

“Accelerating the Global Transition to Sustainable Agriculture” Project (P03770, IKEA Foundation)

Mid-Term Review - Management Response

Evaluand identification data		
Evaluand title:	TERO	
Date started:	September 2023	
Date closed:	March 2024	
Evaluand manager:	Programme/office:	
Silvia Cardellino	Agriculture Team	

Management Response Summary Data	
Evaluation or review title as it appears on final report: <i>Mid Term Review "Accelerating the Global Transition to Sustainable Agriculture Project", referred to as AGSTA in the below</i> Date received: 20/03/2024	Unit/person responsible for managing/tracking follow-up: IUCN Agriculture team – P03770 Project Manager
Date Management Response approved: Last progress update: 01/04/2024	All units/positions requested to take action: Agriculture team (AT), Regional offices, Senior Management, HR, MEL team, Strategic Partnerships Unit (SPU), International Policy Unit
Expected duration required to fully implement the MR: <i>until end of the project</i>	

Narrative Response:

The Agriculture team at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) extends its sincere gratitude for the diligent work of TERO SCIC SAS in conducting the Project Mid-Term Review for the AGSTA project. The insights and recommendations emerged are invaluable as we strive for continuous improvement and effectiveness in our endeavours.

We appreciate the thorough analysis that has been provided, particularly regarding the project's Theory of Change (ToC) and the result framework. This assessment comes at a pivotal time as we are currently in the process of developing our food system and agriculture program's ToC, and this input will undoubtedly inform and enrich this critical aspect of our project planning.

Acknowledging that many project activities are ongoing and some deliverables remain incomplete, we recognize the challenge in fully assessing the expected outcomes at this juncture. Nevertheless, we view this mid-term evaluation as an essential checkpoint to gauge our progress and ensure alignment with our overarching goals, especially in our efforts to establish robust foundations for coherent agricultural work within IUCN.

It is heartening to note the recognition of the strong potential within the AGSTA project, particularly in fostering enhanced connections and capacity building within IUCN teams. As emphasized, our primary focus lies in building the capacity of our internal staff, rather than seeking immediate impact on external beneficiaries. This strategic decision has guided various aspects of the project, including target countries and resource allocation between headquarters and regional offices.

We fully concur with the observation of the evaluating team regarding the initial resource constraints that may have contributed to the slower pace of project advancement in its early phases. However, we are pleased to report significant progress since then, including the establishment and expansion of a dedicated Agriculture team, as well as the appointment of regional focal points. These developments have significantly bolstered our capacity and accelerated project implementation.

Ensuring the continuity of project activities remains a top priority for us. To this end, we have outlined several initiatives aimed at building upon the foundations laid thus far. This includes additional dialogues, engagement with IUCN members, and the development of our project pipeline. We are committed to fostering closer collaboration and synergy both within our team and with external partners to maximize our impact.

We wholeheartedly agree with the recommendation regarding the development of a robust Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) system. As our Agriculture team takes shape, we are actively working on formulating a comprehensive MEL framework for the team and our agricultural programs collectively. This endeavour will undoubtedly enhance our ability to track progress, measure impact, and continuously improve our interventions.

In conclusion, we welcome your constructive feedback and assure you that we are proactively addressing the recommendations that are in line with the AGSTA objectives, to further strengthen the project and our broader agricultural initiatives within IUCN. We thank once again the evaluating team for their invaluable contribution to our project review process.

For any questions, contact IUCN Agriculture team - Ludovic Larbodière (Ludovic.Larbodiere@iucn.org)

Detailed Response:

Evaluation Recommendations	IUCN Management Response	Key actions in response	Intended Result	Responsible unit	Timeframe	Status (for tracking)	Comment (for tracking)
R1. Reconstruct a ToC and Logical Framework: a) for the whole initiative, and b) for AGTSA. On that basis, raise more funding for upscaling	Partially Accepted: a) The initiative is now over and has now been translated into a dedicated new agriculture team, which is currently developing its ToC. b) At this stage of the project we do not believe it is needed to change the ToC of the AGSTA Project, however we intend to revise the result framework and identify more clear MEL indicators for the project	The Agriculture Team (AT) is currently doing a major consultation and projects mapping exercise, in order to develop an updated theory of change. -- Consultation and Project Mapping (Q2 2024) -- Ag team ToC (Q3 2024) -- AGSTA project result framework and MEL indicators revised	Define AT ToC	AT; MEL team	2024 Q3	Partially achieved	
Evaluation Recommendations	IUCN Management Response	Key actions in response	Intended Result	Responsible unit	Timeframe	Status (for tracking)	Comment (for tracking)
R2. Better connect with intended final beneficiaries.	Partially Accepted: The AGSTA Project is intended to focus primarily on building	-- Quarterly calls with global, regional and country focal points for cross information	Increased engagement with Farmer	AT, Regional offices	2025 Q2	Partially achieved	

	IUCN's capacity, and does not seek immediate impact on farmers and value-chain actors. Therefore the direct beneficiaries of the projects are the IUCN staff in the global and regional offices working in Agriculture. We are already strongly connected with them, and we intend to continue building connections across IUCN. This said, we intend to continue strengthening the partnership with farmer organizations as part of the Common Ground multistakeholder dialogues, the future phases of development of land health and NbS approaches, and the future capacity building initiatives, building on and linking with the work of the AT with Producers Organizations (through the Forest and Farm Facility) Beyond the AGSTA project, the AT is working through other projects to develop direct connections with external beneficiaries (Producers	sharing and learning (the seed of a future community of practice) -- Capacity building initiatives customized to ensure their accessibility and inclusiveness for farmers and vulnerable people -- Farmer organizations represented in future dialogues	Organizations and vulnerable people in some of the project initiatives (dialogues, trainings)				
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	Organizations, Corporates and Indigenous Peoples).						
Evaluation Recommendations	IUCN Management Response	Key actions in response	Intended Result	Responsible unit	Timeframe	Status (for tracking)	Comment (for tracking)
R3. Incorporate findings from countries where intensive agriculture dominates.	Rejected: The pilot countries identified for the AGSTA Project have been strategically decided based on: (a) the areas where IUCN was already active in agriculture/food systems or had an office with Ag-related capacity/expertise (low hanging fruits); (b) a discussion with the donor on the geographical scope the donor. Hence the project team agree that these were the most strategic targets, given the nature of the project. Also, at this stage of the project it would not be strategic to shift the focus of the work to other and new countries. Beyond the AGSTA project however, the AT project pipeline includes a broader range of countries, and the recommendation to invest on						

	countries where intensive agriculture dominates will be kept in mind also when developing new project proposals.						
Evaluation Recommendations	IUCN Management Response	Key actions in response	Intended Result	Responsible unit	Timeframe	Status (for tracking)	Comment (for tracking)
R4. Reinforce HR to support IUCN involvement in the agricultural sector	Accepted: We recognise that AGSTA project management has suffered in the past from HR instability and understaffing. However, since the creation of the Agriculture team one year ago, the AGSTA project has drastically reinforced its HR. More globally the project has contributed to increase IUCN's staff capacities, both at HQ and in regions. This process will continue in the next couple of years as the AT works towards growing its portfolio.	-- Plan for increased staff stability and recruitment in the coming years (depending on available resources). -- Upscale of capacity building activities (training, webinars) both for Secretariat and IUCN members' staff. -- Enhanced engagement of IUCN's Commissions experts.	Ensure that IUCN capacity in Agriculture is consolidated and further strengthened.	AT, Regional offices, Senior Management, HR	2025 Q2	Partially achieved	
Evaluation Recommendations	IUCN Management Response	Key actions in response	Intended Result	Responsible unit	Timeframe	Status (for tracking)	Comment (for tracking)
R5. Work out a No-cost extension of AGTSA by 6 months.	Accepted: Project team and donors agreed on this extension.	-- Proceed with formalization of the 6 months no-cost extension	6 months no-cost extension to enable more time for the	AT	Q2 2024	Partially achieved	

	As for the budget distribution, this will remain mainly in the HQ hands and allocated to specific activities at regional level (dialogues and Conservation Fora). Regarding the recommendation to consider a new phase of the project, this will be discussed with the donors at a later stage of the current phase. Should this be concretized, the additional recommendations about inclusion of additional countries and further testing of the tools in regenerative agriculture areas will be taken in consideration.	(to be completed by Q2 2024)	project completion				
Evaluation Recommendations	IUCN Management Response	Key actions in response	Intended Result	Responsible unit	Timeframe	Status (for tracking)	Comment (for tracking)
R6. Set up a proper MEL system for the project and for the agriculture program as a whole.	Accepted The IUCN agriculture team intends to refine the MEL system for the AGSTA project, in order to be able to monitor more accurately the project progress and success. The process will start with building the capacity of the team on MEL; then revising and improving the MEL system for	-- Build capacity of the team on MEL -- Define a clear MEL system for the AT -- Refine MEL system for AGSTA project, including process-oriented and qualitative indicators	Have a clear MEL system set up to structure and simplify future continued evaluation and adjustment of the project and team portfolio	AG Team, MEL Team	2024 Q4	Not Started	

	this project, also with an eye on the project final review; and in parallel develop a MEL system for the agriculture program as a whole.	-- Plan AGSTA Project final review					
Evaluation Recommendations	IUCN Management Response	Key actions in response	Intended Result	Responsible unit	Timeframe	Status (for tracking)	Comment (for tracking)
R7. Raise funds in order to be able to follow up on AGTSA outcomes (especially the dialogues and the portfolio of SA projects) in order to materialize their effects and potential impact	Accepted The project team recognizes the importance of ensuring continuity of the project work and intends to now dedicate more targeted efforts in building a project pipeline.	A higher focus on building the project pipeline and ensuring continuity of the project work will be put in the remaining time of the AGSTA project: -- identifying key opportunities for new project proposals, develop and submit new projects that build on the AGSTA project -- discuss with the IKEA Foundation the possibility to develop a new phase of the AGSTA project.	New projects proposals submitted and ideally accepted by the end of the current project, in order to ensure continuity of the activities initiated	AT, SPU	2025 Q2	Partially Achieved	
Evaluation Recommendations	IUCN Management Response	Key actions in response	Intended Result	Responsible unit	Timeframe	Status (for tracking)	Comment (for tracking)
R8. Design and plan follow-up activities and institutional set-up for	Accepted A follow up to the dialogues organized in the past year is	As part of the AGSTA project, in 2024 and 2025 new series of dialogues will	Continue dialogue process at national,	AG Team, International Policy unit,	2025 Q2	Partially achieved	

the dialogues to continue.	already in the plan of the project and a series of activities had already been identified to ensure continuity to the dialogue process.	be organized, to build on the past ones. Moreover, for each dialogue, a brief follow up recommendation will be developed, and these will feed into High level events during the World conservation Congress and a longer term strategy. In addition, a common ground dialogue methodology will be developed and similar dialogues will be proposed in future project proposals.	regional and international level	Senior Management			
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