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Regional level project coordination meeting

Minutes

Date: 21 March 2014

Venue: WWF Caucasus PO Conference Hall, M.Aleksidze St. 11, 0193 Tbilisi, Georgia

Facilitator: Malkhaz Dzneladze, Project regional coordinator

Participants:

	Name	Project management role	Permanent position, Organization
1	[ML] Matthias Lichtenberger	International Project Leader	Caucasus Programme Officer/WWF-Germany
2	[GS] Giorgi Sanadiradze	Project Supervisor for the Region&Georgia	Director / WWF-Caucasus
3	[KM] Karen Manvelyan	Project Country Supervisor for Armenia	Director / WWF-Armenia
4	[ES] Elshad Askerov (<i>by correspondence</i>)	Project Country Supervisor for Azerbaijan	Director / WWF-Azerbaijan
5	[MD] Malkhaz Dzneladze	Project Regional Coordinator	Project staff / WWF-Caucasus

Background:

On February 28, 2014 the EU Delegation in Tbilisi extended (*non-cost extension procedure*) the Project (No. DCI-ENV/2010/221391) for one year (from March 1, 2014 to March 1, 2015) and signed the relevant Addendum #3 to the main contract aimed at modifying the initial 3-year consolidated budget into 4-year consolidated budget.



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The meeting was preceded by the intensive work and exchange on splitting total consolidated budget into separate country budgets (incl. for WWF-Germany) for both 4-year period and extended year-4. Furthermore, as a result of this work which had been performed by the project regional coordinator [MD], precise calculations were done to come out with payment schedule for all partner offices involved.

The above budget/financial accommodations had been communicated to all project offices (incl. WWF-Germany) to get their comments and/or no-objections.

Meeting objective:

The main objective of the meeting was to exchange information and share the views among senior project managers and to come out with concrete decisions on important issues and further steps for the project implementation during the extended period (from March 1, 2014 to March 1, 2015).

Agenda of the meeting:

1. Discussion and agreement on final budget allocations for all 4 offices involved in implementation
2. Discussion and agreement on final payment request schedule (*incl. payment for administrative cost*)
3. Dates for development of detailed country Action plans – incl. dates for communication and visibility actions
4. Further involvement of academic organizations (e.g, universities)
5. Follow-up on forest transformation manual developed by Dirk Frankenhauser – project service provider to WWF-Germany
6. Upcoming EU-ROM/ Evaluation of the project
 - a) Follow-up on reporting – dates for completion of country narrative reports for the period from June-2014 to March-2014
 - b) Follow-up on 3-year work – discussion and agreement on necessity to develop 3-year country and regional reports in a format of EU final reports (*incl. indicators of achievement according to the logframe etc*)
7. Other business

Absenteeism:

ES (project manager/supervisor in Azerbaijan), had notified the meeting facilitator that he would not be able to attend the meeting as a matter of last minute cancelation.



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At the same time, ES had sent WWF-Azerbaijan's no-objection via e-mail regarding WWF-Azerbaijan's country budget for both 4-year period and draft budget for extended year-4. He had agreed also on payment request schedule for WWF-Azerbaijan – thus fully complementing to agenda item #1.

Summary of the topics discussed and decisions:

1. Final budget allocations for all 4 offices involved in implementation

Summary: MD informed on the process of the EU non-cost extension, addendum to the main contract with EU and new budget items/actions in modified 4-year consolidated and adjusted country budgets for year-4. It was especially pointed out that exact and meticulous country budgets had been offered to implementing partner organizations for first time ever - since start of the project in March 1, 2011, thus, creating basis for clear and accurate regional and country action planning exercise in upcoming extended period of March 1, 2014 - March 1, 2015.

Decision:

<i>Action to be taken</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Person responsible</i>
1.1. to approve adjusted country budgets for extended period - Year-4 (March 1, 2014 – March 1, 2015)	-	-

2. Payment request schedule (incl. payment for administrative cost)

Summary: MD provided meeting participants with details on the methodology of further payment request schedule for the South Caucasus offices. In addition, MD also pointed to the issue of overall administrative cost to be transferred to and charged at WWF-Caucasus in consolidated manner. With this regard, it was suggested to check with the project auditor (Ernst&Young) on the accounting/financial techniques.

Decision:

<i>Action to be taken</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Person responsible</i>
2.1. to prepare country payment requests in order to release whole sums/transfers from already available current EU tranche (362,387 EUR) according to the following breakdown: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WWF Armenia – 63,210 EUR - WWF Azerbaijan – 52,000 EUR - WWF Caucasus – 177,908 EUR (covers, inter alia, most part of consolidated admin cost of 120,303 EUR) - WWF Germany – 69,269 EUR 	28-03-2014	Country project administrators / fin-admin managers WWF Caucasus WWF Armenia WWF Azerbaijan



2.2. to release transfers from WWF Germany to the South Caucasus partner offices	07-04-2014	International project fin-admin manager <i>WWF Germany</i>
2.3. to check with the project auditor (Ernst&Young with headquarters in Germany) on the accounting/financial technique to be applied by WWF Caucasus fin-admin management to charge overall administrative cost of 120,303 EUR from the project account at WWF-Caucasus in consolidated manner	30-04-2014	International project leader and International fin-admin manager <i>WWF Germany</i>

3. Dates for development of detailed country Action plans – incl. dates for communication and visibility actions

Summary: ML noted to the importance to coincide communication and visibility event dates with internationally recognized environmental dates (e.g, *International Environmental Day, International Forests Day, International Biodiversity Protection Day, Earth Hour etc*)

MD briefed meeting participants that consolidated project action plan (showing shares for each country office) would be prepared based on approved adjusted country budgets for year-4 and distributed for comments and further finalization.

It was also noted [MD] that WWF Armenia had already prepared country action plan for the project year-4 and that this plan would be integrated into the consolidated action plan.

Decision:

<i>Action to be taken</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Person responsible</i>
3.1. regional project coordinator [MD] to prepare and distribute for review draft consolidated project action plan for the remaining project period – Year-4	04-04-2014	Regional project coordinator <i>WWF Caucasus</i>
3.2. country communication managers to prepare country communication and visibility action plans with view to internationally recognized environmental dates (e.g, <i>International Environmental Day, International Forests Day, International Biodiversity Protection Day, Earth Hour etc</i>)	<i>due to consolidated action plan</i>	Country communication managers in cooperation with country coordinators <i>WWF Caucasus</i> <i>WWF Armenia</i> <i>WWF Azerbaijan</i>



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4. Further involvement of academic organizations (e.g, universities)

Summary: ML highlighted significance of further involvement of academic organizations (universities and like) in demonstration and field activities.

Decision:

<i>Action to be taken</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Person responsible</i>
4.1. to further involve academic organizations (universities etc) in demonstration and field activities	until the end of 2014	Country coordinators

5. Follow-up on forest transformation manual developed by Dirk Frankenhauser (short term project service provider to WWF-Germany – Nov-2013-Feb-2014)

Summary: ML stressed his concern over recently developed *forest transformation training manual* (by Dirk Frankenhauser – project service provider to WWF-Germany).

Namely, how to integrate this manual in further partners work to avoid that it might end up in book shelves.

He [ML] suggested to have the Training Manual published in all national languages for further distribution.

GS supported ML's idea to have the Training Manual as a separate publication in all 3 national languages.

MD noted that the said *forest transformation training manual* had been already made available for general public through the project web-page¹ and reminded meeting participants that the project proposal envisaged that Regional Forest Transformation Guidelines (*to be developed by the International forestry expert – M.Garforth*) would be translated and published in all national languages and that this was/is one of the main project outputs/deliverables under the current project logframe.

As a last resort, he [MD] proposed to integrate the above training manual into the Regional Forest Transformation Guidelines in a form of annex – given that financial resources available for the Guidelines would be enough to finance publication of both – the Guidelines and the Training Manual.

ML proposed some additional financing from WWF Germany's share for the above purpose – at an expense of not fully necessary publication like the project article in the EU Parliamentary magazine².

MD recalled that he did not support idea of having 3-page project article (*with overall cost of 4,500 EUR for publication*) in the EU Parliamentary magazine, while preferred to have just 1-page project advertising in this magazine.

¹ http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/where_we_work/black_sea_basin/caucasus/publications/?215650/Managing-innovative-learning-on-adaptive-forest-management-to-climate-change
http://awsassets.panda.org/downloads/forestry_training_module.pdf

² <http://www.theparliament.com/magazines/parliament-magazine/>



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Decision:

<i>Action to be taken</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Person responsible</i>
5.1. International project leader and country coordinators along with country communication managers to check on availability of WWF Germany's and South Caucasus country budgets to print the <i>forest transformation training manual (by Dirk Frankenhauser – project service provider to WWF-Germany)</i> in a form of separate publication in all 3 national languages	<i>until Dec-2014 and due to financial circumstances</i>	International project leader WWF Germany Country coordinators in cooperation with country communication managers WWF Caucasus WWF Armenia WWF Azerbaijan

6. Upcoming EU-ROM/ Evaluation of the project

a) Follow-up on reporting – dates for completion of country narrative reports for the period from June-2014 to March-2014

b) Follow-up on 3-year work – discussion and agreement on necessity to develop 3-year country and regional reports in a format of EU final reports (incl. indicators of achievement according to the logframe etc)

Summary: ML shared his idea to apply to EU with an initiative to get upcoming EU-ROM independent evaluation mission not only in Georgia, but also in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

In response to the above matter MD noticed that EU-ROM mission routinely evaluates the regional EU projects in a lens of Georgia and that there is little probability that the mission would be eager to visit Armenia and Azerbaijan as well.

MD especially pointed out to the importance of having comprehensive project narrative report covering most part of the last reporting period (June-2013-March -2014) to be presented to the EU-ROM mission.

Decision:

<i>Action to be taken</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Person responsible</i>
6.1. to complete country narrative reports for the period from June-2014 to March-2014 (already in pipeline in Armenia)	04-04-2014	Country coordinators in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia WWF Caucasus WWF Armenia WWF Azerbaijan



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6.2. to complete regional narrative report based on the country narrative reports for the period from June-2014 to March-2014	11-04-2014	Regional project coordinator <i>WWF Caucasus</i>
6.3. not to go for consolidated final 3-year report – given that the final project report shall be developed for overall extended 4-year period according to the EU’s template for a final report	-	-

7.1. Other business: Procurement of services (maintenance works and replanting works – 10,000 EUR for each under current country budget allocations) in Armenia via s.c. “direct contracting”

Summary: KM raised an issue of procurement services in Armenia. Namely, on having maintenance works and replanting works (*with cost of 10,000 EUR for each under current country budget for Armenia*) procured via s.c. “direct contracting” with emphases on having schools and/or community based NGO’s as contracting third parties.

KM emphasised that direct contracting of local schools and/or community based NGO’s for forest maintenance/replanting works would allow local population and communities to obtain direct ownership over the project pilot sites, in addition they would directly benefit from financial point of view.

MD reminded of a fact that tenders bellow 10,000 EUR should be subject of WWF internal procurement rules (*instead of EU single tender procedure as per agreement with the project auditor /Ernst&Young/ reached in early 2012*) which imply involvement of at least three bids.

However, MD expressed his support to such an approach – given that fin-admin issues would be cleared.

GS pointed to study tour direct contract between WWF Germany and Hessen Forest Organization for more than 30,000 EUR concluded last year in agreement with EU.

With the above regard ML proposed to check the possible options with EU.

Decision:

<i>Action to be taken</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Person responsible</i>
7.1. International project leader to check with EU on possibilities for breakdown of service costs (under budget lines 6.1.3 and 6.1.4 - maintenance and replanting works) into comparatively small portions to be further allocated with local schools and community based NGO’s in a form of a “direct contracting” (e.g. in Armenia)	11-04-2014	International project leader <i>WWF Germany</i>



7.2. Other business:

Summary: GS noted that by the end of the project country offices should arrange “closing workshops” preferably at the capital cities (*not in a field*) with participation of high level officials from the forest administrations and related agencies. He mentioned that better to have this kind of national events rather than one more regional conference, as regional dimension is not always attractive for national representatives.

MD mentioned that closing national events had been always envisaged under the project proposal, so it would be up to country offices how to shape them. He pointed out that country offices might feel free to combine all types of events (incl. closing ones) – e.g., media, field/training, VIP, awareness raising etc.

Decision:

<i>Action to be taken</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Person responsible</i>
7.2. Not to go for arranging “closing” regional conference by the end of the project.	–	–

7.3. Other business: Ex-post evaluation

Summary: The issue of ex-post evaluation had been raised by ML and the meeting participants. It was mentioned that 2013-EU/ROM mission evaluator recommended to have ex-post evaluator long before the end of the project, so that there might be a room for some corrections and/or changes/improvements.

MD mentioned that the best period for ex-post evaluation would be October-November or November-December 2014, and that ex-post evaluation would be physically impossible in January-February 2015.

It was noted that procurement of consulting services for ex-post evaluation had been prescribed as responsibility of WWF-Germany and that WWF-Germany started to work on this (ToR etc) in mid-2013. In addition it was recalled that the EU expressed its interest to have really independent (from WWF) evaluator on a board to be agreed finally with the EU.

With the above regard it was proposed that WWF-Germany checks with the EU on possibilities to go for “direct contracting” for ex-post evaluation procurement services.

Decision:

<i>Action to be taken</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Person responsible</i>
7.3.1. October-November or November-December in 2014 to be selected as ex-post evaluation period	–	–
7.3.2. WWF-Germany to check with the EU on procurement rules for ex-post evaluation services	30-04-2014	Int. project leader WWF Germany



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Important open action items list:

1. Preparation of draft amendments to the existing grant agreements concluded between leading organization – WWF-Germany and its partner organizations in the South Caucasus – WWF-Caucasus, WWF-Armenia and WWF-Azerbaijan – due to extension period and EU's official approval of 4-year modified budget.
2. Clarifications with expatriate international procurement expert (HU Fuchs) regarding a service contract reporting format for transformation works (budget line 6.1.1).
3. Delay in finalization of country technical assessment report on transformation works in Azerbaijan – precondition for integration into the regional technical assessment report, which in turn is precondition for development of Regional Forest Transformation Guidelines and the Project Popular Report/Brochure (*to be developed by the International forestry expert – M.Garforth in upcoming period*).
4. Tentative date of the next regional level project coordination meeting (*to be decided via phone/e-mail exchange*).

Minutes:

Facilitator will prepare the meeting minutes (including a summary of the topics discussed, a decision/action to be taken, deadline/person responsible) after the meeting. This minutes will constitute the project document. Minutes of the meeting are due out to the project team members within 3 working days of the meeting. Minutes of the meeting will be distributed to the project team members by e-mail. Minutes will also be filed in the project binder and the project's electronic folder at WWF-Caucasus. Facilitator is responsible for ensuring that the minutes are distributed.

Meeting Documents:

- Addendum #3 to the main grant contract of 2010 between the EU and WWF Germany with new version of consolidated modified 4-year budget and consolidated budget forecast for year-4
- Calculations for payment request schedule for all offices (incl. net account/cash balances in all 4 offices)
- Consolidated modified 4-year country budget and adjusted country budget for year-4 (WWF-Germany)
- Consolidated modified 4-year country budget and adjusted country budget for year-4 (WWF-Caucasus) [Regional components + country components for Georgia]
- Consolidated modified 4-year country budget and adjusted country budget for year-4 (WWF-Armenia)
- Consolidated modified 4-year country budget and adjusted country budget for year-4 (WWF-Azerbaijan)



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Combined List of the Meeting Decisions (21-03-2014):

<i>Action to be taken</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Project staff /Organization responsible</i>
1.1. to approve adjusted country budgets for extended period - Year-4 (March 1, 2014 – March 1, 2015)	-	-
2.1. to prepare country payment requests in order to release whole sums/transfers from already available current EU tranche (362,387 EUR) according to the following breakdown: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WWF Armenia – 63,210 EUR - WWF Azerbaijan – 52,000 EUR - WWF Caucasus – 177,908 EUR (<i>covers, inter alia, most part of consolidated admin cost of 120,303 EUR</i>) - WWF Germany – 69,269 EUR (<i>already on WWF-Germany's project account</i>) 	28-03-2014	Country project administrators / reg. and country financial-administrative managers <i>WWF Caucasus WWF Armenia WWF Azerbaijan</i>
2.2. to release transfers from WWF Germany to the South Caucasus partner offices	07-04-2014	International project fin-admin manager <i>WWF Germany</i>
2.3. to check with the project auditor (Ernst&Young with headquarters in Germany) on the accounting/financial technique to be applied by WWF Caucasus fin-admin management to charge overall administrative cost of 120,303 EUR from the project account at WWF-Caucasus in consolidated manner	30-04-2014	International project leader and International fin-admin manager <i>WWF Germany</i>
3.1. regional project coordinator [MD] to prepare and distribute for review draft consolidated project action plan for the remaining project period – Year-4	04-04-2014	Regional project coordinator <i>WWF Caucasus</i>
3.2. country communication managers to prepare country communication and visibility action plans with view to internationally recognized environmental dates (<i>e.g. International Environmental Day, International Forests Day, International Biodiversity Protection Day, Earth Hour etc</i>)	<i>due to the project consolidated action plan</i>	Country communication managers <i>in cooperation with country coordinators</i> <i>WWF Caucasus WWF Armenia WWF Azerbaijan</i>



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4.1. to further involve academic organizations (universities etc) in demonstration and field activities	until the end of 2014	Country coordinators in Armenia and Georgia and country comm. Manager in Azerbaijan <i>WWF Caucasus WWF Armenia WWF Azerbaijan</i>
5.1. International project leader and country coordinators along with country communication managers to check on availability of WWF Germany's and South Caucasus country budgets to print the <i>forest transformation training manual</i> (by Dirk Frankenhauser – project service provider to WWF-Germany) in a form of separate publication in all 3 national languages	<i>until Dec-2014 and due to financial circumstances</i>	International project leader <i>WWF Germany</i> Country coordinators in cooperation with country communication managers <i>WWF Caucasus WWF Armenia WWF Azerbaijan</i>
6.1. to complete country narrative reports for the period from June-2014 to March-2014 <i>(already in pipeline in Armenia)</i>	04-04-2014	Country coordinators in Armenia and Georgia <i>WWF Armenia WWF Caucasus</i> and country project manager and communications officer in Azerbaijan <i>WWF Azerbaijan</i>
6.2. to complete regional narrative report based on the country narrative reports for the period from June-2014 to March-2014	11-04-2014	Regional project coordinator <i>WWF Caucasus</i>
6.3. not to go for consolidated final 3-year report – given that the final project report shall be developed for overall extended 4-year period according to the EU's template for a final report	-	-
7.1. International project leader to check with EU on possibilities for breakdown of service costs (under budget lines 6.1.3 and 6.1.4 - maintenance and replanting works) into comparatively small portions to be further allocated with local schools and community based NGO's in a form of a “direct contracting” (e.g. in Armenia)	11-04-2014	International project leader <i>WWF Germany</i>



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7.2. Not to go for arranging “closing” regional conference by the end of the project.	–	–
7.3.1. October-November or November-December in 2014 to be selected as ex-post evaluation period	–	–
7.3.2. WWF-Germany to check with the EU on procurement rules for ex-post evaluation services	30-04-2014	International project leader <i>WWF Germany</i>



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