

Central project evaluation – executive summary

Transboundary Use and Protection of Natural Resources in the SADC Region (TUPNR II)

Title	Transboundary Use and Protection of Natural Resources in the SADC Region (TUPNR II)		
Country/region/global	Southern African Development Community (SADC)		
Sector and creditor reporting system code	41030 – Biodiversity (100 %)		
Project number	2014.2453.0		
Commissioning party	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)		
Lead executing agency /partner organisations	SADC Secretariat/IAi-IAis-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park (ARTP), Malawi-Zambia (Kasungu-Lukusuzi) TFCA, Lubombo TFCA (LTFCA), SADC Secretariat, TFCA Network		
Development cooperation (DC) programme	<i>Grenzüberschreitender Schutz und Nutzung natürlicher Ressourcen</i>		
Implementing organisations of the DC programme	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, KfW Development Bank		
Project value	EUR 13,296,000		
Project term	June 2015 - March 2021		
Reporting year CPE	2022	Sample year CPE	2019

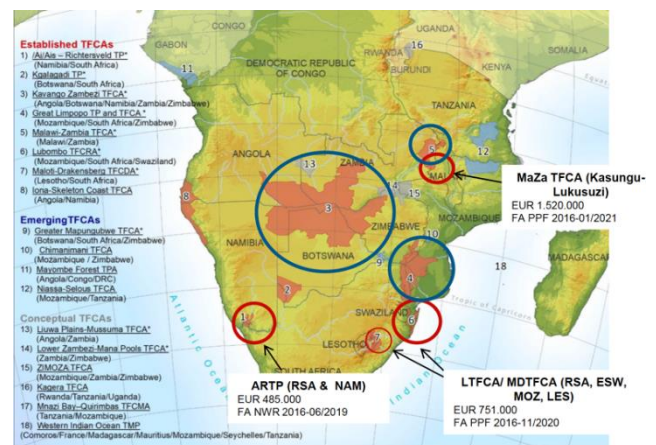
Context of the project

The TUPNR project was implemented in SADC countries with different political and economic conditions. Whereas South Africa and Namibia are relatively economically stable low-middle-income countries with a functioning regulatory framework for conservation areas, Eswatini and Zambia struggle considerably more with establishing supportive conditions for sustainable use of their natural resources. Mozambique and Malawi lack even the basic capacities and financial resources to do so. Moreover, they suffer from a deficient infrastructure and, particularly Eswatini and Malawi, from much less developed tourism sectors.

The supported Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) in the region face a number of challenges, including population growth and the resulting extension of farmland, degradation and fragmentation of eco-systems, increasing energy demands and the wider effects of climate change. In addition, they suffer from problems rooted mainly in insufficient collaboration and coordination of actors across borders and a lack of participation of local communities on issues such as fires, wildlife population movements, increased poaching, unused potential for tourism, weak local management capacities and a lack of dissemination of knowledge about sustainable utilisation and conservation approaches.

The governing organisations of the TFCAs, i.e. the SADC Secretariat, the TFCA Focal Points and the TFCA structures, do not have the necessary capacities and resources to provide sufficient guidance to alleviate this situation. During the project’s and its predecessor’s implementation terms, the general ecologic conditions and organisational setting did not appear to change. However, what did change dramatically in the final year of the project was the economic situation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This led to a breakdown of the tourism sector and, hence, a substantial shortfall of income for the population and the protected area institutions in these areas.

Figure 1: Project region



Brief description of the project

The project aimed to improve the implementation of SADC protocols and strategies for sustainable natural resource management in TFCAs by local, national and regional actors. It should thus contribute to the transfrontier conservation of biodiversity and functional eco-systems and the sustainable use of natural resources that secure the socio-economic and ecologic livelihood of the local population and future generations.

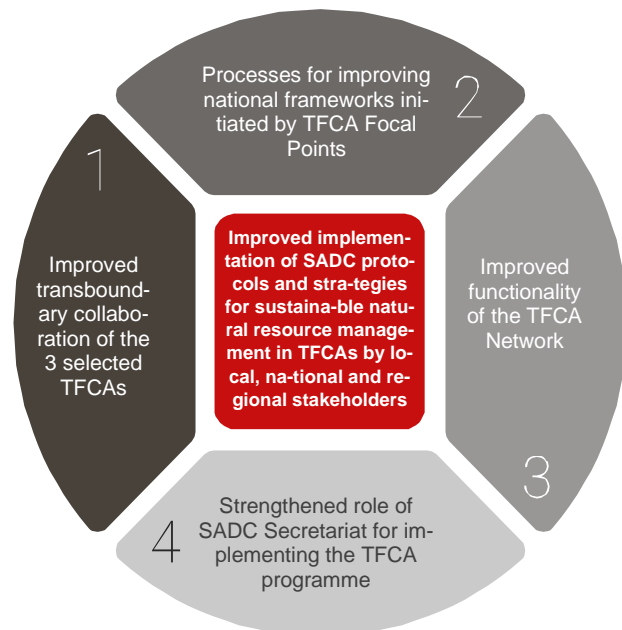
The **political partner** of the project was the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Directorate of the SADC Secretariat, whose primary objective is to contribute to poverty eradication and regional integration. At regional and national level, the project collaborated with the TFCA Network, the TFCA Focal Points in the respective sector ministries of the member states, and national, regional and international non-governmental organisations. At local cross-border level the project worked in three TFCAs. In these TFCAs the **direct target groups** included the park management, forestry and wildlife staff, and district governments, local authorities and communities. TFCA residents such as farmers and ranchers, agroforestry groups, cooperatives, youth groups and former poachers and charcoal burners were the **final beneficiaries** of the project.

The project provided capacity development support to technical and management staff of the TFCAs, TFCA Network practitioners, professional staff of the education and research institutions, and staff of the relevant sector ministries in partner countries.

The development and improved implementation of the protocols and strategies in the TFCAs was intended to lead to a number of **direct benefits** for the project's target groups. At local level, it should result in improved capacities and ownership on the part of TFCA stakeholders and in their increased participation in decision-making processes. Through their increased capacities and participation, stakeholders' income opportunities should increase, which in turn should enable them to share in revenues generated by tourism. At regional level the achievement of the project objective should result in improved governance of TFCAs and gender equality in TFCA management, which in turn

should translate into improved protection of natural resources in TFCAs.

Figure 2: Project objective/areas of intervention



Assessment according to DAC criteria

Relevance

The TUPNR project was very much in line with the SADC member countries' development objectives and strategies for achieving them. The project objective indicators related directly to the policy fields of action, including outcomes relevant for the governance of TFCAs, increased participation of TFCA stakeholders in decision-making processes, improved capacities and ownership of TFCA stakeholders, and improved gender equality in TFCA management. The project was also well aligned with BMZ's Political Guidelines for Africa and featured linkages to poverty reduction (Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1), food security (SDG 2) gender equality (SDG 5), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), reducing inequalities (SDG 10), taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (SDG 13), sustainable life on land (SDG 15) and good governance (SDG 16).

The project also proved to be relevant at political, regional and local (TFCA) level. However, at TFCA level, while overall the interviews yield a positive picture, in 6 out of 36 interviews respondents indicated the project's lack of alignment with their

specific needs, with additional technical equipment being the most frequently named requirement.

The project's results logic and the assumptions associated with it were well thought through. All support measures, including training, advisory and technical support, were considered adequate. Accordingly, the intervention design was assessed as appropriate and realistic. Finally, the project's reactions to the changing environmental and health-related conditions were adequate and comprehensive.

Coherence

TUPNR is part of a German development programme that included – besides its sister project, Adaptation to Climate Change in Rural Areas – several financial cooperation projects from the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau, which were complementary to the project as they were geared directly at supporting other TFCAs in the region. Thus, the projects featured considerable mutual learning potential that was exploited, at least to some extent.

The project pursued a multilevel approach, tackling the lack of strategies for natural resource management at the TFCAs and thus providing the basis for an economically and ecologically sustainable livelihood. In particular, the triad of assisting actors at political, regional and local level was significant, given their mutual interdependence and the limited opportunities for the SADC Secretariat to foster improvements.

The project featured a high degree of consistency with national and international standards, and it complied with GIZ's own human capacity development quality standards. The project was also in line with the SDG implementation principles and showed a high degree of universality. By considering social, economic and ecologic dimensions in its goal design, it followed an integrated approach.

The project complemented the secretariat's efforts to develop the TFCA Network and to provide a suitable regulatory framework. Fostering tourism in the TFCAs and knowledge sharing between them contributed to the regional development strategy.

The project considered the objectives of its political partners and complemented their efforts in reaching them by facilitating their collaboration across borders and harmonising actions for the benefit of the TFCAs. As the project worked within the existing regional governing frameworks for TFCAs, no evidence could be found for any unnecessary duplications.

Effectiveness

All four project objective indicators were fully achieved by the end of the project term. The project succeeded in improving cross-border collaboration between the TFCAs in various ways by building up trust and willingness to collaborate among a wide range of local stakeholders such as area managers, rangers and other practitioners.

Improved cross-border collaboration supported the achievement of the project objective in terms of making the stakeholders aware of the necessity of a coherent regulatory framework for natural resource management in the TFCAs.

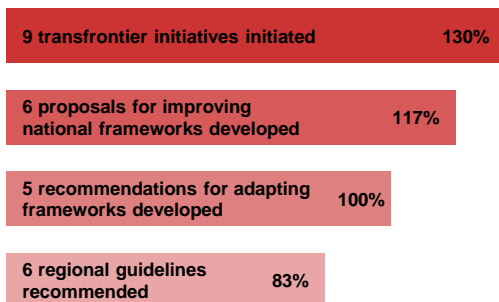
The main milestones for supporting the improvement of national frameworks by capacitating key stakeholders were met, with the exception of the organisation of on-site training, which had to be converted into a series of online webinars due to COVID-19.

However, it remained unclear how the capacitation of key stakeholders effectively translated into improved national frameworks. At this point the results logic of the project appeared rather vague.

The quality of the project implementation was assessed as good. The steering structure and capacity development approach appeared reasonable and adapted to the respective stakeholders at the different levels. Most of the partner staff interviewed characterised the collaboration with GIZ as honest, trustful, transparent and flexible. GIZ staff were considered very committed, easy to work with and responsive. As regards the composition of the stakeholder setting, many respondents further stated that partners at regional and local level were well selected and adequately involved. However, a project duration that was too short and the lack of an exit strategy were mentioned as

major shortcomings of the project management, giving the partners insufficient time to absorb the support measures and establish long-term development changes.

Figure 3: Achievement of the project's objective indicators



Impact

At political level, TFCA stakeholders' ownership increased considerably. However, their capacities were not sufficiently built up.

At TFCA level, the project contributed to improved governance, as indicated in the development and application of instruments, guidelines and frameworks such as community conservation and park management, Climate Change Strategies and an Integrated Management Development Framework, the establishment of joint park management and steering committees, the introduction of joint cross-border patrols and the existence of a Law Enforcement and Anti-Poaching (LEAP) strategy, which reduced poaching. Improved area management was mentioned as being reflected in reduced hostility of rural communities towards rangers.

Evidence about observable development changes was somewhat weaker. While it was possible to verify improved natural resource protection and, to some extent, increased income in the TFCAs, little proof of increased job opportunities and revenues from tourism could be found. However, the influence of COVID-19 must be considered in this regard, as it certainly had a detrimental impact on tourism.

In addition to the increase in the wildlife population, TFCA residents reported an increased use of sustainable agricultural practices and a reduction in charcoal production and deforestation.

The programme objective can be considered as partly achieved, with stronger results in managing natural resources sustainably than in fostering tourism in the TFCAs and generating income from this.

As regards unintended results at impact level, there was evidence of more families sending their children to school, reduced levels of domestic violence, and improved morale among rangers.

Efficiency

The largest share of the budget was invested in activities to improve the functionality of the TFCA Network (36%), followed by activities within the TFCAs (26%) and at the SADC Secretariat (23%). Only 8% of the budget was spent on supporting the TFCA Focal Points. This distribution of funds towards local and regional actors at the expense of national actors made sense, given the different levels of power and interest of these stakeholder groups.

The project budget was spent economically to a large extent and the project succeeded in efficiently transforming the available budget into useful products and services for its stakeholders. Only the indicator whose achievement depended on third-party financial contributions was missed significantly. However, this underachievement could probably not have been remedied by allocating more resources to this area of intervention.

From a technical point of view, project implementation was comprehensible and efficient. It is thus questionable whether it would have been possible under the same framework conditions to achieve more outputs of the same or better quality with the available resources.

The project's outputs were delivered according to schedule, with only a few slight delays for administrative or logistical reasons. The only notable factor in this regard was COVID-19, which resulted in a three-month extension. It should also be mentioned that COVID-19 considerably compromised the project's economic achievements.

The project's activities were appropriate in terms of their content and design. Furthermore, the equipment and infrastructure support provided in the

TFCAs made sense in view of the state of facilities there. It is thus doubtful that any alternative means would have been more suitable for achieving the project results.

Sustainability

It appears that the SADC Secretariat does not have sufficient capacities in the long run to continue with the activities initiated by the project. Since the long-term capacities of its national counterparts, the TFCA Focal Points, depend on the support of the respective member countries, their situation looks similar. It was reported that in general, member countries had little interest in further developing TFCAs, and that TFCAs were of little relevance for national political agendas.

The TFCA Network is in a better position owing to the involvement of its stakeholders, its established working communities and its ability to mobilise funds. However, its institutional fragmentation makes it difficult to gain traction at TFCA level. The coordination of differing interests of member countries also appears to remain challenging.

While the regional non-governmental partners are the strongest link in the chain, the TFCAs are not able to maintain the established infrastructure and equipment provided let alone develop it further without project support. Accordingly, their managements are seeking further support from the TFCA Network and hope to attract other donors.

Much hope was put into the follow-on project, which continues to work in the TFCAs. It was also mentioned that further support will be sought, for instance by the United States Agency for International Development Umbrella programme for Combating Wildlife Crimes in Southern Africa, VukaNow and the European Union's Global Climate Change Alliance Plus (GCCA+) initiative.

Given that the tourism sector will recover, much hope is also put – at least in the long term – into making money from the increased wildlife and established infrastructure.

Overall rating

The evaluation provides a heterogeneous though predominantly positive picture. While there were no doubts about the project's relevance and coherence as well as its professional and efficient implementation, it did not fulfil all the stakeholders' expectations. In particular, the implementation of the tourism component was hampered by the outbreak of COVID-19.

On the positive side, the project had some noteworthy achievements in the TFCAs as regards natural resource management. More critical are the threats to the sustainability of the project's achievements at partner level.

Table 1: Rating of OECD DAC evaluation criteria

Criteria	Score (Max. 100)	Rating 1 (highly successful) to 6 (highly unsuccessful)
Relevance	95	Level 1: highly successful
Coherence	90	Level 2: successful
Effectiveness	85	Level 2: successful
Impact	75	Level 3: moderately successful
Efficiency	90	Level 2: successful
Sustainability	70	Level 3: moderately successful
Overall	84	Level 2: successful

Conclusions and factors of success and failure

The evaluation team puts forward the following key findings and factors of success and failure:

- ☑ The project was very much in line with regional and national development strategies. It directly supported the efforts of the SADC member countries' governments to reach some of their objectives in the area of natural resource management and economic development.
- ☑ At political level, the project measures were adequately adapted to the SADC Secretariat's needs as regards capacity development as well as technical and

financial support for advocacy and awareness-creating measures, coping with the consequences of climate change, encouraging concerted actions, raising further financial resources and establishing a functional monitoring system for the TFCA Network.

- ☑ The project's multilevel capacity development approach, including collaboration with stakeholders at national/government, regional/conservancy and local/beneficiary level, proved to be adequate for establishing a supportive framework for the development of the TFCAs. The use of instruments and selection of support measures also appeared adequate.
- ☑ The project complemented to a large extent the efforts of its political and implementing partners to develop the TFCA Network. It facilitated their collaboration across borders and harmonisation of actions for the benefit of the TFCAs.
- ☒ One major point of critique was raised about the project duration, which was rated as being too short and lacking an exit strategy. Hence, capacities could not be built sufficiently and expectations at the TFCAs could not be fulfilled.
- ☒ Staff fluctuations at TFCA Focal Points and the SADC Secretariat and a lack of support from the governments of the member countries were mentioned as the most critical external factors for the project's effectiveness.

Recommendations

Based on the evaluation findings, the following recommendations can be drawn:

- Manage expectations: In order not to end up with unsatisfied partners and beneficiaries due to unrealistic visions of what the project can provide, the project management should manage expectations clearly from the beginning by setting verifiable targets at all levels, which should then be monitored on the ground.

- Develop an exit strategy for the follow-on project at the outset: To ensure sustainability of the project results, as early as possible the partners should be supported in developing suitable strategies for further developing capacities and maintaining infrastructure. In particular, they need to be better enabled to acquire alternative third-party funds.
- Improve knowledge management: In view of the staff fluctuations on the partner side, more efforts should be made to keep established knowledge within the respective organisation, for instance by supporting knowledge dissemination beyond the direct counterparts (e.g. in workshops, training of trainers) and facilitating the handover of knowledge in the case of staff change.
- Exploit synergies more systematically: The project did not appear to make systematic use of upscaling potential by collaborating with other donors. Particularly for the benefit of the TFCAs to which the project provided support, actors should be sought who are willing and able to replicate what has been done and also what is planned in the supported TFCAs. In addition, taking over learning experiences from other projects in the field (e.g. VukaNow) should be fostered.
- Monitor closely human-wildlife conflicts: Although reported by only a few, the development of these conflicts should be closely monitored as they pose a potentially fatal hazard to TFCA residents. They also risk compromising economic improvements and thus diminishing residents' acceptance of the LEAP strategy, e.g. if wild animals attack livestock or destroy farm infrastructure.
- Improve the project's monitoring system: Although the monitoring instruments in place were useful and appeared to be adequately applied, they were nevertheless insufficient. The main gaps were seen in the fact that they were limited to the monitoring of the achievement of the Project Objectives and did not monitor unintended effects. However, a comprehensive project assessment also requires data on project results beyond the Project Objectives, whether positive or negative.

Approach and methods of the evaluation

The evaluation was based on a non-experimental (single) time-difference design, as the target groups were not selected at random and therefore it was not feasible to construct a comparison group. Furthermore, project outcomes were partially referring to changes at institutional and system level.

To compensate for these deficits and to provide for valid and reliable findings, the evaluation team followed a theory-based approach and a multimethod approach. This enabled a thorough understanding of how the project intended to achieve its objectives, which measures were therefore implemented, and how and why they took, or did not take, effect. Furthermore, the roles of the different stakeholders involved in the activities, as well as their own objectives, strategies and capacities, were taken into account. Finally, unintended effects and the influence of external factors on the measures' implementation, their effectiveness and their outcomes/impacts were also identified and assessed. Thus, at the outset the intervention logic of the programme was reconstructed by tracing its main impact pathways. The results model guided the data collection process by highlighting the causal assumptions to be investigated further between output, outcome and impact level. The results model was validated by the evaluation as it provided information about the extent to which the causal assumptions between its elements held true.

All interviews were transcribed and the transcripts of the interviews where both evaluators were present were cross-checked by the evaluators. The interview contents and documents were subject to qualitative content analysis according to Mayring. For data management and analysis, a software called MaxQDA® was used.

Quantitative data was analysed descriptively with univariate statistical methods in MS Excel®.

The qualitative and quantitative data analysis was undertaken according to socio-scientific standards. Thus, the evaluation team applied good common practice (e.g. sound mix of qualitative and quantitative methods, four-eyes principle) and in particular

followed the DeGEval and UNEG evaluation standards.

Rating system

Projects are rated based on the OECD DAC criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and efficiency. Each of the six criteria is rated on a scale of 1 to 100 (percentage system).

The project's overall score is derived from the average points awarded for the individual DAC criteria. The average value for the overall score is rounded according to mathematical convention. All DAC criteria are equally weighted for the overall score. Compared with the predecessor systems (6-point scale, 16-point scale), a 100-point scale has a number of advantages in that it allows differentiation, is commonly used internationally, is easy to understand and can readily be converted into other assessment systems.

Table 2: Rating and score scales

100-point scale (score)	6-level scale (rating)
92–100	Level 1: highly successful
81–91	Level 2: successful
67–80	Level 3: moderately successful
50–66	Level 4: moderately unsuccessful
30–49	Level 5: unsuccessful
0–29	Level 6: highly unsuccessful

Overall rating: The criteria of effectiveness, impact and sustainability are knock-out criteria: If one of the criteria is rated at level 4 or lower, the overall rating cannot go beyond level 4 although the mean score may be higher.

Both the assessment dimensions within the OECD DAC criteria and the determination of the overall score using a points system serve to increase the transparency of ratings while enabling better comparability between individual projects.

Imprint

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