UN environment programme | Evaluation Office

Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP/GEF Project

"Shepherding Biodiversity Back into South Africa's Productive Landscapes" GEF Project ID 9382 (2016-2020)

Evaluation Office of the United Nations Environment Programme
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Front cover: This photo was taken by Stephanie Hodge in March 2024 during a field visit to the project area and home of the Shepherding Academy in South Africa. The site served as the central hub for training and demonstration activities under the project.

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For further information on this report, please contact:
Evaluation Office of UNEP
P. O. Box 30552-00100 GPO Nairobi Kenya
Tel: (254-20) 762 3389
Email: unep-evaluation-director@un.org
Website: https://www.unep.org/about-un-environment/evaluation

Shepherding Biodiversity Back into South Africa's Productive Landscape
GEF ID 9382

Acknowledgements

This Terminal Evaluation was prepared for UNEP by Ms. Stephanie Hodge, serving as an external consultant. The evaluator would like to express sincere gratitude to all those met and who contributed to this evaluation, as listed in **Annex VI.**

Special thanks are extended to the project team—particularly Mr. Johan Robinson and Ms. Jane Nimpamya, from the GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit, UNEP Ecosystems Division—for their contributions and collaboration throughout the evaluation process.

The evaluator would also like to acknowledge the invaluable support received during the mission to South Africa and the project site areas from representatives from the Agricultural Research Council, Western Cape Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, and independent consultants engaged by the project.

It is hoped that the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of this evaluation will contribute to the design of any future phases, and support the continuous improvement of similar projects globally.

Evaluation Consultant
Stephanie Hodge – Principal Evaluator

Evaluation Office of UNEP
Pauline Marima – Evaluation Manager
Mercy Mwangi – Evaluation Programme Assistant

Brief Consultant’s Biography

Stephanie Hodge is an experienced development consultant specializing in project evaluation, strategic planning, and sustainable development. With over 30 years of expertise in assessing development interventions, she has led evaluations across sectors, integrating social, environmental, and governance perspectives. Her work emphasizes participatory approaches, gender inclusion, and alignment with national and global sustainability goals. She has contributed to major initiatives in biodiversity conservation, resource management, and capacity building, ensuring practical, locally driven solutions.

About the Evaluation

Joint Evaluation: No

Report Language(s): English.

Evaluation Type: Terminal Evaluation

Brief Description: This report is a Terminal Evaluation of a UNEP/GEF Shepherding Biodiversity Back into South Africa's Productive Landscapes project implemented between 2016 and 2020.

The project's overall development goal was to foster biodiversity conservation on livestock farms, through a return to human shepherding and the development of a wildlife-friendly produce branding scheme, leading to Payment for Ecosystem Services as a tool in conservation and local economic development. The GEF grant was intended to serve as a catalyst for a 25-year (2015-40) research initiative, managed by the Executing Agency, Landmark Foundation.

The evaluation sought to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact) and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP, and the relevant agencies of the project participating countries.

Sources of Funding by Institution / Type:

Foundation/NGO/Private Sector:

Green Fund (DBSA)

Tamarisk Trust (South African Philanthropist)

Woolworth Trust

Department of Environmental Affairs

Multilateral institutions:

GEF and UNEP

Key words: conservation; rangeland protection; sustainable agriculture; herding; predator management; rural economies; sustainable land management; land use planning; biodiversity shepherding.[1]

Primary data collection period: February 1 - March 15, 2025

Field mission dates: March 9 - March 15, 2025

[1] *This data is used to aid the internet search of this report on the Evaluation Office of UNEP Website, and includes key words, which are not already in the project title*

Table of Contents

List of Figures and Tables

List of acronyms and abbreviations

ABS – Access and Benefit Sharing
ARC – Agricultural Research Council
BD-4 – Biodiversity Focal Area 4 (GEF)
BFA – Biodiversity-Friendly Agriculture
BFL – Biodiversity-Friendly Livestock
CBO – Community-Based Organization
CBD – Convention on Biological Diversity
CCA – Climate Change Adaptation
CIWF – Compassion in World Farming
DALRRD – Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
DBSA – Development Bank of Southern Africa
DEA – Department of Environmental Affairs
DEFF - Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries
DRDAR – Department of Rural Development and Agrarian Reform
DOA - Department of Agriculture
ECPHRA – Eastern Cape Provincial Heritage Resources Authority
EOP – End of Project
ESA – Ecosystem Services Assessment
ESMF – Environmental and Social Management Framework
EWT – Endangered Wildlife Trust
FGB – Fair Game Branding (Wildlife-Friendly Meat Certification)
GIS – Geographic Information Systems
Green Fund – Green Fund via DBSA
HCV – High Conservation Value
HMP – Herding Management Plan
HWC – Human-Wildlife Conflict
IPBES – Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPLC – Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities
KPI – Key Performance Indicator
LF – Landmark Foundation
LUC – Land Use Change
LUP – Land Use Planning
M&E – Monitoring and Evaluation
MEA – Multilateral Environmental Agreements
MTR – Mid-Term Review
NBSAP – National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
OP – Operational Programme (GEF)

PAs – Protected Areas
PDALA – Preservation and Development of Agricultural Land Act (2024)
PES – Payment for Ecosystem Services
PMU – Project Management Unit
PPPs – Public-Private Partnerships
PSC – Project Steering Committee
Renu-Karoo – Renu-Karoo Veld Restoration
REDD+ – Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
RLP – Rangeland Livelihood Program
ROI – Return on Investment
SAMIC – South African Meat Industry Corporation
SANBI – South African National Biodiversity Institute
SANParks – South African National Parks
SAEON – South African Environmental Observation Network
SES – Social and Environmental Safeguards
SFM – Sustainable Forest Management
Tamarisk Trust – South African Philanthropic Fund
TE – Terminal Evaluation
UCT – University of Cape Town
UNCCD – United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNCBD – United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
UNEP – United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UWC – University of the Western Cape
UW-Madison – University of Wisconsin-Madison
WITS – University of the Witwatersrand
Woolworths – Woolworths Holdings Limited

Project Information

Table 1: Project Identification Table

GEF Project ID/SMA ID[2]:	9382	**Umoja/ IMIS no.**	01333
Implementing Agency (UNEP Division/Branch/Unit):	GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit, Ecosystems Division, UNEP	**Executing Agency:**	Landmark Foundation Trust (NGO, South Africa)
Sources of Funding (Co-finance):	Landmark Foundation Trust South Africa (NGO), Woolworths, Green Fund via Development Bank of south Africa (DBSA), Tamarisk Trust (philanthropist)		
Relevant SDG(s):	SDG 1, Target 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, SDG 2, Target 2.1, 2.2., 2.3, 2.4, 2.5 SDG 3, Target 3.8, 3.9 SDG 4, Target 4.1, 4.4. SDG 6, Target 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 SDG 7, Target 7.1, 7.2 SDG 12, Target 12.8 SDG 15, Target 15.1, 15.3, 15.5, 15.5, 15.7, 15.9		
MTS (at approval):	MTS 2014-2017		
POW Output(s) number/reference *(applicable for projects approved pre-2022)*	PoW Outputs 1 and 2 for EA 3 (a):	**POW Expected Accomplishment(s) number/reference *(applicable for projects approved pre-2022):***	MTS 2014-2017 Subprogramme 3 Ecosystem management Expected Accomplishment (a) use of the ecosystem approach in countries to maintain ecosystem services and sustainable productivity of terrestrial and aquatic systems is increased
Sub-programme:	Nature Action (Ecosystems Management at approval)	**Programme Coordination Project:**	N/A
UNEP approval date:	June 2016	**GEF approval date:**	May 2016
GEF Operational Programme #:	BD-4	**GEF Strategic Priority:**	
Project type:	MSP	**Focal Area(s):**	Biodiversity
***Expected* start date:**		**Actual start date:**	June 2016
***Planned* completion date:**	December 2020	**Actual operational completion date:**	December 2021
GEF grant allocation:	US$ 1,017,750	**Actual total expenditures reported at evaluation**	US$ 1,040,464.26
***Expected* Medium-Size Project co-financing:**	US$ 5,500,000	**GEF grant expenditures reported as of 30 Dec 2023**	US$ 1,040,464.26
***Planned* total project budget at approval:**	US$ 6,517,750	**Secured Project co-financing:**	US$ 7,078,843.00
No. of formal project revisions:	N/A	**Date of last approved project revision:**	N/A
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	5	**Date of Last Steering Committee meeting:**	June 2020?
Mid-term Review/ Evaluation *(planned date):*	N/A	**Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (actual date):**	N/A

[2] *SMA refers to the ID provided by the Integrated Planning, Management and Reporting Solution (IPMR) system, which was introduced by UNEP in July 2023.*

Terminal Evaluation *(planned date):*	30 June 2021	**Terminal Evaluation (actual date):**	November 2024
Coverage - Country:	South Africa	**Coverage - Region:**	Africa
Dates of previous/future project phases:	No previous phase. *Similar work is being considered under the auspices of the new Preservation and Development of Agricultural Land Act (PDALA), enacted in South Africa in December 2024.*	**Date of first disbursement:**	03 August 2016

Executive Summary

Project and evaluation background

1. The Shepherding Biodiversity Back into South Africa's Productive Landscapes Project (the Project, GEF ID 9382) was the first of its kind in the Karoo, pioneering an integrated approach that combined sustainable livestock management, biodiversity conservation, and economic incentives. It addressed rangeland degradation, predator conflict, and unsustainable grazing by restoring human herding, introducing market-driven conservation incentives, and establishing scientific monitoring frameworks.

2. The GEF-funded project sought to institutionalize ecologically sensitive livestock and land management by embedding conservation objectives into both commercial and smallholder farming. Its integrated, multi-disciplinary and intersectoral design combined wildlife conservation, traditional herding, ecological restoration, financial sustainability, and policy reform[3]. However, its success depended on a well-coordinated institutional framework, secure land tenure, and private-sector confidence—challenges that ultimately hindered its scaling and long-term viability. In the broader context, the GEF funding was intended to act as a catalyst within a longer-term research and development trajectory managed by the Executing Agency, Landmark Foundation, and envisioned to 2024[4].

3. The Project aimed to generate economic, environmental, and social benefits, with a particular focus on conserving and restoring apex and meso-predators to enhance broader ecosystem health through cascading trophic effects. Implemented in Grassland, Thicket, and Karoo ecosystems, the project tested and validated biodiversity-friendly livestock management practices. Despite disruptions to long-term monitoring, it demonstrated the feasibility and ecological benefits of human shepherding interventions.

4. The broader research initiative was halted in 2021 - after the Project had completed. By then, the project had demonstrated results, including:

- Implemented non-lethal predator management techniques such as mobile kraals, herd surveillance, and behaviour-based deterrents, resulting in a significant reduction in livestock losses and improved carnivore coexistence.
- Engaged farms across a total 60,000 hectares of rangeland in various ways: 5 target farms (25,000 ha) demonstrated non-lethal biodiversity and conservation practices; 4 control farms (15,000 ha) acted as a control group and provided baseline, monitoring and end data, and a further 7 additional farms (20,000 ha) took part in some of the project's activities. The 9 target and control farms (40,000 ha) formed the empirical foundation for peer-reviewed validation and created replication potential for the longer term.
- Successfully piloted human herding interventions, including the establishment of a Shepherding Academy (on the demonstration/target farms -learning sites) and the training of 30 herders in biodiversity-friendly livestock practices.
- Transitioned 5 commercial farms—designated as demonstration/target sites—to biodiversity-compatible operations under intensive monitoring and regenerative grazing practices.

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[3] The methodology used by Landmark Foundation incorporated three key components:
a.) Shepherding to mitigate predation – Shepherds inspected livestock twice daily, checking for injuries, infections, and overall health. Beyond reducing predation, this practice also minimized losses due to disease and infection, benefiting farmers.
b.) High-density, short-duration grazing – Livestock grazed in tightly controlled formations to prevent selective grazing. Each site was grazed for just one day per year, ensuring long recovery periods.
c.) Mobile kraals for soil regeneration – These overnight enclosures were strategically placed on severely degraded land, where livestock dung and urine enriched the soil, promoting grass seed germination and ecosystem recovery.
[4] The research initiative was called the Landmark Project and was intended to run from 2015 to 2040 but was, due to extenuating circumstances, curtailed in September 2021.

- Began to establish a model Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) framework, operationalized through the Fair Game™ certification scheme, and linking ecological performance with market-based incentives.
- Authored 17 peer-reviewed publications including publications that support documentation of the evidence base, the innovations, as well as the approach being piloted[5].

Table 2: Summary of Farm Types Involved in Demonstration and Monitoring

Farm Type / Site Category	Area (approx.)	Role / Characteristics
Target Farms (learning sites demonstrating non-lethal methods)	Target: 30,000 ha Actual: 25,000 ha	Core learning and demonstration farms; intensively monitored for biodiversity, livestock production, and financial performance. *(conservation benefits)*
Control Farms (continuing with lethal predator control)	Target: 20,000 ha Actual:15,000 ha	Non-intervention farms used for comparative evaluation of conventional lethal predator control versus non-lethal coexistence strategies. *(monitoring and comparative data)*
Additional Participating Farms	No target ~20,000 ha	Engaged in selected project interventions such as mitigation trials, biodiversity monitoring, and Fair Game™ certification. *(learning on select interventions)*
Total Land Area Involved in Demonstration and Monitoring	~40,000 ha	Target and control farm sites
Total Farms Engaged	~60,000 ha (engagement)	Represents the full set of farms contributing to data collection, monitoring, training, and/or PES implementation across the project landscape.

Terminal Evaluation objectives and scope

5. This Terminal Evaluation was conducted five years after the project's closure, to assess the project's performance, effectiveness, and long-term impact. Conducted independently under the UNEP Evaluation Office, the assessment followed UNEP's Evaluation Policy and Programme Manual. It examined the project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact, measuring results against intended outputs and long-term objectives. Key stakeholders involved in the evaluation included: Project steering committee members, Project management staff, UNEP Task Manager, Landmark Foundation Trust, Green Fund (via the Development Bank of South Africa, DBSA), Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA), Agriculture Institute, Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD), Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DEFF), Department of Rural Development and Agrarian Reform (DRDAR) and Farmers and Vendors in the pilot site region (see Annexes V and Annex VI). The evaluation aimed to capture key lessons learned and provide recommendations for future interventions, particularly with respect to scalability, sustainability, and enhanced operational alignment with stakeholder needs.

6. Ambitiously designed as the foundation for a longer-term paradigm shift (evaluator notes the project had three components that could have easily stood on their own as separately funded projects), the project was evaluated on its expected results and as an experimental approach, i.e. having piloted biodiversity-friendly livestock management and demonstrated a replicable model for conservation-driven farming for upscaling.

Key Findings

7. The project's logical framework outlining intended results and achievements is presented in Annex I alongside the external evaluator's validation of reported results. Chapter 5 of this report provides further discussion of accomplishments and implementation challenges.

[5] *Methodological guide on predator friendly farming practices and biodiversity monitoring guidelines*

8. In summary, the project was highly relevant in addressing pressing conservation and land-use challenges in the target farms, and its integrated design demonstrated tangible benefits. However, systemic coherence—particularly alignment with government institutions and formal policy pathways—remained a critical constraint to scale-up, broader adoption, and long-term sustainability. This was particularly significant given that scaling and institutional embedding were presented in the project document as the main rationale for UNEP's intervention. Bridging this gap will be essential if the model is to expand beyond pilot sites and be mainstreamed into national policy frameworks. During the evaluation mission, stakeholders noted that the New Protected Rangeland Management Act, approved in South Africa in January 2025, could provide a critical entry point for a follow-on phase at national level.

9. Despite promising results, impact-level change remained modest. The payment for ecosystem services (PES) model did not scale beyond the pilot area, and wider learning and uptake of practices across the sector were limited. Farmers and local conservation groups needed more time to adjust markets and farming practices, even though the pilot demonstrated clear ecological, social, and economic benefits. Sustaining biodiversity monitoring beyond the project lifespan also required greater financial and technical support.

10. The project nonetheless delivered measurable benefits in sustainable grazing, biodiversity conservation, and farm-level resilience. Stakeholders widely agreed on its scientific significance. As one academic noted: *"From a scientific perspective, this was the most important rangeland experiment in the country at the time. Many similar experiments had collapsed, but this one persisted."* Results included bringing 25,000 hectares of rangeland under conservation-friendly management, training 30 functional herders, and validating biodiversity gains through monitoring. Additional farms covering 15,000 ha served as controls for assessing lethal predator control and PES interventions.

11. Economic efficiency was evident in the target farms. Sustainable grazing practices reduced reliance on external feed, cutting costs—especially during drought periods—while simultaneously improving productivity. This demonstrates that the project largely delivered on its intended outputs. Yet transformation and scaling remained limited. Staggered disbursement of co-financing disrupted implementation, and minimal government involvement weakened institutional backing. The Fair Game™ wildlife-friendly meat certification represented a promising innovation, though market adoption remained at an early stage. Research outputs generated valuable insights, but their broader influence was constrained by limited dissemination. As one stakeholder noted, enhancing sustainability in future efforts will require stronger coordination, clearer legal frameworks, government-backed PES incentives, and more structured knowledge transfer.

12. Overall, the project showcased multiple benefits across ecological, social, and economic dimensions. However, institutional sustainability and broader shifts in farmer and public attitudes toward coexistence with wildlife remain challenges. While co-financing and academic partnerships were significant, the withdrawal of some private land commitments weakened prospects for a longer-term, multidimensional experiment across the biome. Government interest in public–private partnerships (PPPs) was evident—particularly in the Western Cape—but opportunities to translate this into concrete policy influence were not fully captured. Without stronger legal security for land tenure agreements and government-backed financial mechanisms, scaling the shepherding model across South Africa remains uncertain.

13. It is important to situate the project within its catalytic role. The GEF phase was designed to demonstrate proof of concept: that non-lethal predation management could succeed under real farm conditions, that a PES mechanism could be piloted, and that regenerative farming practices could generate measurable ecological and socio-economic gains. In practice, the project achieved this catalytic purpose; it established pilots, generated peer-reviewed evidence, and shifted stakeholder attitudes. What it did not achieve—because it lay beyond the scope and duration of this phase—was embedding the innovations into institutional frameworks, consumer markets, or national land management policy.

Key Successes

14. The project created openings for influence at national and provincial levels. During the pilot period, government actors, research institutions, and farmers' networks engaged with the integrated approach / model and expressed support for stronger leadership in scaling it—particularly in rangeland and wildlife management in the Karoo. These engagements showed clear potential for influence but remained event-driven and ad hoc, rather than embedded in a structured policy learning or outreach process.

15. Without a deliberate strategy for scaling through markets, policy and public engagement, results remained confined to pilot farms and the immediate area. They did not catalyse broader replication—geographically, institutionally, or in terms of behavioural change and public awareness—at the scale originally envisioned. The project was overly ambitious for a four-year timeframe, resting on the assumption that new practices would be rapidly absorbed into government, markets and public systems. Both the PES mechanism and the associated market ecosystem was rudimentary, with no clear framework for scaling out i.e. established partnerships or contracts for the meat and its distribution. The design was at fault in that it lacked a defined timeframe and clear endpoint for measuring the success, leaving expectations for scaling misaligned with implementation realities.

16. Evidence from the evaluation mission showed tangible ecological and socio-economic benefits on 25,000 hectares of pilot farms: improved rangeland health, increased biodiversity, and higher livestock productivity. Farmers reported fewer predation losses, healthier pastures, and diversified incomes—validating the model's integrated approach. These gains represent proof of concept, but not yet systemic uptake.

17. The introduction of PES certification and ethical meat branding (Fair Game™) was ambitious and forward-looking, providing the foundations for market-based sustainability. While uptake was limited by weak consumer demand and shallow private sector partnerships, the mechanism aligned with global trends in ethical consumption. Stakeholders noted that South African consumers are increasingly receptive to conservation-friendly products, suggesting that with stronger outreach and market partnerships, future scaling could be viable.

18. The project contributed significantly to scientific and policy discourse, producing over 17 peer-reviewed publications authored by staff in the nine partner universities and at Landmark Foundation (source: Final Technical Report 2020) and developing a biodiversity monitoring framework that could support integration of shepherding into rangeland strategies. However, the absence of a dedicated outreach and policy engagement strategy limited the translation of these outputs into broader government departments, public awareness and policy uptake. The result was strong evidence but weak pathways for mainstreaming.

Challenges and Risks

19. One of the most significant external risks identified was land tenure security. The action research project relied on private land agreements rather than a government-backed conservation designation. While this approach allowed for rapid implementation, it also left the project vulnerable to long-term instability. This risk became evident in 2021, when private landowners withdrew their support, disrupting the long-term research vision. This highlighted the fragility of conservation initiatives that lack formal legal protection.

20. While the project proved the feasibility of biodiversity-compatible livestock farming through a trial between target and control Farms, several systemic barriers remain:

- Land Tenure and Government Oversight: Institutionalizing land access frameworks is vital for future scaling.
- Underdeveloped PES Market: The PES model lacked the project time frame for realistically including the policy, regulatory, and financial mechanisms needed to scale it and support commercialization. Without active government endorsement and market and partnering incentives, widespread adoption remains unlikely.

- Monitoring and Extension Gaps: While biodiversity tracking tools were developed and tested, they were not integrated into formal agricultural extension systems. No clear enforcement or compliance frameworks were established to support farmer accountability or adaptive management.

21. The project further revealed a need for stronger cross-sectoral government involvement. While certain agencies (e.g., DEA/DEFF, provincial agriculture departments) engaged periodically, the lack of a more structured oversight pushed by UNEP for collaboration with key agencies such as SANParks, the Department of Agriculture, and Rural Development and Lands hindered country ownership during implementation.

22. Despite the project's strong scientific base and inclusive stakeholder model, limited government oversight slowed uptake. While NGO leadership enabled innovation and flexibility, broader system change requires co-leadership by the public sector, especially in rangeland management, agricultural economics, and wildlife corridor planning.

23. The Human Shepherding Academy, while successfully established, lacked long-term financing and operational integration. Its continuity would benefit from institutional anchoring within agricultural colleges (e.g., Grootfontein) or extension programs—ensuring standardized training, employment pipelines, and knowledge transfer.

24. Lastly, consumer demand for wildlife-friendly meat was weaker during the period than anticipated and the COVID pandemic also impacted this effort negatively – i.e. getting the meat to the local market and building the supply. Without robust communication campaigns and market incentives, uptake by farmers and retailers will remain low, limiting the viability of PES certification as a standalone mechanism.

Conclusions

25. The project represented an experimental but forward-looking attempt to bridge the gap between conservation and commercial livestock farming in South Africa's arid rangelands. Its central innovations — reintegrating human shepherding, piloting wildlife-friendly branding, and testing a Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) mechanism — were conceived as a combined strategy for ecological restoration and rural economic resilience.

26. Five years after its formal conclusion, this Terminal Evaluation finds that while the project encountered significant institutional and contextual challenges, it successfully demonstrated proof of concept. On 25,000 hectares of pilot farms, it delivered measurable ecological and socio-economic benefits, validated through scientific monitoring and widely acknowledged by stakeholders. Farmers, scientists, and provincial and national officials interviewed during the mission viewed the model favourably, and the pilot has contributed to ongoing discourse on sustainable agriculture, predator management, and land management policy.

27. Against its intended results, the project is rated Moderately Satisfactory. It succeeded in showcasing the feasibility of biodiversity-compatible livestock production and in generating a credible evidence base but fell short of embedding its approaches and learning in government systems, private sector markets, or legal frameworks. Scaling was constrained by limited policy uptake, weak consumer demand, fragile land tenure arrangements, and gaps in institutional ownership.

28. The project's legacy is one of demonstrated feasibility, ecological benefit, and stakeholder momentum. However, achieving long-term sustainability and wider replication will require stronger institutional anchoring, more robust financial incentives (including government-backed PES schemes), and deliberate outreach to both policymakers and the public. With these enabling conditions in place, the project's vision of biodiversity-compatible livestock farming remains not only relevant but urgently needed in the face of South Africa's conservation and land-use challenges.

Summary of performance ratings by criteria (see details in Section 6.1, Table 9)

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Rating
Strategic Relevance	The project aligned with UNEP's objectives on biodiversity conservation, sustainable land management, and ecosystem restoration	Satisfactory
Quality of Project Design	The project was designed with strong scientific backing and innovative approaches, but gaps in institutional engagement and policy sustainability limited its effectiveness.	Satisfactory
Nature of External Context	The project was affected by external risks, including political instability, land reform uncertainty, and limited investor confidence.	Moderately Favourable
Effectiveness	The project demonstrated tangible environmental and economic benefits, but weak institutional support and policy barriers affected long-term outcomes.	Moderately Satisfactory
Financial Management	The project adhered to UNEP financial procedures, though challenges in fund disbursement timing and coordination impacted efficiency.	Satisfactory
Efficiency	The project demonstrated cost-effectiveness, particularly in reducing grazing costs for farmers, but governance challenges created inefficiencies.	Moderately Satisfactory
Monitoring and Reporting	The project had a structured monitoring and evaluation framework that ensured compliance with UNEP reporting requirements.	Satisfactory
Sustainability	Long-term sustainability was impacted by weak government ownership and a lack of financial incentives to continue the model at scale.	Moderately Unlikely
Factors Affecting Performance	Policy gaps, funding challenges, and lack of institutional support were the key limiting factors in overall performance.	Satisfactory
Overall Project Performance Rating	**The project demonstrated clear successes in biodiversity restoration and economic viability but was hindered by governance challenges, policy misalignment, and financial sustainability risks.**	**Moderately Satisfactory**

Lessons Learned

29. The following is a summary of the lessons learned from this evaluation (see the detailed Recommendations in Section 6.2 of this report).

Lesson 1. Exit strategies and legal mechanisms are essential for sustainability. Conservation outcomes are unlikely to endure without clear exit strategies and legally grounded stewardship incentives. Future projects should embed sustainability mechanisms—such as land stewardship clauses, tenure instruments, or incentive-based agreements—into legal or policy frameworks from the outset.

Lesson 2. Biodiversity can only function as an economic asset when supported by policy and market systems. Turning biodiversity into a viable economic resource requires institutional structures, market access, and enabling policy frameworks. Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes and green branding initiatives succeed only when embedded in agricultural and trade policy and linked to clear revenue models for producers.

Lesson 3. Secure land tenure is a prerequisite for long-term conservation investment. Without clear and enforceable tenure arrangements, both public and private investment in conservation remain at risk. Future initiatives should formalize land-use rights and responsibilities through contracts, leases, or public-sector-backed stewardship agreements to provide long-term security for conservation outcomes.

Lesson 4. Effective regulatory enforcement prevents ecological backsliding. Conservation gains can be rapidly undermined in the absence of enforceable legal frameworks. Robust regulation, oversight mechanisms, and permitting regimes are essential to ensure that conservation standards are maintained beyond project timelines.

Lesson 5. Behaviour change depends on cultural legitimacy and economic incentives. Sustainable shifts in land and wildlife management require not only technical interventions but also social and financial incentives that align with local values. Building trust, strengthening peer networks, and linking conservation to tangible livelihood benefits are key to lasting behavioural change.

Lesson 6. Scaling biodiversity-positive production systems requires public-sector leadership. Non-governmental organizations can effectively pilot innovative models but lack the authority and permanence to scale them nationally. Replication and policy uptake depend on government leadership, anchored in legislation, institutional frameworks, and dedicated public financing.

Lesson 7. Strategic communication is critical for policy and practice uptake. Knowledge products alone are insufficient without targeted dissemination and stakeholder engagement. Future projects should allocate adequate resources to communication strategies that reach policymakers, practitioners, and producers to support replication, policy uptake, and long-term behavioural change.

Recommendations

30. The following is a summary of the main recommendations of the evaluation (see the detailed Recommendations in Section 6.3 of this report).

Recommendation #1: Confirm DEFF as the institutional home for Shepherding and Land-Restoration Knowledge Products.

Recommendation #2: Consolidate and package Phase 1 evidence for policy uptake

Recommendation #3: Establish a knowledge-to-policy platform

Recommendation #4: Champion a phase 2 project that builds upon the evidence and lessons learned from the shepherding pilot, and connects with national agricultural land commitments, Land Degradation Neutrality, SDG 15.3.1, and policy cycles

Recommendation #5: Leverage PDALA 2024 as policy opportunity for scaling shepherding

Evaluation Office of UNEP Response to Stakeholder Comments

The draft evaluation report received significant negative feedback, primarily from the Landmark Foundation, and particularly relating to the evaluation scope and methods, and expectations around the sustainability and scalability of the intervention. The Evaluation Office of UNEP (EOU) has addressed these comments by incorporating relevant inputs into the final report or providing detailed responses in Annex IX.

The main objection was to the reconstruction of the longer-term results such as outcomes and impact and the assumptions underpinning the assessment of sustainability. In particular, Landmark Foundation representatives objected to assumptions around the scaling ambition of the project. The EOU clarifies that evaluations follow UNEP and GEF policies, and that the Theory of Change (TOC) generated for this evaluation draws from both the project results framework as well as the articulation of the causal narrative embedded within the official project document. See Table 7 within this report and an excerpt taken from the Project Document, below).

"*This GEF project is required to enable the Landmark Foundation to replicate the baseline project interventions and scale them up to a level where they have commercial relevance, applicability and support for more widespread uptake and implementation, and thus positive biodiversity impact on a landscape scale. Without this MSP the baseline project will not be able to pilot the scale and cohesive interventions proposed. The baseline project will remain, without GEF intervention, limited and sporadic effort without cohesive and measurable outcomes on a scale that will have restrained applicability in commercial agriculture. The GEF support through this MSP will greatly facilitate the*

incremental rollout of commercial interventions, through herding (that is also a green jobs initiative), that will enable the platform to be created to build on the foundation of the baseline project that has demonstrated positive commercial and ecological benefit of herding and herding tools. This will be through the development of a learning site to not only train herders (for project and wider uptake) and promote the use of herding and herding tools to effect ecologically supportive commercial farming practices in the livestock industry, but also will assist the monitoring and evaluation of these methods, and finally to develop a PES (via a brand scheme) to sustain the rollout and eventual replication and up-scaling of the project."[6]

The EOU has reviewed criticisms of the evaluation process but reaffirms confidence in the report (limitations notwithstanding), which accurately reflects the project's performance and assigns an overall project performance rating of 'Moderately Satisfactory'.

[6] ***https://www.thegef.org/projects-operations/projects/9382*** ***Request for CEO Approval. Page 12.***

1 Introduction

31. The project "Shepherding Biodiversity Back into South Africa's Productive Landscapes" (GEF ID 9382) represents a substantive effort by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to integrate biodiversity conservation into livestock farming across South Africa's arid rangelands. Approved by the Project Review Committee in June 2016, this project was implemented under UNEP's Ecosystems Division, specifically within the GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit, as part of the Nature Action Sub-programme (previously classified under the Ecosystem Management sub-programme). The initiative contributed directly to UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy (2014–2017), aligning with Expected Accomplishment (a) under Sub-programme 3, which focuses on the use of ecosystem approaches to maintain ecosystem services and productivity in terrestrial and aquatic systems. It contributed to several SDGs (notably SDGs 2, 15, and 12), and to the global biodiversity and land degradation agendas under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and GEF's BD-4 focal area.

32. With an approved total budget of over USD 6.5 million—including a GEF grant of USD 1,017,750 and co-financing commitments totalling USD 5.5 million—the project exceeded expectations by securing over USD 8 million in total resources by its close. It was implemented over a four-year period, beginning in June 2016 and officially reaching operational completion in December 2020. While envisioned as the first phase of a long-term 25-year action research initiative implemented by the Executing Agency, the broader research project concluded prematurely in December 2021 due to the breakdown of a critical land trust agreement that underpinned access to long-term rangeland monitoring sites.

33. The initiative took place in South Africa, with activities concentrated in the Karoo and surrounding regions of the Western, Northern, and Eastern Cape provinces. Project demonstration/target sites strategically linked key biodiversity hotspots—Fynbos, Thicket, Nama Karoo, and Grassland biomes—within a corridor between several national and provincial protected areas. The design aimed not only to improve ecological connectivity but to mainstream biodiversity-friendly practices on livestock farms located in proximity to these protected landscapes.

34. Execution was led by the Landmark Foundation Trust, with UNEP serving as the GEF Implementing Agency and technical backstop. The project was strongly supported by a multi-stakeholder Project Steering Committee that included representatives from the Department of Environmental Affairs (now DFFE), SANParks, SANBI, the Ministry of Agriculture, and other provincial departments. Co-financing and in-kind support came from a diverse set of partners, including the Green Fund via the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), the Tamarisk Trust (a South African philanthropic entity), the Woolworths Trust, and several academic and private sector collaborators (see details on co financing in section 3.6).

35. At its core, the project sought to demonstrate that biodiversity conservation and livestock production could not only coexist but reinforce one another. By reintroducing human shepherding practices in target sites, establishing a wildlife-friendly meat branding scheme (Fair Game™), and piloting a Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) model, the project aimed to create a replicable framework for market-based conservation that could both restore degraded ecosystems and provide viable livelihoods in rural communities.

36. This Terminal Evaluation was conducted in early 2025, five years after the end of the UNEP/GEF-supported phase. In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy[7] and the UNEP Programme Manual[8], the Terminal Evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP and Landmark Foundation Trust and other project partners especially Green Fund (DBSA), Tamarisk Trust (South African Philanthropist),

[7] *https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/policies-and-strategies*

[8] *https://wecollaborate.unep.org*

Woolworth Trust and Department of Environmental Affairs – these are also the target audience for the evaluation.

37. The evaluation is intended to serve both accountability and learning purposes: to demonstrate results to funders and stakeholders, and to generate actionable lessons that can inform future projects—particularly as similar work can be considered under the auspices of the new Preservation and Development of Agricultural Land Act (PDALA), enacted in South Africa in January 2025.

38. Attention is given in this evaluation to the commitments made in the project document for replication and upscaling, alignment with national policy reforms, and the development of institutional partnerships required for long-term sustainability (see Table 7). As such, this assessment draws on extensive documentation, stakeholder interviews, field missions, and triangulated data collection methods to offer a thorough and evidence-based understanding of what this project achieved—and what remains to be done.

39. Therefore, the Evaluation will identify lessons of operational relevance for future project formulation and implementation, especially where a second phase of the project is being considered. Recommendations relevant to the whole house may also be identified during the evaluation process.

40. In addition to the evaluation criteria outlined in the TOR (See in the Wedocs link), the Evaluation has aimed to address the four strategic questions (see section 6.1). These are questions of interest to UNEP and to which the project was believed to make a substantive contribution.

- **Q1:** To what extent has the Project fostered biodiversity conservation on livestock farms, through a return to human shepherding and the development of a wildlife-friendly produce branding scheme, leading to Payment for Ecosystem Services as a tool in conservation and local economic development?
- **Q2:** What are the most successful examples enabled by the project with potential for their scaling-up?
- **Q3:** What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how did they influence the project's performance?
- **Q4:** In what ways, and to what extent, have the needs and interests of differentiated groups been considered in the implementation and monitoring of the project?

2 Evaluation Methods

2.1 Introduction and Mission Context

41. The evaluation of the Project was conducted using a comprehensive mixed-methods approach to assess its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact. By integrating qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, the assessment ensured a triangulated, evidence-based analysis to enhance the reliability and validity of findings. The methodology was participatory and inclusive, capturing diverse stakeholder perspectives while adhering to UNEP's evaluation standards and guidelines.

42. Given that the project concluded several years ago, this evaluation required a considered approach with an experienced evaluator, balancing the need for historical accuracy with an assessment of long-term outcomes. Recognizing the challenges associated with accessing firsthand data after such a time lapse, the evaluation design incorporated a combination of document reviews, stakeholder consultations, field observations, and validation meetings to ensure a robust and balanced assessment.

2.2 Evaluation Design

43. The evaluation framework was structured in accordance with OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, ensuring a comprehensive and systematic analysis of project performance. This approach examined the project's alignment with national policies, its contribution to international environmental agreements, and the extent to which its outcomes were sustainable and scalable. The assessment focused on strategic relevance, quality of project design, external factors influencing implementation, achievement of outcomes, financial management, efficiency, sustainability, and key performance factors affecting results. Additionally, cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, human rights, and environmental sustainability were embedded into the analysis to capture broader social and environmental impacts.

44. The evaluation placed a strong emphasis on the project's objectives, intended results and theory of change, and the underlying assumptions and risks identified at the outset of implementation. A systematic review of the project's logical framework, work plans, and monitoring tools provided a foundation for measuring progress against established objectives and end-of-project (EOP) targets.

2.3 Data Collection Methods

45. A combination of data collection methods was employed to ensure a comprehensive and credible assessment of project outcomes. A thorough desk review was conducted between November and February 2025, analysing key project documents, including the project proposal, the theory of change in the project document, inception reports, annual progress reports, financial statements, and mid-term review findings. National policies and international agreements relevant to biodiversity conservation and sustainable agriculture were also examined to assess the project's alignment with broader environmental governance frameworks.

46. Stakeholder engagement was central to this evaluation, particularly given the time elapsed since project completion. A total of 17 interviews were conducted with representatives from UNEP, government agencies, the Project Management Unit (PMU), implementing partners, and members of the project steering committee. These discussions provided insights into the project's design, implementation challenges, and the effectiveness of interventions. Focus group discussions were held with farmers and community members in the Karoo farmlands, capturing their perspectives on livelihood impacts, conservation practices, and the feasibility of sustaining project interventions.

47. Surveys were distributed to government departments, project participants, and relevant stakeholders, gathering feedback on the project's effectiveness, stakeholder satisfaction, and areas requiring further intervention. Responses were disaggregated by gender to understand differential responses through a single survey and ensure inclusivity in the assessment.

48. A critical component of the evaluation was the evaluator's participation in the field visit conducted in the Western Cape -Beauford West farm region from March 11 to March 13 in collaboration with the Agricultural Research Institute and other key government stakeholders. This visit allowed for direct engagement with local markets, farmers, herders, and research specialists and provided an opportunity to assess the remnants of project interventions, including discussion on ecology and biodiversity conservation practices and livestock management systems. Observations were complemented by interviews with farmers and conservation specialists, offering valuable insights into whether key practices had been maintained and the extent to which project outcomes remained visible in the landscape.

49. The evaluation mission took place from March 9 to March 15, 2024, with key engagements across multiple locations including Cape Town, university of the Western Cape and old Beauford West. On March 10, a 2 ½ hour discussion was held with the Western Cape Department of Environment and Forestry in Cape Town, focusing on policy alignment, institutional engagement, and the integration of biodiversity conservation into broader agricultural and environmental policies. These engagements facilitated an in-depth understanding of the project's practical applications, long-term sustainability, and the economic and ecological challenges experienced by participants. (See **Annex VI** for list of interviewees)

Table 3. List of people contacted

Category	# People Contacted	Male	Female
Project Team: Implementing Agency (UNEP) and Executing Partners (Landmark Foundation)	3	2	1
Collaborating/Contributing Partners (Did not receive funds – e.g. DBSA, SANBI, UWC)	18	10	8
Duty Bearers (Govt. officials: DOA, DALRRD, DRDAR, DEFF)	27	17	10
Academic, Extension, Advisory (UWC, ARC, Grootfontein, Independent Advisors)	9	6	3
Direct Beneficiaries (Local Farmers from field visit)	3	3	0
Indirect Beneficiaries (Community level impacts; represented via field insights)	0	0	0
Civil Society Representatives (Environmental NGOs, advocacy orgs)	5	3	2

2.4 Data Analysis and Triangulation

50. The analysis employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure a robust and nuanced interpretation of project performance. Quantitative data, including performance indicators from the project's results framework, were analysed against baseline data and EOP targets to assess progress. Financial records were also reviewed to evaluate the efficiency of resource utilization and the cost-effectiveness of project interventions.

51. Qualitative insights from interviews and focus group discussions were analysed thematically, identifying key patterns and emerging trends in stakeholder experiences, challenges, and long-term impacts. To enhance credibility, findings from multiple data sources were cross-referenced through triangulation, minimizing potential biases and reinforcing the validity of conclusions. Discrepancies in data were investigated through follow-up consultations, ensuring a thorough and evidence-based assessment.

2.5 Limitations and Mitigation Strategies

52. Several limitations influenced the evaluation, requiring strategies to mitigate challenges. Given that the project ended five years ago (December 2020), access to key project stakeholders including management and project staff, some steering committee members, and obtaining context relevant data was constrained. Stakeholders had transitioned to different roles, and institutional memory of the project's implementation had diminished over time. However, through strategic

methodological approaches, these challenges were effectively mitigated, ensuring that the findings remained robust, well-rounded, and accurately reflective of the project's outcomes.

53. To strengthen the validity of the evaluation, a site visit to the operating context and triangulation approach was employed, combining multiple data sources, perspectives, and verification methods. This helped cross-check findings and reduced reliance on any single viewpoint, improving the accuracy of insights gathered.

54. Virtual engagement tools were leveraged to broaden participation, allowing key informants to contribute regardless of logistical constraints. Additionally, secondary data sources were integrated, ensuring that project documentation, policy inputs, and monitoring reports supplemented firsthand accounts.

55. To ensure a diverse and representative sample, purposeful sampling techniques were used, enabling the identification of both historical and contemporary stakeholders who could provide contextualized insights into the project's evolution, implementation challenges, and long-term impacts. This approach ensured that the evaluation captured not just immediate project results, but also broader systemic changes and stakeholder experiences.

56. Furthermore, interview and survey tools were carefully designed to enhance clarity and minimize recall bias, ensuring that stakeholder reflections on past events were as accurate and objective as possible. By structuring questions to focus on verifiable experiences and evidence-based impact, the evaluation avoided subjective distortions and maximized the reliability of responses.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

57. The evaluation adhered to UNEP's ethical guidelines, ensuring that all stakeholder engagements were conducted with informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for cultural sensitivities. Special attention was given to ensuring the inclusion of marginalized groups, including women, indigenous communities, and youth, in discussions. All interactions were designed to promote openness and honesty, encouraging stakeholders to share their experiences without fear of repercussions. The rigorous and participatory nature of this evaluation methodology provided a balanced and transparent assessment of the Project's achievements, challenges, and lessons learned. By incorporating diverse perspectives and applying robust analytical techniques, the evaluation offers a credible foundation for understanding the project's long-term outcomes and its potential implications for future biodiversity conservation initiatives.

3 The Project

3.1 Context

58. The project focused on the conservation and restoration of the top trophic levels (i.e. top and meso predators) in the targeted rangeland ecosystems. It aimed to positively affect improved conservation of the entire trophic pyramid and mitigate the negative and cascading effects of removing the influence of natural predation from the productive landscapes. The project strategically focused its work through various ecotones across the Western, Northern and Eastern Cape Provinces of South Africa (SA), incorporating biodiversity hotspot areas of Fynbos (Cape Floristic Region), Succulent- and Nama-Karoo, Grassland and Thicket biomes. This focus in the early implementation phases of the project was to ensure that project results could be replicated and scaled up throughout the SA region and beyond.

59. The Project focused on the arid zones of South Africa. While the specific study sites were located between key protected areas, care was taken to ensure that good representation of the biomes of the region were captured in the pilot sites for future replication and up-scaling. As such, the Cape Floristic Region, succulent Karoo, Nama Karoo, subtropical thicket biome and grasslands were represented in the project domain. The project areas were contained within the central southern region of the arid region of South Africa where good representation of the above biomes was evident and represented by an area circumscribed by the following towns: Beaufort West, Graaff Reinet, Colesberg, Willowmore, and Riversdale. The protected areas incorporated in this broad area were: Camdeboo National Park, Mountain Zebra National Park, Karoo National Park, Addo National Park, Tankwa Karoo National Park and Baviaanskloof Nature Reserve, Swartberg Nature Reserve, Kammanasie Nature Reserve, and Garcia Nature Reserves (the latter four being provincial nature reserves and part of the Cape Floristic Region World Heritage Site).

60. The project aimed to work in 10 farms/economic units (5 target sites and 5 control sites) where landholding in the various areas was estimated to be about 5,000 ha per unit with an assumption of effectively involving at least 50,000 ha. The project farms were chosen within and around the wider regions that contain areas of recognised biological importance and surrounding existing private conservation areas and Protected Areas (PAs). There were several reasons for this:

- Private and public funded efforts for the conservation of biodiversity were already taking place within and near these existing PAs. The project intervention aimed to be synergistic with these efforts and provide opportunities for the expansion of conservation efforts, through the (re)establishment of wildlife corridors on production livestock farms resulting in improved genetic connectivity between PAs (and improved status of biodiversity both on and off protected areas);
- Protected Areas are often (wrongly) blamed for being the cause/source of predation on livestock by wild predators. The project aimed to demonstrate that synergistic efforts between PAs and the farmers in surrounding production landscapes can result in (a) significant added value for farm products originating from 'Fair Game' (ethically branded produce) farms, (b) improved biodiversity conservation through better connectivity and production, and (c) more local 'green' employment opportunities. This approach, mainstreaming biodiversity conservation in production landscapes surrounding PAs, may be the key to sustaining both PAs and the surrounding rural economy; and
- Shepherding has been on a declining trend in all these commercial livestock farming regions for many decades, resulting in loss of local employment opportunities. The project aimed to reverse this trend. The envisaged alternative mainly focused on removing capacity barriers to facilitate the uptake of more wildlife-friendly livestock farming practices. This approach was intended to underpin the mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation practices on extensive areas of livestock farms. Key additional outcomes expected from this intervention in the results framework (see section 3.2 and 5.4) included the development of a herding training program and testing the efficacy of several wildlife-friendly control methods. This was, in turn, intended to generate: new national capacity and new management/training tools; development of sound monitoring and evaluation tools to assess the efficacy of several predator-control/livestock management options, as the basis for adaptive management and early warning systems to keep damage to livestock within acceptable levels and support biodiversity conservation; production of a wide range of peer-

reviewed technical studies, as well as simple educational and illustrative materials, to support advocacy efforts and to underpin legislative and policy making processes at the national level; support improved genetic connectivity between wildlife populations; and biodiversity stewardship was to be promoted as the project demonstration farms served as the basis for an important conservation extension programme.

3.2 Results Framework

61. The project aimed to enhance biodiversity conservation on livestock farms by reintroducing human shepherding techniques and creating a wildlife-friendly branding scheme that would contribute to Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES). This dual focus was expected to support both conservation and local economic development, integral to sustainable development. **Table 4** below summarises the project's results hierarchy as stated in the Project Document.

Table 4. Results Framework (ProDoc, 2016)

Project Objective: To foster biodiversity conservation on livestock farms, through a return to human shepherding and the development of a wildlife-friendly produce branding scheme, leading to Payment for Ecosystem Services as a tool in conservation and local economic development.		
Project Components/ Programs	**Project Outcomes**	**Project Outputs**
Component 1. Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation on livestock farms through biodiversity-friendly shepherding practices	Outcome 1. Biodiversity-friendly shepherding practices are documented, tested and applied on large commercial farms through training of herders	Output 1.1. Conduct an evaluation of the actual environmental and economic impact of all methods of management of predation and damage-causing animals on livestock farms, both lethal (where livestock farmers continue to prefer this method), and non-lethal methods (where farmers wish to test these methods on their farms). Output 1.2. Biodiversity-friendly shepherding practices are tested and applied on selected pilot livestock farms covering approximately 50 000 ha, resulting in the return of wildlife and improved biodiversity conservation and improved connectivity between existing protected areas and other adjacent non-protected sites of conservation importance. Output 1.3. BD-friendly shepherding associations are developed and operational at 5 farms covering approximately 30 000 ha, supporting wildlife conservation and providing the platform for demonstration, training and education activities as well as the basis for replication and upscaling of best practices at the national level. A further 5 farms (20 000 ha) participate in piloting shepherding programmes or surrogate measures. Output 1.4. A shepherding Academy is established and operational, with innovative curriculum developed, and partnerships developed with several other training/educational institutions in the country. Output 1.5. Production standards and templates for management that foster improved BD conservation on livestock farms are developed and widely promoted through the work of the Academy, the Landmark Foundation, government entities and their broad network of partners.
Component 2. Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes linked to wildlife-friendly and socially responsible labelling of farm products	Outcome 2. Wildlife-friendly and socially responsible labelling of farm products provides the basis for the establishment of payment for Ecosystem Service	Output 2.1. A Brand scheme standards and Brand membership structures are developed and operationalised, building on ongoing work by the Landmark Foundation and partners Output 2.2. A Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) scheme is developed and tested, linking to the Brand partnership (the sellers of Ecosystem Services [ES]

Project Objective: To foster biodiversity conservation on livestock farms, through a return to human shepherding and the development of a wildlife-friendly produce branding scheme, leading to Payment for Ecosystem Services as a tool in conservation and local economic development.		
Project Components/ Programs	**Project Outcomes**	**Project Outputs**
	(PES) schemes that support local development and BD conservation	products) and the wider public (buyers of ES products), and resulting in direct and measurable benefits to biodiversity conservation on livestock farms Output 2.3 Identification and analysis of direct and measurable benefits to biodiversity conservation on livestock farms
Component 3. Wildlife protection on production landscapes promoted, biodiversity monitoring and impact assessments conducted and knowledge management enhanced	Outcome 3. Wildlife protection and compliance by brand scheme participants is promoted on farms, biodiversity monitoring programme is developed and implemented and awareness on BD friendly shepherding methods created.	Output 3.1. Wildlife protection and compliance by brand scheme participants is encouraged through financial incentives (premium on their produce) and financial disincentives resulting from non-compliance through the audited, certified and accredited Fair Game brand membership scheme are effected. Output 3.2. An effective Biodiversity monitoring programme is developed and implemented, to assess changes in the status of biodiversity in the participating livestock farms and the overall targeted rangeland ecosystems. Output 3.3. An evaluation of the actual environmental and economic impact of all methods of management of predation and damage-causing animals on livestock farms, both lethal (where livestock farmers continue to prefer this method), and non-lethal methods (where farmers wish to test these methods on their farms). Output 3.4. Results are independently evaluated and lessons learnt are published and widely disseminated, mainly targeting farmers as well as decision/policymakers

3.3 Stakeholders

62. The project brought together diverse stakeholders whose roles, influence, and interests significantly shaped its outcomes. These stakeholders included academia, civil society, private sector actors, government agencies, and marginalized groups. Their contributions and engagement reflect both the initiative's achievements and challenges, providing critical insights for the Project's Terminal Evaluation.

63. Partner and stakeholder engagement was central to the implementation and evolution of the project, with key contributions from academic institutions, civil society, the private sector, government agencies, and marginalized groups. Each played a distinct role, and their levels of influence and interest shaped both project design and outcomes in meaningful ways.

64. Academic institutions were the most consistently engaged and influential group. Nine institutions—including the University of the Western Cape, Pretoria University, the University of Cape Town, the University of the Witwatersrand, and international partners such as the University of Technology Sydney and the University of Wisconsin-Madison—contributed significant in-kind resources. Their inputs shaped the project's monitoring and evaluation framework and produced a growing body of scientific publications, positioning the initiative as a credible contributor to global debates on regenerative agriculture and non-lethal predator management. Their interest was high, driven by the opportunity to conduct applied research, and their influence was equally strong due to the technical rigor they introduced. Importantly, there was active participation from women and underrepresented groups within the academic teams, aligning with UNEP's commitments to gender and social inclusion.

65. Civil society organizations such as Compassion in World Farming, the Endangered Wildlife Trust, and RENU-KAROO Veld Restoration also provided strategic support, participating in governance structures, site visits, and technical reviews. RENU-KAROO stood out for its role in co-designing analytical frameworks and contributing to joint publications. While these actors had moderate institutional influence, their grassroots presence helped ground the project in practical conservation realities. Their alignment with the project's values ensured strong interest and sustained collaboration, especially in promoting biodiversity and ethical land-use practices.

66. Private sector engagement was more mixed. Woolworths served as a financial co-funder, while the South African Meat Industry Corporation (SAMIC) facilitated the registration and audit of a sustainability-linked brand scheme. Five commercial farms (see **Table 2**) piloted the project's innovative land management methods. Despite these efforts, overall uptake from the private sector was below expectations. Resistance was rooted in cultural inertia and economic risk aversion within the commercial agriculture sector. While private actors had high potential influence—particularly in scaling sustainable practices—their moderate interest limited deeper engagement. Future initiatives would benefit from earlier alignment of incentives and clearer demonstration of economic benefits to overcome this barrier.

67. Government engagement was uneven. The National Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE) were set to play a central role in project governance, co-financing, and policy alignment and notably through its facilitation of the initial partnership i.e. Green Fund and GEF support. SANParks engaged through the Steering Committee. However, provincial government oversight—especially in the Eastern and Western Cape—remained largely disengaged. This limited opportunities for institutional uptake and replication at sub-national levels, highlighting the need for more robust provincial partnerships in future project designs. Despite this gap, national government interest and influence was high concerning the results i.e. and lesson learned of this project due to the alignment of the project's objectives with biodiversity, social, economic and land degradation commitments.

68. Finally, the project intersected with the lives and livelihoods of marginalized and underrepresented groups, particularly rural farmers and women involved in agriculture around farms and shops in Beaufort West. While these groups held limited formal decision-making power, their participation lent field-level legitimacy to the initiative. Women normally play vital roles in implementing the project as scientists and researchers, through local markets and in conservation and land-use practices. In practice however, a need to set up monitoring indicators was not seen and as the saying goes, 'if you can't measure it you can't monitor it'. The project had a high degree of relevance to women and communities, enhancing food security and resilience. Future efforts should proactively address access and empowerment challenges to ensure that marginalized and women's voices are more centrally reflected in governance and benefit-sharing structures.

3.4. Project Implementation Structure and Partners

69. The project was implemented by UNEP through the GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation Unit (Ecosystems Division). The GEF Executing Agency (EA) was the Landmark Foundation, an NGO based in South Africa. UNEP was accountable to GEF for project delivery and had ultimate responsibility for supervising project development and guiding project development activities. The UNEP-Sub-regional office in South Africa was the contact point between the EA (Landmark Foundation) and the GEF Implementing Agency (UNEP). The UNEP Sub-regional office in South Africa represented the UNEP Ecosystems Division on the PSC in the event that representatives of the UNEP Ecosystems Division were not able to attend.

70. The Project was guided by a PSC composed of Department for Environmental Affairs (DEA) as the chair, South Africa National Parks Authority (SANParks), South Africa National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Education, Local Governments and NGOs, private sector, Provincial Conservation Departments and Statutory Boards, University of Pretoria (Veterinary Faculty) as the research partner, the National Project Manager and UNEP. The PSC was responsible for, among other things, the adoption of the project's strategic decisions and reports, approval of the annual work plans, budgets and financial procurement, and overseeing the use of financial resources.

71. Landmark Foundation, as the project EA, managed the GEF grant, coordinated execution with all key partners, and provided technical and financial management services for execution of the project. Landmark Foundation organized Project Steering Committee Meetings and was responsible for involving all relevant government representatives such as SANBI and SANParks, civil society, academic and private-sector stakeholders and UNEP. They reported to UNEP for technical and financial delivery of the project outputs and reported to the DEA and PSC for policy backstopping purposes.

72. Other project partners with whom the project leveraged resources included the following:

- Nine Institutions from Academia: University of the Western Cape, University of Technology Sydney, Australia, Pretoria University, Agricultural Research Council, South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON), Grootfontein Agricultural College, University of Wisconsin Madison, United States of America, University of Witwatersrand and University of Cape Town. Resources: Extensive input from the above academic institutions who provided intellectual input to the monitoring and evaluation as well as the academic publications that emanated and are still being crafted by the initiative. These resources were provided in kind.
- Three Civil Society Organizations: Compassion in World Farming, Endangered Wildlife Trust and RENU-KAROO Veld Restoration. Resources: The parties participated in the Steering Committee and site visits together with Renu-Karoo providing academic inputs in design of analysis and scientific publications of outcomes. These resources were provided in kind.
- Private Sector: Woolworths, South African Meat Industry Corporation (SAMIC). Resources: Woolworths was a co-funder. The SAMIC helped to register the brand scheme and oversaw the audits. Five target sites, five control sites and others that took part in the activities.
- Government: National Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Environment (DFFE), South African National Parks (SANPARKS), Western Cape Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, CapeNature, Eastern Cape of Economic Development and Environmental Affairs and Northern Cape Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Rural Development and Land Reform. Resources: DFFE gave extensive support in project development and had facilitated co-financing agreements through the Green Fund and GEF. SANParks participated in the steering committee. The remaining government entities gave less vigorous support.

73. Agricultural Research Council (ARC) played a considerably substantive role in project implementation. As South Africa's statutory agricultural science institution, ARC collaborated closely with the Landmark Foundation during the project period (2016–2020), contributing scientific design, field implementation support, and long-term ecological monitoring. ARC co-established rangeland monitoring plots on participating farms, provided technical validation of grazing and vegetation indicators, supported livestock performance assessments, and engaged postgraduate students in experiential research and data analysis. ARC researchers also contributed directly to peer-reviewed publications arising from the project's datasets, ensuring scientific rigor and continuity. This level of engagement reflected a sustained, multi-year partnership rather than a peripheral advisory presence, and positions ARC as a central institutional actor in developing and validating the biodiversity-friendly livestock management model.

3.5. Changes in Design and Context during Implementation

74. The results framework remained unchanged throughout. The implementation of the project was monitored jointly by the Landmark Trust and the UNEP task team, in collaboration with a Project Steering Committee. The project had a clear set of reporting mechanisms including: yearly GEF project implementation reports submitted between 2017-2020, a final project implementation report (2020), annual steering committee meetings during 2016 -2020 and half year reporting. Notably, the project risk rating was deemed by project management to be low from inception till the end of the project despite low government participation throughout (see design, assumption, driver and effectiveness sections).

75. A further concern in assessing project performance was the "one-in-three-hundred-years" drought that affected the project area during the 2015–2020 cycle. This event had significant ecological and commercial impacts on producers, who were the primary focus of most project activities. Notably,

however, it also served as an important test case: the pilot sites implementing regenerative agricultural methods experienced comparatively lower economic losses, thereby demonstrating the efficacy of these approaches under extreme climatic stress.

76. Just as this drought was partially alleviated, the project endured an extended constraint of the COVID19 lockdown that hampered ongoing exit activities. This additional and added challenge possibly impacted the appetite for, and attitudes towards embedding the innovations and the methodological approach for ecologically (biome) sensitive production and agriculture (land management).

3.6. Project Financing

77. The project had an overall planned budget of USD US$6,517,750 made up of a GEF Grant allocation of US$1,017,750 and co-financing of US$5,500,000 to support the achievement of results. **Table 5** below shows the estimated project budget and sources of funding as per the project design documentation.

Table 5. Project Budget (at approval)

GEF financing amount		**US$ 1,017,750**				
Expected Co-financing amounts		**US$ 5,500,000**				
Landmark Foundation		Philanthropist	Woolworths	Green Fund	GEF Agency (UNEP)	
Cash	In-kind	Cash	Cash	Cash	Cash	In-kind
100,000	**100,000**	**4,600,000**	**100,000**	**500,000**	**-**	**100,000**

78. Reported Co-finance: Landmark Foundation and Allsop & Tamarisk Trust, between them, leveraged about US$1.6m more than what was committed at the project inception. These amounts are accounted under the reported co-financing (See **Table 6**).

Table 6. Actual Co-financing (GEF projects only)[9]

Co-financing Source	**Planned (US$)**	**Actual (US$)**	**Difference (US$)**
Philanthropist	4,600,000	5,987,599	1,387,599
Green Fund	500,000	544,834	44,834
Woolworths	100,000	100,644	644
Landmark Foundation	200,000	445,766	245,766
UNEP/GEF	1,017,750	1,017,750	0
Total	**6,417,750**	**8,096,593**	**1,678,843**

79. Additional leveraged resources: Several spinoff and additional efforts that were conducted alongside the project brought in approximately further US$ 100,000 to augment efforts in developing ecologically regenerative farming efforts. The academic input from the above collaborators is estimated to be in-kind contribution of a further US$100,000. In summary:

- The total planned co-finance amount was $6,417,750. This does not account for unquantified in-kind contributions, i.e., participation of government and other steering committee members' support.
- The total actual realised co-financing amount was $8,096,593.
- The difference between planned and actual is $1,678,843, largely driven by higher contributions from the Philanthropist and Landmark Foundation.

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

4 Theory of Change at Evaluation

80. The Theory of Change (ToC) was not required at design, nor was there a mid-term evaluation/review to reflect on such a development. It was thus reconstructed through a comprehensive review of the project's design, revisions, and logical framework during this TE. While the core pathways and objectives remained unchanged, refinements were made to clarify outcomes and outputs without altering the intended impact. These adjustments, detailed in **Table 7**, strengthen the foundation for evaluating the project's contributions to biodiversity conservation in livestock farming.

81. The overarching objective was to promote biodiversity-friendly livestock farming through the adoption of human shepherding practices and the establishment of a wildlife-friendly produce branding mechanism**.** The project sought to achieve its objectives through three components or pathways. According to the approved project document, the project's intention was to build on and scale up the pre-existing but fragmented initiatives that the Landmark Foundation (LF)— a conservation-focused NGO—had already been implementing.

82. Over a ten-year horizon (stated in the project documents- the land trust agreement was for 25 years), the project envisioned the institutionalization of biodiversity-friendly practices across the livestock sector, leading to their incorporation into national policies and widespread implementation in target regions. Achieving this long-term outcome was anticipated to enhance ecosystem resilience, generate economic benefits for local communities, and contribute to broader landscape-level conservation goals.

83. The project design (Pro Doc p.29) recognized gender equality as an integral aspect of biodiversity-friendly livestock management. Given the historical and cultural male dominance in South Africa's livestock industry, the project aimed to foster gender equity through targeted interventions. These included training programs for young herders, the promotion of herding associations, and the incorporation of life skills—such as business development, disease prevention, and gender rights—into educational curricula. The UNEP gender marker was to be used to assess gender relevance at the project's inception, and gender-disaggregated data were planned to be collected at key intervals to measure participation and job creation outcomes[10]. While the project acknowledged the deep-seated nature of gender biases within the sector, it committed to integrating gender considerations throughout implementation and monitoring.

84. The ultimate impact envisioned was the integration of biodiversity conservation into livestock farming policies. Given the centrality of policy reform to achieving impact, the reconstructed ToC underscores the need for strategic engagement with policymakers, as well as an assessment of political and institutional barriers that may influence the success of these reforms.

85. The ToC also acknowledges key intermediate states that bridge the gap between on-the-ground implementation, knowledge generation and policy influence to support scalability. Cross-sectoral coalitions, local organizations (e.g., herding associations), and institutional partners are essential to translating high-level policy goals into actionable strategies.

4.1 Theory of Change Pathways

86. In the Great Karoo, where livestock farming and conservation often stood at odds, the Project set out to transform how rangelands were managed. The vision was ambitious: to create a biodiversity-friendly livestock farming model that not only protected predators and restored degraded landscapes

[10] *In alignment with UNEP and Government of South Africa commitments, the project document says it will apply the **UNEP Gender Marker** during the inception phase. This requires: A gender analysis linked to how environmental goals are achieved by recognizing and addressing gender-specific roles and needs; and Reporting on gender-disaggregated data by Year 2 and project end, specifically: Number of full-time project staff (men/women), Number of Project Board members (men/women), and Number of jobs created by the project (men/women).*

but also made economic sense for farmers. To do this, the project wove together three interconnected pathways, each designed to reinforce the other and drive lasting change.

87. These three pathways were not isolated interventions; they were mutually reinforcing, each addressing a critical element needed for systemic change:

- The Shepherding Academy was expected to provide the behavioural foundation, ensuring that biodiversity-friendly practices were understood and applied.
- The PES and branding initiative was intended to make these practices economically sustainable, creating financial motivation for farmers to maintain them.
- Biodiversity monitoring was designed to provide scientific validation and policy leverage, strengthening the case for institutional adoption.

88. Through this integrated approach, the project sought to embed biodiversity conservation into the fabric of livestock farming—not as an external requirement but as an inherent, beneficial, and financially viable practice.

Causal Pathway 1: Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation

Evidence-based decision-making → Knowledge generation and dissemination → Adoption of biodiversity-friendly practices → Increased wildlife presence → Improved ecosystem connectivity → Enhanced biodiversity conservation.

89. At its core, the project recognized that traditional predator control methods—such as shooting, dogs, trapping and poisoning—were neither ecologically sustainable nor economically viable in the long run. Instead, it sought to revive an ancient but disappearing practice: human shepherding. By training a new generation of herders through the Shepherding Academy, the project reintroduced adaptive grazing techniques, promoting better livestock management while reducing conflict with predators. Herders were not just livestock guardians; they became stewards of biodiversity, ensuring that grazing patterns supported rangeland restoration and improved habitat conditions for both livestock and wildlife.

Key Assumptions:

- Knowledge and Evidence for Policy Change: The ToC assumes that policy reforms will be influenced by project-generated evidence. Strengthening the mechanisms for knowledge dissemination and policy advocacy will enhance this assumption.
- Acceptance of Non-Lethal Predation Management: Social acceptance is key to adoption; however, resistance among farmers due to entrenched practices must be addressed through targeted outreach and incentive structures.
- Effectiveness of Practices: The project assumes that biodiversity-friendly practices will yield positive ecological outcomes, though variability across local contexts necessitates adaptive monitoring and learning.
- Willingness to Participate in Training: While engagement is expected to be facilitated by farmer networks, potential barriers such as financial constraints and geographic isolation require mitigation strategies.

Key Drivers

- Scalable replication enabled.
- Policy guidance for biodiversity sensitive farming practices informed.
- Documented biodiversity gains serve as evidence for policy or model for broader application.
- Operational associations function as hubs for knowledge sharing, demonstration, and policy advocacy, enabling replication across regions and integration into national policy frameworks.

- The Academy institutionalizes knowledge transfer and professional training, serving as a replicable model for scaling biodiversity-friendly herding nationally.
- Policies and training partnerships support sector-wide adoption and compliance.

Causal Pathway 2: PES Schemes and Branding

Development of branding standards → Increased market demand → Implementation of PES → Financial incentives → Adoption of sustainable practices.

90. Shifting farmer mindsets and behaviours required more than just training—it needed economic incentives. This led to the second pathway: Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) and market-driven branding. The project developed a PES framework, rewarding farmers for adopting biodiversity-friendly grazing practices. The idea was simple but powerful: if farmers could see a financial return for their conservation efforts, they would be more likely to sustain them beyond the project's lifespan. To further strengthen this approach, the project introduced a wildlife-friendly livestock branding initiative, helping farmers tap into niche markets that valued ethically produced, environmentally responsible meat and wool products.

Key Assumptions:

- Effective Coordination among certification bodies, partnerships, and supply chain actors is sustained throughout implementation.
- Market Demand for Wildlife-Friendly Products will grow in line with national and global sustainability trends. However, success depends on a robust market analysis and well-executed branding and marketing strategies.
- Effectiveness of PES Schemes: PES incentives must be sufficient to cover implementation costs and remain viable in fluctuating economic conditions.
- Government Support for PES: The ToC assumes sustained government support, but competition with other policy priorities may pose challenges. Proactive engagement strategies are needed.

Key Drivers

- Bio-friendly practices are incentivized by improved prices in pilot area.
- Nationally recognized wildlife-friendly branding standards and membership structures are established and integrated into certification processes.

Causal Pathway 3: Wildlife Protection and Monitoring

Wildlife protection incentives → Compliance with standards → Biodiversity monitoring → Data-driven decision-making across stakeholder groups→ Improved biodiversity outcomes.

91. For these efforts to have a lasting impact, they needed to be recognized, validated, and integrated into national policies. This is where the third pathway—Biodiversity Monitoring and Knowledge Outputs—came into play. The project established a science-based monitoring system, using camera traps, vegetation assessments, and remote sensing to track the ecological benefits of biodiversity-friendly livestock management. The data collected not only provided evidence that these approaches worked but also served as a tool for policy advocacy. Reports, case studies, and policy briefs were developed to engage government agencies, conservation organizations, and policymakers, ensuring that the project's findings could influence future rangeland and conservation policies at the national level.

Key Assumptions:

- Compliance and Monitoring: Farmers are expected to adhere to biodiversity-friendly standards, though enforcement mechanisms need further elaboration.

- Effective Knowledge Transfer: Knowledge dissemination mechanisms must be tailored to stakeholder needs to ensure effective uptake of best practices.

Key Drivers

- Biodiversity-friendly farming practices are reinforced by brand scheme.
- Incentive structures promote adherence to conservation practices within certified frameworks and support biodiversity-friendly farming.
- Scientific credibility and transparent evidence demonstrate biodiversity outcomes and validates regenerative methods.
- The industry is informed, through guidelines, by the results of the impact evaluation.
- Published findings and lessons learned from the research are accessible to relevant audiences.

4.2 TOC Analysis at Evaluation

92. The project's Theory of Change provides a structured framework for showcasing an evidence based and innovative integrated approach to achieving biodiversity conservation in livestock farming through innovative mechanisms such as human shepherding, PES, and wildlife-friendly branding. A summary of the evaluator interpretation of the reconstruction of the ToC is presented in tabular form below (**Table 7**), showing a comparison between the original and clarified results hierarchy. While the project's fundamental objectives remain intact, refinements to its outcomes and outputs have strengthened the logic and evaluability of the ToC.

93. It is important to note that the original project design and final document did not include a Theory of Change, nor did it *define intermediate states to logically connect outputs with intended longer-lasting expected results*. In accordance with GEF and UNEP guidelines and as part of standard practise, this evaluation had to clarify the project logic at the evaluation inception phase based on consultations, implementation evidence, interviews, and evaluator judgment.

94. The project results framework relied primarily on activity- and output-level indicators (e.g., number of farms involved, hectares covered, herders trained), without clearly defined SMART outcome-level indicators or milestones for behaviour change, policy uptake, or institutional transformation. The absence of such metrics limited the project's ability to measure systemic progress or adaptively manage toward long-term impact.

95. This reconstruction is therefore grounded in the evaluation's role to assess not only whether outputs were delivered, but whether the project functioned as a scalable scientific experiment—one capable of informing biodiversity policy, institutional learning, and market-based conservation models.

96. As such, the evaluation clarifies the strategic intent and contribution pathways—interpreting the project as an effort to integrate biodiversity into production landscapes through practice innovation, institutional partnership, and policy engagement.

Table 7. Comparison of Evaluator interpretation of Results Framework in the Prodoc and TOC

Original Prodoc Formulation	Detailed description in Prodoc	Reconstructed TOC	Justification for Reformulation
Objective: To foster biodiversity conservation on livestock farms, through a return to human shepherding and the development of a wildlife-friendly produce branding scheme, leading to Payment for Ecosystem Services as a tool in conservation and local economic development.	*[pg. 12.]* This project is required to enable the Landmark Foundation **to replicate the baseline project interventions and scale them up to a level where they have commercial relevance, applicability and support for more widespread uptake and implementation, and thus positive biodiversity impact on a landscape scale. Without this MSP, the baseline project will not be able to pilot the scale and cohesive interventions proposed. The baseline project will remain, without GEF intervention, limited and sporadic effort without cohesive and measurable outcomes on a scale that will have restrained applicability in commercial agriculture.** The GEF support through this MSP **will greatly facilitate the incremental rollout of commercial interventions**, through herding (that is also a green jobs initiative), that will enable the platform to be created to build on the foundation of the baseline project that has demonstrated positive commercial and ecological benefit of herding and herding tools. *[pg 25.]* The Department of Environmental Affairs will be the lead government agency in the steering structures of the project, **with the aim of influencing policy and information dissemination**. *(and other references to influencing policy)*	**Impact:** Institutionalized Conservation Practices across Livestock Farming and Key Sectors: biodiversity-friendly practices are embedded in national policies and implemented across target regions, enhancing ecosystem resilience, economic benefits for local communities, and conservation outcomes across landscapes.	Highlights systemic impact through policy-level changes that integrate conservation goals into livestock farming and other relevant sectors. Emphasis on resilience and economic benefits aligns with GEF's focus on sustainable, community-centred outcomes.
		Intermediate State 1: Biodiversity-friendly livestock farming practices are *[at project outcome level]* adopted on pilot farms and *[at Intermediate State level]* formalized in an advisory network to influence farm management at a national scale.	Highlights intermediate behavioural and policy changes needed to institutionalize conservation practices across farms and regions.
		Intermediate State 2: Multi-stakeholder collaboration platforms and cross-sectoral frameworks are operational, enabling coordination between biodiversity, agriculture, and policy sectors to reinforce sustainable livestock farming.	Establishes the importance of formal collaboration frameworks for coherent, sector-wide conservation integration.
		Intermediate State 3: Policy frameworks integrate biodiversity conservation mandates within livestock and wildlife management, providing a structured approach to mainstream biodiversity goals into regulatory landscapes.	Reflects the necessity of integrating conservation policies into related sectors to sustain project impact across governance levels.

Original Prodoc Formulation	Detailed description in Prodoc	Reconstructed TOC	Justification for Reformulation
Component 1: Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation on livestock farms through biodiversity-friendly shepherding practices			
Outcome 1: Biodiversity-friendly shepherding practices are documented, tested and applied on large commercial farms through training of herders.	*[pg 12.]* See text above on rationale for the MSP. *[pg. 14]* The focus of Component 1 will be to reintroduce and redevelop shepherding as a profession, building on the traditional shepherding skills currently absent or **being lost on farms**. **The component will support demonstration of a range of husbandry interventions in selected farms and will contribute to building a new platform for job creation, skills development (and retention), as a basis for local economic development** that supports biodiversity conservation and rural livelihoods.	**Outcome 1:** Evidence-based *[i.e. documented and tested],* biodiversity-friendly livestock management models are established [*i.e. applied]* across pilot farms. *ProDoc text indicates scaling was a fundamental justification for the project.* *DRIVER: Scalable replication enabled*	The wording has been changed from passive documentation to active validation and scaling.
Output 1.1: Conduct an evaluation of the actual environmental and economic impact of all methods of management of predation and damage-causing animals on livestock farms, both lethal (where livestock farmers continue to prefer this method), and non-lethal methods (where farmers wish to test these methods on their farms).	*[pg. 14-15]* The project is pioneering a method that outcomes of the research by Landmark Foundation has demonstrated to be beneficial on an ad hoc scale. **This project is about the practical and up-scaled commercial roll out of the intervention (and validation of these outcomes) to enable the dissemination of lessons learnt into the commercial livestock farming sector. The evaluation intended by this project is the measurement and validation of the efficacy of the interventions proposed by this rollout of methods in commercial production.**	**Output 1.1**: Environmental and economic impacts of predation management methods are systematically assessed and results disseminated *[i.e. conduct an impact evaluation]* *ProDoc text indicates national policies were to be influenced.* *DRIVER: Policy guidance for biodiversity sensitive farming practices informed*	Ensures findings are actively used to guide policies that promote sustainable farming and conservation outcomes.
Output 1.2: Biodiversity-friendly shepherding practices are tested and applied on selected pilot livestock farms covering approximately 50 000 ha, resulting in the return of wildlife and improved biodiversity conservation and improved connectivity between existing protected areas and other adjacent non-protected sites of conservation importance.	*[pg. 15]* **Biodiversity-friendly shepherding practices are tested and applied on selected pilot livestock farms covering approximately 50 000 ha**, resulting in the return of wildlife and improved Biodiversity conservation and improved connectivity between existing Protected Areas and other adjacent non-protected sites of conservation importance. Under this output, the project will take stock of all the experience in field of predator management and the application non-lethal management and support the latter application in combination with human shepherding. **Different grazing management practices will also be combined with non-lethal management**. These methods, facilitated through herding, of high impact, short duration, low frequency duration grazing mimic the natural	**Output 1.2:** Piloting *[i.e. testing and applying]* of biodiversity-friendly shepherding practices across 50,000 ha results in documented biodiversity gains. *ProDoc text indicates national policies were to be influenced.* *DRIVER: Documented biodiversity gains serve as evidence for policy or model for broader application*	This clarifies scope of pilot outcomes to provide a tested model that informs broader policy and spatial planning.

Original Prodoc Formulation	Detailed description in Prodoc	Reconstructed TOC	Justification for Reformulation
	grazing cycles of herbivores and have demonstrated land cover restoration effects and improved biodiversity in arid zones.		
Output 1.3: BD-friendly shepherding associations are developed and operational at 5 farms covering approximately 30 000 ha, supporting wildlife conservation and providing the platform for demonstration, training and education activities as well as the basis for replication and upscaling of best practices at the national level. A further 5 farms (20 000 ha) participate in piloting shepherding programmes or surrogate measures.	[pg. 15] **These associations are expected to become operational in productive landscapes in a selection of regions/districts.** The persons will be trained in herding skills and techniques, and a variety of life skills and basic business management skills. With the placement in the jobs market they will be assisted to establish herding associations that can commercially sell their skills into the commercial farming sector to provide herding functions. The associations will only be set up as the training of herders have taken place, and thus cannot be developed prior to project inception, and will emerge as the training academy takes effect. Membership will be conditional to the herders being trained through the herding academy.	**Output 1.3:** Operational shepherding associations across 30,000 ha function in a selection of regions/districts for demonstration, policy advocacy, replication and upscaling of best practices at the national level *ProDoc text indicates an intention to support scaling and influence national policies.* *DRIVER: Operational associations function as hubs for knowledge sharing, demonstration, and policy advocacy, enabling replication across regions and integration into national policy frameworks.*	Elevates the role of associations as policy advocacy platforms that enable cross-regional replication and national policy integration.
Output 1.4: A shepherding Academy is established and operational, with innovative curriculum developed, and partnerships developed with several other training/educational institutions in the country.	[pg. 16] The Shepherd training academy will be developed by Landmark Foundation (along the lines of the African Centre for Holistic Management & Savory Institute models), in collaboration with government entities (Department of Agriculture and Department of Environmental Affairs) and commercial farmers. The Academy is expected to train approximately 10 students annually in the first 3 years of the pilot phase, to be doubled to 20 per annum thereafter. The low number initially is to allow for the development of the curriculum and methods of training, together with cultivating acceptance in the agricultural community. **After the pilot phase this will be scaled up**. The development of professional capacity for the reintroduction of shepherding will be a key avenue to address biodiversity loss and habitat degradation, allowing the development of more hands-on management. Guidelines, assessments and lessons learned papers will also be developed to support improved extension services in the same direction, extending the impact	**Output 1.4:** A Shepherding Academy is established and operational as a model biodiversity training institution, with a certified curriculum and partnerships, for ensuring long-term conservation capacity building. *ProDoc text indicates an intention to support scaling and influence national policies.* *DRIVER: The Academy institutionalizes knowledge transfer and professional training, serving as a replicable model for scaling biodiversity-friendly herding nationally.*	Emphasizes the Academy's role as a key institution that supports conservation training, policy development, and capacity building aligned with GEF standards.

Original Prodoc Formulation	Detailed description in Prodoc	Reconstructed TOC	Justification for Reformulation
	on extensive areas of livestock farms. **The detailed manual and textbooks developed for the training programmes will also become an authoritative guide for the replication and upscaling of such programmes at the national and regional level.**		
Output 1.5: Production standards and templates for management that foster improved BD conservation on livestock farms are developed and widely promoted through the work of the Academy, the Landmark Foundation, government entities and their broad network of partners.	[pg. 16-17] The project will **develop management plans in generic template format for the region that will assist and help producers to adapt such plans to their own unique situations**, yet to be compliant with the required production standards of the Brand. This intervention will **enable enforcement of the standards promoted by the project** and help to meet the biodiversity conservation, animal welfare and husbandry best practices and social responsibility standards. These templates will spell out the management issues that are conducive to biodiversity conservation, standards and methods to be employed with getting the farms complaint with the desired standards. These plans will assist in getting sound ecological benefits on these farms.	***Output 1.5:*** *Standards and templates for biodiversity-friendly livestock production are developed and widely promoted.* *ProDoc text indicates an intention to have an effect beyond the project farms and to support the enforcement of standards.* *DRIVER: Policies and training partnerships support sector-wide adoption and compliance*	Ensures standards are formalized and integrated into policy frameworks to drive sector-wide adoption and accountability.
Component 2: Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes linked to wildlife-friendly and socially responsible labelling of farm products			
Outcome 2: Wildlife-friendly and socially responsible labelling of farm products provides the basis for the establishment of payment for Ecosystem Service (PES) schemes that support local development and BD conservation.	[pg. 17] The initiative will create and develop the brand standards and register them. **Producers will be encouraged to become members of the brand through compliance with these standards and beneficiation of improved prices on the value-adding brand**. As such the membership is voluntary. It is envisaged the brand will become a membership-based entity (of producers) who will be audited by 3rd parties and verified by a 4th party and certified by the Brand secretariat. The authority will be based on this transparent audit scheme. As such the Brand will become its own "authority" and will be an entity much like the Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC). It is hoped with scaling up and replication that it can develop into similar status. This project will be a pilot to the eventual scheme and be focused on a few producers.	**Outcome 2:** PES schemes are based on wildlife-friendly and socially responsible labelling of farm products in support of biodiversity-friendly practices across farming communities. *ProDoc text indicates the intention that there will be a benefit of improved prices to the voluntary membership.* *DRIVER: Bio-friendly practices are incentivized by improved prices in pilot area.*	Enhances outcome by clarifying PES scheme linkages to national conservation priorities, encouraging biodiversity through incentives for sustainable practices.

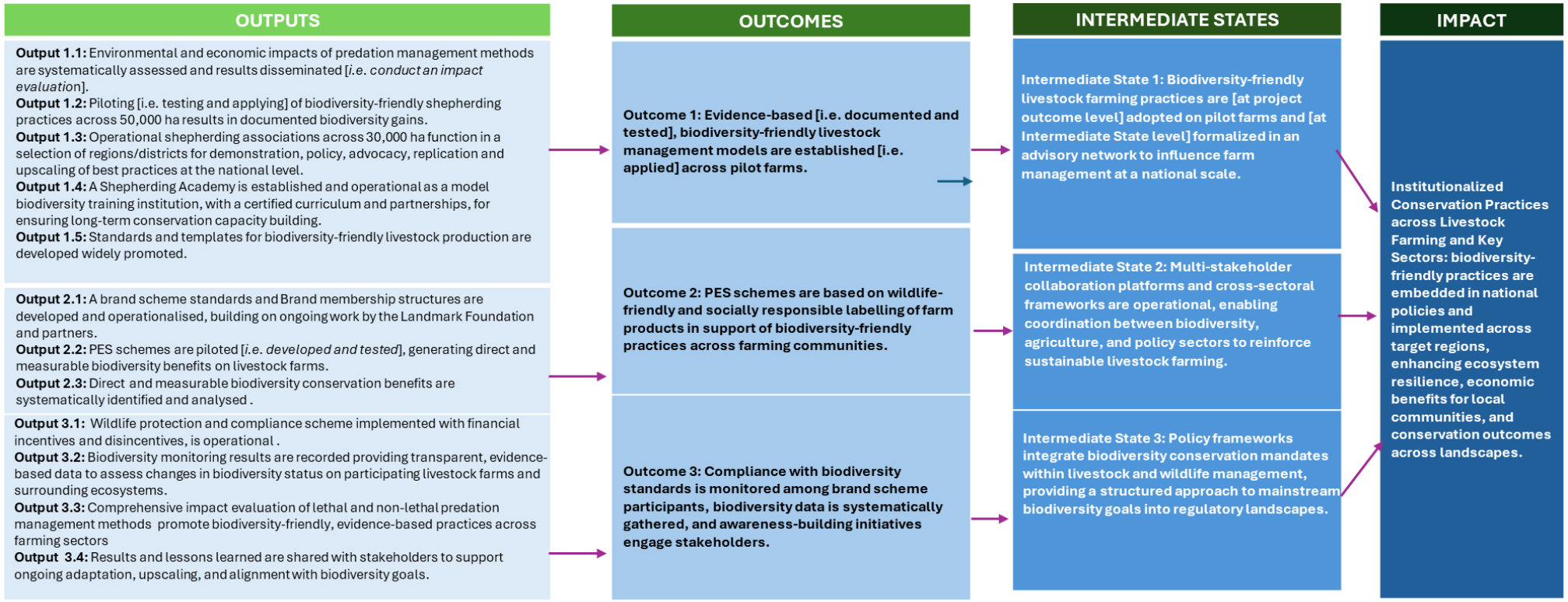
Original Prodoc Formulation	Detailed description in Prodoc	Reconstructed TOC	Justification for Reformulation
	While project approval has been negotiated over many years with GEF, the Fair Game brand standards have been in development. This needs completion with project stakeholders after project inception. Then it needs registration with the South African Meat Industry Corporation – SAMIC (a statutory organization governing meat standards). Once registered, it can be sold to the public and through retail outlets. The brand scheme will target national sales and not international sales (South Africa is a nett meat importer), as such the standards are governed by SAMIC. This will be a national brand governed by national standard registration.		
Output 2.1: A Brand scheme standards and Brand membership structures are developed and operationalised, building on ongoing work by the Landmark Foundation and partners.	[pg. 18] The branding scheme, code named Fair Game™, to be established by this project, is to **promote agricultural production practices that will promote biodiversity conservation, animal husbandry and welfare best practice, and social responsibility and labour best practice on production landscapes**. This will be done through the development of a brand of agricultural produce that will be an ethical brand and demand financial premiums that will **incentivize more producers to follow these production standards**, and in turn result on wildlife being conserved on production landscapes. The Fair Game brand is intended to assist in the conservation of indigenous biodiversity and ethical production practices, **and to reward those producers participating in these efforts**. [pg. 19] The development of a value-adding wildlife-friendly brand (Fair Game™) of agricultural produce will economically support this new paradigm of livestock management. **Producers of farm products will be certified by incorporating biodiversity management standards, and in so doing the project will foster the inclusion of productive landscapes into wider protected area networks.**	**Output 2.1:** A Brand scheme standards and Brand membership structures are developed and operationalised, building on ongoing work by the Landmark Foundation and partners. *ProDoc text indicates the intention for certification.* *DRIVER: Nationally recognized wildlife-friendly branding standards and membership structures are established and integrated into certification processes.*	Formalizes brand standards within certification and policy frameworks to ensure sustainability and alignment with national priorities.
Output 2.2: A Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) scheme is developed and tested, linking to the Brand partnership (the sellers of Ecosystem Services [ES] products) and the wider	[pg. 19] The development of a value-adding wildlife-friendly brand (Fair Game™) of agricultural produce will **economically support this new paradigm of livestock management**. Producers of farm products will be certified by incorporating biodiversity management standards, and in so doing the project will foster	**Output 2.2:** PES schemes are piloted *[i.e. developed and tested]*, generating direct and measurable biodiversity benefits on livestock farms.	Expands PES scope to include public engagement and measurable biodiversity outcomes, ensuring

Original Prodoc Formulation	Detailed description in Prodoc	Reconstructed TOC	Justification for Reformulation
public (buyers of ES products), and resulting in direct and measurable benefits to biodiversity conservation on livestock farms.	the inclusion of productive landscapes into wider protected area networks.		transparency and sustainable impact.
Output 2.3: Identification and analysis of direct and measurable benefits to biodiversity conservation on livestock farms.	[pg. 19] Detailed biophysical parameters will be identified and assessed with each field management treatment and controlled against sites where the treatments are not done. **This will enable an evaluation of the relative biodiversity benefits and performance of different management treatments. This will evaluate the relative benefits of each management intervention in terms of biodiversity, agricultural production and financial performance of the enterprise.**	**Output 2.3:** Direct and measurable biodiversity conservation benefits are systematically identified and analysed.	Emphasizes systematic tracking and dissemination of results to inform policy and encourage replication of successful practices.
Component 3: Wildlife protection on production landscapes promoted, biodiversity monitoring and impact assessments conducted, and knowledge management enhanced			
Outcome 3: Wildlife protection and compliance by brand scheme participants is promoted on farms, biodiversity monitoring programme is developed and implemented and awareness on BD friendly shepherding methods created.	[pg. 19] Wildlife protection and compliance by brand scheme participants is promoted on farms, biodiversity monitoring programme is developed and implemented and awareness on biodiversity-friendly shepherding methods created.	**Outcome 3:** Compliance with biodiversity standards is monitored among brand scheme participants, biodiversity data is systematically gathered, and awareness-building initiatives engage stakeholders. *Prodoc text has indicated that standards and certification are a form of incentivisation of a wider membership.* *DRIVER: Biodiversity-friendly farming practices are reinforced by brand scheme.*	Reinforces outcome by focusing on compliance through certified schemes and engagement across stakeholder levels, supporting adaptive management and policy alignment.
Output 3.1: Wildlife protection and compliance by brand scheme participants is encouraged through financial incentives (premium on their produce) and financial disincentives resulting from non-compliance through the audited, certified and accredited	[pg. 20] Wildlife protection and compliance by brand scheme participants is encouraged and positively affected in all participating farms through financial incentives (premium on their produce) and financial disincentives resulting from non-compliance through the audited, certified and accredited Fair Game brand membership scheme are effected. The project team of Landmark Foundation will coordinate the audits and	**Output 3.1:** Wildlife protection and compliance scheme implemented with financial incentives and disincentives, is operational, *DRIVER: Incentive structures promote adherence to conservation practices*	Institutionalizes compliance through incentive structures, promoting adherence to conservation practices within certified frameworks.

Original Prodoc Formulation	Detailed description in Prodoc	Reconstructed TOC	Justification for Reformulation
Fair Game brand membership scheme are effected.	compliance of participating farmers to the wildlife friendly production standards of the brand scheme. Members of the Brand will be guided in applicable legislation and gain a financial incentive for compliance in it and the best practice standards of the Brand. Disincentives will result in premiums being forfeited and legal non-compliance reported to authorities.	*within certified frameworks and support biodiversity-friendly farming*	
Output 3.2: An effective Biodiversity monitoring programme is developed and implemented, to assess changes in the status of biodiversity in the participating livestock farms and the overall targeted rangeland ecosystems.	[pg. 20] An effective Biodiversity monitoring programme is developed and implemented, to assess changes in the status of biodiversity in participating livestock farms and the overall targeted rangeland ecosystems. This biodiversity monitoring methods (developed with university partners) will be focused on the learning site particularly and select other participant farmer sites and will be conducted by project team using exclusion and inclusion plots, transect species counts, fixed point photography and aerial remote sensing which will be accessed through university partners.	**Output 3.2**: Biodiversity monitoring results are recorded providing transparent, evidence-based data to assess changes in biodiversity status on participating livestock farms and surrounding ecosystems. *DRIVER: Scientific credibility and transparent evidence demonstrate biodiversity outcomes and validates regenerative methods*	Emphasizes data transparency and integration into national databases, supporting evidence-based conservation and adaptive management practices.
Output 3.3: An evaluation of the actual environmental and economic impact of all methods of management of predation and damage-causing animals on livestock farms, both lethal (where livestock farmers continue to prefer this method), and non-lethal methods (where farmers wish to test these methods on their farms).	[pg. 21] The outcome will promote and investigate the ecological, production and financial efficacy of both lethal and non-lethal control methods of livestock production. The testing of non-lethal predator and human-wildlife conflict mitigations will, for the first time allow for ecological, production and financial evaluations of the contrasting methods in pair controls scenarios across a range of habitats, and **in so doing inform the industry.**	**Output 3.3:** Comprehensive impact evaluation of lethal and non-lethal predation management methods promotes biodiversity-friendly, evidence-based practices across farming sectors. *ProDoc text indicates an intention to scale up and replicate* *DRIVER: The industry is informed, through guidelines, by the results of the impact evaluation.*	Ensures findings are available to be informing policy to encourage sustainable predation management and biodiversity-friendly practices scale up.
Output 3.4: Results are independently evaluated and lessons learnt are published and widely disseminated, mainly targeting farmers as well as decision/policymakers.	[pg. 21] Independent assessments on the successes and failures of the various approaches to be tested will be conducted to monitor biodiversity trends and flows of ecosystem services as a result of both the adoption of wildlife-friendly shepherding. The M&E programme will also document and evaluate the impact of the “Fair Game” branding and PES scheme, looking at changes in production costs, returns on investment, revenue	**Output 3.4:** Results and lessons learned are shared with stakeholders to support ongoing adaptation, upscaling, and alignment with biodiversity goals.	Strengthens knowledge sharing to support learning, adaptation, and policy alignment, fostering broader, sustainable impact across regions.

Original Prodoc Formulation	Detailed description in Prodoc	Reconstructed TOC	Justification for Reformulation
	streams and marketing results, against changes in biodiversity status at targeted farms. The assessments and changes will be tracked through the interventions and the revenue accounting will focus on financial income as well as human capital accounting. The lessons learnt will be captured in reports and analysis for further shepherding training and farmer extension functions. Published findings and lessons learned from the research will provide the basis for education and training programs (ref. component 1) and will be widely disseminated.	*ProDoc text indicates an intention to scale up and replicate within the industry and among other farmers, government bodies etc.* *DRIVER: Published findings and lessons learned from the research are accessible to relevant audiences.*	

Figure 1. Reconstructed Theory of Change



5 Evaluation Findings

5.1 Strategic Relevance

5.1.1 Alignment with UNEP MTS, POW, and Strategic Priorities

97. The evaluation confirms that the project was aligned with UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) and Programme of Work (POW), particularly in relation to ecosystem conservation, biodiversity monitoring, and sustainable land-use practices. The project aligned closely with UNEP sub-programme 3, focusing on biodiversity conservation within rangeland ecosystems. The project's technical outputs, monitoring frameworks, and compliance models reinforced ecosystem health principles in productive landscapes. Key contributions included:

- **Strengthened Collaboration for Biodiversity Conservation**. The project facilitated multi-sector engagement between farmers, conservation NGOs, academic institutions, and government departments. Technical guidance materials, including the Shepherding Back Biodiversity Manual, were developed to support knowledge dissemination and policy advocacy. However, while private sector engagement was moderately successful, efforts to secure sustained government support for shepherding-based conservation models were less effective. National agricultural and environmental departments expressed limited commitment to integrating project learnings into mainstream policy, affecting the long-term scalability of the intervention.
- **Integration of Ecosystem-Based Approaches into Education**. The project established the Shepherding Academy, which served as a training hub for shepherding techniques and biodiversity-conscious livestock management. The academy produced 30 trained herders, contributing to local employment in regenerative grazing enterprises. The project also developed a predator coexistence manual, which—though not formally published due to project termination—was recognized as a valuable knowledge resource. The challenges in wider curriculum adoption within agricultural training institutions indicate that further policy engagement would be needed for institutionalizing shepherding education at scale.
- **Economic Viability and Market Integration**. The project explored the financial feasibility of biodiversity-conscious livestock production, linking ecosystem health indicators to economic performance. Farmers participating in PES schemes reported improvements in drought resilience and reduced input costs due to enhanced rangeland health and ecosystem stability. However, the project faced challenges in securing widespread market adoption, with the Fair Game™ brand struggling to penetrate commercial supply chains. The reliance on a niche consumer market for predator-friendly meat made long-term sustainability uncertain.

98. The project contributed to capacity building under the Bali Strategic Plan (BSP) by strengthening national institutions' ability to monitor biodiversity and implement sustainable land-use practices. Through training initiatives, policy discussions, and stakeholder engagement, the project facilitated knowledge transfer in ecosystem-friendly livestock management. The project also facilitated South-South knowledge exchange, with technical inputs from Zimbabwe on herding and non-lethal predator management, supporting the adoption of PES-linked conservation incentives. However, uncertainties regarding long-term funding and policy adoption hindered further South-South expansion.

Rating for Alignment with UNEP MTS, POW, and Strategic Priorities: Satisfactory

5.1.2 Alignment to GEF strategic priorities

99. The project aligns closely with GEF strategic priorities, specifically BD-4, which focuses on mainstreaming biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes and sectors. The project's efforts to integrate biodiversity considerations into rangeland management practices have resulted in measurable improvements, such as increased vegetative ground cover and forage diversity, evidence of predator return (e.g., caracal and jackal sightings) without retaliatory killings, and enhanced ecological functioning of grazed landscapes in pilot areas across the Western and Northern

Cape. These outcomes demonstrate the compatibility of livestock production with biodiversity goals when traditional herding is paired with regenerative grazing techniques and non-lethal predator management. The documented results contribute to the GEF's broader objective of transforming production systems into biodiversity-positive models, reinforcing policy relevance and paving the way for scalable replication.

Rating for Alignment to Donor Strategic Priorities: Satisfactory

5.1.3 Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-Regional, and National Priorities

100. By addressing environmental degradation, promoting sustainable land management, and fostering inclusive economic growth, the project contributes to biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, and rural livelihoods in alignment with national, sub-regional, and regional development plans.

Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

101. The project supports several SDG targets, particularly those related to biodiversity conservation, sustainable resource management, and poverty reduction.

- SDG 15 (Life on Land) – The project contributes to Targets 15.1, 15.3, and 15.5, restoring degraded rangelands, protecting wildlife, and promoting ecosystem-based land management.
- SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) – The Fair Game™ certification scheme promotes sustainable production, aligning with Target 12.8 on awareness of biodiversity-friendly consumption.
- SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) – The project supports Target 2.4 by encouraging sustainable food production systems through improved grazing practices, reducing environmental impact while enhancing food security.
- SDG 1 (No Poverty) – By strengthening livelihoods through sustainable rangeland management, the project contributes to Targets 1.1 and 1.2, supporting vulnerable rural communities.
- SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) – Improved grazing strategies contribute to water conservation and watershed protection, reducing soil erosion and aligning with Target 6.3 on water quality improvement.
- SDG 4 (Quality Education) – The establishment of the Shepherding Academy ensures skills development for sustainable rangeland management, supporting Target 4.4 on vocational training.

Alignment with Regional and National Strategies

102. The project is well-integrated into regional environmental frameworks and national policies on biodiversity conservation and climate resilience. It supports commitments under the UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF), National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), and regional conservation agreements. By promoting market-based conservation incentives and ecosystem monitoring, the project aligns with global efforts to combat biodiversity loss, enhance rural sustainability, and integrate nature-based solutions into economic planning. Its emphasis on "leaving no one behind" ensures that vulnerable groups—particularly farmers, herders, and local communities—benefit from sustainable development initiatives.

Alignment with National Priorities

103. The project is highly relevant to South Africa's national development goals, biodiversity and development priorities including:

- It strategically supports the expansion of ecological connectivity by targeting areas near or between key national parks—Tankwa Karoo, Karoo, Camdeboo, Mountain Zebra, and Addo—extending conservation impact beyond protected area boundaries.[11]
- It directly addresses gaps identified in the UNU/TEEB study and aligns with the South African National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) by mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystem services into agricultural and economic planning.
- Through employment creation, skills development, and biodiversity-friendly agricultural production—including the Fair Game™ certification—the project promotes sustainable land management and economic empowerment.
- It also aligns closely with South Africa's National Development Plan Vision 2030 by focusing on green jobs, rural development, and environmental sustainability. Furthermore, it reflects the government's priorities articulated in the State of the Nation Addresses (2011–2013) and the 2012 Budget, particularly around job creation in agriculture and inclusive economic transformation.

UNSCF and UNDAF (South Africa)

104. The project aligns strongly with the United Nations Strategic Cooperation Framework (UNSCF) and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for South Africa, contributing to key thematic areas, including inclusive growth, sustainable development, governance, and human capability building. It contributes to two outcomes of the UNDAF in South Africa: accelerating inclusive economic growth (Outcome 2) and intensifying poverty eradication efforts (Outcome 5). The project's approach integrates biodiversity conservation into commercial livestock farming, supports sustainable livelihoods, and enhances institutional capacity for long-term environmental and economic resilience.

105. The South Africa UNSCF 2013–2017 serves as the overarching framework for UN activities in South Africa, informed by national policies such as the New Growth Path (NGP), the National Development Plan (NDP): Vision 2030, the Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF), and the 2010 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Country Report. Within this framework, the project contributes across multiple strategic objectives.

Alignment with UNSCF and UNDAF

UNSCF, South Africa 2013 – 2017

A) Inclusive Growth and Decent Work:

- Key Result Area 1: Strengthened national capacity for the harmonization and implementation of policies aimed at promoting inclusive economic growth and decent work.
- Key Result Area 2: Increased employability of vulnerable groups through skills building and SMME development

B) Sustainable Development

- Key Result Area 1: The transition to a 'green economy' is accelerated through policies that promote the creation of green jobs, increased energy production from renewable sources, greater energy efficiency and increased reliance on low carbon development.
- Key Result Area 2: Government integrates sustainable development approaches into policies aimed at reducing poverty and promoting equitable socio-economic development.

C) Human Capabilities

- Key Result Area 1: Improved access to equitable quality basic education for children in South Africa
- Key Result Area 2: Accelerated progress towards the sustainable achievement of the health MDGs

[11] *South African National Parks Board (SANParks) is actively expanding five key protected areas in the region, namely the Tankwa Karoo National Park, Karoo National Park, The Camdeboo National Park, the Mountain Zebra National Park and the Addo National Park. This project has strategically selected sites to implement its outputs in locations near or between these protected areas with the ambition to expand biodiversity pattern and process conservation in the areas around/between these nationally protected areas. This objective serves to expand conservation influence for protected areas beyond their statutory boundaries into key areas of biodiversity importance. (Karoo National Park, Park Management Plan, Oct 2006; Mountain Zebra National Park, Park Management Plan, March 2008, Addo National Park Park Management Plan, Oct 2006, Camdeboo National Park, Park Management Plan, Aug 2012, Tankwa Karoo National Park, Park management Plan, March 2008.).*

D) Governance and Participation

- Key Result Area 1: Improved capacity of national, provincial and local governments to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate government policies for improved service delivery and strengthened participatory democracy
- Key Result Area 4: Strengthened national institutions and systems to support South Africa's contributions for a Better Africa and a Better World.

UNDAF, South Africa 2007-2010:

- National Goal 1: Strengthen democracy, good governance and effective and efficient administration
- National Goal 2: Accelerate the growth of the economy and development for the benefit of all
- National Goal 3: Strengthen South African and sub-regional institutions to consolidate the African Agenda, promote global governance and South-South cooperation
- National Goal 5: Poverty eradication

Rating for Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-Regional, and National Priorities: Satisfactory

5.1.4 Complementarity with Existing Interventions/ Coherence[12]

106. At the regional level, the project contributed to broader land restoration and biodiversity conservation initiatives, such as the African Union's Great Green Wall Initiative. Experts from academic and research institutions highlighted the project's scientific contributions, particularly in monitoring ecosystem health and developing sustainable grazing protocols, as valuable components of regional restoration efforts.

107. However, the evaluation found that regional collaboration could have been further strengthened. While the project produced valuable data and demonstrated successful conservation farming models, stronger links with regional conservation bodies and intergovernmental frameworks would have enhanced policy adoption and replication in similar landscapes across southern Africa.

108. The project aligned with several UN-led sustainable development programs, including those under UNDP and FAO, which focus on climate-adaptive agricultural practices, ecosystem-based adaptation and biodiversity-friendly rural economies.

109. However, the evaluation found that while conceptually aligned, deeper collaboration with these initiatives could have strengthened project sustainability and policy uptake at the national level. This gap was evident both in project design and implementation.

110. A stakeholder interviewed said "The missing link was stronger coordination with existing multilateral efforts. The project was innovative, but it operated too independently from similar conservation programs that could have supported its institutionalization."

111. Stronger inter-agency collaboration from the outset could have ensured that the project's successful interventions—such as the PES model and biodiversity-friendly livestock practices—were formally adopted within national and regional policy frameworks.

Rating for Complementarity with existing interventions/Coherence: Satisfactory

Rating for Strategic Relevance (overall): Satisfactory

5.2 Quality of Project Design

112. The evaluator learned, from the original ProDoc and stakeholder responses, that the genesis of this project was building on Landmark Foundation's work on predators and conservation since 2011.

[12] *This sub-category is consistent with the new criterion of 'Coherence' introduced by the OECD-DAC in 2019.*

The project design was comprehensive and interdisciplinary, aligning ecological, economic, and social objectives through innovative rangeland management practices. The design combined scientific research, policy experimentation, production and market creation and community engagement, creating a model for biodiversity-friendly livestock production.

113. Key design elements included:

- Targeted land area- total 50, 000 hectares (30,000 ha target sites; 20,000 ha control sites) and scaling up.
- Non-lethal predator management, establishing the scientific basis for mesopredator coexistence.
- A Shepherding Academy, reviving human herding as an alternative to fencing.
- A Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) model, linking biodiversity stewardship to financial incentives.
- Wildlife-friendly branding, positioning sustainable meat markets as an economic driver.
- A biodiversity monitoring framework, ensuring data-driven validation of conservation benefits.

Strengths of the Project Design

114. A key strength of the project design was its strong foundation in scientific evidence, which informed three strategically linked and integrated interventions. These included: (1) promoting wildlife-friendly corridors between protected areas, (2) advancing biodiversity conservation through regenerative grazing and predator coexistence, and (3) integrating sustainable agricultural practices into commercial livestock systems. This holistic approach enabled the project to address both ecological connectivity and production landscape management in a mutually reinforcing way. It sought to develop a model of rangeland management where livestock and wildlife could coexist, benefiting both ecological restoration and rural livelihoods. The design was aligned with global frameworks such as SDGs and national policies promoting sustainable land use and biodiversity conservation.

115. The project included a mechanism for multi-stakeholder and multi-sector collaboration through a structured steering committee. Additionally, the project design placed a strong emphasis on capacity building, implementing structured training programs to equip farmers, herders, and conservation practitioners with the skills necessary to adopt and sustain biodiversity-friendly practices.

116. A strong Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) framework was embedded into the design, to support the tracking of project outcomes. A scientific approach to biodiversity monitoring and land restoration outcomes, led by the academic institutions, provided a data-driven foundation for assessing impact and refining interventions as needed.

117. The NGO-led approach was critical in pioneering this model, allowing for scientific innovation, rapid experimentation, and direct farmer engagement without being hindered by policy and institutional constraints. The flexibility of an NGO-driven intervention made it possible to test and validate biodiversity-friendly livestock practices in ways that government-led programs could not. This was validated by interviewees with key stakeholder including government participants involved.

Weaknesses and Gaps in the Project Design

118. Despite its conceptual strengths, the project design exhibited several structural weaknesses, and this is what was found to have played a significant role in the longer-term achievement of results. It is however, important to recognize that these weaknesses were largely limitations of government participation and institutional uptake, rather than flaws in the NGO-led design and execution.

119. The weaknesses outlined below refer to deficiencies in the project design.

- Weak approach in design for Multi-Sectoral Policy Integration –The original project document stated that the Department of Environmental Affairs will be the lead government agency in the steering structures of the project, with the aim of influencing policy and information dissemination.
- Complexity in Implementation and Coordination – Designed as a pioneering experiment, the project sought to drive a paradigm shift through a learning-by-doing approach at both the farmer and scientific levels while introducing market-based incentives for change. While holistic in vision, the intervention lacked a clear operational framework, making coordination across sectors and stakeholders—particularly government agencies—challenging. However, the project was never intended to be government-led, so these integration challenges should be understood as a reflection of broader systemic gaps in multi-sectoral collaboration rather than a shortcoming in the project's original design.

120. The project's ambitious but scientifically focused design was critical in advancing biodiversity-friendly herding, but gaps in land tenure security, financial sustainability, hands on learning for cross sectoral policy integration, and coordination affected its ability to scale and sustain long-term impacts. Importantly, these issues were not failures of the NGO-led model but rather limitations in government participation and policy uptake.

Rating for Quality of Project Design: Satisfactory

5.3 Nature of the External Context

121. The Project was implemented in a complex external environment, shaped by policy frameworks, institutional structures, and land tenure arrangements. While during evaluation, the project was widely recognized by stakeholders as being an important experiment /model that was demonstrating the viability of biodiversity-friendly livestock management, it faced significant structural challenges that influenced its long-term sustainability and scalability.

122. One of the most significant external risks identified was land tenure security. The action research project relied on private land agreements rather than a government-backed conservation designation. While this approach allowed for rapid implementation, it also left the project vulnerable to long-term instability. This risk became evident in 2021, when private landowners withdrew their support, disrupting the project's long-term research vision. This highlighted the fragility of conservation initiatives that lack formal legal protection. According to stakeholders, two main factors drove this withdrawal:

- Increased land value – The improvements in land infrastructure and landscape management made the area more valuable on the market.
- Pressure from local game farmers – As these farmers observed the positive results of the project, they lobbied for changes to reverse the status quo.

123. Stakeholders emphasized that had the land been secured under a Protected Environment designation under the National Protected Areas Act, it would have been shielded. The Shepherding Biodiversity Project showcased the economic, ecological, and social viability of biodiversity-friendly livestock management, creating momentum for policy discussions and stakeholder engagement. However, external challenges—including policy gaps, weak government co-ownership, and land tenure insecurity—posed barriers to full-scale adoption.

124. The project performed well within its external constraints, but structural risks related to land tenure, policy adoption, and institutional embedding prevented it from operating in a more favourable context.

Rating for Nature of the External Context: Moderately Favourable

5.4 Effectiveness

5.4.1 Availability of Outputs

125. The evaluation examined the project's effectiveness in delivering outputs as reflected in its results statements, indicators and targets. It analyses the output level performance of the project within the framework of the Theory of Change (refer to Table 7). The project aimed to simultaneously achieve scientific experimentation and scaling up, necessitating a dual assessment of outputs through scientific and policy lenses.

126. Below is a list of the project Outputs and a summary assessment on their delivery:

Output 1.1. Conduct an evaluation of the actual environmental and economic impact of all methods of management of predation and damage-causing animals on livestock farms, both lethal (where livestock farmers continue to prefer this method), and non-lethal methods (where farmers wish to test these methods on their farms).

Indicators	Targets:	Assessment	Level of delivery
- M&E methodology developed - Mitigation measures employed at treatment sites - Control sites identified and monitored - M&E done - Peer reviewed publications submitted	- M&E protocol developed: Yes - Number of site mitigation treatments implemented: 10 - Number of control sites monitored: 10 - M&E conducted: Yes - Submit for peer review efficacy assessments of mitigation measures in terms of biodiversity, production and financial returns at treatment and control sites: Yes	All indicators were met: a robust M&E methodology was developed, treatment and control sites were implemented and monitored, and peer-reviewed publications were submitted. These technical achievements demonstrate the project's scientific rigor and ability to test both lethal and non-lethal methods under real farm conditions. *DRIVER: While the research generated clear evidence of biodiversity, production, and economic impacts, the driver of scalable replication was only partly enabled. Results of the predator management manual and practical farmer-friendly packages, are not yet disseminated - limiting broader uptake beyond the pilot sites.*	Output fully delivered at pilot level
Summary			
Technical outputs were delivered through planning, assessments, and policy-relevant research. However, integration into policy guidelines was limited. Policymakers requested clearer, concise briefs to facilitate regulatory uptake.			

Output 1.2 Biodiversity-friendly shepherding practices are tested and applied on selected pilot livestock farms covering approximately 50 000 ha, resulting in the return of wildlife and improved biodiversity conservation and improved connectivity between existing protected areas and other adjacent non-protected sites of conservation importance.

Indicators	Targets:	Assessment	Level of delivery
- Herders employed and trained - Locations secured to implement herding and mitigation interventions and control sites - Mitigation equipment acquired - Mitigation measures applied in field treatments to measure efficacy of methods - Control sites measured for efficacy	- Number of herders trained: 30 - Number of herders operational: 30 - Number of farm locations secured with contract to conduct analysis and treatments: 10 - Number of mitigation treatment trials being conducted: 10 - Number of control sites being analysed: 10 - Number of hectares participating in wildlife friendly methods: 50 000 ha	All immediate deliverables under Output 1.2 were achieved: 30 herders were trained and employed, 10 farm locations were secured under contract, 10 mitigation treatment trials were implemented, and 10 control sites were monitored. Mitigation equipment was acquired, measures applied, and biodiversity-friendly methods were operational across 50,000 ha. These results demonstrate technical and ecological evidence that wildlife-friendly shepherding is feasible and effective at scale within the project sites. *DRIVER: While the pilot achieved strong results, the broader driver of transformative change -replication and uptake by non-project farmers and institutionalization into wider practice - was only partly realized. Scaling beyond the direct project-supported farms remained limited during the project cycle.*	Output fully delivered at pilot level
Summary			
Pilots achieved biodiversity gains and demonstrated practical viability. However, farmer adoption remained limited due to cultural resistance and lack of sustained behavioural incentives.			

Output 1.3 BD-friendly shepherding associations are developed and operational at 5 farms covering approximately 30 000 ha, supporting wildlife conservation and providing the platform for demonstration, training and education activities as well as the basis for replication and upscaling of best practices at the national level. A further 5 farms (20,000 ha) participate in piloting shepherding programmes or surrogate measures.

Indicators	Targets:	Assessment	Level of delivery
- Herding Association mechanisms/legal structures developed - Herding association established	- Legal mechanisms for herding association developed: Yes - Association formed: Yes - Number of farms employing herders' operation: 5 - Number of Hectares where herders are operational: 30 000ha	Herding associations were formally established with legal mechanisms in place and operational across 5 farms covering 30,000 ha, providing platforms for demonstration, training, and knowledge exchange. A further 20,000 ha engaged in piloting shepherding programmes or surrogate measures, extending reach beyond the core sites. While membership and influence remain modest relative to national scaling ambitions, these associations demonstrated functionality as both livelihood-supporting entities and biodiversity management platforms. *DRIVER: Operational associations function as hubs for knowledge sharing,*	Output fully delivered

		demonstration, and learning and advocacy during piloting.	
Summary			
Shepherding associations were positively received but lacked inclusivity and resources to reach marginalized or small-scale farmers, limiting national replication and visibility.			

Output 1.4 A shepherding Academy is established and operational, with innovative curriculum developed, and partnerships developed with several other training/educational institutions in the country.

Indicators	Targets:	Assessment	Level of delivery
- Course material developed - Location acquired for the Shepherding Academy and established - Training agreement with ACHM developed - Shepherds identified and enrolled in training - Training and pilot sites secured - Accommodation, learning site and materials for shepherd training acquired - Shepherds trained in use of materials	- Training manual developed: Yes - Herding academy established: Yes - Agreement with ACHM to train herders: Yes - Herders selected for training: Yes - Infrastructure upgraded for academy: Yes - Agreement with farmers to utilise herders: Yes - Certificate of completed training: 30 herders	The Shepherding Academy was successfully established for knowledge transfer within the project timeframe and served as a replicable model vehicle for scaling biodiversity-friendly herding nationally, where appropriate. While further scaling and sustained policy integration were long-term goals, the Academy's establishment and operationalization fully met its intended output. DRIVER: *The Academy demonstrated a replicable model and knowledge transfer, but public awareness, policy learning, and institutional uptake (the scaling assumptions in the ProDoc) were not apparent within the project.*	Output fully delivered
Summary			
The Shepherding Academy was established with a certified curriculum and strong scientific foundation. Long-term partnerships are needed to ensure national training system integration.			

Output 1.5. Production standards and templates for management plans that foster improved BD conservation on livestock farms are developed and widely promoted through the work of the Academy, the Landmark Foundation, government entities and their broad network of partners.

Indicators	Targets:	Assessment	Level of delivery
- Production standards developed - Audit protocols for production standards developed - Ecological management plans developed - Producer manual developed	- Production standard developed: Yes - SAMIC registration obtained: quarter 4: Yes - Audit protocols drafted: Yes - Ecological management plan: Yes - Producer manual published: Yes	Production standards and ecological management plans were developed and formally registered with SAMIC in quarter 4. Audit protocols were drafted, and a producer manual was published, all of which were vetted during the evaluation. These outputs provided a solid technical foundation for biodiversity-friendly livestock management, ensuring that production practices are clearly defined, auditable, and replicable. DRIVER: *The project delivered the technical and institutional foundations for biodiversity-friendly livestock management. Production standards*	Output fully delivered at pilot level

Indicators	Targets:	Assessment	Level of delivery
		were developed and formally registered with SAMIC, audit protocols were drafted, ecological management plans were produced, and a producer manual was published. These outputs provided clear, auditable, and replicable frameworks, fulfilling the driver's intent of establishing standards and training partnerships to enable sector-wide adoption.	
Summary			
Standards were developed, but institutionalization across sectors remains incomplete. Integration was hindered by delayed engagement with policymakers and uneven policy advocacy.			

Output 2.1. A Brand scheme standards and Brand membership structures are developed and operationalised, building on ongoing work by the Landmark Foundation and partners.

Indicators	Targets:	Assessment	Level of delivery
- Legal not-for-profit entity owning Fair Game™ developed - Brand standards developed - Statutory registration of brand completed - Manual guiding producers developed - Audit template compiled and audits conducted - Certification completed - Brand launched - Promotional material developed	- Secretariat legally registered: Yes - Meat standards registered with SAMIC; Yes - Production manual published: Yes - Numbers of producer members of brand: 10 - Audit template finalised; Yes - Brand promoted through marketing: Yes	The Fair Game™ wildlife-friendly meat brand was legally registered as a not-for-profit entity, with statutory brand standards recognized by SAMIC. A producer manual and audit template were finalized, certification procedures were completed, and promotional materials supported the brand's launch. Ten producer members were enrolled under the brand, demonstrating early adoption. These achievements fully delivered the intended output by creating a certified and operational market platform. *DRIVER: Bio-friendly practices are incentivized by improved prices This driver was only partially realized beyond the pilot because sustained market uptake and transformative scale depend on consumer demand, expanded membership, and long-term economic sustainability. Without stronger demand-side pull and institutional backing, the price incentive alone risks being insufficient to shift the wider livestock sector*.	Output fully delivered at pilot level
Summary			
Branding frameworks were developed and piloted with positive feedback from farmers. However, concerns about economic viability and competitive positioning limited widespread market adoption.			

Output 2.2. A Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) scheme is developed and tested, linking to the Brand partnership (the sellers of Ecosystem Services [ES] products) and the wider public (buyers of ES products), and resulting in direct and measurable benefits to biodiversity conservation on livestock farms.

Indicators	Targets:	Assessment	Level of delivery
- Produce volume sold under brand - Revenue generated from brand - Hectares incorporated into biodiversity friendly land use due to brand scheme	- Volume of produce sold under brand (Units in kg meat) 10,000 livestock units sold per year in scheme - Revenue per unit (%) generated by brand: 10% - Hectares incorporated under biodiversity friendly land use: 50,000 ha	A Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) scheme was designed and piloted in conjunction with the Fair Game™ brand, linking certified producers to biodiversity-friendly land use practices. Initial results demonstrated the sale of approximately 10,000 livestock units annually under the scheme, generating an estimated 10% price premium and incorporating 50,000 ha into biodiversity-friendly management. These achievements reflect important progress in developing a functioning PES mechanism with measurable biodiversity benefits. The scheme's influence was limited to early adopters. Broader consumer demand and sustained financial flows were not yet secured, leaving long-term viability dependent on further investment, market development, and stronger public–private partnerships. While the pilot demonstrated feasibility, it fell short of delivering systemic market transformation within the project timeframe.	Output fully delivered at pilot level
Summary			
PES schemes were piloted and delivered measurable biodiversity results. However, institutionalization and market integration were constrained by lack of financial viability assessments.			

Output 2.3. Identification and analysis of direct and measurable benefits to biodiversity conservation on livestock farms.

Indicators	Targets:	Assessment	Level of delivery
- Financial efficacy parameters measured of the different mitigation treatments measured against controls - Production efficacy parameters measured of the different mitigation treatments measured against controls - Biodiversity efficacy parameters measured of the different	- Relative financial impact of different mitigation treatments (and compared to controls) evaluated: End Term total - Relative livestock impact of different mitigation treatments (and compared to controls) evaluated: End term total biodiversity impact of different mitigation treatments (and compared to controls) evaluated: End Term total	By project end, the relative financial, production, and biodiversity impacts of different mitigation treatments were systematically measured against control sites. End-term evaluations confirmed that financial efficacy, livestock production benefits, and biodiversity outcomes were all quantified, providing a transparent evidence base. These results not only fulfil the intended output of identifying and analysing direct and	Output fully delivered at pilot level

Indicators	Targets:	Assessment	Level of delivery
mitigation treatments measured against controls		measurable benefits to biodiversity conservation on livestock farms but also demonstrate a credible foundation for scaling: treatments that showed positive synergies across biodiversity, production, and financial returns can be promoted more widely, while those with limited benefits inform adaptive management. This can be now handed over to government. The evaluation provided a foundation for wider adoption by identifying which treatments delivered positive synergies across biodiversity, production, and financial returns, and which offered limited benefits. This evidence is transferable to policymakers and industry actors, positioning the work for potential scaling. However, while the evidence base is strong, actual replication and uptake beyond the project sites were not yet secured within the project cycle. The driver's systemic ambition—sector-wide adoption—therefore remains only partially realized.	
Summary			
Monitoring and validation of biodiversity outcomes were completed with standardized tools. Challenges remain in sustaining systems without external support.			

Output 3.1. Wildlife protection and compliance by brand scheme participants is encouraged through financial incentives (premium on their produce) and financial disincentives resulting from non-compliance through the audited, certified and accredited Fair Game brand membership scheme are effected.

Indicators	Targets:	Assessment	Level of delivery
- 10 farms participate in monitoring and evaluation of differing treatments and herding interventions - Brand participants audited yearly on compliance with the ethical brand standards and applicable laws - Incentives and disincentives recorded and published in lessons learnt	- Number of farms participating in M&E programme: 10 - Yearly audits done on brand participant farms: 10 - Financial incentive quantification on unit price for brand participants: 10% - Lessons learnt documents distributed: Yes - Number of project, producer and producer	By project end, the wildlife protection and compliance scheme under the Fair Game™ brand was operationalized and implemented as intended. Ten farms participated in monitoring and evaluation of treatments and herding interventions, with yearly audits conducted to ensure compliance with brand standards and applicable legislation. Financial incentives were realized, with participants receiving a 10% premium on unit prices, while disincentives were applied for non-compliance. Lessons learned were documented	Output partially delivered Driver partially in place.

Indicators	Targets:	Assessment	Level of delivery
- Lessons learnt published - Number of project, producer and producer labour trained in biodiversity monitoring and compliance. - Number of green jobs created	labour trained in biodiversity monitoring and compliance. Herders 30, Farmers 10, Project staff 10 - Number of green jobs created: 30	and disseminated, strengthening transparency and adaptive management. Capacity building was notable: 30 herders, 10 farmers, and 10 project staff were trained in biodiversity monitoring and compliance. The initiative also generated 30 green jobs, providing tangible socio-economic benefits linked to conservation practices. *DRIVER: The Fair Game™ scheme showed that a certified compliance framework can deliver both rewards and penalties tied to biodiversity-friendly practices. Ten farms participated, audits were conducted, and a 10% premium incentivized compliance, while disincentives were applied for violations. Training and 30 green jobs added further benefits.*	
Summary			
Compliance frameworks were drafted with incentives but lacked full implementation and enforcement capacity. Institutional buy-in remained partial.			

Output 3.2. An effective Biodiversity monitoring programme is developed and implemented, to assess changes in the status of biodiversity in the participating livestock farms and the overall targeted rangeland ecosystems.

Indicators	Targets:	Assessment	Level of delivery
- Biodiversity parameters identified and monitoring programme developed - Biodiversity parameters measured in project area	- Biodiversity parameters identified and monitoring programme developed - Biodiversity parameters measured in project area yearly: Biodiversity trends assessed within each treatment	The project successfully identified biodiversity parameters and developed a monitoring programme in collaboration with university partners. Parameters were measured annually within the project area, and biodiversity trends were assessed across treatment sites. These activities provided a credible baseline and comparative evidence of ecological change, directly fulfilling the intended output of establishing and implementing a biodiversity monitoring programme. DRIVER: the programme was confined to project sites and not integrated into national monitoring systems, leaving long-term sustainability and broader uptake only partially realized.	Output partially delivered Driver partially in place.
Summary			
Biodiversity monitoring protocols were technically robust and implemented, but face sustainability risks due to lack of financial and institutional continuity post-project.			

Output 3.3. An evaluation of the actual environmental and economic impact of all methods of management of predation and damage-causing animals on livestock farms, both lethal (where livestock farmers continue to prefer this method), and non-lethal methods (where farmers wish to test these methods on their farms).

Indicators	Targets:	Assessment	Level of delivery
- Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) methodology developed - M&E implemented - Comparative Production, Financial and Biodiversity efficiency of different mitigation treatments and paired controls evaluated.	- M&E methodology developed and implemented: Yes - Peer reviewed publications submitted: Yes	By project end, a comprehensive evaluation of the environmental, production, and financial impacts of both lethal and non-lethal predation management methods was completed. For the first time in this context, non-lethal predator mitigation measures were tested alongside traditional lethal methods in paired control scenarios across a range of habitats. The evaluation generated robust comparative evidence on ecological, production, and financial trade-offs, thereby fulfilling the ProDoc requirement to systematically assess contrasting approaches. Both sets of outputs (lethal vs. non-lethal evaluations) were produced and disseminated, providing valuable guidance to the livestock industry. DRIVER: the broader aim of sector-wide adoption and replication was only partially achieved, since policy uptake and large-scale scaling remained outside the project's direct scope.	Output fully delivered at pilot level Driver partially in place.
Summary			
Evaluations of predator management informed guidelines. However, practical translation for farmer use and broad sectoral dissemination was limited.			

Output 3.4. Results are independently evaluated and lessons learnt are published and widely disseminated, mainly targeting farmers as well as decision/policymakers.

Indicators	Targets:	Assessment	Level of delivery
- Lessons learnt document produced and disseminated - Peer reviewed publications drafted and published - Legislative inputs drafted and disseminated with authorities - Farmer's manual produced and distributed - Learning sites and hubs established through participating farmers	- Lessons learnt published: Yes - Peer reviewed publications submitted: Yes - Legislative inputs drafted and circulated to authorities: Yes - Farmers production manual published: Yes - Learning sites and hubs established: 2	By project end, ten farms were actively participating in the biodiversity monitoring and evaluation programme, and an equal number were enrolled in the Fair Game™ brand scheme. Two dedicated learning sites were established and made operational, providing demonstration grounds for regenerative grazing, monitoring methods, and compliance with brand standards. In addition, lessons learned were documented and published, with outputs distributed to stakeholders to support	Output fully delivered Drivers partially in place.

Indicators	Targets:	Assessment	Level of delivery
		awareness, extension, and adaptive management. These achievements demonstrate that the project successfully implemented the intended pilot-scale mechanisms to generate evidence, engage producers, and share knowledge. *DRIVER: scaling beyond the initial ten farms was not realized, and replication remained aspirational during the project cycle. The broader ambition—sector-wide uptake—was therefore only partially achieved.*	
Summary			
Lessons were documented and shared among core stakeholders. Broader policy engagement was constrained by timing and stakeholder availability.			

Qualitative Assessment of Outputs Based on Stakeholder Feedback

Aspect	Stakeholder insights
Quantity and Quality	Stakeholders acknowledged the high volume of technical outputs (e.g., biodiversity data, PES models) but noted a gap between scientific rigor and usability. Accessibility for farmers and policymakers was limited, with delays in translating research into actionable formats.
Ownership and Usefulness	Scientific outputs were rigorous but often not actionable. Practical outputs such as branding and PES models required further refinement to be economically viable for stakeholders.
Timeliness	Scientific research was largely completed on schedule. However, implementation and policy integration lagged due to coordination and regulatory approval delays. Farmers and local groups reported that incentives and training came later than expected.
Scientific Outputs	Policymakers valued biodiversity data but requested clearer policy briefs. Conservationists approved of monitoring robustness, while farmers needed more practical tools. Lack of tailored communication limited uptake.
Policy and Institutional Outputs	Government agencies endorsed policy recommendations but stressed the need for better cross-sectoral coordination. Institutional ownership of PES frameworks remained weak due to inflexible planning cycles and resource limitations.
Livelihood & Market-Based Outputs	Farmers supported wildlife-friendly branding but raised concerns about market competitiveness. PES models were well-designed conceptually but lacked financial sustainability and required longer pilot durations to mature. Businesses struggled without consistent public incentives.
Evaluation Summary	The project delivered high-quality data and documentation, but learning and broader dissemination to non-technical users and market adaptation were weak. PES and branding components needed greater supervision and economic planning. Coordination between science and policy cycles was inconsistent.
Forward-Looking Considerations	Future initiatives should enhance research-to-policy translation, initiate early stakeholder engagement, strengthen PES market analysis, and improve supervision. Structural alignment between outputs, users, and implementers is key to long-term impact.

Aspect	Stakeholder insights
Overall Output Availability	Technical rigor and knowledge generation were strong, however stakeholder participation, uptake, policy delays, and market-readiness concerns constrained full delivery.

Rating for Availability of Outputs: Satisfactory

5.4.2 Achievement of Project Outcomes

127. The achievement of project outcomes has been assessed against the project's results statements, indicators and targets. The outcome level performance of the project is analysed in the context of the reconstructed TOC (see **Table 7**). Emphasis is placed on the achievement of project outcomes that are most important for attaining Intermediate States.

Outcome 1: Biodiversity-friendly shepherding practices are documented, tested and applied on large commercial farms through training of herders.

Component 1. Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation on livestock farms through biodiversity-friendly shepherding practices [Prodoc pg. 14] The focus of Component 1 will be to reintroduce and redevelop shepherding as a profession, building on the traditional shepherding skills currently absent or being lost on farms. The component will support demonstration of a range of husbandry interventions in selected farms and will contribute to building a new platform for job creation, skills development (and retention), as a basis for local economic development that supports biodiversity conservation and rural livelihoods.		
Indicators	**Targets:**	**Evaluator's summary**
- Number of Farms participating in BD monitoring programs. - Number of locations implementing herding and mitigation interventions and/or control sites - Human herding and herding techniques developed, piloted and evaluated. - Herding academy established and herders trained. - Training materials developed	- Number of sites participating in BD monitoring: 10 - Number of farmers participating in predator mitigation paired controls: 10 - Number of Herders operational: 10 per annum - Herding academy operational and herders trained: Yes - Training materials available to farmers and shepherds: Yes	Ten sites were engaged in biodiversity monitoring programmes, and ten farmers participated in predator mitigation trials using paired control sites. Human herding techniques were developed, piloted, and evaluated, with results documented in peer-reviewed outputs. The Shepherding Academy was established and functioned during the project period, training 30 herders in total, with at least ten operational annually. Training materials were developed and made available to both farmers and shepherds, supporting knowledge transfer and demonstrating the feasibility of integrating biodiversity-friendly herding practices into production landscapes. *DRIVER: While the technical indicators were met or exceeded, the intention to provide evidence and influence scaling through wider policy learning and public awareness was less apparent. The project created a strong model for professionalized herding and ecological monitoring, but the assumptions in the design that these practices would diffuse more broadly through extension systems, farmer networks, or government policy were not realized within the project period. This is a critical design and monitoring flaw.*
Level of achievement	Partially achieved	

128. The goal of this outcome was to establish and evaluate sustainable predation management methods that would reduce human-wildlife conflict while enhancing biodiversity and ensuring economic resilience for farmers. This intervention sought to shift entrenched practices—primarily the

reliance on lethal predator control—towards non-lethal, biodiversity-friendly alternatives. Additionally, shepherding techniques were tested and institutionalized, creating structured training through the Shepherding Academy. Through scientific validation, market-based incentives, and policy integration, this outcome laid the groundwork for long-term changes in land and livestock management.

129. By the end of the project, the intervention had demonstrated significant success in reducing predation losses, improving biodiversity through regenerative grazing, and integrating new standards for conservation-based livestock management in the target farms. However, challenges remained, particularly in scaling adoption, addressing scepticism about high-density grazing methodologies, and ensuring long-term funding for shepherd training.

Outcome 2: Wildlife-friendly and socially responsible labelling of farm products provides the basis for PES schemes that support local development and biodiversity conservation.

Component 2: Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes linked to wildlife-friendly and socially responsible labelling of farm products [Prodoc pg. 17] The initiative will create and develop the brand standards and register them. Producers will be encouraged to become members of the brand through compliance with these standards and beneficiation of improved prices on the value-adding brand. As such the membership is voluntary. It is envisaged the brand will become a membership-based entity (of producers) who will be audited by 3rd parties and verified by a 4th party and certified by the Brand secretariat. The authority will be based on this transparent audit scheme. As such the Brand will become its own "authority" and will be an entity much like the Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC). It is hoped with scaling up and replication that it can develop into similar status. This project will be a pilot to the eventual scheme and be focused on a few producers. While project approval has been negotiated over many years with GEF, the Fair Game brand standards have been in development. This needs completion with project stakeholders after project inception. Then it needs registration with the South African Meat Industry Corporation – SAMIC (a statutory organization governing meat standards). Once registered, it can be sold to the public and through retail outlets. The brand scheme will target national sales and not international sales (South Africa is a nett meat importer), as such the standards are governed by SAMIC. This will be a national brand governed by national standard registration.		
Indicators	**Targets:**	**Evaluator's summary**
- Legal Not For Profit brand secretariat entity owning brand scheme developed - Brand standards developed - Statutory Registrations of brand completed - Manual guiding producers developed	- Brand secretariat entity registered by year 2. - Brand standards finalized and audit standards developed by quarter 4: Yes - Registration with statutory entity SAMIC completed by quarter 4: Yes - Producers Manual published by quarter 4: Yes	The project succeeded in developing and operationalising the Fair Game™ brand framework. A legal entity was registered by Year 2 to own the scheme, though ownership ultimately remained with the Landmark Foundation rather than an independent secretariat. Brand standards and associated audit protocols were finalised on schedule, and statutory registration with SAMIC was achieved within the planned timeframe. A producer's manual was drafted and substantially completed, though final publication and dissemination slipped beyond project closure. From an effectiveness perspective, the technical achievements were strong: the brand was legally registered, standards established, and guidance prepared. However, the driver of institutional independence and scaling was only partly realised. The ProDoc assumed the secretariat would operate autonomously and that brand adoption would grow through public awareness and policy learning. In practice, uptake was narrow, ownership stayed with the implementing NGO, and market engagement was shallow. Overall, the Fair Game™ brand output is rated Highly Satisfactory for achievement of planned deliverables, but only Satisfactory on drivers, as

		institutionalisation and scaling assumptions were not met within the project period.
Level of achievement	Partially achieved	

130. The project was successful in demonstrating biodiversity-friendly livestock management but requires policy shifts, financial investment, and continued advocacy to ensure long-term impact. It achieved substantial progress in promoting sustainable predation management and biodiversity-friendly practices. The combination of scientific research, practical application, and capacity building created a robust framework for mitigating human-wildlife conflict. Evidence from peer-reviewed publications, monitoring reports, and stakeholder consultations underscored the credibility and effectiveness of the interventions.

131. Key challenges, such as the lack of formal shepherding associations, highlighted areas for improvement. However, the project's flexibility in addressing these gaps ensured continued progress. The establishment of the Shepherding Academy and the registration of production standards SACMIC provided critical infrastructure and institutional support for long-term sustainability. Outcome 1 demonstrated the feasibility and benefits of integrating biodiversity conservation with agricultural practices. The project's results laid a strong foundation for scaling up interventions and informing policy decisions.

132. Market-based conservation mechanisms were central to the project's strategy, aiming to integrate biodiversity conservation with economic incentives for livestock farmers. Outcome 2 sought to establish Fair Game™ and implement a PES scheme to financially reward farmers for conservation efforts. By linking sustainable farming practices with consumer markets and conservation finance, this approach aimed to demonstrate the economic viability of conservation-based livestock farming.

133. While the initiative achieved several critical milestones—establishing brand standards, registering certifications, and developing market linkages—challenges persisted. The Fair Game™ brand faced difficulties in commercialization, particularly in scaling demand and securing independent governance. Similarly, the PES scheme showed promise but struggled with funding continuity and consumer adoption. Despite these hurdles, the scientific validation of biodiversity and financial benefits provided a strong foundation for further development of market-driven conservation models.

134. In conclusion, the project successfully established market-based conservation tools, proving that biodiversity-friendly livestock farming can generate financial rewards. However, long-term sustainability depends on governance reforms, stronger institutional partnerships, and diversification of consumer markets. Addressing these barriers will be crucial for scaling the project's success beyond its initial implementation.

Outcome 3: Wildlife protection and compliance by brand scheme participants is promoted on farms, biodiversity monitoring program is developed and implemented, and awareness on biodiversity-friendly shepherding methods created

Component 3: Wildlife protection on production landscapes promoted, biodiversity monitoring and impact assessments conducted, and knowledge management enhanced [pg. 19] Wildlife protection and compliance by brand scheme participants is promoted on farms, biodiversity monitoring programme is developed and implemented and awareness on biodiversity-friendly shepherding methods created.		
Indicators	**Targets:**	**Evaluator's summary**
- Number of farms participating in BD monitoring program - Number of farms participating in brand scheme - Learning sites established - Lessons learnt publication produced and distributed	- Number of farms participating in BD M&E: 10 - Number of farms participating in Brand scheme: 10 - Learning sites operational: 2	Outcome 3 aimed to promote wildlife protection on production landscapes, establish biodiversity monitoring and impact assessment systems, and enhance knowledge management. The project largely met its output-level targets. Ten farms participated in biodiversity monitoring and evaluation, and ten farms were engaged under the Fair Game™ brand scheme. Two learning sites were established and operational, serving as demonstration and training hubs. A lessons-

	- Lessons learnt publication: Yes	learned publication was produced alongside peer-reviewed outputs and manuals, supporting knowledge sharing. The technical achievements demonstrate that the core monitoring and compliance mechanisms were put in place, and that demonstration sites were functional during the project. However, the driver assumptions in the ProDoc—that biodiversity-friendly herding methods would be widely promoted through public awareness and that policy learning would mainstream these practices—were only partly achieved. While strong scientific outputs and manuals were delivered, evidence of broad farmer uptake or policy integration remained limited within the project timeframe. *DRIVER: The component demonstrated proof of concept and produced knowledge products, but scaling through awareness and broader learning for change purposes was not realised as envisaged.*
Level of achievement	Partially achieved	

135. This outcome focused on creating financial incentives for farmers to comply with wildlife protection standards while ensuring the integration of biodiversity conservation into livestock farming. The intervention was designed to strengthen compliance through financial incentives, establish biodiversity monitoring programs, compare lethal vs. non-lethal predation management methods, and ensure knowledge dissemination. Key achievements included:

- The operationalization of the Fair Game™ compliance system, which provided financial rewards for wildlife-friendly practices while penalizing non-compliance.
- Biodiversity monitoring exercises across 60,000 hectares, validating the effectiveness of conservation-friendly grazing.
- Scientific research demonstrated the viability of non-lethal predator management, with farms using ethical practices showing increased biodiversity and improved livestock survival.
- Dissemination of project results through policy inputs and farmer outreach, though gaps remained in ensuring widespread adoption and public awareness of the lessons learned.

136. Despite the successes, challenges persisted, including limited market adoption of wildlife-friendly products, farmer reluctance to move away from lethal predator control, and insufficient institutional support for biodiversity monitoring and enforcement mechanisms.

137. In conclusion, the project successfully demonstrated biodiversity gains and economic benefits of wildlife-friendly farming but faced structural, market, and policy barriers that must be addressed to ensure long-term adoption and scalability. The project achieved strong technical and socio-economic outcomes, but structural barriers in policy, institutional integration, and land tenure security limited its long-term scalability within the current external environment. While it provided a critical proof-of-concept, addressing these external challenges will be essential for future expansion and policy adoption. Those project outcomes that are the most important to attain intermediate states, *partially* achieved. Other project outcomes are not/only partially achieved. Assumptions for progress from project outputs to project outcome(s) hold *partially.* Drivers to support transition from outputs to project outcome(s) are only *partially* in place.

Rating for Achievement of Project Outcomes: Moderately Satisfactory

5.4.3 Likelihood of Impact Achievement

138. The project demonstrated ecologically restorative grazing methods, biodiversity recovery, and conservation-compatible livelihoods on pilot farms. However, key assumptions underpinning the ToC—especially those related to government leadership, land access continuity, and market readiness—were only partially upheld, undermining the transition from demonstration to sustained, system-level change.

Project Objective:	**Indicators**
To foster biodiversity conservation on livestock farms, through a return to human shepherding and the development of a wildlife-friendly produce branding scheme, leading to Payment for Ecosystem Services as a tool in conservation and local economic development. [pg. 13] The Project Objective is to foster biodiversity conservation on livestock farms, through a return to human shepherding and the development of a wild-life friendly produce branding, leading to Payment for Ecosystem Services as a tool in conservation and local economic development. The project will also contribute to land regenerative actions and climate change mitigation through sequestration efforts of improved land cover through ecologically friendly grazing methods that operate in tandem to ecologically friendly damage animal management methods. This will complement ongoing efforts and promote a better understanding and application of ecological and ethically acceptable practices to mitigate the human-wildlife conflict. In addition, the project will contribute to reversing the trend of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation that is associated with the current use of indiscriminate lethal controls methods for wild predators. [pg. 12.] This project is required to enable the Landmark Foundation to replicate the baseline project interventions and scale them up to a level where they have commercial relevance, applicability and support for more widespread uptake and implementation, and thus positive biodiversity impact on a landscape scale. The GEF support through this MSP will greatly facilitate the incremental rollout of commercial interventions, through herding (that is also a green jobs initiative), that will enable the platform to be created to build on the foundation of the baseline project that has demonstrated positive commercial and ecological benefit of herding and herding tools.	• Hectares incorporated into wildlife friendly land uses facilitating biodiversity corridor connectivity between protected areas. • Number of landowners benefiting from payment for ecosystem services established through ethical brand scheme that incentivises landowners to foster biodiversity conservation. • "Green" jobs created through shepherds to steward biodiversity on production landscapes.

139. One of the critical assumptions in the ToC was that early and ongoing government support, particularly from the GEF Focal Point, would catalyse broader institutional ownership across wildlife, agriculture, and land reform sectors. While the National Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment provided early legitimacy, limited follow-through by them and the other ministries weakened vertical integration. This eroded the project's ability to mainstream innovations into extension systems and regulatory frameworks, a necessary driver for systemic replication (*ToC Intermediate State 3: Policy frameworks integrate biodiversity conservation mandates within livestock and wildlife management, providing a structured approach to mainstream biodiversity goals into regulatory landscapes)*.

140. The project attempted to shift entrenched grazing norms through high-density, short duration grazing and mobile kraaling. These interventions were grounded in ToC assumptions that: (i) farmers would be willing to adopt regenerative practices when presented with evidence of ecological and economic benefit, and (ii) trained herders would be institutionally recognized as agents of change. While biophysical results in target farms were impressive—including increased herd resilience during severe drought—resistance to labour-intensive practices and cultural inertia undermined scaling. *(ToC Intermediate State 1: Biodiversity-friendly livestock farming practices are adopted on pilot farms and formalized in an advisory network to influence farm management at a national scale).* This reveals a key weakness in behavioural change assumptions embedded in the project logic.

141. The PES scheme was intended to enable market-based incentives for conservation—linked to drivers such as private sector engagement and consumer demand. Though biodiversity and animal welfare standards were codified and retail interest initiated (e.g., Woolworths), the enabling environment for PES remained underdeveloped. Branding, logistics, and regulatory support were insufficient to convert interest into viable transaction flows. This directly constrained the project's ability to reach establishment of a functioning PES-linked market (*ToC Intermediate State 3*).

142. The original design anticipated a 25-year generational experiment. Additionally, the assumption that resource availability would scale with geographic expansion did not hold. The project stretched beyond its absorptive capacity, with disproportionate staffing and financial pressure on implementing agencies. Stakeholders underlined the need for more realistic scaling thresholds in the ToC design. (*ToC Intermediate State 1*).

143. Despite these structural barriers, significant ecosystem benefits in target farms were recorded—such as a 25% increase in mammalian species, improved vegetation cover, and bird surveys confirming early ecological recovery. These achievements support a partial realization of the intended impact pathway related to environmental resilience and biodiversity integrity.

144. On the social side, the Shepherding Academy trained 30 professional herders, all employed during the project, contributing to an emerging profession for biodiversity stewards. The assumption that conservation-compatible jobs would enhance livelihood outcomes was validated. Community members linked improved income to school attendance and basic welfare gains—though broader replication was hindered by land loss and weak institutionalization.

145. Academic partners affirmed the project's scientific legitimacy. According to one rangeland ecologist, "It was the most important land management experiment in the country at the time." Peer-reviewed articles and practitioner tools were produced, fulfilling the expectation that knowledge products would inform wider application. Yet without translating these during implementation for public weakness, policy and programmatic instruments, this driver remained latent.

146. The project's implementation by an NGO, rather than a government agency, created both agility and vulnerability. This misalignment with the ToC's institutional scaling pathway meant that post-project integration into formal systems (e.g., SANParks or DALRRD) did not occur. Stakeholders noted missed opportunities to link pilot results with conservation corridors and state-funded agricultural reforms. (*ToC Intermediate State 2: Multi-stakeholder collaboration platforms and cross-sectoral frameworks are operational, enabling coordination between biodiversity, agriculture, and policy sectors to reinforce sustainable livestock farming).*

147. Moving forward, the model remains relevant and replicable, but success depends on correcting the flawed ToC assumptions. Stakeholders emphasized the need for:

- Formalized land tenure mechanisms,
- Integrated, multi-ministry governance structures, and policy backup instruments i.e. subsidies and incentives across the innovations.
- Long-term funding to sustain behavioural and market transformation.

148. In sum, while the project generated robust learning while doing and knowledge products as evidence and localized impact, systemic barriers—including land insecurity, fragmented governance and limited country ownership, resource constraints, and market immaturity—prevented full realization of the intended impacts. The evaluation concludes that the likelihood of Impact achievement in the longer-term is moderately unlikely because although the project reflects strong proof of concept, there is incomplete progression to intermediate states and impact-level changes due to flawed or unmet design assumptions (time to showcase success across all components, limited government ownership, adaptive management).

Rating for Likelihood of Impact Achievement: Moderately Unlikely

Rating for Effectiveness (overall): Moderately Satisfactory

5.5 Financial Management

149. This initiative was facilitated under UNEP's internal controls, staffing, and financial oversight, ensuring adherence to UNEP policies and expectations. The evaluation highlights that financial and project management coordination played a critical role and generally ran smoothly, with some risks related to staggered fund disbursement and governance alignment affecting overall efficiency.

150. The project was a financially well-managed initiative, with minimal variances from the approved budget and generally great oversight by the UNEP organization in line with its rigor financial management policies. The efficient use of funds, especially in personnel, consultants, and equipment, highlights effective project execution. The project successfully utilized its resources to achieve its objectives, demonstrating strong financial oversight throughout its lifecycle. The project's overall financial performance aligns well with its goals, concluding with a negligible unspent balance and no significant financial risks at the close of the project. This financial analysis provides a clear picture of the successful budget management and the impact of financial decisions on project outcomes, particularly in promoting biodiversity and sustainable land use in South Africa.

151. During the evaluation, interviews with the Fund Management Officer and the Task Manager at UNEP confirmed that there were no reported concerns regarding financial management. According to steering committee minutes, budgets were released on time in most cases, ensuring that project activities could proceed as planned. These findings indicate that UNEP's financial and administrative processes were effectively implemented, though broader governance and institutional challenges still impacted long-term sustainability.

152. A summary assessment of the project's performance in financial management is presented in Table 8 below, under three categories: (i) adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures; (ii) completeness of financial information, including the actual project costs (total and per activity) and (iii) actual co-financing used; and communication between financial and project management staff. (see **Annex IX** for details on the project's budget and expenditure).

Table 8. Financial Management Table

Financial management components:		Rating	Evidence/ Comments
Adherence to UNEP's/GEF's policies and procedures:		**Satisfactory**	**The project generally adhered to UNEP and GEF policies, with no major violations noted. However, some governance and coordination challenges were observed, particularly in securing provincial government support.**
Any evidence that indicates shortcomings in the project's adherence[13] to UNEP or donor policies, procedures or rules		No	No significant breaches were identified. However, delays in high-level political engagement may have had indirect implications for compliance.
Was first disbursement carried out within 9 months of UNEP's project approval date.		Yes	The first disbursement was made within the required timeframe, as verified by project financial records.
Completeness of project financial information:		**Satisfactory**	**Some financial documentation was provided, but gaps were identified in reporting clarity and co-financing verification.**
Provision of key documents to the evaluator (based on the responses to A-H below)		Moderately Satisfactory	Some documents were available, but not all were fully detailed.
A	Co-financing and Project Cost's tables at design (by budget lines)	Yes	Co-financing tables were provided but lacked specifics i.e. kind or in cash and disaggregation by specific budget lines.

[13] *If the evaluation raises concerns over adherence with policies or standard procedures, a recommendation maybe given to cover the topic in an upcoming audit, or similar financial oversight exercise.*

Financial management components:		Rating	Evidence/ Comments
B	Revisions to the budget	Yes	Budget revisions were documented and approved.
C	All relevant project legal agreements (e.g. SSFA, PCA, ICA)	Yes	Legal agreements were available and reviewed.
D	Proof of fund transfers	Yes	Fund transfer records were provided, with minor gaps in documentation.
E	Proof of co-financing (cash and in-kind)	Partially	Co-financing commitments were documented, in-kind contributions could have been detailed and substantiated.
F	A summary report on the project's expenditures during the life of the project (by budget lines, project components, and/or annual level)	Yes	Summary expenditure reports were available.
G	Copies of any completed audits and management responses (where applicable)	Yes	All annual Audits were conducted, with responses addressing identified issues.
H	Any other financial information that was required for this project (list)	Yes	Additional financial statements were provided upon request.
Communication between finance and project management staff		**Satisfactory**	**Communication between financial management and project management was generally effective, with periodic updates and financial oversight mechanisms in place.**
Project Manager and/or Task Manager's level of awareness of the project's financial status.		Satisfactory	The Project Manager demonstrated adaptive and transparent financial oversight. Engagement with high-level government entities on financial matters was limited as they did not engage.
Fund Management Officer's knowledge of project progress/status when disbursements are done.		Satisfactory	The Fund Management Officer had adequate knowledge of project progress, ensuring disbursements were aligned with implementation needs.
Level of addressing and resolving financial management issues among Fund Management Officer and Project Manager/Task Manager.		Satisfactory	Issues were generally addressed in a timely manner, though some delays in fund reallocation approvals were noted and addressed by the task manager promptly.
Contact/communication between by Fund Management Officer, Project Manager/Task Manager during the preparation of financial and progress reports.		Satisfactory	Regular coordination took place, but evaluator noted more involvement of other part of UNEP may have been useful for advocacy and knowledge building across UNEP and the region.
Project Manager, Task Manager and Fund Management Officer responsiveness to financial requests during the evaluation process		Satisfactory	Financial requests were met with responsiveness, including co-financing clarifications.
Overall rating		**Satisfactory**	**The financial management of the project was sound, with adherence to UNEP and GEF policies.**

Rating for Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures: Satisfactory

Rating for Completeness of Financial Information: Satisfactory

Rating for Communication between Financial and Project Management Staff: Satisfactory

Rating for Financial Management (overall): Satisfactory

5.6 Efficiency

153. The project incorporated time-saving design elements such as leveraging existing herding traditions, community networks, and prior infrastructure. Strategic deployment of labour-intensive but low-tech solutions—such as mobile kraaling, rotational herding, and predator-smart grazing—enabled rapid land restoration without heavy capital investments. These approaches were praised for reducing input costs (e.g., feed) and increasing livestock health and drought resilience.

154. The establishment of the Shepherding Academy helped professionalize herding roles quickly and improve outcomes, such as reduced predation and better animal handling. These human-centred practices were both cost-effective and culturally reinforcing, replacing mechanical solutions with nature-based ones and minimizing the project's environmental footprint.

155. Despite efforts to align with national goals on biodiversity, rural livelihoods, and restoration, the project remained largely outside formal government frameworks, reducing opportunities for synergistic implementation with existing agriculture, land reform, or biodiversity programs. Missed opportunities for collaboration with extension services and national parks (e.g., SANParks) limited scaling potential.

156. The PES-linked "Fair Game" certification created proof of concept with private sector partners such as Woolworths. However, market uptake was constrained due to insufficient marketing, regulatory coordination, and logistical readiness. Some opportunities for synergy with sustainable agriculture or certification systems in the region were underexplored.

157. A significant missed opportunity was the lack of enforceable land tenure agreements. The project's dependency on philanthropic landowners exposed it to disruption that undermined progress toward the 25-year vision and weakened community enterprise development.

158. Implementation faced multiple delays tied to fragmented funding flows and governance gaps. Staggered disbursements and donor timelines led to start-stop cycles that eroded momentum and delayed the finalization of key outputs, including biodiversity and predator control manuals. Dissemination remained limited.

159. Although the project secured a no-cost extension (June–Dec 2020), the strategic use of additional time was constrained by uncertainty around institutional buy-in and unresolved policy tensions. These included fears around land reform, labour cost resistance, and competing land-use pressures (e.g., game farms, renewable energy projects).

160. A critical limitation was that the project operated outside national planning cycles. While this allowed for innovation, it also hindered policy embedding, institutional alignment, and long-term sustainability. Government stakeholders stressed that political priorities, such as cost-efficiency and mechanization, misaligned with the project's labour-intensive approach.

161. In the final phase, many stakeholders agreed that while the pilot was effective, future success depends on embedding models within national systems, harmonizing funding streams, and securing legal and institutional safeguards.

162. The project demonstrated several efficiency gains, especially in terms of land recovery using low-cost, traditional methods. However, those gains were blunted by institutional fragmentation, limited policy integration, and lack of sustained synergies with ongoing public or private sector initiatives. Delays and extension limitations further constrained learning, dissemination, and market development.

163. The evaluation recommends future iterations focus on:

- Early formalization of land access
- Strategic alignment with national rangeland and agricultural policies
- Cross-sectoral partnerships for training, monitoring, and extension

- Structured use of extensions tied to adaptive management

Rating for Efficiency: Moderately Satisfactory

5.7 Monitoring and Reporting

5.7.1 Monitoring Design and Budgeting

164. The project's monitoring system was grounded in scientific rigor for the control trial and aligned with its results framework, but its effectiveness in supporting long-term impact was mixed when assessed against SMART criteria.

165. The indicators developed for the impact evaluation were largely **Specific**, focusing on clear thematic areas such as biodiversity recovery, rangeland regeneration, predator coexistence, and the socio-economic contributions of conservation grazing. Data was collected on well-defined outputs, including the number of hectares under improved management, species return in target areas, and the number of professional herders trained. However, some outcome-level indicators lacked precision, often bundling ecological and economic benefits into a single measure. This diluted clarity, especially in assessing behaviour change, policy uptake, or systemic transformation.

166. In terms of **Measurability**, the monitoring design performed well. Field protocols included standardized biodiversity surveys, GPS livestock tracking, fixed-point photography, and kraaling assessments across designated index and control sites. These yielded quantifiable results and underpinned peer-reviewed publications. Still, the results framework lacked specific thresholds or targets to define what constituted success or impact, particularly at the intermediate and outcome levels. While measurement tools were technically robust, they were not converted into formats usable by wider audiences, including government officials, farmers, or civil society.

167. The design was **Achievable** within the scope of the project's timeframe and budget as it was founded on the previous experience of Landmark Foundation with this work. Monitoring activities were completed as planned, with adequate disbursement and flexibility to reallocate resources where needed—for instance, shifting funds from electric fencing to GPS tracking. However, some assumptions embedded in the results framework proved overly optimistic. The belief that rigorous evidence would automatically drive institutional uptake, or that project-generated data would be absorbed into government systems, did not hold. Without an explicit sustainability or handover strategy, the monitoring system risked remaining project bound.

168. The relevance of the indicators to project objectives and GEF priorities was evident. Monitoring activities were **Relevant** to global biodiversity goals, the national context of land degradation, and local livelihoods. They tracked progress on key aspects of the project's integrated approach. However, institutional relevance was limited. Despite early engagement with government partners, monitoring data was not systematically adopted by national systems such as SANBI or DALRRD. This undermined the longer-term value and influence of the evidence base, particularly for replication or policy integration.

169. Finally, the system was **Time-bound** in that monitoring activities were clearly scheduled and delivered across the project life cycle, with data collected regularly from baseline to endline. Yet the design lacked a forward-looking framework for post-project monitoring. The absence of follow-up intervals phased indicators, or a structured dissemination timeline reduced the ability to track changes over time or maintain stakeholder engagement beyond closure. Delays in publishing core outputs, such as biodiversity manuals and predator control guidelines, further weakened the time-sensitive utility of monitoring work.

170. In sum, the project's monitoring framework met several SMART criteria in design and delivery but fell short in terms of institutional integration, long-term continuity, and impact-focused

measurement. While the monitoring system demonstrated technical excellence and generated valuable ecological data, its potential to shape policy, inform national programs, or support scaling was constrained by strategic gaps in alignment, communication, and sustainability planning.

Rating for Monitoring Design and Budgeting: Satisfactory

5.7.2 Monitoring of Project Implementation

171. The project demonstrated a well-structured monitoring and implementation oversight system that operated effectively on two levels: overall project governance, and scientific monitoring for evidence-based policy engagement. While challenges persisted regarding government participation, the project maintained a rigorous and adaptive monitoring framework that provided accountability, scientific credibility, and a foundation for future scaling.

172. At the governance level, the project's monitoring efforts were led by the Landmark Foundation, with the UNEP Task Manager overseeing financial and technical reporting. A reference group was established, and quarterly stakeholder meetings were conducted to bring together funders, farmers, academics, government representatives, and media to review progress. While steering committee meetings were initially convened on schedule, some delays occurred due to UNEP directives. To maintain engagement across various sectors, meetings were divided into specialized working groups, ensuring that funders and private sector actors remained involved.

173. Beyond its governance structures, the project's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system was a fundamental pillar of its experimental approach—ensuring that biodiversity and production impacts were scientifically measured, validated, and used to inform policy and practice. The biodiversity monitoring methodology was developed in close collaboration with university researchers and a dedicated reference group, allowing for both scientific rigor and adaptive learning throughout the project's lifespan.

174. The monitoring program involved a total of 16 commercial farms, differentiated by their roles in the project's comparative design:

- Five "Index Site" target farms served as the core learning and demonstration cluster.
- Four control farms applied conventional lethal predator control to provide a scientific basis for comparison.
- Seven additional farms participated in mitigation activities or were enrolled in the PES and Fair Game™ certification schemes.

175. Together, these farms accounted for engagement of the project with approximately 60,000 hectares, either in biodiversity monitoring or trialling non-lethal practices, during the implementation period—a figure confirmed during the evaluation mission (see **Table 2**).

176. The M&E system was intentionally complex in design, reflecting the project's ambition to validate ecological, production, and economic impacts. While brand scheme monitoring (e.g., PES certification audits) was more straightforward, the broader research-driven monitoring program included:

- Land cover assessments and vegetation mapping
- Fixed-point photography and kraaling impact analysis
- Bird and mammal population surveys
- Soil health and predator-prey interaction data
- Financial analyses of livestock productivity and grazing efficiency

177. These datasets provided quantifiable evidence of the viability of biodiversity-friendly livestock management—helping to shift the discourse from anecdotal to empirical. Notably, innovations such as

GPS tracking of livestock movements were introduced during the project, made possible through the reallocation of funds originally intended for electric fencing and aversion devices.

178. The scientific outputs of the monitoring system were substantial. The project generated 17 publications authored by the project's academic partners and the Landmark Foundation, including peer-reviewed journal articles and a PhD thesis focused on the ecological benefits of herding-based land management. These contributions positioned the initiative as a model for evidence-based rangeland conservation, setting it apart from more conventional conservation efforts that often lack longitudinal data or scientific validation.

179. ARC's technical contributions to rangeland monitoring and ecological validation were central to the robustness of the project's scientific results. ARC co-designed and maintained long-term vegetation and soil monitoring plots, supported biodiversity and carrying-capacity assessments, and provided independent validation of key ecological indicators used to assess rangeland recovery under the shepherding model. ARC's involvement strengthened the methodological quality of the project's monitoring framework, including the interpretation of grazing impacts, vegetation dynamics, and predator–livestock interactions. Through postgraduate training, data analysis support, and co-authorship of peer-reviewed outputs, ARC played a key role in embedding the project within national research systems.

180. The key takeaway from this evaluation is that securing early high-level political and administrative engagement was critical for institutional backing and for risk mitigation in particular for the land dispute that came up. Future projects should adopt a structured stakeholder engagement strategy that includes early and proactive engagement with top political stakeholders, a formalized government-led monitoring framework to ensure sustainability beyond donor funding, and stronger coordination between UNEP and the PMU to flag institutional risks early in the project cycle. Furthermore, UNEP and GEF should recognize political hesitancy as an early risk signal, prompting adaptive management strategies to ensure project continuity despite governance challenges.

181. The project successfully demonstrated that evidence-driven, participatory conservation models can provide both scientific credibility and practical results, making a compelling case for policy uptake. Moving forward, the challenge lies in ensuring that the monitoring framework transitions from an NGO-led initiative to a government-supported system, ensuring its continuity and long-term impact.

Rating for Monitoring of Project Implementation: Satisfactory

5.7.3 Project Reporting

182. The project followed UNEP's standard reporting requirements, including quarterly and annual progress reports, as well as the Project Implementation Review (PIR) for each year. These reports provided regular updates on financial management, project activities, and outcomes, ensuring transparency and accountability. The evaluation confirmed that monitoring reports were submitted to UNEP as required, supporting effective oversight and decision-making throughout the project's implementation.

Rating for Reporting: Satisfactory

Rating for Monitoring and Reporting (overall): Satisfactory

5.8 Sustainability

5.8.1 Socio-political Sustainability

183. The socio-political sustainability of the project is strongly linked to its demonstrated socio-economic benefits, which have influenced local attitudes toward biodiversity-friendly livestock management. While institutional engagement remains a challenge, the project successfully showcased economic incentives in addition for smallholder farmers and rural communities, providing a foundation for long-term adoption.

184. Field observations, documented peer review articles and stakeholder interviews during the mission, as well as study of the project knowledge and academic outputs indicate that participating farmers saw tangible improvements in livestock productivity, rangeland health, and financial stability. Farmers who engaged with shepherding practices reported lower predation losses, increased access to higher-value markets through sustainable meat certification, and reduced reliance on expensive predator control methods. Several farmers emphasized that well-managed grazing rotations led to improved pasture quality, reducing feed costs and increasing the resilience of their herds.

185. At the community level, the project provided new employment opportunities in shepherding, particularly for young male people and seasonal labourers, revitalizing a traditional but undervalued skill set. The Shepherding Academy was instrumental in training young shepherds, and feedback from project output studies and researcher interviewed during the field mission and online interviewees confirmed that the skills acquired were directly applicable to improving farm operations. Community members noted that having trained shepherds available created an alternative to fencing, reducing capital costs for small-scale farmers while maintaining predator-friendly, biodiversity-conscious grazing systems.

186. While not so explicitly documented, the interviewees also suggested that local women also played an increasing role in project activities, particularly in community-driven land stewardship efforts and sustainable livestock management initiatives. While traditional herding practices were male-dominated, interviews suggested that women were involved in knowledge transfer, local coordination, and household-level financial planning, which contributed to the adoption of biodiversity-friendly practices.

187. Government officials interviewed acknowledged that while biodiversity conservation and sustainable rangeland management were recognized national priorities, relevant policy tools remained fragmented and coordination among agencies was weak. Focus group participants confirmed that, at the time, no clear institutional mandate or operational mechanism existed to integrate pastoral land management into conservation or land-use policy. Given this context, the likelihood of a coherent, timely, and government-led integration effort was moderate rather than high—progress was moderately likely at best, and constrained by overlapping mandates, administrative inertia, and political sensitivities that would have delayed or diluted implementation.

188. Conversely, the NGO-led "learning by doing" approach bypassed these institutional constraints by acting first, gathering evidence, and forcing policy discussions through demonstrable success. Interviews with project field staff, scientists, and local farmers highlighted that by showcasing results on the ground—rather than waiting for policy consensus—the project created momentum that would not have emerged otherwise.

189. From an economic perspective, the project demonstrated that integrating biodiversity conservation into livestock production could enhance financial returns rather than create additional costs. Farmers who adopted the PES model reported greater economic stability, with additional income streams linked to sustainable meat markets and conservation agreements. These results provided a compelling business case for biodiversity-friendly pastoralism, helping to shift perceptions among farmers who initially viewed conservation as a trade-off rather than a benefit.

190. Scaling these benefits beyond early adopters is essential to making sustainable grazing the economic standard rather than the exception.

Rating for Socio-Political Sustainability: Moderately Likely

5.8.2 Institutional Sustainability

191. At the policy level, the project was well-aligned with South Africa's biodiversity and agricultural strategies, particularly under the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (2004) and the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP). By integrating predator-friendly livestock management and rangeland restoration, it provided a real-world demonstration of sustainable grazing as a conservation tool. However, despite its conceptual alignment, it was not fully integrated into mainstream agricultural policy frameworks. Interviews with government stakeholders highlighted several key barriers to policy adoption, including the dominance of commercial farming models that favour fencing and intensive grazing, the lack of structured financial incentives for biodiversity-friendly farming, and limited recognition of managed herding systems within land reform programs.

192. The NGO-led model demonstrated strong innovation potential, enabling scientific experimentation, adaptive management, and active farmer participation. This approach validated the feasibility of integrating conservation, agricultural productivity, and local economic incentives to achieve cross-sectoral benefits. However, despite these technical successes, government ownership and institutional uptake remained limited, constraining the long-term sustainability of results. Formal adoption of biodiversity-friendly herding practices into agricultural and land-use policies was partial, and the lack of a government-endorsed conservation agreement for the demonstration site exposed the initiative to risk when private land tenure changed.

193. At the policy level, engagement with the Western Cape University and Provincial Government indicated growing policy interest in embedding biodiversity-friendly grazing within public–private partnership (PPP) frameworks and land-use planning under the new Preservation and Development of Agricultural Land Act (PDALA, 2024). While this shows promising alignment, the absence of a structured transition plan from NGO implementation to government-led institutionalization limits the likelihood of sustained replication or policy mainstreaming. Overall, the outcome is rated Moderately Likely (ML), reflecting solid technical proof-of-concept but incomplete policy anchoring and institutional continuity.

Rating for Institutional Sustainability: Moderately Likely

5.8.3 Financial Sustainability

194. The project made notable strides in financial sustainability by establishing co-financing partnerships, public-private collaboration, and policy engagement. A major success of the project was its ability to leverage significant co-financing, exceeding initial commitments. The Landmark Foundation, Allsop, and Tamarisk Trust collectively mobilized approximately US$1.6 million beyond the originally committed funds, with additional spin-off initiatives securing a further US$100,000 to advance ecologically regenerative farming practices. The project's strong academic partnerships further contributed an estimated US$100,000 in in-kind support, reinforcing its scientific credibility and capacity-building efforts.

195. Traditional herding techniques were revived through a structured training academy, offering skills development for local farmers, farm workers, and herders. The intervention demonstrated and generated evidence that human shepherding significantly reduced predation risks, decreasing livestock losses on participating farms, while also improving soil regeneration and vegetation recovery. By the project's end, eight commercial farms had successfully transitioned to shepherding-based systems, exceeding the original target of five. Additionally, 30 herders were trained, with several securing employment on regenerative agriculture farms. However, challenges in the wider adoption of shepherding due to labour costs and policy constraints remained a barrier to full-scale implementation.

196. The project developed the Fair Game™ certification scheme, designed to financially incentivize farmers for adopting predator-friendly and biodiversity-positive livestock management. The scheme established compliance mechanisms through farm audits, ensuring that certified producers

adhered to strict biodiversity conservation principles. By 2020, five core farms had been certified under Fair Game™, with three additional farms participating in preparatory audits. However, commercialization efforts faced significant obstacles, particularly due to uncertainties in long-term financing, market penetration challenges, and difficulties in securing sustained retail partnerships. The certification scheme's reliance on a single private entity, rather than an independent governance body, also posed sustainability concerns.

197. The project's innovative approach and financial mobilization were highly successful, but long-term stability depends on securing institutional backing and government leadership. Future efforts should focus on embedding the shepherding model within national rangeland policies, securing legally binding agreements for land access, and expanding financial instruments to ensure continuity beyond donor-funded cycles.

Rating for Financial Sustainability: Moderately Unlikely

Rating for Sustainability (overall): Moderately Unlikely

5.9 Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

5.9.1 Preparation and Readiness

198. The project's readiness phase was shaped by both its strategic strengths and the institutional limitations of the time. Stakeholder interviews and field observations during the mission in the Karoo revealed a consensus: no government agency could have implemented this project in its early stages. Bureaucratic inertia, political sensitivities, and the absence of an enabling policy environment meant that an NGO-led model was the only viable approach.

199. Stakeholder interviews revealed disparities in readiness levels across project components. Scientific research was well-prepared, with established methodologies and clear biodiversity indicators. Policy engagement and PES rollout lacked early-stage coordination, leading to delays in formal adoption processes. Farmer engagement strategies were reactive rather than proactive, causing delayed buy-in for biodiversity-friendly practices.

Evidence from Stakeholder Sentiment & Observations

- Government Hesitation: During focus groups, multiple government officials and scientists interviewed admitted that "without an NGO stepping in, this project simply would not have been attempted" due to the lack of institutional readiness and policy alignment.
- Landowner & Farmer Resistance Post-Success: In interviews with local farmers, game reserve owners, and extension officers, a key pattern emerged—early resistance turned into opposition only when the model started to work. One respondent noted: *"At first, we ignored it. Then, when we saw that it was actually working, people started asking questions and pushing back."* This shift indicates that the project was not just theoretical but had a tangible economic and ecological impact, triggering reactions from those with vested interests in maintaining the status quo.
- Absentee & Game Farmers' Reaction: Several absentee and game farmers, initially indifferent, became vocal opponents as the project gained traction. This was observed firsthand during the mission, where informal discussions with key stakeholders revealed that the landscape-scale shift in grazing patterns posed an indirect challenge to private conservation models that relied on low-intensity land use such as unsustainable camps and fences, game farming and or solar /wind projects.
- Government & Institutional Learning: In follow-up discussions, government stakeholders at the margins of the project—including officials from SANParks and agricultural extension services—acknowledged that the project filled a critical policy gap. One government

interviewee stated: *"This forced us to look at biodiversity management in working landscapes differently."*

200. The project had significant institutional, financial, and policy challenges, but its pioneering, evidence-driven approach proved necessary. Now that the model has demonstrated viability, the next phase must transition to government leadership, formalizing and scaling the approach under PDALA 2024 to ensure policy and financial sustainability.

Rating for Preparation and Readiness: Moderately Satisfactory

5.9.2 Quality of Project Management and Supervision

201. The project was a highly complex initiative that required an integrated, multi-sectoral approach to successfully implement biodiversity conservation within commercial livestock farming. The project's scope necessitated coordination across government agencies, conservation organizations, commercial farmers, and rural communities, all while navigating challenging environmental conditions, policy landscapes, and economic realities.

202. Stakeholders widely acknowledged that the project management team demonstrated exceptional capability in executing this intricate initiative, emphasizing that only a management structure of this calibre could have successfully delivered such an ambitious program.

203. The Project Manager (PM) was instrumental, not only in technical oversight and operational efficiency but also in stakeholder engagement and strategic leadership, ensuring that project outcomes were achieved despite significant external challenges.

204. The project's management structure effectively balanced technical implementation, operational efficiency, and risk management, ensuring that all deliverables were met on time, reporting was consistently of high quality, and staff morale remained high throughout the project cycle.

205. Strategic Leadership and Coordination: The complexity of biodiversity-focused agricultural transformation required a highly coordinated effort, which the management team facilitated through continuous engagement, technical guidance, and policy integration strategies. The project manager successfully integrated multi-sectoral stakeholders, ensuring strong collaboration between government (as possible), conservation bodies, the private sector, and local herding communities.

206. Operational Oversight and Efficiency: The project remained on schedule despite external challenges, with all reports submitted in a timely manner and no major deviations from planned deliverables. Staff engagement and retention were well managed, contributing to a high level of motivation and effectiveness across implementation teams.

207. Risk Management and Adaptive Implementation: The project faced significant external risks, including market resistance, extreme environmental conditions, and logistical constraints due to COVID-19. Despite these obstacles, the project management team demonstrated strong foresight and adaptability in mitigating those risks, ensuring continuity and progress. Generally, these risks were managed through the steering committee and the project implementing teams' adaptive management.

208. The project was a highly ambitious and complex action research initiative requiring sophisticated management and technical oversight. The project management team demonstrated exemplary leadership, ensuring high operational efficiency, strong stakeholder engagement, and effective risk mitigation. Despite challenging environmental conditions, policy hurdles, and external disruptions, the project delivered on its objectives, setting a benchmark for future conservation-driven agricultural initiatives. The strategic leadership, technical execution, and proactive risk management exhibited in this project serve as a strong foundation for future replication and scaling within similar multi-sectoral biodiversity conservation efforts.

UNEP/Implementing Agency

209. UNEP's involvement ensured that project outputs contributed to broader environmental policy dialogues at the national and international levels. Its presence in nearly all steering committee meetings allowed for consistent oversight and played a key role in helping the project navigate bureaucratic processes, ensuring compliance with global environmental funding and reporting requirements.

210. While UNEP provided strong oversight, the evaluator observed there may have been a missed opportunity to establish a direct and proactive linkage with UNEP's other technical experts when needed in areas such as:

- Stronger integration of UNEP's technical experts into steering committee meetings or targeted consultations.
- More direct engagement with government agencies, facilitated by UNEP's global experience in policy integration and multi-sectoral coordination.
- Greater involvement of UNEP's specialized expertise in biodiversity, sustainable agriculture, and PES mechanisms could have further strengthened the project's technical implementation and policy influence.
- Adaptive biodiversity management strategies in response to climate variability.
- Market-based conservation incentives, particularly in refining the wildlife-friendly branding and Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) components.
- Scaling ecological monitoring methodologies, ensuring that biodiversity data collected during the project could be integrated into regional and global monitoring frameworks.

211. By fostering stronger real-time collaboration between UNEP's in-house experts and the project's implementing partners, there could have been more rapid technical support in key decision-making moments.

212. UNEP played a crucial role in ensuring technical integrity, institutional alignment, and strategic oversight throughout the project. UNEPs presence in all but one steering committee meeting, and consistent backstopping support helped maintain high-quality implementation and compliance with international standards.

Partners/Executing Agency

213. The Executing Agency - the Landmark Foundation had provided excellent management, oversight and execution, with strong leadership, scientific credibility, and effective project management. The Project Manager was widely recognized as a convenor and leader, bringing together scientific networks, conservation practitioners, and local stakeholders to drive implementation.

214. One key observation from the evaluation mission was that project management demanded followership rather than conventional hierarchical leadership. The PM's convening role was apparent in both steering committee meetings and smaller stakeholder convenings, where decision-making was collaborative, informed, and guided by scientific and conservation priorities. This was also validated by stakeholder interviewed. The management approach ensured strong buy-in from technical partners, reinforcing the scientific integrity and credibility of the project. Unfortunately, the assumption was that the government participants would also actively participate in terms of the learning and for shielding risks (break down of land agreement) and for taking this project forward.

215. Stakeholder interviews confirmed that the project's monitoring and scientific oversight were extensive. Reports were completed on time and maintained high quality, reflecting the rigorous evidence-based approach embedded in the project's execution. The integration of scientific monitoring with practical field implementation strengthened the project's ability to generate validated, actionable insights, supporting both adaptive management and broader knowledge-sharing.

216. The Landmark Foundation's leadership and execution were instrumental in the project's genesis and success, ensuring that scientific evidence, stakeholder engagement, and implementation quality remained at the highest standards. The PM's facilitative and convening style fostered

collaboration, while the rigorous monitoring framework ensured credibility and timely reporting, positioning the initiative as a benchmark for conservation-driven livestock management.

Rating for Quality of Project Management and Supervision: Satisfactory

5.9.3 Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation

217. Civil society showed general support for the initiative, with several organizations working within the conservation space. Particularly encouraging was the rise of regenerative agriculture activists, academics, and practitioners toward the end of the project cycle. While the project team did receive support from the private sector, this support was less than initially anticipated or desired. The project design had, in fact, underestimated the resistance to innovative change within commercial agriculture. It became clear that more effort and resources were required to market these innovations and facilitate their adoption within the commercial agriculture sector. Additionally, government support was inconsistent, with notable absences in some cases. While the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE) provided substantial support, the provincial governments of the Eastern and Western Cape were largely disengaged from the project.

218. A strong participatory approach ensured that key stakeholders' groups—including conservation groups, academic institutions, and private sector actors—were actively engaged in project planning, implementation, and knowledge-sharing. However, limited government integration and institutional buy-in posed barriers to long-term sustainability. Furthermore, cross-sectoral collaboration between environmental, agricultural, and economic policy actors was not fully realized, limiting the project's ability to scale and institutionalize biodiversity-friendly livestock management.

Traditional herding communities and local farmers

219. The project successfully demonstrated that traditional herding knowledge could be integrated with biodiversity-friendly land-use strategies, preserving cultural continuity while enhancing ecological sustainability. The reintroduction of human shepherding practices, particularly through the Shepherding Academy, provided evidence of the effectiveness of non-lethal predator control and rotational grazing in restoring rangeland health. A stakeholder interviewed said "The problem isn't that herding doesn't work—it's that we haven't valued it as a viable conservation tool. This project provided the science to back up what we've known for generations."

220. However, several stakeholders expressed concerns about labour costs and the economic viability of human shepherding, noting that it remains a significant challenge for farmers considering long-term adoption. One stakeholder remarked, "We saw improvements in rangeland health and fewer predator-related losses, but herding is expensive. Without financial incentives, it's hard for farmers to justify the additional costs." While the project began demonstrating economic benefits—such as reduced costs on fencing infrastructure, fewer animal losses, and savings on feed during drought conditions—these were not yet sufficient to ensure sustainability. This highlights the need for institutionalized support mechanisms, such as government subsidies, payment for ecosystem services (PES) schemes, or tax incentives, to make biodiversity-friendly grazing economically viable at scale. In the absence of such financial mechanisms, farmers struggled to maintain the new approach without continued external support.

Academic and research institutions

221. The project collaborated with universities and conservation organizations to develop scientific monitoring frameworks, strengthening its credibility and evidence base. Researchers played a crucial role in validating the ecological benefits of biodiversity-friendly grazing, particularly in soil restoration, predator-prey dynamics, and sustainable livestock production. A stakeholder interviewed said *"The project produced an extraordinary amount of peer-reviewed research, contributing valuable insights into predator-friendly grazing and land restoration. These findings should be leveraged for future policy advocacy."*

222. Although academic contributions and manuals emerged as expected, providing a solid foundation for future uptake of the methods, the implementation phase revealed substantial cultural

resistance to change within the commercial agriculture sector. This resistance was confirmed through discussions with the academics involved during the Terminal Evaluation.

223. A missed opportunity was the lack of mechanism other than site visits for direct collaboration between scientific institutions and agricultural extension services, which could have helped embed research findings into mainstream farming practices and policy frameworks.

Cross-Sectoral Collaboration

224. Despite its relevance to sustainable agriculture, land restoration, and conservation, the project by design remained largely compartmentalized within the conservation sector, limiting its integration into broader agricultural and economic policies. A stakeholder interviewed said "This was a conservation-driven project, but its success depended on livestock farmers. If the agricultural research and extension system had been involved from the start, it might have been more integrated into farming practices for scale."

225. Stronger learning by doing together /engagement with key government agencies, such as SANParks, the Department of Agriculture, and rural development authorities, could have facilitated greater policy coherence and long-term sustainability. A stakeholder interviewed said "SANParks should have been involved from the star with a component. There was a huge, missed opportunity to align biodiversity-friendly grazing with protected area management in this area between two parks."

226. Similarly, the Department of Agriculture's extension services could have played a more integral role- had a component for training farmers, providing financial incentives, and scaling PES models to commercial viability. A stakeholder interviewed said "We needed stronger government leadership from the start. Without a clear institutional champion, the project always risked being a temporary initiative rather than a long-term policy shift. This risk should have been better managed"

227. One of the missed opportunities in the project was the lack of hands-on coordination between environmental, agricultural, and rural development sectors. Without cross-sectoral collaboration, the project struggled to bridge conservation goals with economic and agricultural realities, making its institutional sustainability more uncertain.

Interdepartmental Coordination

228. Despite the project's alignment with national strategies, key barriers to institutionalization included weak coordination between conservation and agricultural agencies, limited formal recognition of PES models in policy frameworks and the absence of a clear government-led transition plan post-project completion. A stronger whole-of-government approach, involving environmental, economic, and agricultural sectors, could have created a more stable policy foundation for biodiversity-friendly farming.

229. A key lesson from this project is the critical role of securing high-level political and administrative support early in the process to ensure sustained backing and effective risk mitigation. While the project engaged departmental officials, it did not actively seek buy-in from top-tier political stakeholders such as the Premier, the Provincial Cabinet, or the Head of Department. This gap in high-level engagement posed significant risks, particularly given the existing political tensions between the Project Manager and government authorities. The absence of engagement with senior government officials weakened institutional commitment, and the strained relationship between the Project Manager and the Departmental MEC may have further influenced decision-making, creating barriers to project support

Rating for Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation: Satisfactory

5.9.4 Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality

230. Efforts were made to ensure equitable access to training and employment opportunities, particularly through the Shepherding Academy, which provided skills development for local communities. The project respected fundamental human rights in practice—particularly through its

efforts to support historically marginalized pastoral communities, promote fair labour through herder training, and uphold voluntary participation. While the project framework acknowledged gender considerations, further integration of targeted gender-specific strategies could enhance inclusivity in future initiatives.

231. A review of the project revealed that while biodiversity, land, and livelihoods were central themes, the monitoring system did not explicitly integrate human rights-based indicators or frameworks. Human rights principles such as equitable land access, the right to participation, and non-discrimination were not systematically tracked or reported. Additionally, while gender inclusion was monitored to some extent, broader rights-based monitoring—particularly relating to indigenous knowledge, free prior and informed consent (FPIC), and intergenerational equity—was underdeveloped. Future iterations of the project should include explicit human rights indicators within the results framework and adopt a rights-based approach to ensure alignment with UNEP's Environmental and Social Safeguards and GEF policy requirements.

232. The evaluation considered whether the project adopted measures to enhance gender equity and social inclusion, ensuring that marginalized groups were actively engaged in project activities. Key evidence supporting this assessment includes:

- The project design included capacity-building activities targeting women, youth, and marginalized herding communities, primarily through the Shepherding Academy's training in sustainable herding, monitoring, and regenerative land use. While some women participated, the design lacked a gender-transformative approach. There were no specific gender indicators, action plans, or mechanisms to support women's leadership in land governance or grazing cooperatives. Structural barriers—such as caregiving roles, tenure exclusion, and mobility constraints—limited women's sustained engagement. As a result, their role remained largely at the beneficiary level. Future projects should adopt a rights-based approach with clear targets, budgeted support for inclusion, and measures to address systemic gender inequality in land access and decision-making.
- Gender-Disaggregated Data and Participation Metrics: Project monitoring data indicate that women did not account for a significant proportion of trainees in ecosystem-friendly livestock management, and persistent cultural and economic barriers to leadership roles is noted.
- Inclusion of Smallholder Farmers: While the medium to larger commercial farming sector and the PES model offered opportunities for small-scale livestock farmers to access biodiversity incentives, many faced financial and logistical challenges in meeting certification standards, highlighting the need for more focus on small-scale farmers' (beneficiaries of the land grants) needs and stronger support mechanisms to consider their needs.

Rating for Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality: *Moderately Satisfactory*

5.9.5 Environmental and Social Safeguards

233. The project followed UNEP's environmental and social safeguard policies, ensuring that activities aligned with sustainable land use and conservation principles. The project's design partially addressed environmental and social safeguards, particularly in relation to biodiversity conservation and land degradation. ESS risks were identified in the initial UNEP Environmental and Social Screening, and the project was categorized as "Moderate Risk." Mitigation strategies were proposed in line with UNEP's Environmental and Social Sustainability (ESS) Framework. These included biodiversity-friendly land use, restoration of overgrazed rangelands, and non-lethal predator control practices. However, key social risks—such as land tenure insecurity, community-level social impacts, and barriers to equitable participation—were underdeveloped in the original risk analysis and not fully reflected in the results framework or safeguard action plans.

234. While the project integrated conservation logic and traditional ecological knowledge, it lacked a comprehensive Social and Environmental Management Plan (SEMP) or dedicated safeguard monitoring tools. No Gender Action Plan or stakeholder grievance mechanism was included in the design phase, despite recognition that land governance and rural exclusion are significant risks in South

Africa's policy environment. As such, ESS planning was technically aligned with core GEF and UNEP requirements but insufficiently operationalized to manage the complex social dynamics associated with land, labour, and inclusion.

235. Testimonies from government actors, practitioners, and community members highlighted several positive environmental and social contributions during implementation:

- **Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Grazing**: Approximately 25,000 hectares were converted to conservation-compatible land use through the introduction of high-density, short-duration grazing and mobile kraals on the index learning site. These methods restored degraded rangelands while also reducing livestock predation—key environmental sustainability achievements confirmed through ecological monitoring.
- **Reduction of Human-Wildlife Conflict**: Field testimonies confirmed that traditional non-lethal predator control methods replaced older harmful practices such as poisoning and steel traps. The Fair Game initiative helped formalize wildlife-friendly meat production standards, though limited commercial scale and marketing constrained its full potential as a safeguards-enabling tool.
- **Social Safeguards and Community Engagement**: The Shepherding Academy trained 30 herders and professionalized human herding. However, some unintended social effects—such as increased alcohol abuse due to income shocks—surfaced post-training, underlining the need for more holistic community support and risk mitigation measures in future projects.
- **Stakeholder Inclusion and Institutional Weaknesses**: Despite intentions to integrate landowners, farmers, and conservationists, governance challenges and minimal government execution support weakened the durability of safeguards. Stakeholders suggested that stronger state leadership would have reinforced institutional safeguards and better protected social outcomes, especially in relation to land tenure and benefit-sharing.

236. The project demonstrated several strong environmental safeguards in practice and generated measurable conservation benefits. However, ESS planning during design was only partially adequate, with limited foresight on social risks, gender equity, and long-term tenure issues. Future efforts should include a full SEMP, structured stakeholder engagement protocols, and alignment with UNEP's safeguard standards throughout the project lifecycle—from design to post-project institutionalization.

237. While the project effectively implemented key environmental safeguards, stronger social support systems and long-term governance structures would enhance future sustainability.

Rating for Environmental and Social Safeguards: Moderately Satisfactory

5.9.6 Country Ownership and Driven-ness

238. Although the project was strategically aligned with sustainable land management policies, provincial government representatives demonstrated limited commitment, which ultimately hindered institutional integration and the potential for government-led scaling. Despite its strategic relevance, the project suffered from low direct government participation and weak institutional ownership. While it effectively demonstrated conservation-friendly livestock management, it lacked the formal policy pathways needed for long-term sustainability. Stronger government leadership was needed from the start. A stakeholder interviewed said: "*We needed stronger government leadership from the start. Without a clear institutional champion, the project always risked being a temporary initiative rather than a long-term policy shift.*" Agricultural policy structures were not adapted to support herding models, despite herding being a recognized strategy in other regions. A stakeholder interviewed said: "*Rural sustainability starts with valuing traditional knowledge. If we train farmers properly, they'll see biodiversity as an asset, not a burden.*"

239. A missed opportunity in the project was the failure to leverage public-private partnerships to strengthen political buy-in and mitigate risks associated with limited government support. A more structured high-level engagement with investors and clearer ownership frameworks could have encouraged greater commitment. An open discussion on investment flexibility and land ownership

structures, allowing for investor exits and transitions while securing long-term sustainability, could have positioned the project on firmer ground. Regarding SANParks and the Department of Agriculture, a stakeholder interviewed said: "*SANParks should have been involved from the start. There was a huge missed opportunity to align biodiversity-friendly grazing with protected area management*."

240. The Fair Game™ certification´s commercial scalability was limited due to market challenges such as supply chain constraints, low consumer awareness, and an underdeveloped ecosystem for sustainable meat branding. A stakeholder interviewed said *"We supported the development of 'Fair Game' products, looking at standards and partnerships for meat purchasing. However, commercialization was always a challenge. While we worked with Woolworths, it didn't quite reach the full potential we had hoped for"*. Despite initial interest from retailers and livestock exporters, the long-term viability of Fair Game™ as a commercial brand was uncertain due to the time constraints of the project. A stakeholder interviewed said *"Certification schemes take time to gain market traction. Fair Game™ was a great concept, but it needed a long-term investment strategy to really take off."*

241. The project demonstrated the need for UNEP and GEF to be more proactive in identifying political hesitancy as a risk factor. If high-level political support had been actively pursued but remained unattainable, it could have served as an early warning indicator, prompting necessary mitigation measures. The limited government buy-in should have been identified as a red flag, enabling UNEP to adjust their engagement strategy earlier in the project cycle.

242. A broader and more transparent approach to stakeholder engagement would have also improved institutional and public support. The project primarily operated within a small circle of decision-makers, limiting its ability to generate broader advocacy. Increased visibility through public relations efforts could have strengthened the project's credibility and encouraged external advocacy for biodiversity conservation.

243. While the project made important contributions to sustainable land management, weak government ownership, lack of formal policy integration, and limited institutionalization hindered its long-term impact. Future initiatives must ensure stronger regulatory frameworks, financial mechanisms, and cross-sector collaboration to achieve full institutional sustainability.

Rating for Country Ownership and Driven-ness: Moderately Satisfactory

5.9.7 Communication and Public Awareness

244. This project was designed as an action research initiative - a living demonstration of regenerative livestock management and biodiversity restoration in practice. Communication and public awareness were embedded not only as cross-cutting issues but also as integral tools for validating, showcasing, and influencing change. Rather than producing advocacy materials alone, the project sought to communicate through doing, using the demonstration farm, the herder academy, and the Fair Game™ brand as proof points. The emphasis on experiential learning and real-time demonstration reflected a theory of change based on shifting mindsets, especially among farmers, policymakers, and consumers. As one stakeholder put it, "*This project wasn't just about land management; it was about changing mindsets*."

245. Showcasing results through practice was central to communication: The project's primary mode of communication was experiential. The functioning farm, trained herders, Fair Game™ products, and visibly restored rangeland were intended as 'living communications tools. Multiple stakeholders, including those from academia, policy, and retail, emphasized that "demonstration, not declaration," was what made the project persuasive to scientists, but this is not public awareness.

246. Knowledge products were developed but not widely disseminated in a public domain: over 17 peer review articles were produced as well as flagship manuals on shepherding and predator control, which were perceived by contributors as high-quality, relevant tools. However, delays in publication and lack of structured dissemination have hindered their use. One stakeholder involved in production stated, *"The termination of the project seems to have stopped the use of the manuals and impacted broader conservation efforts."*

247. Media engagement and strategic messaging were limited: Although some branding and outreach occurred (e.g., the Fair Game™ website and retail engagement), as well as through steering committee members' websites (i.e. SAMBI, Landmark Foundation) there was limited engagement with mass media, influencers, or government communication channels. Several stakeholders noted the missed opportunity to amplify successes through public platforms and said that broader societal awareness could have helped build resilience to political or financial disruptions.

248. Mindset change among farmers was emerging but incomplete: Farmers who directly engaged with the project began to shift practices, supported by scientific validation and training. However, broader peer-to-peer learning and diffusion were limited. A key insight: "The biggest resistance wasn't just policy—it was changing the mindset of farmers. Even when we had the data to show it worked, uptake beyond the project zone was limited."

249. Knowledge and monitoring systems had strong components but were not consolidated as a 'case': High-quality biodiversity monitoring was conducted over four years, including bird and invertebrate surveys and satellite tracking. But this data was not always synthesized into accessible formats for policy, media, or public education. As one stakeholder suggested, "There needs to be a final case package to document and share the full story for future replication."

250. Government and UNEP missed opportunities to publicly endorse or amplify findings: While both UNEP and national stakeholders were engaged in the steering committee, the project lacked formal government or multilateral-led public showcasing, especially at key milestones. One interviewee noted: "This could have been a flagship demonstration if UNEP and the government had jointly presented it as a model. Instead, it remained more of a pilot in the background."

Rating for Communication and Public Awareness: Satisfactory

Rating for Factors Affecting Performance: Satisfactory

6 Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

251. The project marked an experimental attempt to bridge the gap between conservation and commercial livestock farming in arid rangelands. At its core, the project aimed to reintegrate human shepherding, establish wildlife-friendly branding, and pilot a Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) scheme as a combined strategy for ecological restoration and rural economic resilience.

252. The pilot provided substantial knowledge inputs and learnings toward its central goal of fostering biodiversity conservation on the 5 pilot livestock farms. It succeeded in reintroducing adaptive human herding techniques, training 30 herders through the establishment of a dedicated Shepherding Academy—and implementing non-lethal predator management as an effective alternative to entrenched lethal control practices. In these target sites, these efforts led to measurable improvements in rangeland conditions, a 2.6-fold increase in herd and flock sizes, and a reduction in predation-related losses from 30% to under 2%, all achieved without supplementary feeding, even under extreme drought conditions.

253. The initiative also launched the Fair Game™ wildlife-friendly meat certification, which, despite facing commercialization and market uptake constraints, represented a pioneering attempt to connect ethical livestock production with conservation incentives. Complementing this, a PES framework was developed and tested on participating farms. The PES scheme rewarded biodiversity-compatible farming practices and provided a proof-of-concept for linking local livelihoods with ecological stewardship through market-based tools.

254. By the end of the project, farms covering approximately 60,000 hectares had engaged with the project. Collectively, the project contributed to a 24% increase in mammalian species richness in the target farms and produced over 17 peer-reviewed scientific publications, demonstrating the viability and replicability of biodiversity-friendly livestock systems in arid rangelands.

255. Several successes with potential for scaling-up emerged from the project. Most notably, the establishment of the Shepherding Academy created a new institutional model in South Africa for biodiversity-compatible land management training. Though its long-term sustainability was uncertain, the Academy demonstrated that traditional ecological knowledge and scientific monitoring could coalesce into a replicable, community-rooted education model. Similarly, the project's approach to branding and PES showed promise, with stakeholders across academic and civil society sectors recognizing their potential catalytic role in shifting attitudes toward predator tolerance and sustainable grazing. These innovations—anchored in rigorous science and community engagement—provide a foundation for future initiatives, particularly if integrated into government-supported frameworks such as the newly enacted Preservation and Development of Agricultural Land Act (PDALA, 2024).

256. However, the project's trajectory was not immune to external shocks. The COVID-19 pandemic posed significant implementation barriers, especially during its final year. Lockdowns disrupted supply chains, undermined the visibility of the Fair Game™ brand, and delayed in-person training and monitoring. Coupled with a prolonged, historic drought, the pandemic constrained farmers' ability to adopt new practices and reduced institutional appetite for innovation during a period of acute vulnerability. While the core design remained unchanged, the project had to recalibrate expectations and work within limited physical and economic space, ultimately affecting the depth and sustainability of some interventions.

257. In terms of social inclusion and responsiveness to differentiated needs, the project demonstrated intent but uneven follow-through. Women were engaged in scientific research teams, market activities, and conservation work, yet no systematic indicators were developed to monitor gender equity or participation of marginalized groups. Despite its high relevance for rural livelihoods and food security, the initiative missed an opportunity to integrate social inclusion more explicitly into its results framework. Stakeholders repeatedly affirmed the importance of women's contributions at the local level, yet these were not structurally embedded into decision-making, benefit-sharing, or monitoring systems.

258. Overall, the project's performance, assessed against its intended results, is rated Moderately Satisfactory. Its model gained traction among farmers, scientists, and provincial actors, and it contributed to national discourse on sustainable agriculture, predator management, and ecosystem restoration. However, scalability and long-term sustainability remain contingent on addressing legal, financial, and institutional gaps. The withdrawal of the key private landholding partner underscored the need for more secure tenure arrangements and government leadership if this model is to be adopted at scale.

259. The project's legacy is one of demonstrated feasibility, ecological benefit, and stakeholder momentum, though further efforts are needed to integrate its tools and lessons into national policy and rural development strategies. With the right institutional anchoring, financial incentives, and inclusive design, the project's vision of biodiversity-compatible livestock farming in South Africa remains not only relevant—but urgently needed.

Key strategic questions

To what extent has the Project fostered biodiversity conservation on livestock farms, through a return to human shepherding and the development of a wildlife-friendly produce branding scheme, leading to Payment for Ecosystem Services as a tool in conservation and local economic development? (Strategic Question 1)

260. The project made strong contributions to biodiversity conservation on target livestock farms by reintroducing human shepherding as a core land management strategy and mainstreaming regenerative grazing practices. Through the establishment of the Shepherding Academy, herders were trained in ecologically sound livestock management, enabling practical implementation across commercial landscapes.

261. Aligned with its GEF logframe, the project targeted 50,000 hectares for biodiversity-compatible management. By the project's conclusion, the project operated below its targets, reaching approximately 40,000 hectares and selected interventions in a further 20,000. These included:

- 5 demonstration/target farms under intensive monitoring - 25,000 ha; and
- 4 control farms providing monitoring data by continuing to practice conventional lethal predator control – 15,000 ha;

262. In addition, selected interventions – mitigation and PES certification activities – were carried out in 7 additional farms, covering approximately 20,000 ha.

263. The project's science-based monitoring program captured ecological, production, and financial outcomes. In the target farms it recorded a 24% increase in mammalian species, including apex predators, over four years—despite severe drought conditions. Livestock productivity improved significantly in this area, with herd and flock sizes increasing 2.6 times and predation-related losses dropping from 30% to below 2%, achieved through non-lethal coexistence strategies such as mobile kraals and behavioural deterrents.

264. To incentivize stewardship, the project launched the Fair Game™ certification scheme and piloted a Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) model on participating farms. These tools provided a functioning framework for linking ecological performance to market-based benefits. However, while the PES scheme demonstrated strong proof-of-concept, scaling, which was the primary justification for the project, was constrained by limited consumer demand, policy uptake, and enabling financial mechanisms.

265. "Biodiversity-friendly management" was operationalized as a holistic system that integrated predator-friendly livestock practices, rangeland restoration, ecological connectivity, and community development standards. These principles were codified into auditable production criteria and reinforced through robust research partnerships. The project generated over 17 peer-reviewed scientific publications, helping to validate the model and support its replication across arid rangelands globally.

What are the most successful examples enabled by the project with a potential for their scaling-up? (Strategic Question 2)

266. The most successful and scalable examples included: (1) The Shepherding Academy, which trained 30 professional herders and helped institutionalize sustainable pastoralism; (2) the deployment of mobile kraaling and rotational grazing to restore land without major capital inputs, showing resilience even under climate stress; (3) the pilot PES and Fair Game branding initiatives, which illustrated how biodiversity-friendly livestock production could generate economic returns. Notably, operational data from a 6,000-hectare site showed that savings from removing internal fencing could fund a herder's salary for 30 years. These models remain scalable if future projects address structural barriers such as land tenure, government buy-in, and market development.

What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how did they influence the project's performance? (Strategic Question 3)

267. The project experienced delays due to COVID-19, particularly in terms of travel restrictions and fieldwork. In response, local staffing and decentralized monitoring structures helped maintain implementation continuity. Activities such as shepherd training and field assessments were adjusted to comply with health protocols. While some planned regional knowledge exchanges and multi-stakeholder forums were postponed or adapted to remote formats, core monitoring and land management activities were not substantially disrupted. Nevertheless, COVID-related uncertainty compounded financial planning challenges and slowed knowledge dissemination.

In what ways, and to what extent, have the needs and interests of differentiated groups been considered in the implementation and monitoring of the project? (Strategic Question 4)

268. The project made efforts to include underrepresented groups, particularly through training opportunities for women, youth, and marginalized pastoralists. The design emphasized capacity-building and local employment in green livelihoods. However, systemic barriers—such as caregiving responsibilities, land tenure exclusion, and mobility constraints—limited women's sustained engagement. No formal gender action plan or inclusion-specific monitoring indicators were included. While the principle of non-discrimination was upheld, the absence of a rights-based or gender-transformative framework reduced the project's ability to influence power relations in land governance. Future efforts should include dedicated gender budgets, targets for leadership participation, and mechanisms to track equity outcomes over time.

269. The project was highly relevant and technically sound. It achieved measurable conservation and livelihood results, introduced innovative models, and demonstrated strong local viability. Yet, weaknesses in governance, financial sustainability, gender equity, and policy integration limited system-wide transformation. The project was not designed to achieve systemic scaling within its four-year catalytic phase, and in that sense, it cannot be faulted for not delivering nationwide transformation. However, the absence of adaptive management — to clarify proof of concept as the primary endpoint, strengthen public communication, and prepare for a transition to long-term scaling — limited its overall effectiveness and sustainability. The evaluation concludes by emphasizing the need for greater institutional alignment, gender responsiveness, and market readiness in future scale-up efforts.

270. The resulting performance is rated Moderately Satisfactory. **Table 9** below provides a summary of the ratings and findings discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Table 9. Summary of project findings and ratings[14]

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Rating
Strategic Relevance	The project was highly relevant, addressing biodiversity conservation, sustainable land management, and ecosystem restoration.	Satisfactory

[14] Most criteria will be rated on a six-point scale as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact are rated, also on a six-point scale, from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU) and Nature of External Context is rated from Highly Favourable (HF) to Highly Unfavourable (HU).

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Rating
Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and Strategic Priorities	Supported UNEP's MTS by promoting conservation-compatible agriculture and rangeland management.	Satisfactory
Alignment to UNEP Donor/GEF/Partner Strategic Priorities	Directly aligned with GEF priorities on sustainable land use and biodiversity.	Satisfactory
Relevance to global, regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities	Contributed to biodiversity conservation goals at multiple levels.	Satisfactory
Complementarity/Coherence	Complemented ongoing conservation efforts at farm and landscape level, though links to wider awareness and adoption were limited.	Satisfactory
Quality of Project Design	Innovative, science-based design; but assumptions on scaling, consumer uptake, and readiness for PES were overly ambitious.	Satisfactory
External Context	Political and land reform uncertainty, weak investor confidence, and fragile tenure affected performance.	Moderately Favourable
Effectiveness	Demonstrated measurable ecological and economic benefits at pilot scale; but did not translate into broad behavioral change or widespread replication.	Moderately Satisfactory
Availability of Outputs	Key outputs (manuals, training programs, management guidelines) were produced and scientific evidence generated, but outreach to farmers, consumers, and wider audiences was limited.	Satisfactory
Achievement of Outcomes	Biodiversity and grazing results were achieved locally; mindsets among pilot farmers shifted, but broader awareness and long-term behaviour change were modest.	Moderately Satisfactory
Likelihood of Impact	Proof of concept was established; but without stronger public engagement and long-term incentives, broader transformation remains uncertain.	Moderately Unlikely
Financial Management	Adhered to UNEP procedures; delays in disbursement affected efficiency.	Satisfactory
Adherence to UNEP financial policies	Fully compliant with UNEP standards.	Satisfactory
Completeness of financial information	Financial records were complete; staggered disbursements caused implementation delays.	Satisfactory
Communication between Financial and Project Management Staff	Effective communication; no major issues reported.	Satisfactory
Efficiency	Cost-effective at farm level (reduced feed costs, resilience during droughts); inefficiencies arose from delays and external context.	Moderately Satisfactory
Monitoring & Reporting	Structured M&E ensured compliance; biodiversity and grazing data collection strong, though long-term continuation was underfunded.	Satisfactory
Monitoring design & budgeting	Resources allocated and used effectively for data and reporting.	Satisfactory
Monitoring of implementation	Predator management and biodiversity indicators tracked well; some long-term studies cut short by funding.	Satisfactory
Project reporting	All reporting requirements (PIRs, annual, quarterly) met.	Satisfactory
Sustainability	Long-term sustainability constrained by lack of incentives and weak follow-through on consumer awareness and farmer adoption beyond pilot farms.	Moderately Unlikely

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Rating
Socio-political sustainability	Some provincial interest in expanding conservation-friendly herding; but not yet matched by widespread awareness or farmer buy-in nationally.	Moderately Likely
Financial sustainability	Farmers at pilot farms saw economic benefits; scaling adoption requires consumer demand and market-based incentives.	Moderately Unlikely
Institutional sustainability	Academic and NGO partnerships were strong; but uptake into broader farming communities and long-term networks was limited.	Moderately Likely
Factors Affecting Performance	Limited outreach, staggered co-financing, and lack of strong incentives for long-term behaviour change constrained results.	Satisfactory
Preparation and Readiness	Technically well-prepared, but not enough groundwork was done for public awareness and consumer engagement.	Moderately Satisfactory
Quality of project management and supervision		Satisfactory
UNEP/Implementing Agency	*Ensured compliance with procedures; limited leverage on farmer and consumer uptake.*	
Partners/Executing Agency	*Delivered technical pilots effectively.*	
Stakeholder Participation	Farmers and NGOs engaged well at pilot level; wider farmer networks and consumer groups modestly reached.	Satisfactory
Human Rights & Gender	Equal participation opportunities were ensured; gender mainstreaming not strongly targeted.	Moderately Satisfactory
Environmental & Social Safeguards	Environmental safeguards well applied (e.g., non-lethal predator management); social safeguards less developed.	Moderately Satisfactory
Country Ownership	Interest existed at local and provincial levels, broader uptake into national awareness and behaviour change campaigns was limited.	Moderately Satisfactory
Communication & Public Awareness	High quality research and training produced but lacked a dedicated communication strategy to drive behaviour change and consumer awareness.	Satisfactory
Overall Project Performance Rating	**Demonstrated proof of concept and ecological benefits; broader scaling, public awareness, and sustained behavioural change remain unrealized.**	**Moderately Satisfactory**[15]

6.2 Lessons Learned

Lesson 1. Exit strategies and legal mechanisms are essential for sustainability. Conservation outcomes are unlikely to endure without clear exit strategies and legally grounded stewardship incentives. Future projects should embed sustainability mechanisms—such as land stewardship clauses, tenure instruments, or incentive-based agreements—into legal or policy frameworks from the outset.

Lesson 2. Biodiversity can only function as an economic asset when supported by policy and market systems. Turning biodiversity into a viable economic resource requires institutional structures, market access, and enabling policy frameworks. Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes and green

[15] *The overall rating has been determined based on a calculation of assigned criterion weights, with an overall score corresponding to 'Moderately Satisfactory'*

branding initiatives succeed only when embedded in agricultural and trade policy and linked to clear revenue models for producers.

Lesson 3. Secure land tenure is a prerequisite for long-term conservation investment. Without clear and enforceable tenure arrangements, both public and private investment in conservation remain at risk. Future initiatives should formalize land-use rights and responsibilities through contracts, leases, or public-sector-backed stewardship agreements to provide long-term security for conservation outcomes.

Lesson 4. Effective regulatory enforcement prevents ecological backsliding. Conservation gains can be rapidly undermined in the absence of enforceable legal frameworks. Robust regulation, oversight mechanisms, and permitting regimes are essential to ensure that conservation standards are maintained beyond project timelines.

Lesson 5. Behaviour change depends on cultural legitimacy and economic incentives. Sustainable shifts in land and wildlife management require not only technical interventions but also social and financial incentives that align with local values. Building trust, strengthening peer networks, and linking conservation to tangible livelihood benefits are key to lasting behavioural change.

Lesson 6. Scaling biodiversity-positive production systems requires public-sector leadership. Non-governmental organizations can effectively pilot innovative models but lack the authority and permanence to scale them nationally. Replication and policy uptake depend on government leadership, anchored in legislation, institutional frameworks, and dedicated public financing.

Lesson 7. Strategic communication is critical for policy and practice uptake. Knowledge products alone are insufficient without targeted dissemination and stakeholder engagement. Future projects should allocate adequate resources to communication strategies that reach policymakers, practitioners, and producers to support replication, policy uptake, and long-term behavioural change.

6.3 Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Confirm DEFF as the institutional home for Shepherding and Land-Restoration Knowledge Products.

Challenge/problem to be addressed: *Phase 1 lacked clear institutional anchoring. While DEFF acted as host, ownership and participation remained weak. Without a designated custodian, evidence and lessons risk being lost.*

Rationale: *Long-term sustainability requires a national custodian. Formal DEFF stewardship ensures policy continuity, data management, and coordination across environment, agriculture, and land portfolios.*

Priority Level: *High*

Type of Recommendation: *Partner*

Responsibility: *DEFF (as the constitutionally mandated authority for biodiversity and land restoration, DEFF is best placed to house results, designate focal points, and maintain inter-ministerial links); DALRRD (to support integration into land-use and rural-development policy) and, UNEP (to provide transitional technical support during hand-over)*

Proposed implementation timeframe: *2026 – Formalize DEFF mandate and designate focal points.*

Recommendation #2: Consolidate and package Phase 1 evidence for policy uptake.

Challenge/problem to be addressed: *Project evidence remains fragmented and highly technical, limiting policy relevance..*

Rationale: *Synthesizing Phase 1 outputs into accessible formats—policy briefs, case studies, peer-reviewed papers—will enable evidence-based decision-making under PDALA 2024 and national biodiversity-agriculture strategies.*

Priority Level: *High*

Type of Recommendation: *Project, Partner*

Responsibility: *UNEP (as GEF Implementing Agency with comparative advantage in knowledge translation and global dissemination); DEFF and DALRRD (validate content and integrate findings into national planning and budget processes)*

Proposed implementation timeframe: *2026 – Complete synthesis; Integrate into policy/planning cycles.*

Recommendation #3: Establish a knowledge-to-policy platform

Challenge/problem to be addressed: *Evidence from the pilot is not linked to decision-making forums, and cross-sector coordination is weak. Lessons risk remaining project bound.*

Rationale: *A national platform will convert technical findings into policy reform, strengthen inter-ministerial dialogue, and institutionalize shepherding models within PDALA 2024 implementation.*

Priority Level: *High*

Type of Recommendation: *Partner, UNEP*

Responsibility: *DEFF (to anchor cross-sector coordination and host the platform); DALRRD (participate to link agriculture and economic policy); and UNEP (to facilitate the inaugural roundtable and provides advisory input)*

Proposed implementation timeframe: *2026 – Launch initial roundtable; Institutionalize platform under DEFF*

Recommendation #4: Champion a phase 2 project that builds upon the evidence and lessons learned from the shepherding pilot, and connects with national agricultural land commitments, Land Degradation Neutrality, SDG 15.3.1, and policy cycles.

Challenge/problem to be addressed: *The project design was disconnected from national/global reporting frameworks, risking loss of political traction.*

Rationale: *UNEP is uniquely positioned to champion a phase 2 longitudinal system under GEF 9 that connects the shepherding pilot results with Land Degradation Neutrality (SO1–SO3), SDG 15.3.1 reporting, and policy cycles e.g. PDALA 2024 reporting, while aligning with GEF-9's mandate on land degradation neutrality and sustainable food systems.*

Priority Level: *Critical*

Type of Recommendation: *Project*

Responsibility: *UNEP to leverage its convening and technical authority within GEF in collaboration with DEFF and DALRRD (to serve as national institutional homes ensuring ownership), DPME and PDALA (to facilitate monitoring and policy integration)*

Proposed implementation timeframe: *2026/27 – Design phase with DEFF and DALRRD); 2027 – Launch under GEF-9; 2027-2030 – Integrate with LDN reporting and PDALA monitoring*

Recommendation #5: Leverage PDALA 2024 as policy opportunity for scaling shepherding

Challenge/problem to be addressed: *Shepherding remains a promising model but remains outside formal policy frameworks, threatening momentum and resource continuity.*

Rationale: *Embedding the model within PDALA 2024 provides a clear policy and financing window to mainstream regenerative grazing and biodiversity-positive agriculture.*

Priority Level: *High*

Type of Recommendation: *Partner, Project*

Responsibility: *DEFF (to champion inclusion in PDALA 2024 commitments); DALRRD (to ensure policy integration and inter-sectoral alignment); UNEP (to supply comparative case studies and briefing materials as requested)*

Proposed implementation timeframe: *2026/27 – Integrate shepherding model into PDALA 2024 policy agenda and monitoring frameworks.*

Annex I. Evaluation Framework

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	METHODS	SOURCES INFORMATION
A. Strategic Relevance		
• Is the project aligned with UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy, Programme of Work, and strategic priorities, as well as donor and partner priorities? • Does the project align with global, regional, and national priorities, including the Rio Conventions, SDGs, and Agenda 2030? • Has the project optimized synergies with related initiatives while avoiding duplication? • Were stakeholder needs and gender considerations adequately reflected in the project design? • What has been the knowledge management and learning strategy of this project and how did it influence the expected outcomes?	Document review Interviews and Focus Groups Field Visits	Key document: - UNEP´s Medium Term Strategy, Programme of Work, Agenda 2030 and relevant UN reports, Rio Convention document and related reports, donor and partner strategy documents, project documents, progress reports, gender action plan and reports, case studies, relevant national and regional policies/strategies, relevant UN and government reports on project´s impact areas (also covering similar initiatives) Interviews and focus groups with: - Project staff, PSC members, relevant UNEP staff (at country, regional and HQ levels) - Representatives of donor agencies - Government Officials involved in the project - Relevant partner organizations, NGOs, academic institutions involved in project
B. Quality of Project Design		
• Does the project design adequately address the desired outcomes and impacts? • Were the right stakeholders and beneficiaries identified to ensure relevance and ownership of the outcomes? • Was the design informed by a gender-differentiated beneficiary analysis?	Desk review Interviews and Focus Groups Field Visits	Key documents: - Project documents, progress reports operational documents/reports, gender action plan and related reporting, case studies and other relevant documents and reports Interviews and focus groups with: - Project team, key stakeholders including relevant government officials, donors, implementing partners
C. Effectiveness		
• To what extent has the project delivered its planned outputs on time and with quality? • How practical and relevant were the delivered outputs to the intended beneficiaries? • Has the project successfully achieved cross-sectoral coordination and stakeholder capacity-building outcomes? • What internal and external factors influenced the achievement of outputs and outcomes? Sub-Questions: Availability of Outputs: • How useful, relevant and appropriate did beneficiaries find the Outputs produced by the Project? • To what extent do the Outputs contribute to their planned Outcomes? Achievement of project outcomes: • What direct Outcomes have been achieved? • Would these have been achieved without the direct involvement of UNEP? Why? Likelihood of impact	Desk review Interviews and Focus Groups Field Visits	Key documents: - Project documents, progress reports, PSC meeting reports, case studies relevant national documents/reports on national conservation efforts, documents on other similar conservation efforts in the project country, relevant UN/UNEP, government and donor reports Interviews and focus groups with: - Project team, relevant UNEP staff, key stakeholders, government officials involved in conservation efforts, donors, key CSOs involved in conservation efforts, implementing partners

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	METHODS	SOURCES INFORMATION
• What is the likelihood of expected positive impacts to be realized? • Is the Project likely to contribute to the long-lasting changes represented by the Sustainable Development Goals, and/or the intermediate-level results reflected in UNEP's MTS, POW and national strategic priorities of participating countries?		
D. Efficiency		
• Was the project implemented on schedule and within the allocated budget? If not, what were the reasons and impacts? • Were cost-effective measures and synergies with other initiatives utilized? • How did financial management and resource allocation influence the project's efficiency? Sub-questions: • Were resources (time, budget, personnel) utilized effectively? • How could efficiency have been improved? • What was the role of the Project's governance structure and management approach on its efficiency?	Desk review Interviews and Focus Groups Field Visits	Key documents: - Project documents, operational/financial documents and reports, progress reports, PSC meeting reports, relevant UNEP and government reports Interviews and focus groups with: - Project team, operational staff, relevant UNEP staff, key stakeholders, government officials, donors, implementing partners
E. Impact and Sustainability		
• What are the current and potential future impacts of the project on livelihoods, biodiversity conservation, and environmental sustainability? • To what extent have policies, governance structures, or institutional frameworks improved as a result of the project? • Are there mechanisms to ensure the financial, institutional, and socio-political sustainability of project outcomes? • What measures are in place to sustain outcomes beyond project completion? • What is the likelihood that the results will endure? Sub-questions: Socio-political sustainability • What is the level of ownership, interest and commitment among governments and among other main stakeholders? Financial sustainability • What efforts are being made to secure funding for future complementary activities? • What are the current and potential future impacts of the project on livelihoods, biodiversity conservation, and environmental sustainability? • To what extent have policies, governance structures, or institutional frameworks improved as a result of the project? • Are there mechanisms to ensure the financial, institutional, and socio-political sustainability of project outcomes?	Desk review Interviews and Focus Groups Field Visits	Key documents: - Project documents, operational documents/reports, progress reports, sustainability plans, financial data and reports, relevant national documents/reports on national conservation efforts, documents on other similar conservation efforts in the project country, relevant partner reports Interviews with: - relevant UNEP staff, key stakeholders, government officials involved in conservation efforts, donors, key CSOs involved in conservation efforts, implementing partners, relevant academic institutions
F. Monitoring and Reporting		
• Are the monitoring systems (e.g., indicators, baseline data) adequate and relevant for tracking progress? • How effectively has the project performed against its monitoring and evaluation framework?	Desk review Interviews and Focus Groups Field Visits	Key documents: - Project documents, M&E framework and reports, PSC meeting reports, other relevant documents on M&E system Interviews with:

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	METHODS	SOURCES INFORMATION
• Were lessons learned from monitoring and reporting used to improve project implementation? Sub-questions: Monitoring design and budgeting • To what extent were the monitoring plans designed to track progress against SMART indicators? Monitoring of Project implementation • To what extent were the monitoring plans operational? Project reporting • To what extent have other UNEP and donor reporting requirements been fulfilled?		- Project team, operational staff, key stakeholders, project partners, government officials involved in the project
G. Cross-Cutting Issues		
• How effectively were gender equity, human rights, and environmental safeguards integrated into the project? • Were vulnerable and marginalized groups adequately included in project design and implementation? • How effectively were environmental and social risks managed throughout the project	Desk review Interviews and Focus Groups Field Visits	Key documents: - Project documents, case studies, progress reports, gender action plans, risk management plans, stakeholder analysis, relevant national and/or UNEP polices, documents and reports, partner and relevant CSO reporting on cross-cutting issues. Interviews and focus groups with: - Project team, key stakeholders, project partners, relevant CSOs, government officials, donors
H. Stakeholder Engagement		
• To what extent was the stakeholder engagement plan implemented? • Were mechanisms for stakeholder participation effective and inclusive? • How did stakeholders adapt to challenges, including external crises like COVID-19?	Desk review Interviews and Focus Groups Field Visits	Key documents: - Project documents, case studies, stakeholder analysis, progress reports, documents/reporting on feedback/communication mechanisms, knowledge products and dissemination plans, COVID-19 related reports Interviews with: - Project team, key stakeholders, project partners
I. Financial Management		
• Was financial information transparent, complete, and compliant with UNEP policies? • Were co-financing commitments adequate and effectively managed to support the project's objectives? • Was resource allocation efficient and aligned with project priorities? Sub-questions Adherence to UNEP´s policies and procedures • Was the Project implemented in compliance with UN financial management standards and procedures? Completeness of financial information • To what extent were the projects' expenditures in line with the corresponding approved budget? Communication between financial and Project management staff • To what extent did the quality of communication between Project management and financial management staff affect project efficiency?	Desk review Interviews and Focus Groups	Key documents: - Project documents, operational documents/reports, progress reports, financial data and reports Interviews with: - Project team, key stakeholders including project partners, donors

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	METHODS	SOURCES INFORMATION
J. Partnerships and Coordination		
• Were key partners identified and effectively engaged across all project stages? • How effective were coordination mechanisms in promoting collaboration, complementarity, and avoiding duplication?	Desk review Interviews and Focus Groups Field Visits	Key documents: - Project documents, case studies, stakeholder analysis, progress reports, documents/reporting on communication and coordination mechanisms, knowledge products and dissemination Interviews and focus groups with: - Project team, key stakeholders, project partners, relevant CSOs, government officials, donors
K. Lessons Learned and Innovation		
• What innovative practices introduced by the project can inform future programming? • What lessons learned during the project's implementation have broader applicability?	Desk review Interviews and Focus Groups Field Visits	Key documents: - Project documents, case studies, progress reports, donor, government and partner reporting on the project, relevant UN/UNEP reports and documents Interviews and focus groups with: - Project team, key stakeholders, project partners, relevant CSOs, government officials, donors, academic institutions,

Annex II. GEF Portal Inputs

What was the performance at the project's completion against Core Indicator Targets? (For projects approved prior to GEF-7[16], these indicators will be identified retrospectively and comments on performance provided).

The Shepherding Project demonstrated significant progress in achieving its Core Indicator Targets, particularly in biodiversity conservation and sustainable grazing management.

The project successfully introduced shepherding as a scientifically validated approach to reducing human-wildlife conflict and improving rangeland health. The biodiversity monitoring program provided strong empirical evidence of ecological benefits, contributing to policy discussions on sustainable land management. While some targets were met or exceeded, challenges in government engagement limited institutionalization of outcomes, affecting long-term sustainability. Data from monitoring activities showed improvements in vegetation cover, reduced predator-livestock conflict, and enhanced soil quality. However, integrating these findings into national policy frameworks remains an area for further development.

What were the progress, challenges and outcomes regarding engagement of stakeholders in the project/program as evolved from the time of the evaluation?

Stakeholder engagement in the Shepherding Project evolved throughout its implementation, with strong participation from conservation groups, and the scientific community. The project successfully facilitated dialogue between farmers, researchers, and to some extent policymakers (however weak participation was noted and discussed), leading to increased awareness of the ecological and economic benefits of shepherding. However, challenges arose in securing sustained commitment from government entities, which demonstrated limited institutional buy-in. Political tensions between key actors restricted broader adoption of the project's approach within formal policy frameworks. Despite these challenges, the project established partnerships that contributed to peer-reviewed research and demonstrated scalable conservation practices.

What were the completed gender-responsive measures and, if applicable, actual gender result areas?

The project integrated gender considerations by promoting women's participation in project through management, scientific expertise, implementation, and outreach activities. Women were engaged in various aspects of the project, particularly in science, management, livestock management, conservation education, and capacity-building efforts. However, the project did not include gender-sensitive indicators need to track women's involvement in decision-making processes. While field-level participation was equitable, certain roles, such as herding, remained male-dominated due to structural barriers, including traditional land-use norms. These norms limited women's access to income-generating opportunities in formal agricultural jobs, even though community-level farm work was generally shared between men and women. The project underscored the need for more targeted efforts to promote gender equity in conservation leadership and policy discussions. Future initiatives should focus on addressing systemic barriers and ensuring that gender-inclusive strategies are embedded in project design and monitoring frameworks.

[16] *The GEF is currently operating under the seventh replenishment period of the GEF Trust Fund covering the period July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2022. The GEF Portal Reporting Guide for FY20 Reporting Process indicates that GEF-6 projects that have yet to map existing indicators to GEF-7 Core Indicators need to do so at MTR stage or (if already there) at the time of the TE. .(i.e. not GEF projects approved before GEF-6)*

What was the progress made in the implementation of the management measures against the Safeguards Plan submitted at CEO Approval? The risk classifications reported in the latest PIR report should be verified and the findings of the effectiveness of any measures or lessons learned taken to address identified risks assessed.

The implementation of safeguard measures in the project was consistent with the plan submitted at CEO Approval. The project successfully mitigated environmental risks by ensuring that shepherding practices did not lead to overgrazing or habitat degradation. Monitoring data confirmed that predator deterrence methods minimized human-wildlife conflict without causing ecological harm. However, the lack of provincial government support limited the formal institutionalization of these safeguards within land management policies. Compliance with UNEP's safeguards framework was maintained throughout, with no significant environmental or social risks emerging. Continued monitoring will be necessary to sustain these positive outcomes.

What were the challenges and outcomes regarding the project's completed Knowledge Management Approach, including: knowledge and learning deliverables (e.g. website/platform development); knowledge products/events; communication strategy; lessons learned and good practice; adaptive management actions? (This should be based on the documentation approved at CEO Endorsement/Approval)

The Knowledge Building, Learning and Management Approach of the Shepherding Project resulted in the production of peer-reviewed publications, some public outreach materials, and engagement with media platforms i.e. website of Landmark Foundation ARC, and Sambi. The project developed a dedicated framework for data collection and dissemination, supporting adaptive management and policy advocacy. However, knowledge-sharing efforts were constrained by limited government engagement, reducing the potential for direct policy integration. Despite this, the project successfully contributed to the scientific discourse on sustainable grazing and human-wildlife coexistence, laying the groundwork for further research and policy influence.

What are the main findings of the evaluation?

The evaluation found that the project effectively demonstrated, through the project sites, the ecological and economic benefits of biodiversity-friendly livestock management. The project's strong scientific foundation and stakeholder engagement contributed to its credibility and potential for replication. The socio-economic results of the approach were documented in the scientific knowledge outputs (peer reviewed academic journals. However, limited high-level government buy-in and the absence of formal institutional adoption posed challenges to long-term sustainability. A final case study on the integrated approach remains warranted for policy. Financial and administrative management were generally sound, with minor delays in fund reallocations. The project underscored the importance of early political engagement, structured risk mitigation, and strategic public-private partnerships. While the project achieved significant outcomes, ensuring lasting impact requires continued efforts in policy integration, stakeholder engagement, and knowledge dissemination.

Annex III. Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder Group/Organization	Level of Power	Level of Interest	Label/Type of stakeholder	Priority Level	Level of Involvement in the Project	Mode of Engagement
Government Agencies1 (e.g., Department of Environmental Affairs, SANParks, Eastern Cape Department of Economic Development and Environmental Affairs)	High	High	A - Key player	High Priority	High involvement: Critical in policy development, ensuring project alignment with national/regional biodiversity goals. Direct influence on regulatory frameworks and funding.	Face-to-face (in-person or hybrid), Frequent meetings for policy discussions, coordination, and progress tracking.
Academic Institutions1 (e.g., Onderstepoort Veterinary Faculty, Pretoria University, Grootfontein Agricultural College)	High	High	A - Key player	High Priority	High involvement: Essential for research, monitoring, evaluation, and providing scientific credibility. Their contribution is crucial for data collection, analysis, and the development of evidence-based strategies.	Face-to-face or online meetings for knowledge sharing, research collaboration, and reviewing methodologies.
Industry Stakeholders 1(e.g., Woolworths, South African Meat Industry Corporation)	Medium	High	C - Show consideration	Medium Priority	Moderate involvement: Influence through market demand, setting industry standards for sustainable practices. Vital for securing financial incentives and market support. Their Involvement helps drive adoption of new practices.	Online or face-to-face meetings for discussions on market integration, policy alignment, and commitment to sustainability.
Civil Society Organizations 1(NGOs) (e.g., Landmark Foundation, Endangered Wildlife Trust, Compassion in World Farming)	Medium	High	C - Show consideration	Medium Priority	Moderate involvement: Serve as advocates for ethical practices, public engagement, and community awareness. Their role is to act as intermediaries between farmers, the public, and policymakers.	Face-to-face or online engagement for community outreach, advocacy campaigns, and collaboration on public awareness programs.
Development Agencies 1(e.g., Development Bank of Southern Africa, UNEP)	Medium	High	B - Meet their needs	Medium Priority	Moderate involvement: Provide funding and policy support, especially focusing on sustainability, gender equity, and marginalized groups. Help ensure the project's financial stability and scalability.	Online or face-to-face discussions for financial planning, policy support, and ensuring equitable project outcomes.
Farmers, herders and Producers1	Low	Medium	D - Least important	Low Priority	Low involvement: While their adoption of new practices is essential, their influence is limited until financial or economic incentives are clear. They are the target of the project's implementation but have a relatively lower role in strategic decision-making.	Face-to-face (in-person visits, local workshops) for hands-on training, demonstrations, and discussions on economic benefits.
General Public and Consumers1	Low	Medium	D - Least important	Low Priority	Low involvement: Influence is indirect, through consumer demand for sustainable products. Their role in the project is primarily through supporting and driving market trends.	Online or public forums for raising awareness, consumer education, and campaigns promoting sustainable consumption.

Annex IV. Evaluation Itinerary and Stakeholder Engagement

March 9, 2025

- Departure: New York

March 10, 2025

- Arrival: Cape Town, South Africa

Engagement with Western Cape Government (WCG) – 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM

- Workshop at DEFF (Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries)
    - Discussion topics: Environmental policies, biodiversity conservation, and project alignment with national strategies.
    - Discussion Focus:
        - Project Relevance
        - Provincial environmental governance and alignment with national policies.
        - Climate change adaptation in Western Cape's rural landscapes.
        - Integration of local biodiversity conservation into socio-economic planning.
        - Challenges in sustainable land use, water resource management, and policy implementation.

March 11, 2025

- 11 am - Travel to University of the Western Cape (UWC)
- Stakeholder Engagement at the Agricultural Research Council (ARC)
    - Discussion Focus:
        - Project Relevance
        - Herding Efficacy
        - Field research methodologies for biodiversity conservation and land rehabilitation in Karoo Landscape.
        - Scientific monitoring of veld conditions using mobile and other low technology.
        - Community engagement in sustainable farming practices.
        - Integration of academic research with policy-driven initiatives in natural resource management.
- 12 pm – 7 pm Travel by car to Beaufort West
- 8 pm -Dinner and discussion with Scientists

March 12-13, 2025

- Karoo Veld Condition Training – Beaufort West
    - Hosted by: ARC, Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD), and Provincial Government of the Western Cape (WCG)
    - Key Sessions Attended and Presenters:
        - Introduction and background –Dynamics of Karoo veld – *DOA*
        - Standardized survey methods – *DOA*
        - Climate change impacts on Karoo ecosystems – *ARC*
        - Species identification and veld condition assessment –*ARC*
    - Participating Stakeholders:
        - Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD)
        - Agricultural Research Council (ARC)

- Department of Rural Development and Agrarian Reform (DRDAR)
- Independent Experts
- Academic Institution – *UWC - contributing insights into stewarding /herding, sustainable land-use management and local ecological research.*

March 13, 2025 – In-field Survey and practical assessments

- Field Visit Locations:
  - Small-Scale Farm Veldt condition on local farm with Farmer who had benefited from Land reform COOP plot scheme
  - Roadside Veld - commercial farm survey
- Activity Overview:
  - Hands-on veld condition assessment and biodiversity monitoring and social economic discussions.
  - Testing mobile survey tools for real-time veld / ecological data collection.
  - Comparative analysis of conservation practices across different farming systems.
- Discussion on Findings:
  - Results interpretation and application for policy development, ecological restoration, and wildlife management /corridor and sustainable farming guidance.
  - Engagement with farmers and local stakeholders on challenges and opportunities in veld management.

Summary of Stakeholder Interactions

This itinerary encompassed interactions with key government, research, and independent stakeholders, focusing on:

- Policy and governance frameworks with DEFF, DALRRD, DRDAR .
- Scientific and technical research applications with ARC and UWC.
- Practical field-based conservation strategies with DALRRD, DRDAR, and local land managers.
- Knowledge-sharing and training for sustainable resource and wildlife management across sectors.

March 16- Travel back to USA

Annex V. Meetings Held During the Evaluation

Agenda for Workshop as part of Evaluators mission to Beauford West
ARC and DOA Joint Workshop - Agenda – Karoo Veld Condition Training
Location: Beaufort West- Department of Transport Building
Dates: 12–13 March 2025
Time: 09:00 onward

12 March 2025 – Indoor Sessions

Time	Agenda Item	Presenter(s) / Facilitator(s)
09:00 – 09:10	Opening and Welcome	
09:10 – 09:30	Introduction and Background	Head of Department DOA
09:30 – 10:00	The Dynamics of Karoo Veld	GIS Specialist DOA
10:00 – 11:00	Standardised Survey Form for Karoo Veld Condition Surveys	Head of Department DOA
11:00 – 11:30	Cell Phone Applications as Tools in Karoo Veld Condition Surveys	GIS Specialist DOA
11:30 – 12:00	Impact of Climate Change in the Karoo *(title to be confirmed)*	Ecologist ARC
12:30 – 13:00	Karoo Veld Management from a Provincial Perspective	Western Cape Provincial Dept. of Agriculture (WC PDA)
13:00 – 13:45	Lunch Break	
13:45 – 14:15	Species Identification in the Karoo	ARC (Agricultural Research Council)
14:15 – 14:45	Determining Carrying Capacity for Your Camp	ARC
14:45 – 15:30	Veld Condition Assessment: Data Processing and On-Farm Application	ARC
15:30 – 16:00	Closing Remarks and In-Field Survey Arrangements for 13 March	

13 March 2025 – In-Field Sessions

- In-field survey exercise – Visit to Small-scale farm - Meeting with farmers
- In-field survey exercise – Visit to Commercial farm
- Discussion on in-field survey results and interpretation
- Thanks for participation

People met during the ARC Workshop in Beauford West March 12-13

No	Organisation	Position
1	DOA	
2	UCT	
3	Western Cape Government- DOA	Senior Official
4	Western Cape Government- DOA	Agricultural Planner
5	Western Cape Government- DOA	Research Analyst
6	Western Cape Government- DOa	Project Manager
7	Western Cape Government- DOA	Policy Advisor
8	Western Cape Government- DOA	Environmental Specialist
9	DALRRD	Director
10	DALRRD	Program Coordinator
11	DALRRD	Agricultural Economist
12	DALRRD- DOA	Technical Expert
13	DOA	GIS Specialist
14	DALRRD	Stakeholder Engagement Officer
15	DOA	Field Researcher
16	DOA	Sustainable Agriculture Officer
17	DALRRD	Biodiversity Specialist
18	DALRRD	Land Use Planner
19	DALRRD	Finance Officer
20	DOA	Senior Scientist
21	ARC	Research Scientist

No	Organisation	Position
22	ARC- NRE	Soil Scientist
23	ARC	Ecologist
24	ARC-NRE	Research Analyst
25	ARC-NRE	Environmental Consultant
26	ARC- NRC	Climate Change Expert
27	DOA EC	Regional Director
28	DOA EC	Field Officer
29	Independent- ARC	Agricultural Consultant
30	Independent- DOA	Conservationist
31	Independent	Community Liaison
32	University of the Western Cape (UWC)- ARC	Professor
33	DOA	Head of Department
34	Grootfontein Agricultural College	Lecturer
35	Landmark Foundation – Maintenance	Maintenance Rehabilitator
36	Landmark Foundation - Research	Lead Researcher
37	Private Consultant	Environmental Consultant
38	Private Party	Sustainability Advocate
39	UNEP/GEF	Program Manager

Annex VI. Stakeholder Interviewees

Stakeholders Interview Summary (Chronological Order, Verified Details)

Interview Date	Title / Organization	Modality
30 Jan 2025	UNEP Finance	Email
27 Jan 2025	Green Fund, Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA)	Online
28 Jan 2025	Professor of Botany, Scientific Advisor, University of the Western Cape	On line
29 Jan 2025	Biodiversity Shepherding Manual Author, Private Consultant	Online
30 Jan 2025	Lecturer, Grootfontein Agricultural College	On line
30 Jan 2025	Regenerative Farming Advocate (Private)	Online
3 Feb 2025	Rehabilitator, Landmark Foundation	Online
4 Feb 2025	Environmental Consultant (Avian Surveys), Garden Route	Online
10 Feb 2025	Researcher, Landmark Foundation	WhatsApp and online
18 Feb 2025	Portfolio Head of GEFBD/LD unit UNEP	Online
22 Feb 2025	GEF Task Manager, UNEP	Online
March 11-13 2025	Researcher, Agricultural Research Council (ARC) / UWC	Online (Feb 21) In-person 11-13 Beauford West Mission host
March 11-13	Agricultural Consultant / Independent Researcher, ARC	On-site visit Beauford West Mission host
TBD – March 11 - 13	Researcher, South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI)	On-site visit On mission 11-13
20 Feb 2025	UNEP Affiliate / International Environmental Policy Advisor (Rangelands)	Online
Nov 2024	Project Manager, Landmark Foundation	WhatsApp
March 10- Workshop 2- 5 Cape town	Western Cape Dept. of Environmental Affairs & Development Planning (DEADP)	WhatsApp & In-person

Annex VII. Literature Review

Project planning and reporting documents

- Project Identification Form (PIF)
  – Concept note submitted to GEF for endorsement of project idea and alignment with GEF focal areas.
- Project Preparation Grant (PPG) Document
  – Outlines activities and budget for preparing the full project proposal.
- Project Document (ProDoc)
  – Full project proposal detailing objectives, components, budget, results framework, theory of change, and implementation arrangements.
- CEO Endorsement Request
  – Final submission to the GEF CEO for approval, based on the complete project document.
- Environmental and Social Safeguards Screening and Management Plan
  – Includes risk screening, stakeholder engagement plan, grievance mechanisms, and gender action plan.
- Gender Action Plan (GAP)
  – Integrates gender considerations and indicators into project design and implementation.
- Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)
  – Identifies stakeholders, engagement strategies, and participation modalities.
- Results Framework (Logframe)
  – Specifies outcomes, outputs, indicators, baselines, targets, and sources of verification.

GEF Project Monitoring and Reporting Documents

- Inception Report
  – Submitted after project start-up to confirm the implementation plan, baseline data, and risk updates.
- Annual Project Implementation Report (PIR)
  – Main performance monitoring tool; includes progress on outcomes, risks, lessons learned, and financial updates.
- Subsequent and Final Project Implementation Report (Final PIRs)
  – Submitted with or just before the TE; summarizes final performance data and achievements.
- Co-Financing Reports
  – Summary of confirmed, actual, and leveraged co-financing contributions from all sources.
- Project Completion Report (PCR) *(sometimes required by agencies in addition to TE)*
  – Wrap-up document confirming the status of deliverables, assets, and sustainability measures.

Project Outputs – Overall

Broadened understanding of leopard ecology, human-wildlife conflict, and connectivity across modified landscapes.

Multidisciplinary synthesis contributing to coexistence strategies between carnivores and agricultural production systems.

Predator Management and Shepherding Academy

- Demonstrated efficacy of wildlife-friendly livestock practices (e.g., rotational grazing, herder presence) in biodiversity recovery.
- Provided scientific support for non-lethal predator management strategies.
- Contributed data to support coexistence-based rangeland policy reform.

Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES)

- Provided conceptual foundation for integrating biodiversity metrics into PES systems.
- Framed economic rationale for predator coexistence incentives in working landscapes.

Knowledge and Monitoring

- Advanced understanding of predator spatial ecology, species richness indicators, and land-use effects.
  Developed tools for vegetation recovery and monitoring post-livestock impact.

Other research

- Recent peer-reviewed studies affirm that herding, ecological knowledge, and community-based governance are central to sustainable rangeland management in the Karoo. These findings validate the Shepherding Biodiversity Project's core approach and highlight critical drivers and barriers.

Annex VIII. Assessment of the Quality of Project Design

	SECTION	SELECT RATING	SCORE (1-6)	WEIGHTING	TOTAL (Rating x Weighting/10)
A	**Operating Context**	Satisfactory	5	0.4	0.2
B	**Project Preparation**	Satisfactory	5	1.2	0.6
C	**Strategic Relevance**	Highly Satisfactory	6	0.8	0.48
D	**Intended Results and Causality**	Moderately Satisfactory	4	1.6	0.64
E	**Logical Framework and Monitoring**	Moderately Satisfactory	4	0.8	0.32
F	**Governance and Supervision Arrangements**	Satisfactory	5	0.4	0.2
G	**Partnerships**	Highly Satisfactory	6	0.8	0.48
H	**Learning, Communication and Outreach**	Highly Satisfactory	6	0.4	0.24
I	**Financial Planning / Budgeting**	Moderately Satisfactory	4	0.4	0.16
J	**Efficiency**	Highly Satisfactory	6	0.8	0.48
K	**Risk identification and Social Safeguards**	Moderately Unsatisfactory	3	0.8	0.24
L	**Sustainability / Replication and Catalytic Effects**	Moderately Satisfactory	5	1.2	0.6
M	**Identified Project Design Weaknesses/Gaps**	Highly Satisfactory	6	0.4	0.24
				TOTAL SCORE (Sum Totals)	**4.88 Satisfactory**

Annex IX. Summary of Substantive Comments from Interviewees and Not/Partially Resolved within the Report

Name, Organisation, Designation	Summary of comments submitted to UNEP	Evaluation Team Response
Jeannine McManus Acting Director / Research Director Landmark Foundation	▪ The report contains inaccuracies, omissions, and misinterpretations, and applies benchmarks that differ from those agreed upon in the original project framework. ▪ Risks undermining the exceptional achievements of the project, which fully delivered on all agreed outputs and conclusively demonstrated its proof of concept within a four-year pilot phase. ▪ The evaluation imposes post hoc expectations of national rollout and institutional adoption, which were not part of the project's original scope or deliverables. ▪ The evaluation downplays the scientific leadership and innovation of the Landmark Foundation, which was the driving force behind the project's research and outputs. ▪ It undervalues the transformative outcomes of the Shepherding Academy, which trained herders as skilled field ecologists and contributed significantly to rural livelihoods and ecological recovery ▪ The evaluation, conducted five years after the project's conclusion, excludes key role-players (such as ARC) who were central to implementation while overrepresenting institutions and individuals who were absent during the project itself. It therefore portrays the project as an isolated NGO effort rather than as a collaborative initiative. ▪ It undervalues the transformative outcomes of the Shepherding Academy which trained herders as skilled field ecologists and contributed significantly to rural livelihoods and ecological recovery. ▪ The evaluation narrowly defines sustainability as immediate institutional adoption, ignoring the project's lasting ecological and social impacts, which were achieved without government support.	**On the Project's Scientific Achievements and Proof of Concept** ▪ The evaluation acknowledges that the project made substantive advances in rangeland ecology, predator coexistence, and biodiversity-compatible livestock management. The data, publications, and field-level systems established by the Landmark Foundation represent a credible scientific contribution and demonstration of innovation. ▪ These aspects are reflected in the report's positive ratings for Effectiveness. ▪ Some of the evidence referenced in the response appears to extend beyond the scope and reporting period of the GEF-funded intervention. **On Institutional Engagement and Attribution** ▪ The response correctly highlights that government participation was limited and that this constraint was recognized during implementation. ▪ The evaluation does not attribute blame but situates weak institutional uptake as a systemic risk affecting the sustainability of project outcomes. ▪ The distinction between project delivery and systemic embedding is maintained to ensure objectivity in the application of GEF evaluation criteria. **On Omitted Partners and Custodianship** ▪ The additional information regarding the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) and other scientific collaborators is valuable and will be noted in the project file. ▪ The evaluation's focus on formal executing and implementing partners reflected available documentation and interview data at the time.

Name, Organisation, Designation	Summary of comments submitted to UNEP	Evaluation Team Response
	▪ The evaluation incorrectly attributes the lack of government participation and policy uptake to the project's shortcomings, rather than recognizing these as systemic institutional barriers that the project aimed to address. ▪ The evaluation recommendation for DEFF to assume custodianship of the project's legacy is deemed unsupported and inappropriate, as DEFF showed no interest or capacity during the project. ARC is a more suitable custodian. ▪ Commentor calls for a revised, independent review process to accurately reflect the project's achievements and ensure its legacy is preserved.	▪ Custodianship recommendations were made on the basis of institutional mandates and sustainability frameworks; however, the points raised on ARC's technical suitability are well taken. **On Methodology and Temporal Limitations** ▪ The evaluation recognizes that it was conducted several years after project closure and that staff turnover affected institutional memory. These limitations are transparently reported. ▪ The evaluation triangulated data from available documentation, interviews, and field verification to the extent possible within UNEP evaluation standards. ▪ While some project representatives were no longer available, the evaluator made multiple attempts to secure broad representation. **On Sustainability and Scaling** ▪ The evaluation does not dispute the continued ecological and social benefits cited. Rather, it notes that the assessment of sustainability under the UNEP/GEF evaluation framework is based on the likelihood of institutional and financial continuation at the time of assessment. ▪ The project's demonstration model and local persistence are recognized as positive outcomes, though these do not automatically translate to institutionalized or policy-level sustainability. **On Overall Assessment** ▪ The comments provide useful factual clarification and reinforce several of the project's scientific and field achievements already acknowledged in the evaluation. ▪ They do not, however, alter the fundamental assessment of systemic barriers, institutional engagement challenges, and risks to long-term scaling within government frameworks.

Name, Organisation, Designation	Summary of comments submitted to UNEP	Evaluation Team Response
		▪ The evaluation remains confident in the validity of its findings, while noting the valuable additional context now provided by the executing partners. **Conclusion** We reiterate appreciation for the Landmark Foundation's contributions and recognize the project as a pioneering demonstration of biodiversity-compatible livestock production. The clarifications provided are valuable additions to the project record. We believe the evaluation findings remain valid within the framework of GEF and UNEP evaluation standards, while the additional context reinforces appreciation for the project's scientific, ecological, and social achievements within the design parameters originally approved.
Igshaan Samuels Specialist Scientist Agricultural Research Council (ARC)	▪ The report underestimates the significance of ARC's involvement, contributions, and technical support to the project, which was essentially a substantive and sustained partnership rather than a peripheral or consultative involvement. ▪ ARC's participation in the project was formalized during its implementation phase (2016–2020) through collaborative work with the Landmark Foundation (note: TM confirms that there was no partner agreement with UNEP) ▪ Collaboration with Landmark forum included: - long-term rangeland monitoring and exploratory assessments - technical validation of project outputs - co-authorship of the peer-reviewed publications produced through the project - technical advisory support throughout implementation ▪ By failing to recognise ARC's active and scientific role in the implementation of the project, the report distorts the project's	We generally agree that the current draft underrepresents the substantive technical and scientific role of ARC, and have revised it to highlight /enhance ARC's contributions in the following report sections: • Section 3.4: Project Implementation Structure and Partners • Section 5.7 Monitoring & Reporting

Name, Organisation, Designation	Summary of comments submitted to UNEP	Evaluation Team Response
	collaborative nature, portraying it as an NGO-driven effort rather than a multi-institutional science–practice partnership. ▪ ARC as the national agricultural science institution integrated with DoA, and as a government research entity, is the appropriate custodian for scaling and sustaining the shepherding model. ▪ UNEP to revise the evaluation to accurately reflect the ARC's contributions	

Annex X. Brief CV of the Evaluator

Name	Stephanie Jill Hodge
Profession	International Evaluator
Nationality	Canadian- Resident of USA
Country experience	Eastern Europe: Latvia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Belarus, Bosnia and Hertizgova Africa and Indian Ocean : South Africa, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Namibia, Angola, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Botswana, Malawi, Senegal, Namibia, Niger, Mali, Madagascar, Mauritius, Comoros, Seychelles, Egypt, Sudan, Uganda, Nigeria, Reunion Américas: USA, Colombia, Barbados, Dominica, Guyana, Belize, Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis Asia: Thailand, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Mongolia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Philippines, Azerbaijan Oceania: Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Samoa
Education	MPA in Government and Public Administration – Harvard University, USA (2005–2006) Harvard Certificate – Future of Education – Harvard University, USA (2014) MA in Comparative International Education and Development – University of East Anglia, UK (1996–1997) Postgraduate Studies in International Development Economics and Political Science – Carleton University, Canada (1989–1990) Conjoint Bachelor's Degrees in Education and Physical Education (Geography major) – Memorial University, Canada (1982–1987) Additional professional certificates from World Bank, UC Berkeley, IAIA, CHIEAM, UNICEF, and others Professional Certificates: Strategic Environmental Assessment (IAIA), Environmental Management (Berkeley), Natural Resource Management (CHIEAM), Education in Emergencies (UNICEF/NRC), among others

Short Biography

Ms. Stephanie Hodge is an independent senior evaluator with over 30 years of global experience leading evaluations and technical inputs for the UN system and global funds, including UNSG, UNEP, ILO (Kuwait) UNDP, UN Women, UNICEF, OIOS, GEF, GCF, and the Adaptation Fund. Her work spans climate change, biodiversity, DRR, gender equality, institutional capacity, international waters, ecosystem-based adaptation, and SDG-aligned sustainable development. She has conducted more than 80 evaluations, including high-level strategic, thematic, and country programme evaluations, across more than 140 countries. She is known for her methodological rigor, commitment to inclusion, and ability to link global frameworks (UNFCCC, UNCBD, UNCCD) with country-level results.

Key Specialties and Capabilities Cover:

Evaluation of major GEF, ILO, UNEP, UNDP, and UN system-wide environmental/climate programmes

Labor, Gender-responsive and inclusive evaluation methodologies

Institutional capacity assessment and RBM

SDG alignment and policy coherence

International Waters, DRR, ecosystem-based adaptation, and sustainable livelihoods

Humanitarian-development-environment nexus evaluations

Selected GEF Evaluation Assignments

2024

Vietnam – Final Evaluation, Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Biosphere Reserve Management (UNDP/GEF)

Philippines – TE of Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) Project (UNDP/GEF)

Indonesia – TE of RESTORE Early Recovery Project (UNDP/GEF)

2023

Philippines – Final Evaluation, Renewable Energy and Net Zero Transition (DREAMS, UNDP/GEF)

Nile Basin (Multiple Countries) – MTR of Regional Groundwater Cooperation Project (UNDP/GEF)

Cambodia – Technical Advisor for Climate Strategy & CC/DRR Gap Analysis (UNDP)

2022

Grenada – TE of Protected Areas & Ridge to Reef Biodiversity Project (UNDP/GEF)

Dominica – TEs of two GEF supported Sustainable Ecosystems and Low Carbon Development Projects (UNDP/GEF)

2021

GMS Region (Vietnam, Philippines, Cambodia, etc.) –ADB GEF Mekong project TA

Philippines (Regional) = TE of PEMSEA Coastal and Marine Environmental Management (UNDP/GEF)

China – MTR of Biodiversity Conservation Projects (Dongting Lake & Huangshan, FAO/GEF)

Fiji – MTR of GEF R2R Biodiversity Project (UNDP/GEF)

Namibia, Angola, South Africa – MTR of BCLME Large Marine Ecosystem Project (UNDP/GEF)

2020

Sierra Leone – TE of Local Water Governance and Adaptation Project (UNDP/GEF)

Egypt – TE of Protected Areas Financial Management Project (UNDP/GEF)

2019

Guyana – TE of Biodiversity and Gold Sector Mainstreaming (UNDP/GEF)

Vietnam – TE of Three Rio Conventions Project (UNDP/GEF)

Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam – TE of Regional High Seas Tuna Fisheries Project (UNDP/GEF)

Earlier Evaluations (2010–2018)

Iran – MTR of MENARID Natural Resources Programme (UNDP/GEF)

Bangladesh – CDMP II Knowledge and DRR Evaluation (UNDP/GEF)

Lesotho, Mauritius, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Albania, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Comoros, Madagascar, Seychelles, etc. – Various TE/MTR of GEF projects on biodiversity, SLM, DRR, and climate adaptation

Other Major & Recent Evaluations (Non-GEF)

2024

UNSG Executive Office – Lead Evaluator, *Our Common Future* Agenda (UNPDF-funded)

Rwanda – Final Evaluation of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF)

Maldives – UNDP CPD Mid-Term Evaluation

UNOPS (Global) – Climate Change Strategy and Infrastructure Alignment Assessment

2023

Indonesia – TE of UNDP SPAN-LAPOR E-Governance Programme

Cambodia – National Climate Change Strategy Technical Roadmap (UNDP)

2022

Vietnam – MTR of Sendai Framework

FAO Global + Sri Lanka, Senegal, Rwanda – TE of KnowATER Water Governance Project

UN Women + UNEP – EmPower Project Evaluation on Climate Change, DRR & Gender

2021

UN Pacific – TE of UN Pacific Strategy 2018–2022

OIOS – Review of UN Secretariat HR Reforms Uptake

ADB India – GEF Coastal Zone Engineering Evaluation (non-GEF co-financed)

Annex XI. Quality Assessment of the Evaluation Report

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
Report Quality Criteria		
Quality of the Executive Summary Purpose: acts as a stand-alone and accurate summary of the main evaluation product, especially for senior management. To include: • concise overview of the evaluation object • clear summary of the evaluation objectives and scope • overall evaluation rating of the project and key features of performance (strengths and weaknesses) against exceptional criteria • reference to where the evaluation ratings table can be found within the report • summary response to key strategic evaluation questions • summary of the main findings of the exercise/synthesis of main conclusions • summary of lessons learned and recommendations.	The Executive summary provides a good synthesis of the evaluation objective, scope, key findings (successes, challenges, risks), conclusions, lessons-learned and recommendations. A summary of performance ratings by criteria is presented and cross-referenced. The key strategic questions are not explicitly covered in this section but have been addressed to some extent within the executive summary and in chapter 6.	5
Quality of the 'Introduction' Section Purpose: introduces/situates the evaluand in its institutional context, establishes its main parameters (time, value, results, geography) and the purpose of the evaluation itself. To include: • institutional context of the project (sub-programme, Division, Branch etc) • date of PRC approval, project duration and start/end dates • number of project phases (where appropriate) • results frameworks to which it contributes (e.g. POW Direct Outcome) • coverage of the evaluation (regions/countries where implemented) • implementing and funding partners • total secured budget • whether the project has been evaluated in the past (e.g. mid-term, external agency etc.) • concise statement of the purpose of the evaluation and the key intended audience for the findings.	The chapter satisfactorily covers all the required elements.	6
Quality of the 'Evaluation Methods' Section Purpose: provides reader with clear and comprehensive description of evaluation methods, demonstrates the credibility of the findings and performance ratings. To include: • description of evaluation data collection methods and information sources • justification for methods used (e.g. qualitative/ quantitative; electronic/face-to-face) • number and type of respondents *(see table template)* • selection criteria used to identify respondents, case studies or sites/countries visited • strategies used to increase stakeholder engagement and consultation • methods to include the voices/experiences of different and potentially excluded groups (e.g. vulnerable, gender, marginalised etc) • details of how data were verified (e.g. triangulation, review by stakeholders etc.) • methods used to analyse data (scoring, coding, thematic analysis etc) • evaluation limitations (e.g. low/ imbalanced response rates across different groups; gaps in documentation; language barriers etc)	The section is complete and covers all the required aspects in sufficient detail.	5.5

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
• ethics and human rights issues should be highlighted including: how anonymity and confidentiality were protected. Is there an ethics statement? E.g. *'Throughout the evaluation process and in the compilation of the Final Evaluation Report efforts have been made to represent the views of both mainstream and more marginalised groups. All efforts to provide respondents with anonymity have been made.*		
Quality of the 'Project' Section Purpose: describes and verifies key dimensions of the evaluand relevant to assessing its performance. To include: • *Context:* overview of the main issue that the project is trying to address, its root causes and consequences on the environment and human well-being (i.e. synopsis of the problem and situational analyses) • *Results framework*: summary of the project's results hierarchy as stated in the ProDoc (or as officially revised) • *Stakeholders:* description of groups of targeted stakeholders organised according to relevant common characteristics • *Project implementation structure and partners:* description of the implementation structure with diagram and a list of key project partners • *Changes in design during implementation:* any key events that affected the project's scope or parameters should be described in brief in chronological order • *Project financing:* completed tables of: (a) budget at design and expenditure by components (b) planned and actual sources of funding/co-financing	The chapter covers all the required aspects of the project in a satisfactory manner.	6
Quality of the Theory of Change Purpose: to set out the TOC at Evaluation in diagrammatic and narrative forms to support consistent project performance; to articulate the causal pathways with drivers and assumptions and justify any reconstruction necessary to assess the project's performance. To include: • description of how the *TOC at Evaluation*[17] was designed (who was involved etc) • confirmation/reconstruction of results in accordance with UNEP definitions • articulation of causal pathways • identification of drivers and assumptions • identification of key actors in the change process • summary of the reconstruction/results re-formulation in tabular form. *The two results hierarchies (original/formal revision and reconstructed) should be presented as a two-column table to show clearly that, although wording and placement may have changed, the results 'goal posts' have not been 'moved'.* This table may have initially been presented in the Inception Report and should appear somewhere in the Main Evaluation report.	The TOC narrative is comprehensive. The main causal pathways, assumptions and drivers clearly described. A comparison table and a diagrammatic representation of the TOC are also included.	6
Quality of Key Findings within the Report Presentation of evidence: nature of evidence should be clear (interview, document, survey, observation, online resources etc) and evidence should be explicitly triangulated unless noted as having a single source. Consistency within the report: all parts of the report should form consistent support for findings and performance ratings, which should be in line with UNEP's Criteria Ratings Matrix. Findings Statements (where applicable): The frame of reference for a finding should be an individual evaluation criterion or a strategic question from the TOR. **A finding should go beyond description and uses analysis to**	Ther report contains findings supported by evidence. These are insightful and likely to aid learning that is specific to the evaluand as well as other similar UNEP initiatives	6

[17] *During the Inception Phase of the evaluation process a TOC at Evaluation Inception is created based on the information contained in the approved project documents (these may include either logical framework or a TOC or narrative descriptions), formal revisions and annual reports etc. During the evaluation process this TOC is revised based on changes made during project intervention and becomes the TOC at Evaluation.*

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
provide insights that aid learning specific to the evaluand. In some cases a findings statement may articulate a key element that has determined the performance rating of a criterion. Findings will frequently provide insight into 'how' and/or 'why' questions.		
Quality of 'Strategic Relevance' Section Purpose: to present evidence and analysis of project strategic relevance with respect to UNEP, partner and geographic policies and strategies at the time of project approval. To include: Assessment of the evaluand's relevance vis-à-vis: • Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities • Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partners Strategic Priorities • Relevance to Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities • Complementarity with Existing Interventions: complementarity of the project at design (or during inception/mobilisation[18]), with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups.	The chapter provides a detailed analysis of all the sub-categories of this criterion.	6
Quality of the 'Quality of Project Design' Section Purpose: to present a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the project design, on the basis that the detailed assessment was presented in the Inception Report.	The section provides a summary of the main strengths and weaknesses identified in the project design document. The calculation of the overall quality assessment rating is presented in Annex VIII although there is no cross-reference provided in the text.	5
Quality of the 'Nature of the External Context' Section Purpose: to describe and recognise, when appropriate, key external features of the project's implementing context that limited the project's performance (e.g. conflict, natural disaster, political upheaval[19]), and how they affected performance. While additional details of the implementing context may be informative, this section should clearly record whether or not a major and unexpected disrupting event took place during the project's life in the implementing sites.	The external contextual factors that disrupted project implementation have been discussed in sufficient detail.	5
Quality of 'Effectiveness' Section **(i) Availability of Outputs:** Purpose: to present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the outputs made available to the intended beneficiaries. To include: • a convincing, evidence-supported and clear presentation of the outputs made available by the project compared to its approved plans and budget • assessment of the nature and scale of outputs versus the project indicators and targets • assessment of the timeliness, quality and utility of outputs to intended beneficiaries • identification of positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	The assessment of outputs is detailed and evidence based. It provides useful insights and assesses both qualitative and quantitative aspects.	6
ii) Achievement of Project Outcomes:		

[18] *A project's inception or mobilization period is understood as the time between project approval and first disbursement. Complementarity during project implementation is considered under Efficiency, see below.*

[19] *Note that 'political upheaval' does not include regular national election cycles, but unanticipated unrest or prolonged disruption. The potential delays or changes in political support that are often associated with the regular national election cycle should be part of the project's design and addressed through adaptive management of the project team.*

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
Purpose: to present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the uptake, adoption and/or implementation of outputs by the intended beneficiaries. This may include behaviour changes at an individual or collective level. To include: • a convincing and evidence-supported analysis of the uptake of outputs by intended beneficiaries • assessment of the nature, depth and scale of outcomes versus the project indicators and targets • discussion of the contribution, credible association and/or attribution of outcome level changes to the work of the project itself • any constraints to attributing effects to the projects' work • identification of positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	Likewise, the assessment of outcomes is detailed, evidence-based and well-reasoned.	6
(iii) Likelihood of Impact: Purpose: to present an integrated analysis, guided by the causal pathways represented by the TOC, of all evidence relating to likelihood of impact, including an assessment of the extent to which drivers and assumptions necessary for change to happen, were seen to be holding. To include: • an explanation of how causal pathways emerged and change processes can be shown • an explanation of the roles played by key actors and change agents • explicit discussion of how drivers and assumptions played out • identification of any unintended negative effects of the project, especially on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	The assessment is presented in a clear manner and cross-references to the TOC. It provides insights into the extent to which drivers and assumptions necessary for change to happen, were seen to be holding.	6
Quality of 'Financial Management' Section Purpose: to present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under financial management and include a completed 'financial management' table (may be annexed). Consider how well the report addresses the following: • *adherence* to UNEP's financial policies and procedures • *completeness* of financial information, including the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used • *communication* between financial and project management staff	The section includes an assessment of all the sub-categories and a summative assessment of the overall financial management.	5
Quality of 'Efficiency' Section Purpose: to present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under efficiency (i.e. the primary categories of cost-effectiveness and timeliness). To include: • time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe • discussion of making use, during project implementation, of/building on pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. • implications of any delays and no cost extensions • the extent to which the management of the project minimised UNEP's environmental footprint.	All the required aspects of efficiency have been assessed and corroborated with evidence.	5
Quality of 'Monitoring and Reporting' Section Purpose: to present well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the evaluand's monitoring and reporting. Consider how well the report addresses the following: • quality of the monitoring design and budgeting *(including SMART results with measurable indicators, resources for MTE/R etc.)* • quality of monitoring of project implementation *(including use of monitoring data for adaptive management)* • quality of project reporting *(e.g. PIMS and donor reports)* \	All the required sub-categories have been assessed and corroborated with evidence.	5
Quality of 'Sustainability' Section Purpose: to present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under sustainability (i.e. the endurance of benefits achieved at outcome level).	The report covers all three dimensions of sustainability in detail and	6

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
Consider how well the report addresses the following: • socio-political sustainability • financial sustainability • institutional sustainability	includes supporting evidence.	
Quality of Factors Affecting Performance Section Purpose: These factors are not always discussed in stand-alone sections and may be integrated in the other performance criteria as appropriate. However, if not addressed substantively in this section, a cross reference must be given to where the topic is addressed and that entry must be sufficient to justify the performance rating for these factors. Consider how well the evaluation report, either in this section or in cross-referenced sections, covers the following cross-cutting themes: • preparation and readiness • quality of project management and supervision[20] • stakeholder participation and co-operation • responsiveness to human rights and gender equality • environmental and social safeguards • country ownership and driven-ness • communication and public awareness	All the required factors have been discussed in stand-alone sub-sections and are anchored on actual findings presented across the report.	6
Quality of the Conclusions Section **(i) Conclusions Narrative:** Purpose: to present summative statements reflecting on prominent aspects of the performance of the evaluand as a whole, they should be derived from the synthesized analysis of evidence gathered during the evaluation process. To include: • compelling narrative providing an integrated summary of the strengths and weakness in overall performance (achievements and limitations) of the project • clear and succinct response to the key strategic questions • human rights and gender dimensions of the intervention should be discussed explicitly (e.g. how these dimensions were considered, addressed or impacted on)	The conclusions are clear and are consistent with the findings presented in the report. Both successes and shortcomings in project implementation have been highlighted. Gender aspects a have been included in the discussion. The summary of ratings table is included. The section includes explicit responses to the key strategic questions.	6
ii) Utility of the Lessons: Purpose: to present both positive and negative lessons that have potential for wider application and use (replication and generalization) Consider how well the lessons achieve the following: • are rooted in real project experiences (i.e. derived from explicit evaluation findings or from problems encountered and mistakes made that should be avoided in the future) • briefly describe the context from which they are derived and those contexts in which they may be useful • do not duplicate recommendations	The lessons learned have potential for wider application in similar contexts. Each 'lesson learned' is presented as a stand-alone statement. They are anchored upon actual implementation challenges/successes and are supported by some contextual background/ explanatory text	5
(iii) Utility and Actionability of the Recommendations: Purpose: to present proposals for specific action to be taken by identified people/position-holders to resolve concrete problems affecting the project or the sustainability of its results. Consider how well the lessons achieve the following: • are feasible to implement within the timeframe and resources available (including local capacities) and specific in terms of who would do what and when	The recommendations are based on concrete problems that affected the implementation of the project and/or sustainability of its results. They all identify the problem being addressed,	4.5

[20] In some cases 'project management and supervision' will refer to the supervision and guidance provided by UNEP to implementing partners and national governments while in others, specifically for GEF funded projects, it will refer to the project management performance of the executing agency and the technical backstopping provided by UNEP. This includes providing the answers to the questions on Core Indicator Targets, stakeholder engagement, gender responsiveness, safeguards and knowledge management, required for the GEF portal.

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
• include at least one recommendation relating to strengthening the human rights and gender dimensions of UNEP interventions • represent a measurable performance target in order that the Evaluation Office can monitor and assess compliance with the recommendations. NOTES: **(i)** In cases where the recommendation is addressed to a third party, compliance can only be monitored and assessed where a contractual/legal agreement remains in place. Without such an agreement, the recommendation should be formulated to say that UNEP project staff should pass on the recommendation to the relevant third party in an effective or substantive manner. The effective transmission by UNEP of the recommendation will then be monitored for compliance. **(ii)** Where a new project phase is already under discussion or in preparation with the same third party, a recommendation can be made to address the issue in the next phase.	the proposed actions and rationale, the responsible agents, and proposed timeframes for their implementation. There is no recommendation that relates to strengthening the human rights and gender dimensions	
Quality of Report Structure and Presentation **(i) Structure and completeness of the report:** To what extent does the report follow the Evaluation Office structure and formatting guidelines? Are all requested Annexes included and complete?	The report is complete; it follows the structure and formatting guidelines provided by the Evaluation Office of UNEP	6
(ii) Writing and formatting: Consider whether the report is well written (clear English language and grammar) with language that is adequate in quality and tone for an official document? Do visual aids, such as maps and graphs convey key information?	The report is written in a clear and professional language.	6
OVERALL REPORT QUALITY RATING		**5.6 Highly Satisfactory**