

Eastern Usambara Forest Landscape Restoration project

Internal Project Audit Report

March 2006

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Self-assessment for the Eastern Usambara Forest Landscape Restoration project was conducted in 7th -10th February 2006. The audit was carried out by the project team using WWF Audit Tool as a evaluation method. The main results are summarized below and more detailed scoring table including comments and remarks is annexed. As an integral part of the audit the team reviewed also relevant parts of the Year 2 work plan in relation to the activities and outputs.

Participants

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The Auditing tool

The audit was carried out against “the standards of practice for implementing conservation projects and programmes in the WWF Network”. These standards are meant to help conservation projects describe their long term vision and key assumptions, develop effective activities, measure their success, and then to adapt, share, and learn over time – to practice adaptive management.

These standards are rooted in a long history of project and programme planning and management in WWF, across other conservation organizations, and in other disciplines. They are not meant to be a rigid set of standards that every project must blindly follow, but rather a set of best practices that conservation practitioners can use to make their work more effective and efficient.

The Auditing tool assessed the project by using the following criteria:

1. **Define** who will be involved on the project team in the early stages, your project’s geographic or thematic scope, your vision of what you hope to achieve, and the context in which you intend to work including threats and opportunities and who the key stakeholders are.
2. **Design** your action plan (including goals, objectives, and strategic activities), monitoring plan, and operational plan.
3. **Implement** your workplans while ensuring sufficient funding, capacity, and partners.
4. **Analyze** your data, results and assumptions, and operational and financial performance **& Adapt** your workplans as necessary based on your findings.
5. **Share** lessons, formal communication products, feedback and evaluations, and a learning culture with key external and internal audiences.

Results of the audit

The table summarises the results by each criteria and the main results are discussed below more in detail. The table shows the relative share (percentage) and the sum (in brackets) of positive, medium or negative responses

by each issue. The questions are formulated so that positive responses (yes, mostly) reflect the project has fulfilled criteria on best practises, and negative responses (no, don't know) indicate the areas where the project may have weaknesses.

Summary Table

WWF Standards Steps, Sub-steps, Outputs and related questions	YES	MOSTLY	SOME-WHAT	NO	DON'T KNOW	NA
Define	71% (12)	17% (3)	12% (2)	-	-	-
Design	43% (10)	35% (8)	13% (3)	9% (2)		
Implement	44% (7)	38% (6)	12% (2)	6% (1)		
Analyze & Adapt	41% (7)	12% (2)	12% (2)	24% (4)		12% (2)
Share	25% (3)	33% (4)	33% (4)	8% (1)		

Discussion of the results by criteria

Define

The project scored high indicating project's initial team composition and operations, its scope and vision, targets, context and stakeholders are well defined.

The project area locates in WWF's global priority ecoregion and has links to WWF's three forest targets: project, manage and restore. The overall project objective is brief and includes general and visionary elements. There are three clearly defined purposes and eight 'results'. Furthermore, project defines proxy indicators for biodiversity in terms of habitat area.

The project team, steering group, project manager and field staff has been designated. Yearly detailed work plans have been developed.

The conceptual model for the project was derived from WWF's forest landscape restoration approach.

Some development needs were identified. There is room to improve the analysis of key stakeholders in particular the private sector. Scaling up by creating links to National Forest Programme through a landscape committee have not yet been realised.

The project identified but did not rank critical threats affecting project targets as part of the project planning. Subsequently the threats to each of the forest reserves has been identified as part of undertaking threat reduction analysis.

Design

Project's design issues, including setting of goals, objectives and strategic activities as well as operational planning, received good scores.

The project document articulates eight results (which correspond 'goals') and identifies the highest priority key

factors.

Although key factor analysis was not done very systematically, the project did focus on those activities which going to have a high impact. As part of the project review process, there is potential to ensure that investment is focused on the 'best value' areas.

Project document includes a logical framework and activity plan. Indicators are listed in the logical framework and some baseline studies that were needed were identified.

A detailed annual work plan and budget has been developed for the project. Through regular plans and revision of project budgets estimates of financial, human, and other resources required to implement the project is in place and project seeks to ensure sustainable funding.

Some development needs were observed in monitoring plans. Methods of monitoring have been listed but a more detailed plan of how and timing/frequency to collect some of this data is needed. For some indicators, it is easy to identify when they should take place e.g. baseline socioeconomic studies.

Implement

This part of the audit covered the project's workplans and budgets, fund raising, capacity building and partnerships.

Field activities have been implemented according to the work plans. Some of the consultancies are behind schedule. These have been delayed by the absence of the Project Manager (car accident). In order to overcome slight delays the team reviewed the Year 2 work plan in relation to the activities and outputs so far achieved (see part 2 in this report).

Funding is secured for the three year project by Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A solution between WWF Finland and TPO has been found to ensure smooth transfer of funds to Tanzania.

MoUs are in place between the project partners. A project steering committee is in place with a terms of reference. Roles and responsibilities were reviewed during the annual planning meeting and during the project steering committee meeting.

There are mechanisms in place for communication such as quarterly reports, the project steering committee and the annual project review and planning. The project could benefit from more information sharing about forest landscape restoration with other programmes.

The project has been providing training to staff in the district, project officers and community members. Training has been based on needs which have been identified in the course of implementation.

Analyze & Adapt

The project showed good performance in its readiness to analyze and adapt according to feedback from incoming data and results on the ground. Project received somewhat lower scores in criteria dealing with assumptions and impact analysis because the project is still in its early stages.

Project has clear reporting system in place. Field reports are synthesised into quarterly and annual financial and technical reports. Project progress is reviewed quarterly within TFCG and WWF as part of the reporting process. A more detailed analysis is undertaken biannually during project planning and review meetings. Decisions are recorded in reports and in the minutes of meetings.

Project data is managed and stored in quarterly reports and uploaded on the WWF system. It is planned to improve this during Q3 Y2 during a review of the project monitoring.

Results are reviewed in the context of the logical framework using the outputs, activities and indicators. As the project is in its early stages, a thorough analysis of the impact has not yet been undertaken. Impacts as well as project assumptions and utility of indicators should be revisited at near future.

The project managers have not identified a significant problem with the level at which the goals and objectives have been set and thus they have remained the same. However, there have been some changes to the activities: for example during the last annual review decision was taken to focus more effort on fewer villages to ensure real impact in the priority areas.

Share

Evaluation team identified some needs to improve project's learning culture through the monitoring procedures. Feedback mechanisms on all levels of the project are in general well established.

The project includes an adaptive management process. In addition the project is testing the forest landscape restoration approach. Lessons learned are documented in monthly, quarterly and biannual reports. At this stage the project has not yet identified lessons learned to share more broadly however the project aims to contribute to understanding about forest landscape restoration and its role in conservation and development.

Some materials have been developed and distributed such as the TFCG newsletters, powerpoint presentations and photographs. It is also on the website for WWF Finland. Some materials such as the WWF Forest Landscape Restoration book and TFCG and WWF's experience in the East Usambaras and other areas have been integrated.

Feedback is received from project officers involved in monthly progress reviews. Through regular meetings with the communities, the project officers also get feedback from the beneficiaries.

Evaluations and audits has been planned and undertaken by regular basis. WWF holds annual financial audits. The project has done biannual reviews in addition to this internal mid-term evaluation. During the annual planning meetings, we have identified areas for action.

Some mechanisms are in place to enhance learning culture through the monitoring procedures however this aspect of the project could be strengthened. The project plans to address this through the review of the monitoring system.

General comments on the Audit Tool

In general the audit tool was found to be a useful way of reviewing the different aspects of the project. Some specific comments were:

- Output 2.2 it was confusing what 'best' means in this context
- Output 2.2e: Not clear what the track system was
- The process is quite slow

Review of the work plan

As an integral part of the audit the team reviewed also relevant parts of the Year 2 work plan in relation to the activities and outputs. Some key action points were identified and agreed upon.

Output 1: New Village Forest Reserves (VFRs) are established and assistance is provided to the management of existing VFRs through CBFM agreements

The support for the village forest reserves is progressing well.

ACTION TFCG: Provide project partners with an English translation of at least one management plan and by laws.

The review of community based fire management strategies has not yet been developed. This has delayed implementation. It was agreed that this is a priority activity.

ACTION: WWF TPO draft ToR and recruit consultant and complete consultancy by end of March. This should be done with input from WWF-International as they have experience in this field.

Activities 6.1 and 1.10 are to be combined into one consultancy. These activities have not yet been implemented. These have been pushed forward from Y1.

ACTION WWF TPO to develop ToR and identify and recruit consultant by end of March. Complete study by end of May 06.

Output 2: Village land use plans developed for selected villages. and integrated with 2003 - 2005 and for 2006 - 2008 Muheza District strategic plans

A consultancy was undertaken by Mlingano to address activities 2.1, 4.1 and 4.2. A draft report has been submitted by the consultants. There was some discussion on the consultancy report produced by Mlingano. It was recognised that some of the initial recommendations from Mlingano were inappropriate as it included relocating three villages. It was also agreed that the consultancy did not fulfil the terms of reference. There was some discussion as to how to ensure that the project has good guidance as to how to achieve the forest landscape restoration.

ACTION SM and ND: Meet with the consultants from Mlingano to agree a way forward to ensure that the project receives a useful output from the work.

Output 5: Private sector make commitments to maintain and conserve existing forests e.g. through creation of private reserves, or co-management agreements in collaboration with TFCG and/or local VECs

Private sector guidelines

This activity involves extracting the relevant information from the Forest Act and discussing with relevant people in FBD.

This can be done in-house by WWF-TPO. Although not a priority, this should be completed by end June 2006.

There was some discussion on what the 'guidelines' should look like. It was agreed that a two page 'leaflet' of information printed in-house plus a power point presentation would be sufficient. This should be accompanied by some relevant extracts from the Forest Act or with copies of the whole Forest Act.

Output 6: Livelihoods improved through development of income generating and other activities which reduce pressure on surrounding natural resources

The consultancy to identify potential IGAs and the socio-economic baseline study is linked with the IGA consultancy. This activity is important for showing impact. This should be included in Activity 6.3.

Possible consultants for the socio-economic work could include Saada Juma.

It might be necessary to have a team of people working on this. This should include someone with the experience of identifying novel IGAs such as essential oils, spices, silk moth farming.

See notes under Output 1 for timing of this activity.

The link with the CEPF financed ICIPE project was recognised to be a good opportunity for the project. Similarly the linkages with TFCG's Amani Butterfly Project and the Novella project were recognised to be opportunities.

Output 7: Awareness of the importance of forests and appropriate land management enhanced

There was some discussion about how to raise the profile of the Environment Day activity. It was agreed that it should link with a national theme.

Output 8: Concerted efforts are made towards having systems in place to support the continuation of activities initiated during the programme.

There was some discussion about the role of the Biosphere Reserve Committee. Given that the 'Biodiversity and Ecosystem Working Group' has not been formed it was felt that there is no role for the Biosphere Reserve Committee.

Output 9

Monitoring plan

A student is due to be visiting the project in March. It was agreed that this would be a good opportunity to review our monitoring strategy and ensure that we have a clear plan as to how we can obtain all the relevant data and who is responsible for collecting which data. PS and ND agreed to sit down and review this in advance of the student's visit.

Phase II

It was agreed that it is important for us to be planning for a Phase II of the project from 2007 onwards. It was agreed that ND and SM would meet on March 1st to start the drafting of a Phase II project document.