



IW:LEARN Mid-Term Evaluation
UNEP Response for Steering Committee Consideration

Dear Steering Committee members,

UNEP's responses to the findings and recommendations of the IW:LEARN Mid-Term Evaluation Report (MTE) are provided below. For clarity, additional documentation to supplement this response note has been prepared and included as part of the 19th April 2007, Steering Committee meeting package:

1. Annex I: UNEP IW:LEARN Report for the First Quarter of 2007
2. Annex II: UNEP IW:LEARN Detailed Workplan and Benchmarks for 2007
3. Annex III: UNEP IW:LEARN MTE Response (table format)
4. Annex IV: UNEP IW:LEARN Clarified Logical Framework
5. Annex V: UNEP IW:LEARN Proposed Revised Budget (including actual and planned expenditures and co-financing)
6. Annex VI: IW:LEARN Proposed Project Management Structure

Although only some MTE recommendations pertain specifically to the UNEP components of IW:LEARN, we have included in this note other recommendations that relate to the IW:LEARN project as a whole in order to provide UNEP's views on broader aspects of project implementation. Having conducted a thorough review of the MTE, UNEP feels that some recommendations merit reconsideration, even though these were not accepted by the Steering Committee in the earlier response to the evaluation.

Recommendation 1:

Option to extend:

Assuming necessary corrections are made then IW:LEARN will need to continue after October 2008 if there is to be any substantive legacy. January through December 2007 should be provided to meet the recommendations presented below. If substantive progress in delivering these recommendations is seen to have been made by the end of 2007 this will allow the final ten months of the IW:LEARN Project to be used to provide firm foundations for a continuation. Ideally any continuation of core goods and services should use institutional funds and not Project funds although IW Projects should contribute value-added.

Option to close:

If, at the end of 2007, IW:LEARN cannot show evidence of the delivery of the proposed recommendations in a clear and objective way, then IW:LEARN should move to closure. This should be done in a way that minimises adverse impact on Project stakeholders and results in a comprehensive inventory of IW:LEARN tools.

UNEP is taking action on the recommendations made in the mid-term evaluation report in order to meet the December 2007 target, in the anticipation that the project will continue implementation after the end of this year. Annex I presents a progress report for the period January-March 2007 outlining actions taken to address key MTE recommendations, particularly related to component A and sub-component D1. A detailed work plan for the rest of 2007, including targets and deadlines for action in response to the MTE, can be found in Annex II.

Recommendation 2: N/A to UNEP



Recommendation 3: *Based on latest GEF Policies and Strategies and feedback on 1 above IW:LEARN should develop a revised Mission Statement and Service Delivery Agreement/Charter specifying core services to its core customers . The Service Delivery Agreement should specify SMART services that will be delivered and complaints procedures in the event that the services are not being delivered. To the extent possible this Statement and Agreement should be developed in consultation with the current IW Projects and GEF Secretariat and approved by the Steering Committee.*

UNEP partly supports this recommendation. Without changing the content, the mission statement (and/or project objective) can be made clearer and client oriented. Instead of a service agreement, the detailed work plan for the remaining duration of the project should be amended based on the clarified IW:LEARN focus. Further, the logical framework should be amended to clarify the logical steps to achieve the anticipated outcomes of the project. A clarified logical framework for component A (and other UNEP-led activities) is provided in Annex IV. Further, UNEP is happy to work with UNDP and the Steering Committee to draft a concise mission statement for IW:LEARN and supplement, improve or replace the current post-MTE text on the front page of the IWLEARN.Net website accordingly.

Recommendation 4: *A public communications and/or branding consultancy should identify and obtain agreement with the Steering Committee for delivering a dissemination strategy for the IW:LEARN brand that specifies simple complementary commitments required from core customers. The agreed dissemination strategy should be delivered.*

UNEP supports the idea and the rationale provided by the evaluator (see IWL-Final-MTE.pdf, page 53). However, it is understood that there is no need for a consultancy to do this as communications and outreach is already part of UNDP's project components. It is hoped that the recommendation related to making explicit the "simple complementary commitments required from core customers" will be addressed.

Recommendation 5: *All eligible IW Projects and GEF Secretariat should have been given the opportunity to sign up to the Mission Statement and Service Delivery Agreement. Links to signatories and non-signatories should be notified on each and every signatory IW Portfolio Project home page and on the IW:LEARN home page. By end December 2007 IW:LEARN should have the systems in place to support the Service Delivery Agreement and complaints procedure.*

UNEP partly supports the recommendation and has already started working with projects to explore the possibility to establish a service delivery agreement as it pertains to component A.

Recommendation 6: *If possible the logical framework should be revised and simplified to contain a clear vertical logic that will contribute to delivery of the overall goal. If practical and appropriate it should reinforce the Learning and Exchange (LE) and Resource Networking (RN) elements of the LEARN mnemonic and there should be a strong emphasis on developing a long-term institutional home for core goods and services.*

UNEP supports this recommendation. Consistent with the MTE suggestions, a revised and clarified logical framework for component A and for sub-components B1.1 (Caribbean activity) and D1 can be found in Annex IV. However, without clarifying other sections of the project logframe there is a risk of not achieving full complementarity and synergy between components and activities to realize project outcomes.



Recommendation 7: N/A to UNEP

Recommendation 8: *Based on this Mid-Term Evaluation and input from the Public Communications consultancy the Steering Committee should request the PCU to commission a study to develop a simple business paper specifying what pre-conditions IW Portfolio Projects, IAs and PALs should meet with respect to IW:LEARN to maximise mutual benefits. The plan should be approved by the Steering Committee and transmitted to GEF for consideration.*

This recommendation should be taken into consideration by the two project teams during the preparation of the sustainability plan, although it is agreed that a consultancy is not required.

Recommendation 9: *The GEF should respond to the business paper indicating whether it can ensure that new Projects in the GEF IW portfolio will be approved, to a reasonable extent, based on the requirements specified in the simple business plan.*

See comments to Recommendation 8.

Recommendation 10: *Six months before Project end date: Unless the terminal evaluation is to be done ex-post (after the end of the Project) the Terminal Evaluator(s) should be selected and the evaluation scheduled over the three months before the end of the Project. In either case the evaluation should be electronic to maximise cost-effectiveness. Up to date accounts should be provided and the PCU should allocate up to 10% of its staff time in its workplan to supporting the evaluation. Serious consideration should be given to a substantive increase in the budget for the final evaluation. The ToR for the evaluation should be fine tuned dependent on whether IW:LEARN is likely to continue or not. Consideration should be given to including the following in the ToR:-*

- i. *A review of the extent to which the recommendations specified in the Mid-Term evaluation have been delivered;*
- ii. *A review of percent delivery of IW:LEARN goods and services using objectively verifiable deliverables posted/linked on the IW:LEARN web site map (or equivalent logical framework based structure) and with active links to the electronic source documents.*
- iii. *A simple electronic/telephone survey of the satisfaction of core customers (as defined above) concerning the relevance, impact and sustainability of the material goods and services they have received. The survey should also request respondents to identify any key electronic documented materials they will continue to use.*
- iv. *An assessment of the utility of the IW:LEARN web site in exchange of information between IW:LEARN and core customers including:-*
 - *a review of objectively verifiable deliverables linked to IW:LEARN deliverables present on the link areas of ten IW Projects that are using the web toolkit.*
 - *an assessment of the extent to which IW:LEARN is delivering a common vocabulary to support its dissemination and to ensure interoperability of the products produced by its core IW:LEARN customers.*
- v. *A listing of what and where the electronic documented legacy from IW:LEARN is.*
- vi. *Recommendations based on lessons learned from the IW:LEARN Project particularly with respect to Project Cycle Management.*

In regards to this recommendation UNEP would like to re-emphasize the need for Joint UNDP/UNEP evaluations for all jointly implemented projects. UNDP evaluation office



should contact the UNEP Evaluation and Oversight Unit (EOU) to plan and manage this evaluation along both organizations' evaluation policies and procedures. UNEP EOU contacts are:

Mr. Segbedzi Norgbey, Chief Evaluation and Oversight Unit <segbedzi.norgbey@unep.org>
or Mr. Michael Spilsbury, Evaluation Officer, EOU, UNEP <michael.spilsbury@unep.org>

Recommendation 11: *The IW:LEARN website and toolkit should be independently reviewed to determine how they can be made fit for purpose. The criteria should be that they are:*

- intuitively simple to use;
- support the Mission Statement, Service, Delivery Agreement and Business Plan;
- be supported by key words/phrases from existing sources (glossary/thesaurus) that facilitate the labelling of and search for information;
- support the automatic upload and dissemination of key information links from IW Project web pages through IW:LEARN;
- support the upload, archiving and dissemination of key electronic documents from IW Project web pages through IW:LEARN;

UNEP supports this recommendation but rather than “independent reviews”, client reviews would achieve the same. UNEP’s workplan includes a number of actions to address the various suggestions of the MTE including feedback about the quality and usefulness of the IWLEARN.Net website and the toolkit from GEF IW projects. While the UNEP work plan for 2007 aims to improve usability of the website, the toolkit and associated utilities, UNEP still considers that greater emphasis needs to be placed on the generation and packaging of knowledge and learning materials generated by the structured learning component B of IW:LEARN. We propose that a process to scope, format and vet the quality of information to be placed on IWLEARN.net as well as to capture knowledge generated through structured learning activities is prepared by the UNDP and UNEP project execution teams.

Recommendation 12: *A repeat independent review should show that the substantive deficiencies identified in the July/August review have been resolved.*

As stated above UNEP supports this recommendation. Annex II outlines an activity to conduct a survey among GEF IW projects to assess the utility of the IWLEARN.Net and website toolkit.

Recommendation 13: *The PCU should have prepared, and the Steering Committee agreed, a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and a Sustainability Plan. To the extent possible these Plans should be a model that can be used by IW Projects and include “how do I” guidelines to facilitate replication. Objective evidence of delivery of the M&E plan should be posted as links to electronic verifying documents on the IW:LEARN web site map (or equivalent logical framework structure) with a clear link from the M&E site on the home page.*

UNEP supports this recommendation. However, UNEP prefers to have a jointly (rather than by PCU only) developed M&E plan by the June Steering Committee meeting, together with a revised logical framework matrix for joint implementation by the project teams. UNEP is also in agreement to develop a joint sustainability plan to be ready for consideration by this June Steering Committee meeting.

Recommendation 14: *The PCU and Steering Committee, in consultation with IW customers should agree a list of key documented tools and/or guidelines. (These may already exist within IW:LEARN or elsewhere but need to be mainstreamed). By end December these tools and/or guidelines should have been produced in at least draft form, be labelled using the*



IW:LEARN glossary/ thesaurus to facilitate searching, and be clearly accessible on the IW:LEARN website and through the Web toolkit.

UNEP supports this recommendation and is taking steps to develop a glossary as specified in the workplan. UNEP would be willing to work with PCU to identify and document relevant tools and guidelines that could be made available through the IW:LEARN website.

Recommendation 15: *Consideration should be given to scheduling and providing “surgeries” using roster experts where IW Projects can access a particular area of relevant expertise at particular times (perhaps using skype or equivalent). This would provide an opportunity for the IW community to get advice and for the expert to communicate key good practice guidelines and toolkits. The outcome of each surgery should be questions and answers appended to a relevant “surgery toolkit” clearly labelled using the IW:LEARN glossary/thesaurus to facilitate searching and posted in a “surgery area” of the IW:LEARN website and IW Projects web toolkit sites.*

UNEP finds this recommendation and the ideas suggested in A1.8 constructive but agrees with PCU that there are serious staffing and financial constraints for its implementation.

Recommendation 16: *The Steering Committee should request the PCU to identify and all IAs to agree a single line of management authority for PCU Management of the Project.*

UNEP partly supports this recommendation. This recommendation reflects the lack of adequate coordination among the project execution teams. UNEP agrees that this needs to be addressed, but recommendation 16 suggesting a single line of management authority between UNOPS and UNEP is not possible within UN rules and regulations. However, as a committed partner in this project, we are pleased to inform you that UNEP has put in place a revised internal management structure for its execution of IW:LEARN through the Division of Early Warning and Assessment (UNEP/DEWA) with oversight from the Division of Global Environment Facility coordination (UNEP/DGEF), and is proposing a coordination mechanism that delineates the roles and responsibilities as suggested in the MTE, between the UNDP and UNEP execution teams (see Annex VI Proposed IW:LEARN Project Management Team Structure). Such coordination mechanism may be discussed and agreed upon by the two executing teams on the side of this Steering Committee meeting. By enhancing and streamlining the UNEP internal project management structure, more effective communication can be made with the UNDP, including at higher management levels of both organizations. Through the above, UNEP is of the opinion that we would be able to achieve the desired coordination in lieu of the proposed single reporting line.

Recommendation 17: *The IW:LEARN Steering Committee should instruct the PCU to write a letter by end April 2007 copied to the GEF secretariat to all partners who still have outstanding commitments asking them to provide a clear statement as to the status of the commitment. The letter should also indicate that if co-financing commitments cannot be met by end July 2007 then it will not be possible to partner with IW:LEARN. By end December 2007 PCU should have a firm indication of the status of the co-financing commitments.*

UNEP supports this recommendation. The project document approved by Council included a co-financing commitment from UNEP of cash US\$477,700 and in-kind US\$730,400. As of 31 December 2006, UNEP has made available US\$394,119 and maintains its commitment to contribute the full amount through 2009, per the revised UNEP/IWLEARN workplan. See Annex V – UNEP Proposed Revised Budget – for a summary of actual and expected expenditures and co-financing.



Recommendation 18: *Excepting for at least two representatives from IW Projects the Steering Committee should comprise the IAs and GEF. It should not contain persons who are actively involved in the technical or financial implementation of the Project and who may have a conflict of interest with respect to delivery of particular components. Such persons may be represented on the Steering Committee Secretariat.*

UNEP supports this recommendation and has taken steps to implement it as described in Annex-IV. Tessa Goverse (DGEF, Programme Officer) reporting to Takehiro Nakamura (DGEF Senior Programme Officer) has been appointed as the UNEP Steering Committee member for IW:LEARN. Ms Goverse is also responsible for oversight to the UNEP implemented component of IW:LEARN (Task Manager). Isabelle Vanderbeck (International Water, LAC Task Manager) who is based in Washington DC, will provide technical back stopping and act as a liaison person between the UNEP execution team and other project partners situated in Washington DC as and when required. Sean Khan, is the designated Project Coordinator of the UNEP component. He will attend the Steering Committee meetings as part of the project execution team. Consistent with this recommendation, in future, the CTA of the PCU should not serve as Chair of any SC meetings.

Recommendation 19: *The mode of operation of the Steering Committee, agenda, minutes and opportunity to raise items should be publicly available to the IW Projects.*

UNEP supports this recommendation and proposes that the composition and rules of procedure of the Steering Committee be formalized and made public. The minutes of the SC meetings should also be circulated to members for approval and then made public. UNEP is of the opinion that the composition of the SC should include only one representative from each GEF Implementing Agency, one representative of the GEF Secretariat, and two project representatives (one from a UNDP GEF project and one from a UNEP GEF project). Other agency staff may attend the meetings as observers but are not part of the SC.

Recommendation 20: *The PCU should have identified, and the Steering Committee agreed, a reasonable amount of time that each and every Steering Committee member should allocate to IW:LEARN. Each Steering Committee member should have obtained written agreement from respective IA/GEF line Managers to allocate this amount of time."*

UNEP management has already appointed a new Task Manager for the UNEP component and she has been assigned 10-12% of her time to IW:LEARN during 2007. An assessment of whether this time is sufficient to discharge the task management functions will be done at the end of the year.

Recommendation 21: *The PCU should draft a letter to be approved by the Steering Committee requesting the IAs to commit separately or severally to cover management costs for the IW:LEARN website and toolkits, including a help desk within their recurrent budget(s) after October 2008. The IAs separately or severally should have provided a written response to the Steering Committee indicating a commitment to funding after the end of the Project. The commitment should be from October 2008 for at least two years.*

UNEP partly supports this recommendation as it cannot be realistically expected that the agencies would absorb the full costs of maintaining the management of the website, the tool kit and associated ICT utilities. UNEP is committed to help sustain the benefits of the project beyond its completion and will continue hosting the IW:LEARN website after project completion, however, UNEP cannot ensure sustained support for the tool kit users (i.e.



projects whom deploy the toolkit). It would be worth exploring the feasibility of requesting that any new IW project allocate part of the GEF resources to sustain agreed IW:LEARN services and deploy the toolkit for their respective project. UNEP will contribute its views and ideas on project sustainability to the CTA for the paper to be considered by the SC in June 2007.

Recommendation 22: *The PCU should prepare and the Steering Committee approve a letter to be transmitted to GEF and IAs indicating that guidelines should be developed as to how to incorporate core evaluation criteria into the logical framework of future Projects and review whether the five criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability could be reconciled into a simpler more easily understood framework for use by practitioners. There should be a written response which should be posted on the M&E sites of IW:LEARN and IW Project Web toolkit sites. IWL-Final-MTE.pdf, page 69 -- Guidelines for introducing core evaluation criteria into logical framework.*

Not addressed to UNEP, however, UNEP would be happy to share its evaluation experiences and tools with IW projects.

Recommendation 23: *Postpone International Conference: The International Conference should be postponed to a future phase (if any) of IW:LEARN. IW:LEARN should focus on developing and delivering its core services rather than on another of the many Conferences on the global environment calendar.*

UNEP supports this recommendation if the international waters conference is organised in the same manner as the previous three conferences. However, if the next conference is organised in a manner that would clearly contribute to the achievement of the project objective, then it should not be postponed. UNEP expects the conference to generate some clear knowledge products that would then feed into the IW:LEARN website.

Recommendation 24: *Postpone SEARLC web site: There seems to be little benefit in continuing with the development of the SEARLC web site and associated activities until the IW:LEARN website and toolkit are fully operational.*

UNEP supports this recommendation and has taken steps to implement it as described below and outlined in Annex II. Consistent with discussions reflected in the MTE, UNEP in consultation with the South East Asia System for Analysis, Research and Training Regional Center (SEA START-RC) have revised this component to support project component A. In this respect, the component has been refocused to lead the implementation of GIS tools and services that GEF projects have requested¹, support UNEP in the content management of the IW:LEARN information system and website toolkit, and provide logistical support for ICT workshops planned for the remaining of the project. In addition, a number of significant actions have been planned to migrate useful information and utilities residing on the SEA-RLC website into IWLEARN.Net.

Recommendation 25: N/A to UNEP.

Recommendation 26: *Workshops, cross-visits and exchanges designed to “identify” needs should be dropped in preference to a reduced number of workshops, cross visits and*

¹ See UNEP/IW:LEARN User Survey (2004-2005)
http://www.iwlearn.net/websitetoolkit/ictneeds/index_html



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exchanges that will deliver shared and transferable solutions in the form of documented good practices and toolkits.

UNEP supports this recommendation and has taken actions to redesign sub-component B1.1 for the Caribbean workshop. UNEP proposes to focus the workshop to identify and document best practices, with emphasis on IW data collection, management and sharing.

Recommendation 27: *A revised budget for the remainder of the Project based on the above suggestions should be prepared for and approved by the Steering Committee and (if necessary) IAs and GEF by 30th April 2007.*

UNEP supports this recommendation and has prepared a draft budget for Steering Committee review (Annex V). A meeting for April 19th to address these issues and other actions tabled per the MTE has been called.

16 April 2007