

UNCC Follow-up Programme for Environment Awards

IR Evaluation of Report under Decision 269 (2011)

IR team for Jordan:

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The Jordan Award no. 5000304 is aimed at Restoration of the Jordan Badia. Some key observations on the project are:

1. The restoration of deteriorated marginal lands is a rather tedious task which requires a long period of time, as well as innovative solutions and approaches.
2. The required interventions are not strictly physical activities that deal with Natural Resources rehabilitation and development. The Project activities depend basically on the participation and proactive inputs from the Badia people (who are marginalized resource-poor farmers and herders), through organizing and enrolling them in "Rangeland Cooperatives".
3. The UNCC Award money at present is held in a special account and as such, its disbursement and all transactions should adhere to UNCC Governing Council decisions, including release of funds and also follow applicable Governmental regulations.
4. The Badia in Jordan lacks a whole range of necessary infra-structure facilities and services (including health, education, transportation, communication, and housing). Evidently, all those human necessities should be taken into consideration by the Jordan Government, in parallel with Badia restoration and rehabilitation.
5. In all, the project must ensure that the Badia rangeland communities are progressively engaged, empowered and enabled to sustainably benefit from the remediated environment.

The IRs reviewed the NFP report on Jordan Government readiness to take-over complete responsibility for managing the Award Funds and practicing adequate over-sight of the Badia Restoration Project for its entire life cycle. From the NFP Report submitted, in response to the UNCC Five Criteria previously addressed to the Government; the IRs can list the following salient issues.

(a) Management and administration infrastructure

- (i) Evaluation of Government's plan, status and timetable for satisfying the criterion. Major actions taken so far are:
 1. The Ministry of Environment established the Project Management Unit (PMU) within its National Focal Point (NFP) for Jordan Badia Restoration Project in October 2005.
 2. Presently, the PMU consists of the following staff members: Director; Socio-economist; officers in Natural Resources; Environment/Watershed Management; Information Technology; Finance Manager/Chief Finance Officer and a Procurement Officer and small secretariat and logistic support staff.
 3. The Cabinet of Ministers formed in 2011 a Steering Committee (SC) consisting of Minister of Environment as Chair; Minister of Finance; Minister of Planning and International Cooperation;

Minister of Agriculture; Minister of Water and Irrigation; Audit Bureau; Hashemite Fund for Badia Development as members.

4. A focal point committee was established with representations from the Ministries included in the SC, to liaise work activities, including field visits and monitoring.
5. PMU recruited in August 2011 a Project Manager for oversight of field activities implemented by contractors and who reports back to NFP-PMU.
6. NFP established in Sept 2011 a Technical Advisory Committee to provide technical advice to PMU on the overall Project management issues.

(ii) Identification of any issues / shortcomings.

The following issues are noticed and cause major concerns:

1. Delay of recruiting needed staff for the PMU
2. Poor Partnership activities. Therefore partnership with other institutions needs to be strengthened more and clear division of labor and responsibilities should be identified and acknowledged
3. Rangeland cooperative organization according to F-4 panel recommendations is essential partner in executing the BRP, however the present or suggested organizational structure for BRP or CAP does not include these rangeland cooperative organization, this issue deserve more attention and focus.
4. The involvement of some 6 or 7 Ministries and Government Bureaus in the Project execution work may entail conflict of interests, overlaps and legislative and executing problems;
5. Weak PMU staff knowledge in the area of rangeland ecology and restoration. The delay in hiring rangeland expert is becoming a serious concern.

(iii) Identification of solutions / measures for establishing this criterion by 2012.

1. Speed up and finalise the recruitment of additional staff in Rangeland Management, Small-ruminant Production and Policy and Planning.
2. Use out-sourcing of certain activities/deliverables that are not deemed as regular daily work or once-made action, like preliminary assessment, surveys, and preparation of reports on certain issues or subjects.
3. Establish a closer and more pro-active association with Badia stakeholders, including awareness programs, field visits and distributing information materials on all BRP work activities.
4. Increase the frequency of the meetings of the Steering Committee (At least a meeting every three months).
5. Feasibility and importance of the Badia Restoration at the national level should be high-lighted. The planned activities should be included within the Government budget and programs which are presented to the Parliament. They also should be integrated with the developmental projects in the Governorates without jeopardizing the goals of BRP.
6. Granting more authority and flexibility to PMU in order to facilitate and expedite the implementation of certain activities and actions that cannot wait delays and lengthy procedures.
7. BRP management structure ought to be following the F4 Panel Recommendations that is focused on rangeland cooperative organizations staffed with a senior level administrator, supported by two additional scientists, as well as 35 field staff (i.e. one individual staff could serve about 200,000 ha); in addition to two GIS specialists.

(b) Project plans and related budgets

(i) Evaluation of Government's plan, status and timetable for satisfying the criterion.

1. The 1st phase of the Incentives (Barley Distribution) was implemented in January-February 2012 to livestock owners.
2. Due to the central role of Community Action Plan (CAP) for organizing Badia Restoration activities, the IRs requested PMU to prepare a New version of the CAP (for the period 2012 to

2015), which is forthcoming.

(ii) Identification of any issues / shortcomings.

1. The New CAP document is still expected.
2. The IRs have to review the "new CAP document".
3. Proper coordination mechanisms need to be established to streamline field activities in the three Badia regions in order to ensure ownership, efficiency and sustainability.
4. CAP needs to cover the entire Badia region according to the GC decision 258 and F4 panel recommendations.
5. Wildlife reserve is not an appropriate option to apply BRP as these reserves are already managed under sustainable grazing management and BRP is intended to restore damaged Badia ecosystems. Once BRP enhance the natural recovery of Badia vegetation, wildlife will benefit at larger scale than reserve border; accordingly, wild life management interventions need to be in place.
6. Close harmony need to be sought with the new Government Executive Programme 20011-2013, launched at the governorate level.

(iii) Identification of solutions / measures for establishing this criterion by 2012.

1. Before approving the second phase of barley distribution, an assessment of the first phase experience, particularly to verify that the Barley Distribution was really an incentive that led to range resting.
2. Income-generation initiatives and activities ought to be considered in view of the fact that majority of the Badia communities are resource-poor.

(c) Accounting and treasury systems and procedures

(i) Evaluation of Government's plan, status and timetable for satisfying the criterion.

1. The Finance Control System is expected to be in place by April 2012.
2. Employing an Accountant and a Chief Finance Officer (in August 2011) within PMU staff was a good first step in establishing the Finance System.
3. Acquisition and placing in service of the accounting software is fundamental to the system and must be done as soon as possible.

(ii) Identification of any issues / shortcomings.

1. The time line of 30 April is ambitious as it doesn't allow time for any modifications or changes to be made to the system should they be necessary, nor does it allow for any operational period of time for the system as a whole to be reviewed.
2. The PMU Manual for Finance Policies and Procedures has been reviewed by the Financial IR and the Secretariat but has not been reviewed by the External Auditor.
3. The Protocols and Policies related to stakeholders reporting and the funding of Stakeholders by the NFP does not seem to have been codified in any manual.

(iii) Identification of solutions / measures for establishing this criterion by 2012.

1. Request the CFO to review the PMU Manual with the External Auditor and to take into account any recommendations, as necessary.
2. The NFP should conduct testing operations of the system and engage the External Auditor to undertake a control audit after an appropriate period.
3. The Stakeholders protocols should be more clearly defined and incorporated in the financial system as a whole. These should be reviewed by the IRs and the Secretariat, as soon as possible.
4. Expedite installation and operation of the Finance Control System, with no further delay.

(d) Adequate and coherent audit processes

- (i) Evaluation of Government's plan, status and timetable for satisfying the criterion.
 - 1. In Sept. 2010, NFP entered a contract with Ernst &Young as External Auditor to ensure conformity with International Auditing Standards.
 - 2. Chief of the Audit Bureau is a member of the Steering Committee, as well as in the Special Tendering Committee.
- (ii) Identification of any issues / shortcomings.
 - 1. The report does not indicate any time frame for the External Auditor's contract.
 - 2. To date, no financial statement audits have been received. However, we note that the Audit for the calendar year 2011 is presently under way.
 - 3. There is no discussion of the scope of audit.
- (iii) Identification of solutions / measures for establishing this criterion by 2012.
 - 1. The contract of the External Auditor should be of sufficient time duration so as to ensure continuity for the auditing the majority of the Award Fund.
 - 2. Audit schedules should be developed and followed.
 - 3. The scope of the Audit needs to be documented and fully understood by all parties.

(e) Transparent procurement processes

- (i) Evaluation of Government's plan, status and timetable for satisfying the criterion.
 - 1. Formation in 2006 of the Special Tendering Committee, chaired by Under-Secretary of Ministry of Environment to streamline the procurement process and ensure its adherence to Governmental rules and regulation.
 - 2. The PMU recruited in August 2011 a Procurement Officer.
 - 3. The organization of the Tendering Committee, with members from the relevant Governmental Bodies, would ensure transparency of the process.
 - (ii) Identification of any issues / shortcomings.
 - 1. The contribution and outputs of the Procurements Officer is not adequately explained.
 - 2. There is no explanation on the oversight role of the NFP as regards to any procurement that will be under taken by the stakeholders, either for assets/supplies or for services.
 - (iii) Identification of solutions / measures for establishing this criterion by 2012.
 - 1. It would add to the transparency and fairness of the Project contracting work to invite some qualified Private Sector institutions in the bidding process.
 - 2. The outputs of the Procurements Officer and that of the Chief Finance Officer ought to be elucidated.
 - 3. The Protocol document described above, under (c), should include the over-sight of procurement processes that might be undertaken by stakeholders.
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