

Title, author and date of the evaluation report: The Mount Elgon Integrated Conservation and Development Project, External Evaluation: Final report, M. Laman & B. Khamati & P. Milimo, March 2001.

Objectives of the project or the programme: The project's overall goal is: "Enhancement of biodiversity conservation on Mt Elgon by building up the competencies of some local communities and the partner agencies in collaborative natural resources management and seeking means of decreasing the dependency of these communities on the natural resources of Mt Elgon.". The project's immediate objective is: "The Kenyan side of the Mount Elgon ecosystem's natural resource base & its functions are sustainably managed and utilized".

IUCN area of specialisation: Forest

Geographical area: Mount Elgon, Kenya

Project duration: Originally 5 years but shortened to 2 and a half years

Overall budget of the project or programme: 8,9 millions NLG but RNE committed themselves for two years and half with 4,16 millions NLG

Donors: Royal Netherlands Embassy (RNE)

Objectives of the evaluation: The overall objective of the evaluation is to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of project implementation approaches and how the project supported activities have contributed to achieving the over-all project purpose.

Type of evaluation: External evaluation

Period covered by the evaluation: From April 1998 to February 2001

Commissioned by: Royal Netherlands Embassy (RNE)

Audience: Donors, partners, project team and IUCN

Evaluation team: External

Questions of evaluations:

- What is the progress made by the project towards the outputs and the immediate objective, as designated in the Plan of Operations? The causes of progress or under-performance?.
- What are the effectiveness and the efficiency of the organisational arrangements under which the project has been conducted, including the contribution of each of the principal organisational partners and the Project Management Unit to the project's performance?
- Appropriateness: Was the project, in particular, the project objectives and outputs specified in the Plan of Operations, appropriately designed?
- Impact: To what extent has the project contributed towards its long-term goals? Why or why not? Have there been any unanticipated positive or negative consequences of the project? Why did they arise?
- Sustainability: will there be continued positive impacts as a result of the 2.5 years of project implementation? Why or why not? Will the organisational arrangements under which the project has been conducted support continued project activities implementation? What impact has this arrangement had on project implementation?

Methodology used:

The evaluation took place from Monday 29 January to Friday 16 February 2001. It included interviews at the national level and field visit to the project areas. The evaluation team, made of three persons, reviewed all relevant project documents and interviewed the key project actors and stakeholders. The field trip included the visit to all four pilot communities in which the project is active. The large majority of the interviews and visits were deliberately carried out without project staff being present.

Findings:

1. Destruction and losses in the Mount Elgon ecosystem are significant. The longer they continue, the more difficult it will be to rehabilitate the ecosystem and to safeguard its important role as a water catchment. There is a conspicuous need for a programme like the Mount Elgon Integrated Conservation and Development Project.
2. During the first 2½ years of its existence, the Mount Elgon Project has operated under quite severe constraints. Lack of political commitment to forest conservation issues and involvement of local and high level authorities in illegal felling are obviously a predominant constraint, but these have been the very reasons to start the project. Notwithstanding constraints, such as the progressive reduction of the long-term commitment by the donor, the inflexible logical framework planning, the delays in arrival of project equipment, the flaws in the project design, the dependency attitude among local communities, the project has produced encouraging results. Some were essential to project implementation (conflict resolution in areas of ethnic strife) and to sustainability.
3. Together with the need to rehabilitate the Mount Elgon ecosystem, the results produced so far fully justify long term donor support. A budget-neutral extension by RNE to 31 December 2001 and a deliberate effort by RNE to support IUCN to find a new donor taking over by 1 January 2002 are a minimum condition for a decent exit. In case a budget neutral extension is not granted and / or a new donor is not found, results in several key areas will not materialise or be minimised.
4. The fundamental principles of the project approach, such as: avoiding the creation of parallel structures, emphasising the need for communities' contribution to the project, showing caution in funding of recurrent costs of implementing agencies, motivating staff of implementing agencies by providing them various incentives, have proven to be sustainable. The project has laid the foundation of community involvement in conservation.
5. The project design recognises the community as a critical partner, yet this is not reflected in the budgetary allocations. The institutional arrangements under which the programme has been implemented have not functioned very satisfactorily. These arrangements should remain unchanged during the budget-neutral extension. The implementing partners at the district level should be granted more responsibility by their parent organisations.

Recommendations:

1. It is recommended for IUCN EARO to intensify and speed up its efforts to secure long-term donor support for rehabilitation of the Mount Elgon Ecosystem, preferably in a cross-border operation with neighbouring Uganda.
2. It is recommended for RNE to grant a budget-neutral extension for a bridging phase of a period, as long as permitted by remaining funds (at least until 31 December 2001) and, to take a pro-active approach in securing support from a new donor for a follow-up project, preferably to be implemented on a regional (Eastern-African) basis.
3. The evaluation team recommends that the fundamental principles of the approach of the project be maintained, if a new funding agency is found.
4. The evaluation team recommends for institutional arrangements and partnership relations during the follow-up project to be reviewed.

Language of the evaluation: English

Available from: IUCN-East African Regional Office (EARO) & IUCN Headquarters.