

Mid-Term Review: Gulf of Mottama Project



Report to The Swiss Confederation, represented by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, acting through Embassy of Switzerland in Myanmar

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Executive Summary

- i. The Community-Led Coastal Management in the Gulf of Mottama Project (CLCMGoMP) commenced in September 2015. The second Phase of this project, now renamed the Gulf of Mottama Project (GoMP), started in April 2018 and extends until December 2021. The GoMP is being implemented by a consortium comprising HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation (HELVETAS), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Network Activities Group (NAG).
- ii. The overall goal of the GoMP is “the unique biodiversity of the Gulf of Mottama (GoM) is conserved and sustainably developed in order to benefit human communities that depend on it.”
- iii. The Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Gulf of Mottama Project (GoMP) was conducted in March 2020. The MTR has been based on a literature and document review, an extensive itinerary of consultation meetings and site visits conducted over a 14-day period and a synthesis of the findings and observations.
- iv. The MTR has followed the standardised evaluation framework and has considered the context, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, gender and social equity and impact. The evaluation assessment grid has focussed 28 key evaluation questions. The evaluation has tried to be both robust and fair. Consideration has been given to the absolutes, in terms of progress towards outputs, as well as progress towards impacts and outcomes, which can be more subjective.
- v. The overall conclusion of the MTR is that the project is making significant progress towards both its outputs and outcomes. Almost two thirds of the evaluation questions were classed as very ‘good’. The evaluation reflects the considerable efforts of the project partners to ensure that they are working towards their collective goal.
- vi. The project is making significant investment and progress with regards to enhancing livelihoods, building capacity and knowledge for farming systems and developing sustainable fisheries practices. These benefits are clearly manifest at a village level.
- vii. One of the most successful initiatives is the establishment of a village-administered finance system, the revolving fund (RF). This has helped many villagers have access to small loans and has contributed significantly to improved well-being across the majority of the project villages. Additionally, the project has provided capital infrastructure investment and awareness training resulting in improved access to drinking water and enhanced hygiene in many of the project villages.
- viii. The project has assisted with developing a robust governance structure from the village through the State/Region level up to the Union level. Both the vertical and horizontal structures are sound and provide an excellent framework for future decision-making and management of the natural resources of the GoM. At a village level, the establishment of village development committees is considered to represent a strong positive success which integrate well within the overall governance framework.
- ix. The GoMP has been instrumental in extended the GoM Ramsar Site in February 2020 and increasing its size by approximately 300%. The project has also worked closely with universities in Bago and Mawlamyine to develop research activities which support the sustainable management of natural resources.
- x. However, the MTR has also identified key areas where progress could be improved, and more significantly, where there are shortcomings which, unless adequately addressed, will compromise

the future legacy of the project and the considerable investment of resources. The main concern is that the project is not focused sufficiently on the sustainability of natural resources and the conservation of the unique biodiversity of the GoM. The MTR suggests that there needs to be a rebalancing of emphasis, away from livelihoods and governance towards conservation and wise use. This rebalancing is critical at village level where too often the local conservation groups are inactive or poorly represented.

- xi. There is a significant concern regarding the wise use of the Ramsar Site and the long-term maintenance of its ecological character. The project needs to build on the existing GoM Management Plan and develop an integrated and coherent management plan for the extended Ramsar Site which will also incorporate wider land-use zonation and disaster risk reduction strategies. It is essential that the management plan is developed by local stakeholders so that there is a strong sense of ownership and empowerment. To achieve this, it is essential that the project works with local stakeholders to create an appropriate body which has the clear mandate to manage the Ramsar Site.
- xii. In parallel with the development of a robust management plan for the Ramsar Site, the project needs to establish a sustainable financing mechanism to underpin future conservation and site management-related activities. The ambition for the financing mechanism must to transition away from donor-dependency.
- xiii. The developing university-based research activities and the potential mobilisation of the local conservation groups at the village level, should be coordinated in order to provide both baseline data on the ecological character of the Ramsar Site and also to support long-term monitoring and management activities.
- xiv. The body responsible for overseeing the Ramsar Site needs to be fully integrated within the established governance structure. Furthermore, efforts also need to be made to ensure that the different components within the governance structure are sustainable beyond the life of the project. To achieve this, it is important that the project decreases its visibility and works towards local ownership and identity.
- xv. A part of working towards future sustainability, the project needs to develop approaches for extending beyond the project villages and embedding the knowledge and lessons learned within the wider communities around the GoM. This could involve working through the project villages as knowledge-transfer hubs. However, before this outreach commences the project needs to evaluate further the impact of skill training and alternative income generation to ensure that the ambition to enhance these livelihoods is achievable and sustainable in the long-term.
- xvi. The MTR has identified a range of recommendations, and suggestions for taking them forwards. These need to be considered by the project team and integrated within the project activities over the remainder of the project.
- xvii. Overall, as the project moves towards completion, it needs to carefully consider its achievements in terms of both outputs and outcomes. The delivery of outputs is not a guarantee of outcomes and the desired impacts. There also needs to be cultural and subliminal transfer away from promoting the idea of 'the project' towards invisibility and local ownership, otherwise there is a risk that the much of the good work will struggle to continue after the project is completed.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Project contextual background

- 1.1.1. The Gulf of Mottama (GoM)¹ is one of the most extensive and important intertidal ecosystems in the world. Located in the southwest of Myanmar and bordering the Andaman Sea, the dynamic and evolving coastline of the GoM extends for some 300 km and links the Yangon and Bago Regions in the west to Mon State in the east. The funnel-shaped gulf receives inputs of water and sediments from the Salween, Sittaung, and Yangon Rivers in the north and exchanges energy, water and sediments through the powerful incoming tides from the south.
- 1.1.2. The GoM supports approximately 150,000 waterbirds², is a vitally important habitat for the Critically Endangered Spoon-billed sandpiper *Calidris pygmaea* and also supports a huge diversity of fish, crustaceans and other fauna and flora. As a result of the ecological value of the area, the north eastern portion of the GoM was designated as Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar Site) in May 2017. The designated area was extended from 42,500 hectares (ha) to 161,030 ha in early 2020, to include a greater area of this unique estuarine environment.
- 1.1.3. The areas of Bago and Mon States surrounding the GoM are generally low-lying, flat, rural and predominantly un-developed. The tidal dynamics result in a shifting shoreline which can adversely affect livelihood patterns and increases the vulnerability of local, coastal communities. The combination of weak governance, overexploitation of natural resources, limited infrastructure and saltwater intrusion, allied to the natural dynamics of the coastal system creates a coastal community with an impoverished economy and limited resilience to environmental change.
- 1.1.4. Through support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Government of Myanmar has begun to address these multiple issues. The Community-Led Coastal Management in the Gulf of Mottama Project (CLCMGoMP) was implemented between September 2015 and April 14, 2018. A major output of the CLCMGoMP was the development of the GoM Management Plan (GoMMP)³. A second phase commenced in April 15, 2018 (now termed the Gulf of Mottama Project (GoMP)) and extends until December 2021. The GoMP is being implemented by a consortium comprising the following project partners: HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation (HELVETAS), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Network Activities Group (NAG). The consortium is also working with other associate private, government and non-governmental partners.
- 1.1.5. The overall goal of the GoMP is:

“The unique biodiversity of the GoM is conserved and sustainably developed in order to benefit human communities that depend on it.”
- 1.1.6. The project is about transforming a system of exploitation of natural resources to one which will be more sustainable and beneficial in the long term for local communities. Accordingly, the

¹ See Appendix 1 for a list of all abbreviations used throughout this report.

² See Ramsar Information Sheet published on 1 February 2020.

³ In the ToR the GoMMP is referred to as the GoM Coastal Natural Resources Management Plan (CNRMP). However, the published document is called the GoMMP.

project reflects the global conservation value of the GoM and the opportunity to implement the GoMMP.

- 1.1.7. The overall goal (or impact) of the GoMP is underpinned by a series of desired outcomes, objectives, outputs and activities. These are summarised in Appendix 2. Each activity is underpinned by inputs, specific beneficiaries and assumptions and risks.
- 1.1.8. In addition to the information detailed in Appendix 2, the overall success of implementing the GoMP also depends on other factors including:
 - Integration within and among outcomes
 - Ensuring gender equality and social equity
 - Considering climate change-related issues
 - Upscaling from site level
 - Delivering sustainable interventions
 - Managing resources efficiently
 - Monitoring risks
 - Providing adequate reporting
 - Developing an appropriate exit strategy

1.2. Purpose of the Mid-Term Review

- 1.2.1. In keeping with the SDC's Evaluation Policy⁴, and Article 170⁵ of the Swiss Federal Constitution, justification for the investment in the GoMP is required in order to evaluate and demonstrate effectiveness. In this regard, the SDC adheres to the definition provided by Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), insofar that:

"An evaluation is an assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, developmental efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process of both recipients and donors."

- 1.2.2. The aim of a full evaluation, therefore, is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, developmental efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability⁶. Whereas, a *review* is an assessment of the performance of an intervention, periodically or on an ad hoc basis. As such, a review, such as this Mid-Term Review (MTR), is usually less comprehensive and/or in depth than an evaluation.

- 1.2.3. Taking into account the Phase 2 project outcomes (Appendix 2) and on-going working approaches, the Terms of Reference (ToR – see Appendix 3) explicitly state that the MTR shall assess the following:

- Does the strategy and impact logic effectively support achieving the outcomes?

⁴ FDFA (2018) Evaluation Policy: Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC, revised March 2018. Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Bern, Switzerland. 12pp.

⁵ Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation, of 18 April 1999 (Status as of 1st January 2018). Art. 170 Evaluation of effectiveness. The Federal Assembly shall ensure that federal measures are evaluated with regards to their effectiveness.

⁶ OECD DAC (2010) Quality Standards for Development Evaluation. www.oecd.org

- Are the consortium cooperation framework, capacities and collaborations conducive to efficiently deliver expected results?
- Is the project on track to producing desired impact and reaching the specific project objective?

1.2.4. In conducting the MTR, the ToR stipulate that the review shall follow the OECD DAC evaluation criteria and include the assessment grid for the evaluation of SDC projects/programmes as an annex. This assessment grid should consider a standard set of key evaluation questions focussed on context, relevance, sustainability, gender and social equity, effectiveness, efficiency and impact. However, in developing the final methodology, these key questions have been subject to refinement in order to collect specific information germane to the review process.

2. Evaluation methodology

2.1. Definition and purpose

- 2.1.1. As stated above, the SDC adheres to the definition provided by the OECD DAC, i.e. an *evaluation* is an assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy. The aim of the evaluation methodology, therefore, is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, developmental efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. Whereas, a *review* is an assessment of the performance of an intervention, periodically or on an ad hoc basis. As such, a review, such as this MTR, is usually less comprehensive and/or in depth than an evaluation.
- 2.1.2. The purpose of any evaluation criteria, such as efficiency or effectiveness, whether used in a review or a full evaluation, should be linked to the purpose of the evaluation. Namely, to enable the determination of the merit, worth or significance of the interventions. The term *intervention* is used throughout this MTR to mean the subject of the evaluation. Each criterion is a different lens or perspective through which the intervention can be viewed. Together, they provide a comprehensive picture of the intervention, the process of implementation, and the results.
- 2.1.3. The criteria play a normative role. Together they seek to describe the desired attributes of interventions: all interventions should be relevant to the context, coherent with other interventions, achieve their objectives, deliver results in an efficient way, and have positive impacts that last, potentially beyond the duration of the project. The criteria can also be used beyond evaluation – for monitoring and results management, and for strategic planning and intervention design.

2.2. Evaluation criteria

- 2.2.1. For the purpose of this MTR, the ToR stated that the standardized set of key evaluation questions displayed in the *Assessment grid for evaluations of SDC projects/programmes* should be addressed, along with specific questions germane to the review process. The following seven evaluation criteria have been used in the MTR.

Context

- 2.2.2. This criterion seeks to understand whether there have been significant political, socio-economic and/or environmental changes influencing the project. Where this is the case, the review seeks to understand whether the project been able to adapt to it. Under this criterion, consideration is also given to whether there are expected important contextual changes for which the project needs to prepare.

Relevance

- 2.2.3. The relevance criterion considers whether the project's impact logic is valid and comprehensible and, within the specific context of the GoM, is the project aiming at achieving the correct outcomes? In addition to the geographical relevance, this criterion also places the MTR in the context of the Swiss Cooperation Programme Myanmar 2019-2023 in order to ascertain whether the GoMP contributes to a peaceful, inclusive, democratic and prosperous society by promoting sustainable development, conflict transformation, reconciliation and participation of all people in state-building?

Effectiveness

- 2.2.4. In order to evaluate whether the GoMP is being effective, or “doing things right”, this criterion needs to evaluate the project’s institutional approaches, how progress to date has been made towards outcomes and outputs, as stated in the logframe, and whether there are any changes recommended or required to enhance effectiveness of delivery. The review of effectiveness must also consider different perspectives, including *inter alia* those of potential beneficiaries, such as village communities, knowledge providers, such as universities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), as well as the project consortium.

Efficiency

- 2.2.5. The efficiency criterion considers whether the project’s resources (human and financial) are being used efficiently and is the project achieving value for money. The review also considers whether the project is delivering any added value and how well economies of scale are being considered through optimisation of synergies with wider SDC and other donor-funded projects within the GoM.

Sustainability

- 2.2.6. Sustainability is at the core of the overall objectives of the project. Therefore, this criterion seeks to evaluate whether the project is contributing to social, ecological and economic sustainability, both individually and collectively. The evaluation further evaluates whether the project is set up in such a way that institutional sustainability can be achieved. Specific consideration has been given as to whether the Coastal Resource Management Committees (CRMCs) are the right institutions to assure institutional sustainability for a sustainable management of natural resources in the GoM, and what should the role of the private sector and civil society in the future governance of the natural resources of the GoM?

Gender and social equity

- 2.2.7. This evaluation criterion considers whether the project is reaching out to the disadvantaged parts of the population in the GoM, and appraises whether the gender, ethnic and religious composition of the population in the GoM have been adequately considered in project design and implementation.

Impact

- 2.2.8. The success, or otherwise of the project, will be measured by the impact of its outcomes, not simply by its outputs. This criterion evaluates whether the project is likely to reach the desired impact based on its current trajectory. The evaluation also assesses whether, over the final period of the project, there is a need for corrective measures to be taken in order to minimise the risk of failure to reach the desired impact, particularly at beneficiary level.

Additional considerations

- 2.2.9. During initial consultation with staff from SDC and the Helvetas Country Office, a request was made to ensure that two aspects were given specific consideration during the MTR. The two issues raised were *institutional sustainability* and the *exit strategy*, potentially beyond the GoMP. These two elements have not been considered as separate criteria; rather specific evaluations have been embedded within the seven evaluation criteria.

2.3. Evaluation assessment grid

- 2.3.1. The ToR set out a range of evaluation questions to be addressed and answered during the MTR. During the review process, specific sub-questions were developed in order to elicit more

detailed information from different consultees or from documentation interrogated. The evaluation questions and sub-questions, the methods and data sources, and an overall summary score for each element of a criterion are provided in Appendix 4.

3. Limitations

3.1. Knowledge gaps

- 3.1.1. Whilst every attempt has been made to conduct a thorough evaluation of the GoMP, it has not been possible to review every piece of document produced (in both the Myanmar language and in English), to visit all the project villages or to consult with every stakeholder. Practical, resource and logistical constraints have unfortunately intervened. Therefore, it is acknowledged that knowledge gaps may remain.
- 3.1.2. Equally, it is possible that some discussions, especially where groups of stakeholders have been consulted, may have been misinterpreted or salient points incorrectly translated or even missed. Whilst every attempt has been made to address this issue (through the use of a Local Consultant and a translator), it is possible that minor misinterpretations may remain.
- 3.1.3. The Consultants have been provided with a significant volume of documentation on the project. Given time and resource limitations, it has not proved feasible to read every item completely. However, emphasis has been given to items the Consultants consider to be key documents and also to reading conclusions and executive summaries, where provided. Consequently, some information may have been overlooked in the review process. However, it is expected that that any significant impact of this will have been obviated through the consultation process.
- 3.1.4. The livelihood diversification and income generation initiatives within the GoMP have focussed on three areas: garment/tailoring, beauty/hair and motorbike skill training. During the MTR the Consultants did not have the opportunity to meet any representatives of the motorbike repair skill trainers. Therefore, any conclusions made regarding the success, or otherwise, of motorbike repair skill training rely on documented evidence, rather than direct consultations.
- 3.1.5. During the consultation process, only one private fishing company was visited. Ideally, the Consultants would have held discussions with other private fisheries to garner a broader understanding of the private sector perspective. Therefore, conclusions drawn regarding the private fishing sector are only based on documentation review and one consultation meeting.
- 3.1.6. At the time of the MTR, the GoMP extends into 59 villages, with one of the selected villages choosing not to cooperate. However, the Village Selection Ranking Assessment Report (2018) states that potentially 200 villages exist along the coastal zone. Accepting the limitations imposed by resources and the need to prioritise, the GoMP targets directly approximately 30% of the villages within the coastal zone. It would have been helpful, especially with regards to understanding the potential exit strategy, to have visited a selection of non-project villages. This would have assisted in understanding the wider dissemination and outreach of the project and also in providing recommendations on future priorities.
- 3.1.7. The GoM covers a vast area. Many of the natural habitats are challenging to access due to distance and tides. Given more time, the Consultants would have appreciated the opportunity to visit more of the tidal areas, such as the fishing zones, the mangrove areas and the tidal mudflats. However, the limitations imposed by a tight time schedule are fully understood by the Consultants. Consequently, conclusions drawn by the Consultants on the ecological character of the GoM are based primarily on *a priori* knowledge and observations made from limited localities along the shoreline.

3.2. Institutional limitations

- 3.2.1. The consultation programme arranged by the Project Co-ordination and Implementation Unit (PCIU) was comprehensive. However, through no fault of the PCIU, it was not always possible to meet all Government representatives, especially those comprising members of the CRMCs or the National Coastal Resource Management Committee (NCRMC). It is acknowledged by the Consultants that Government officials have challenging diaries and limited time. However, the consultation process could have been more robust if all representatives of these committees had been available and also had sufficient time for a thorough discussion to have taken place.

3.3. Contextual changes

- 3.3.1. The MTR has to take into account any broader contextual changes that may, or may not, be outside of the control of the GoMP, but which have the capacity to influence the ability of the project to achieve its desired outcomes. The Consultants have identified four principle contextual issues which have manifest themselves during the first part of the GoMP and which have the potential to materially affect the overall project outcomes.
- 3.3.2. The GoMP has strongly advocated that the Ramsar Site should be extended (the project has a distinct output indicator for this). The extension of the Gulf of Mottama Ramsar Site was formally adopted on 1st February 2020. However, the extension of the Ramsar Site, whilst considered positive with regards to extending the area that is formally recognised as being internationally important, brings with it a range of challenges. The project needs to have demonstrated that this contextual change, which cannot be considered unknown or outside of the influence of the project, has been prepared for and subsequently will be considered in accordance with the obligations adopted by the Ramsar Convention. These considerations are evaluated further as part of the MTR.
- 3.3.3. The cessation of the Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association's (BANCA) direct involvement as an associate partner in the project has had ramifications with regards to the emphasis on, and delivery of, biodiversity aspects of the overall project. BANCA are Myanmar's Birdlife International Partner and have a strong history of *inter alia* conservation monitoring and awareness raising with local communities within Myanmar, and specifically around the GoM. They are also part of a wider network of actors engaged in the strategic protection of the critically endangered Spoon-billed sandpiper. Their departure from the project, irrespective of the reason or justification, needs careful evaluation and a clear strategy enacted to ensure that the biodiversity-related outcomes are not compromised. The implications of BANCA's withdrawal from the project are evaluated further as part of the MTR.
- 3.3.4. In 2019, the SDC published a second Swiss Cooperation Programme Myanmar 2019-2023. This programme reflects the Swiss foreign policy objectives in Myanmar and builds on the lessons learned between 2013 and 2018. The GoMP will need to demonstrate progress and delivery against the current Programme, despite being developed, and initially implemented, during the previous Programme. Furthermore, any exit strategy planned between the end of the GoMP (2021) and 2023 needs to reflect and support the policy objectives in the current Programme. Consideration has been given to this issue within the MTR evaluation, and specifically in recommendations for priorities which move towards an exit strategy.
- 3.3.5. During the GoMP Phase 2, there have been several legislative and policy changes at both the Union and the State/Region level, including the Forest Law (Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law No. 29/2018, September 2018), the National Wetland Policy (January 2019), the Rural Development Law (Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law No. 39/2019, December 2019) and Law Amending

the Farmland Law (Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law No. 2/2020, February 2020). However, the project has had to remain cognisant of these changes and needs to have demonstrated appropriate responses. The prevailing legislative changes are considered further in the evaluation framework.

4. Results

4.1. Evaluation

- 4.1.1. Building on the CLCMGoMP, the GoMP has delivered some significant results to date. The project team comprise many knowledgeable and dedicated individuals that are working hard to ensure that the project meets its desired objectives. This is demonstrated by the fact that considerable progress has been made towards the output indicators across many of the project areas.
- 4.1.2. The evaluation has tried to be both robust and fair. In doing so, the Consultants have tried to understand the absolutes, in terms of progress towards outputs (for instance as number of people, etc.), as well as progress towards impacts and outcomes, which can be more subjective. For instance, evaluating whether people or communities have benefitted cannot necessarily be measured by a simple metric or the summation of several indicators. Often benefit is a very personal experience or one that depends on individual or collective perception. Consequently, the evaluation approach has tried to combine factual evidence, as synthesised or presented by the members of the project consortium, with understanding, appreciation and experience of a range of stakeholders.

Context

- 4.1.3. Whilst there have been some legislative and policy changes, there have not been any significant political changes for the project to adapt to since its inception. Similarly, the broader socio-economy of Myanmar, and particularly at the State and Region or Township level, has not undergone any significant changes that the project has had to adapt to.
- 4.1.4. At several of the villages, the local communities have experienced positive socio-economic changes. However, these changes are as a result of the project activities rather than responses to broader, external drivers of socio-economic change. The socio-benefits are discussed further under the evaluation of effectiveness below.
- 4.1.5. There are two environmental changes that have influenced the project and to which the project has needed, and continues to need, to adapt. The first change relates to the extension of the GoM Ramsar Site boundary; and the second relates to the on-going erosion and deposition issues resulting from the dynamic nature of the coastal environment. The physical changes to the coastline and the configuration on the boundary of the Ramsar Site have implications for a range of issues, not least the wise use of natural resources.
- 4.1.6. Output 2.2.C of the GoMP logframe states that the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) for the extension of the GoM Ramsar Site is developed and endorsed. This has been achieved and the area of the Site has been increased by almost 300%. Ostensibly this is a significant achievement. However, currently, based on interviews, reviews of documentation and observations on the ground, the extension of the Ramsar Site is predominantly considered as an end in itself, rather than fully understanding that the designation is a means to ensure wise use through the maintenance of the ecological character of the Site. Furthermore, the designation brings with it a range of obligations under the Ramsar Convention as well as best-practice expectations. There is good evidence that the designation of large Ramsar Sites does not guarantee their future conservation or wise use but rather such designations simply result in significant management

challenges which fail to be addressed in the long-term resulting in a gradual decline in the state of the Site⁷.

- 4.1.7. The current GoM Management Plan was published in May 2019, approximately eight months prior to the extension of the Ramsar Site. The GoM Management Plan states that: “*The Myanmar government is committed to put in place a management framework for this Ramsar site. The designation of the GoM Ramsar site is of special significance because it is the first in Myanmar that is outside a legally designated protected area. This sets an important precedent for Myanmar’s many other wetlands of global importance that merit Ramsar status but are not in designated protected areas*”. This clearly demonstrates the importance, not just to the GoM, but to future Ramsar Sites in Myanmar, of ensuring that both the management planning process and subsequent management practices are robust and exemplars of best practice.
- 4.1.8. The Management Plan further states that: “*Moving from this Plan to effective management of the GoM will require development and implementation of focused action plans and programs. This Plan is meant to be an enduring, but adaptable, guide for the management of the GoM; it should be adapted as new information becomes available, as monitoring and review occurs, or as legislation changes*”. Arguably, the planned and actual extension of the Site should have prompted such an adaptation.
- 4.1.9. In order to prevent the ecological character of the Ramsar Site from declining, the following issues need to be addressed urgently by the project:
- The existing management plan, whilst forming a framework for the GoMP, needs to be superseded with a new plan that focusses on the management of the GoM Ramsar Site since it covers almost the whole length of the project coast line and follows best practice guidance published by the Ramsar Convention⁸⁹.
 - The new Plan needs to be developed as a single coherent plan, taking into account and updating other designations, zonation and land uses. The plan should adhere to the principle advocated by the Ramsar Convention that the designation and management of Wetlands of International Importance in the coastal zone provides a global mechanism for the identification and recognition of critically important parts of coastal zone ecosystems, as the basis for their sustainable management⁹. Such principles should be further embedded in integrated coastal zone management planning.
 - The Plan should be based on describing and maintaining the ecological character of the Site and developing clear management objectives, responsibilities, targets and budgets.
 - In order for the new Management Plan to be successful, an appropriate authority or body needs to be established with the mandate and responsibility for reviewing and ensuring progress and developing future iterations of the Plan.
 - Careful consideration needs to be given to the current boundary of the Ramsar Site, and also possible future modifications to the boundary. Due to the dynamic

⁷ McInnes, R. J., Davidson, N. C., Rostron, C. P., Simpson, M., & Finlayson, C. M. (2020). A Citizen Science State of the World’s Wetlands Survey. *Wetlands*, 1-17.

⁸ For instance: Ramsar Convention Secretariat. (2010). *Managing wetlands: Frameworks for managing Wetlands of International Importance and other wetland sites*. Ramsar handbooks for the wise use of wetlands, 4th edition, vol. 18. Ramsar Convention Secretariat, Gland, Switzerland; or Ramsar Regional Center – East Asia. (2017). *The Designation and Management of Ramsar Sites – A practitioner’s guide*. RRC-EA, Suncheon, Republic of Korea, 26pp.

⁹ Ramsar Convention Secretariat, 2010. *Coastal management: Wetland issues in Integrated Coastal Zone Management*. Ramsar handbooks for the wise use of wetlands, 4th edition, vol. 12. Ramsar Convention Secretariat, Gland, Switzerland.

nature of the environment, potentially important areas of mudflats in excess of 1,000 ha are already outside of the extended Ramsar Site boundary, and this dynamic situation is expected to continue. Boundary considerations need to be set within the context of wider integrated coastal zone management.

- Consideration needs to be given to the existing zonation developed by the project (such as the co-management fishing zones and the criteria used for their delineation and management) and ensuring positive synergies with wider strategies for *inter alia* land use allocation, food production, disaster risk management, tourism and fishing.

- 4.1.10. Another crucial aspect is to ensure that there is local ownership and responsibility for the Ramsar Site. At all of the other four Ramsar Sites in Myanmar there is clear signage and distinct Ramsar branding. Currently, there are no signs that acknowledge the presence of the GoM Ramsar Site. Additionally, there are no boundary markers to physically identify the Site on the ground. The visibility, identity and branding of the Site is highly important and should be a key CEPA (communications, capacity building, education, participation and awareness) activity which includes the local communities and government representatives. It is noted that the current GoM Management Plan does not include either the Ramsar Convention's logo or the logo of any organisation responsible for the Site, rather, the Plan is presented as clearly part of the GoMP, and reads like an advocacy piece for the project. This is considered wholly inappropriate and a barrier to local ownership and empowerment.
- 4.1.11. Integral to the future management planning for the Ramsar Site, is how to address the dynamic and rapidly evolving geomorphology of the GoM. The perpetual cycle of erosional and depositional processes is a key element of the ecological character of the area. The changes that have occurred during the project have already had implications on the appropriateness of the location of the extended Ramsar Site boundary. The current strategy of facilitating the relocation of villages at threat from erosion (particularly, but not exclusively, in Bago Region) is finite. The project has improved greatly the understanding of the challenges around the geomorphological dynamics. A coherent strategy that integrates the societal implications, the physical dynamics and the wise use of the natural resources needs to be developed as part of the Ramsar Site management planning process. It is essential that the final output is one coherent plan that address the multiplicity of challenges in and around the Ramsar Site through the principles of integrated coastal zone management. It is also vital that this plan is steered and owned by local institutions and is not seen as a simple extension of the GoMP.
- 4.1.12. The GoMP needs to also adapt further to changes in the policy and legislative landscape. There is limited evidence, either in the existing Management Plan or in the project logframe, of how, over the duration of the project or beyond, the wise use of the natural resources of the GoM will contribute to, or support the implementation of, a variety of policies such as *inter alia* the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (MSDP) 2018-203; UNFCCC Myanmar Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs); National Wetland Policy (NWP), January 2019; or the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Potentially this is because several of these have been developed since the project started. However, it is important that the project demonstrates and clearly communicates how delivery on the project goal not just enhances local livelihoods but contributes substantially and positively to wider national policy objectives.
- 4.1.13. Since commencement of the GoMP, the Swiss Government have published a new Swiss Cooperation Programme 2019-2023. This brings with it a change of emphasis as foreign policy objectives evolve. The GoMP is currently delivering under the transversal themes articulated within the strategic orientation and priorities for 2018-2023. The project is currently delivering on gender equality and is establishing a good governance framework for the management of

natural resources in the GoM. Within this governance framework, the project is targeting disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies. The project activities in Mon State are commensurate with the geographical focus, but arguably the activities in Bago Region may lie beyond the core geographic focus. However, given the transboundary nature of the Ramsar Site, it would be inappropriate for the project to only focus on Mon State, therefore it is suggested that the geographic focus of the GoMP is correct, and defensible, both to ensure compatibility with the Swiss Cooperation Programme 2019-2023 and also to ensure that the unique biodiversity is conserved and sustainably developed in order to benefit human communities.

- 4.1.14. There is a slight change in emphasis in the domains of intervention between the previous (2013-2018) Strategy and the extant Swiss Cooperation Programme Myanmar. The focus on agriculture and food security, and particularly the natural resources governance developed through the GoMP, has been reoriented under the Peace, Statebuilding and Protection Domain. The emphasis is strongly on governance and, within it, sustainably managed land and natural resources that contribute to *inter alia* social cohesion. The current project activities align broadly with this domain, but a stronger emphasis on social cohesion should be considered, for instance through ensuring that DRR strategies utilize natural infrastructure interventions whilst also maintaining the cohesion of displaced communities.
- 4.1.15. The income generation and livelihood diversification activities of the GoMP, including gender equality issues, align strongly with the Skills and Market Development Domain. Similarly, the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) activities align with the Health Domain, especially in the areas of health literacy for vulnerable people. A challenge remains, however, to ensure that any extension to the project aligns biodiversity and natural resource conservation within the Swiss Cooperation Programme Myanmar. Wetland wise use depends on appropriate and robust governance. Therefore, it is suggested that any future focus should be on natural resource governance and ensuring that the appropriate institutional structure is established to guarantee the long-term maintenance of the ecological character of the GoM Ramsar Site.

Relevance

- 4.1.16. The overall goal of the project emphasises biodiversity conservation and the fact that human communities depend on it for their livelihoods and well-being. The overall impact logic of the project is valid. If the biodiversity is conserved and sustainably managed through a sound governance structure then livelihoods and resilience can be enhanced.
- 4.1.17. However, within the Outcome Framework, even though they are not to be considered in isolation and significant synergies exist among the main outcomes, a question remains as to whether the outcomes, despite being non-sequential, are presenting in the wrong order. Arguably the priority is to establish the appropriate governance (Outcome 3) in order to conserve the biodiversity through good management (Outcome 2), as livelihoods and human well-being depend on it; in order to secure communities' resilience and livelihoods (Outcome 1). The current presentation and ordering may be providing a sub-conscious or psychologically barrier to the project partners and the wider stakeholders which undermines the integrated and synergistic nature of the outcomes. Consideration needs to be given on how to redress this balance over the remainder of the project and beyond.
- 4.1.18. The Outcome Framework has a weak emphasis on direct biodiversity conservation, with only five of the 37 output indicators having a strong link to activities which will directly conserve biodiversity, and consequently underpin the overall impact of the project. Therefore, the emphasis appears to be placed on ensuring that the governance structure is appropriate and well-functioning in order to secure sustainable livelihoods and improved resilience. Whilst this approach can be robust, it also introduces the risk that if livelihoods are enhanced (for instance

through increased rice production or increases in fish catch) and the governance structure is weak (through limitations in practical implementation rather than design) the appropriate checks and balances may not be in place to ensure that biodiversity is being conserved and that the livelihoods are genuinely sustainable in the long-term, and particularly with reference to inter-generational equity.

- 4.1.19. The project's ambitions demonstrably align with a variety of policy priorities, including the MSDP, which clearly states that: *"Myanmar's rich endowment of natural resources proffers a cornucopia of benefits, as well as some risks. The Government of Myanmar recognises that the natural environment is the foundation upon which Myanmar's social, cultural and economic development may be sustained"*. However, the MTR consultation process clearly demonstrated that this message is not widely understood or appreciated by stakeholders across all sectors. A significant mis-connect remains, particularly at the village level.

Effectiveness

- 4.1.20. The project has undoubtedly delivered significant achievements. The MTR consultation process at the village level highlighted the following key achievements:

- The establishment of the Village Development Committees (VDCs) is considered to have substantially improved governance and livelihoods at a local level within the project villages consulted.
- The VDCs and the associated governance structure that has been established by the project has enhanced vertical integration, from the village level to the Township level, with government departments.
- Access to finance through the Revolving Fund (RF) was repeatedly highlighted as a key benefit to the local communities.
- The development and implementation of capital items and infrastructure, such as drinking water ponds, seedbanks, fisheries training centre, village level training centres, WASH infrastructure, boats, ice store, ice boxes, etc., are considered as major benefits to the local communities.
- Good capacity building has been achieved through training and knowledge exchange, particularly in the agricultural, fisheries and alternate income generation sectors.
- A serendipitous and subtle or intangible benefit of the project has been to demonstrably empower local communities and enhance their ability to communicate and self-manage, along with increasing their confidence and self-worth.

- 4.1.21. Beyond the villages, the project has also made effective progress on a range of activities, including:

- The vertical governance structure, from the Union level to the village level, is considered to be highly appropriate. Whilst it is recognised by the project partners that strengthening is still required, good progress is being made.
- The establishment of Coastal Resource Management Committees (CRMCs) at Region and State level is considered significant as these will provide vital decision-making fora and will provide strong connectivity to Union level committees and policies.
- The continued development of the Working Groups (WGs) under the CRMCs at Township level is considered vital and a positive achievement. However, it is

acknowledged that further work is required to ensure that the WGs are genuinely functioning entities.

- The Arcadis report on coastal erosion has provided a critical evidence-base for future strategic decision-making across the GoM. It is essential that the conclusions of this report are not only recognised but actively integrated into future land use planning and zonation and the overall management of the GoM.

4.1.22. Progress is being made against many outputs, but work remains on-going and is currently being addressed through the project activities. To ensure compliance with the overall project goal and the achievement of outcomes rather than outputs, sound progress is required on the following elements:

- Income generation through skill training and livelihood diversification activities have resulted in some women and men receiving additional income and the establishment of self-employment business opportunities. However, the overall impact and sustainability of this requires a thorough evaluation and review.
- New co-management fishing zones have been established and are broadly understood by the local communities. However, the MTR is concerned that the criteria and information used to establish these zones, which is robust with regards to fishery considerations, has not demonstrably evaluated the wider biodiversity conservation implications of these areas.
- Some progress has been made on the status of threats to key species and critical habitats. However, other than the waterbird surveys coordinated by BANCA (which would continue independently from the project due to commitments made from other donor organisations, such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and through other initiatives such as the Saving the Spoon-billed sandpiper project), there is limited evidence of systematic assessments of other key species or habitats.
- Capacity building is on-going in the university sector and demonstrating some good results. However, whilst research has been conducted there is limited evidence of integration of the results within wider project activities. The MTR considers that the project remains weak in several areas, but particularly in fish and fisheries research. A research priority for the project should be on fisheries and lower level biodiversity e.g. crabs, benthic infauna.
- Although six species of interest were studied along the east coast of the GoM¹⁰ and nine economically important fish species have been mentioned in GoMMP, only one species (*Seabass *Lates calcarifer**) was common in both papers. Therefore, one or more priority fish species should be identified and related fisheries research should be conducted by Bago and Mawlamyine Universities in cooperation, collaboration and participation with local communities and the Department of Fisheries (DoF). There are inconsistencies in the reporting on the fisheries research conducted under the project. For instance, the wrong English name (e.g. Mango fish for Threadfin or Paradise threadfin) or non-existing names (e.g. Smallheaded ribbon fish for Ribbon fish; Butter catfish for Pungas or River catfish) have been used. Reporting on weight (g or kg) categories have been titled as size categories¹¹. Due to the importance of understanding the status of the fisheries within the GoM, it is critical that the opportunity for

¹⁰ 2019 Annual Progress Report (P2Y2), GoMP, Annex 7. Fisheries Data Collection and Analysis of Key Species in the Gulf of Mottama, Myanmar.

¹¹ 2019 Annual Progress Report (P2Y2), GoMP, Annex 5, Fisheries Data from the Gulf of Mottama, A Summary of Four Years Fisheries Data Collection in the Gulf of Mottama.

confusion for researchers and management planners is reduced by improving on the consistency and accuracy of data collection.

- Cetaceans are highly migratory species and they occupy the top level of the food chain and, therefore, they depend on the abundant of foods which are at the lower level. Furthermore, Irrawaddy dolphins and dugongs are protected by law and Department of Fisheries issued notification to protect some marine mammals. Therefore, the project needs to ensure that information on these important species is better integrated into fishery resources management practices.
- It is also considered important that the CRMCs actively engage in setting the research agenda and responding to the results of research activities. Interactive events, such as the Research Forum held in December 2019, are good approaches to address this issue.
- Good efforts are being made in the development and implementation of mobile telephone applications for data collection in the farming and fisheries sectors. However, greater collaboration is required between the universities and local communities to develop citizen science initiatives such as these that also monitor the biodiversity of the GoM and provide essential conservation monitoring data.
- The structure of the CRMCs at State and Region levels and Coastal Resources Management Working Committees (CRMWC) at State/Region and District levels are strong. However, concerns remain regarding the availability of key government officials to attend meetings and to engage effectively due to other time commitments. Furthermore, the links with the village level stakeholders will be more efficient when township level CRMWCs are formed. However, at present, links between the village level and township level offices could be improved.

4.1.23. Despite the multiple achievements, to ensure effectiveness, a range of challenges remain. These include:

- The development of an appropriate and coherent Ramsar Site management plan and the establishment of a robust governance structure for the Ramsar Site (as discussed above).
- The overall profile and importance of the conservation of biodiversity remains weak within the project. This is evidenced by the limited representation or engagement of the Local Conservation Groups (LCGs) at village level and the fact that not all villages have an active LCG. Despite the fact that several of the LDCs are a legacy of conservation efforts that pre-date the project, the MTR has revealed that they are poorly constituted and have limited voice at VDC or other levels.
- At the village level, income generation has justifiably focussed on farming, fishing and other activities. However, there is no coherent income generation plan to underwrite and finance current of future ecological monitoring and assessment, or the management of the Ramsar Site. There is a genuine concern that there will be limited funds available for future monitoring, patrolling (and specifically Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) patrolling) or assessment of conservation-related efforts. The donor-dependency on this element will remain even if the governance structure is robust and livelihoods are being enhanced. Considerable thought needs to be given to developing a sustainable financing mechanism to underwrite future ecological and

conservation work. Without this, there will be limited data or evidence to assess the ultimate impact or sustainability of the project.

- There are many donor-led projects active within the wider State and Region. The GoMP has sought some good integration with other projects. However, there are a significant number of other projects, for instance on waste management in Bago Region, that have the potential to deliver significant synergies and economies of scale. The MTR is concerned that, as has been evidenced elsewhere¹², that a degree of commercial and political self-interest has also worked against closer coordination among the project partners and wider outreach and engagement.
- For rational and sensible reasons, the GoMP is only engaging directly with a minority of villages in the GoM coastal area. However, for the project to deliver genuine success over the entire GoM ecosystem, it is vital that the positives delivered through the project villages are extend to non-project villages. The MTR heard how some villages are currently achieving this informally through local discussions among, and knowledge-exchange with, neighbouring villages. Whilst such approaches are to be commended, the project needs to develop a more systematic approach to engagement with the non-project villages in order to maximise impact and ensure delivery on the overall goal.
- Strategies for DRR need to be integrated from the village level, where good progress has been made, to a larger scale in order to develop a sustainable strategy that will function within the wider geomorphological dynamics of the GoM.
- The project has genuinely enhanced livelihoods, particularly in the farming and fishing sectors. However, there is a risk that these efforts will fail to achieve their maximum impact, not through any inherent failing of the project, but due to a lack of infrastructure needed to link villagers to markets, namely adequate roads. Whilst this is not a direct project responsibility, a solution needs to found and the overall issue needs to be addressed through the governance structure.

4.1.24. The project effectiveness in the context of the Swiss Cooperation Programme 2019-2023 has been discussed above. Scope remains to align with the relevant domains. However, careful consideration needs to be given as to how conservation of the unique biodiversity and the sustainable management of natural resources will be delivered beyond the end of the GoMP.

Efficiency

4.1.25. The SDC is investing a considerable sum of money (c. CHF 8m) in the project. The expectation should be that the return on this investment will deliver a net benefit. Any cost-benefit analysis (CBA) should extend beyond simple value chains and consider the wider values delivered to society as a result of the project's interventions in the GoM. It is important that the project understands the potential for perverse incentives and unintended consequences to arise as a result of its interventions. For instance, is the intensification of rice production resulting in unintended eutrophication of watercourses?

4.1.26. The MTR acknowledges that such analysis is complex and immensely challenging. Insights to the efficiency have been garnered through the *ex-ante* CBA undertaken in July 2018. This analysis has concluded:

¹² Fuchs, A., Nunnenkamp, P., Ohler, H. (2013). Why Donors of Foreign Aid Do Not Coordinate: The Role of Competition for Export Markets and Political Support. Kiel Institute Working Paper no. 1825. Kiel, Germany: Kiel Institute for the World Economy

- The project has invested considerably in enhancing rice farming at the project villages. However, the rice farming profitability is fragile with a benefit-cost ratio (BCR) near to 1. It is not clear how much this would change, and particularly over the long-term, if all project costs were included and a thorough assessment of other externalities, such as water pollution, loss of biodiversity, soil erosion, increased emissions through greater transport requirements, etc. were taken into account.
- The CBA reports that the benefits for fishermen and fish collectors are marginal and at risk from a range of external factors. From the analysis it is not clear how fish catch is being recorded and whether a standard metric is being used for catch per unit effort (CPUE). The value of fish catch per year does not necessarily reflect the effort involved and therefore the resource costs for fishermen. Similarly, there is an assumption that all fish caught can have access to markets. However, concerns raised by the fishermen indicate that quality of the catch at landings mainly depends on the storage during the fishing as well as subsequent transport to market.
- The *ex-ante* CBA only provides an insight to the cost efficiencies associated with the project. A more detailed and deeper analysis is planned towards the end of 2021. Currently, the analysis has adopted traditional market-driven economic analysis of the costs and benefits. It is important that the subsequent evaluation is more systemic and considers traditional economic analysis combined with a more nuanced assessment of value, beyond simple monetary concepts. For instance, the provision of a drinking water pond for a village can be evaluated in using a replacement cost approach (the cost of buying water from another village) but this only reflects a singular CBA. There are other factors which will also deliver benefits, such as the time saved in having to visit other villages to buy water, the transport costs, the impacts on health of local climate cooling produced by the proximity to a drinking water pond, the sense of social cohesion and self-reliance, provision of habitats for dragonflies, etc. All of these are values but only some of them are expressed in traditional economic use or non-use values. An attempt should be made to understand the plurality of values delivered by the project and how these might change beyond 2021.

4.1.27. The MTR notes that in 2019 changes have been made with regards to the Conservation Officer and the Management Plan Coordinator (MPC). Both of these staff members have moved to Helvetas from BANCA and IUCN respectively. Given the concerns raised through the MTR regarding the importance of the Ramsar Site management planning process and the weak representation that biodiversity has within the project, it is concerning that these important positions are now within Helvetas. This is in no way intended to be a criticism of Helvetas *per se*, rather BANCA and IUCN both have expertise and track records in these fields and therefore, irrespective of the direct cost implications, it would be expected that there would be an overall added value to the project of utilising the institutional knowledge and expertise of the two organisations. Consequently, a question mark remains as to whether the deployment of these positions represents genuine value for money to the project and whether the long-term cost-effectiveness to the project of the revised arrangements for delivering on the key biodiversity elements that underpin the overall project goal have been effectively evaluated and are delivering value for money.

4.1.28. Comments are provided above regarding the potential to improve synergies with other donor-funded projects active around the GoM. However, it is estimated that there are some 16 active SDC-funded projects in Myanmar. During the consultation limited reference was made to any of

these. However, a review of the extant SDC projects suggests that there may be some added value and potential for mutual support, particularly in the areas of livelihoods, poverty reduction and land governance, which could be pursued.

Sustainability

- 4.1.29. The project is making good progress especially at the village level with regards to improving sustainability. However, question marks remain regarding the long-term viability of the income generation activities, especially through the skill training. In addition, the overall sustainability and wise use of the Ramsar Site remains a challenge, as described above.
- 4.1.30. However, there are, without a doubt, reasons to believe that the potential for long-term sustainability exists. The governance structure is robust and fit for purpose. At the State and Region level the government institutions need to be empowered in order to secure their long-term commitment to the sustainable outcomes. Without a strong governance structure which is sustainable from both top-down and bottom-up there remains a risk that the overall objectives may be compromised. The project partners recognise the current weaknesses in the institutions and across the vertical and horizontal aspects of the governance structure, and plans are in place to address these over the remaining period of the project. The WGs need to be strengthened so that they integrate more fully at the Township level, such as through the Fisheries Development Associations (FDCs) and the Coastal Farmers Development Associations (CFDAs) At the village level, the VDCs need to ensure that there is better integration among the, the farming and fishing groups, the Income Generation Groups (IGGs) and the LCGs in order to secure the conservation interest and the sustainable use of natural resources.
- 4.1.31. The long-term financial sustainability remains challenging, especially with regards to environmental and ecological monitoring, patrolling and assessment. Without adequate funding, it will be a challenge to demonstrate the long-term sustainability and wise use of natural resources. Engagement with the private sector might help to secure some funding if novel avenues are investigated, such as with microfinanciers or the fishing industry. Alternatively, other novel approaches to establishing a secure funding base for long-term conservation-related activities need to be explored to ensure that this vital element is delivered beyond the life of the project.

Gender and social equity

- 4.1.32. The project is making very sound progress with regards to addressing gender issues, particularly at a village level. There is very good female representation on the VDCs and in the administration of the RF. It is clear that within the VDCs, female members more likely to be in IGGs than other groups and that there is a clear gendered occupational segmentation at village level. However, females are more likely to access funding, either through the RF or other microfinancing, than men.
- 4.1.33. With regards to the take up of skills training and the opportunities for self-employment or paid employment, based on the interviews held and the information reviewed, the uptake is clearly greater for females rather than males. This is probably a reflection of the occupational segmentation within the villages and the lack of opportunity for men to leave the village to receive training.

- 4.1.34. A further disparity is clear within the university environment. As is reflected elsewhere in Myanmar¹³, there is a strong gender bias towards females in universities, both within the faculty staff and the student cohort. However, it is beyond the expectation of the project to tackle this issue.
- 4.1.35. The outcomes of the project are contributing to the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (2013–2022). The gender specific outcomes should be mapped against this plan and clearly communicated to demonstrate how the GoMP is delivering on a broad range of synergistic policy platforms.
- 4.1.36. No issues were encountered regarding ethnic or religious bias. However, as a result of discussions with the private fishing company, concerns are raised regarding the potential for illegal fishing activities in the GoM to be reliant on slave or forced labour. The governance structure needs to ensure that this threat is addressed and any such activity dealt with appropriately.
- 4.1.37. The MTR review, as identified previously, has some residual concerns regarding the ultimate success of the project in achieving inter-generational equity. Failure to secure the sustainable use of natural resources and the conservation of biodiversity could potentially compromise the welfare of future generations.
- 4.1.38. The RF is producing good opportunities for disadvantaged groups to access finance and to improve their livelihoods. However, different villages have developed different approaches to the administration and prioritisation of loans across different. Whilst this independence should be welcome, if it is introducing any level of discrimination it needs to be challenged and rectified. The project needs to review the processes in place in the villages for administering the RF and ensure that opportunities, even if they are unintentional, for discrimination are removed.

Impact

- 4.1.39. The project is making good progress towards the various outputs. However, outputs are not the same as outcomes. A major challenge for the project is to shift the focus towards considering whether delivery on an output equates to delivery on an outcome. For instance, Output 2.3.B plans to undertake a valuation of mangrove ecosystem services. A report will be the output. However, the outcome will be dependent on how the information in the report is communicated and used and whether it assists in achieving the sustainable use of natural resources. Similarly, Output 1.1.G aims to raise awareness of WASH issues. The output indicator is the number of people who have had their knowledge and awareness raised. However, the outcome is improved human health and a reduction in common illnesses so that human communities can benefit from the awareness raising.
- 4.1.40. When the Outcomes are considered, Outcome 1 is furthest off achieving its output indicators. This is surprising as the consultation process with the various VDCs suggested that, despite some concerns regarding the viability and success of the skills training, many villagers were benefitting from enhanced livelihoods and improved income. Therefore, the observed underachievement may be an artefact of the scale of the target, not the achievements of the project.

¹³ Asian Development Bank, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund, and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (2016). *Gender Equality and Women's Rights in Myanmar: A Situation Analysis*. Mandaluyong City, Philippines: Asian Development Bank. pp251.

- 4.1.41. Ostensibly, Outcome 2 is making good progress against the indicators. However, closer inspection suggests that this might not be the case. The appropriateness of the locations of the fishing areas needs to be more rigorously and transparently assessed. The results of such an assessment then need to feed into a robust zonation exercise for the entire Ramsar Site. Secondly, Outcome 2.B conflates the GoM Management Plan (produced in 2019) with annual action plans. Currently, no evidence of annual action plans has been provided or is reported in the Annual Progress Report (P2Y2). Work on the status of threats, key species and critical habitats has been limited and, whilst there is some good input to CEPA activities, there seems to be limited practical translation of the results of surveys into proactive management activities. The MTR acknowledges that the project has made good progress towards the elimination of shorebird hunting. However, the production of a report (an output) should not be conflated with a successful outcome. The project needs to ensure that the LCGs actively engage in the elimination of shorebird hunting and enforcement is provided by the government.
- 4.1.42. The governance structure established has cemented progress towards Outcome 3. The structure is good, but the project recognises the need to strengthen vertical and horizontal linkages. A key shortcoming is the lack of a single body responsible for the Ramsar Site. This situation is further confused by the updated RIS which specifies that “*Local governance and integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) mechanisms will be developed after designation and will involve the Mon state relevant Ministries*”. Whilst the project has promoted ideas for future management of the Ramsar Site through the CRMCs, efforts need to be made over the final phase of the project to clarify the situation and to establish and constitute an appropriate body to address this shortcoming over the long-term.
- 4.1.43. The project is also generating a variety of information from numerous sources. However, the project needs to evaluate better whether the form of communication is appropriate to effect changes in behaviour. The vision for CEPA within the context of the Ramsar Convention is “*People taking action for the wise use of wetlands*”. The project needs to evaluate its various information generation and exchange activities against this criterion and assess whether the CEPA activity does (or does not) result in people taking action for the wise use of wetlands.

Other observations

- 4.1.44. As the project moves into its final phase, and also looking beyond the completion of the project, it is clear that a significant amount of work is required to change the overall culture of the GoMP. There is an overriding impression provided by all the stakeholders consulted of ‘the project’. On one hand this is a positive reflection of the influence and reach of the GoMP. However, and more worryingly, it also reflects a sense of donor-dependency and an undermining of local ownership and responsibility. Unfortunately, this is reinforced by a logo and branding culture (on reports, sign boards, buildings, etc.) that perpetuates a sense of ‘the project’. The omnipresent branding undermines domestic government legitimacy¹⁴ and creates a psychological barrier to change, empowerment and adoption of ownership. There is an urgent need for the project to shift away from the use of donor and NGO logos and replace them with local institutional insignia or badges.

¹⁴ Dietrich, S., Mahmud, M., & Winters, M. S. (2018). Foreign aid, foreign policy, and domestic government legitimacy: Experimental evidence from Bangladesh. *The Journal of Politics*, 80(1), 133-148.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

- 5.1.1. The overall conclusion of the MTR is that the project making significant progress towards both its outputs and outcomes. Almost two thirds of the evaluation criteria were classed as 'very good'. The evaluation reflects the considerable efforts of the project partners to ensure that they are working towards their collective goal across wide areas of the project.
- 5.1.2. However, the MTR has identified certain key areas where progress is being made but needs some further efforts to keep it on track, and more significantly, there are shortcomings which, unless adequately addressed, will compromise the future legacy of the project and the considerable investment of funds and efforts. The areas of concern have been discussed in detail in the previous section. Below, a series of recommendations are provided. Where appropriate, the MTR has also made suggestions for the project partners to consider. These are not intended to be prescriptive, rather they are merely proposed in attempt to assist the project deliver on the recommendation.

5.2. Recommendations

- 5.2.1. The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the MTR. Where appropriate, further suggestions are provided for consideration by the project partners. The recommendations and suggestions relate to activities both within the remainder of the GoMP and also to aspects of a potential exit strategy.

Recommendation 1

Development and adoption of a single coherent management plan which adheres to Ramsar Convention's published guidance and provides an exemplar for future sites in Myanmar.

Suggestions

- 5.2.2. The project partners need to plan out an integrated and participatory approach to Ramsar Site management planning that builds on the existing GOM Management Plan. The plan should be embedded in the principles of integrated coastal zone management. The project partners should seek to steer the process, but the actual plan production should be under the ownership of the body that will be responsible for its delivery.

Recommendation 2

Establish a clearly defined body responsible for the management of the Ramsar Site.

Suggestions

- 5.2.3. The project partners need to work with the CRMCs and investigate the best approach to the development and implement of the Ramsar Site management plan. For instance, a transboundary WG, comprising representatives of each State and Region, could be created. Approval for the management body should be sought from the NCRMC and the NWC.

Recommendation 3

Develop a coherent strategy to address DRR and associated geomorphological changes along the coastline of the GoM and integrate this within the single Ramsar Site Management Plan.

Recommendation 4

Promote and demonstration how the project is contributing to wider policy frameworks in order to enhance institutional buy-in.

Suggestions

- 5.2.4. Establish standing agenda items for the CRMCs which seek policy updates from the various government departments on the relevant policies.
- 5.2.5. Produce CEPA material that highlights the contribution of the project outcomes to different policy initiatives.

Recommendation 5

Align GoMP and any exit strategy to natural resource governance, with a particular emphasis on the Ramsar Site, to ensure delivery under the Swiss Cooperation Programme Myanmar 2019-2023.

Suggestions

- 5.2.6. If a third tranche of funding is sought from SDC, the emphasis of the project needs to focus on future governance of the Ramsar Site as a way to deliver sustainable and equitable livelihoods and protect critical natural resources.

Recommendation 6

Improve the emphasis on biodiversity conservation and the wise use of natural resources within the GoMP.

Suggestions

- 5.2.7. Expand the role and profile of the LCGs at village level. This could be through the re-deployment of BANCA, as they are a well-known and respected organisation, or through other civil society organisations (CSOs).
- 5.2.8. Through the development of the Ramsar Site management plan, identify key research questions and possible citizen science programmes so that both universities and the LCGs respond to genuine management needs.

Recommendation 7

Conduct a robust evaluation of the skills training activities and develop clear recommendations for future actions.

Suggestions

- 5.2.9. Consider bringing trainers to the villages, particularly during the no-fishing period, to increase the likelihood of uptake from villagers. Consider also a diversification of the training to provide other skills such as general machine maintenance and repair. Investigate the potential to provide advance training for the villagers who have received basic training in the garment and tailoring skills.

Recommendation 8

Enhance knowledge of key species and habitats (including those specifically highlighted in the RIS) and improve understanding of the threats and strategies for protection and restoration in order to inform the Ramsar Site Management Plan.

Suggestions

- 5.2.10. In developing the Ramsar Site management plan, baseline data will be required on the species and habitats present. Work with universities, other donor-funded projects and through citizen science to develop and disseminate knowledge of species and habitats.

Recommendation 9

Develop collaborative fishery research priorities to be conducted by *inter alia* the CRMCs, Department of Marine Science, Department of Zoology, Department of Economics, Department of Geography at Bago and Mawlamyine Universities and, Department of Fisheries and Myanmar Fisheries Federation in Bago Region and Mon State.

Recommendation 10

Modify fishing log books in order to collect additional useful information which can contribute to fishery studies and fisheries management.

Suggestions

- 5.2.11. Ensure that a standardised and universal CPUE value is used so that more meaningful analysis can be conducted. Work with experts to standardise this information. An example of a possible approach is provided in Appendix 7 and further information has been summarised in Annex 7 of the GoMP's 2019 Annual Progress Report (P2Y2).

Recommendation 11

Develop a sustainable financing mechanism that will underwrite the future costs of ecological monitoring, SMART patrolling and wider conservation activities.

Suggestions

- 5.2.12. Investigate whether money invested in the RF could be used to support local actions to be undertaken by the LCGs. This might involve creating an interest premium that is paid into a dedicated fund for conservation-related activities. Discuss with other microfinanciers the potential for them to provide funding to assess the sustainability of their loans with regards to the management and conservation of natural resources.

Recommendation 12

Improve integration with other donor-funded projects within the GoM area, as well as with synergistic SDC-funded projects.

Suggestions

- 5.2.13. Hold a knowledge exchange seminar among all organisations working in the GoM to identify synergies, overlaps and duplication. Ensure that the CRMCs are also invited so that the government has no excuse to be complicit in the duplication of effort.

Recommendation 13

Develop a strategy for out-reach from the project villages to the non-project villages.

Suggestions

- 5.2.14. Based on the village tracts, identify project villages that can act as knowledge hubs for information exchange. Develop training and communication materials that project villages can

use to assist with capacity building in non-project villages. Engage with non-project villages throughout the development of the Ramsar Site management plan.

Recommendation 14

Work with appropriate government institutions, and through the project governance structure, to ensure long-term access to markets.

Suggestions

- 5.2.15. Provide evidence to the CRMCs on the costs and benefits of enhancing access to markets for both fishing and farming communities.

Recommendation 15

Conduct a more rigorous evaluation of the benefits of the project and particular the multiplicity of values.

Suggestions

- 5.2.16. As part of the project evaluation, but also to inform other policy frameworks and CEPA activities, consider integrating an ecosystem services evaluation with more recent thinking on multiple values as promulgated by Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)¹⁵ in order to fully recognised the return on the investment across the GoM.

Recommendation 16

Undertake a systematic review of the RF governance, prioritization criteria and beneficiaries to ensure that the financing mechanisms are equitable and reach the most vulnerable members of society.

Recommendation 17

Complete a review of the CEPA activities and ensure that they result in people taking action for the wise use of wetlands.

Recommendation 18

Progressively develop local ownership, empowerment and branding in order to embed the project within the local communities.

Suggestions

- 5.2.17. Particularly along highways, install signs at the boundaries of the Ramsar Site. Develop insignia for the two CRMCs.

Recommendation 19

Training on marine mammal stranding response and sea turtle by-catch should be conducted in both Bago Region and Mon State.

Suggestions

- 5.2.18. Ensure that knowledge on the response to stranded marine mammals and the issues relating to sea turtles by-catch are fully understood and supported at village level.

¹⁵ Kumar, R., McInnes, R.J., Everard, M., Gardner, R.C., Kulindwa, K.A.A., Wittmer, H. and Infante Mata, D. (2017). *Integrating multiple wetland values into decision-making*. Ramsar Policy Brief No. 2. Gland, Switzerland: Ramsar Convention Secretariat. 9pp.

6. Appendices

Appendix 1: List of abbreviations

| | |
|----------|---|
| BANCA | Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association |
| BCR | Benefit-cost ratio |
| CBA | Cost-benefit analysis |
| CBDRM | Community-Based Disaster Risk Management |
| CEPA | Communications, capacity building, education, participation and awareness |
| CFDA | Coastal Farmers Development Associations |
| CHF | Swiss Franc |
| CLCMGoMP | Community-Led Coastal Management in the Gulf of Mottama Project |
| CNRMP | Coastal Natural Resources Management Plan |
| CPEU | Catch per unit effort |
| CRMC | Coastal Resources Management Committee |
| CRMWC | Coastal Resources Management Working Committee |
| CSO | Civil society organisations |
| DAC | Development Assistance Committee |
| DoF | Department of Fisheries |
| DRM | Disaster Risk Management |
| DRR | Disaster Risk Reduction |
| FDA | Fisheries Development Association |
| GoM | Gulf of Mottama |
| GoMP | Gulf of Mottama Project |
| GoMMP | Gulf of Mottama Management Plan |
| ha | Hectares |
| IGG | Income Generation Group |
| IPBES | Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services |
| IUCN | International Union for Conservation of Nature |
| LCG | Local Conservation Group |
| MPC | Management Plan Coordinator |
| MSDP | Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan |
| MTR | Mid-Term Review |
| NAG | Network Activities Group |
| NCRMC | National Coastal Resources Management Committee |
| NDC | Nationally Determined Contributions |
| NWC | National Wetland Committee |
| NWP | National Wetland Policy |
| OECD | Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PCIU | Project Coordination and Implementation Unit |
| RF | Revolving Fund |
| RIS | Ramsar Information Sheet |
| SDC | Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation |

| | |
|--------|---|
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SMART | Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool |
| ToR | Terms of Reference |
| UNFCCC | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change |
| VDC | Village Development Committee |
| WASH | Water, Sanitation and Hygiene |
| WG | Working Group |

Appendix 2: Project outcomes, objectives, outputs and activities

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Overall Goal (Impact) | The unique biodiversity of the GoM is conserved and sustainably developed to benefit human communities that depend on it. | | |
| Project Specific Objective | The implementation of the GoM CRNM plan has been supported and results in improved livelihood security for vulnerable women and men in targeted coastal areas of the GoM. | | |
| By Outcome | Outcomes (Objectives) | Outputs (Results) | Activities |
| Outcome 1 | Livelihoods are secured and diversified to build communities' resilience | 1.1. Improve and/or diversify fisheries and on-farm livelihoods through skills and market system development | 1.1.1 Assess and prioritise potential livelihoods improvements 1.1.2 Facilitate applied agricultural research; Assess and test value chain opportunities in fisheries and farming, livelihoods 1.1.3 Disseminate and promote implementation of successful approaches 1.1.4 Facilitate access to affordable credit and PPPs to support new and/or improved livelihoods and SMEs 1.1.5 Secure access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene |
| | | 1.2. Develop off-farm options through skills and market system development | 1.2.1 Carry out skills needs and opportunities assessment based on labour markets demands 1.2.2 Deliver skills training for villagers and youth (off-farm) 1.2.3 Carry out study on migration patterns for regional migration 1.2.4 Design specific technical and life skills training for migrants, with special focus on youth |
| | | 1.3. Support communities for disaster risk management, planning and adaptation | 1.3.1 Include CBDRM into Village Action Plans 1.3.2 Organize education, awareness and behaviour change on DRM in all target villages |
| Outcome 2 | Coastal Natural Resource use is sustainable and well-managed and biodiversity is conserved | 2.1 Produce and use knowledge for effective CNR Management and biodiversity conservation | 2.1.1 Build capacity for research and science writing at Mawlamyine University, Bago University 2.1.2 Develop an integrated research strategy to guide ecological, physical and social science research across partners and institutions 2.1.3 Research, mapping and documentation feeding into knowledge platforms 2.1.4 Conduct participatory learning and action of project and GoM management actions |

| | | | |
|------------------|--|--|--|
| | | 2.2 Practise inclusive co-management of CNR at the village, township, district and State/Region levels | 2.2.1 Restore critical habitats for key species through science-based management measures, based on digital natural resource mapping, including mitigation measures for threats 2.2.2 Build village-level capacity for co-management, with an initial focus on fisheries and lining to biodiversity conservation 2.2.3 Build capacity for surveillance, patrol and enforcement across levels 2.2.4 Synthesise and integrate information from resource and resource-use mapping |
| | | 2.3 Promote ecosystem-based DRM to increase resilience in communities | 2.3.1 Conduct erosion and land allocation study, assessment and planning |
| Outcome 3 | Coastal Natural Resources Governance is coordinated and effective, and awareness on the GoM values is raised | 3.1 Strengthen capacities of governance institutions | 3.1.1 Facilitate organising and strengthening of groups/associations and multi-stakeholder platforms for co-management 3.1.2 Support development, strengthening and promotion of CRMC (including Fishery Partnership Platforms) and CRMC working groups at all levels 3.1.3 Define and mainstream practical gender and inclusive governance strategies and actions for the project 3.1.4 Support the political process of the expansion of the Ramsar Site designation 3.1.5 Promote information exchange between GoM Governance institutions and other co-management projects |
| | | 3.2 Support adaptation and enforcement of policies and laws on coastal natural resource management | 3.2.1 Review and analyse State/Regional existing policies and laws relevant to GoM natural resource management and livelihoods 3.2.2 Support dialogue and consultations of State/Regional and National Policies and Laws among stakeholders 3.2.3 Advocate (based on review/analysis and consultations) on State/Regional and National policies and laws 3.2.4 Support tools, methodologies and resources for implementation and enforcement of policies and laws (including curricula for Fishery Development and Research Collaboration Centre and Mawlamyine University) |
| | | 3.3 Improve awareness and knowledge-sharing on the unique values of the GoM promoting behaviour change and co-management | 3.3.1 Support the development of GoM-relevant curricula for schools, villagers and other primary stakeholders and conduct CEPA training 3.3.2 Establish knowledge sharing platforms to communicate information within project and with stakeholders 3.3.3 Raise awareness through collaboration with media (including citizen journalism, social media campaigns, media trainings, events) |

Appendix 3: Terms of reference: Mid-Term Review

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Contract no: | 7F-09030.02.01 |
| No of project/donor/country: | 81054435/SDC/Myanmar |
| Office/project name: | Gulf of Mottama (GoMP) |
| Contract Duration | from signature to April 30, 2020 |

Background

The SDC mandate Gulf of Mottama Project (GoMP) is implemented by a consortium led by HELVETAS Swiss Inter-cooperation, with core partners Network Activities Group (NAG), a local Myanmar NGO, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), a Swiss-based environmental network. The project is conceived to address current disparities in particular in fishery-based livelihoods while safeguarding the unique but at risk important biodiversity and ecology of the Gulf of Mottama. The first phase of the Project (at that time still called CLCMGoMP) ran from September 2015 until April 14, 2018. The second phase of the GoMP started on April 15, 2018 and is expected to be completed on December 31, 2021, with a potential third phase.

The project contributes to the Swiss Cooperation Programme Myanmar's (SCPM) Peace, Statebuilding and Protection domain overall goal aiming at: "The people of Myanmar benefit from inclusive peace agreements and from more accountable, decentralised and democratic institutions that promote public participation. Vulnerable and conflict-affected persons are better protected from violence and disasters, experience better respect of their human rights and gain improved access to public services, land and natural resources." The project contributes to the SCPM's outcome 1.2 on Governance: "More accountable, efficient and decentralized institutions, a stronger participation of civil society, vulnerable communities and women in decision-making processes and a more equitable access to public services and sustainably managed land and natural resources, contribute to conflict transformation, social cohesion and statebuilding. It will be more specifically measured against the Aggregated Reference Indicator (ARI) on 'Policies and their implementation regarding the sustainable use of natural resources including fisheries and biodiversity'. **The goal** of the GoMP is defined as: "The unique biodiversity of the GoM is conserved and sustainably developed in order to benefit human communities that depend on it."

The Specific Objective of the project (or Project Impact) is to ensure the development of an enabling environment for the implementation of the GoM Coastal Natural Resources Management Plan (CNRMP) and support its implementation to result in an improved livelihood security for vulnerable women and men in targeted coastal areas of the GoM. To achieve this objective, the project will support a series of interrelated changes organized around three major outcomes, building on the management strategies from the GoM CNRMP which are:

1. Livelihoods are secured and diversified to build communities' resilience.
2. Coastal Natural Resource use is sustainable and well-managed, and biodiversity is conserved.
3. Coastal Natural Resources Governance is coordinated and effective, and awareness on the GoM values is raised.

The project is about transforming a system of exploitation of natural resource to make it more sustainable and beneficial in the long term for local communities. Accordingly, the project reflects the global conservation value of the GoM and the opportunity to implement the GoM Coastal Natural Resources Management Plan.

Taking into account above mentioned project outcomes for phase 2 and priority working approaches, the mid-term review shall assess the following:

1. Does the strategy and impact logic effectively support achieving the outcomes?
2. Are the consortium cooperation framework, capacities and collaborations conducive to efficiently deliver expected results?
3. Is the project on track to producing desired impact and reaching the specific project objective?

The mid-term review shall follow the [OECD DAC evaluation criteria](#) and include the [assessment grid for the evaluation of SDC projects/programmes](#) as an annex.

Expected results (or Output)

In the “Assessment grid for evaluations of SDC projects/programmes” a standardized set of key evaluation questions are displayed. The consultants are tasked to fill in this grid. In addition, the following, more specific questions shall be addressed and answered in the text. These questions are open to refinement and agreement with the partners and consultants.

Context: Have there been significant political, socio-economic and/or environmental changes influencing the project and if yes has the project been able to adapt to it? Are there important context changes to be expected for which the project needs to prepare?

Relevance: Is the project’s impact logic valid and comprehensible? Is the project aiming at the “right thing”? Does the project align well with the new Swiss Cooperation Programme Myanmar?

Sustainability: Is the project contributing to social, ecological and economic sustainability? Is the project set up in such a way that institutional sustainability will be reached? Are the Coastal Natural Resources Management Committees the right institutions to assure institutional sustainability for a sustainable management of natural resources in the Gulf of Mottama? What measures are needed to strengthen institutional sustainability? How can the private sector and civil society be better involved in the governance of the natural resources of the Gulf of Mottama?

Gender and Social Equity: Is the project reaching out to the disadvantaged parts of the population in the Gulf of Mottama? Does the project address gender issues adequately? Are adequate measures in place to “leave no one behind”? Are ethnic and religious composition of the population in the Gulf of Mottama adequately considered in project design and implementation?

Effectiveness: Does the project “do things right”? The mid-term review is asked to assess the project’s institutional approaches, progress towards outcomes and outputs as stated in the logframe to date and to recommend required changes.

- *Is the current Outcome framework an appropriate approach for reaching project objectives e.g. in particular supporting co-management of natural resources, setting up and capacitating the CRMCs alongside livelihood diversification in the frame of Ramsar wise use of natural resources?*
- *What are the project achievements and challenges in meeting respective Outcomes and outputs and desired results in quantity and quality?*
- *What are project strengths and challenges – with remedial recommendations to better leverage existing national or sub-national relevant sector policies and/or strategies? How is the communication between Union and State/Regional level CRMC’s and will the expected outcome be achieved?*
- *How do the results of the research activities undertaken flow into the decision making process of the co-management zones and the CRMC of Mon State and Bago Region?*
- *What are achievements and challenges with recommendations for the project in contributing to and enhancing the new Swiss Cooperation Programme Myanmar?*

Efficiency: Are the project’s resources (human and financial) used efficiently (value for money)? What are insights from the cost-benefit analysis conducted by the project? The GoMP has collaborated with several other SDC financed projects (OneMap Myanmar, SDC Humanitarian Aid on DRR...) – Was this collaboration efficient? Is there scope for more?

Impact: Is the project likely to reach the desired impact? Are there corrective measures to be taken to reach the desired impact, particularly at beneficiary level? In view of a short (2.5 years) final phase of the project with a reduced budget, what is the view of the mid-term review with regard to focus and priorities to reach maximum impact and sustainability?

Main Tasks and Activities of the Assignees

The mid-term review shall

- Familiarize itself with relevant policies on national and state/region level and other guiding documents such as the previous and new Swiss Cooperation Programme Myanmar
- Review relevant project documentation and existing reports
- Develop relevant assessment methodology and tools
- Attend a briefing meeting with SDC and the project implementers
- Carry out interviews as relevant with SDC, Coastal Resources Management Committee members, Project Coordination and Implementation Unit, consortium partners, field team members, partners and peers
- Survey a sample of relevant primary stakeholders in consideration of gender inclusion
- Organize a preliminary in person debriefing with consortium partners and SDC
- Produce a draft report with prioritized recommendations for consultation with SDC and consortium members
- Review comments and produce a final report.

For International Consultant

- Overall responsibility for managing the team, consolidating the inputs and ensuring the quality of the review report, findings and recommendations.
- Tasks as to be defined between the national and international consultant

For Local Consultant

- Tasks as to be defined between the national and international consultant
- Support to logistical arrangements for MTR team as appropriate

Working methodology

- Strategy, process-focused and results-oriented
- Desk review
- Participatory and multi-stakeholder approach
- Combination field visit and in person interviews: individual and/or focus group
- Mapping, analysis, reporting taking into account socio-political context and enabling environment

Time Frame of the assignment

- February-April 2020 assessment and draft report; April 10, 2020 final report
- 17 total days according to final mission schedule technical proposal
- MTR team will develop the details work plan (mission program) together with project team and to be agreed by SDC

Programme/Mission Schedule

| Dates/ timeframe | Activity | Number of days |
|---------------------|---|-------------------|
| 1 By Mar 4 | Desk Review | 1 |
| 2 By Mar 5 | Development of assessment tools | 1 |
| 3 By Mar 6 | Interviews with project team and donor | 1.5 |
| 4 By Mar 11 | Survey community stakeholders | 3 |
| 5 By Mar 14 | Survey private sector stakeholders | 0.5 |
| 6 By Mar 16 | Survey Civil society and academic, other stakeholders | 1 |
| 7 By Mar 17 | Survey government stakeholders (State/Region & Union level) | 2 |
| 8 By Mar 20 | Reporting with recommendations | 3 |
| 9 By Mar 23 | Debriefing in Myanmar for GoMP Steering Committee | 1 |

| | | | | |
|----|-------------|--------------|-------|----|
| 10 | By April 10 | Final Report | | 3 |
| | | | Total | 17 |

All additional days and tasks to those listed above require written pre-agreement between SDC Myanmar and the Consultant(s).

Logistics

The Gulf of Mottama Project will assist in arranging travel and accommodation as part of field visit tasks. There are no other logistical provisions applicable to this consultancy. SDC will provide the domestic flight tickets to Nay Pyi Taw only based on the mission program.

Reporting / Debriefing

The Consultant(s) shall submit relevant report and supporting documentation according to the agreed guidelines and formats with SDC in Yangon.

The final report should not exceed 20 pages, plus annexes, and include:

1. Executive summary – concisely state the most salient findings and recommendations (1-2 p)
2. Table of contents (1-2 p)
3. Contextual background (1-2 p)
4. Purpose of the MTR (1-2 p)
5. Methodology – describe evaluation methods and approaches (1-2 p)
6. Limitations of the MTR – provide any gaps and issues of key technical and/or administrative, if any (1-2 p)
7. Results of investigation, including opportunities for programming/gaps to be filled (3-4 p)
8. Conclusions and recommendations – answers to the key evaluation questions with separate recommendations section (3-4 p)
9. Practical options for the land project ‘expansion’ phase, with main project directions, components for implementation, rationale
10. Annexes – MTR TOR, Assessment Grid for Evaluations and other annexes that document the evaluation methods, schedules, risk analysis of the proposed engagement, interview lists, project logical framework (can be indicative or options), budget, bibliography of key resource documents which should be succinct, pertinent and readable.

Agreed draft and final report and/or supporting documentation e.g. debriefing PPT; mapping/analysis annexes etc. shall be in English and submitted electronically according to agreed ToR timeframes.

Documents

SDC will provide the Consultant(s) the following documents with the understanding that these documents are internal and confidential.

- Complete set of Project Document for phase 2 and relevant annexes e.g. logframe, stakeholder, risk and conflict analysis, implementation illustrations, PRA and other tools
- Political Economy Analysis 2019
- Cost Benefit Analysis 2018
- Contact information for relevant interviewees and stakeholders
- Latest project report(s)

Appendix 4: Assessment grid

| Evaluation Criteria | Key evaluation questions | Specific sub-questions considered during consultation and data review | Evaluation summary score ¹ | Summary of methods and data sources |
|---------------------|---|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| Context | | | | |
| | Have there been significant political changes influencing the project and if yes has the project been able to adapt to it? | Has the project been able to adapt to any changes in government structures, institutions or mandates? | Very good | Desk review of reports and information Interviews with Government Departments Interviews and consultation with Helvetas staff Interviews and consultation with IUCN staff Interviews and consultation with NAG staff Institutional knowledge of consultants |
| | Have there been significant socio-economic changes influencing the project and if yes has the project been able to adapt to it? | Has the socio-economy of the villages changed during the GoMP? Has the socio-economy at a township or State/Region level changed during the GoMP. | Very good | Desk review of reports and information Interviews and consultation with Government Departments Institutional knowledge of consultants |
| | Have there been significant environmental changes influencing the project and if yes has the project been able to adapt to it? | How has the project considered and addressed the extension of the Ramsar Site? How has the dynamic geomorphological nature of the GoM influenced the project? | Poor | Desk review of reports and information, including the updated RIS and the erosion study report Interviews and consultation with Government Departments Institutional knowledge of consultants |
| | Are there important context changes to be expected for which the project needs to prepare? | Are there any political or institutional changes pending which may influence the GoMP? Are there any legislative changes pending which may influence the GoMP? Is there a need for harmonization of policies in order to conserve the unique biodiversity of the GoM? | Very good | Desk review of reports and information, including the Swiss Cooperation Programme Myanmar 2019-2023 Interviews and consultation with Helvetas staff Interviews and consultation with Government Departments Institutional knowledge of consultants |
| Relevance | | | | |
| | Is the project's impact logic valid and comprehensible? | Are there sufficient synergies across the three main outcomes? | Fair | Desk review of reports and information, particularly the project logframe Interviews with villages Interviews with CRMCs |
| | Is the project aiming at the "right thing"? | Is there appropriate balance among the three main outcomes? Do these outcomes align with local and national priorities? | Fair | Desk review of reports and information, particularly the project logframe Interviews with villages Interviews with CRMCs and Government Departments |

| | | | | |
|----------------------|---|--|------------------|--|
| | | | | Institutional knowledge of consultants |
| | Does the project align well with the new Swiss Cooperation Programme Myanmar? | Given the different timelines between the GoMP and the new Swiss Cooperation Programme Myanmar, how closely do the project's outputs and outcomes align and how will the project's legacy contribute to the new programme? | Very good | Desk review of reports and information, particularly Swiss Cooperation Programme Myanmar 2019-2023 Interviews with villages Interviews with CRMCs Interviews with project partners |
| Effectiveness | | | | |
| | Is the current Outcome framework an appropriate approach for reaching project objectives e.g. in particular supporting co-management of natural resources, setting up and capacitating the CRMCs alongside livelihood diversification in the frame of Ramsar wise use of natural resources? | Is the balance of emphasis appropriate among the three main outcomes? Is the Outcome framework appropriate to ensure that natural resources are managed sustainably (a) within the governance structure developed; and (b) with a diversification and enhancement of livelihoods? | Fair | Desk review of reports and information, particularly the project logframe and the RIS Interviews with villages Interviews with CRMCs Interviews with project partners Institutional and contextual knowledge of consultants |
| | What are the project achievements and challenges in meeting respective Outcomes and outputs and desired results in quantity and quality? | What do stakeholders consider the best achievements and benefits of the project? What do stakeholders consider to be the biggest challenges facing the project between the MTR and the end of the project? Are consistent metrics being used to monitor outputs and outcomes? | Very good | Desk review of reports and information, particularly the Annual Progress Report Interviews with villages Interviews with CRMCs Interviews with the private sector Interviews with the university sector Interviews with project partners and other NGOs |
| | What are project strengths and challenges – with remedial recommendations to better leverage existing national or sub-national relevant sector policies and/or strategies? | What do stakeholders consider the main strengths of the project? What do stakeholders consider to be the biggest challenges facing the project with regards to leveraging across other policies and strategies? | Very good | Interviews with villages Interviews with CRMCs Interviews with the private sector Interviews with the university sector Interviews with project partners and other NGOs |
| | How is the communication between Union and State/Regional level CRMC's and will the expected outcome be achieved? | How do the Union level CRMC members rate the vertical integration to State/Region level, and beyond to Township and Village? How do the State/Region level CRMC members rate the integration vertically up to the Union level and downwards to the Township and Village level? | Very good | Interviews with CRMCs and Government Departments Interviews with villages |
| | How do the results of the research activities flow into the decision-making process of the co-management zones and the CRMC of Mon State and Bago Region? | Is the research asking the right questions? How are research results going to be communicated and will there be open access to information? How is the added value of the research going to be applied beyond the GoM? How can citizen science and local knowledge be integrated within long-term monitoring and decision-making? | Very good | Interviews with the university sector Interviews with villages Interviews with project partners and other NGOs |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------|--|---|------------------|--|
| | What are achievements and challenges with recommendations for the project in contributing to and enhancing the new Swiss Cooperation Programme Myanmar? | How are the project outputs and outcomes contributing to the Swiss Cooperation Programme Myanmar? How will they contribute beyond the end of the GoMP? | Very good | Desk review of reports and information, particularly Swiss Cooperation Programme Myanmar 2019-2023 Interviews with villages Interviews with CRMCs Interviews with project partners |
| Efficiency | | | | |
| | Are the project's resources (human and financial) used efficiently (value for money)? | Are the project outputs financially justifiable? Are the project partners delivering value for money? Is there an appropriate balance between capital infrastructure expenditure and investments in knowledge sharing and development? | Very good | Desk review of reports and information, particularly the logframe, cost-benefit analysis and Annual Progress Report Interviews with project partners |
| | What are insights from the cost-benefit analysis conducted by the project? | Are there any financial anomalies that need investigating? Are all the project partners delivering value for money? | Very good | Desk review of reports and information, particularly the logframe, cost-benefit analysis and Annual Progress Report Interviews with project partners |
| | The GoMP has collaborated with several other SDC financed projects (OneMap Myanmar, SDC Humanitarian Aid on DRR...) – Was this collaboration efficient? Is there scope for more? | Has collaboration with other SDC projects been effective? Have economies of scale been achieved through collaboration? | Very good | Desk review of reports and information, particularly the logframe, cost-benefit analysis and Annual Progress Report Interviews with Helvetas |
| | Has the project collaborated and sought synergies with other potentially mutually supporting projects around the GoM? | Has the GoMP adequately pursued synergies with mutually supporting initiatives and projects? Are there barriers to wider integration with other donor-funded projects? | Fair | Desk review of reports and information, particularly the logframe, cost-benefit analysis and Annual Progress Report Interviews with Helvetas Institutional and contextual knowledge of consultants |
| Sustainability | | | | |
| | Is the project contributing to social, ecological and economic sustainability? | Are the income generation approaches yielding positive and sustainable results? How can access to markets be secured? Are the financial mechanisms sustainably contributing to the long-term socio-economic sustainability? Is the ecological character of the Ramsar Site being maintained and is the GoM management plan fit for purpose? Who is responsible for conserving the unique biodiversity of the GoM? What will the GoM look like in 10 to 20 years after the project has ended? Does environmental sustainability need further consideration in the project's exit strategy? | Fair | Interviews with villages Interviews with CRMCs and Government Departments Interviews with private sector Interviews with micro-financier Interviews with project partners Desk review of reports and information, particularly the RIS and the GoM Management Plan Institutional and contextual knowledge of consultants |

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--|--|------------------|---|
| | Is the project set up in such a way that institutional sustainability will be reached? | Are the governance structures robust and fit for purpose? Is their sufficient vertical and horizontal integration throughout the institutional structures? | Very good | Desk review of reports and information Interviews with villages Interviews with CRMCs and Government Departments Interviews with project partners |
| | Are the CRMCs the right institutions to assure institutional sustainability for a sustainable management of natural resources in the GoM? | Are the State/Region level CRMCs fit for purpose? Will the State/Region CRMCs function effectively beyond the end of the GoMP? | Very good | Desk review of reports and information Interviews with villages Interviews with CRMCs and Government Departments Interviews with project partners Institutional and contextual knowledge of consultants |
| | What measures are needed to strengthen institutional sustainability? | Will the governance structure be sustainable beyond the GoMP? Are there sufficient capacity and resources in the institutions to deliver long-term sustainability and effective monitoring and enforcement? Will the project legacy be one of local ownership and empowerment and a transition away from donor-dependency? To what degree is institutional sustainability important within the project's exit strategy? | Fair | Desk review of reports and information Interviews with villages Interviews with CRMCs and Government Departments Interviews with project partners Institutional and contextual knowledge of consultants |
| | How can the private sector and civil society be better involved in the governance of the natural resources of the GoM? | How engaged is the private sector in ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources in the GoM? | Very good | Interviews with villages Interviews with CRMCs Interviews with project partners Interviews with private sector Interviews with micro-financier |
| Gender and Social Equity | | | | |
| | Does the project address gender issues adequately? | How are different genders represented at a village level? | Excellent | Interviews with villages Interviews with project partners |
| | Is the project reaching out to the disadvantaged parts of the population in the Gulf of Mottama and are adequate measures in place to "leave no one behind"? | Are the livelihood and income generation measures extended to the disadvantaged members of the community? Is there equality of access to financing mechanisms? | Very good | Desk review of reports and information, particularly the logframe and Annual Progress Report Interviews with villages Interviews with project partners Interviews with private sector Interviews with micro-financier |
| | Are ethnic and religious composition of the population in the Gulf of Mottama adequately considered in project design and implementation? | What consideration is being given to religious groups, ethnicity or local sense of community? | Very good | Interviews with villages Interviews with project partners |

| Impact | | | | |
|--------|--|---|------------------|---|
| | Is the project likely to reach the desired impact? | Is the project delivering on both outputs and outcomes? | Very good | Desk review of reports and information, particularly the logframe and Annual Progress Report Synthesis of multiple interviews |
| | Are there corrective measures to be taken to reach the desired impact, particularly at beneficiary level? | Are there any significant challenges in delivering on individual output indicators? If so, what needs to be considered to address these challenges? How are non-project villages and wider communities going to be integrated in the long-term? | Fair | Desk review of reports and information, particularly the logframe and Annual Progress Report Synthesis of multiple interviews Institutional and contextual knowledge of consultants |
| | In view of a short (2.5 years) final phase of the project with a reduced budget, what is the view of the mid-term review with regard to focus and priorities to reach maximum impact and sustainability? | What do stakeholders consider to be the greatest needs over the remaining period, and beyond the end, of the project? | Fair | Desk review of reports and information, particularly the logframe and Annual Progress Report Synthesis of multiple interviews Institutional and contextual knowledge of consultants |

¹ The evaluation score is based on the summary categories in the table below. Wherever possible, the justification and explanation of the score is cross referenced to the section in the main report text, shown in parenthesis:

| Score | Context | Relevance | | Effectiveness | | Efficiency | Sustainability | Gender and Social Equity | Impact |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| | | Consistency | Adequacy | Achievements | Contributions | | | | |
| Excellent | Strong response | Fully consistent | Fully adequate | Fully or overachieved | Strong evidence of contribution | Highly efficient | Very likely | Strong inclusion | Strong positive |
| Very good | Adequate response | Largely consistent | Largely adequate | Largely | Evidence of contribution | Efficient | Likely | Inclusion | Adequate positive |
| Fair | Partial response | Only partly consistent | Only partly adequate | Only partly | Limited evidence of contribution | Partly efficient | Little likelihood | Partial inclusion | Partial positive |
| Poor | Weak or no response | Marginally or not at all consistent | Marginally or not at all adequate | Marginally or not at all | No evidence of contribution | Not efficient | Unlikely | Weak or no inclusion | Weak, no or negative |
| Not assessed or not applicable | | | | | | | | | |

Appendix 5: Schedule for in-country assessment

| Date | Activity | Location |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| Sunday 1 st March 2020 | Briefing meeting for SDC / HELVATAS | Yangon |
| Monday 2 nd March 2020 | Travel to Mawlamyine; meeting at Helvetas PCIU Office | Mawlamyine |
| Tuesday 3 rd March 2020 | Meetings: Mawlamyine University & Point B; Fashion & Beauty Employer Trainers; Mawlamyine Fisheries Holding Company | Mawlamyine |
| Wednesday 4 th March 2020 | Certified employer trainee's fashion shop observation | Ywar Lut village, Chaungzon Township |
| | Mon State CRMC meeting | Mawlamyine |
| | Fisheries Training Centre meeting | Thaton |
| Thursday 5 th March 2020 | Crab production farm observation | Gyoe Hpyu Kone village, Thaton Township |
| | Village meetings; income generation beneficiaries, ice storage, a certified fashion owner training beneficiary observation | Aung Kan Tha village, Thaton Township |
| | Vision Fund Myanmar meetings | Thaton |
| Friday 6 th March 2020 | Village meetings; Rice nursery cultivation observation | Zwe Ka Lar village, Bilin Township |
| | Village meetings; Seed bank, livestock beneficiary observation | Mu Thin village, Bilin Township |
| Saturday 7 th March 2020 | Village meetings; clean water system observation | Kha Wa Chaug village, Kyaikto Township, MON STATE |
| | Village meetings; water storage pond observation | Ah Loke village, Waw Towhship, BAGO REGION |
| | Seed bank observation; Village meetings | Tha Nat Tan village, Thanatpin Township |
| Sunday 8 th March 2020 | Erosion area observation; Village meeting | Mi Lauk Village, Kawa Township |
| Monday 9 th March 2020 | Village meetings; water storage pond observation | Aung Kan Hlaing Village, Kawa Township |
| Tuesday 10 th March 2020 | Meetings: Bago Region CRMC; Bago University | ECD office and Bago University, Bago |
| Wednesday 11 th March 2020 | Meeting Department of Fisheries; meeting NAG | Nay Pyi Taw |
| Thursday 12 th March 2020 | Meeting Forest Department; meeting IUCN; travel back to Yangon | Nay Pyi Taw |
| Friday 13 th March 2020 | Meeting (virtual) IUCN; meeting BANCA; preparation for debrief meeting | Yangon |
| Saturday 14 th March 2020 | Debriefing to SDC, Helvetas and NAG | Yangon |

Appendix 6: Consultees

The following summarizes the principle communities, private sector representatives, government and national and international non-government organizations that were consulted during the in-country mission.

| Consultee | Category |
|---|-----------------|
| Helvetas | INGO |
| International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) | INGO |
| Network Activities Group (NAG) | NGO |
| Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association (BANCA) | NGO |
| Point B | NGO |
| Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation | Government |
| Mon State Coastal Resource Management Committee ¹ | Government |
| Bago Region Coastal Resource Management Committee ¹ | Government |
| Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation | Government |
| Forest Department, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation | Government |
| Environmental Conservation Department, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation | Government |
| Watershed Management Department, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation | Government |
| Directorate of Hotels and Tourism, Ministry of Hotel and Tourism | Government |
| Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation | Government |
| Directorate of River Resources and Improvement of River Systems, Ministry of Transport and Communications | Government |
| Electricity Supply Enterprise, Ministry of Electricity and Energy | Government |
| Department of Disaster Management, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement | Government |
| Planning Department. Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry | Government |
| Vision Fund Myanmar | Micro-Financier |
| Department of Geography, Bago University | University |
| Department of Botany, Bago University | University |
| Department of Zoology, Bago University | University |
| Department of Marine Science, Mawlamyine University | University |
| Mawlamyine Fisheries Holdings Ltd | Private company |
| Garment and Tailoring Employer Trainer | Private company |
| Beauty, Hair and Facial Massage Employer Trainer | Private company |
| Paung Township Fishery Development Association | CSO |
| Thaton Township Fishery Development Association | CSO |
| Bilin Township Fishery Development Association | CSO |
| Kyaikto Township Fishery Development Association | CSO |
| Khin Tan Village Development Committee ² , Paung Township, Mon State | Village |
| Aung Kan Thar Village Development Committee ² Thaton Township, Mon State | Village |
| Mu Thin Village Development Committee ² Bilin Township, Mon State | Village |

| | |
|---|---------|
| Zwe Ka Lar Village Development Committee ² Bilin Township, Mon State | Village |
| Tha Pyay Kone Village, Bilin Township, Mon State | Village |
| Ngwe Thaug Yan Village, Bilin Township, Mon State | Village |
| Shan Chaung Village Development Committee, Bilin Township | Village |
| Kar Wa Chaung Village Development Committee ² , Kyaikto Township, Mon State | Village |
| Moke Kha Mawt Village Development Committee ² Kyaikto Township, Mon State | Village |
| Kha Ywae Village Development Committee ² Kyaikto Township, Mon State | Village |
| Bo Yar Gyi Village Development Committee ² , Kyaikto Township, Mon State | Village |
| Ah Loke Village Development Committee ² , Waw Township, Bago Region | Village |
| Tha Nat Tan Village Development Committee ² , Thanatpin Township, Bago Region | Village |
| Kha Lat Su Village Development Committee ² Thanatpin Township, Bago Region | Village |
| Aung Bon Gyi Village Development Committee ² , Thanatpin Township, Bago Region | Village |
| Kyuun Kone Village Development Committee ² , Thanatpin Township, Bago Region | Village |
| Pha Yar Lay Village Development Committee ² , Thanatpin Township, Bago Region | Village |
| Ma Mauk Village Development Committee ² , Kawa Township, Bago Region | Village |
| Sar Hphu Su Village Development Committee ² , Kawa Township, Bago Region | Village |
| Ta Dar U Village Development Committee ² , Kawa Township, Bago Region | Village |
| Mi Lauk Village Development Committee ² , Kawa Township, Bago Region | Village |
| Aung Kan Hlaing Village Development Committee ² , Kawa Township, Bago Region | Village |
| Aung Naing Gyi Village Development Committee ² , Kawa Township, Bago Region | Village |

¹ The CRMC consultees included representatives from different Government line departments including *inter alia* State/Region Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation Ministers, Forest Department, Environmental Conservation Department, Department of Fisheries, Directorate of Hotels and Tourism, Department of Agriculture, Directorate of River Resources and Improvement of River Systems, Electricity Supply Enterprise, Department of Disaster Management and Planning Department.

² The Village Development Committees included representatives and members of *inter alia* the Fisheries Groups, Income Generation Groups, Farming Groups, Seedbank Committees, Local Conservation Groups, Water User Groups, Religious Leaders and Revolving Fund Administrators.

Appendix 7: Fishing effort

Any fisheries management planning will only be as good as the data collected. It is essential that the project leaves in place a systemic and accurate data collection and evaluation protocol. Estimates of the catch per unit effort (CPUE) are already being made as part of the project and integrated into data collection approaches, such as through the use of mobile phone applications and fishing log book distributed to the fishermen.

It is recommended that in addition to the information already collected in the fishing log books, the following information is also collected in order to understand the trend of catch and effort:

| Fishing Trip | | | Fishing during the trip | | |
|--------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Start Date | Finish Date | Landing (Viss or Kg) | Date | Start Net setting (hour:min) | Finish Net hauling (hour:min) |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |