	
Tuesday, 1 Dec 15	11:00-14:00	Interview with National Consultant Interview with Funds Manager Briefing meeting with NPC and NPA Departure for airport	Taxi

Annex 3. List of Documents Reviewed

2003
UNEP/UNFCCC. March 28, 2003. UNFCCC COP 8 Decisions

2004
UNEP. April 13, 2004. Decision VII 2-Dry and sub humid lands
UNEP/UNFCCC/SBSTA/2004/INF.19.November 2, 2004. UNFCCC options paper
UNEP/CBD/COP/7/INF/28. January 12, 2004. Progress reports on implementation

2005
UNEP/ICCD/CRIC(5) INF.3 December 23, 2005. Review of implementation of the convention
UNEP/CBD/ July 14, 2005. Cooperation with other conventions options paper
UNEP. 2005. Bali Strategic Plan.

2007
UNEP/ICCD/COP (8). October 23, 2007. CCD COP 8 decisions

2008
UNEP. June 17, 2008. Joint reporting
UNEP. June 17, 2008. PIF joint reporting MSP
UNEP. September 9, 2008. Endorsement Letter
UNEP. October 9, 2008. Decision IX. 16 Biodiversity and climate change
UNEP. Programme of Work. 2010-2011.

2009
UNEP. October 2009-2012. Co finance Letters
UNEP/GEF. October 2009 - September 2012. Project document
UNEP. September 29, 2009. Review sheet joint reporting
UNEP/GEF. October 2009. Approval letter
UNEP/ICCD/COP (9). November 18, 2009. CCD COP 9 decisions
UNEP. December 2009. Agreement; 2328-2713-4B10 Medium sized project
UNEP. December 14, 2009. Project approval group discussion sheet

2010
UNEP/FNR_RIO. 2010. Financial Progress Report; Eritrea
UNEP/GEF. January 2010. Quarterly expenditure reports; January-March 2010
UNEP. January 2010. Funds transfer remittance advice
UNEP. January 2010. Funds transfer remittance advice
UNEP/FNR_RIO. February 9-10, 2010. Project inception report
UNEP. February 10, 2010. Monitoring and Reporting system of the UNCCD
UNEP. February 10, 2010. Monitoring and Reporting system of the UNCCD
UNEP/FNR_RIO. February 11, 2010. Project steering committee meeting report; UK
UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA. February 16, 2010. Proposed elements for a joint work programme between the three RIO conventions
UNEP/FNR_RIO. May 2010. National situational analysis; Afghanistan
UNEP/ GEF. May 14, 2010. Piloting integrated processes and approaches to facilitate national reporting to RIO conventions; Kenya
UNEP/FNR_RIO. June 2010. Situation analysis; Mauritius
UNEP/GEF/WCMC. June 2010. Report on Reporting requirements of the three conventions
UNEP/GEF/WCMC. June 2010. Report on Reporting requirements of the three conventions
UNEP/FNR_RIO. June 28, 2010. National assessment report; Lao
UNEP/GEF. July 2010. Quarterly expenditure report; July –September 2010
UNEP. July 2010. Cash Advance
UNEP. July 2010. Cash Advance
UNEP/WCMC. August 2010. Agreement; 06031E Eritrea-small-scale project
UNEP/WCMC. August 2010. Agreement; 06031E Eritrea-small-scale project
UNEP. August 19, 2010. Memorandum
UNEP. August 19, 2010. Memorandum
UNEP. September2010. Cash Payment
UNEP/GEF. September 2010. Data analysis training; Mauritius
UNEP/GEF. September 2010. Data analysis training; Mauritius
UNEP/FNR_RIO. October 2010. Joint reporting format; Liberia
UNEP/FNR_RIO. October 2010. Test joint reporting format; Lao
UNEP/GEF. October 2010. Quarterly expenditure report; October-December 2010
UNEP/GEF. October 2010. Quarterly expenditure report; October-December 2010
UNEP/ GEF project. October 30, 2010. Institutional framework. Mauritius
UNEP/GEF project. October 30, 2010. Reporting systems; Mauritius
UNEP/FNR_RIO. December 21, 2010. Analysis report of the FNR RIO Prelim whole Doc; Liberia
UNEP/GEF project. December 28, 2010. Strengthened institutional frameworks for reporting; Afghanistan
UNEP/GEF project. December 28, 2010. Strengthened national systems for monitoring, reporting; Afghanistan
UNEP/FNR_RIO. February 9-11, 2010. Governance; UK
UNEP/FNR_RIO. February 9-11, 2010. Milestones; UK
UNEP/FNR_RIO. February 9-11, 2010. Project details; Kenya

UNEP/FNR_RIO. February 9-11, 2010. Project implementation phase, UK
UNEP/FNR_RIO. February 9-11, 2010. Work plan and budget, UK
UNEP/WCMC. February 9-11, 2010. List of Participants; UK
UNEP/WCMC. February 9-11, 2010. Questions and confirmation; Lao
UNEP/WCMC. February 9-11, 2010. List of Participants; UK
UNEP/WCMC. February 9-11, 2010. Questions and confirmation; Lao
UNEP/ WCMC. February 9-11, 2010. Tentative Agenda; UK
UNEP/GEF. April 2010. Quarterly expenditure reports; April-June 2010
UNEP. 2010. Programme of Work (PoW). 2012-2013
UNEP. Medium Term Strategy. 2010-2013.

2011
UNEP/FNR_RIO. 2011. Work plan; Liberia
UNEP. January 01- December 31, 2011. Annual work plan; Mauritius
UNEP/GEF. January 2011. Quarterly expenditure Reports; January-March 2011
UNEP/ICCD. January 11, 2011. Options to increase synergies in monitoring the RIO conventions
UNEP. January 26, 2011. Implementation Review; Afghanistan
UNEP. January 26, 2011. Review workshop, Port Louis
UNEP/FNR_RIO. January 27, 2011. Work plan; Afghanistan
UNEP/FNR_RIO. January 27, 2011. Work plan; Eritrea
UNEP/GEF. January 28, 2011. Steering committee minutes
UNEP/ GEF. January 31, 2011. Enhanced capacity for data collection analysis; Afghanistan
UNEP/ FNR_RIO. February 2011. Convention report; Palau
UNEP/GE project. February 2011. Enhanced capacity for data collection and analysis. LAO PDR
UNEP/FNR_RIO. February 9-11, 2011. Project website; UK
UNEP. February 22, 2011. Final recommendation for monitoring and reporting; LAO PDR
UNEP/GEF project. February 22, 2011. Recommendations for strengthened institutional framework for repo0rting; Lao
UNEP. April 05, 2011. Memorandum
UNEP/GEF. January-June 2011. Performance review and assessment of the PARIS
UNEP/GEF. April 2011. Expenditure report; January-September 2011
UNEP. October 2011. Liberia Training report; Liberia
UNEP/FNR_RIO. June-December 2011. Test joint reporting format; Afghanistan
UNEP/GEF. October 2011. Expenditure report; October-December 2011
UNEP/WCMC. December 2011. Funds Transfer Remittance advice
UNEP/FNR_RIO. January 20-28, 2011. Project work plan and budget
UNEP/FNR_RIO. January 26-28, 2011. List of participants; Mauritius
UNEP/FNR_RIO. January 26-28, 2011. National milestones; Mauritius
UNEP/FNR_RIO. January 26-28, 2011. Project governance; Mauritius
UNEP/FNR_RIO. January 26-28, 2011. Project implementation review workshop; Mauritius
UNEP. January 26-28, 2011. Implementation Review; Lao
UNEP. January 26-28, 2011. Annual work plan; Lao
UNEP. January 26-28, 2011. Implementation Review; Palau

2012
UNEP. February 2012. Funds transfer Remittance Advice
UNEPP/WCMC. February 7, 2012. Joint reporting questionnaire; Mauritius
UNEP/FNR_RIO. March, 2012. Tentative agenda; Iran
UNEP/GEF FNR_RIO. March 12, 2012. Situation analysis and technical report; Iran
UNEP/FNR_RIO. March 13, 2012. Institutional set-up and staffing arrangements; Iran
UNEP/GEF FNR_RIO. March 13, 2012. Joint reporting component; Iran
UNEP/GEF project. March 13, 2012. Steering committee meeting; Iran
UNEP/WCMC. April 2012. Synergies within the cluster of biodiversity related conventions
UNEP/FNR_RIO. April 17, 2012. Report of the 3rd workshop at the Ministry of Women Affairs; Kabul
UNEP. May 2012. Test joint reporting format; Mauritius
UNEP. June 22, 2012. Pilot country experience; Mauritius
UNEP. October 2012. Cash Advance
UNEP. October 2012. Situational analysis; Eritrea
UNEP/FNR_RIO. October 16, 2012. Integrated approaches to national reporting to the RIO conventions
UNEP. November 2012. National manual; Afghanistan
UNEP. November 2012. National manual; Lao
UNEP/FNR_RIO. November 28, 2012. Draft agenda project close down workshop; Mauritius
UNEP/WCMC. December 2012. Payment
UNEP/WCMC Project. December 2012. National manual; Eritrea
UNEP. December 4, 2012. Final manual; Liberia
UNEP. December 5, 2012. Decision XI.6 Cooperation with other conventions, international organisation and initiatives

2013
UNEP. December 2009-2013. Endorsement document

UNEP/GEF July 1, 2012-June 30, 2013. Piloting integrated processes and approaches to FNR_RIO
UNEP/WCMC Project. January 2013. Final manual; Mauritius
UNEP. January 25, 2013. Routing Slip
UNEP/DTIE. January 2013. Expenditure report; January-March 2013
UNEP/GEF. November 2013. Draft project report
UNEP/ICCD/COP (11). November 4, 2013. CCD COP 11 decisions

UNEP/FNR_RIO. November 16, 2013. Tentative agenda; Kenya
UNEP/FNR_RIO. December 2013. Final narrative report.

2014
UNEP. March 31, 2014. Fifth national report guidelines

2015
UNEP/FNR_RIO. June 2015. Terminal evaluation of the UNEP project

NO DATE
UNEP. (NO DATE). Draft National Manual; Palau (Output 1.3a National Manual Folder)
UNEP/FNR_RIO. Implementation Review; Liberia NO DATE (2nd PSC Meeting folder)
UNEP/GEF. NO DATE Implementation Review; Mauritius (2nd PSC meeting Folder; Meeting documents)
UNEP. NO DATE Summary of Report (2nd PSC meeting Folder; Meeting documents)
UNEP. No Date Supporting countries towards a better and more coherent implementation of MEAs (2nd PSC meeting Folder; Meeting documents)
UNEP (NO DATE) Exploring opportunities for synergies among the RIO conventions (Meeting documents, Side event folder)
UNEP. NO DATE Fourth national report guidelines (Other relevant documents; CBD Folder)
UNEP/GEF No DATE Third national report guidelines (Other relevant documents; CBD Folder)
UNEP/UNFCCC. (NO DATE) UNFCCC Resource guide module 1 (Reports Folder; Other relevant documents folder; UNFCCC folder)
UNEP/UNFCCC. (NO DATE) UNFCCC Resource guide module 2 (Reports Folder; Other relevant documents folder; UNFCCC folder)
UNEP/UNFCCC. (NO DATE) UNFCCC Resource guide module 3 (Reports Folder; Other relevant documents folder; UNFCCC folder)
UNEP/UNFCCC. (NO DATE) UNFCCC Resource guide module 4 (Reports Folder; Other relevant documents folder; UNFCCC folder)

Annex 4. Summary co-finance information and a statement of project expenditure by activity for the FNR_Rio

Project Costs

Component/sub-component/output	Estimated cost at design USD (Revised Budget at Design)	Actual Cost USD	Expenditure ratio (actual/planned)
Component 1: Situational analysis and Reporting Process Design	550,500.00	483,509.33	0.878
Component 2: Implementation of integrated reporting processes and experimenting options for report design	172,000.00	164,548.75	0.957
Component 3: Sharing of experience and upscaling	491,780.00	65,386.69	0.556

Co-financing

Co financing (Type/Source)	UNEP own *through* WCMC Financing (US$1,000)		Government (US$1,000)		Other* (US$1,000)		Total (US$1,000)		Total Disbursed (US$1,000)
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	
− Grants									
− Loans									
− Credits									
− Equity investments									
− In-kind support	50.00	97.48513	725.88	513.86624			775.88	611,35137	611,35137
− Other (*) - -									
Totals	50.00	97.48513	725.88	513.86624			775.88	611,35137	611,35137

* This refers to contributions mobilized for the project from other multilateral agencies, bilateral development cooperation agencies, NGOs, the private sector and beneficiaries.

Annex 5. FNR_Rio Terminal Evaluation Brief

The Terminal Evaluation Brief is attached to this evaluation in a PDF format. The content of this brief is as follows:

PILOTING INTEGRATED PROCESSES AND APPROACHES TO FACILITATE NATIONAL REPORTING TO RIO CONVENTIONS (FNR_RIO)
Results and Lessons Learned

About the Project

The medium-sized project 'Piloting Integrated Processes and Approaches to Facilitate National Reporting to Rio Conventions (FNR_Rio)' was implemented between January 2010 and December 2013 by the United Nations Environment Programme and executed by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre in partnership with six participating countries. The countries involved were Liberia (Environmental Protection Agency), Eritrea (Ministry of Lands, Water and Environment), Mauritius (Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development), Afghanistan (National Environmental Protection Agency), Lao PDR (Water Resources and Environment Administration), and Palau (Office of Environmental Response and Coordination). The overall objective of the project was to pilot nationally-driven integrated processes and approaches to reporting to the three Rio Conventions. The website to access all relevant and interesting project documentation is here http://old.unep-wcmc.org/integrated-reporting-to-the-rio-conventions_675.html. The total project budget was USD 1,615,880.00, with the GEF allocation being USD 840,000.00, with the remainder co-financing from the six countries.

Relevance

The reporting burden continues to be a real challenge to many countries, and even more so with countries of limited financial and human resources. The project objective was strongly aligned to the global environmental needs because it aligned directly to the three largest international environmental conventions and their improved implementation. The FNR_Rio was consistent with national priorities mainly because it supported enhanced cost and time efficiency, loosening resources for other, more pressing concerns at country level. The project was also consistent with the GEF framework and UNEP mandate. It was related to the Medium Term Strategy (2010-2013) and its associated programmes of work, as well as the Bali Strategic Plan.

Performance

Despite this being a complex project to implement, with the diversity and situations of countries involved, the project managed to achieve all of its outputs, and even an additional one added at the request of the GEF Secretariat mid-way through the project on developing and testing a template approach to reporting. Some countries (e.g. Afghanistan, Eritrea) felt that it did not have long-term staying power and was not necessarily successful in setting out what it aimed to achieve, or that it contributed to a more collaborative reporting environment. This said, country visits to Liberia and Mauritius indicated that the project did establish some mechanisms in terms of sustaining institutional collaborative frameworks. Data mechanisms, which would have been a good strengthening tool to further improve reporting, did not come to fruition in any of the countries. If lessons are taken up and this project feeds into a more global process, then it is likely that it can reach impact of improved overall reporting and implementation of the Multi-lateral Environmental Agreements.

Factors affecting Project Performance

The project was well designed, although monitoring and evaluation and risk management was not well articulated in the project document. With regards project management, FNR_Rio was well implemented and coordinated at global level, but country implementation varied indicating differentiated results in terms of long-term impact. There were quite a number of internal implementation issues at country level that were beyond the control of the project. Outputs were well managed, even at country level. There was communication and public awareness, but given the lessons from this project, there should be more. There was not sufficient country ownership and drivenness in some of the countries, but it did suffice in others.

Key Lessons Learned

Lesson 1: Strong/good leadership is important for project sustainability. It was noted by some respondents that even after the project there was a lack of real ownership at the higher level of this project. Many respondents highlighted that it's the people who make things work, not the institutions. More results were sustained in countries where there is strong leadership and ownership of the results of the project. More effort should be placed at design phase during stakeholder analysis to identify possible champions at the onset, especially when conducting a pilot. In addition, more horizontal and vertical (strategic) communication could have gone a long way to further integrate the notion of synergies, especially when it comes to the who and how of the next steps.

Lesson 2: Improving collaboration and coordination among focal points increases cost- and time-effective synergies. Improving coordination among the focal points, especially in countries where the focal points are housed in completely different institutions or even Ministries (e.g. Afghanistan) became a key area for recommendations in each country's manual and at the final PSC meeting. This project helped the focal points see the need and benefits of synergy and some countries have even used the collaborations for the reporting (e.g. Liberia and its SNC). For instance, the consultant responsible for the SNC in Liberia made it a point to see all three Focal Points separately, and then together as a team. This in turn caused a team atmosphere to build between the focal points where synergies were easily seen. Because of this (and of course the MEA unit where they all now sit in the same office block) created a collaborative atmosphere. A meeting of MEA high level staff in Mauritius to discuss combined reporting and how it can be done is another step towards collaboration that has been effective (although in its initial stages). Regular meetings and intra and inter institutional communication also improves collaboration and decreases duplication of efforts (and causes a team spirit if work is shared and used by all).

Lesson 3: Providing strong platforms for effective stakeholder engagement forges sustainable relationships for collaboration...in some cases - what are these? Based on the country visits to Mauritius and Liberia, it was found that relationships forged during project implementation have stayed strong two years on, and this has increased synergies and collaboration. Stakeholders are required for an effective implementation of the Rio Conventions and therefore need to be involved for reporting processes. Through this project, the countries started to forge strong relationships with stakeholders for processes of data and information collection and the analysis and writing of national reports. This was not the case in all countries so it begs the question - why was it so effective in some, and not in others? The reasons for this are alerted to in Lesson 2 above. In Mauritius, continued active engagement that is routinely managed and coordinated through the MESD makes a large impact on sustaining relationships (especially if the same people come to the meetings every time). If there is also less turn-over in staff then there will also be more opportunity to meet the same figures responsible and thus forge stronger relationships.

Lesson 4: Building and maintaining an effective data collection and access mechanism continues to be vitally important in streamlining reporting. Based on country visits two years after project closure, it was noted that data mechanisms were not effectively built and sustained. There was a lot of mention especially of grey literature that has not been effectively collected. Access continues to be a problem. This needs to be a priority as this access is vital to effective reporting. The Final Project Report made it clear in one of its key lessons that facilitating access to global data sets may help address some issues and be a useful interim tool while country data is being organised (and even for data that is just not available in-country). Suggestions to reduce barriers to data access have been widely captured in international decision documents. In the long-term there needs to be the development and promulgation of a relatively simple set of guidelines on how countries can manage data and information to implement the MEAs in a more coherent manner.

Lesson 5: Capacity-building at national level continues to be very important. It was noted strongly by many respondents that capacities still have gaps and there is a strong need for continued support in this area. This was also particularly emphasised in the final PSC meeting. Countries like Lao PDR and Afghanistan were prioritising capacity building towards harmonisation in reporting. Capacity building continues to be an important component generally in convention implementation.

Lesson 6: Stronger support and guidance (and integration among conventions) provided by conventions would go a long way in improving country reporting. A strong sentiment reflected from the evaluation was

the need for more guidance and support from the Rio Convention Secretariats, including more synergies amongst the conventions themselves in terms of reporting (e.g. reporting cycles, templates). Convention Secretariats could learn a lot from the FNR_Rio project. The project also developed recommendations for improved integration of the reporting processes between the conventions at the global level, which have elements of previously used tools such as UNCCD PRAIS, as well as other online reporting systems. In future, where there is particular relevance of GEF projects to Rio Conventions, there needs to be more flagging of such to the Secretariats at planning phase.

Lesson 7: Work on providing clearer guidance on how to assess and report co-financing for future projects.
It is the Evaluator's opinion, based on interviews and reporting, that countries may have underestimated the amount of co-financing they contributed during the process of the project. This is not a situation that is necessarily unique to this project, but it bodes well to think about this for future projects and how countries (and project partners) can better assess and report their co-financing contributions.

Lesson 8: Conducting a Terminal Evaluation too long after a project has ended poses limitations on the quality of the evaluation. This evaluation was conducted two years after the project ended. As a result, many of the project partners and implementers had moved on and were no longer contactable. This had limiting factors on the evaluation. On another note, it was helpful to look at the project sustainability two years on to see how many of the activities have actually 'stuck' in the long term. There should be some thought given to projects that have ended and how important it is to either assess project performance generally and have a direct link still to project partners, or assess the effectiveness and impact the project has had in the long term.

Annex 6. Brief CV of the consultant

Name   Justine Braby
Nationality Namibia (and Germany)
Languages   English, German, (learning Spanish)

Academic Qualifications
PhD Zoology, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa, June 2011
Postgraduate Diploma (International) Environmental Law, University of Cape Town, February 2007
Postgraduate Certificate Education (Senior Phase and Further Education), University of Cape Town, December 2005
Bachelor of Science (Zoology), University of Cape Town, December 2004
[Training certificate in the Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity, GIZ and Government of Namibia (2011)]

Summary
Professional expertise ranges from project development, implementation to evaluation of GEF projects for agencies like UNDP, UNEP, FAO and IUCN; communication strategy development, implementation and evaluation for various institutions; capacity-building interventions and facilitation of participatory processes; development of NAPAs, national development plans, strategies and action plans. Justine has thematic expertise and extensive experience in international environmental law (reporting and implementation), climate change (adaptation mostly), sustainable land management, biodiversity and ecosystem services, alternative development paradigms (alternative economics), coastal zone management, water resource management, and renewable energy as it pertains to climate change. She has worked for African governments and international and national development agencies all over Africa, and had experience working in several countries in Latin America and Europe.

Regional Experience
Africa (West, East, South, Central), Central America, South America, Europe

Professional Associations
Climate Change Focal Point and Member of the IUCN Commission on Education and Communication (www.iucn.org/cec)
Deputy Coordinator/Programme Director (elected in March 2012) of the African Youth Initiative on Climate Change (AYICC), the leading youth network on climate change matters for African youth and has currently 31 country-members (www.ayicc.net)
Founder of the Namibia Youth Coalition on Climate Change (www.youthclimate-namibia.org)
Member of the Balaton Network on Sustainability (www.balatongroup.org)
Selected by the Club Of Rome as one of 60 Future World Leaders (Change of Course)
NNF Associate

Publications experience
Climate Change Adaptation, Community Resilience, Communication, Education and Public Awareness, Zoology, Marine Biology, Ecology, Alternative Economics

Annex 7. Response to stakeholder comments received but not (fully) accepted by the evaluators

All comments received by the project team were accepted.

Annex 8. Quality Assessment of the Evaluation Report

Evaluation Title: **Piloting Integrated Processes and Approaches to Facilitate National Reporting to Rio Conventions (FNR-Rio)**

All UNEP evaluations are subject to a quality assessment by the Evaluation Office. The quality assessment is used as a tool for providing structured feedback to the evaluation consultants.

The quality of both the draft and final <u>evaluation report</u> is assessed and rated against the following criteria:

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Draft Report Rating	Final Report Rating
Substantive report quality criteria			
A. **Quality of the Executive Summary**: Does the executive summary present the main findings of the report for each evaluation criterion and a good summary of recommendations and lessons learned? (Executive Summary not required for zero draft)	Draft report: It is well summarised and captures the main highlights of the evaluation findings in a succinct manner Final report: Same	5.5	5.5
B. Project context and project description: Does the report present an up-to-date description of the socio-economic, political, institutional and environmental context of the project, including the issues that the project is trying to address, their root causes and consequences on the environment and human well-being? Are any changes since the time of project design highlighted? Is all essential information about the project clearly presented in the report (objectives, target groups, institutional arrangements, budget, changes in design since approval etc.)?	Draft report: The context and background of the project are well defined and in accordance with the TOR requirements Final report: Same	6	6
C. **Strategic relevance**: Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of strategic relevance of the intervention in terms of relevance of the project to global, regional and national environmental issues and needs, and UNEP strategies and programmes?	Draft report: This section has been discussed in sufficient detail to support the rating provided. There is sufficient evidence provided and the text gives a detailed account of project relevance to global, regional and national environmental issues and needs, including UNEP MTS 2010-13and relevant Expected Accomplishments Final report: Same	6	6
D. **Achievement of outputs**: Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based	Draft report: The chapter gives a satisfactory assessment of each output in a very systematic way;	6	6

	assessment of outputs delivered by the intervention (including their quality)?	sufficient evidence is provided to support the findings and qualitative aspects of the outputs are also included in the narrative

Final report:
Same | | |
| E. | **Presentation of Theory of Change**: Is the Theory of Change of the intervention clearly presented? Are causal pathways logical and complete (including drivers, assumptions and key actors)? | Draft report:
The TOC diagram is easy to comprehend, complete and sufficiently representative of the project's intervention logic. It is also aptly described in the narrative.
Final report:
Same | 5 | 5 |
| F. | **Effectiveness - Attainment of project objectives and results**: Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the achievement of the relevant outcomes and project objectives? | Draft report:
The report presents an evidence-based and well-argued justification for the ratings provided in the sub-criteria for 'Effectiveness', although the Evaluation Manager holds a different point of view from that of the Consultant's.

Final report:
Same | 5 | 5 |
| G. | **Sustainability and replication**: Does the report present a well-reasoned and evidence-based assessment of sustainability of outcomes and replication / catalytic effects? | Draft report:
The treatment of the 'sustainability' section could use more substantiation including also specific examples to justify the ratings provided.

Final report:
More examples were provided to substantiate findings. Section is improved from previous draft | 4 | 5 |
| H. | **Efficiency**: Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of efficiency? Does the report present any comparison with similar interventions? | Draft report:
This section is adequately covered and needs only minor additional information to make complete
Final report:
Some improvement noted from previous draft | 5 | 5 |
| I. | **Factors affecting project performance**: Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of all factors affecting project performance? In particular, does the report include the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used; and an assessment of the quality of the project M&E system and its use for project management? | Draft report:
This section is covered adequately for the most part. Minor improvements needed to get a more comprehensive and systematic coverage of the sub-criteria being assessed. The consultant has been advised to substantiate findings with examples and to state sources of info where applicable.

Final report:
More examples were provided to substantiate findings. Section is improved | 5 | 5.5 |

		from previous draft		
J.	**Quality of the conclusions:** Do the conclusions highlight the main strengths and weaknesses of the project, and connect those in a compelling story line?	Draft report: The conclusions section is well written and highlights the key findings from the project evaluation – both positive and negative. Final report: Same	6	6
K.	**Quality and utility of the recommendations**: Are recommendations based on explicit evaluation findings? Do recommendations specify the actions necessary to correct existing conditions or improve operations ('who?' 'what?' 'where?' 'when?)'. Can they be implemented?	Draft report: The recommendations are well founded on actual findings mentioned in the report. The consultant has been adviced to propose who should implement the corrective action in order to make the implementation more 'actionable'. Final report: Some improvement noted from the previous draft	5	5.5
L.	**Quality and utility of the lessons**: Are lessons based on explicit evaluation findings? Do they suggest prescriptive action? Do they specify in which contexts they are applicable?	Draft report: The lessons are clear and include their contextual background. They are formulated in a manner that allows for wider applicability Final report: Same	6	6
Report structure quality criteria				
M.	**Structure and clarity of the report**: Does the report structure follow EO guidelines? Are all requested Annexes included?	Draft report: The consultant has made an effort to follow the guidelines provided in the TOR and by the Evaluation Manager. All requested annexes are included. Final report: Same	6	6
N.	**Evaluation methods and information sources**: Are evaluation methods and information sources clearly described? Are data collection methods, the triangulation / verification approach, details of stakeholder consultations provided? Are the limitations of evaluation methods and information sources described?	Draft report: The evaluation approach, methodology and information sources are clearly described. The consultant consulted widely. Primary data were enumerated through interviews, meetings, consultations and interviews. Secondary data was extracted from existing documentation. Results of the primary and secondary data analysis were triangulated. Limitations are adequately described. Final report: Same	6	6
O.	**Quality of writing**: Was the report well written? (clear English language and grammar)	Draft report: The report is well written, comprehensible, and logical. Final report: Same	6	6

P.	**Report formatting**: Does the report follow EO guidelines using headings, numbered paragraphs etc.	Draft report: The report is well written, comprehensible, and logical. Final report: Same	6	6
		OVERALL REPORT QUALITY RATING	**5.5 (S)**	**5.7 (HS)**

The quality of the <u>evaluation process</u> is assessed at the end of the evaluation and rated against the following criteria:

		UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Rating
Evaluation process quality criteria			
Q.	**Preparation:** Was the evaluation budget agreed and approved by the EO? Was inception report delivered and approved prior to commencing any travel?	Yes. The budget was agreed and approved by the EO. The Inception Report was delivered and discussed before travel	6
R.	**Timeliness:** Was a TE initiated within the period of six months before or after project completion? Was an MTE initiated within a six month period prior to the project's mid-point? Were all deadlines set in the ToR respected?	No. the TE was initiated more than six months after project completion. TOR deadlines were respected to the extent possible. Alterations to the planned timelines were discussed and agreed between the Evaluation Manager and the Consultant	5
S.	**Project's support:** Did the project make available all required documents? Was adequate support provided to the evaluator(s) in planning and conducting evaluation missions?	The project provided sufficient documentation and the consultant was offered logistical support in conducting the missions. Payments due to the consultant were significantly delayed by UNEP due to the transition to Umoja	4
T.	**Recommendations:** Was an implementation plan for the evaluation recommendations prepared? Was the implementation plan adequately communicated to the project?	An implementation plan for the evaluation recommendations has been prepared and will be shared with the relevant personnel	6
U.	**Quality assurance:** Was the evaluation peer-reviewed? Was the quality of the draft report checked by the evaluation manager and peer reviewer prior to dissemination to stakeholders for comments? Did EO complete an assessment of the quality of the final report?	Yes. The draft reports were peer reviewed prior to circulation to the project team and external stakeholders for comments. An assessment of the quality of the zero draft was undertaken	6
V.	**Transparency:** Were the draft ToR and evaluation report circulated to all key stakeholders for comments? Was the draft evaluation report sent directly to EO? Were all comments to the draft evaluation report sent directly to the EO and did EO share all comments with the commentators? Did the evaluator(s) prepare a response to all	The TOR was shared with the Task Manager for comments. The draft TOR was not shared with external stakeholders however. Draft reports were sent directly to the EO. The draft report was shared internally within UNEP and to external stakeholders. Comments to the draft by stakeholders were sent back to the EO	5

	comments?		
W.	**Participatory approach:** Was close communication to the EO and project maintained throughout the evaluation? Were evaluation findings, lessons and recommendations adequately communicated?	Yes. Close communication between the consultant and the EO was maintained throughout the evaluation. Evaluation findings and lessons learned will be disseminated through the circulation of the report to a wider stakeholder base including its availability on the UNEP document repository. Efforts will be made to circulate a separate 2-page summary of the main evaluation highlights and lessons.	5
X.	**Independence:** Was the final selection of the evaluator(s) made by EO? Were possible conflicts of interest of the selected evaluator(s) appraised?	The consultant was selected by the EO independently of the project team	6
		OVERALL PROCESS RATING	**5.4 (S)**

Rating system for quality of evaluation reports
A number rating 1-6 is used for each criterion: Highly Satisfactory = 6, Satisfactory = 5, Moderately Satisfactory = 4, Moderately Unsatisfactory = 3, Unsatisfactory = 2, Highly Unsatisfactory = 1

The overall quality of the evaluation report is calculated by taking the mean score of all rated quality criteria.