

Terminal Evaluation Report

UNDP-GEF Project: Improving sustainability of the PA system in desert ecosystems through promotion of biodiversity-compatible livelihoods in and around PAs

GEF Project ID: 4584

UNDP Project ID: 4855

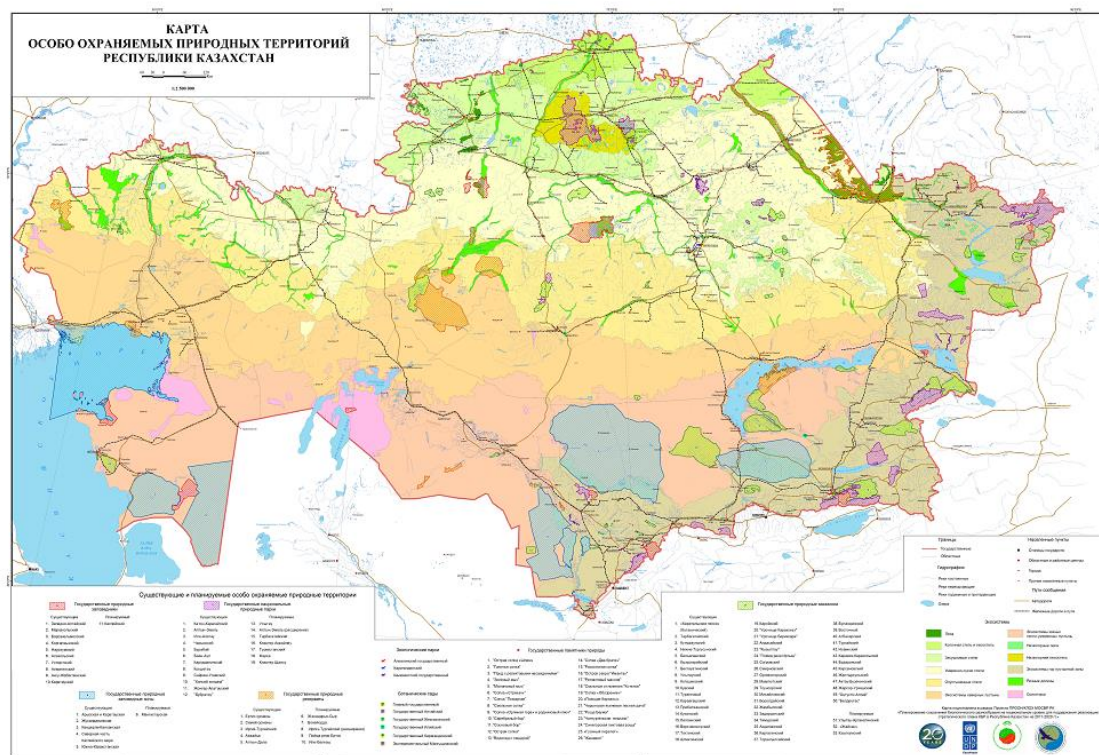
Country: Kazakhstan

Region: Europe and Central Asia

Focal Areas (GEF-5): Biodiversity
Land Degradation

GEF Agency: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Executing Agencies: Forestry and Wildlife Committee of the Ministry of Agriculture



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Opening Page

PROJECT DETAILS:

Project Name: Improving sustainability of the PA system in desert ecosystems through promotion of biodiversity-compatible livelihoods in and around PAs

Project ID: GEF Project ID: 4584 UNDP PIMS ID: 4855

Country: Kazakhstan

Region: Europe and Central Asia

Focal Area: Biodiversity

Funding Source: GEF Trust Fund

Strategic Programs: **GEF-5 Biodiversity Strategy, Objective 1:** Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems
GEF-5 Land Degradation Strategy, Objective 3: Integrated Landscapes: Reduce Pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in wider landscape

GEF Agency: United Nations Development Programme

Implementation Modality: National Implementation Modality (NIM)

Executing Agency: Forestry and Wildlife Committee of the Ministry of Agriculture

Responsible Partners: N/A

FINANCIALS AT PROJECT APPROVAL:

Project Preparation Grant: USD 120,500

GEF Project Grant: USD 4,364,000

Cofinancing Total: USD 19,179,293

GEF Agency Fees: USD 436,400

Total Cost: USD 26,663,793

PROJECT TIMELINE:

Received by GEF: 05 August 2011

Preparation Grant Approved: 27 October 2011

Concept Approved: 01 November 2011

Project Approved for Implementation: 08 July 2013

State Date: 3 September 2013

Project Closed (planned): 31 August 2018

TERMINAL EVALUATION DETAILS:

TE Timeframe: May-July 2018

Evaluator: James Lenoci, International Consultant

Reporting Language: English

The TE evaluator would like to acknowledge the feedback provided by the interviewed stakeholders, including the National Project Director, Project Coordinator, the project management team, the UNDP country office staff, local partners and beneficiaries, and other governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

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Executive Summary

The multi-focal area project was implemented under the GEF-5 strategic program through a national implementation modality with the Forestry and Wildlife Committee (FWC) of the Ministry of Agriculture as the executing agency, supported by the UNDP as the GEF agency. Basic project information and finances are summarized below in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Project summary table

Project Title:	Improving sustainability of the PA system in desert ecosystems through promotion of biodiversity-compatible livelihoods in and around PAs	at endorsement (USD million)	at completion* (USD million)
GEF Project ID:	4584	GEF financing, PPG grant:	120,500
UNDP Project ID:	4855	GEF financing, project grant:	4,364,000
Country:	Kazakhstan	IA own:	700,000
Region:	Europe and Central Asia	Government:	12,629,954
Focal Areas (GEF-5):	Biodiversity (BD) and Land Degradation (LD)	Other:	5,849,339
Focal Area Objective:	BD Objective 1: Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems; LD Objective 3: Integrated Landscapes: Reduce Pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in wider landscape	Total co-financing:	19,179,293
		Total Project Cost:	23,663,793
Executing Agency:	Forestry and Wildlife Committee of the Ministry of Agriculture	Prodac Signature (date project began):	03 July 2013
Other Partners Involved:	N/A	(Operational) Closing Date:	Proposed:
			Actual:
			31 August 2018
			31 August 2018

Note: Total expenditures based upon figures through 18 May 2018.

Project Description:

The project objective was to enhance the sustainability of protected areas in globally important desert and semi-desert ecosystems by expanding their geographic coverage, promoting a landscape approach and supporting biodiversity-compatible livelihoods in and around PAs, focusing on regions of Ile Balkhash, Ustyurt and Aral-Syrdarya desert and semi-desert ecosystems. The long-term solution to addressing the threat of loss of desert and semi-desert ecosystems took a more strategic landscape-based approach to protected area expansion and management of the least-represented desert and semi-desert ecosystems in Ile Balkhash and Southern Kazakh desert areas. The GEF alternative was designed through three mutually supportive components. The first component related to expansion of the PA estate to include desert ecosystems, accompanied with management plans for the PAs, financing, and permanent and fully staffed management units. The second component entailed integrating these protected areas with buffer zones, wildlife corridors and other areas of the broader productive landscape. And, the third component focused on engagement of local communities in activities that would income on the one hand and ensure a biodiversity dividend on the other, as well as their participation in PA management.

Terminal Evaluation Purpose and Methodology:

This terminal evaluation was conducted to provide conclusions and recommendations about the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and impact of the project. The evaluation also aimed to identify lessons from the Project for future similar undertakings, and to propose recommendations for ensuring the sustainability of the results. The evaluation was an evidence-based assessment and relied on feedback from persons who have been involved in the design, implementation, and supervision of the project, review of available documents and records, and findings made during field visits.

Global Environmental Benefits generated:

The project has generated the following global environmental benefits:

Biodiversity focal area:

- Number of new protected areas: 3 (Ile-Balkhash *Reservat*, Mangystau and Arganaty wildlife sanctuaries)
- New coverage of unprotected ecosystems: 851,161 ha
- Management effectiveness exceeded or met targets for 3 PAs covering a cumulative area of: 997,708 ha

Land Degradation focal area:

- Land use plans developed for three rayons covering a cumulative area of: 13 million ha.

- Improved pasture management approaches demonstrated at 6 distant pastures covering a cumulative area of 32,000 ha.

Summary of Conclusions:

The project has made substantive achievements with respect to facilitating expansion of the national PA system and improving representation of desert and semi-desert ecosystems in the PA system. Apart from the 851,161 ha of newly established and expanded PAs, the 973,765-ha Kapshaguy-Balkhash wildlife corridor was created between the Altyn Yemel National Park and Ile-Balkhash *Reservat*, providing increased protection for flagship migratory species in this vast landscape. Coverage of the Southern desert ecosystems in the PA system increased to 1,907,941, or 6.3% of the ecological zone, with the approval of the 316,141-ha Mangystau *zakaznik* (wildlife sanctuary). The establishment of the new Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve, the new Arganaty *zakaznik* (wildlife sanctuary), and the expansion of the Altyn Yemel National Park resulted in a cumulative addition of 748,624 ha of Mountain-valley subtype desert to the national PA system, increasing coverage of this ecosystem by 848,328 ha, or 25% of the ecological zone.

Expanded coverage of unprotected ecosystems contributes to improved protection of globally significant biodiversity: the Ile-Balkhash *Reservat* is situated within the Ili River Delta Key Biodiversity Area (KZ092); the Altyn Yemel National Park is one of the KBAs in Kazakhstan (KZ101); the Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve is situated near the Lesser Aral Sea KBA (KZ043); and the project facilitated sustainable land use management within the Syrdarya Delta Lakes KBA (KZ044).

Improvements of more than 50% to the management effectiveness of the Altyn Yemel National Park and Barsakelmes and Ustyurt State Nature Reserves were achieved, as measured by the GEF-5 adapted version of the management effectiveness tracking tool (METT). Through training and procurement of equipment and supplies, these PA administrations have strengthened capacities to protect the globally significant landscapes they are managing. And, development of a METT tool (KZ-METT) adapted to circumstances in Kazakhstan provides a national system level mechanism for tracking management effectiveness, enabling decision makers to more judiciously allocate scarce financial and human resources. The FWC approved a decree obliging national level PAs to use the KZ-METT to assess management effectiveness.

The likelihood that project results will be sustained are significantly enhanced through the legislative amendments facilitated during implementation; for example, amending with Law on Specially Protected Areas with the requirement to establish PA public committees; improved pasture management approaches integrated into the Law on Pastures; and amendments to the Forest Code that introduces the term forest ecosystem services and includes provisions on allowing contributions to forest management through forest ecosystem services.

The multi-focal area project design (biodiversity and land degradation) was aligned to key barriers identified as hindering implementation of a long-term solution to protection of desert ecosystems; however, the lack of mention of the priorities in the NBSAP and the National Action Program on Combatting Desertification is reflective of the current gap in institutional ownership. The abolishment of the Ministry of Environment has relegated responsibility of biodiversity conservation and sustainable land management to the level of committees, both situated with the Ministry of Agriculture.

Some of the PA expansion targets proved overly optimistic, as the process of establishment new protected areas is increasingly difficult, balancing conservation objectives with economic priorities largely associated with the oil & gas and mineral resources sector. Moreover, the implementation of the project coincided with a period of economic austerity put in place by the government in response to the effects of the global financial crisis. Severe constraints were placed on establishing new protected areas and adding new public sector staff, for example.

Stakeholder engagement had a predominantly subnational orientation, consistent with the designed outputs and activities. Apart from the FWC, there was limited involvement of national level stakeholders. Most of the project funds were allocated towards local level activities, focusing on strengthening capacities of local governance structures and demonstrating sustainable alternative livelihoods for residents living near protected areas.

Land use planning assistance extended to the Aral and Kazaly rayon in the Kyzylorda oblast and Balkhash rayon in the Almaty region, covering a cumulative area of 13 million ha. These land use plans provide important technical guidance to local decision makers with respect to sustainable development of the resources located within their territories.

Improved pasture management investments made at the herder household level include provision of solar and/or wind power and rehabilitation of water wells, to enable use of pastures distant from the immediate vicinity of local villages, where lands have become degraded due to over-grazing. Some of the households selected were financially viable, with several hundred head of livestock. In-kind cofinancing, e.g., in the form of labor, was provided by the beneficiary households, and in four households provided monetary cofinancing for repair and construction of livestock enclosures.

However, there were missed opportunities in obtaining capital cofinancing contributions for the specific assets procured with project funds, e.g., solar panels and wind turbines. This might have increased the level of ownership of the assets received and allowed the GEF resources to extend to additional households.

During the first round of loan disbursements under the USD 1.5 million Eco-Damu microcredit program, 129 business plans/proposals were received and 83 were funded. Based on information contained in the business plans, the total cumulative number of jobs supported the investments were 209, and 30% of the beneficiaries were women. Under an agreement between the Committee of Forestry and Wildlife of the Ministry of Agriculture (FWC) and the Fund of Financial Support to Agriculture JSC (FFSA), joint implementation of the Eco-Damu microcredit program was agreed for the period of 2014-2024. Article 17 of the agreement reads *"After the implementation of the second stage of the Program, the funds shall remain at FFSA and may be used at FFSA's own discretion."* (unofficial translation). The TE evaluator considers that this condition does not sufficiently ensure that the GEF funds (USD 0.5 million) will continue to be used to promote sustainable use of natural resources, according to the original aim of the microcredit scheme.

There was limited monitoring and evaluation of livelihood co-benefits realized through the distant pasture interventions or through the Eco-Damu microcredit schemes. Estimations of co-benefits were based on typical increases in livestock weight from improved fodder and from information contained in business plans submitted prior to disbursement of the microcredits.

With respect to environmental stress reduction, biophysical changes to degraded desert ecosystems, e.g., in response to improved pasture management practices will require many years to reach a healthy status. The project supported improved pasture management through facilitating enabling conditions at distant pastures for 6 herder households managing a cumulative total of 32,000 ha. Providing renewable energy sources and rehabilitating water wells allowed the herders to move their livestock from degraded grasslands located close to village centers to more distant pastures. Promoting sustainable land management practices, e.g., growing fodder crops and rotating pastures, reduces stress on these fragile desert ecosystems.

There have been significant reductions in the incidences of illegal logging violations in the Altyn Yemel National Park and Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve between 2013 (baseline) and 2017: 92.5% and 99.6%, respectively. The number of poaching incidents has reduced by 89.9% at the Altyn Yemel National Park over this same period; however, poaching remains a challenge at the Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve, where the number of incidents annually have decreased by only 8.3% between 2013 and 2018.

With respect to environmental status changes, assessment of grassland quality among monitoring sites delineated among the distant pasture lands has indicated reductions of areas heavily affected by soil erosion reduced by 31%, 35% and 24% in the Ile-Balkhash, Aral Syrdarya and Ustyurt areas, respectively. Moreover, of the 32,000-ha total area of the distant pastures, 2,640 ha, or 8.3% were observed to be under-grazed and contained unwanted plant species in 2015-2016 (baseline conditions). By 2017, this area decreased to 1,948 ha, or 6.1% of the total.

Environmental status changes have been reported at the PA scale among the three target protected areas. The numbers of goitered gazelle (*Gazella subgutturosa*) have increased from a population of 1,800 in 2013 (baseline) at the Altyn Yemel National Park (613,540 ha) to 4,718 in 2017; at the Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve (160,826 ha), the numbers in 2017 were up from 80 in 2013; and at the Ustyurt State Nature Reserve (223,342 ha), the population was 1,000 in 2017, a significant increase from the 270 observed in 2013. The populations of koulan (*Equus hemionus*) have increased at the Altyn Yemel National Park and Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve; population of Ustyurt argali (*Ovis orientalis*) have increased by approx. 50% between 2013 and 2017; and the populations of argali (*Equus hemionus*) at the Altyn Yemel National Park, Pallas's sandgrouse (*Syrrhaptes paradoxus*) at Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve and Houbara bustard (*Chlamydotis undulata*) at Ustyurt State Nature Reserve have been stable over the period of 2013-2017.

The project supported development of the biodiversity monitoring information system www.biodata.kz, which is being used by the Ustyurt State Nature Reserve, Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve, Altyn Yemel National Park, Almaty State Nature Reserve, Karkaraly National Park, Akzhaiyk *Reservat* and Korgalzhyn State Nature Reserve. And, the project provided technical assistance in creating an online geoportal of space monitoring of desertification and land degradation (www.geomonitoring.kz).

The sum of materialized cofinancing was nearly twice the amount confirmed at project endorsement and, impressively, contributions were made by 36 separate cofinancing partners, up from the 15 that provided cofinancing letters. Tracking of cofinancing contributions was not regularly made; the project team solicited information from the cofinancing partners during the terminal evaluation period, and some of the partners did not respond by the time the TE report was issued. More proactive cofinancing tracking might have resulted in more sustained partnerships; synergies with cofinancing partners were not clearly developed.

The project benefitted from effective and consistent project coordination. Financial management was good throughout, with financial delivery rates exceeding 85% in the 3 of the 4 years from 2014 through 2017. Twice per year project steering committee meetings provided timely oversight and progress reporting was informative and thorough. There were some shortcomings regarding monitoring & evaluation design and implementation, including not validating some of the indicators in the project results framework.

Evaluation Ratings:

Evaluation ratings are summarized below in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Evaluation ratings

Criteria	Rating	Comments
1. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)		
M&E Design	Satisfactory	The M&E budget allocation of USD 234,000 or 5.8% of the GEF grant was proportionally adequate; however, plan was not sufficiently elaborated at project inception, i.e., clarifying certain indicators, validating baseline conditions, identifying roles and responsibilities, agreeing on tracking procedures for cofinancing contributions and developing M&E protocols for socioeconomic benefits, which were paramount to the project objective. For example, additional jobs created associated with the Eco-Damu microcredit scheme were not followed up; information provided in progress reports was taken from business plans.
M&E Implementation	Satisfactory	The project steering committee provided a proactive platform for M&E feedback. And, management responses were implemented in response to the midterm review recommendations. It is unclear how the demonstration/pilot activities will be monitored and evaluated after project closure; ownership is unclear.
2. Implementing Agency (IA) and Lead Implementing Partner (Executing Agency - EA) Execution		
Quality of Implementation (UNDP as GEF Agency)	Satisfactory	Drawing from long-standing operations in Kazakhstan and strong institutional capacity in leading biodiversity conservation and land degradation projects and programs, UNDP as the GEF agency on the project, proactively supported the Government of Kazakhstan throughout the project cycle, from conceptualization to project development and throughout implementation. And, the FWC is an experienced executing agency of GEF projects.
Quality Execution (MET as Executing Agency)	Satisfactory	There were some delays in starting the project, partly due to the process of centralizing coordination and management of donor financed biodiversity projects under the FWC, including having one national steering committee overseeing the projects in the portfolio. The centralized structure provides increased continuity among the projects in the portfolio and enhances the likelihood for cross-project collaboration. The downside of this approach is that there not a single person managing each of the projects and tabling all projects in the portfolio in each steering committee meeting limits the degree of attention placed on the individual projects. Key issues were captured in project reporting and discussed at the steering committee meetings. Achieving approval of the Ile-Balkhash <i>Reservat</i> by project closure was elevated to a critical risk and through concerted and coordinated efforts, the PA was finally approved in June 2018. Management of the Eco-Damu microcredit scheme was not handled as a critical risk; the project document includes an indication that according to GEF policy, all such innovative financing schemes need to be considered critical risks. Consistent with established practice, UNDP provided extensive support services to the execution of the project, including procurement, contracting, human resource management and financial administration. This supported national execution modality possibly provides more streamlined processes; however, there are shortcomings with respect to reduced likelihood for country ownership. The institutional reshuffling in recent years, specifically shifting the FWC between the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Environment and eventually abolishing the Ministry of Environment has also resulted in ownership uncertainties, e.g., regarding the national biodiversity strategy and action plan and national action program on combating desertification.
3. Assessment of Outcomes		
Overall Quality of Project Outcomes	Satisfactory	GEF funds addressed the key barriers highlighted in the project design. The project has managed to satisfactorily achieve the intended project outcomes within the allocated budget and timeframe.

Criteria	Rating	Comments
		Cofinancing materialized significantly exceeded confirmed sums at project endorsement, with 36 separate partners contributing grant and in-kind cofinancing. Synergies with cofinancing partners were limited, which affect the sustainability of results achieved.
Relevance	Moderately Satisfactory	The multi-focal area project was approved under the GEF-5 replenishment cycle and aligned to the GEF-5 Biodiversity Strategy, specifically Objective 1, <i>"Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems"</i>, Outcome 1.1, <i>"Improved management effectiveness of existing and new protected areas"</i>, and GEF-5 Land Degradation Strategy, specifically Objective LD-3, <i>"Integrated Landscapes: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land use in the wider landscape"</i>, Outcome 3.2, <i>"Good management practices in the wider landscape demonstrated and adopted by relevant economic sectors"</i>. The project design addresses the key barriers identified as hindering implementation the long-term solution of protecting biodiversity and ecosystem services in desert landscapes. However, the project document makes no mention to the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) or the Program on Combating Desertification in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2005-2015). The NBSAP is dated (the most recent version dates to 1999) but it would have been advisable to describe the project outcomes with respect to the strategic directions considered at the time when the NBSAP was prepared and provide guidance moving forwards.
Effectiveness	Satisfactory	Outcome 1: PA system of Kazakhstan contains representative samples of desert and semi-desert ecosystems under various conservation regimes and is effective in protecting ecosystems and ecological processes
		Outcome 2: Landscape-level conservation planning and management are developed and implemented in target desert and semi-desert environments
		Outcome 3: Community involvement in conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in and around PAs is enhanced
Efficiency	Satisfactory	The project has managed to satisfactorily achieve the intended project outcomes within the allocated budget and timeframe. Cost-effectiveness was enhanced through implementing a centralized coordination modality for the biodiversity projects in the portfolio under the FWC and through utilizing local and national experts and service providers for most activities. Efficiency gains were also realized because of the sharp devaluation of the KZT in 2015. The sum of materialized cofinancing was nearly twice as much as the confirmed amount at project endorsement, with contributions from 36 separate cofinancing partners. Tracking of cofinancing was not regularly made and, consequently there were shortcomings in identifying and realizing synergies with initiatives managed by cofinancing partners. There were missed opportunities in securing capital cofinancing from herders and other landowners for the pilot activities implemented under Component 2. Beneficiaries provided in-kind support, e.g., in the form of labor, but many of them were capable of contributing matching capital investments for the assets procured with the GEF funds, such as solar panels and wind turbines.
4. Sustainability		
Overall likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure	Moderately Likely	The expansion of the PA system, with increased representation of desert ecosystems, increases the likelihood that biodiversity and ecosystem services in these landscapes will be protected against threats. The approved ecological corridor further enhances the sustainability of protecting threatened migratory species.
Financial dimension	Moderately Likely	The increases in management effectiveness and increased participation of location communities among the target PAs further enhances the likelihood that results achieved under the project will be sustained, through strengthened enabling capacities. Land use planning frameworks provide the three target districts with strategic guidance towards achieving sustainable development of the resources in their territories.

Criteria	Rating	Comments
Socioeconomic dimension	Moderately Likely	Cofinancing exceeded the confirmed amounts at project endorsement, and many donors remain committed to continue financing environmental improvements in the desert landscapes of the country, e.g., in the Aral Sea region.
Institutional Framework and Governance dimension	Moderately Likely	There are several factors that diminish the likelihood that project results will be sustained. The prolonged time required to achieve approval of the Ile-Balkhash PA underscores the increasing difficulties faced with expanding the national PA system, e.g., the land use conflicts with the oil & gas or mineral resources sector. The policy framework is in place, including a government decree issued in 2013 that outlines a comprehensive program for further developing the PA network in the country until 2050; execution, however, has been slow during the past few years.
Environmental dimension	Moderately Likely	The project funded some monitoring and enforcement equipment and infrastructure for the target PAs; however, counterpart investments by the government did not match the envisaged contributions in the project document. Many of the PAs remain significantly under-funded and rely on donor projects to provide incremental support beyond covering basic salary expenses. Efforts are being made to diversify financing for biodiversity conservation, including the BIOFIN initiative.
		There is evidence of replication of some of the project supported interventions, including drilling of water wells in the Mangystau region to facilitate improved pasture management. However, there is no sustainability strategy or action plan for maintaining and scaling up the pilot interventions the project supported under Component 2.
		At the time of the TE there was no long-term strategy for continuing the Eco-Damu microcredit scheme beyond completion of the second round of loans; it is uncertain how the GEF funds contributed to this fund will be utilized in the long run.
		And, the uncertainties associated with the potential impacts of climate change are concerns over the medium to long term.
5. Overall Project Results	Satisfactory	Global environmental benefits generated include 839,765 ha of new coverage of unprotected ecosystems, and land use plans developed for three rayons covering accumulative area of 13 million ha. The project has strengthened the enabling environment and demonstrated best practice for biodiversity conservation and sustainable land management in desert ecosystems in Kazakhstan.

Recommendations:

TE recommendations are summarized below in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Recommendations table

No.	Recommendation	Responsible Entities	Timeframe
Corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project			
1.	Prepare an exit plan that outlines actions that require follow-up after project closure, including timeframes and responsibilities. A few issues that should be followed up after project closure include but are not limited to the following: (a) management of the second phase of the Eco-Damu microcredit program; (b) operationalization of the wildlife corridor; (c) advocacy for upscaling pilot interventions and PES schemes; (d) operationalization of the KZ-METT; (e) expanding coverage and continued management of the biodata.kz and geomonitoring.kz information management systems; and (f) advocacy for the finalization of the approval for the expansion of the Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve, the proposed expansion of the Ustyurt State Nature Reserve, and the establishment of the State Reserved Zone in Mangystau Oblast.	PMU	Before project closure
2.	Prepare a guidance note for updating the NBSAP and NAP on Combating Desertification, promoting the results of the project in desert ecosystems. Prepare a guidance note containing recommended strategic directions to include in updated versions of the NBSAP and National Action Program on Combating Desertification, regarding conservation and sustainable management of desert ecosystems.	PMU, FWC	Before project closure
3.	Renegotiate the agreement with FFSA, regarding on the utilization of the GEF funds after the second phase of the Eco-Damu microcredit program. Renegotiate the agreement with the FFSA on the continuation (or conclusion) of the Eco-Damu microcredit scheme. If the parties agree to continue the scheme beyond the second phase of loan disbursements, then it would be important, for example, to ensure the contributed GEF funds remain earmarked for biodiversity conservation or restoration of degraded lands, preference should be given to women and other vulnerable groups.	PMU, FWC, FFSA	Before project closure
4.	Complete collection of information on materialized cofinancing and map out the ongoing governmental and non-governmental initiatives in the three target landscapes, as guidance for	PMU	Before project closure

No.	Recommendation	Responsible Entities	Timeframe
	upscaling. It would be advisable to complete the cofinancing analysis, documenting materialized contributions from all cofinancing partners, and map out the ongoing and planned initiatives in the three target landscapes; this would provide a useful tool for facilitating upscaling.		
5.	Carry out a comparative assessment of the management effectiveness of Altyn Yemel National Park, Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve and Ustyurt State Nature Reserve using the KZ-METT tool and the GEF-5 version of the METT. Carry out a parallel assessment of management effectiveness of the three existing PAs using the adapted KZ version of the METT; there is no evidence of a trial application. This would provide useful guidance for validating and mainstreaming the KZ-METT.	PMU, FWC	Before project closure
6.	Ensure equipment, completed infrastructure and other project funded assets are transferred to the intended owners. Project assets funded through services contract and grant agreements are not included in the asset registers; it would be advisable to ensure all project assets are properly transferred before project closure.	PMU, FWC	Before project closure
Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives			
7.	Expand the scope of collaborative PA management arrangements with local communities. It would be advisable to expand the scope of collaborative PA management arrangements with local communities; for example, including participatory monitoring and patrolling, tourism concessionary agreements, etc.	PA administrations, FWC	Within the next 1-2 years
8.	Enhance the microcredit program through provision of an integrated package of services. Consider an integrated package of services rather than just disbursing microcredits; for example, offering insurance, enterprise development (such as management training, marketing support) and welfare related services (e.g., gender awareness training).	FWC, FFSA	Within the next 1-2 years
9.	Develop a complementary project, focusing on ecosystem-based adaptation in desert ecosystems. The strengthened enabling conditions associated with biodiversity conservation and sustainable land management provide solid foundational capacity for implementing ecosystem-based adaptation interventions in the target desert ecosystems.	FWC, UNDP	Within the next 1-2 years

A few examples of good practices and lessons learned regarding project design and implementation are presented below.

Good Practices:

Facilitating legislative amendments to institutionalize best practices demonstrated. The likelihood that the results of the project will be sustained after GEF funding ceases is significantly enhanced by the legislative amendments that have institutionalized the best practices demonstrated; for example, establishing PA public committees, integrating improved pasture management approaches, inclusion of forest ecosystem services into the Forest Code, etc.

Documenting results of pilot interventions and production of knowledge products. The project has done a good job documenting the pilot interventions and producing several informative knowledge products.

Partnering with an experienced microcredit program manager FFSA. Partnering with FFSA on the Eco-Damu microcredit program was a very sensible decision, leveraging their experience in implementing microcredit programs in Kazakhstan.

Promoting synergies among the projects in the biodiversity portfolio. The coordination arrangements instituted at the FWC facilitate synergies among the projects in the biodiversity portfolio.

Facilitating certificates/passports for irrigation canals. Facilitating the certificates (“passports”) for the irrigation canals in the Aral-Syrdarya region was an important contribution. Achieving this legal status, local governments can obtain governmental funding for maintaining the canals.

Cofinancing materialized from 36 separate partners. Obtaining cofinancing from 36 separate partners, including in-kind support from private sector and grant and in-kind contributions from NGOs, was a commendable accomplishment by the project.

Demonstrating innovative biodiversity monitoring techniques. The project provided valuable contributions to the conservation sector through demonstration of innovative biodiversity monitoring techniques, e.g., through unmanned aerial vehicles, aerial surveys, wildlife tagging, etc.

Ownership of the information management systems by the Kazakh Forest Inventory Enterprise, an entity of the FWC. The ownership of the information systems www.biodata.kz and www.geomonitoring.kz was enhanced through involvement during development and assigning responsibility for management to the Kazakh Forest Inventory Enterprise, an entity of the FWC.

Lessons Learned:

Lack of validating baselines and approved changes recorded. Sorting out issues, such as validating baselines and agreeing to performance metrics in the project results framework, should be made as early as possible in the inception phase, and changes recommended should be formally presented to the project steering committee requesting and recording approval.

Gender aspects should be sufficiently integrated into the project results framework. A gender analysis was made as part of project development and indicators and targets established; however, these were not sufficiently integrated into the project results framework and not followed up during project implementation.

Project design not directly aligned with the NBSAP and NAP on Combatting Desertification. Although the NBSAP is dated, issued in 1999, the project design was not directly aligned with it. There was no mention of the 2005-2015 NAP on Combatting Desertification in the project design.

Lack of capital cofinancing for improved pasture management interventions. Some of beneficiaries of the project interventions seemed capable of providing capital cofinancing, e.g., for the renewable energy systems installed. Securing capital cofinancing from these stakeholders might have ensured higher levels of ownership and allowed GEF resources to reach additional beneficiaries.

Limited tracking of cofinancing and coordinating with cofinancing partners. Materialized cofinancing and the number of cofinancing partners exceeded the confirmed cofinancing at project entry; however, tracking of cofinancing was not regularly made and, consequently, there was a general lack of coordination with activities carried out by cofinancing partners.

Risks associated with microcredit program not fully assessed. The risks associated with the Eco-Damu microcredit program were not assessed as part of the social and environmental screening process, and the microcredit disbursement did not follow UNDP environmental and ethics policies and procedures.

Allowing room for improvement on METT assessments. It is important to allow room for improvement on METT assessments; it would be advisable to provide guidance on scoring during the project inception workshop.

Instructions for allocation of project management costs should be clarified at project inception. Allocation of PMU staff costs across the project components should be agreed upon at project inception. If PMU staff are providing substantive contributions to the technical components, then costs should not only be allocated to project management.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Exchange Rate, KZT:USD (6 April 2018) = 319.055

ACBK	Association for Biodiversity Conservation in Kazakhstan
APR	Annual Project Review
ATLAS	UNDP Financial system
BD	Biodiversity
CACILM	Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management
carec	Central Asia Regional Environmental Center
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CDR	Combined delivery report
FWC	Committee for Forestry and Hunting
CP	Country Programme
CPAP	Country Programme Action Plan
ENO	Scientific background report
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FFI	Fauna and Flora International
FFSA	Fund for Financial Support of Agriculture
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographic information system
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
ha	hectares
IFAS	International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea
INRM	Integrated Natural Resource Management
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KBA	Key Biodiversity Area
KSUA	Kazakh State University of Agriculture
LD	Land degradation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEP	Ministry of Environmental Protection
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTR	Midterm Review
NAP	National Action Program (on combatting desertification)
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NEX	National Execution
NGO	Non-government Organization
PA	Protected Area
PES	Payments for Ecosystem Services
PIR	Project Implementation Review
PM	Project Manager
PMU	Project Management Unit
PoWPA	Programme of Work on Protected Areas
PSC	Project Steering Committee
QPR	Quarterly progress report
SBAA	Standard Basic Assistance Agreement
SLM	Sustainable land management
TE	Terminal evaluation
TEO	Technical economic background report
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDP DRR	UNDP Deputy Resident Representative
UNDP RCU	UNDP Regional Coordination Unit
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USD	United States dollars
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Evaluation

The objectives of the evaluation are to assess the achievement of project results, to draw lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project, and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP programming. The purposes of evaluations of UNDP supported, GEF financed projects also include the following:

- ✓ To promote accountability and transparency, and to assess and disclose the extent of project accomplishments;
- ✓ To synthesize lessons that can help to improve the selection, design and implementation of future GEF financed UNDP activities;
- ✓ To provide feedback on issues that are recurrent across the UNDP portfolio and need attention, and on improvements regarding previously identified issues;
- ✓ To contribute to the overall assessment of results in achieving GEF strategic objectives aimed at global environmental benefit; and
- ✓ To gauge the extent of project convergence with other UN and UNDP priorities, including harmonization with other UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and UNDP Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP).

Thematic Learning Review of UNDP-GEF Ecosystems and Biodiversity Team's Portfolio of PA Projects:

The TE is also part of a thematic learning review of UNDP-GEF Ecosystems and Biodiversity team's portfolio of projects on protected areas. UNDP's work in Ecosystems and Biodiversity (EBD) has as an overall strategic objective to maintain and enhance the goods and services provided by biodiversity and ecosystems to secure livelihoods, food, water and health, enhance resilience, conserve threatened species and their habitats, and increase carbon storage and sequestration. The aim of the thematic learning review is to advance understanding of solutions that have worked or not worked within the UNDP-GEF EBD protected areas portfolio of projects to improve the design and implementation of ongoing and/or future projects. Apart from the objectives of the TE outlined above, the evaluation will also address the following questions in support of the thematic learning review.

High-level technical questions:

1. What are the **key characteristics, collective outcomes and innovation highlights** of the protected area project **portfolio**?
2. At **project-level**, which protected area strengthening **approaches/practices have worked well** (and under what conditions), what **challenges** have been encountered and how have/can they be resolved?
3. How does the protected area work supported by UNDP **deliver on the sustainable development goals (SDGs)**, and how can this delivery be **enhanced** in future?

High-level operational/strategic questions:

4. What **practical recommendations for strengthening protected area project design** can be made, with particular attention paid to **effective ways of integrating protected area work into multifocal programming approaches**?
5. How best can UNDP's **information management systems and project evaluation processes be enhanced**, so that they contribute maximally to enhanced data availability, improved knowledge management, and reflexive learning?

What recommendations can be made for **embedding protected-area related work in the EBD team's future strategic priorities**, in line with the new UNDP Strategic Plan, and evolving GEF programming directions?

1.2 Evaluation Scope and Methodology

The overall approach and methodology of the evaluation follows the guidelines outlined in the following guidance documents:

- Guidelines for GEF Agencies in Conducting Terminal Evaluation for Full-sized Projects, Approved by the GEF IEO Director on 11th of April 2017
- UNDP Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed Projects, 2012

The terminal evaluation was an evidence-based assessment, relying on feedback from persons who have been involved in the design, implementation, and supervision of the project, and review of available documents and findings made during field visits.

The evaluation included following activities:

- ✓ The TE mission was completed over the period 13-26 May 2018. The mission itinerary is compiled in **Annex 1**.
- ✓ As a data collection and analysis guidance tool, the evaluation matrix included as **Annex 2** was used to guide the evaluation. Evidence gathered during the evaluation was cross-checked between as many sources as practicable, to validate the findings.
- ✓ A desk review was made of available reports and other documents, listed in **Annex 3**.
- ✓ The TE evaluator interviewed key project stakeholders, including the project manager, representatives from participating government agencies and ministries, NGO partners, consultants, local beneficiaries, as well as the country manager of the UNDP Country Office, the environment and energy program manager of the UNDP CO and the UNDP Regional Technical Advisor; a list of interviewed people is included in **Annex 4**.
- ✓ The project results framework was used as an evaluation tool, in assessing attainment of the project objective and outcomes against indicators (see **Annex 5**).
- ✓ The TE evaluator reviewed information regarding cofinancing realized throughout the duration of the project; the filled in cofinancing table is compiled in **Annex 6**.

The project was approved under the GEF-5 replenishment cycle; tracking tools under Objective 1 of the GEF-5 Biodiversity Strategy and Objective 3 of the GEF-5 Land Degradation Strategy were assessed at CEO endorsement (baseline), midterm, and project closure (terminal evaluation).

Evidence gathered during the fact-finding phase of the evaluation was cross-checked between as many sources as practicable, to validate the findings.

1.3 Structure of the Evaluation Report

The evaluation report starts out with a description of the project, indicating the duration, main stakeholders, and the immediate and development objectives. The findings of the evaluation are broken down into the following five sections:

- Assessment of Project Design
- Assessment of Project Results
- Assessment of Monitoring & Evaluation Systems
- Assessment of Implementation and Execution
- Other Assessments

The assessment of project design focuses on how clear and practicable the project's objectives and components were formulated, and whether project outcomes were designed according to SMART criteria:

- **S: Specific:** Outcomes must use change language, describing a specific future condition;
- **M: Measurable:** Results, whether quantitative or qualitative, must have measurable indicators, making it possible to assess whether they were achieved or not;
- **A: Achievable:** Results must be within the capacity of the partners to achieve;
- **R: Relevant:** Results must make contributions to selected priorities of the national development framework;
- **T: Time-bound:** Results are never open-ended. There should be an expected date of accomplishment.

The project design assessment covers whether capacities of the implementation partners were sufficiently considered when designing the project, and if partnership arrangements were identified and negotiated prior to project approval. An assessment of how assumptions and risks were considered in the development phase is also included.

In GEF terms, project results include direct project outputs, short- to medium-term outcomes, and longer-term impact, including global environmental benefits, replication efforts, and local effects. Project results were evaluated and rated according to effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, sustainability and progress towards impacts. Effectiveness refers to the extent to which the project objective and outcomes have been achieved or how likely it is to be achieved by project closure. The assessment of relevance looks at the extent to which the activity is suited to local and national

development priorities and organizational policies, including changes over time. Relevance also considers the extent to which the project is in line with GEF operational programs and strategic priorities under which the project was funded. Efficiency is a measure of the extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible; also called cost effectiveness or efficacy. The efficiency assessment also examines compliance with respect to the incremental cost concept, i.e., the GEF funds were allocated for activities not supported under baseline conditions, with the goal of generating global environmental benefits.

Assessment of the sustainability addresses the likelihood that project results will be sustained after GEF funding ceases, with respect to financial resources, institutional frameworks and governance, socioeconomic considerations and environmental factors. Progress towards impact is an assessment of the project theory of change, i.e., how project results will lead to long term impact, according to the assumptions made and estimated intermediate states.

The assessment of project monitoring & evaluation systems includes an evaluation of the appropriateness of the M&E plan, as well as a review of how the plan was implemented, e.g., compliance with progress and financial reporting requirements, how were adaptive measures taken in line with M&E findings, and management response to the recommendations from the midterm review.

The quality of project implementation and execution is evaluated and rated. This assessment considers whether there was adequate focus on results, looks at the level of support provided, quality of risk management, and the candor and realism represented in the annual reports.

Other assessments include the need for follow-up, materialization of cofinancing, environmental and social safeguards, gender concerns, and the effectiveness of partnerships and the degree of involvement of stakeholders.

The report concludes with a set of recommendations for reinforcing and following up on initial project benefits and a discussion of good practices and lessons learned which should be considered for development and implementation of other UNDP supported, GEF financed projects.

1.4 Ethics

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluators, and the TE evaluator has signed the Evaluation Consultant Code of Conduct Agreement form (**Annex 7**). The TE evaluator ensures the anonymity and confidentiality of individuals who were interviewed and surveyed. In respect to the UN Declaration of Human Rights, results are presented in a manner that clearly respects stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.

1.5 Evaluation Ratings

The findings of the evaluation are compared against the targets set forth in the logical results framework and analyzed according to developments that occurred over the course of the project. The effectiveness and efficiency of project outcomes are rated according to the 6-point GEF scale, ranging from Highly Satisfactory (no shortcomings) to Highly Unsatisfactory (severe shortcomings). Monitoring & evaluation and execution of the implementing and executing agencies were also rated according to this scale. Relevance is evaluated to be either relevant or not relevant. Sustainability is rated according to a 4-point scale, ranging from Likely (negligible risks to the likelihood of continued benefits after the project ends) to Unlikely (severe risks that project outcomes will not be sustained). More detailed descriptions of the rating scales are compiled in **Annex 8**.

1.6 Audit Trail

As an "audit trail" of the evaluation process, review comments to the draft report are compiled along with responses from the TE evaluator as an annex separate from the TE report. Relevant modifications to the report will be incorporated into the final version of the TE report.

1.7 Limitations

The TE was carried out over the period of April-July 2018; including preparatory activities, field mission, desk review, and completion of the evaluation report, according to the guidelines outlined in the Terms of Reference (**Annex 9**).

The project deliverables were prepared in English and Russian, with progress reports and work plans in English. An interpreter supported the TE evaluator during the TE mission, and documents or selected parts of documents were translated to Russian, as requested by the TE evaluator.

Each of the three ecoregions that the project focused on (Ile Balkhash, Aral-Syrdarya and Ustyurt) were visited as part of the TE field mission. The TE evaluator feels that the information obtained in the field was representative of the total set of activities completed on the project.

2 Project Description and Development Context

2.1 Project start and duration

Key project dates are listed below:

Preparation Grant Approved:	27 October 2011
Project approved for implementation by GEF Secretariat:	08 July 2013
Project start (project document signed by Government of Kazakhstan):	03 September 2013
Project inception workshop:	November 2013
Midterm review:	June 2016
Terminal evaluation	April-July 2018
Project completion (planned):	31 August 2018

The project preparation grant was approved in October 2011, and the project was approved for implementation by the GEF Secretariat on 08 July 2013, following the project preparation phase. The Government of Kazakhstan and UNDP signed the project document, on 03 September 2013, which marks the official start of the project. The project inception workshop was held in November 2013, and the project effectively started in February 2014, when the National Biodiversity Coordinator was hired. The midterm review was carried out in 2016, with the final report delivered in June of that year. The project completion date is set at 31 August 2018, consistent with the original closure date, 60 months following the start date.

2.2 Problems that the project sought to address

Desert ecosystems make up about 50%, or more than 139 million hectares (ha) of the territory in Kazakhstan, as shown in the breakdown ecosystem types shown below in **Table 4**.

Table 4: Main ecosystem types in Kazakhstan

Main ecosystem type	Total size (ha)
Forest	5,800,000
Steppe	110,200,000
Desert	139,300,000
Northern deserts	40,000,000
Central deserts	51,200,000
Southern deserts	30,300,000
Foothill desert	17,800,000
Mountains	18,600,000
Others	830,000
Totals	274,730,000

Source: project document (4th national report to CBD, 2009)

The project focused on the Southern deserts and the mountain-valley deserts (which is a sub-type of Foothill deserts). The Southern deserts include the arid Ustyurt Plateau, the Kyzyl Kum desert and the sand massifs of “Bolshie Barsuki”, “Malye Barsuki” and “Aral Karakum” covering 30.3 million hectares of typical dry desert ecosystem in the Ural-Caspian and Aral-Syrdarya river basins. They are home to two Global 200 Ecoregions, a number of Important Bird Areas (IBAs), the largest threatened mammals such as goitered gazelle (*Gazella subgutturosa*), onager (*Equus hemionus*), Pallas's cat (*Otocolobus manul* or *Felis manul*), caracal (*Caracal caracal*), near-threatened ground squirrel species, several jerboas, and the endemic desert dormouse (*Selevinia betpakdalaensis*).

Drawing upon information included in the 4th national report to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the situation analysis in the project document describes how Kazakhstan's desert ecosystems continue to be under threat of habitat loss, the biodiversity index of desert and semi-desert ecosystems had dropped by 66% in the decade leading up to 2009, primarily due to unsustainable farming practices (crop and rice production) and extensive resource use (grazing, wood and grass harvesting). Widespread monoculture practices were by far the leading cause of the gradual degradation of habitats, flora and fauna, and desiccation of small wetlands in the mountain-valley deserts, such as the Ile-Balkhash ecosystem. The Kapchagai hydropower reservoir, built along the middle reaches of the Ile River in 1966, led to the proliferation of water-dependent crops, like rice, and to inefficient irrigation practices along the lower reaches of the river.

The long-term solution formulated to address the threat of loss of desert ecosystems required a more strategic landscape-based approach to protected area expansion and management of the least-represented desert and semi-desert ecosystems in Ile Balkhash and Southern Kazakh desert areas. The first element of the three-part solution focused on improving representation of desert ecosystems in the PA system, accompanied with management plans for the existing and newly established PAs, financing, and permanent and fully staffed management units. Secondly, a high degree of integration of these protected areas with buffer zones, wildlife corridors and other areas of the broader landscape. Finally, the engagement of local communities in activities that foster mutually beneficial outcomes of improved well-beings of local households and improved conservation of fragile biodiversity and ecosystem services. The key barriers to the long-term solution are described below.

Barrier #1: Desert ecosystems under-represented and poorly managed in current PA system

Desert ecosystems were under-represented in the national PA system. Deserts had historically been considered wastelands from a pure economic perspective. Moreover, conservation priorities focused on protecting specific species and unique features rather than maintaining ecological integrity and processes.

Management and enforcement of the PAs in the Southern and Ile Balkhash regions were also sub-optimal, were not effective at mitigating threats to biodiversity, and allocation of resources were not based on strategic assessment approaches, such as the management effectiveness tracking tool (METT). As a result, PA management units in desert ecosystems were under-financed, had old infrastructure, limited number of staff and inadequate patrolling capabilities for protection of the vast areas they cover.

Barrier #2: Design of desert ecosystem PA's do not apply a landscape-level approach

Kazakh deserts shelter important migratory mammals and birds, whose status depends on a landscape-level approaches to conservation, combining strict conservation in breeding/ nesting areas with sustainable use in the remaining areas. However, at the time of project development, PA design and expansion decisions were not considering the broader, landscape-level processes. For example, the design of PAs and conservation activities at the existing desert PAs in the southern region of the country had focused on concentration points of ungulates only in typical steppe areas, neglecting to assign protection status or limit economic activities in the adjacent Southern Desert ecosystems, on which these mammals heavily depend for migration.

Barrier #3: Lack of practical application of collaborative PA management with local communities

There was a lack of practical application of collaborative management with local communities in PA governance in Kazakhstan. There were very few PA public councils or joint boards, and none in the desert regions specifically. Even though population density in desert regions is low, poaching, illegal removal of tugai forests and other forms of unsustainable resource use by the local populations remain key concerns requiring rational agreements on allowable resource use thresholds and economic incentives for alternative uses on the other. Both parts of this equation were missing, with local communities disconnected from PA planning and management.

2.3 Immediate and development objectives of the project

The project was aligned with Outcome 2 of the 2010-2015 United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for the Republic of Kazakhstan: *"By 2015 communities, national and local authorities use more effective mechanisms and partnerships that promote environmental sustainability and enable them to prepare, respond and recover from natural and man-made disasters"*, and with the Environmental Sustainability component of the 2010-2015 UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD).

The situation analysis included in the project document describes how biodiversity values have declined in desert and semi-desert ecosystems in the country primarily due to unsustainable farming practices, unsustainable resource use including illegal logging of saksaul (*Haloxylon*), regulation of rivers and other development related pressures. The project objective is consistent with the strategic aim of current government programs aimed at improving conservation of fragile desert ecosystems. Prevention of desertification and other forms of land degradation are critical in achieving mutually beneficial outcomes of biodiversity conservation and improved well-being of local communities.

2.4 Baseline indicators established

Baseline indicators established include:

- Coverage of underrepresented Southern desert in the PA System of Kazakhstan: 1,591,800 ha (5.3% of ecological zone) – see **Table 5**.
- Coverage of underrepresented Mountain-valley subtype desert in the PA System of Kazakhstan: 99,704 ha (3.3% of ecological zone) – see **Table 5**.

Table 5: Coverage of desert and semi-desert ecosystems in the national PA system at project entry

Desert and semi-desert ecosystems	Estimated remaining area of natural habitat, ha	Number of PAs*	Hectares protected	PA as % of total remaining area of natural habitat **
Foothill deserts	14,800,000	11	3,347,331	22.6
Central deserts	51,200,000	13	3,675,887	7.2
Southern deserts	30,300,000	3	1,591,800	5.3
Mountain-valley subtype	>3,000,000	4	99,704	3.3
Dry steppe (Northern Desert)	40,000,000	16	481,689	1.2

* PAs often consist of different ecosystems and thereby might be counted more than once here.

** Calculations assume that PAs consist of 100% natural habitat.

Source: 4th National Report to CBD, GEF-UNEP-WWF-«ECONET Central Asia»; Landscape and biological diversity of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Almaty, 2005 (updated by national experts in 2012)

- Populations of flagship species in target desert and semi-desert ecosystems:

Species	Baseline population (2012)
Ile Balkhash Project Area:	
Goitered gazelle (<i>Gazella subgutturosa</i> , IUCN: Vulnerable A2acd ver 3.1)	1,800
Koulán (<i>Equus hemionus</i> IUCN: Near Threatened ver 3.1):	1,700
Argali (<i>Ovis ammon</i> , IUCN: Near Threatened ver 3.1):	205
Aral Syrdarya Project Area:	
Goitered gazelle (<i>Gazella subgutturosa</i> , IUCN: Vulnerable A2acd ver 3.1)	80
Koulán (<i>Equus hemionus</i> IUCN: Near Threatened ver 3.1):	340
Pallas's sandgrouse (<i>Syrrhaptes paradoxus</i> , IUCN: Least Concern ver 3.1):	407
Ustyurt Plateau:	
Ustyurt argali (<i>Ovis orientalis</i> , IUCN: Vulnerable A2cde ver 3.1)	1,020
Goitered gazelle (<i>Gazella subgutturosa</i> , IUCN: Vulnerable A2acd ver 3.1)	270
Houbara bustard (<i>Chlamydotis undulata</i> , IUCN: Vulnerable A2cd+3cd+4cd ver 3.1)	60

- Management effectiveness of **existing PAs that were envisaged to be expanded** under the project (as measured by the GEF-5 adapted version of the management effectiveness tracking tool METT):

Protected Area:	METT (GEF-5 version, baseline year: 2012)
Altyn Yemel:	50%
Barsakelmes:	42%
Ustyurt:	43%

- Management effectiveness of **new PAs that were envisaged to be established** under the project (as measured by the GEF-5 adapted version of the management effectiveness tracking tool METT):

Protected Area:	METT (GEF-5 version, baseline year: 2012)
Ile-Balkhash:	19%
Mangystau:	7%
Arganaty:	9%

- Territorial development plans not employing landscape management approach.
- Number of hectares of riparian & saksaul forests under sustainable management: 0 ha.
- Hectares of land with significant signs of soil erosion caused by overgrazing in selected plots in 3 rural districts (baseline assessed in 2015-2016).
- Hectares of distant rangelands with significant signs of natural succession due to under-grazing and unwanted vegetation: (baseline assessed in 2015-2016).
- Average income of families participating in the measures on pasture management: USD 1,600 (year 2012)
- No projects which use participatory bottom-up approaches in the target areas.
- Poaching and illegal logging at target PAs (annual) per unit of patrolling effort:

Type of violation	Number of violations (baseline year: 2012)
Ile-Balkhash Target Area:	
Illegal logging:	67
Poaching	436

Type of violation	Number of violations (baseline year: 2012)
Total number of violations:	503
Aral-Syrdarya Target Area:	
Illegal logging:	241
Poaching	157
Total number of violations:	398

- No PA public committees for mobilizing stakeholders in and around PAs in the Ile-Balkhash and Aral-Syrdarya target areas.

2.5 Main stakeholders

The main stakeholders relevant to the project were described in the project document, as listed below in **Table 6**.

Table 6: Project stakeholders

Stakeholder group	Roles and responsibilities in the project
Government:	
Committee for Forestry and Hunting (FWC) of the Ministry of Agriculture	This Committee is under the Ministry of Agriculture. It is the key government institution responsible for regulating biodiversity, including the establishment and management of protected areas. It is the national executing agency of the project. Its Deputy Chairman was National Project Director and chaired the Project Board meetings. Oversee the actual establishment/ expansion of PAs, including negotiations with local authorities and stakeholders, through its regional offices. Seek approval of amendments to existing forest legislation on corridors, buffer zones, and a stakeholder consultation mechanism for PA management. Provide training facilities for the project's capacity building activities. Ensure relevant staff from FWC participates in the project's capacity building efforts. Ensure that its monitoring and data collection systems are harmonized with the decision support system developed under Output 2.4. Ensure that its territorial organizations participate in restoration of wetlands and sustainable management of saksaul & riparian forests.
Committee for Fishery of the Ministry of Agriculture	This Committee is responsible for government control over protection, reproduction and use of fish resources and other aquatic species, and development of fisheries. The Committee and its territorial organizations contributed to development of landscape-level planning frameworks, implementation of wetlands and small lakes restoration projects, and its representatives participated PA public committees in the target regions.
Committee of Water Resources and its territorial organizations (RBOs) of the Ministry of Agriculture	This Committee and its territorial organizations, Balkhash-Alakol and Aral-Caspian River Basin Organizations (RBOs), are responsible for management of water resources to meet the needs of water users of different sectors of the economy in an environmentally sustainable and economically optimal way. The Committee and its two territorial RBOs contributed to development of landscape-level planning frameworks, implementation of wetlands and small lakes restoration projects, and its representatives participated on PA public committees in the target regions.
Ministry of Agriculture	Develops and implements state policy and programs on agriculture, forestry, fishery, water resources management, wildlife reproduction and use, PA management. The Ministry contributed to development of landscape-level management plans and implementation of SLM pilot projects. The Ministry currently developed a government program "Development of Distant Pasture Livestock Breeding for 2013-2016" funds from which was expected to complement GEF funding for proposed pilot activities on improved rangeland rehabilitation & management. This complementary funding was envisaged to address issues such as water supply, livestock development, rural finance, access to markets, and improvement of herder skills. Its representatives were included on the Project's Board and supported the implementation of sustainable use alternatives in rangeland and agricultural productive landscapes.
Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) – oblast- and rayon-level offices	The MEP was abolished during the project inception phase. At the time of project development, the role of the Ministry of Environment Protection (MEP) was to develop state policies and programs on environmental conservation and sustainable development, and coordinate with the Secretariat of the CBD.

Stakeholder group	Roles and responsibilities in the project
	One of the key players in development of planning frameworks that focus on the economic potentials (rather than the constraints) of safeguarding and maintaining ecosystem services in the rayons. Ensure that its monitoring and data collection systems under its Environmental Information Center are harmonized with the decision support system developed under Output 2.4. MEP and its Oblast branches were responsible for Environmental impact assessments, e.g., associated with conservation or use of nature resources.
Land Use Agency (oblast- and rayon-level offices)	At national level, the Agency for Land Resources Management is responsible for development and implementation of state policy and programmes on land use planning and land management, geodesies and cartography. Oblast branches of the Agency for Land Resources Management are responsible for key decisions related to zoning and allocation of land use permits for agriculture, mining, etc at oblast level. One of the key players in development of planning frameworks that focus on the economic potentials (rather than the constraints) of safeguarding and maintaining ecosystem services in the rayons. Ensure that its monitoring and data collection systems are harmonized with the decision support system developed under Output 2.4.
Administrative Units at the new PAs (Ile-Balkhash, Mangystau, Arganaty) and existing PAs (Altyn Yemel, Barsakelmes, Ustyurt)	Key beneficiaries of activities on protected area expansion and strengthening management effectiveness. Coordinate negotiations with oblast/ rayon administrations and other relevant government agencies regarding zoning arrangements and the creation of buffer zones and corridors, as well as adaptive landscape management to ensure that the PA is managed in tandem with the management of production activities occurring in the larger landscape.
Oblast Akimats	Grant official endorsement of land use projects for PAs of local importance and wildlife corridors. Allocate land for planned PA of republican importance. Disseminate the project's lessons learned related to landscape-level planning and management and advocate for replication of this ecosystem approach throughout Oblast.
Aralsk rayon akimat of Kyzylorda Oblast	Lead the development and implementation of the landscape-level management plans by providing coordinating inputs of all stakeholders; Assist with creation of and contribute to the work of a PA Public Committee in the Aral-Syrdarya target area. Co-finance demonstration projects in Zhanakurylys, Karateren and Bogen rural districts related to sustainable land and pasture management. In particular, the rayon akimat was envisaged to apply for funds of the MoA program on development of distant pastures for livestock breeding to complement GEF financing.
Balkhash rayon akimat of Almaty Oblast	Lead the development and implementation of the landscape-level management plans by providing coordinating inputs of all stakeholders; Assist with creation of and contribute to the work of a PA Public Committee in the Ile-Balkhash target area. Co-finance demonstration projects in Akdalinsk, Berekinsk and Akkol rural districts related to sustainable land and pasture management. In particular, the rayon akimat was envisaged to apply for funds of the MoA program on development of distant pastures for livestock breeding to complement GEF financing.
Fund for Financial Support of Agriculture	Expand its existing portfolio of microcredit products to include support for sustainable livelihoods of rural communities in and around PAs, with a particular focus on desert and semi-desert ecosystems. Contributed USD 1 million to the biodiversity microcredit line with an additional USD 0.5 million of in-kind contributions to cover operational costs of the microcredit program.
Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):	
Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity in Kazakhstan (ACBK)	Invited to contribute their research and expertise on advocating for conservation of desert ecosystems and its species. Cofinancing partner. Support the project in developing an ecological monitoring and decision support system to inform desert and semi-desert conservation and land use planning in the Ile-Balkhash pilot area. Support the project in developing the capacity for monitoring and enforcement of resource use regulations at target PAs.
Central Asia Regional Environmental Center (CAREC)	Provide its research, experience and expertise on developing reward schemes (or PES) in Kazakhstan. Cofinancing partner.
Fauna and Flora International (FFI)	Invited to contribute their research and expertise on advocating for conservation of desert ecosystems and its species. Cofinancing partner.
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)	Invited to contribute their research and expertise on advocating for conservation of desert ecosystems and its species.

Stakeholder group	Roles and responsibilities in the project
	Support the project in developing the capacity for monitoring and enforcement of resource use regulations at target PAs.
Frankfurt Zoological Society	Invited to contribute their research and expertise on advocating for conservation of desert ecosystems and its species.
World Wildlife Fund (WWF)	Invited to contribute their research and expertise on advocating for conservation of desert ecosystems and its species. Support the project in developing an ecological monitoring and decision support system to inform desert and semi-desert conservation and land use planning in the Ile-Balkhash pilot area. Support the project in developing the capacity for monitoring and enforcement of resource use regulations at target PAs.
Local NGOs	Support mediation between the FFSA and local communities in accessing and implementing the micro-credit projects. Involved in advocacy and public awareness activities.
Private Sector:	
Local industries and entrepreneurs	Participate in consultations and provide inputs to the development of the landscape-level management plans for further implementation. Contribute to PA management by sitting on the PA public committee.
Hunting and Fishery Managers	Contribute to the development and implementation of the landscape-level management plans as being key repositories of ecological information on biodiversity, land resources, wildlife, and habitats. Contribute to PA management by sitting on the PA Public Committees in respective target regions. Ensure that its monitoring and data collection systems are harmonized with the decision support system developed under Output 2.4. Engage patrolling rangers of existing hunting areas for co-monitoring and enforcement activities within the established wildlife corridor in the Ile-Balkhash area. Hunting area "Kop-Kuduk" was envisaged to implement a demonstration project on restoration and sustainable management of saksaul forests in the Aral-Syrdarya area
Rural consumer cooperatives and communities	Actively engaged in the development of income-generation activities (through Public Councils) at the PAs and corridors that are a focus of the project. Actively engaged in sustainable use demonstrations at pilot sites. For sustainable rangeland demonstration activities, envisaged to contribute labor and other inputs.
Academic/Research Institutions:	
Kazakh State University of Agriculture	Supports project's capacity building efforts related to improving the capacities of government staff for conserving target high biodiversity value desert and semi-desert PAs, in response to estimated impacts of climate change. Designs with project experts and delivers a graduate course of study on PA management (MS equivalent). Support project activities related to training land users in monitoring.
Forestry Institute and Kazlesproekt (State project design institute under FWC)	Contribute their research, experience and expertise for training and site visits related to monitoring.
State enterprise "Science & Production Center on Land Resources Management" and its regional offices in Kyzylorda, and Kyzylorda State University	Support project activities related to implementation of demonstration projects on sustainable land and pasture management, and monitoring land degradation.
Kazakh Research Institute of Livestock Breeding and Fodder Production	Support project activities related to implementation of demonstration projects on sustainable land and pasture management, and monitoring land degradation.

2.6 Project theory of change

The GEF alternative addressed the three primary barriers that were identified in the project design as hindering the implementation of the long-term solution to addressing the threat of loss of desert and semi-desert ecosystems; namely, the under-representation of desert and semi-desert ecosystems in the national PA system, not applying a landscape approach to the design of desert and semi-desert PAs, and the lack of practical experience in implementing collaborative PA management with local communities. The **project objective** was to enhance the sustainability of protected areas in globally important desert and semi-desert ecosystems by expanding their geographic coverage,

promoting a landscape approach, and supporting biodiversity-compatible livelihoods in and around PAs. The objective was designed to be achieved through three mutually supportive outcomes:

- Outcome 1: PA system of Kazakhstan contains representative samples of desert and semi-desert ecosystems under various conservation regimes and is effective in protecting ecosystems and ecological processes;
- Outcome 2: Landscape-level conservation planning and management are developed and implemented in target desert and semi-desert environments; and
- Outcome 3: Community involvement in conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in and around PAs is enhanced.

The project aimed to strengthen the enabling environment required to facilitate the representative design of desert and semi-desert PA's through applying a landscape approach, and effective management of the expanded PA system through collaborative arrangements with local communities. The theory of change reconstructed in **Figure 1** presents the intermediate states and ultimate impacts following achievement of the project outcomes. Making further progress towards impact will be contingent upon the assumptions impact drivers outlined, including continued expansion of the national PA system to further capture under-represented ecosystems, integrating conservation objectives with socioeconomic development priorities, securing PA financing and expanding incentives for encouraging local communities and the private sector to actively engage in collaborative PA management.

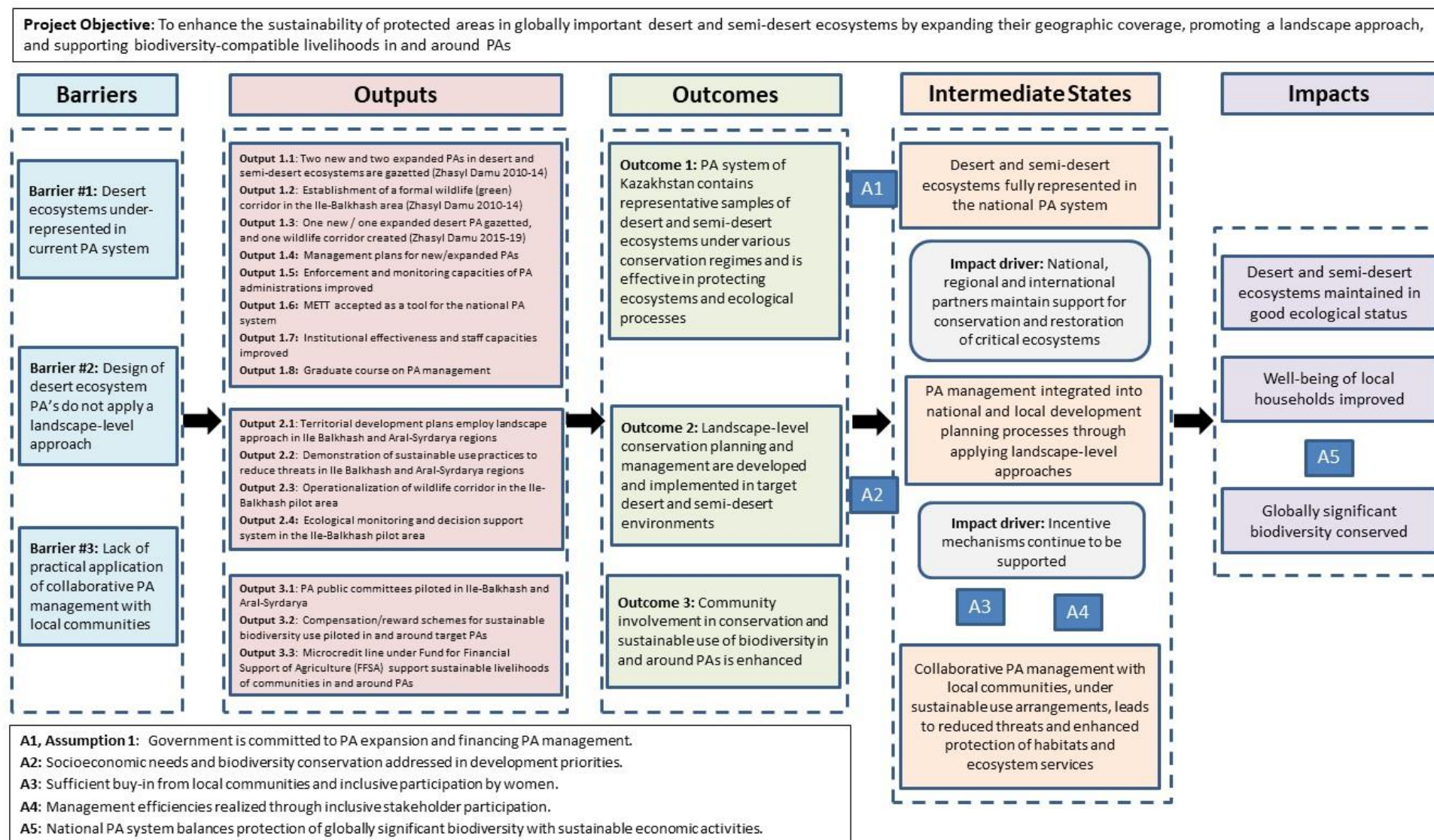


Figure 1: Theory of change diagram

3 Assessment of Project Design

3.1 Analysis of project results framework

The multi-focal area project was approved under the GEF-5 replenishment cycle and aligned to the GEF-5 Biodiversity Strategy, specifically Objective 1, *“Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems”*, Outcome 1.1, *“Improved management effectiveness of existing and new protected areas”*, and GEF-5 Land Degradation Strategy, specifically Objective LD-3, *“Integrated Landscapes: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land use in the wider landscape”*, Outcome 3.2, *“Good management practices in the wider landscape demonstrated and adopted by relevant economic sectors”*.

The project design addresses the key barriers identified as hindering implementation the long-term solution of protecting biodiversity and ecosystem services in desert landscapes. However, the project document makes no mention to the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) or the National Action Program (NAP) on Combating Desertification in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2005-2015). The NBSAP is dated (the most recent version dates to 1999) but it would have been advisable to describe the project outcomes with respect to the strategic directions considered at the time when the NBSAP was prepared and provide guidance moving forward. The NAP was under implementation at the time when the project was prepared, and it contains complementary outputs, e.g., design and implementation of pilot projects on land rehabilitation and inventory of degraded lands.

The three project outcomes were designed to be mutually supportive in achieving the project objective *“to enhance the sustainability of protected areas in globally important desert and semi-desert ecosystems by expanding their geographic coverage, promoting a landscape approach, and supporting biodiversity-compatible livelihoods in and around PAs”*:

- Outcome 1:** PA system of Kazakhstan contains representative samples of desert and semi-desert ecosystems under various conservation regimes and is effective in protecting ecosystems and ecological processes;
- Outcome 2:** Landscape-level conservation planning and management are developed and implemented in target desert and semi-desert environments; and
- Outcome 3:** Community involvement in conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in and around PAs is enhanced.

As part of this terminal evaluation, the project results framework for the project was assessed against “SMART” criteria, to evaluate whether the indicators and targets were sufficiently specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. With respect to the time-bound criterion, all targets are assumed compliant, as they are set as end-of-project performance metrics.

Project Objective:

There are three indicators at the project objective level, with the two indicators aimed at increasing coverage of underrepresented desert ecosystems into the national PA system representing changes in the area under the national protected system, and the third one focusing on maintain stable populations of flagship species in protected areas situated within the three target landscapes: (1) Ile Balkhash, (2) Aral Syrdarya and (3) Ustyurt Plateau. The performance indicators at the objective level did not address supporting biodiversity-compatible livelihoods, which is included in the phrasing of the project objective and title.

The three objective level indicators and end of project targets were found to be mostly SMART compliant (see **Table 7**).

Table 7: SMART analysis of project results framework (project objective)

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	MTR SMART analysis				
			S	M	A	R	T
Objective: To enhance the sustainability of protected areas in globally important desert and semi-desert ecosystems by expanding their geographic coverage, promoting a landscape approach, and supporting biodiversity-compatible livelihoods in and around PAs							
1. Coverage of underrepresented Southern desert in the PA System of Kazakhstan	1,591,800 ha (5.3% of ecological zone)	By 2015 coverage of Southern desert in PA system increases by 2,682,032 ha (8.9% of the ecological zone). This increase comes from the following: - Establishment of 1 new PA (Mangystau State Reserved Zone) covering 2,676,262 ha - Expansion of 1 existing PA (Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve) by 5,770 ha	Y	Y	?	Y	Y

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	MTR SMART analysis				
			S	M	A	R	T
		By 2020 ¹ coverage of Southern desert in PA system increases by approximately 970,000 ha (3.2% of the ecological zone). This increase comes from: - Expansion of 1 existing PA (Ustyurt State Nature Reserve) by approximately 220,000 ha - Establishment of a wildlife corridor between Barsakelmes and Ustyurt PAs of approximately 750,000 ha					
2. Coverage of underrepresented Mountain-valley subtype desert in the PA System of Kazakhstan	99,704 ha (3.3% of ecological zone)	By 2015 coverage of Mountain-valley subtype desert in PA system increases by 1,602,504 ha (53.4% of the ecological zone). This increase comes from the following: - Establishment of 1 new PA (Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve) covering 442,296 ha - Expansion of 1 existing PA (Altyn Yemel State National Nature Park) by 460,208 ha - Establishment of a wildlife corridor between Altyn Yemel and Ile-Balkhash PAs of 700,000 ha By 2020 ² coverage of Mountain-valley subtype desert in PA system increases by approximately 30,000 ha (1% of the ecological zone). This increase comes from the following: - Establishment of 1 new PA (Arganaty) covering approximately 30,000 ha	Y	Y	?	Y	Y
3. Size of flagship species populations of desert & semi-desert ecosystems in target areas remains at the baseline level or increase	Ile Balkhash Project Area:						
	Goitered gazelle: 1,800	1800≥					
	Koulan: 1,700	1700≥					
	Argali: 205	205≥					
	Aral Syrdarya Project Area:						
	Goitered gazelle: 80	80≥					
	Koulan: 340	340≥	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Pallas's sandgrouse: 407	407≥					
	Ustyurt Plateau:						
	Ustyurt argali: 1,020	1020≥					
	Goitered gazelle: 270	270≥					
	Houbara bustard: 60	60≥					
SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound Green: SMART criteria compliant; Yellow: questionably compliant with SMART criteria; Red: not compliant with SMART criteria							

The achievability of the envisaged PA expansions under indicator Nos. 1 and 2 are questionable, given the difficulties in designing and approving new and expanded PAs. For example, under Indicator No. 2, expanding from a baseline of 99,704 ha to 1,602,504 ha by 2015 is overly optimistic. Including the envisaged wildlife corridors into the calculations of expanding the PA system seems to be incorrect; the TE evaluator understands that such corridors are not counted as part of the national PA system.

Considering the increasing trends in the populations of flagship species at some of the protected areas in the target landscapes, setting performance targets to maintain populations in expanded PAs is reasonable.

Outcome 1:

There are two indicators under Outcome 1 are focused on improving PA management effectiveness, as measured by the GEF-5 adapted version of the management effectiveness tracking tool (METT). The SMART analysis of Outcome 1 indicators included in the project results framework is presented below in **Table 8**.

¹ Although the project is expected to end in 2018, target indicators for PAs and corridors to be established/ expanded under Zhasyl Damu 2015-2020 are set for 2020 as this is the official time frame for Zhasyl Damu. However, the project expects to achieve much of the ground work for establishment/ expansion of these PAs and corridors by 2018 through supporting the government in preparation of ENOs and TEOs for these areas along with necessary consultations. But it may not be until the end of 2020 that the government is able to formally gazette these areas. Target hectare estimates for 2020 remain estimates at this stage and will be confirmed during project implementation.

² Ibid.

Table 8: SMART analysis of project results framework (Outcome 1)

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	MTR SMART analysis				
			S	M	A	R	T
Outcome 1: PA system of Kazakhstan contains representative samples of desert and semi-desert ecosystems under various conservation regimes and is effective in protecting ecosystems and ecological processes							
4. Enhanced management effectiveness of existing PAs that are expanded under the project (as measured by METT)	Altyn Yemel: 50 %	75%	Y	Y	?	Y	Y
	Barsakelmes: 42 %	67%					
	Ustyurt: 43 %	68%					
5. Enhanced management effectiveness of new PAs that are established under the project (as measured by METT)	Ile-Balkhash: 19%	44%	Y	Y	?	Y	Y
	Mangystau: 7%	32%					
	Arganaty: 9%	34%					
SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound Green: SMART criteria compliant; Yellow: questionably compliant with SMART criteria; Red: not compliant with SMART criteria							

Under Indicator No. 4, the METT scores of three existing PAs in the target landscapes are slated to increase by approximately 50% from baseline figures. These targets are considered generally reasonable, although the 75% end target for Altyn Yemel seems a bit high. For reference purposes, a global study in 2010 concluded that a score of >67% infers sound management³.

The end of project targets (METT) for three new PAs in Indicator No. 5 range from 44% for Ile-Balkhash to 32% for Mangystau. The end targets for Mangystau and Arganaty are consistent with the threshold of 33% defined as “basic management” in the same global study mentioned above. With regard to the Ile-Balkhash, existing capacity of the nearby Nearbalkhash (Pribalkhasskii) reserve and Bakanask state forest management authorities contribute to the higher end target for this PA.

Outcome 2:

The seven indicators established for Outcome 2 are associated with facilitating landscape management approaches among territorial development plans in the target landscapes and supporting implementing of sustainable management practices that result in improved ecosystem and livelihood outcomes. The SMART analysis of the Outcome 2 indicators included in the project results framework is presented below in **Table 9**.

Table 9: SMART analysis of project results framework (Outcome 2)

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	MTR SMART analysis				
			S	M	A	R	T
Outcome 2: Landscape-level conservation planning and management are developed and implemented in target desert and semi-desert environments							
6. Territorial development plans employing landscape management approach	0 ha	9 million ha	?	Y	?	Y	Y
7. Number of hectares of restored wetlands & delta lakes	0 ha	2,202 ha	?	Y	?	Y	Y
8. Number of hectares of riparian & saksaul forests under sustainable management	0 ha	18,048 ha	?	Y	Y	Y	Y
9. Quality and quantity of vegetation cover in rangelands in 3 rural districts	Hectares of land with significant signs of soil erosion caused by overgrazing in selected plots ⁴	Reduction of the size of the area heavily affected by soil erosion by at least 15% in the Ile Balkhash area and 20% in the Aral Syrdarya target area	Y	Y	?	Y	Y
10. Presence of plant species which negatively affect the function of distant rangelands	Hectares of distant rangelands with significant signs of natural succession due to under grazing ⁵	Unwanted plant species in at least 4 rangeland monitoring plots are less than 5% surface coverage	?	Y	?	Y	Y
11. Average income of families participating in the measures on pasture management	US\$ 1,600	Increase by at least 20%	?	Y	?	Y	Y

³ In a global study of PA management effectiveness, a threshold of 67% was deemed representative of “sound management”. Leverington, F., K.L. Costa, J. Courrau, H. Pavese, C. Nolte, M. Marr, L. Coad, N. Burgess, B. Bomhard, and M. Hockings. 2010. Management effectiveness evaluation in protected areas – a global study. Second Edition. The University of Queensland, Australia.

⁴ Baseline to be estimated at the beginning of the project once monitoring sites are identified and primary data are collected.

⁵ Same as previous footnote.

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	MTR SMART analysis				
			S	M	A	R	T
12. Number of farmer associations that use the experiences of this project as a model	No projects which use participatory bottom-up approaches in the target areas	At least 15 farmer associations or rural consumer cooperatives in the Aral Syrdarya target area and 25 in the Ile Balkhash area use the experience of this project as a model.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound Green: SMART criteria compliant; Yellow: questionably compliant with SMART criteria; Red: not compliant with SMART criteria							

Indicator No. 6 calls for developing territorial development plans applying the landscape management approach, covering an area of 9 million ha by the end of the project. There is no universal definition of the “landscape approach” and it is unclear what is meant in this indicator. Through an intergovernmental and interinstitutional process, the following 10 principles of the landscape approach have been adopted by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the CBD: Principle 1: Continual learning and adaptive management; Principle 2: Common concern entry point; Principle 3: Multiple scales; Principle 4: Multifunctionality; Principle 5: Multiple stakeholders; Principle 6: Negotiated and transparent change logic; Principle 7: Clarification of rights and responsibilities; Principle 8: Participatory and user-friendly monitoring; Principle 9: Resilience; Principle 10: Strengthened stakeholder capacity.

The achievability of the 9 million ha end target of Indicator No. 6 is also questionable. 9 million ha represents 3.3% of the total land area of Kazakhstan; putting this into context, 9 million ha is greater than the land area of the countries of Azerbaijan and of Austria.

The descriptions of Indicator Nos. 7 and 8 are also unclear; for example, the term “restored” in Indicator No. 7 and “sustainable management” in Indicator No. 8. With respect to Indicator No. 9, achieving reductions in areas heavily affected by soil erosion in the Ile Balkhash and Aral Syrdarya target landscapes is questionable, considering the time constraints of the project. The description of the Indicator No. 10 is also unclear; for example, the term “rangeland monitoring plot” is only used in the project results framework and a definition is not provided. Monitoring changes to household incomes in response to project activities requires sound protocols and detailed baseline and follow-up assessments. For instance, it is unclear if this indicator refers to total household income or only income associated with pasture management practices. The details behind the baseline of USD 1,600 are not provided in the project document and it is unclear whether the end target is inflation-adjusted.

Outcome 3:

There are four indicators under Outcome 3 of the project, focusing on reducing threats associated with illegal logging and poaching, and increasing participation of local communities through representation on PA public committees, involvement in payment for ecosystem services (PES) schemes and benefitting from microcredit financing. The SMART analysis of the Outcome 3 indicators included in the project results framework is presented below in **Table 10**.

Table 10: SMART analysis of project results framework (Outcome 3)

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	MTR SMART analysis				
			S	M	A	R	T
Outcome 3: Landscape-level conservation planning and management are developed and implemented in target desert and semi-desert environments							
13. Reduction in poaching and illegal logging at target PAs (annual) per unit of patrolling effort, compared with year of initial patrolling	Ile-Balkhash Target Area:		?	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Illegal logging violations: 67 Poaching violations: 436 Total violations: 503	Reduction by 40%					
	Aral-Syrdarya Target Area:						
	Illegal logging violations: 241 Poaching violations: 157 Total violations: 398	Reduction by 40%					
14. Functioning stakeholder engagement mechanism for transparency in PA planning and management	No PA public committees for mobilizing stakeholders in and around PAs in the Ile-Balkhash and Aral-Syrdarya target areas	Two (2) operational PA public committees	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
15. Number of PES agreements under implementation in project area	0	2 by project end	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
16. Share of registered land users and low-income rural households benefiting from biodiversity microcredit line	0%	5%	?	Y	?	Y	Y

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	MTR SMART analysis				
			S	M	A	R	T
SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound							
Green: SMART criteria compliant; Yellow: questionably compliant with SMART criteria; Red: not compliant with SMART criteria							

Regarding Indicator No. 13, it is unclear what is defined as the Ile-Balkhash target area in terms of the baseline violations. Regarding Indicator No. 16, the project document includes a baseline analysis of potential land users and low-income rural households benefitting from the biodiversity microcredit line. The analysis indicates that FFSA estimates that 2,332 rural households and 5,605 individual entrepreneurs and farm holders (cumulative total: 7,937) could potentially be interested in the microcredit scheme. The analysis further describes that the estimated 5% end target represents about 400 beneficiaries and 55% of them are expected to be women. It would have been more advisable to provide these specific figures as the end target for the indicator.

Indicator No. 16 is not the only indicator that could have included gender mainstreaming targets. For example, representation of PA public committees in Indicator No. 14, participation in the PES agreements in Indicator No. 15, representation of farmer associations in Indicator No. 12, etc.

3.2 Assumptions and risks

A risk analysis was included in Annex 1 to the project document. Among the identified eight (8) risks, seven (7) were rated as having medium; one of the risks was rated as uncertain-low. The risks are listed below in **Table 11**, along with an assessment of whether the risks materialized during implementation and if they remain valid at project closure.

Table 11: Project risks

Risk/Assumption	Impact & Probability	Validity of the identified risk at project closure
Government does not continue to place priority on conservation of the desert and semi-desert ecoregion and the historical perception of deserts as “wastelands” remains entrenched	Medium	This risk remained a concern throughout the duration of the project. For instance, government approval of the Ile-Balkhash PA was issued in June 2018, very close to project closure in August. The overall PA expansions realized under the project were lower than
Future financial allocations under the Government’s Natural Resource Program (Zhasyl Damu) to the desert/ semi-desert ecoregion are reduced	Medium	This risk was elevated to critical during project implementation, as there were significant delays in government approval of the Ile-Balkhash PA. The risk remains valid moving forward, as further expansion of the national PA system will require sustained financial commitment from the government.
Influence of climate change will undermine efforts to arrest biodiversity loss and land degradation in desert and semi-desert ecosystems	Uncertain-Low	This risk remains valid over the long term; in fact, the potential impacts of climate change pose significant threats to the integrity of desert and semi-desert ecosystems. The project contributed to reducing these threats, e.g., through increased resilience achieved through expanding protection of desert and semi-desert ecosystems and enhanced awareness and community participation in conservation and sustainable land management.
Local authorities and communities do not support the establishment of new PAs due to their conservative view of desert ecosystems as wastelands	Medium	Interview local authorities and communities were generally in favor of establishment of new PAs. It would be advisable to proactively communicate the integrated landscape management approach envisaged in the updated territorial development plans to rayon level local government officials and non-governmental and private sector stakeholders.
Land users abandon SLM activities as they do not perceive the medium to long term benefits of sustainable land use strategies	Medium	The land users who participated in sustainable land use strategies, e.g., improved pasture management, were actively engaged at the time of the TE mission. In fact, in most cases, short term benefits have already been achieved, e.g., through improved availability of water and energy. Moving forward, it is important that herders and other land users receive guidance on sustainable management practices, consistent with the integrated landscape approach that was envisaged in the formulation of updated territorial development plans.
Communities are wary of the opportunity to collaborate on management of PAs through Public Committees	Medium	Interviewed community members on PA public committees were actively engaged. Increasing participation, through more genuine collaborative management arrangements would further reduce the risk of having communities lose interest in being involved with PAs.
Land users are unwilling to consider PES schemes as these are relatively new in the Kazakh context	Medium	There does not seem to have been problems with willingness of land (and resource) users to participate in PES schemes. The schemes trialed on the project were demonstration scale; continued facilitation and monitoring will be required to scale up and sustain the schemes.
The micro credit line specifically for biodiversity-friendly and sustainable land management activities faces start-up difficulties	Medium	The microcredit line did not face start-up difficulties. An additional risk that could have been included at project entry is level of inclusion of low income and vulnerable groups. The continued operation of the microcredit program after project closure is also a risk that should have been addressed.

One risk that was not assessed as part of the social and environmental screening procedure was the implementation of the microcredit program. As indicated in a note included in the project document in the monitoring and evaluation section: *Note that for UNDP GEF projects, all financial risks associated with financial instruments such as revolving funds, microfinance schemes, or capitalization of ESCOs are automatically classified as critical on the basis of their innovative nature (high impact and uncertainty due to no previous experience justifies classification as critical).*

3.3 Lessons learned and linkages with other projects

In the years prior to preparation of the project, UNDP had supported Government of Kazakhstan in developing and implementing several GEF-financed biodiversity and land management projects aimed at strengthening mountain and wetland protected area systems, demonstrating *in situ* conservation of agrobiodiversity, good practice in livestock management, and landscape approaches to steppe conservation and management that promote both the ecological integrity of ecosystems and enhanced rural livelihoods.

The project design drew upon the knowledge gained on the *Steppe Conservation and Management* project (GEF ID 3293), which was completed in March 2014. The steppe conservation project generated considerable knowledge on migrating ungulates, including setting up effective PAs, buffer zones and ecological corridors, also in desert ecosystems.

The project also utilized the experiences and practices of the UNDP-GEF and GIZ project on sustainable rangeland management for rural livelihood and environmental integrity including identification and selection of pilot sites, functional zoning of pastures, reconstruction of water points at distant pastures, and participatory approaches to herder engagement.

Some examples of lessons drawn upon and linkages with other projects and initiatives outlined in the project document include the following.

Output 1.5: Enforcement and monitoring capacities of PA administrations at target desert and semi-desert PAs improved

- One of the lessons learned on other UNDP-GEF projects in Kazakhstan highlights the need for strengthening the capacity of rangers and other PA field staff through training on planning, monitoring, conflict resolution and enforcement.

Output 1.7: Institutional effectiveness and staff capacities for conservation and sustainable use of the sub-system of desert and semi-desert PAs improved

- The training program planned under this output was designed to be jointly developed with the Kazakh State University of Agriculture (KSUA) and FWC. Prior to the development of this project, KSUA was providing some professional training for PA staff; however, there were concerns noted with respect to inconsistencies and quality of the trainings, largely due to limited financing available.

Output 1.8: A graduate course of study on PA management (MS equivalent) designed jointly with and delivered by the Kazakh State University of Agriculture (KSUA)

- The KSUA was also identified as the strategic partner for this output, involving development of a graduate course study on PA management. The project design indicated that the project would draw upon experiences and lessons learned from the UNDP-UNOPS-GEF global project on *Supporting Country Early Action on Protected Areas* (GEF ID: 2613), which closed in 2006. Specifically, the GEF 2613 project funded an online conservation training program created by the Nature Conservancy.

Output 2.1: Territorial development plans employ the landscape management approach to inform and plan conservation and restoration of key ecological functions and processes of natural and productive desert and semi-desert landscapes in pilot rayons around target PAs in Ile Balkhash and Aral-Syrdarya region

- The activities planned under this output included sharing experiences and lessons learned through workshops, seminars and exchange tours, with respect to application of landscape planning and management for the Korgalzhyn and Alakol State Nature Reserves (completed UNDP-GEF wetlands project) and the newly created Altyn Dala Rezervat (UNDP-GEF steppe conservation project).

Output 2.4: Ecological monitoring and decision support system to inform desert and semi-desert conservation and land use planning in the Ile-Balkhash pilot area

- Implementation of this output was designed to be linked to activities of governmental and NGO enabling partners, including oblast and rayon level local government offices, ACBK and WWF.

Output 3.1: PA Public Committees, acting as a stakeholder engagement mechanism for transparency in PA planning and management, piloted at target PAs in Ile-Balkhash and Aral-Syrdarya

- Establishing PA public committees was envisaged to draw upon experience gained in the context of setting up river basin councils in the country, in the context of watershed management.

Output 3.2: Compensation or reward schemes for long-term sustainable biodiversity use in and around target PAs piloted among PA management, local communities, conservationists, hunting/fishing areas, tourism operators and other non-PA actors

- A partnership arrangement was proposed with the Central Asia Regional Environmental Center (CAREC) in implementing this output. CAREC had completed an analysis of the opportunities for reward schemes, including payment for ecosystem services (PES) in Kazakhstan.

Output 3.3: Biodiversity microcredit line under the Fund for Financial Support of Agriculture (FFSA) specifically to support sustainable livelihoods of rural communities in and around PAs

- Under this output, the project partnered with the FFSA in launching and implementing a biodiversity microcredit line. The FFSA had been running microcredit programs, including experience in working with communities located in and around 25 protected areas throughout the country.

3.4 Planned stakeholder participation

The project document includes a tabulated stakeholder analysis, which outlines the general roles and responsibilities of the listed stakeholders, broken down into the following categories: Government, NGOs, Private Sector and Academic/Research. The list is extensive and provides a reasonable level of detail regarding the expected role each stakeholder was expected to have in the project. There was no stakeholder involvement plan included in the project document. The cofinancing partners were included in the stakeholder analysis table, but this analysis only provides general indications of the roles of these organizations. Some information regarding stakeholder engagement at the local level was included in Annex 6 to the project document (Demonstration of Restoration and Sustainable Use in the Wider Landscape), which indicates the key stakeholders associated with the Component 2 activities described in this annex. Considering the large number of cofinancing partners, it would have been helpful to describe how the project was expected to coordinate with each of them.

Stakeholder engagement at the local level was planned to be facilitated through establishment of PA public committees, described in Output 3.1, *“PA Public Committees, acting as a stakeholder engagement mechanism for transparency in PA planning and management, piloted at target PAs in Ile-Balkhash and Aral-Syrdarya”*. The PA public committees were envisaged to be modeled on the experience gained with respect to river basin councils.

The project design was primarily oriented towards activities at the subnational level, but in terms of replication and strengthening the enabling environment at the national level, a higher-level stakeholder engagement plan might have facilitated broader participation (lesson learned) by some of the key national stakeholders.

3.5 Replication approach

The project design does not include a comprehensive replication approach. Under the presentation of global benefits, replication potential was identified for certain activities, including the following:

- Improved rangeland management over 84,000 ha (Replication potential 0.5 million ha)
- Restored water-table at 2,202 ha of degraded wetlands. (Replication potential 12,000 ha)
- Restoration and sustainable management of 18,048 ha of riparian forest curbs soil erosion of the river channel and prevents excess deposition of sediment to the Ile River and the Balkhash Lake. (Replication potential 100,000 ha).

There were limited specific mechanisms described for facilitating these and other replication opportunities. One of the activities under Output 2.1 included developing a “how-to” guide for territorial planning. And, reference was made regarding using the knowledge platform developed under the *Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management* (CACILM) program⁶ for dissemination of knowledge and replication outside the immediate project areas.

⁶ CACILM is a multi-country and donor partnership to support the development and implementation of national level programmatic frameworks for more comprehensive and integrated approaches to sustainable land management in the region.

3.6 UNDP comparative advantage

The UNDP comparative advantage as the GEF agency was based on their extensive experience working in Kazakhstan, with in-country operations in Astana, their favorable standing among national stakeholders, including the FWC, and their institutional expertise in supporting biodiversity conservation projects; protected areas remains one of the key focal areas of UNDP's Ecosystems and Biodiversity team. UNDP has delivered extensive and continuous in-country support to the Kazakh government and other partners in strengthening institutional and individual capacities with respect to biodiversity conservation, and the multitude of aspects centered on human development, including gender and social inclusion.

UNDP has adapted to progress and pressing issues in Kazakhstan, relocating the country office to Astana in 2007-2008 and aligning development assistance programs to the priorities of the country. The in-house specialists within the Energy and Environment team at the UNDP Country Office supported the project during the preparation and implementation phase, and senior management in the CO provided strategic guidance. The UNDP Regional Technical Advisor provided high level advisory services, e.g., through sharing best practices and lessons learned from the large portfolio of GEF biodiversity projects supported by UNDP.

3.7 Management arrangements

The project was designed under a national execution modality (NEX), with the Committee for Forestry and Hunting (FWC) acting both as the implementing partner and beneficiary of the project, and UNDP operating at the GEF agency. The FWC was responsible for overall project management and the Deputy Chairperson of the committee was appointed National Director. Like other GEF-financed projects implemented earlier in Kazakhstan, the UNDP supported the execution through providing support services including procurement, contracting, human resources management and financial administration in accordance with relevant UNDP rules and procedures and results-based management guidelines.

The inception of the project coincided with extensive changes to the approach to management arrangement of UNDP supported, GEF financed projects in the country. A National Biodiversity Coordinator was hired in February 2014 to oversee the management of all UNDP-GEF projects in the portfolio under the FWC. Four thematic team leaders were recruited to support the management of the portfolio of projects, under the following themes: Protected Areas, Landscape Planning, Community Engagement and Conservation Finance. Among the advantages of this arrangement, management resources could be shared across projects and a higher level of continuity is ensured.

The changes to management arrangements also included constituting a national steering committee to serve as the governing body for the biodiversity portfolio. The National Director serves as chair of the steering committee and, according to FWC Order. No. 07-1/12 dated 17.01.2017, the members of the steering committee include:

1. FWC, Deputy Chair (steering committee chairperson)
2. UNDP, Deputy Resident Representative
3. Land Resources Committee of Ministry of Agriculture, Chief Expert
4. Science Committee of Ministry of Education and Science, Head of State Monitoring and Scientific Projects
5. Tourism Industry Department of Ministry of Investments and Development, Head of Tourism Market Monitoring and Regulating
6. Natural Resources, Construction, and Housing and Utilities Department, Ministry of Finance, Director of Budget of Agricultural Complex
7. Ecological Regulation and Control Department, Ministry of Energy, Head of State Ecological Inspection
8. Economic Sectors Development Department, Ministry of National Economy, Head of Agricultural Complex and Agriculture Development
9. Water Resources Committee of Ministry of Agriculture, Head of Exploitation of Water Facilities Development
10. Mangystau Region Agriculture Directorate, Head, Mangystau Oblast
11. Natural Resources and Regulating Resources Unit, Head, Kyzylorda Oblast
12. Natural Resources and Regulating Resources Unit, Head, Almaty Oblast
13. Biodiversity Conservation Fund for Kazakhstan, Head of the Directorate
14. International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, Head of Executive Directorate
15. Kazakh Scientific Research Institute for Forestry and Agroforestry of the KazAgroInnovation joint-stock company, Head of Selection Unit

4 Assessment of Project Results

4.1 Outputs

Output 1.1: Two new and two expanded PAs that include areas identified as high biodiversity value desert and semi-desert ecosystems are gazetted (under Zhasyl Damu 2010-14)

Key Achievements and Challenges:

Southern desert ecosystems:

- The new 316,141-ha Mangystau *zakaznik* (wildlife sanctuary) was established on 27 February 2017, through Decree No. 53 issued by the Mangystau Oblast government.
- A feasibility study for a 2,676,262-ha State Reserved Zone in Mangystau oblast was completed, but establishment of this protected area has not been realized.
- A 2,300-ha expansion of the Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve was approved on 22 June 2017 by the Rayon government and on 10 October 2017 by the Oblast government. National level approval is pending; the feasibility study might need to be redone.

Mountain-valley subtype desert ecosystems:

- The 415,164-ha Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve was approved on 29 June 2018, through Government Resolution No. 17043/381. The project has promoted partnership opportunities with WWF, which is working on reintroducing wild tigers to this part of the country through establishing reserve in the Lake Balkhash region.
- The Altyn Yemel National Park was expanded by 146,500 ha, through Government Resolution No. 1047, dated 24 December 2015. On 16 September 2017 the government approved additional budget for the national park for the period of 2018-2020.
- The 186,960-ha Arganaty *zakaznik* (wildlife sanctuary) was established on 24 April 2018 through Decree No. 188 issued by the Almaty Oblast government. An approved budget is pending for this protected area. According to information shared by the project team, the Law on Protected Areas relegates financing of protected areas to local executive bodies, in this case the Almaty Oblast government, which is obliged to allocation KZT 20 million (approx. USD 55,000) annually for funding the operation of the wildlife sanctuary.

Output 1.2: Establishment of a formal wildlife (green) corridor, connecting migratory routes of goitered gazelle, argali and saiga in the Ile-Balkhash area (under Zhasyl Damu 2010-14)

Key Achievements and Challenges:

- The 973,765-ha Kapshaguy-Balkhash wildlife corridor was established on 20 February 2018 through Decree No. 51 issued by the Almaty Oblast government. This is the second ecological corridor established in Kazakhstan.
- The expansive corridor extends across six rayons. Operationalizing the corridor will require effective coordination between the local governments and regular communication among land users and other stakeholders.

Output 1.3: At least one new and one expanded desert PAs gazetted, and one wildlife corridor created (under Zhasyl Damu 2015-19)

Key Achievements and Challenges:

Southern desert ecosystems:

- A concept for a 78,000-ha expansion of the Ustyurt State Nature Reserve has been developed, but assessment of resource claims by the oil & gas sector is pending. It is unlikely that this expansion will be realized by 2020; concerted advocacy will be required in the coming years.
- Efforts to establish a wildlife corridor between the Barsakelmes and Ustyurt State Nature Reserves have been discontinued because of scientific survey results concluding limited wildlife migration across this landscape.
- The FWC issued Decree No. 17-1/232 on 25 August 2017, according to Article 6 of the Law on Specially Protected Areas, to start the process of evaluating the establishment of the Southern Kazakhstan Desert State Reserved Zone. Funding for a feasibility study is expected in fiscal year 2019.

Mountain-valley subtype desert ecosystems:

- Establishment of the Arganaty *zakaznik* (wildlife sanctuary) was achieved in 2018, earlier than envisaged in the project results framework (estimated by 2020).

Output 1.4: Management plans developed for new and expanded PAs

Key Achievements:

- The project supported development of two management plans for the Altyn-Yemel National Park, one for the period of 2014-2018 and the other for 2019-2023.
- The project provided technical assistance for the initiation of the management plan for the Ile-Balkhash *Reservat*, including sponsoring a workshop in Almaty.
- The NGO ACBK is providing support for the development of the 2019-2023 management plans for the Barsakelmes and Ustyurt State Nature Reserves.

Issues/Challenges:

- Considering that financing for the *zakaznik* category of PAs is limited, as compared to state level PAs, such as national parks and *reservats*, there were limited funds allocated for implementation of the management plans for the Barsakelmes and Ustyurt State Nature Reserves.
- PA management plans are approved by the director/chairperson of the FWC. The 2019-2023 management plans have not yet been completed; completion and approval are expected by the end 2018.

Output 1.5: Enforcement and monitoring capacities of PA administrations at target desert and semi-desert PAs improved

Key Achievements:

- The project team analyzed the equipment and infrastructure at the three PAs located in the target landscapes, based on priorities agreed upon with the PA administrations. A few examples are shown in the photographs below in **Figure 2**.
- The project provided technical assistance for developing biodiversity monitoring protocols and training PA staff. Monitoring plans were developed for 4 PAs, including Ile-Balkhash.

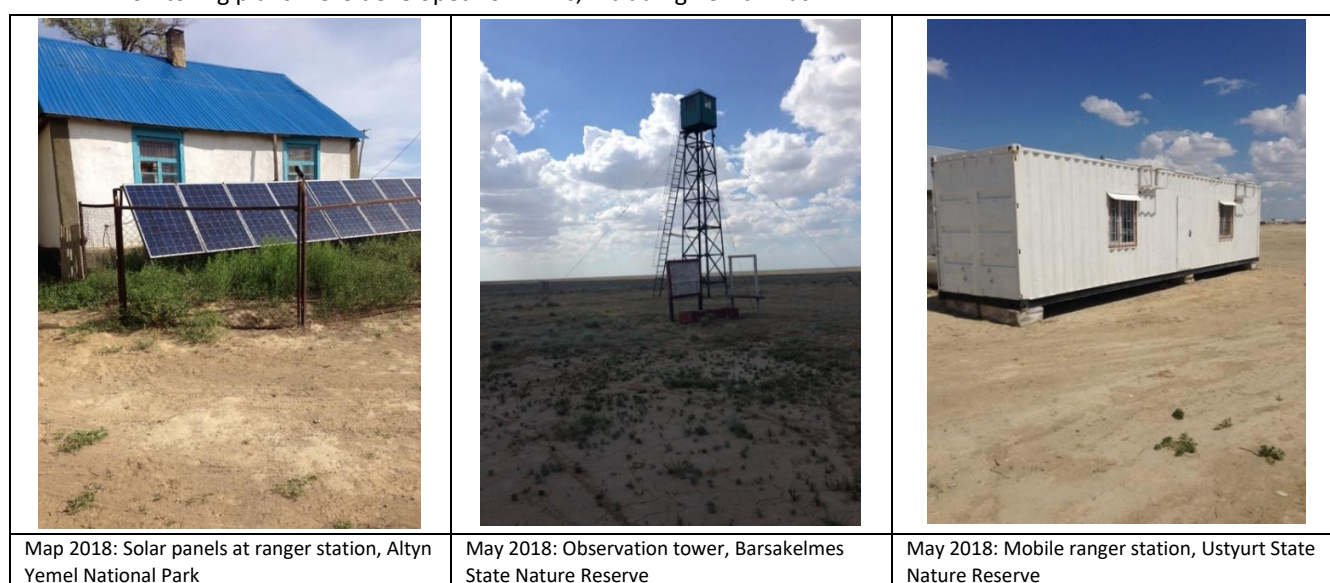


Figure 2: Photographs of some of the PA infrastructure funded by the project

Issues/Challenges:

- The level of cofinancing for acquisition of equipment and supplies for the three PAs did not approach the detailed outline included in Annex 10 to the project document.
- Implementing monitoring activities at most PAs in Kazakhstan is difficult due to funding constraints. For example, there are only 3 scientists employed for the expansive Altyn Yemel National Park; much of the biodiversity monitoring activities are carried out by rangers.
- The biodata database will be maintained by a sub-division of the FWC. An annual budget will need to be secured to ensure the database is maintained.

Output 1.6: METT accepted as the official performance assessment tool to gauge effectiveness of all PAs in the national system

Key Achievements:

- The project provided technical assistance for evaluating international best practice regarding PA management effectiveness tools, and for adapting a methodology for the relevant circumstances in Kazakhstan. The system was used at the Altyn Yemel national park as a trial (the results of the trial were not available to the TE evaluator). The management effectiveness tool is a performance evaluation of the implementation of the management plan of the PA, after 3 years and again after 5 years. The results of the evaluations are used in development of subsequent updated management plans.
- The FWC has approved the management effectiveness evaluation tool, through FWC Protocol No. 17-1-5/4 (2017). Starting in 2019, national level PAs will be obliged to apply the evaluation tool.
- In 2017, Mr. Nigel Dudley, an international PA management expert, was in Kazakhstan, and he gave a seminar to Barsakelmes and Ustyurt PA staff on management effectiveness.

Issues/Challenges:

- Stakeholders agreed that it would be too time consuming to amend the Law on Specially Protected Areas; the amendment process would likely require minimum 5 years. Approval of the management effectiveness evaluation tool at the FWC level was, therefore, decided.
- Kazakhstan continues to implement PA rating system, something that was developed several years ago. Based on observations during the TE mission, PA administrations were aware of the older rating system but were a bit confused with respect to the newly developed management effectiveness evaluation tool. It will take some time to implement these two systems in parallel, or possible decide on discontinuing one of them, if there is an unnecessarily high time or cost burden to the PA administrations.

Output 1.7: Institutional effectiveness and staff capacities for conservation and sustainable use of the sub-system of desert and semi-desert PAs improved

Key Achievements:

- Capacity building activities under this output were connected with those in Output 1.5. The project retained the services of a company to assess the effectiveness of earlier trainings delivered under donor financed projects and to make a needs assessment. The assessment concluded that approximately 70% of the trainings were supported by the UNDP, UN Environment or the World Bank, and due to high turnover of PA staff, the effectiveness at the institutional level has been limited. Based on these findings, the project decided to focus on development of training modules.
- A set of five training modules have been developed and approved by the FWC. The five modules cover the following thematic areas: (1) research and monitoring, (2) environmental education and ecotourism, (3) management of PAs, (4) financial and (5) administrative management. In June 2018, the project is planning on delivering training of trainers on the modules.
- Two international knowledge transfer trainings were supported; one to Austria in 2017, including seven people and focusing on tourism concessions and working with communities through collaborative management arrangements. The second training was made to Mongolia, also in 2017, and focused on learning from the successful reintroduction of Przewalski's Horse.
- The description of this output in the project document also included opening lines of communication with schools in the target landscapes, through talks and educational materials, to enhance understanding of conservation of desert ecosystems. In the project progress reports, activities completed at schools are discussed under Outcome 2. Through a competitive procurement process, the ECOCENTER NGO was selected to help develop and roll out the environmental education activities. Four schools were selected, one in each of the target landscapes (Ile-Balkhash, Aral Syrdarya and Ustyurt) and one in Astana. Educational books were produced, highlighting the ecological values in the three different landscapes, equipment and supplies were procured for the schools, and local coordinators were hired to help deliver the educational materials and programs. The school in the Ile-Balkhash target landscape was visited during the TE mission (see **Figure 3**).



Figure 3: Photographs of primary school in Ile-Balkhash region where environmental education programs were delivered

Issues/Challenges:

- Institutional retention of capacity development is an issue, because of the high turnover rate among PA staff.
- The national level PAs typically have budget allocation for capacity building; subnational PAs have limited possibilities for supporting capacity development for their staff.
- Key findings from international knowledge transfer trainings were not widely shared (lesson learned).

Output 1.8: A graduate course of study on PA management (MS equivalent) designed jointly with and delivered by the Kazakh State University of Agriculture (KSUA)

Key Achievements and Issues:

- The project worked with two universities, KSUA in Almaty and the Kazakhstan Agro-Technical University in Astana, in developing Masters' level elective courses on natural resource management. One professor from each of the universities were involved.
- The courses have been available since 2015. Enrollment has reportedly been limited to date, as fewer students are electing to study natural resource management.

Output 2.1: Territorial development plans employ the landscape management approach to inform and plan conservation and restoration of key ecological functions and processes of natural and productive desert and semi-desert landscapes in pilot rayons around target PAs in Ile Balkhash and Aral-Syrdarya regions

Key Achievements:

- Land use plans were prepared for three rayons: the Aral and Kazaly rayons in the Aral-Syrdarya region and the Balkhash rayon in the Ile-Balkhash region (see **Figure 4**). The cumulative land area covered by these three plans is approximately 13 million ha.



Figure 4: Locations of Aral, Kazaly and Balkhash rayons

- The land use plans were approved at the rayon level, following extensive technical reviews and public meetings.
- The plans are prepared on high quality GIS-based maps, with detailed explanations provided; an excerpt from the Balkhash rayon plan is shown below in **Figure 5**.

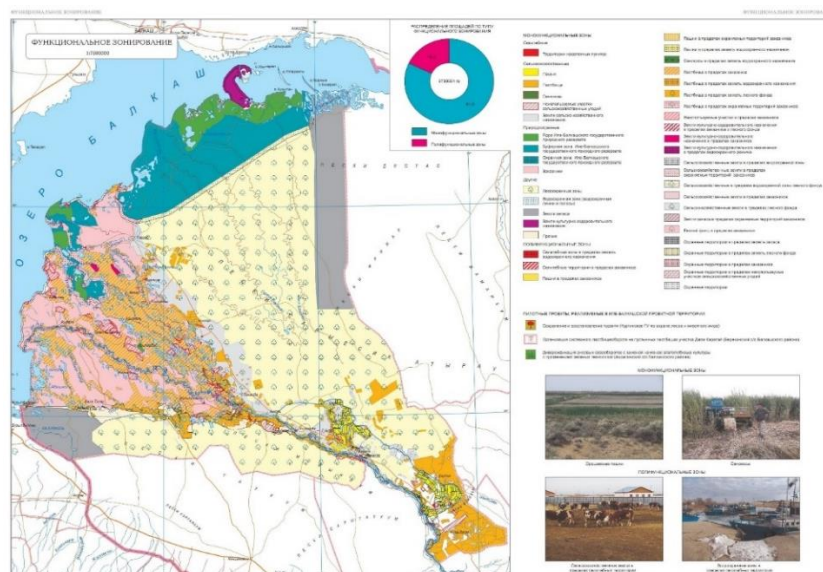


Figure 5: Excerpt of Balkhash rayon land use plan

Issues/Challenges:

- The land use plans are important contributions to the beneficiary rayons. Operationalization of the land use plans integrated into territorial development plans will require concerted commitment and broad stakeholder engagement are necessary moving forward.
- The information contained in the land use plans are updated to 2016 conditions. There are certain technical capacity constraints among the rayon administrations regarding updating the GIS based plans.

Output 2.2: Demonstration of sustainable and replicable resource use practices to reduce threats to biodiversity and preserve ecological functions of productive landscapes around target PAs in the Ile-Balkhash and Aral-Syrdarya regions

Key Achievements:

- The project funded 20 separate demonstration interventions on sustainable land management across the target landscapes.
- Improved pasture management practices were supported at distant pastures for six (6) herder households, with such interventions as private renewable energy systems and irrigated fodder fields (see Figure 6).



Figure 6: Photographs of improved pasture management interventions

- Demonstrations were also made on restoration of degraded lands and improving capacity for supporting restoration activities, e.g., through fixation of shifting sands for two villages and supplying drip irrigation demonstration scale infrastructure for tree nurseries (see **Figure 7**).



Figure 7: Photographs of shifting sand fixation intervention and drip irrigation demonstration plot

- Other interventions focused on improving water supply to wetland areas and delta lakes, through rehabilitating irrigation canals and artesian wells (see **Figure 8**).



Figure 8: Photographs of rehabilitation of irrigation canal and rehabilitated artesian well

- Rehabilitation of irrigation canals lead to increased water supply to wetland areas in Aral-Syrdarya region. Irrigation canals under rehabilitation in Aral rayon: Basykara canal (17 km), Balgabai canal (3.4 km) and Bes Zharma canal (5.9 km).

Issues/Challenges:

- Based on interviews and observations made during the TE mission, some of the herder beneficiaries of the improved pasture management interventions probably could have provided cash cofinancing, e.g., towards the private renewable energy systems or rehabilitated wells. Although in-kind cofinancing was provided, e.g., in the form of labor, and capital cofinancing was provided by four of the farms to cover repair and construction of livestock enclosures, some of these herders are well-off and have the resources to provide capital cofinancing investments for the assets procured under the project, e.g., solar panels and wind turbines. (lesson learned)
- Monitoring and evaluation systems for assessing progress towards impact of the demonstration interventions are not in place.

Output 2.3: Operationalization of a wildlife corridor in the Ile-Balkhash pilot area with species and habitat maintenance plans that are in line with development and conservation objectives of the rayon-level development plans (ref. Outputs 1.2, 1.5, 2.1)**Key Achievements:**

- Through technical assistance for preparation of the scientific background report (ENO) and advocacy with local government stakeholders, the project facilitated the establishment of the 973,765-ha Kapshaguy-Balkhash wildlife corridor, between the Altyn-Yemel National Park and the Ile-Balkhash *Rezervat*.
- The governor of the Almaty Oblast approved the corridor through Decree No. 51, issued in 2018.
- According the 2017 project annual progress report, the Oblast government has approved an annual allocated USD 85,000 for the operation of the corridor (budget allocation was not verified by the TE evaluator).
- The local NGO, ACBK, and academic-research institutions (e.g., Institute of Zoology) supported the project in the process of establishing the new corridor.

Issues/Challenges:

- The corridor extends across 5 different rayons. It will be imperative that local governments and land use stakeholders coordinate and cooperate in the operation of the corridor.
- There is no evidence of a corridor management plan, including specific tasks, management objectives and roles and responsibilities.

Output 2.4: Ecological monitoring and decision support system to inform desert and semi-desert conservation and land use planning in the Ile-Balkhash pilot area**Key Achievements:**

- The project supported development of the biodiversity monitoring information system www.biodata.kz, which is being used by the Ustyurt State Nature Reserve, Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve, Altyn Yemel National Park, Almaty State Nature Reserve, Karkaraly National Park, Akzhaiyk *Rezervat* and Korgalzhyn State Nature Reserve.
- The project provided technical assistance in creating an online geoportal of space monitoring of desertification and land degradation (www.geomonitoring.kz). Roughly 100 academic-research professionals were trained through workshops on space monitoring. Desertification maps were created, including salinization of reservoirs, soil salinity, vegetation, salt marshes (*solonchaks*), etc.
- The two information systems are managed by the Kazakh Forest Inventory Enterprise, an entity of the FWC.
- Several activities were implemented demonstrating innovative methods of ecosystem monitoring, e.g., use of unmanned aerial vehicles.

Issues/Challenges:

- Regular training will need to be implemented, to remain abreast of technological advances and to account for staff turnover.
- Data from all national level PAs will need to be entered into the information management systems, and secure financing will be needed to manage and update the systems.

Output 3.1: PA Public Committees, acting as a stakeholder engagement mechanism for transparency in PA planning and management, piloted at target PAs in Ile-Balkhash and Aral-Syrdarya**Key Achievements:**

- The project facilitated three public committees at the Altyn Yemel National park and the Ustyurt and Barsakelmes Reserves; this is the first time such committees have been established and operationalized in Kazakhstan, for facilitating participatory stakeholder involvement in PA planning.
- The Law on Specially Protected Natural Areas was amended on 15 June 2017 (Article 1, sub-paragraph 21; and Article 3, sub-paragraph 10) with the provision requiring establishment of public committees for the national categories of protected areas.
- The Ministry of Agriculture approved a decree on “The Special Provision on Public Committees (coordinating councils), which defines the rules for formation, composition and powers of public committees, and the rights and obligations of the committee members.

Issues/Challenges:

- The next steps involving achievement of genuine collaborative PA management with local communities include participatory monitoring and patrolling, development of tourism concessions, etc.

Output 3.2: Compensation or reward schemes for long-term sustainable biodiversity use in and around target PAs piloted among PA management, local communities, conservationists, hunting/fishing areas, tourism operators and other non-PA actors**Key Achievements:**

- There has been limited application of payment for ecosystem services (PES). The Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (carec) has implemented one scheme in the past and this project was the second. Cofinancing was confirmed by carec for supporting assessments and promotion of PES; the amount of cofinancing materialized through carec was unavailable at the time of submitting the TE report.
- Through a technical assistance contract, a consultant who earlier worked for carec carried out PES assessments and helped develop pilot PES schemes in the Aral-Syrdarya region.
- One of the pilot PES schemes (public-private) involved eco-tourism in the Lake Kambash region. The local government is the buyer and the tourist association and tourism operators are the sellers. Through an MOU, the local government invested KZT 23 million (approx. USD 70,000 in 2018 figures) for improvement of an access road and provision of drinking water, making the eco-tourism potential more attractive for investors.
- The second PES scheme also considered eco-tourism near the protected area. However, the team could not find a sufficiently large enough buyer, as there are few tourists visiting the protected area.
- The third PES scheme (private-private) involves small-scale, freshwater fisheries. The buyers are local fish pond operators and the sellers are local cooperatives. The main service was to increase the population of certain endemic fish species from hatcheries and increasing the quotas for local fishers.
- The project also produced a video on PES, in Kazakh, Russian and English, and disseminated it to increase awareness and advocate for scaling up.
- An important achievement under this output was an amendment to the Forest Code (No. 477, 8 July 2003). The amendment made in 2017 includes inclusion of the term “forest ecosystem service” (Article 4); allowing forest entities and users to carry out specified activities through voluntary contributions for forest ecosystem services (Article 72); and provision that expenditures for forest management within state forest estates be also covered from donations and voluntary contributions for forest ecosystem services.

Issues/Challenges:

- Further promotion and advocacy of the pilot PES schemes and broader uptake are required. There are limited sustainability structures in place for monitoring and evaluating the progress made on the PES pilots initiated and for promoting and advocating scaling up.

Output 3.3: Biodiversity microcredit line under the Fund for Financial Support of Agriculture (FFSA) specifically to support sustainable livelihoods of rural communities in and around PAs**Key Achievements:**

- Under an agreement between the Committee of Forestry and Wildlife of the Ministry of Agriculture (FWC) and the Fund of Financial Support to Agriculture JSC (FFSA), joint implementation of the Eco-Damu microcredit program was agreed for the period of 2014-2024. The implementation is broken down into two phases: the first one running from 2014-2019 and open to beneficiaries residing not more than 50 km from the PAs in the three target regions, and the second period running from 2020-2024 and open to beneficiaries residing not more than 50 km from PAs through Kazakhstan. The interest rate on the loans was agreed to be not less than 4% for the first phase, and not less than 6% for the second phase.
- The fund was capitalized with USD 1.5 million (KZT 275 million, in 2014 figures), with FFSA contributing USD 1 million (KZT 183 million, in 2014 figures) and the GEF resources contributing USD 0.5 million (KZT 92 million, in 2014 figures).
- The minimum amount of credit was KZT 240,000 and the maximum allowable was KZT 12 million. The loans were issued with a 4% interest rate, which is lower than inflation and considerably less than the typical 9-14% applied in other microcredit schemes managed by FFSA. The maximum term was 54 months, with a possible 18-month grace period, depending upon the business plans and other conditions

- The microcredit program was open to rural beneficiaries in the three project target regions, and focused on developing alternative, biodiversity friendly businesses/livelihoods. Three examples of the type of support rendered are shown in the photographs included below in **Figure 9**; the beekeeping entrepreneur received a KZT 5 million (approx. USD 27,000, in 2015 figures) and the sheltered farming entrepreneur received KZT 1 million (approx. USD 5,400, in 2015 figures). These two interviewed beneficiaries informed the TE evaluator that they had fully paid back the loan.
- During the first round of loan disbursements, 129 business plans/proposals were received and 83 were funded. Based on information contained in the business plans, the total cumulative number of jobs supported the investments were 209, and 30% of the beneficiaries were women.
- Beneficiaries Ile-Balkhash region received KZT 137 million of the total loaned, the Aral Syrdarya region received KZT 120 million and the Ustyurt beneficiaries received KZT 25 million. The types of activities supported are broken down as follows: 28.9% for livestock/poultry, 21% for beekeeping, 18.2% for eco-tourism, 6.1% for traditional handicrafts, 15.1% for vegetable growing and 10.7% for bakeries.
- Among the 83 loans disbursed, there have been problems with 8 of them, or approx. 10%. Some of these have financial difficulties, whereas others cannot be reached. The 10% rate is typical according to FFSA's general practice.



Figure 9: Photographs of three of the activities supported by the Eco-Damu microcredit program

Issues/Challenges:

- Article 17 of the agreement reads “After the implementation of the second stage of the Program, the funds shall remain at FFSA and may be used at FFSA’s own discretion.” (unofficial translation). The TE evaluator considers that this condition does not sufficiently ensure that the GEF funds will continue to be used to promote sustainable use of natural resources, according to the original aim of the microcredit scheme.
- Monitoring and evaluation of socioeconomic benefits were limited. The benefits reported, e.g., in terms of the number of jobs supported, were based on information contained in the business plans prepared prior to disbursing the loans.
- Some type of code of safe environmental practice should have been developed and the beneficiaries requested to agree to the code as part of the loan agreement.
- It is unclear whether the microcredit scheme was sufficiently promoted among low income and vulnerable groups within the target regions.

4.2 Outcomes

4.2.1 Effectiveness

Effectiveness was evaluated by assessing achievement of the project objective and outcomes according to the agreed performance metrics included in the project results framework and the GEF-5 BD-1 and LD-3 targets. With respect to targets relevant to the GEF-5 focal area outputs, overall achievement is rated as mostly achieved.

Expected Focal Area Outcomes*	Focal Area Outputs	Status at TE	TE Assessment
BD-1: Outcome 1.1 Improved management effectiveness of existing and new protected areas	Output 1. New protected areas (number) and coverage (hectares) of unprotected ecosystems.	3 new PAs established (Ile-Balkhash Reservat, Mangystau and Arganaty wildlife sanctuaries). 851,161 ha of new protected areas and coverage of unprotected ecosystems. - Three protected areas meet or exceed their management effectiveness targets covering a cumulative area of 997,708 ha.	Mostly Achieved
LD-3: Outcome 3.2. Integrated landscape management practices adopted by local communities	Output 3.1. Integrated land management plans developed and implemented Output 3.2: INRM tools and methodologies developed and tested.	- Land use plans developed for three rayons covering a cumulative area of 13 million ha. - Improved pasture management approaches demonstrated at 6 distant pastures covering a cumulative area of 32,000 ha.	

Biodiversity focal area:

A cumulative total of 851,161 ha of new and expanded protected areas was achieved under the project, including a 146,500-ha expansion of the Altyn Yemel National Park and establishment of the Ile-Balkhash *Reservat* and the Mangystau and Arganaty wildlife sanctuaries (see **Table 12**).

Table 12: Summary of new and expanded protected areas

Protected Area	Project Entry Area, ha	Project Closure Area, ha	Net area of new and expanded PAs, ha
Altyn Yemel National Park	467,040	613,540	146,500
Ile-Balkhash <i>Reservat</i>	0	415,164	201,560*
Mangystau <i>zakaznik</i> (wildlife sanctuary)	0	316,141	316,141
Arganaty <i>zakaznik</i> (wildlife sanctuary)	0	186,960	186,960
Total:			851,161

*Note: The Ile-Balkhash *Reservat* includes 213,603.9 ha of land transferred from the existing Karaoy State Nature Reserve

Moreover, three protected areas meet or exceed their management effectiveness targets covering a cumulative area of 997,708 ha: Altyn Yemel National Park (613,540 ha), Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve (160,826 ha) and Ustyurt State Nature Reserve (223,342 ha).

Land Degradation focal area:

Land use plans were developed for three rayons: Aral and Kazaly in the Kyzylorda oblast and Balkhash rayon in the Almaty region, covering a cumulative area of 13 million ha. And, improved pasture management approaches were demonstrated at 6 distant pasture sites covering a cumulative area of 32,000 ha.

Objective: To enhance the sustainability of protected areas in globally important desert and semi-desert ecosystems by expanding their geographic coverage, promoting a landscape approach, and supporting biodiversity-compatible livelihoods in and around PAs

Achievement of the project objective is rated as: Satisfactory

Three performance indicators were established at the project objective level; the first two are focused on increasing coverage of the Southern desert and Mountain-valley subtype desert ecosystems in the national PA system, respectively, and the third indicator is a measure of the populations of flagship species in the three target landscapes.

Indicator No. 1: Coverage of underrepresented Southern desert in the PA System of Kazakhstan			
Baseline	End Target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
1,591,800 ha (5.3% of ecological zone)	By 2015 coverage of Southern desert in PA system increases by 2,682,032 ha (8.9% of the ecological zone). This increase comes from the following: - Establishment of 1 new PA (Mangystau State Reserved Zone) covering 2,676,262 ha - Expansion of 1 existing PA (Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve) by 5,770 ha By 2020⁷ coverage of Southern desert in PA system increases by approximately 970,000 ha (3.2% of the ecological zone). This increase comes from: - Expansion of 1 existing PA (Ustyurt State Nature Reserve) by approximately 220,000 ha - Establishment of a wildlife corridor between Barsakelmes and Ustyurt PAs of approximately 750,000 ha	New protected area in the Southern desert ecosystem: • Mangystau <i>zakaznik</i> (wildlife sanctuary): 316,141 ha Coverage of Southern desert in PA system increased to 1,907,941 ha (6.3% of the ecological zone)	Partially Achieved
2013	August 2018	June 2018	

Coverage of the Southern desert ecosystems in the PA system increased to 1,907,941, or 6.3% of the ecological zone, with the approval of the 316,141-ha Mangystau *zakaznik* (wildlife sanctuary) on 27 February 2017, through Decree No. 53 issued by the Mangystau Oblast government.

The achieved expansion by 316,141 ha falls short of the 2,682,032-ha target by 2015. A 2,300-ha expansion of the Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve is expected to obtain national level approval by 2020. The envisaged 220,000 ha expansion of the Ustyurt State Nature Reserve is unlikely to be achieved by 2020. Based on scientific deliberations and reinforced in the project midterm review, establishment of the 750,000-ha wildlife corridor between the Barsakelmes and Ustyurt PAs was concluded to be unnecessary as there was limited wildlife migration across this landscape.

Indicator No. 2: Coverage of underrepresented Mountain-valley subtype desert in the PA System of Kazakhstan			
Baseline	End Target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
99,704 ha (3.3% of ecological zone)	By 2015 coverage of Mountain-valley subtype desert in PA system increases by 1,602,504 ha (53.4% of the ecological zone). This increase comes from the following: - Establishment of 1 new PA (Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve) covering 442,296 ha - Expansion of 1 existing PA (Altyn Yemel State National Nature Park) by 460,208 ha - Establishment of a wildlife corridor between Altyn Yemel and Ile-Balkhash PAs of 700,000 ha By 2020⁸ coverage of Mountain-valley subtype desert in PA system increases by approximately 30,000 ha (1% of the ecological zone). This increase comes from the following: - Establishment of 1 new PA (Arganaty) covering approximately 30,000 ha	New and expanded protected areas in the Mountain-valley subtype desert ecosystems: • New Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve: 415,164.2 ha • Expansion of Altyn Yemel National Park: 146,500 ha • New Arganaty <i>zakaznik</i> (wildlife sanctuary): 186,960 ha Coverage of Mountain-valley subtype desert ecosystem in PA system increased to 848,328 ha (25% of the ecological zone) Established Kapshaguy-Balkhash wildlife corridor: 973,765 ha	Mostly Achieved
2013	August 2018	June 2018	

The establishment of the new Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve, the new Arganaty *zakaznik* (wildlife sanctuary), and the expansion of the Altyn Yemel National Park resulted in a cumulative addition of 748,624 ha of Mountain-valley subtype desert to the national PA system, increasing coverage of this ecosystem by 848,328 ha, or 25% of the ecological zone. Moreover, the establishment of the 973,765-ha Kapshaguy-Balkhash wildlife corridor substantially increases the protection of threatened wildlife species in this desert landscape.

⁷ Although the project is expected to end in 2018, target indicators for PAs and corridors to be established/ expanded under Zhasyl Damu 2015-2020 are set for 2020 as this is the official time frame for Zhasyl Damu. However, the project expects to achieve much of the ground work for establishment/ expansion of these PAs and corridors by 2018 through supporting the government in preparation of ENOs and TEOs for these areas along with necessary consultations. But it may not be until the end of 2020 that the government is able to formally gazette these areas. Target hectare estimates for 2020 remain estimates at this stage and will be confirmed during project implementation.

⁸ Ibid.

Indicator No. 3: Size of flagship species populations of desert & semi-desert ecosystems in target areas remains at the baseline level or increase			
Baseline	End Target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
Ile Balkhash Project Area (Altyn Yemel National park, data provided by the Okhotzooptom state enterprise)			Achieved
Goitered gazelle: 1,800	1,800≥	4,718	
Koulan: 1,700	1,700≥	3,417	
Argali: 205	205≥	215	
Aral Syrdarya Project Area (Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve, data provided by the Okhotzooptom state enterprise):			
Goitered gazelle: 80	80≥	109	
Koulan: 340	340≥	527	
Pallas's sandgrouse: 407	407≥	460	
Ustyurt Plateau (Ustyurt State Nature Reserve, data provided by the Okhotzooptom state enterprise):			
Ustyurt argali: 1,020	1,020≥	1,521	
Goitered gazelle: 270	270≥	1,000	
Houbara bustard: 60	60≥	76	
2013	July 2018	2017	

Populations of flagship species included in Indicator No. 3 for the three existing PAs in the three target landscapes all showed increases in 2017, as compared to baseline figures in 2013. As shown below in **Figure 10**, annual species counts recorded for the Altyn Yemel National park over the period of 2013-2017 indicate steady increasing trends, except for 2014, when the numbers of Goitered gazelle were unusually low.

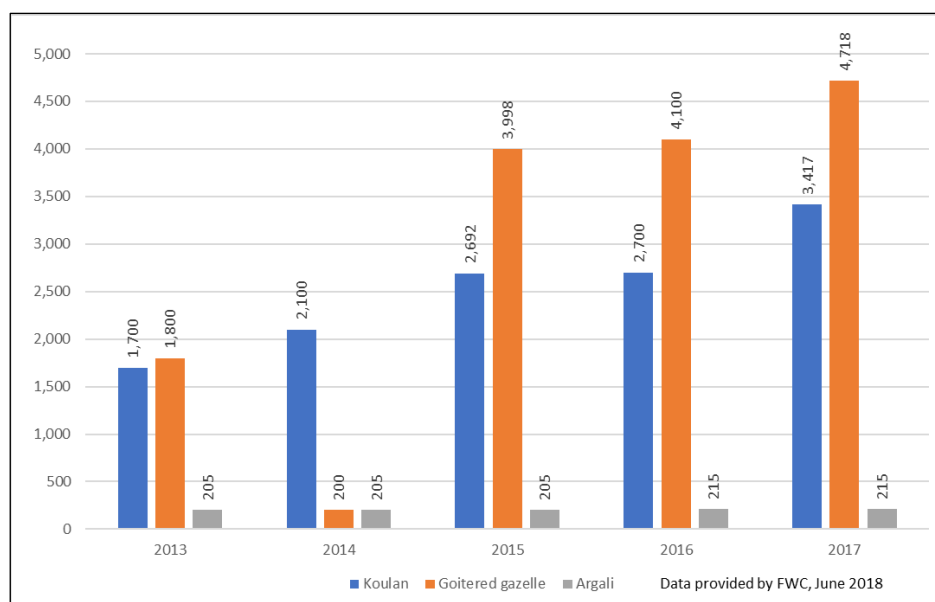


Figure 10: Annual species counts, Altyn Yemel National park, 2013-2017

Similar increasing trends are also reported for the other two PAs, the Barsakelmes and Ustyurt State Nature Reserves (see **Table 13**).

Table 13: Annual species counts, Barsakelmes and Ustyurt State Nature Reserves, 2013-2017

Species	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Aral-Syrdarya project area (Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve, data provided by the Okhotzooptom state enterprise):					
Goitered gazelle	80	80	83	90	109
Koulán	340	400	471	490	527
Pallas's Sandgrouse	407	430	467	468	460
Ustyurt project area (Ustyurt State Nature Reserve, data provided by the Okhotzooptom state enterprise):					
Ustyurt argali/mouflon	1,070	1,074	1,074	1,320	1,521
Goitered gazelle	276	277	277	360	1,000
Houbara bustard	72	74	74	75	76

Source: FCW, 14 June 2018

Outcome 1: PA system of Kazakhstan contains representative samples of desert and semi-desert ecosystems under various conservation regimes and is effective in protecting ecosystems and ecological processes**Achievement of Outcome 1 is rated as: Moderately Satisfactory**

The two indicators under Outcome 1 represent progress towards improvements in the management effectiveness, measured by using the GEF-5 adapted version of the management effectiveness tracking tool (METT); Indicator No. 4 includes METT scores and targets for the three existing PAs among the three target landscapes, and Indicator No. 5 indicates METT scores for three PAs that were envisaged to be established.

Indicator No. 4: Enhanced management effectiveness of existing PAs that are expanded under the project (as measured by METT)			
Baseline	End Target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
Altyn Yemel: 50 (49%)	75%	79 (77.5%)	Achieved
Barsakelmes: 42 (41.2%)	67%	75 (73.5%)	
Ustyurt: 43 (42.2%)	68%	67 (65.7%)	
June 2012	August 2018	May 2018	

The baseline METT figures are slightly revised above; the figures included in the project document were the scores tallied in the METT assessments, not the percentage of the total possible score (102). The baseline and end of project METT scores for the Altyn Yemel National park were understandably higher than the other two PAs, as funding for this PA is higher than the other ones and self-generated revenue is also higher. Improvement of the METT score from a baseline of 49% in June 2012 to 77.5% in May 2018 is attributed to several factors, including expansion of the PA, establishing a public committee, updating the management plan, etc.

The terminal scores seem generally a bit too high. As indicated in Section 3.1 of this TE report, a global study on PA management effectiveness concluded that a score of 67% is the lower threshold for “sound management”. This is probably more applicable to the Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve, which received a terminal METT assessment of 73.5%, up from a baseline of 41.2%. The Ustyurt State Nature Reserve had the lowest METT terminal score of 65.7%, up from a baseline of 42.2%. A few examples of possible scoring that was too high include the following:

- Altyn Yemel: Question 8 on regular work plan. A score of 3 was given, inferring that all activities on the work plan are being implemented. The comments indicate that only part of the plan is implemented due to limited funding.
- Barsakelmes: Question 8 on regular work plan. Like the case for Altyn Yemel, this score seems high.
- Ustyurt: Question 18 on equipment. A score of 2 was given; based on observations in the field and interviews with PA staff, this score does not reflect this generally under-equipped PA.
- Ustyurt: Question 27 on visitor facilities. A score of 1 was given, whereas the comments indicate that the PA essentially does not have visitor facilities.
- Ustyurt: Question 29 on fees. The comments on fees is similar, if not the same as the baseline METT assessment; however, the score increased from 1 to 2.

These are only a few examples; the scoring should be critically reviewed under a workshop type arrangement, with cross-sectoral participation.

Indicator No. 5: Enhanced management effectiveness of new PAs that are established under the project (as measured by METT)			
Baseline	End Target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
Ile-Balkhash: 19 (18.6%)	44%	22 (21.6%)	Unlikely to be achieved by project closure
Mangystau: 7 (6.9%)	32%	9 (8.8%)	
Arganaty: 9 (8.8%)	34%	30 (29.4%)	
August 2012	August 2018	May 2018	

Progress towards improving management effectiveness of the new PAs was not as substantial as for the existing PAs, mainly due to the delays in establishment of the PAs. Approval of the Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve was obtained near the end of the project, in June 2018. The terminal METT score of 21.6% is slightly higher than the baseline of 18.6%, e.g., as funding for the management plan for the PA has been secured. Regarding the Mangystau PA, the baseline increased to 8.8%, up from the baseline of 6.9%. The terminal METT assessment for Mangystau includes some that the PA has not yet been established; whereas, project progress reports (e.g., the 2017 PIR) indicate that the PA has been established, through a decree issued by the Mangystau oblast government in February 2017. The Arganaty PA (“zakaznik” in the Kazakh system, which is translated as a wildlife sanctuary) was approved by the Almaty oblast government in April 2018; the terminal METT score for this PA was 29.4%, slightly lower than the 34% end target.

The project did deliver substantive technical assistance to the Ile-Balkhash PA, e.g., supported development of the management plan for 2019-2013 and provided assets such as radios, computers, GPS units, et. These inputs will contribute towards improving management effectiveness in the coming years.

Outcome 2: Landscape-level conservation planning and management are developed and implemented in target desert and semi-desert environments

Achievement of Outcome 2 is rated as: Satisfactory

The assessment of achievement of the indicators established under Outcome 2 is presented below.

Indicator No. 6: Territorial development plans employing landscape management approach			
Baseline	End Target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
0 ha	9 million ha	Land use plans completed for three rayons: Aral and Kazaly in the Kyzylorda oblast and Balkhash rayon in the Almaty region, covering a cumulative area of 13 million ha. The land use plans are not yet operationalized within territorial development plans, and not fully meeting landscape management approach.	Partially achieved
2013	August 2018	May 2018	

The project facilitated high quality land use plans for three rayons, two in the Aral-Syrdarya region and one in the Ile-Balkhash region, covering a cumulative land area of 13 million ha, exceeding the end target of 9 million ha. The land use plans are not yet operationalized within territorial development plans of the rayons, and the plans themselves do not constitute landscape management approaches.

Indicator No. 7: Number of hectares of restored wetlands & delta lakes			
Baseline	End Target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
0 ha	2,202 ha	Rehabilitation of irrigation canals in the Aral-Syrdarya region under implementation. This work will facilitate restoration of wetlands and delta lakes over time.	Marginally achieved
2013	August 2018	May 2018	

According to the descriptions of planned interventions outlined in Annex 6 to the project document, the 2,202-ha end target includes 1,400 ha of wetlands in the Karatal Hunting Area in the Karatal rayon of the Almaty Oblast and 802 ha of lakes and meadows/hay-lands in the Aral and Kazalinsk rayons of the Kyzylorda Oblast. Planned activities included assessment of water resources needs, implementation of field restorations, baseline assessments and annual monitoring to evaluate the achievement of the restoration activities, including surveys of key bird and fish species, and development and implementation of a plan for long-term biodiversity monitoring.

The activities implemented by the project have been in the Aral-Syrdarya region; there is no reported progress on the planned wetlands restoration in the Karatal rayon of the Almaty Oblast. The project has supported local governments with planning the rehabilitation of irrigation canals in the Aral-Syrdarya region and obtaining legal certificates for eight canals covering an area of 110 ha. This is an important achievement; with legal status of the canals, local governments can more easily obtain funding for rehabilitation works. At the time of the TE mission, the following irrigation canals were under rehabilitation in the Aral rayon through government cofinancing: Basykara canal (17 km), Balgabai canal (3.4 km) and Bes Zharma canal (5.9 km). This rehabilitation work will help facilitate restoration of the wetlands and delta lakes in this region over time.

Tally of area of wetland restoration not estimated.

Indicator No. 8: Number of hectares of riparian & saksaul forests under sustainable management			
Baseline	End Target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
0 ha	18,048 ha	6,327 ha (reported in Jun 2017)	Marginally achieved
2013	August 2018	June 2017	

According to the descriptions of planned interventions outlined in Annex 6 to the project document, the 18,048-ha end target includes 1,726 ha in the Balkhash and Ile regions of the Almaty Oblast and 16,322 ha in the Zhalagash and Syrdarya districts of the Kyzylorda Oblast. The 1,726-ha figure in the Ile Balkhash region includes a 3-ha poplar grove in the Zheltorangi section, a 3-ha polar grove in the Karatorangi section, and a 1,720-ha saksaul forest in the Akadlinsky

irrigation massif section. The project site in the Aral-Syrdarya region is situated south of the Syrdarya River, where the Kop-Kuduk hunting area owns 15 artesian wells, which had been closed in the past. Restoration of the wells, creation of a nursery, and sustainable management of forest resources were planned.

The 2017 PIR report indicates 6,237-ha of progress towards the end target of 18,048 ha and includes restoration work within a 1,693-ha relic Asiatic poplar forest stand and irrigation improvements at a 44-ha nursery in the Kaskelen forestry entity in the Ile-Balkhash region, and improvements to the irrigation infrastructure of a nursery in the Aral-Syrdarya region which has led to the planting of saksaul trees covering a cumulative area of 4,500 ha.

The project has also funded restoration of two artesian wells within the territory of the Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve; however, these activities are not accounted for in the description of progress towards achievement of this performance indicator. The 2017 PIR includes information under the progress made towards the objective level indicator on populations flagship species, on improving habitat conditions for koulans in the Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve. The concept of sustainable management is unclear in the context of this indicator; for example, planting saksaul trees in the former seabed of the Aral Sea is an important activity, but there is no discussion on what measures are being taken to sustainably manage these resources.

Indicator No. 9: Quality and quantity of vegetation cover in rangelands in 3 rural districts			
Baseline	End Target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
Hectares of land with significant signs of soil erosion caused by overgrazing in selected plots ⁹	Reduction of the size of the area heavily affected by soil erosion by at least 15% in the Ile-Balkhash area and 20% in the Aral Syrdarya target area	Reduction of area heavily affected by soil erosion: Ile-Balkhash: 31% (27.5% baseline to 19% in 2017) Aral Syrdarya: 35% (16.7% to 10.8%) Ustyurt: 24% (21% to 16%)	Achieved
2012	August 2018	2017	

Based on information contained in the 2017 PIR report, areas heavily affected by soil erosion reduced by 31%, 35% and 24% in the Ile-Balkhash, Aral Syrdarya and Ustyurt monitoring sites, respectively, exceeding the end targets of 15% (Ile-Balkhash) and 20% (Aral Syrdarya) (see Table 14).

Table 14: Areas heavily affected by soil erosion in monitoring sites in target landscapes

Target Landscape	Site	Area of monitoring site, ha	Areas heavily affected by soil erosion					
			Baseline, 2015-2016		2017		2018	
			Area, ha	% of total	Area, ha	% of total	Area, ha	% of total
Ile-Balkhash	Dala Karatay	600	210	35.0%	138	23.0%		
Ile-Balkhash	Mambet	600	120	20.0%	90	15.0%		
Sub-total, Ile-Balkhash:		1,200	330	27.5%	228	19.0%		
Aral-Syrdarya	Nausha Bulak	500	150	30.0%	90	18.0%		
Aral-Syrdarya	Seitim	650	65	10.0%	45	6.9%		
Aral-Syrdarya	Zhargas	600	78	13.0%	54	9.0%		
Sub-total, Aral-Syrdarya:		1,750	293	16.7%	189	10.8%		
Ustyurt	Tulpar	500	105	21.0%	80	16.0%		
Sub-Total, Ustyurt:		500	105	21.0%	80	16.0%		

Monitoring data for 2018 were unavailable at the time of submitting the TE report. The PIR report correctly states that restoration of degraded land takes time; it is imperative that the sustainable land management practices promoted on the project are maintained.

Figure 11: Photographs of two of the Eco-Damu microcredit line beneficiaries

Indicator No. 10: Presence of plant species which negatively affect the function of distant rangelands			
Baseline	End Target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
Hectares of distant rangelands with significant signs of natural succession due to under grazing ¹⁰	Unwanted plant species in at least 4 rangeland monitoring plots are less than 5% surface coverage	6.1% (by 2017)	Mostly Achieved
2013	August 2018	2017	

⁹ Baseline to be estimated at the beginning of the project once monitoring sites are identified and primary data are collected.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Baseline assessments were made in 2015-2016 of the six sites where improved pasture management practices were implemented at distant pastures. Of the 32,000-ha total area of the assessed plots, 2,640 ha, or 8.3% were observed to be under-grazed and contained unwanted plant species. By 2017, this area decreased to 1,948 ha, or 6.1% of the total (see **Table 15**).

Table 15: Area of under-grazing and unwanted plant species at distant pasture intervention sites

Target Landscape	Site	Total Area, ha	Area of under-grazing and unwanted plant species					
			Baseline, 2015-2016		2017		2018	
			Area, ha	% of total	Area, ha	% of total	Area, ha	% of total
Ile-Balkhash	Dala Karatay	6,000	550	9.2%	300	5.0%		
Ile-Balkhash	Mambet	6,000	450	7.5%	348	5.8%		
Aral-Syrdarya	Nausha Bulak	5,000	750	15.0%	650	13.0%		
Aral-Syrdarya	Seitim	5,000	190	3.8%	125	2.5%		
Aral-Syrdarya	Zhargas	5,000	450	9.0%	350	7.0%		
Ustyurt	Tulpar	5,000	250	5.0%	175	3.5%		
Total:		32,000	2,640	8.3%	1,948	6.1%		

Monitoring data for 2018 were unavailable at the time of submitting the TE report. Achieving and sustaining high quality grasslands is a long-term process and will require continuous implementation of good management practices.

Indicator No. 11: Average income of families participating in the measures on pasture management			
Baseline	End Target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
US\$ 1,600	Increase by at least 20%	The income generating potential of the six participating herder households have clearly increased because of the improved pasture management interventions. However, the baseline household income figure is unclear and, therefore, the level of improvement cannot be assessed.	Unable to assess
2013	August 2018	May 2018	

Improved pasture management interventions were implemented at six herder households situated among the three target landscapes. Based on interviews with the beneficiaries during the TE field mission, it is clear the provision of renewable energy sources (solar, wind power), rehabilitation of water wells and introduction of best management practices, including fodder production on irrigated lands, have increased the income generating potential of their households. Livestock are healthier, reaching greater weights at time of maturation and, thus, bringing higher income, allowing the herders to expand their herds, invest in infrastructure and increase production of value added products, such as butter, wool, etc.

Based on information contained in a May 2018 dated summary of a socioeconomic survey, Breakdowns of household income were outlined for two of the beneficiary herder households in a June 2018 dated socioeconomic survey summary provided by the project team. For the Zhargas farm in the Aral-Syrdarya target landscape, a monthly income of USD 1,938 (KZT 820,000, at June 2018 exchange figures) was reported. This income is cumulative for three families residing on the farm and does not only include income associated with the herding activities. Salary incomes for the wife (teacher) eldest son (state-owned water company, youngest son (veterinarian), and daughter in-law (owner of kindergarten), which tally up to USD 699. Without knowing how the USD 1,600 baseline figure was calculated, it is not possible to assess if the cumulative income calculated for 2018 is comparable to what was generated in 2012/2013.

The terminal assessment of the land degradation tracking tool indicates an average household income of USD 1,823 for the six beneficiary herder households, representing an increase of about 14% from baseline.

Assessing household income in USD terms is not straight forward, as there was a steep devaluation of the KZT in 2015 and inflation has been moderately high throughout the project implementation period, exceeding 15% in 2016. Local incomes are in KZT; it might have been more advisable to set the target at KZT and adjust to inflation at each monitoring stage.

Indicator No. 12: Number of farmer associations that use the experiences of this project as a model			
Baseline	End Target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
No projects which use participatory bottom-up approaches in the target areas	At least 15 farmer associations or rural consumer cooperatives in the Aral Syrdarya target area and 25 in the Ile	No evidence of farmer associations or rural consumer cooperatives using the experience of the project as a model.	Partially achieved

	Balkhash area use the experience of this project as a model.	Anecdotal evidence indicates that improved pasture management practices have been used by 58 herder farms.	
2013	August 2018	May 2018	

Improved pasture management were implemented at six herder households in the three target landscapes. There was informal cooperation among herders, and the project developed guidebooks to facilitate replication. According to information provided by the project team, the improved pastured management approaches demonstrated have been used by a total of 58 herders: 12 farms in the Ile-Balkhash area, 24 farms in the Aral-Syrdarya area and 22 farms in the Ustyurt area. This information was not verified by the TE evaluator, and there is no evidence that farmer associations or rural consumer cooperatives have used the information as a model.

Local governments promoted the improved practices to other farmers, including through organizing field days. The 2017 PIR report indicates that 300 farmers and land-users in the three target landscapes can assess the experiences gained and lessons learned through implementing approved pasture management.

According to a report prepared by the project team for the TE evaluator, the improved pasture management approaches have been integrated into the Law on Pastures (2017) and included in the State Program for the Development of Kazakhstan's Agro-Industrial Complex for 2017-2021 (2017); these have not been verified.

Outcome 3: Landscape-level conservation planning and management are developed and implemented in target desert and semi-desert environments

Achievement of Outcome 3 is rated as: Satisfactory

The assessment of achievement of the four indicators established under Outcome 3 is presented below.

Indicator No. 13: Reduction in poaching and illegal logging at target PAs (annual) per unit of patrolling effort, compared with year of initial patrolling			
Baseline	End Target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
Ile-Balkhash Target Area:			Partially Achieved
Illegal logging violations: 67 Poaching violations: 436 Total violations: 503	Reduction by 40%	Illegal logging violations: 5 (92.5% reduction) Poaching violations: 44 (89.9% reduction) Total violations: 49 (90.3% reduction)	
Aral-Syrdarya Target Area:			
Illegal logging violations: 241 Poaching violations: 157 Total violations: 398	Reduction by 40%	Illegal logging violations: 1 (99.6% reduction) Poaching violations: 144 (8.3% reduction) Total violations: 145 (63.6% reduction)	
2013	August 2018	2017	

There have been substantive reductions in the number of violations reported at the Altyn Yemel National park and the Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve over the period of 2013 to 2017 (see **Table 16**).

Table 16: Data on violations reported in Ile-Balkhash and Aral-Syrdarya target regions, 2013-2017

Description		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Ile-Balkhash project area (Altyn Yemel National park, according to Okhotzooptom state enterprise)						
1	Total number of violations, including:	503	490	417	54	49
	Poaching	436	430	368	45	44
	Illegal logging	67	60	49	9	5
Aral-Syrdarya project area (Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve, according to Okhotzooptom state enterprise)						
2	Total number of violations, including:	398	376	330	378	145
	Poaching	157	156	118	377	144
	Illegal logging	241	220	212	1	1

Source: FWC, 14 June 2018

The incidence of poaching and illegal logging reported at the Altyn Yemel National park reduced by 92.5% and 89.9%, respectively, from the baseline figures reported for 2013 until 2017, with most of the improvements reported in 2016 and 2017. Illegal logging also significantly decreased at the Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve over in 2016 and 2017, with only one incidence reported in each of those two years. Poaching remains a concern at the Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve. In 2017 there were 144 incidents of poaching reported in that PA, down only by 8.3% from the 157 reported in 2013. In 2016, the number of poaching cases reported at Barsakelmes was 377, more than double the

baseline figure. Pressures on ecosystems of the Syrdarya Delta and Aral Sea region remain significant due to low economic development, high unemployment and degraded natural resources.

Indicator No. 14: Functioning stakeholder engagement mechanism for transparency in PA planning and management			
Baseline	End Target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
No PA public committees for mobilizing stakeholders in and around PAs in the Ile-Balkhash and Aral-Syrdarya target areas.	Two (2) operational PA public committees.	Three public committees established and operationalized at the Altyn Yemel National park and the Ustyurt and Barsakelmes State Nature Reserves.	Achieved
2012	August 2018	May 2018	

The project exceeded the end target of establishing two public PA committees; three were established and operationalized. Moreover, the Law on Specially Protected Natural Areas was amended in 2017 with a provision requiring national level protected areas to establish public committees, and the Ministry of Agriculture approved a decree on implementing the amendment to the law.

Indicator No. 15: Number of PES agreements under implementation in project area			
Baseline	End Target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
0	2 by project end	2 PES pilot schemes have been initiated, both in the Aral-Syrdarya region, with one on eco-tourism and the other on small-scale freshwater fisheries improvement.	Achieved
2012	August 2018	May 2018	

The project succeeded in assessing PES opportunities and developing and initiating pilot PES schemes in the Aral-Syrdarya region. The eco-tourism scheme at Lake Kambash involves an agreement public-private agreement between the local government and local tourism operators. The second scheme is a private-private arrangement between fish pond owners and fishing cooperatives. The schemes have been initiated, but there is limited strategic support for assisting the parties in continuing the activities and for advocating for scaling up and replicating elsewhere.

Indicator No. 16: Share of registered land users and low-income rural households benefiting from biodiversity microcredit line			
Baseline	End Target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
0%	5%	83 beneficiaries were awarded microcredit under the first phase of the Eco-Damu scheme. This is approximately 1% of the estimated 7,397 total number of potential beneficiaries. 30% of the beneficiaries were women, short of the 55% target.	Partially Achieved
2012	August 2018	May 2018	

The first phase of the Eco-Damu microcredit scheme included 83 beneficiaries, or 1% of the estimated total number (7,397) of potential beneficiaries within the three target regions. This figure falls short of the end target of 5%, or 400 number of beneficiaries. The 30% women achievement is also short of the 55% indicated in the project design.

The target of 400 might have been too high of an estimate. A total of 129 applications were received, of which 83 were funded. Disbursing 400 loans would have required more extensive promotion and advocacy. With 83 beneficiaries receiving a cumulative total of USD 1.5 million in credit, the average loan was approx. USD 18,000; whereas distributing USD 1.5 million among 400 beneficiaries would infer USD 3,750 per loan.

4.2.2 Relevance

Efficiency is rated as: Moderately Satisfactory

The multi-focal area project was aligned to the GEF-5 Biodiversity Strategy, specifically Objective 1, “*Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems*”, Outcome 1.1, “*Improved management effectiveness of existing and new protected areas*”, and GEF-5 Land Degradation Strategy, specifically Objective LD-3, “*Integrated Landscapes: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land use in the wider landscape*”, Outcome 3.2, “*Good management practices in the wider landscape demonstrated and adopted by relevant economic sectors*”.

The project is relevant to the general strategic directions outlined in the NBSAP issue in 1999 which highlights the increasing rates of desertification and the importance of protecting fragile desert ecosystems. The NBSAP has not been updated since this first version; although a draft “concept for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2030”. This concept has not yet been approved, partly because country ownership of

biodiversity conservation has been diminished since the Ministry of Environment was abolished. The Government of Kazakhstan has also not yet submitted the national action plan for implementing the Programme of Work on Protected Areas (POWPA) of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

As mentioned in Section 3 of this TE report, the project design does not make mention of the 2005-2015 National Action Program (NAP) on Combatting Desertification. The NAP has also not been updated; based on information contained in the GEF project database, there was a proposal submitted in 2013 (GEF Agency Project ID 5172) for “Mobilizing Support to the NAP Alignment and UNCCD Reporting and Review Process”, but it seems that this project was not realized. The draft concept for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in Kazakhstan reportedly includes issues associated with combating desertification; however, there is not yet an approved updated NAP in place.

The project is relevant with respect to globally significant biodiversity, based on project sites situated within key biodiversity areas (KBAs) – see **Table 17**.

Table 17: Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) in the vicinity of project sites

KBA Name	KBA Code	Latitude	Longitude	Comments
Ili River Delta	KZ092	45.41667	74.83333	Ile-Balkhash <i>Reservat</i> situated within this KBA
Altyn-Yemel National Park	KZ101	44.0	78.41667	One of the project target PAs
Lesser Aral Sea	KZ043	46.33333	61.0	This KBA is situated near the Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve, one of the project target PAs
Syrdarya Delta Lakes	KZ044	43.03333	69.51667	Project facilitated land use planning in this area

Source: Kazakhstan KBAs 2018 May 25, www.keybiodiversityareas.org

In summary, the TE evaluator has applied a rating of moderately satisfactory for relevance, due to relatively weak country ownership of the protected area system and the lack of an updated NBSAP or NAP.

4.2.3 Efficiency

Efficiency is rated as: Satisfactory

Supporting Evidence:

- + The GEF funding addressed the key barriers highlighted in the project design.
- + The project has managed to satisfactorily achieve the intended project outcomes within the allocated budget and timeframe.
- + Cofinancing materialized by 36 different partners, including recipient government, UNDP as the GEF agency, NGOs and private sector partners.
- Achievement of Outcome 1 diminished because of delays in approving new protected areas.

As of 18 May 2018, total project expenditures incurred were USD 4,020,814, or 92% of the USD 4,364,000 GEF grant for implementation, as broken down below in **Table 18**.

Table 18: Actual expenditures broken down by project component, 2014-2018

Outcome							Indicative
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018*	Total	Prodoc Budget
Component 1	171,390	246,129	229,913	146,149	16,287	809,868	856,000
Component 2	224,850	594,195	529,195	530,658	104,631	1,983,528	2,341,000
Component 3	447,872	408,334	100,808	47,875	0	1,004,889	950,000
Project Management	131,215	55,486	30,238	186	0	217,125	217,000
Acquisition of Communic Equip	2,524	0	0	0	0	2,524	N/A
Dep Exp Owned - ITC	270	539	539	649	386	2,383	N/A
Dep Exp Owned - Vehicle	0	0	0	498	0.0	498	N/A
Total	978,120	1,304,683	890,692	726,014	121,304	4,020,814	4,364,000
Figures in USD						Balance, 18 May 2018:	343,186

Source of budget figures: approved Project Document

Source of expenditures: Combined Delivery Reports (CDR), provided by UNDP

*2018 expenditures reported through 18 May

Spending on Component 1 and Component 2 activities, USD 809,868 and USD 1,983,528, respectively, is short of the indicative budget amounts of USD 856,000 and USD 2,341,000. Expenditures under Component 3, on the other hand, are 6% higher than the indicative budget allocation of USD 950,000.

Project management costs (USD 217,125) are roughly equivalent to the USD 217,000 allocated. Spending on project management has been skewed towards the earlier years of implementation, with USD 131,215 incurred in 2014, USD 55,486 in 2015, USD 30,238 in 2016, USD 186 in 2017 and zero as of 18 May in 2018. The midterm review raised the issue of project management costs running high by that time; the management response indicated that resources from the other projects in the portfolio will support project management during the second phase of the project. Based on observations on other GEF-financed projects, the TE evaluator feels that the uneven project management costs are more likely attributed to not accounting the professional time of the project manager and thematic managers towards activities implemented in Components 1, 2 and 3. It would have been advisable to have agreed on project management cost allocation at the project inception workshop (lesson learned).

With the project officially starting on 03 September 2013, it took a few months to recruit the project management team and initiate implementation. Expenditures were first reported for calendar year 2014; USD 978,120 were incurred in that first year. A large proportion of that sum is from the grant contribution (USD 252,254) made to the Eco-Damu microcredit scheme managed by FFSA. A separate grant contribution of USD 246,429 is recorded on the 2015 combined delivery report under Component 3 (Atlas 72605).

Expenditures peaked in 2015, when USD 1,304,683 were reported. Spending decreased in 2016 and 2017, but total expenditures in those years exceeded USD 700,000 per year. Financial delivery has been commendably high, including 91% in 2015 and 96% in 2017 (see **Figure 12**).

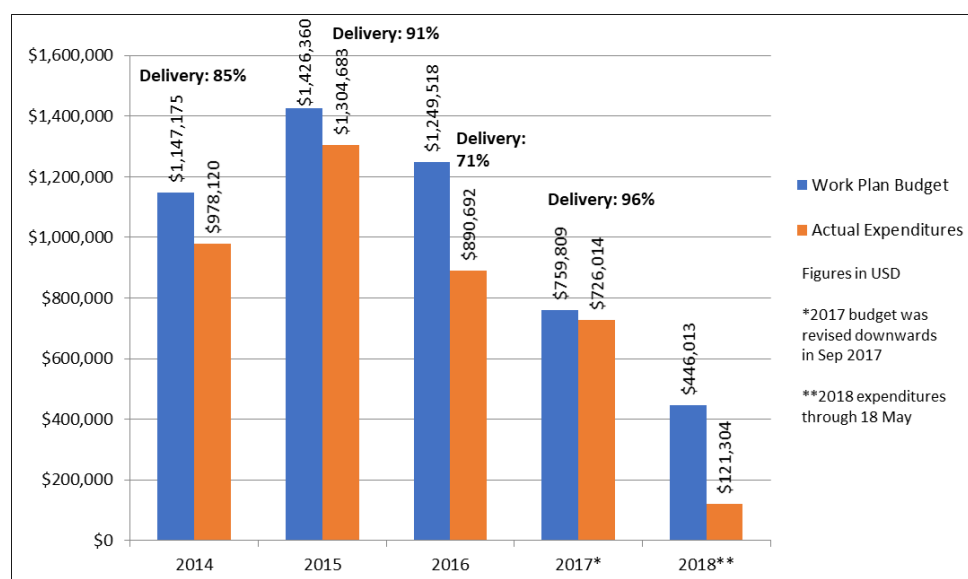


Figure 12: Planned annual budgets and actual expenditures, 2014-2018

Certain efficiency gains were also achieved because of steady devaluation of the Kazakh tenge (KZT) and moderately high inflation rates over the course of the project.

At the start of the project in 2013/2014, the KZT:USD exchange rate was <200, and then increased to approx. 350 by the end of 2015 when the central bank implemented a policy allowing the currency to float freely on the international market (see **Error! Reference source not found.**).

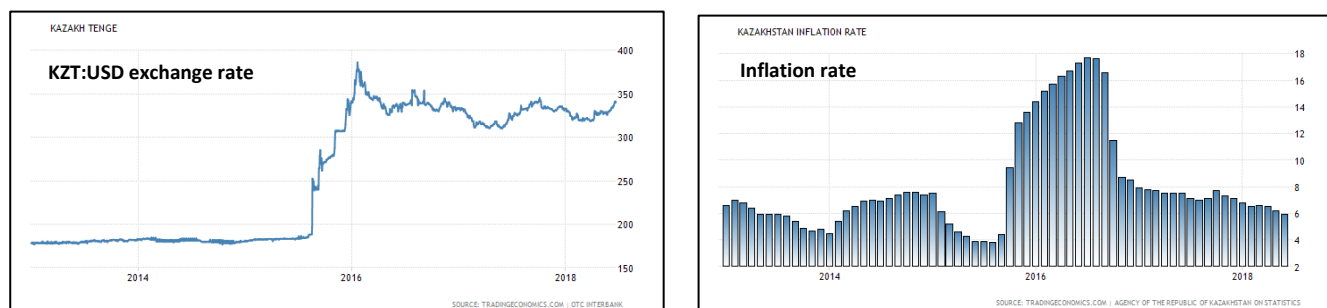


Figure 13: KZT:USD exchange rate and Kazakhstan inflation rate, 2013-2018

Apart from currency devaluation, inflation rates fluctuated during the project implementation timeframe, exceeding 15% during 2016 (see **Figure 13**). Local prices, however, did not increase commensurately with these devaluation and inflation pressures.

According statement of asset reports with the effective date of 31 December 2017, the cumulative purchase values of assets procured at a cost lower than USD 500 and higher than USD 500 were USD 16,457.21 and USD 29,748.87, respectively. These assets do not include equipment and infrastructure related assets purchased through service contracts and grant agreements. Based on information contained in an Excel file provided by the project team on 25 May 2018 that summarizes assets procured through service contracts and grant agreements, the cumulative purchase value over the years 2014 through May 2018 is USD 289,909, with the largest investments made in 2014 (USD 138,234), when vehicles were purchased. It is uncertain if this list captures the full set of equipment and infrastructure acquired on the project. For example, the combined delivery report for 2016 includes USD 154,082 for construction (Atlas 72105) and USD 185,077 for grants (Atlas 72605); whereas, the Excel file provided by the project team reports a total of USD 28,598 in assets for that year. Regarding transfer of assets, the project team informed the TE evaluator that asset transfers have been made and/or are in process; the TE evaluator did not verify these transfers, and it is uncertain whether the asset transfers include those equipment and infrastructure acquired through service contract and grant agreement.

Independent financial audits have been completed of the project, to demonstrate due diligence in the management of funds. Audit reports for fiscal years 2015, 2016 and 2017 were provided to the TE evaluator for review. Each of these three audit reports includes a statement indicating that *"In our opinion, the attached Statement of Expenditure presents fairly, in all material respects, the expenses of US\$... incurred by UNDP output ID 86425, project ID 73767 for the period from 1 January to 31 December ..., in accordance with agreed upon accounting policies and were: (i) in conformity with the approved project budgets; (ii) for the approved purposes of the project; (iii) in compliance with the relevant UNDP regulations and rules, policies and procedures; and (iv) supported by properly approved vouchers and other supporting documents."*

There were no findings reported in the audit reports. The auditors made a couple of observations and recommendations for improving financial management.

4.3 Sustainability

Sustainability is generally considered to be the likelihood of continued benefits after the GEF funding ends. Under GEF criteria each sustainability dimension is critical, i.e., the overall ranking cannot be higher than the lowest one.

Overall:

Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Moderately Likely

Supporting Evidence:

- ✚ Expanded coverage of desert landscapes in national PA system increases protection of regional important ecosystem services and globally significant biodiversity.
- ✚ Improved PA management effectiveness and increased participation of local communities.
- ✚ Land use planning frameworks provide strategic guidance for sustainable development.
- ✚ Materialized cofinancing exceeded confirmed amounts at project entry.
- ✚ Donor support for improving sustainability of conservation financing; e.g., through the BIOFIN¹¹ initiative
- ✚ Scale-able frameworks for improved pasture management practices demonstrated.
- ✚ Rehabilitated water courses and water supply points increase likelihood that ecological health of wetland and delta lake ecosystems will be restored and sustained.
- ✚ Partnerships with NGOs and private sector established.
- ✚ Legislative reforms; including PA public committees (Law on Specially Protected Areas); improved pasture management (Law on Pastures); forest ecosystem services (Forest Code), KZ-METT (FWC decree).

¹¹ BIOFIN (the Biodiversity Finance Initiative) was initiated in response to the urgent global need to divert more finance from all possible sources towards global and national biodiversity goals, as highlighted during the 2010 CBD COP 10 in Nagoya. UNDP and the European Commission launched BIOFIN in 2012 and were joined by the Governments of Germany, Switzerland, Norway and Flanders. There are 30 core countries involved, including Kazakhstan.

- Increasing difficulty in approving new protected areas, e.g., land use conflicts with oil & gas and mineral resource sectors.
- High turnover in public sector diminishes retention of institutional capacity.
- Many PAs remain under funded.
- Uncertain use of the GEF funds contributed to the Eco-Damu microcredit program after the second phase of loan disbursements.
- Stakeholder engagement at the national level was limited.
- Lack of a coherent sustainability strategy for scaling up the sustainable land management demonstration interventions.
- Uncertainties associated with potential impacts of climate change.

Financial Dimension:

Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Moderately Likely

With respect to the financial resources dimension of sustainability, a rating of “moderately likely” has been applied.

Cofinancing contributions from recipient government partners was more than twice the amount confirmed at project entry. Financing of the Altyn Yemel National Park, Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve and Ustyurt State Nature Reserve steadily increased over the period of 2013 to 2018, generally according to inflation rates. Funding for the territorial inspectorates for forestry and wildlife of the Almaty, Kyzylorda and Mangystau oblasts has increased at rates much greater than inflation over this same period; for example, the annual financing for the Almaty oblast inspectorate increased from KZT 55.9 million in 2013 to KZT 184.5 million in 2018. The central government has allocated KZT 116.4 million (approx. USD 350,000) for the recently approved Ile-Balkhash *Reservat* for 2018.

Funding for the operation of PAs, however, remains limited. Many of the PAs in the target landscapes are under-staffed and have insufficient infrastructure. Funding constraints were increased after the global financial crisis originating in 2008, when the government reevaluated financing priorities. A temporary moratorium on hiring new government agency staff was put in force and is expected to be lifted at the end of 2018. And, Efforts are being made to diversify financing for biodiversity conservation, including the BIOFIN initiative.

There are government programs supporting improved agricultural practices and livelihoods for rural residents. The FFSA supports several microcredit programs, many of which focus on livestock. There is an 80/20 pasture improvement program managed by local governments; the government provides 80% of funding support and landowners provide the remaining 20%. Based on interviews with local herders during the TE mission, landowners are reimbursed the money after making the investment; this is untenable for most people, as they are unable (or unaware) to raise the required funds.

The international donor community and NGOs continue to provide substantive support for conservation and sustainable land management in the region. The BIOFIN initiative is one example of such support, and the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea attracts technical and financial assistance from a broad range of donors.

Socioeconomic Dimension:

Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Moderately Likely

A rating of moderately likely has been applied to the socioeconomic dimension in the sustainability analysis.

The land use plans the project supported for the three beneficiary rayons provide important guidance for sustainable land use across a cumulative area of 13 million ha. Integrating these land use plans into territorial development plans is the next step, which requires sustained advocacy from local government leaders and key land use stakeholders. From a practical standpoint, rayon governments will require further technical assistance for maintaining and updating the land use plans.

The improved pasture management interventions completed at six herder farms provide replicable approaches for other herders across the target landscapes. The project developed guidebooks and other knowledge products to facilitate upscaling; local stakeholders will need to spearhead the efforts required to promote scaling up.

The project also supported enterprises and activities through Eco-Damu microcredits and demonstration PES schemes. Further technical and financial assistance will be required to guide these beneficiaries towards biodiversity-friendly

alternative livelihoods and to promote upscaling across the target landscapes. The continuation of the Eco-Damu program after the second phase is expected to expire in 2024 is also uncertain.

The establishment of three PA public committees, the first time such committees were created in Kazakhstan, provide legally mandated stakeholder engagement platforms for increased involvement of local communities in the decision-making processes of protected areas. The participation of local communities in these PA public committees could potentially lead to more genuine collaborative management arrangements, e.g., involving participatory monitoring and patrolling, tourism concessions, etc.

Institutional Framework and Governance Dimension:

Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Moderately Likely

A rating of moderately likely was applied to the institutional framework and governance dimension of the sustainability analysis.

The project was successful in facilitating substantial expansion of the PA system, including the approval of the Ile-Balkhash *Reservat* in June 2018. This is a notable achievement considering the increasing difficulty in establishing new PAs or expanding existing ones, partly due to land use conflicts with the oil & gas and mineral resource sector. The policy framework is in place, including a government decree issued in 2013 (Government Decree 1434, 30 December 2013) that outlines a comprehensive program for further developing the PA network in the country until 2050; execution, however, has been slow during the past few years.

Improved management effectiveness of the PAs in the target landscapes and establishment of PA public committees strengthens governance of these PAs and provide good practice examples for replication across other PAs in national PA system.

The legislative reforms facilitated by the project enhances the likelihood that project results will be sustained; including amending to the Law on Specially Protected Areas with the obligation to established PA public committees for the national-level PAs; improved pasture management approaches integrated into the Law on Pastures; inclusion forest ecosystem services into the Forest Code; and approval of the adapted version of the METT for use in Kazakhstan (KZ-METT) through FWC decree.

Governance of the national PA system has been affected by the institutional restructurings involving the shifting of the FWC from the Ministry of Agriculture to the Ministry of Environment and ultimately back to the Ministry of Agriculture, after the Ministry of Environment was abolished. Placing the management of the PA system under a production-oriented ministry does not seem to be a natural fit, and the committee has limited institutional authority from a national standpoint. This is exemplified in the fact that the NBSAP has not been updated since 1999.

Environmental Dimension:

Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Moderately Likely

A rating of moderately likely was applied to the environmental dimension of the sustainability analysis.

With respect to environmental risks, the potential impacts associated with climate change pose the most significant threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services among the target desert landscapes.

The expanded coverage of desert landscapes in the national PA system and establishment of the 973,765-ha Kapshaguy-Balkhash wildlife corridor increases the level of protection of the regionally important ecosystem services and the globally significant biodiversity they support. The project has generated adaptation benefits, e.g., through strengthening capacities of PA administration staff, increasing awareness among local communities (including primary schools), supporting rehabilitation of water courses and inactive water wells and demonstrating improved pasture management practices, reducing pressures to fragile grasslands.

Land degradation and biodiversity loss in the region is a result of decades of unsustainable land use practices and changing climatic conditions. Restoration of degraded lands and reduction to the vulnerability of biological resources will require sustained and concerted oversight and financing.

4.4 Progress towards impact

Environmental Stress Reduction:

With respect to environmental stress reduction, biophysical changes to degraded desert ecosystems, e.g., in response to improved pasture management practices will require many years to reach a healthy status. The project supported improved pasture management through facilitating enabling conditions at distant pastures for 6 herder households

managing a cumulative total of 32,000 ha. Providing renewable energy sources and rehabilitating water wells allowed the herders to move their livestock from degraded grasslands located close to village centers to more distant pastures. Promoting sustainable land management practices, e.g., growing fodder crops and rotating pastures, reduces stress on these fragile desert ecosystems.

There have been significant reductions in the incidences of illegal logging violations in the Altyn Yemel National Park and Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve between 2013 (baseline) and 2017: 92.5% and 99.6%, respectively. The number of poaching incidents has reduced by 89.9% at the Altyn Yemel National Park over this same period; however, poaching remains a challenge at the Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve, where the number of incidents annually have decreased by only 8.3% between 2013 and 2018.

Improved management effectiveness of the three target PAs and establishment of PA public committees enhance the likelihood that environmental stress will be further reduced. Expansion of the PA system through declaration of the new Ile-Balkhash Reservat and expansion of the Altyn Yemel National Park, and establishment of the wildlife corridor between Altyn Yemel and Ile-Balkhash provide broader ecosystem protection. And, the land use plans for the three rayons covering a cumulative total of 13 million hectares, has delivered the local governments in these regions a useful management tool for promoting environmental stress reduction through sustainable land use.

Environmental Status Change:

Assessment of grassland quality among monitoring sites delineated among the distant pasture lands has indicated reductions of areas heavily affected by soil erosion reduced by 31%, 35% and 24% in the Ile-Balkhash, Aral Syrdarya and Ustyurt areas, respectively. Moreover, of the 32,000-ha total area of the distant pastures, 2,640 ha, or 8.3% were observed to be under-grazed and contained unwanted plant species in 2015-2016 (baseline conditions). By 2017, this area decreased to 1,948 ha, or 6.1% of the total.

Environmental status changes have been reported at the PA scale among the three target protected areas. The numbers of Goitered gazelle (*Gazella subgutturosa*) have increased from a population of 1,800 in 2013 (baseline) at the Altyn Yemel National Park (613,540 ha) to 4,718 in 2017; at the Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve (160,826 ha), the numbers in 2017 were up from 80 in 2013; and at the Ustyurt State Nature Reserve (223,342 ha), the population was 1,000 in 2017, a significant increase from the 270 observed in 2013. The populations of Koulán (*Equus hemionus*) have increased at the Altyn Yemel National Park and Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve; population of Ustyurt argali (*Ovis orientalis*) have increased by approx. 50% between 2013 and 2017; and the populations of Argali (*Equus hemionus*) at the Altyn Yemel National Park, Pallas's sandgrouse (*Syrrhaptes paradoxus*) at Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve and Houbara bustard (*Chlamydotis undulata*) at Ustyurt State Nature Reserve have been stable over the period of 2013-2017.

Contributions to Changes in Policy/Legal/Regulatory Enabling Frameworks:

The project made substantive contributions to enabling legal and regulatory frameworks, including the following:

- The Law on Specially Protected Natural Areas was amended on 15 June 2017 (Article 1, sub-paragraph 21; and Article 3, sub-paragraph 10) with the provision requiring establishment of public committees for the national categories of protected areas.
- Improved pasture management approaches have been integrated into the Law on Pastures (2017) and included in the State Program for the Development of Kazakhstan's Agro-Industrial Complex for 2017-2021 (2017).
- Amendment to the Forest Code (No. 477, 8 July 2003). The amendment made in 2017 includes inclusion of the term "forest ecosystem service" (Article 4); allowing forest entities and users to carry out specified activities through voluntary contributions for forest ecosystem services (Article 72); and provision that expenditures for forest management within state forest estates be also covered from donations and voluntary contributions for forest ecosystem services.
- The FWC has approved the management effectiveness evaluation tool, through FWC Protocol No. 17-1-5/4 (2017). Starting in 2019, national level PAs will be obliged to apply the evaluation tool.

Arrangements to Facilitate Follow-up Actions:

Improved management effectiveness of the Altyn Yemel National Park and the Barsakelmes and Ustyurt State Nature Reserves, measured by the METT, imply strengthened capacities for achieving management objectives of these protected areas. Central government funding for these protected areas has been consistent over the duration of the project implementation timeframe and is expected to continue after project closure. The central government has allocated KZT 116.4 million (approx. USD 350,000) for the recently approved Ile-Balkhash *Reservat* for 2018. The BIOFIN initiative is assisting the Government of Kazakhstan in identifying sustainable financing mechanisms for biodiversity conservation in the country.

Establishment of the PA public committees and amendment to the Law on Specially Protected Areas, obliging national level PAs to establish such committees, provide the foundation for collaborative PA management with local communities.

The second phase of the Eco-Damu microcredit program is scheduled to be implemented from 2020 to 2024, and people living within 50 km of any PA within the national PA system will be eligible to submit a business plan for funding.

There are potential opportunities for following up actions through the second phase of Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management (CACILM), which is supported by GEF and implemented by FAO. The overall objective of “CACILM 2” is to scale up integrated natural resources management (INRM) in drought prone and salt affected agricultural production landscapes in the Central Asian countries and Turkey.

WWF is working on an initiative involving reintroduction of tigers in the Ile-Balkhash region, providing an important partner in the management of the recently approved protected area.

Contributions of other Actors and Factors:

The project has successfully leveraged contributions, financial and technical, from a wide range of partners, including local governments, international and domestic NGOs and donors, and the private sector. These contributions have improved the overall effectiveness of the project and enhance the likelihood that results generated will be sustained after GEF funding ceases.

The FFSA contributed USD 1 million towards the funding of the Eco-Damu microcredit program, as well as USD 0.5 million for operation of the program.

Replication:

The project has facilitated replication potential through strengthening enabling conditions, including improved PA management effectiveness, legislative amendment, demonstration of sustainable land management practices, initiation of payment for ecosystem services (PES) schemes, and enhanced and introduced alternative livelihoods for local beneficiaries. Several guidebooks and knowledge products have also been produced to promote replication; including but not limited to the following:

- Landscape planning methodology
- Methods identifying land-use planning
- Methodology of regulated cattle grazing in pastures
- Methods identifying rotation grazing
- Landscape planning methods
- Methods identifying functional zoning
- Methods of regulated animal grazing in pastures
- Methods identifying rotational grazing
- Methods and practices in forage crop cultivation

5 Assessment of Monitoring & Evaluation Systems

5.1 M&E Design

Monitoring and Evaluation design at entry is rated as: Satisfactory

The M&E plan was developed using the standard UNDP template for GEF-financed projects. The indicative budget for the M&E plan was USD 234,000 (excluding PIU and UNDP staff time and travel expenses), which is 5.8% of the USD 4,020,814 GEF grant for project implementation. The M&E budget included allocations of USD 45,000 (USD 15,000 for start, middle and end) for measurement of means of verification for project purpose indicators and USD 40,000 (USD 8,000 per year) for annual measurement of means of verification for project progress and performance. USD 8,000 were allocated for the project inception workshop, and USD 2,000 per year was budgeted for hosting the project steering committee meetings. The midterm and terminal evaluation were budgeted at USD 30,000 and USD 40,000, respectively, and USD 15,000 was allocated for preparation of the terminal report/publication. An additional USD 6,000 was included for technical and periodic status reports, and USD 8,000 per year was budgeted to cover the costs for financial audits.

Revisions to the project results framework are indicated in the project inception report; for example, four additional indicators were proposed under Outcome 2 and one additional indicator under Outcome 3. There is no evidence that these proposed revisions were approved; the project has reported against the version of the results framework that is included in the project document. (lesson learned)

In general, the project document includes detailed descriptions supporting some of the indicators in the results framework; e.g., regarding restoration of wetlands and delta lakes, improved management of riparian and saksaul forests, and potential beneficiaries of the microcredit scheme. Some of the information in the results framework was, however, unclear; e.g., the basis for the USD 1,600 per month household income level for Indicator No. 11.

5.2 M&E implementation

Implementation of Monitoring and Evaluation Plan is rated as: Satisfactory

The quality of implementation of the M&E plan was found to be generally proactive and effective, facilitated by the project team and supported by contracted external consultants and other service providers. M&E results were documented in project implementation review (PIR) review reports, annual progress reports and stand-alone monitoring reports. The steering committee was an important platform for M&E, providing strategic feedback to issues raised through project reporting and discussions during the meetings. Meetings were convened generally twice per year, providing a reasonably regular frequency for reviewing progress made.

There was room for improvement with respect to results-based management; e.g., certain indicators and baseline figures remain unclear at the time of the TE. For example, the term “landscape management approach” was not clearly defined and the details regarding the baseline household income figure is unknown. The project retained technical specialists to prepare socioeconomic studies, but there was a general lack of monitoring towards impact regarding the efforts made towards strengthening alternative livelihoods in and around the target PAs.

Tracking Tools:

The project was obliged to complete two separate sets of tracking tools, one set for the biodiversity focal area and the other for land degradation. External consultants and specialists were hired to make the baseline, midterm and terminal assessments. Some comments on the tracking tool process and results are summarized below.

Biodiversity tracking tool (GEF-5, BD-1):

- A total of 2-3 people participated in the baseline assessments. For the terminal assessments, 2 people were involved for Altyn Yemel and Barsakelmes, and 8 people participated at Ustyurt. Based on observations on other projects, focus group or workshop format arrangements with cross-sectoral participation are most conducive for completing METT assessments.
- The adapted METT (KZ-METT) for specific use in Kazakhstan was reportedly trialed at the Altyn Yemel National Park. The results of this trial were not available to the TE evaluator for review, and there seems to have been a missed opportunity to carry out a comparative analysis of the results of the GEF-5 METT and KZ-METT assessments.
- Some inconsistencies in the background information for the individual PAs; e.g., number of permanent and temporary staff, annual recurrent costs (excluding staff costs) are comparable to the total financing figures provided by the FWC (which include staff costs).
- Threats to the PAs are inconsistent with records on poaching and illegal hunting violations for the Altyn Yemel National park and Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve.
- Terminal METT assessments are scored a bit high; leaving limited room for improvement and not consistent with the poorly funded and under-staffed conditions observed in the field and indicated by stakeholders during TE interviews.

Land degradation tracking tool (GEF-5, LD-3):

- Sufficient detail is provided in the land degradation tracking tool, with informative comments provided for most of the entries. The LD tracking tool is a bit cumbersome, focusing more on facts and figures and less on results achieved.
- Some of the progress reported in the LD tracking tool appears to be over-estimated. With baseline information collected in 2015/2016, one or two years is insufficient for making reliable estimations of reductions in coverage of degraded lands, etc. Improved water availability is indicated across 53,606 ha, which includes 32,000 of improved pasture management through utilization of distant pastures and the remaining area representing improved management of degraded lands in close vicinity of villages (11,000 ha) and improved conditions where water supply has been rehabilitated (10,606 ha). The evaluator questions the estimation of the impact of restoring six water supply points and rehabilitation of eight water wells.

Midterm review:

The midterm review (MTR) of the project was completed in 2016, with the final version of the report dated 28 October of that year. The MTR presented a comprehensive assessment of progress made and several recommendations were made for improving project performance and enhancing the likelihood for sustainability of results. The recommendations from the midterm review were satisfactorily addressed by the project team during the second half of the implementation timeframe, as summarized below in **Table 19**.

Table 19: Status of MTR recommendations at terminal evaluation

Midterm review recommendation	Status at terminal evaluation
A: Objective	
A1: The project is being successfully implemented to date. There is much that remains to be done and if the project is to become a model GEF project, then the PMU and the partners will have to keep working furiously!	The project continued their concerted implementation efforts after the MTR.
A2: Adapt and grow, where possible. The project's design is generally good but there are aspects that could be further improved (if the project has adequate time and funding), there are additional and additive work it could carry out (see Section 5.2.2 for examples).	The project made a few adaptive changes in response to this recommendation, e.g., two drones were purchased in 2017 for improving monitoring capacities of the PAs in the target landscapes.
A3: Replication plan and measuring impact. For some of the other aspects of the project, it is unclear how i) results will be replicated and ii) how the impact will be measured (see Section 5.2.2 for examples). The PMU should strive to find mechanisms for replication and for measuring the impacts of the work they are carrying out.	The management response to this recommendation indicates that an exit strategy was to be developed; this was not available for review by the TE evaluator. The project did prepare a number of guidelines and knowledge products for facilitating replication.
A4: NBSAP approval. Support the process and try to ensure that the NBSAP is fully approved.	The NBSAP has not yet been developed. A conceptual framework for an updated NBSAP has been prepared, but there are issues with institutional ownership regarding the development, approval and implementation of an updated NBSAP.
B: Outcome 1	
B1: The definition of corridors used by the project (movement of one species of antelope) is limited; if there is sufficient time and resources (without compromising the need to operationalize the corridor(s)), the analysis could be deepened to include other important parameters, especially as corridors are increasingly important under climate change scenarios (see para 41b under Section 4.2.1). The project will have to go through the complicated steps of operationalizing the corridors. Given that this is a relatively complicated process, the sooner the project embarks on getting this done, the better.	The project supported the preparation of the scientific rationale (ENO) for establishment of the Kapshagay-Balkhash corridor and approval of the corridor has been achieved. Moreover, according to the 2017 annual project progress report, the Almaty oblast government has committed an annual allocation of USD 85,000 for management of the corridor and the Arganaty wildlife sanctuary. Sustained operationalization of the corridor remains a concern at the time of the TE, as local governments across three rayons and other stakeholders will need to agree upon monitoring, enforcement, reporting, etc.
B2: If and when the project considers supporting the development (including design and content) of PA visitor's centres, there are some outstanding examples across the region. The UNDP-GEF RTC is Istanbul should be in a position to advise appropriately.	The project provided USD 20,000 and technical assistance towards the upgrading of the visitor center at the Altyn Yemel National Park.
B3: Support the approval of the NBSAP. As suggested in Section 4.2.1, the project partners, including the FWC and the UNDP-CO should do whatever they can to support the approval of the NBSAP as this will, in turn, support the process of extending and establishing further protected areas.	Preparing an updated the NBSAP remains an open issue. In fact, the National Action Program for Combatting Desertification also requires updating.
D: Outcome 3	
D1: Beware of inadvertent impacts. Some of the project activities may lead to negative, inadvertent impacts especially an arid system. The team should remain cognisant and vigilant against such inadvertent impacts and attempt to stave them off before they become significant.	The project was diligent with risk management. It would have been advisable to prepare pasture management plans as part of the improved pasture management interventions, e.g., distant pastures, to provide guidance against unintended consequences.
D2: Be vigilant for the impact of climatic stochasticity. There may be occasions when a particular intervention may appear to fail – but this may be more due to climatic stochasticity than to the actual failure of the intervention. The team and the project partners should remain vigilant to such climatic stochastic events masking the actual results of the interventions.	The project timeframe was generally too short for impacts of climatic stochasticity to be measurable.
D3: Ensure inclusion of marginalised and vulnerable people. It is essential that the project (with the FFSA – the project partner on the "Eco Damu"	The TE evaluator shares concern regarding inclusion of vulnerable groups. Based on information provided by

Midterm review recommendation	Status at terminal evaluation
microcredit scheme) is inclusive of these marginalised and vulnerable people. In addition, the Eco Damu scheme offers an opportunity to include women and women-led households.	FFSA, 30% of the 89 beneficiaries of the Eco-Damu microcredits were women; which is short of the 55% target. Entrepreneurs who have an existing income-generating activity or enterprise and who are capable of preparing a business plan tend not to be from vulnerable groups.
E: Project Management	
E1: As indicated in Section 4.3.3, 86% of the project management budget has been spent to date. The PMU and UNDP-CO should plan how the project management costs will be funded for the remainder of the project's life.	The management response to this recommendation was that resources from other projects in the portfolio would cover project management costs during the second half of the project. Protocols for allocation of project management costs should have been developed and agreed at project inception.
E2: <i>TE to meet a broader range of stakeholders.</i> There were a number of stakeholders that the MTR did not manage to meet. At the end of the project, the TE should aim to meet stakeholders such that it can evaluate all the successes of the project (including stakeholders who have been trained to evaluate the success of the training and how it is being used to deliver impacts).	The TE evaluator concurs with this observation and recommendation. At the subnational level, a wide range of stakeholders were interviewed and visited during the TE mission. Consistent with comments on stakeholder engagement, there was limited involvement of national level stakeholders, apart from the FWC.
E3: Monitoring co-finance. The accuracy of co-finance monitoring could be further improved – using the system that was developed by a UNDP - GEF project in Uzbekistan ⁸ that monetises the time that people spend on project business. Once the system is in place, it would be relatively simple to keep track of all in-kind co-finance.	Cofinancing monitoring was not improved during the second half of the project. Cofinancing partners needed to be contacted at the time of the TE mission for information on materialized cofinancing.
E4: <i>Build system of records.</i> It is always useful to have an organised system of records of everything (including, for example, trainings, outputs – correspondence, reports, plans and policy documents, government approvals, etc.) that the project is and has been doing. Having databases of all such project outputs makes it simple for the project team to produce these things whenever anybody (including an MTR team!) asks for them.	Project records were found to be well managed and readily retrievable.

Consistent with the UNDP MTR guidelines, an overall project rating was not provided in the MTR report. A highly satisfactory rating was given for progress towards achieving the project objective. In the 2017 PIR report there are two references to the project receiving a highly satisfactory rating by the MTR, and some of the interviewed stakeholders referenced this rating during TE interviews. Although one of the MTR recommendations indicated that the project will need to work “furiously” to attain the intended results by closure, the rating applied seems to have been interpreted differently and, possibly, was counter-productive.

6 Assessment of Implementation and Execution

6.1 Quality of implementation

Quality of Implementation (UNDP) is rated as: Satisfactory

The quality of implementation by UNDP as the GEF agency on this project is rated as satisfactory. UNDP supported the Government of Kazakhstan throughout the project life cycle, from conceptualization to project development and throughout implementation. Based on the lack of integration of the NBSAP and the National Action Program on Combating Desertification into the project document, the UNDP could have done a better job advocating for inclusion of these strategic guidance tools into the project design.

The UNDP Country Office (CO) provided strategic guidance to the project, and the Deputy Resident Representative was a member of the project steering committee. The CO also provided extensive implementation support to the implementing partner; including procurement, contracting, human resource management and financial administration. The TE evaluator understands that this supported national implementation modality arrangement is a long-standing practice in Kazakhstan. There are certainly efficiency advantages; however, there are also certain downsides, including the potential for lower levels of country ownership and reduced likelihood that GEF-financed projects are integrated into the operational framework of the government partners.

The USD 700,000 in cofinancing materialized in full, according to cofinancing details provided by the project team. The cofinancing contributions included USD 600,000 in grant financing and USD 100,000 of in-kind support. There was no indication of what the cofinancing covered in the December 2012 cofinancing letter, and project progress reports do not include information on cofinancing details. Cofinancing tracking, in general, was not regularly made.

The UNDP regional technical advisor (RTA) has also been actively involved, providing overall guidance during the project preparation phase, liaising with the Ecosystems and Biodiversity team at UNDP headquarters and with the GEF Secretariat. Project progress reports provided candid accounts of issues, and these were followed up during project steering committee meetings. Internal ratings were reasonable and project risks were monitored. Progress reports also contained constructive recommendations. There is a question of whether the Eco-Damu microcredit program should have been elevated to a critical risk, as indicated as GEF policy in the project document for such financial instruments.

6.2 Quality of execution

Quality of Execution (Forestry and Wildlife Committee) is rated as: Satisfactory

The quality of execution by the Forestry and Wildlife Committee (FWC) is rated as satisfactory. During the early phase of project implementation, the FWC was transferred from the Ministry of Agriculture to the Ministry of Environment and then returned to the Ministry of Agriculture at the end of the inception phase when the Ministry of Environment was abolished. These institutional restructurings contributed to some delays in initiating the project; the Government of Kazakhstan signed the project document in September 2013, the inception workshop was held shortly thereafter in November 2013, but the project effectively started in February 2014 when the National Biodiversity Coordinator hired.

Recruitment of the National Biodiversity Coordinator was part of a new approach institutionalized by the FWC for managing donor funded biodiversity projects. The National Biodiversity Coordinator has a coordination role for each of the projects in the portfolio, there are no separate project managers, rather thematic managers have been hired to support the technical aspects of project implementation. Similarly, a National Project Steering Committee was established to provide oversight for all biodiversity projects. These arrangements provide a higher level of continuity, saves considerable time for recruiting a separate project team for each new project, and facilitates synergies across projects in the portfolio. There are also challenges to consider, including the lack of a project manager to devote full-time effort in facilitating project implementation, particularly for full-size projects. And, whether sufficient time is available in a steering committee meeting that covers multiple projects.

There was institutional capacity in place, as the FWC had executed UNDP supported, GEF-financed projects earlier. The Deputy Chair of the FWC serves as chair of the steering committee, providing high level involvement. The steering committee has a good mix of national and subnational governmental partners, NGOs, private sector (a representative from one joint-stock company) and the UNDP.

The project benefited from effective and consistent project coordination, led by the National Biodiversity Coordinator and the team of qualified thematic managers. Project activities were procured through competitive bidding, and several different service providers were contracted. The members of the project coordination team are contracted through the UNDP and procurements were made under the UNDP procurement system. As mentioned above under the assessment of project implementation, these arrangements probably provide increased levels of efficiency, compared to public procurement and contracting. But, there is a risk that country ownership is diminished over time.

7 Other Assessments

7.1 Need for follow-up

There are a few key issues that should be followed up after project closure, including but not limited to:

- a. Management of the second phase of the Eco-Damu microcredit program;
- b. Operationalization of the wildlife corridor;
- c. Advocacy for upscaling pilot interventions and PES schemes;
- d. Operationalization of the KZ-METT;
- e. Expanding coverage and continued management of the biodata.kz and geomonitoring.kz information management systems; and
- f. Advocacy for the finalization of the approval for the expansion of the Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve, the proposed expansion of the Ustyurt State Nature Reserve, and the establishment of the State Reserved Zone in Mangystau Oblast.

7.2 Materialization of cofinancing

The amount of cofinancing that materialized during project implementation was USD 35,505,025, which is nearly double the amount confirmed at project endorsement (USD 19,179,293). The largest cofinancing contribution was from the recipient government, specifically the FWC, which provided USD 26,839,316 of grant cofinancing – significantly more than the USD 10,000,000 confirmed at project entry.

Impressively, there were 36 separate cofinancing partners, up from 15 at project endorsement, and financing from 25 of those materialized during project implementation. Among the 36 cofinancing partners, 11 were from non-governmental organizations and 13 from the private sector (see **Table 20**).

Table 20: Summary of materialized cofinancing

Cofinancing Source	Number of Cofinancing Partners at Project Endorsement	Number of Actual Cofinancing Partners	Cofinancing Confirmed at Project Endorsement, USD	Actual Cofinancing Materialized, USD
GEF Agency	1	1	700,000	700,000
Recipient Government	3	11	12,629,954	32,024,004
Non-Governmental Organizations	4	11	1,142,720	1,155,514
Multilateral Agencies	1	0	83,000	0
Private Sector	2	13	2,786,667	1,667,707
Academic/Research Institutions	4	0	1,836,952	0
Total:	15	36	19,179,293	35,547,225

A detailed summary of cofinancing contributions is presented in **Annex 6**.

The actual cofinancing is likely greater than reported, as some of the partners had not reported their final contributions by the time the TE report was submitted, including the multilateral agency The Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (carec) and academic/research institutes. The lack of cofinancing information from these partners is reflective of shortcomings with respect to tracking cofinancing contributions during project implementation (lesson learned). It would have been advisable to have developed and implemented cofinancing tracking procedures and regularly report the results, e.g., as part of the annual progress reports.

The limited tracking of cofinancing contributions also indicates that there was limited direct synergies discussed and coordinated with the cofinancing partners.

7.3 Environmental and social safeguards

Environmental and social risks were screened at the project preparation phase; the results of the screening were included as Annex 11 to the project document. No risks were identified in the screening process.

The first part of Question No. 2 in the screening template is: Procurement (in which UNDP's Procurement Ethics and Environmental Procurement Guide need to be complied with). The agreement between FFSA and UNDP regarding the Eco-Damu microcredit program does not make any reference to these UNDP procurement requirements. For that reason, the "procurement" box in Question No. 2 should not have been checked, in the opinion of the TE evaluator, and upstream and downstream risks should have been evaluated.

One example of an upstream planning process with potential downstream environmental and social impacts is the land use plans developed for the three target rayons. Land use planning involves resolving potential conflicts associated with unsustainable resource use, which often result in temporary or long-term access restrictions. Such restrictions could be particularly detrimental to the well-being of vulnerable groups.

Considering the project objective had a specific emphasis on promoting biodiversity-compatible livelihoods, environmental and social safeguard plans should have been developed during the project preparation phase and monitored throughout the implementation phase. (lesson learned)

7.4 Gender concerns

In general, gender mainstreaming has been insubstantial on the project.

A gender analysis was not carried out during the project preparation phase, but Annex 9 to the project document presents an "Action plan for incorporation of gender aspects in the project, with quantifiable baseline and target indicators, as per GEF and UNDP guidance". The 2017 PIR report indicates that the project does not specifically target women or girls as direct beneficiaries; however, the action plan outlined in Annex 9 to the project document includes specific targets for women beneficiaries, including 55% of the estimated 400 beneficiaries of the Eco-Damu microcredit scheme. Among the 89 beneficiaries of the first phase of the Eco-Damu program, 30% were women.

Women are also represented on the three PA public committees established; there are no monitoring data available regarding the specific number of women representatives. The gender action plan also called for women participation in rural coordination councils on joint management of natural resources in the target rayons; there is also no monitoring data available regarding women representation on such councils. Gender aspects were envisaged to be integrated into

territorial development planning; there is no evidence indicating that this was realized. Gender mainstreaming targets were also not integrated into the project results framework.

Women are well represented on the project team and the UNDP CO, and several of the contracted external consultants and other specialists were women.

7.5 Stakeholder engagement

The project did a good job in facilitating stakeholder engagement at the local level, where most of the project activities were carried out. The established PA public committees provide stakeholder engagement platforms for years to come. Inclusion of these committees into the legal framework increase the likelihood they will continue to be maintained after project closure.

The high number of cofinancing partners among NGOs and the private sector further demonstrates the high level of stakeholder involvement. Working in three different regions of the country also resulted in broadened stakeholder engagement.

The steering committee meetings provided opportunities for cross-sectoral stakeholder engagement, between local and national government agencies, as well as interaction of governmental and non-governmental actors. Some of the staff at the FWC and other entities of the Ministry of Agriculture were actively involved on the project, e.g., with respect to the databases, legislative reform and communications. The project design did not include too many activities that involved national level stakeholders and, consequently, apart from the steering committee meetings, there was limited involvement with national governmental stakeholders beyond the Ministry of Agriculture. The project also actively promoted the establishment of the Ile-Balkhash Reservat through advocacy with the national parliament, the presidential administration and the government. Moreover, there was some involvement, for example, with the Ministry of Energy regarding the proposed expansion of the Ustyurt PA.

8 Lessons and Recommendations

The following recommendations have been formulated based upon the findings of the TE.

No.	Recommendation	Responsible Entities	Timeframe
Corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project			
1.	Prepare an exit plan that outlines actions that require follow-up after project closure, including timeframes and responsibilities. A few issues that should be followed up after project closure include but are not limited to the following: (a) management of the second phase of the Eco-Damu microcredit program; (b) operationalization of the wildlife corridor; (c) advocacy for upscaling pilot interventions; (d) operationalization of the KZ-METT; (e) expanding coverage and continued management of the biodata.kz and geomonitoring.kz information management systems; and (f) advocacy for the finalization of the approval for the expansion of the Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve, the proposed expansion of the Ustyurt State Nature Reserve, and the establishment of the State Reserved Zone in Mangystau Oblast.	PMU	Before project closure
2.	Prepare a guidance note for updating the NBSAP and NAP on Combating Desertification, promoting the results of the project in desert ecosystems. Prepare a guidance note containing recommended strategic directions to include in updated versions of the NBSAP and National Action Program on Combating Desertification, regarding conservation and sustainable management of desert ecosystems.	PMU, FWC	Before project closure
3.	Renegotiate the agreement with FFSA, regarding on the utilization of the GEF funds after the second phase of the Eco-Damu microcredit program. Renegotiate the agreement with the FFSA on the continuation (or conclusion) of the Eco-Damu microcredit scheme. If the parties agree to continue the scheme beyond the second phase of loan disbursements, then it would be important, for example, to ensure the contributed GEF funds remain earmarked for biodiversity conservation or restoration of degraded lands, preference should be given to women and other vulnerable groups.	PMU, FWC, FFSA	Before project closure
4.	Complete collection of information on materialized cofinancing and map out the ongoing governmental and non-governmental initiatives in the three target landscapes, as guidance for upscaling. It would be advisable to complete the cofinancing analysis, documenting materialized contributions from all cofinancing partners, and map out the ongoing and planned initiatives in the three target landscapes; this would provide a useful tool for facilitating upscaling.	PMU	Before project closure
5.	Carry out a comparative assessment of the management effectiveness of Altyn Yemel National Park, Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve and Ustyurt State Nature Reserve using the KZ-METT tool and the GEF-5 version of the METT. Carry out a parallel assessment of management effectiveness of the three existing PAs using the adapted KZ version of the METT; there is no evidence of a trial application. This would provide useful guidance for validating and mainstreaming the KZ-METT.	PMU, FWC	Before project closure

No.	Recommendation	Responsible Entities	Timeframe
6.	Ensure equipment, completed infrastructure and other project funded assets are transferred to the intended owners. Project assets funded through services contract and grant agreements are not included in the asset registers; it would be advisable to ensure all project assets are properly transferred before project closure.	PMU, FWC	Before project closure
Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives			
7.	Expand the scope of collaborative PA management arrangements with local communities. It would be advisable to expand the scope of collaborative PA management arrangements with local communities; for example, including participatory monitoring and patrolling, tourism concessionary agreements, etc.	PA administrations, FWC	Within the next 1-2 years
8.	Enhance the microcredit program through provision of an integrated package of services. Consider an integrated package of services rather than just disbursing microcredits; for example, offering insurance, enterprise development (such as management training, marketing support) and welfare related services (e.g., gender awareness training).	FWC, FFSA	Within the next 1-2 years
9.	Develop a complementary project, focusing on ecosystem-based adaptation in desert ecosystems. The strengthened enabling conditions associated with biodiversity conservation and sustainable land management provide solid foundational capacity for implementing ecosystem-based adaptation interventions in the target desert ecosystems.	FWC, UNDP	Within the next 1-2 years

A few examples of good practices and lessons learned regarding project design and implementation are presented below.

Good Practices:

Facilitating legislative amendments to institutionalize best practices demonstrated. The likelihood that the results of the project will be sustained after GEF funding ceases is significantly enhanced by the legislative amendments that have institutionalized the best practices demonstrated; for example, establishing PA public committees, integrating improved pasture management approaches, inclusion of forest ecosystem services into the Forest Code, etc.

Documenting results of pilot interventions and production of knowledge products. The project has done a good job documenting the pilot interventions and producing several informative knowledge products.

Partnering with an experienced microcredit program manager FFSA. Partnering with FFSA on the Eco-Damu microcredit program was a very sensible decision, leveraging their experience in implementing microcredit programs in Kazakhstan.

Promoting synergies among the projects in the biodiversity portfolio. The coordination arrangements instituted at the FWC facilitate synergies among the projects in the biodiversity portfolio.

Facilitating certificates/passports for irrigation canals. Facilitating the certificates (“passports”) for the irrigation canals in the Aral-Syrdarya region was an important contribution. Achieving this legal status, local governments can obtain governmental funding for maintaining the canals.

Cofinancing materialized from 36 separate partners. Obtaining cofinancing from 36 separate partners, including in-kind support from private sector and grant and in-kind contributions from NGOs, was a commendable accomplishment by the project.

Demonstrating innovative biodiversity monitoring techniques. The project provided valuable contributions to the conservation sector through demonstration of innovative biodiversity monitoring techniques, e.g., through unmanned aerial vehicles, aerial surveys, wildlife tagging, etc.

Ownership of the information management systems by the Kazakh Forest Inventory Enterprise, an entity of the FWC. The ownership of the information systems www.biodata.kz and www.geomonitoring.kz was enhanced through involvement during development and assigning responsibility for management to the Kazakh Forest Inventory Enterprise, an entity of the FWC.

Lessons Learned:

Lack of validating baselines and approved changes recorded. Sorting out issues, such as validating baselines and agreeing to performance metrics in the project results framework, should be made as early as possible in the inception phase, and changes recommended should be formally presented to the project steering committee requesting and recording approval.

Gender aspects should be sufficiently integrated into the project results framework. A gender analysis was made as part of project development and indicators and targets established; however, these were not sufficiently integrated into the project results framework and not followed up during project implementation.

Project design not directly aligned with the NBSAP and NAP on Combatting Desertification. Although the NBSAP is dated, issued in 1999, the project design was not directly aligned with it. There was no mention of the 2005-2015 NAP on Combatting Desertification in the project design.

Lack of capital cofinancing for improved pasture management interventions. Some of beneficiaries of the project interventions seemed capable of providing capital cofinancing, e.g., for the renewable energy systems installed. Securing capital cofinancing from these stakeholders might have ensured higher levels of ownership and allowed GEF resources to reach additional beneficiaries.

Limited tracking of cofinancing and coordinating with cofinancing partners. Materialized cofinancing and the number of cofinancing partners exceeded the confirmed cofinancing at project entry; however, tracking of cofinancing was not regularly made and, consequently, there was a general lack of coordination with activities carried out by cofinancing partners.

Risks associated with microcredit program not fully assessed. The risks associated with the Eco-Damu microcredit program were not assessed as part of the social and environmental screening process, and the microcredit disbursement did not follow UNDP environmental and ethics policies and procedures.

Allowing room for improvement on METT assessments. It is important to allow room for improvement on METT assessments; it would be advisable to provide guidance on scoring during the project inception workshop.

Instructions for allocation of project management costs should be clarified at project inception. Allocation of PMU staff costs across the project components should be agreed upon at project inception. If PMU staff are providing substantive contributions to the technical components, then costs should not only be allocated to project management.

Annex 1: TE Mission Itinerary

TIME	ACTIVITY	LOCATION	RESPONSIBLE PERSON
13 May 2018, Sunday			
21.35	Arrival of the international expert in capital Astana. Accommodation in Hotel Esil (Flight Budapest – Astana)	Astana, meeting in the airport	TE evaluator
14 May 2018, Monday			
11.00-12.00	Meeting with the representatives of the Forestry and Wildlife Committee of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan	Astana, UN House, small conference hall (2 nd floor)	Talgat Kerteshev Aray Belgubayeva
13.00-14.00	Lunch		
14.00-17.00	Meeting with the Sustainable Development and Urbanisation Unit and project team. Joint work on logical frames and project results	Astana, UN House, conference hall (1st floor)	Talgat Kerteshev Project experts
18.25-20.05	Flight Astana – Almaty (Flight #KC954). Airline Air Astana. Accommodation in Hotel Kazhol (Almaty city)	Airport of Astana city	Arman Tlepbergenov
15 May 2018, Tuesday			
Ile-Balkhash project area			
Accompanying persons: Talgat Kerteshev – project manager, Arman Tlepbergenov – territorial expert			
07.30-10.30	Travel from Almaty to village Bakanas (Balkhash district, Almaty province), 250 km		Talgat Kerteshev Arman Tlepbergenov
11.00-12.00	Meeting with the deputy governor of Balkhash district, Mr. Kanat Akylbekov	village Bakanas, local government building	Talgat Kerteshev Arman Tlepbergenov
12.00-13.00	Visit to the microcredit project on beekeeping, village Bakanas	village Bakanas	Talgat Kerteshev Arman Tlepbergenov Riash Stambekov (beekeeper)
13.00-14.00	Lunch in Hotel Karoi	village Bakanas	
14.00-15.30	Travel from village Bakanas to village Akkol, 80 km. Visit to the pilot project “Organising distant livestock-rearing in Akkol rural area (distant pasture Mambet)”. Demonstration of project results	Akkol rural area, site Mambet	Talgat Kerteshev Arman Tlepbergenov Oksikbayev B. (farmer)
16.00-18.00	Travel from site Mambet to village Zheltorangi, 70 km. Visit to the pilot project on Asiatic poplar (Kaz. Torangi) preservation. Demonstration of project results	Zheltorangi village, site Sulu Torangi (Beautiful Poplar)	Talgat Kerteshev Arman Tlepbergenov
18.00-19.30	Travel from village Zheltorangi to village Bakanas. Dinner and overnight stay in Hotel Karoi		
16 May 2018, Wednesday			
07.00-11.00	Travel from village Bakanas to village Saryozek, 220 km. While in village Bakanas visit to the forest nursery of Bakanas Forest Protection Entity, meeting with the director of the entity. Inspection of the solar station installed.		Talgat Kerteshev Arman Tlepbergenov Akshabay Nurkhanov
11.00-12.00	Meeting with the deputy governor of Kerbulak district, Mr. Bolusbai Mombayev	village Saryozek, local government building	Talgat Kerteshev Arman Tlepbergenov
12.00-14.00	Travel from village Saryozek to village Shankhanai, 30 km. Visit to the microcredit project on ecotourism. Lunch	village Shankhanai	Talgat Kerteshev Arman Tlepbergenov Serik Akhlasov
14.00-16.00	Travel from village Shankhanai to village Basshy, 60 km.		
16.00-17.00	Village Basshy. Meeting with the chairman of the public committee, Mr. Kh. Akhmetbekov	Office of Altyn-Yemel National Park	Khalimolda Akhmetbekov
	Meeting with the director of Altyn-Yemel National Park. Presentation about national park's activities		Arman Tlepbergenov Khalyk Bayadilov
17.00-18.00	Visit to the pilot school, village Basshy. Presentation of the results of the project on introduction of supplementary environmental education programme	school of village Basshy	Talgat Kerteshev Arman Tlepbergenov
17 May 2018, Thursday			
08.00-12.00	Visit to the territory of Altyn-Yemel National Park: - natural monument “Singing Barkhans” (Singing dune sands); - Scythian mounds “Bes Shatyr”	National park's area	
12.00-16.00	Travel from Altyn-Yemel National Park to Almaty, 100 km.		
16.00-17.00	Almaty city. Visit to the biotechnology laboratory of the National Breeding Center, familiarisation with the results of the programme on artificial growing of Asiatic poplars and other forest crops	Almaty	Talgat Kerteshev Arman Tlepbergenov Sanat Baimukhanbetov
19.45-21.30	Flight Almaty – Astana. Airline Air Astana	Airport of Almaty city	Arman Tlepbergenov
18 May 2018, Friday			
Aral-Syrdaria project area			
Accompanying persons: Akmaral Agazhayeva – landscape planning expert, Yerkin Utegenov – territorial expert			

Terminal Evaluation Report 2018

Improving sustainability of the PA system in desert ecosystems through promotion of biodiversity-compatible livelihoods in and around PAs
UNDP PIMS ID: 4855; GEF Project ID: 4584

07.25-09.00	Flight Astana– Kyzylorda. Airline Air Astana	Airport of Astana city	
		Airport of Kyzylorda city	Yerkin Utegenov
10.00-15.00	Travel from Kyzylorda city to Aralsk town, 450 km. Lunch on the way		
15.00-16.00	Meeting with governor of Aral district, Mr. Mukhtar Urazbayev	Aralsk town, local government building	Akmaral Agazhayeva Yerkin Utegenov Zauresh Alimbetova
16.00-17.00	Meeting with the director, Ms. Alimbetova and staff of the Barsakelmes Reserve.	Aralsk town, reserve’s office	Akmaral Agazhayeva Yerkin Utegenov Zauresh Alimbetova Khanzada Abulgazyieva
	Meeting with the chairman of the public committee, Ms. Khanzada Abulgazyieva		
19.00	Aralsk town. Dinner and overnight stay in hotel		
19 May 2018, Saturday			
09.00-10.00	Travel from Aralsk town to Aralkum village, 50 km. Visit to the pilot project on stabilisation of shifting sands. Demonstration of project results	village Aralkum	Akmaral Agazhayeva Gaukharbek Satekeyev Yerkin Utegenov
10.00-14.00	Travel from village Aralkum to village Bogen, 150 km. Visit to the pilot project on development of distant livestock-rearing in deserts of the Aral region (distant pasture Taur). Lunch in the field	Bogen rural area, site Taur	Akmaral Agazhayeva Yerkin Utegenov Umirbai Utebaliyev (farmer)
14.00-16.30	Travel from site Taur (Bogen village) to site Kaskakulan, 80 km. Demonstration of the restored water hole for koulans (Asiatic wild ass)	Barsakelmes Reserve, Site Kaskakulan	Zauresh Alimbetova Akmaral Agazhayeva Yerkin Utegenov
16.30-19.00	Travel from site Kaskakulan to village Tastak, Zhanakurylys rural area, 70 km. Dinner and overnight stay in the lodge of the Barsakelmes Reserve	Barsakelmes Reserve, lodge	Zauresh Alimbetova Akmaral Agazhayeva Yerkin Utegenov
20 May 2018, Sunday			
07.00-11.00	Travel from site Kaskakulan to village Kamystybas, 100 km.		
11.00-11.30	Village Kamystybas, Visits to guest houses (microcredit projects)	village Kamystybas, recreation area	Akmaral Agazhayeva Yerkin Utegenov Sukhanberdiyev A. Khanzada Abulgazyieva
11.30-13.00	Travel from village Kamystybas to village Akbai, 15 km. Visit to the Aral forest nursery, presentation of the results of the pilot project on water-saving technologies in the forest sector	village Akbai, Aral forestry’s nursery	Akmaral Agazhayeva Yerkin Utegenov Faizulla Smagulov
13.00-14.00	Lunch		
14.00-15.00	Travel from village Akbai to village Bekarystan Bi, 60 km. Visit to the national garments sewing workshop (microcredit project)	village Bekarystan Bi, sewing workshop	Akmaral Agazhayeva Yerkin Utegenov Kuralai Shamuratova (sewer)
15.00-19.00	Travel from village Bekarystan Bi to Kyzylorda, 410 km. Dinner and overnight stay in hotel		Akmaral Agazhayeva Yerkin Utegenov
21 May 2018, Monday			
10.00-11.30	Flight Kyzylorda – Astana (Flight # KC 334)	Meeting in the airport of Astana	
15.00-16.00	Meeting in the Fund for Financial Support of Agriculture under the Ministry of Agriculture of the RK (FFSA)	Astana, FFSA’s office	Talgat Kerteshev Akmaral Agazhayeva
20.55-22.40	Flight Astana - Aktau (Flight #KC 313) Airline Air Astana	Aktau city, airport	Aray Belgubayeva Shadiyar Urkimbayev
23.30	Accommodation in Hotel Zheruiyk		
22 May 2018, Tuesday			
Ustyurt project area			
Accompanying persons: Aray Belgubayeva – expert in protected areas, Shadiyar Urkimbayev – territorial expert			
07.30 - 09.00	Travel from Aktau city to Beibit farm, 150 km	Karakiya district	Aray Belgubayeva Shadiyar Urkimbayev
09.00-09.30	Visit to the microcredit project on vegetable production in greenhouses	Beibit farm’s site Kuryk rural area	Aray Belgubayeva Shadiyar Urkimbayev Mukhanbetov (farmer)
09.30-10.00	Travel from Beibit farm’s site to village Kuryk	village Kuryk, Karakiya district	Aray Belgubayeva Shadiyar Urkimbayev
10.00-11.00	Meeting with the acting governor of Karakiya district, Mr. K.A. Bekov	village Kuryk, Karakiya district	Aray Belgubayeva Shadiyar Urkimbayev
11.00-12.00	Travel from village Kuryk to site Tulpar, 50 km	Kuryk rural area, site Tulpar	Aray Belgubayeva Shadiyar Urkimbayev
12.00-13.00	Visit to the pilot project aimed at improving conditions for the development of distant livestock rearing in desert rangelands		
13.00-15.00	Travel from Tulpar farm to Zhanaozen town	Karakiya district	Aray Belgubayeva

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			Shadiyar Urkimbayev
15.00-15.30	Lunch	Zhanaozen town	
15.30-16.30	Meeting with the staff of the Ustyurt Reserve. Presentation about reserve's activities	Zhanaozen town, office of Ustyurt Reserve	Aray Belgubayeva Shadiyar Urkimbayev Zhalgaz Ustadov
16.30-19.30	Travel from Zhanaozen town to area Beket Ata, 160 km	Karakiya district	Aray Belgubayeva Shadiyar Urkimbayev
19.30-20.00	Visit to the underground mosque Beket Ata, historical and cultural site, pilgrimage centre	Area Beket Ata, Karakiya district	
20.00	Dinner and overnight stay		
23 May 2018, Wednesday			
07.00-08.30	Travel from area Beket Ata to site Mamek Kazgan, 90 km	Ustyurt Reserve's area, Karakiya district	Aray Belgubayeva Shadiyar Urkimbayev
08.30-08.45	Visit to site Mamek Kazgan (northern lodge of Ustyurt Reserve). Habitat for Ustyurt argali, location of historical and cultural monuments (necropolis Baluaniyaz Ata)		
08.45-09.45	Travel from site Mamek Kazgan to site Kokosem, 60 km	Ustyurt Reserve's area, Karakiya district	Aray Belgubayeva Shadiyar Urkimbayev
09.45-10.00	Visit to site Kokosem. The only fresh water well in Ustyurt area. Habitat for Ustyurt argali, goitered gazelle, marbled polecat, caracal, wild cat, black vulture, scavenger		
10.00-11.00	Travel from site Kokosem to site Kenderli, 70 km	Ustyurt Reserve's area, Karakiya district	Aray Belgubayeva Shadiyar Urkimbayev
11.00-11.15	Visit to site Kenderli. Part of the Great Silk Road. Habitat for goitered gazelle, Ustyurt argali, golden eagle. There is a salt spring (7 km length)		
11.15-12.45	Travel from site Kenderli to site Onere, 90 km	Ustyurt Reserve's area, Karakiya district	Aray Belgubayeva Shadiyar Urkimbayev
12.45-14.00	Visit to site Onere. Depression Karyn Zharyk, there is a salt spring (8 km length), habitat for goitered gazelle, mouflon, honey badger. Field lunch (site Elchibek)		
14.00-14.30	Travel from site Onere to site Kansu, 30 km	Ustyurt Reserve's area, Karakiya district	Aray Belgubayeva Shadiyar Urkimbayev
14.30-15.00	Visit to site Kansu. Habitat for honey badger, goitered gazelle, dune cat, Ustyurt argali		
15.00-17.00	Travel from site Kansu to Zhanaozen town, 130 km	Karakiya district	Aray Belgubayeva Shadiyar Urkimbayev
17.00-19.00	Travel from Zhanaozen town to Akau city, 150 km		
19.00-21.00	Dinner	Aktau city	Aray Belgubayeva Shadiyar Urkimbayev
21.30-22.30	Travel from Akau city to the airport of Aktau, 30 km		
23.40-03.10	Flight Aktau-Astana. Airline Air Astana (Flight # KC 314)	-	Aray Belgubayeva
24 May 2018, Thursday			
10.00-13.00	Meeting with the project team. Wrap-up meeting of the terminal evaluation mission	Astana, project's office	Talgat Kerteshev Project experts
13.00-14.00	Lunch		Project experts
14.00-18.00	Meeting with the project team. Wrap-up meeting of the terminal evaluation mission	Astana, project's office	Talgat Kerteshev Project experts
25 May 2018, Friday			
09.00-10.30	Meeting with NGO ACBK representative	Astana, project's office	Project experts
10.30-12.00	Meeting with Deputy Chairperson of FWC	Astana, project's office	Talgat Kerteshev Project experts
12.00-13.30	Lunch		
14.00-16.00	Debriefing at UNDP CO	Astana	Project experts
26 May 2018, Saturday			
10.00-15.00	Meeting with project experts	Astana	Project experts
27 May 2018, Sunday			
09.00-18.00	Consolidate findings	Astana	TE evaluator
22:25	Departure of the international expert from Astana.	Astana, airport	TE evaluator

Annex 2: Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Criteria Questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
Relevance: Is the project relevant with respect to the environmental and development priorities at the local, regional and national levels?			
To what extent is the principle of the project in line with national priorities?	Level of participation of the concerned agencies in project activities. Consistency with relevant strategies and policies.	Minutes of meetings, Project progress reports, national and regional strategy and policy documents	Desk review, interviews
To what extent is the project aligned to the main objectives of the GEF focal area?	Consistency with GEF strategic objectives	GEF Strategy documents, PIRs, Tracking Tools	Desk review, interview with UNDP-GEF RTA
To what extent is the project aligned to the strategic objectives of UNDP?	Consistency with UNDP strategic objectives	UNDP Strategic Plan, Country Programme Document	Desk review, interview
Effectiveness: To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved?			
Assessment of progress made toward achieving the indicator targets agreed upon in the logical results framework			
Sustainability: To what extent are there financial, institutional, social-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?			
What evidence is available showing sufficient funding has been secured to sustain project results?	Financial risks	Progress reports, sectoral plans, budget allocation reports, testimonial evidence	Desk review, interviews
How have individual and institutional capacities been strengthened, and are governance structures capacitated and in place to sustain project results?	Institutional and individual capacities	Progress reports, testimonial evidence, training records	Desk review, interviews
What social or political risks threaten the sustainability of project results?	Socio-economic risks	Socio-economic studies, macroeconomic information	Desk review, interviews
Which ongoing circumstances and/or activities pose threats to the sustainability of project results?	Risks to sustainability	Sectoral plans, progress reports, macroeconomic information	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Have delays affected project outcomes and/or sustainability, and, if so, in what ways and through what causal linkages?	Impact of project delays	Progress reports	Desk review, interviews
Impact: Are there indications that the project has contributed to, or enabled progress toward long lasting desired changes?			
What verifiable environmental improvements have been made?	Verifiable environmental improvements	Progress reports, sectoral plans, municipal development plans	Desk review, interviews, theory of change analysis
What verifiable reductions in stress on environmental systems have been made?	Verifiable reductions in stress on environmental systems	Progress reports, sectoral plans, municipal development plans	Desk review, interviews, theory of change analysis
How has the project demonstrated progress towards these impact achievements?	Progress toward impact achievements	Progress reports, sectoral plans, municipal development plans	Desk review, interviews, theory of change analysis
Efficiency: Was the Project implemented efficiently, in-line with international and national norms and standards?			
How was the project efficient with respect to incremental cost criteria?	Incremental cost	National strategies and plans, progress reports	Desk review, interviews

Evaluation Criteria Questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
To what extent were the project objective and outcomes realized according to the proposed budget and timeline?	Efficient utilization of project resources	Progress reports, financial records	Desk review, interviews
Country Ownership:			
How are project results contributing to national and subnational development plans and priorities?	Development planning	Government approved plans and policies	Desk review, interviews
Which governments policies or regulatory frameworks were approved in line with the project objective?	Policy reform	Government approved plans and policies	Desk review, interviews
How have governmental and other cofinancing partners maintained their financial commitment to the project?	Committed cofinancing realized	Audit reports, project accounting records	Desk review, interviews
Stakeholder Involvement and Partnership Arrangements:			
How has the project consulted with and made use of the skills, experience, and knowledge of the appropriate government entities, NGOs, community groups, private sector entities, local governments, and academic institutions?	Effective stakeholder involvement	Meeting minutes, reports, interview records	Desk review, interviews, field visits
How were partnership arrangements properly identified and roles and responsibilities negotiated prior to project approval?	Partnership arrangements	Memorandums of understanding, agreements	Desk review, interviews
How have partnerships influenced the effectiveness and efficiency of project implementation?	Effective partnerships	Progress reports, interview records	Desk review, interviews, field visits
How have relevant vulnerable groups and powerful supporters and opponents of the processes been properly involved?	Inclusive stakeholder involvement	Meeting minutes, reports, interview records	Desk review, interviews, field visits
How has the project sought participation from stakeholders in (1) project design, (2) implementation, and (3) monitoring & evaluation?	Stakeholder involvement	Plans, reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Catalytic Role:			
How has the project had a catalytic or replication effect in the country?	Catalytic effect	Interview records, municipal development plans	Desk review, interviews
Synergy with Other Projects/Programs			
How were synergies with other projects/programs incorporated in the design and/or implementation of the project?	Collaboration with other projects/programs	Plans, reports, meeting minutes	Desk review, interviews
Preparation and Readiness			
Were project objective and components clear, practicable, and feasible within its time frame?	Project coherence	Logical results framework	Desk review, interviews

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Evaluation Criteria Questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
How were the capacities of the executing institution(s) and its counterparts properly considered when the project was designed?	Execution capacity	Progress reports, audit results	Desk review, interviews
Were counterpart resources, enabling legislation, and adequate project management arrangements in place at Project entry?	Readiness	Interview records, progress reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Financial Planning			
Did the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allowed management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allowed for timely flow of funds?	Financial control	Audit reports, project accounting records	Desk review, interviews
Has there been due diligence in the management of funds and financial audits?	Financial management	Audit reports, project accounting records	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Has promised cofinancing materialized?	Realization of cofinancing	Audit reports, project accounting records	Desk review, interviews
Supervision and Backstopping			
How have GEF agency staff members identified problems in a timely fashion and accurately estimate their seriousness?	Supervision effectiveness	Progress reports	Desk review, interviews
How have GEF agency staff members provided quality support, approved modifications in time, and restructured the project when needed?	Project oversight	Progress reports	Desk review, interviews
How has the implementing agency provided the right staffing levels, continuity, skill mix, and frequency of field visits for the project?	Project backstopping	Progress reports, back-to-office reports, internal appraisals	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Monitoring & Evaluation			
Were intended results (outputs, outcomes) adequately defined, appropriate and stated in measurable terms, and were the results verifiable?	Monitoring and evaluation plan at entry	Project document, inception report	Desk review, interviews
How has the project monitoring & evaluation plan been implemented?	Effective monitoring and evaluation	Progress reports, monitoring reports	Desk review, interviews
How has there been focus on results-based management?	Results based management	Progress reports, monitoring reports	Desk review, interviews
Mainstreaming			
How were gender issues integrated in project design and implementation?	Greater consideration of gender aspects.	Project document, progress reports, monitoring reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
How were effects on local populations considered in project design and implementation?	Positive or negative effects of the project on local populations.	Project document, progress reports, monitoring reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits

Annex 3: List of People Interviewed

Name	Position	Organization
Mr. Kairat Ustemirov	Deputy Chairman (also chairman of project board)	Forestry and Wildlife Committee
Ms. Victoria Baigazina	Programme Associate	UNDP Kazakhstan
Mr. Maxim Vergeichik	Regional Technical Advisor	UNDP, Europe and CIS Region
Mr. Talgat Kerteshev	Biodiversity National Projects Manager	UNDP
Ms. Akmaral Agazhayeva	National Expert in Territorial Landscape Planning /Team Leader	UNDP
Ms. Aray Belgubayeva	National expert on PAs and Biodiversity	UNDP
Ms. Aizhan Baimukanova	Project Specialist on Capacity Building and Logistics	UNDP
Mr. Sultan Khudaibergenov	Communications & PR Specialist	UNDP
Mr. Iskakov Murat	Managing Director	Fund for Financial Support of Agriculture
Ms. Maria Genina	PES Consultant	Independent contractor
Mr. Grigory Mazmanians	Central Asia Programme Director	WWF

Ili-Balkhash Project Area

Name	Position	Organization	Venue
May 15, 2018			
Baurzhan Temirgaliuli	Deputy akim of Balkhash region	Akimat of Balkhash region	Bakanas village, Balkhash district, akimat building
Stambekov Ryash	beekeeper, participant of microcredit program "Eco-Damu"	self-employed sole trader	Bakanas village
Oxikbayev Baurzhan	farmer, head of "Tan Sari" p/f	"Tan Sari" p/f	Akkol r/d, "Mambet" site
Sergaziyev Kanat	Head of Kurinti Forestry SI	Kurinti Forestry SI	Zhelitorangy r/d, section "Sulu Torangi"
May 16, 2018			
Aliyev Bagdat Baishalovich	akim of Kerbulak region	akimat of Kerbulak region	Saryozek village, building of akimat
Mombayev Bolusbai Togusbayevich	deputy akim of Kerbulak region	akimat of Kerbulak region	Saryozek village, building of akimat
Akhlasov Serik	head of "Alaman" p/f, a participant in the micro-credit program "Eco-Damu"	"Alaman" p/f	Shankhanai village, yurt town
Ahmetbekov Kamimolda	Chairman of the PCSE "Altyn Emel"		Bashshi village, national park building
Bayadilov Khalyk	Director of PCSE "Altyn Emel"	PCSE "Altyn Emel"	Bashshi village, national park building
Turgambayev Daniyar	Deputy director of PCSE "Altyn Emel"	PCSE "Altyn Emel"	Bashshi village, national park building
May 17, 2018			
Baimuhanbetov Sanat	Director of the Republican Forestry Selection Center	Republican Forestry Selection Center	Almaty, the building of the breeding center
Genina Mariya	Expert on IOP		Almaty, the building of the breeding center

Aral-Syrdarya Project Area

Name	Position	Organization	Venue
May 18, 2018			
Urazbayev Mukhtar	Akim of the Aral region	Akimat of the Aral region	Aralsk city, akimat building
Zhugunissova Bakytzhamal	Head of the Public Association "Aral Aelderi"	Public Association "Aral Aelderi"	Aralsk city, akimat building
Satekeyev Gaukharbek	Deputy Director of the Barsakelmes Reserve	Barsakelmes Reserve	Aralsk city, reserve office
Yessenova Alma	Specialist on environmental education	Barsakelmes Reserve	Aralsk city, reserve office

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Abulgaziyeva Khanzada	Chairman of the Social Council at the Barsakelmes SNR, a participant in the micro-credit program "Eco Damu"	individual entrepreneur	Aralsk city, reserve office
May 19, 2018			
Kaniyev Khamit	Representative of PA "Baitak Dala"	PA "Baitak Dala"	Aralkum village, a pilot site
Sadykbayev Saken	Akim of r/d Aralkum	Akimat of r/d Aralkum	Aralkum village, a pilot site
Kyrbassov Bakhtybek	The elder of Aralcum village	The resident of Aralcum village	Aralkum village, a pilot site
Muratbaiuly Adilet	The supervisor of the pilot site	The resident of Aralcum village	Aralkum village, a pilot site
Umetbaliyev Umirbay	The head of Zhalgas p/f, a farmer	Zhalgas p/f	Bogen r/d, the site "Tauir"
Andyzbayev Shomen	Akim of r/d Bogen	Akimat of r/d Bogen	Bogen r/d, the site "Tauir"
May 20, 2018			
Dulmaganbetov Nurzhau	Akim of r/d Kamystybas	Akimat of r/d Kamystybas	Kambash Lake Recreational Area
Smagulov Faizulla	Director of the Aral Forestry SI	Aral Forestry SI	Akbay village, Aral region, the territory of the Aral tree nursery
Shamuratova Kuralay	participant of the Microcrediting Program "Eco Damu", seamstress	individual entrepreneur	Bekarstan bi village, Kazalinsky district

Annex 4: List of Information Reviewed

1. Project documents

- 1) GEF Project Identification Form (PIF)
- 2) Project Document
- 3) Social and environmental screening (annex to project document)
- 4) CEO Endorsement Request
- 5) Project Inception report
- 6) Midterm review (MTR)
- 7) Management response to midterm review recommendations
- 8) Annual Project Implementation Review (PIR) reports
- 9) Annual Project Reports
- 10) Annual Work Plans
- 11) Project steering committee meeting minutes (Feb 2014, Jan 2015, July 2015, Jan 2016, Jun 2016, Jan 2017, Jul 2017, Jul 2018)
- 12) Financial audit reports (2015, 2016, 2017)
- 13) Combined delivery reports (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 (through 18 May), broken out by outcomes
- 14) Statement of assets and equipment, below USD 500 value
- 15) State of assets and equipment, above USD 500 value
- 16) Project GEF BD-1 Tracking Tool: baseline, midterm and terminal assessments
- 17) Project GEF LD-3 Tracking Tool: baseline, midterm and terminal assessments
- 18) Actual cofinancing realized by the end of the project (Excel file provided by project team)
- 19) Agreement between FFSA and FWC on joint implementation of the microcredit program Eco-Damu
- 20) Letter from FWC dated 14 June 2018, including a summary of cofinancing 2013-2018, wildlife monitoring results and compliance incident report
- 21) Land use plans (Aral, Balkhash, Kazaly rayons)
- 22) Rayon territorial development plans (Aral, Balkhash, Kazaly rayons)
- 23) Socioeconomic assessment reports (Aral, Ile-Balkhash and Ustyurt regions)
- 24) Extract from Forest Code regarding inclusion of forest ecosystem services
- 25) Internal report, calculation of herder household income
- 26) Government Resolution 17043/381, 29 June 2018, on the establishment of the Ile-Balkhash *reservat*
- 27) Project pilots publication, 2017
- 28) Project produced knowledge products
- 29) Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Land Management, Aral-Syrdarya Project Area
- 30) Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Land Management, Ile-Balkhash Project Area
- 31) Certificates of irrigation canals in Aral region
- 32) Report on Asiatic poplars, 2016
- 33) Report on baseline conditions of demonstration improved pasture management sites, 2015-2016
- 34) Report on assessment of conditions of demonstration pasture management sites, 2018
- 35) Payment for ecosystem services (PES) guidelines, 2017

36) Agreement on implementing PES scheme in Aral, 2017

37) Standard agreement on public PA committees, 2017

38) Summary report of Eco-Damu projects, 2017

2. UNDP documents

39) Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), 2010-2015

40) Country Programme Document (CPD), 2010-2015

41) Country Programme Document (CPD), 2016-2020

42) National Human Development Report, 2016 (Sustainable Development Goals & Capacity Based Development in Regions of Kazakhstan)

3. GEF documents

43) GEF-5 focal area strategic Programme Objectives

4. Other documents

44) National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, 1999

45) National Action Program on Combatting Desertification, 2005-2015

46) The 5th National Report of Kazakhstan to the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2014

47) FFSA Annual Report, 2016

48) The Biodiversity Financial Needs Assessment in Kazakhstan, 2016

Annex 5: Matrix of Rating Achievement of Project Objective and Outcomes

Indicator	Baseline	End of Project target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
Objective: To enhance the sustainability of protected areas in globally important desert and semi-desert ecosystems by expanding their geographic coverage, promoting a landscape approach, and supporting biodiversity-compatible livelihoods in and around PAs			TE Rating: Satisfactory	
1. Coverage of underrepresented Southern desert in the PA System of Kazakhstan	1,591,800 ha (5.3% of ecological zone)	By 2015 coverage of Southern desert in PA system increases by 2,682,032 ha (8.9% of the ecological zone). This increase comes from the following: - Establishment of 1 new PA (Mangystau State Reserved Zone) covering 2,676,262 ha - Expansion of 1 existing PA (Barsakelmes State Nature Reserve) by 5,770 ha By 2020 ¹² coverage of Southern desert in PA system increases by approximately 970,000 ha (3.2% of the ecological zone). This increase comes from: - Expansion of 1 existing PA (Ustyurt State Nature Reserve) by approximately 220,000 ha - Establishment of a wildlife corridor between Barsakelmes and Ustyurt PAs of approximately 750,000 ha	New protected area in the Southern desert ecosystem: • Mangystau zakaznik (wildlife sanctuary): 316,141 ha Coverage of Southern desert in PA system increased to 1,907,941 ha (6.3% of the ecological zone)	Partially Achieved
2. Coverage of underrepresented Mountain-valley subtype desert in the PA System of Kazakhstan	99,704 ha (3.3% of ecological zone)	By 2015 coverage of Mountain-valley subtype desert in PA system increases by 1,602,504 ha (53.4% of the ecological zone). This increase comes from the following: - Establishment of 1 new PA (Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve) covering 442,296 ha - Expansion of 1 existing PA (Altyn Yemel State National Nature Park) by 460,208 ha - Establishment of a wildlife corridor between Altyn Yemel and Ile-Balkhash PAs of 700,000 ha By 2020 ¹³ coverage of Mountain-valley subtype desert in PA system increases by approximately 30,000 ha (1% of the ecological zone). This increase comes from the following: - Establishment of 1 new PA (Arganaty) covering approximately 30,000 ha	New and expanded protected areas in the Mountain-valley subtype desert ecosystems: • New Ile-Balkhash State Nature Reserve: 415,164.2 ha • Expansion of Altyn Yemel National Park: 146,500 ha • New Arganaty zakaznik (wildlife sanctuary): 186,960 ha Coverage of Mountain-valley subtype desert ecosystem in PA system increased to 848,328 ha (25% of the ecological zone) Established Kapshaguy-Balkhash wildlife corridor: 973,765 ha	Mostly Achieved
3. Size of flagship species populations of desert & semi-desert ecosystems in target areas remains at the baseline level or increase	Ile Balkhash Project Area:			Achieved
	Goitered gazelle: 1,800	1800≥	4,718	
	Koulan: 1,700	1700≥	3,417	
	Argali: 205	205≥	215	

¹² Although the project is expected to end in 2018, target indicators for PAs and corridors to be established/ expanded under Zhasyl Damu 2015-2020 are set for 2020 as this is the official time frame for Zhasyl Damu. However, the project expects to achieve much of the ground work for establishment/ expansion of these PAs and corridors by 2018 through supporting the government in preparation of ENOs and TEOs for these areas along with necessary consultations. But it may not be until the end of 2020 that the government is able to formally gazette these areas. Target hectare estimates for 2020 remain estimates at this stage and will be confirmed during project implementation.

¹³ Ibid.

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Indicator	Baseline	End of Project target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
	Aral Syrdarya Project Area:			Achieved
	Goitered gazelle: 80	80≥	109	
	Koulun: 340	340≥	527	
	Pallas's sandgrouse: 407	407≥	460	
	Ustyurt Plateau:			Achieved
	Ustyurt argali: 1,020	1020≥	1,521	
	Goitered gazelle: 270	270≥	1,000	
	Houbara bustard: 60	60≥	76	
Outcome 1: PA system of Kazakhstan contains representative samples of desert and semi-desert ecosystems under various conservation regimes and is effective in protecting ecosystems and ecological processes			TE Rating: Moderately Satisfactory	
4. Enhanced management effectiveness of existing PAs that are expanded under the project (as measured by METT)	Altyn Yemel: 50 (49%)	75%	79 (77.5%)	Achieved
	Barsakelmes: 42 (41.2%)	67%	75 (73.5%)	
	Ustyurt: 43 (42.2%)	68%	67 (65.7%)	
5. Enhanced management effectiveness of new PAs that are established under the project (as measured by METT)	Ile-Balkhash: 19 (18.6%)	44%	22 (21.6%)	Unlikely to be achieved by project closure
	Mangystau: 7 (6.9%)	32%	9 (8.8%)	
	Arganaty: 9 (8.8%)	34%	30 (29.4%)	
Outcome 2: Landscape-level conservation planning and management are developed and implemented in target desert and semi-desert environments			TE Rating: Satisfactory	
6. Territorial development plans employing landscape management approach	0 ha	9 million ha	Land use plans completed for three rayons: Aral and Kazaly in the Kyzylorda oblast and Balkhash rayon in the Almaty region, covering a cumulative area of 13 million ha. The land use plans are not yet operationalized within territorial development plans, and not fully meeting landscape management approach.	Partially achieved
7. Number of hectares of restored wetlands & delta lakes	0 ha	2,202 ha	Rehabilitation of irrigation canals in the Aral-Syrdarya region under implementation. This work will facilitate restoration of wetlands and delta lakes over time.	Marginally achieved
8. Number of hectares of riparian & saksaul forests under sustainable management	0 ha	18,048 ha	6,327 ha (reported in Jun 2017)	Marginally achieved
9. Quality and quantity of vegetation cover in rangelands in 3 rural districts	Hectares of land with significant signs of soil erosion caused by overgrazing in selected plots ¹⁴	Reduction of the size of the area heavily affected by soil erosion by at least 15% in the Ile Balkhash area and 20% in the Aral Syrdarya target area	Reduction of area heavily affected by soil erosion: Ile-Balkhash: 31% (27.5% baseline to 19% in 2017) Aral Syrdarya: 35% (16.7% to 10.8%) Ustyurt: 24% (21% to 16%)	Achieved

¹⁴ Baseline to be estimated at the beginning of the project once monitoring sites are identified and primary data are collected.

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Improving sustainability of the PA system in desert ecosystems through promotion of biodiversity-compatible livelihoods in and around PAs

UNDP PIMS ID: 4855; GEF Project ID: 4584

Indicator	Baseline	End of Project target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
10. Presence of plant species which negatively affect the function of distant rangelands	Hectares of distant rangelands with significant signs of natural succession due to under grazing ¹⁵	Unwanted plant species in at least 4 rangeland monitoring plots are less than 5% surface coverage	6.1% (by 2017)	Mostly Achieved
11. Average income of families participating in the measures on pasture management	US\$ 1,600	Increase by at least 20%	The income generating potential of the six participating herder households have clearly increased because of the improved pasture management interventions. However, the baseline household income figure is unclear and, therefore, the level of improvement cannot be assessed.	Unable to assess
12. Number of farmer associations that use the experiences of this project as a model	No projects which use participatory bottom-up approaches in the target areas	At least 15 farmer associations or rural consumer cooperatives in the Aral Syrdarya target area and 25 in the Ile Balkhash area use the experience of this project as a model.	No evidence of farmer associations or rural consumer cooperatives using the experience of the project as a model. Anecdotal evidence indicates that improved pasture management practices have been used by 58 herder farms.	Partially Achieved
Outcome 3: Community involvement in conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in and around PAs is enhanced			TE Rating: Satisfactory	
13. Reduction in poaching and illegal logging at target PAs (annual) per unit of patrolling effort, compared with year of initial patrolling	Ile-Balkhash Target Area:			Partially Achieved
	Illegal logging violations: 67 Poaching violations: 436 Total violations: 503	Reduction by 40%	Illegal logging violations: 5 (92.5% reduction) Poaching violations: 44 (89.9% reduction) Total violations: 49 (90.3% reduction)	
	Aral-Syrdarya Target Area:			
	Illegal logging violations: 241 Poaching violations: 157 Total violations: 398	Reduction by 40%	Illegal logging violations: 1 (99.6% reduction) Poaching violations: 144 (8.3% reduction) Total violations: 145 (63.6% reduction)	
14. Functioning stakeholder engagement mechanism for transparency in PA planning and management	No PA public committees for mobilizing stakeholders in and around PAs in the Ile-Balkhash and Aral-Syrdarya target areas	Two (2) operational PA public committees	Three public committees established and operationalized at the Altyn Yemel National park and the Ustyurt and Barsakelmes State Nature Reserves.	Achieved
15. Number of PES agreements under implementation in project area	0	2 by project end	2 PES pilot schemes have been initiated, both in the Aral-Syrdarya region, with one on eco-tourism and the other on small-scale freshwater fisheries improvement.	Achieved
16. Share of registered land users and low-income rural households benefiting from biodiversity microcredit line	0%	5% (400 beneficiaries, 55% women)	83 beneficiaries were awarded microcredit under the first phase of the Eco-Damu scheme. This is approximately 1% of the estimated 7,397 total number of potential beneficiaries. 30% of the beneficiaries were women, short of the 55% target.	Partially Achieved

¹⁵ Baseline to be estimated at the beginning of the project once monitoring sites are identified and primary data are collected.

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Annex 6: Cofinancing Table

Cofinancing Source	Type	GEF Agency		Government		Non-governmental Organizations		Multilateral Agencies		Private Sector		Academic/Research Institutions		Total Cofinancing	
		Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
GEF Agency:															
United Nations Development Programme	Grant	600,000	600,000											600,000	600,000
	In-kind	100,000	100,000											100,000	100,000
Sub-total, UNDP		700,000	700,000											700,000	700,000
Government:															
Forestry and Hunting Committee	Grant			10,000,000	26,839,316									10,000,000	26,839,316
Akimat of Aralsk Rayon of Kyzylorda Oblast	Grant			34,600	69,540									34,600	69,540
	In-kind			1,262,227									1,262,227		
Akimat of Balkhash Rayon of Almaty Oblast	Grant			44,547	0									44,547	0
	In-kind			1,288,580									1,288,580		
Kyzylorda Joint Programme	Grant			0	301,800									0	301,800
Mangystau Joint Programme	Grant			0	165,300									0	165,300
Akimat of Almaty region (Department of Natural Resources Management of the Almaty region)	Grant			0	2,179,358									0	2,179,358
Akimat of Mangystau region (Department of Natural Resources Management and Department of Agriculture)	Grant			0	684,733									0	684,733
Akimat of Kyzylorda region (Department of Natural Resources Management)	Grant			0	1,779,411									0	1,779,411
Tanbaly state historical-cultural and natural museum-reserve under the RK Ministry of Culture and Sport	Grant			0	4,546									0	4,546
Sub-total, Government				12,629,954	32,024,004									12,629,954	32,024,004
Non-governmental Organizations:															
International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea	Grant					45,520	54,560							45,520	54,560
	In-kind					140,000								140,000	
Flora & Fauna International*	Grant					680,000	602,128							680,000	602,128
Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan (ACBK)	In-kind					116,000	350,000							116,000	350,000
Public association “Taldykorgan Inter-district Society of Hunters and Fishermen”**	Grant					161,200	0							161,200	0
Biodiversity Conservation Fund of Kazakhstan	Grant					0	16,530							0	16,530
Alakol Kamkor NGO	Grant					0	6,989							0	6,989

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Cofinancing Source	Type	GEF Agency		Government		Non-governmental Organizations		Multilateral Agencies		Private Sector		Academic/Research Institutions		Total Cofinancing	
		Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
Farmer of Kazakhstan Social Fund	Grant					0	3,030							0	3,030
Aral Aelderi (Aral Women) NGO	Grant					0	5,635							0	5,635
Baitak Dala NGO	Grant					0	4,244							0	4,244
Kazakh Society for Nature Protection NGO	Grant					0	9,815							0	9,815
Karagandy Ecological Centre ECOCENTRE	Grant					0	8,483							0	8,483
The Coca-Cola Foundation (New World partnership)	Grant					0	94,100							0	94,100
Sub-total, NGOs:						1,142,720	1,155,514							1,142,720	1,155,514
Multilateral Agencies:															
The Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (carec)*	Grant							74,000	0					74,000	0
	In-kind							9,000	0					9,000	0
Sub-total, Multilateral Agencies:								83,000	0					83,000	0
Private Sector:															
KAP-AC Gas Limited Partnership KAR-AS Gas Kyrlyys LLP*	Grant									1,286,667	0			1,286,667	0
Fund for Financial Support of Agriculture JSC	Grant									1,000,000	1,006,856			1,000,000	1,006,856
	In-kind									500,000	503,428			500,000	503,428
Tamshybulak LLP	In-kind									0	4,546			0	4,546
	Grant									0	10,000			0	10,000
Kozhagul Ata farm	In-kind									0	6,063			0	6,063
Otes agricultural firm	In-kind									0	2,425			0	2,425
Zhalantos LLP	In-kind									0	6,900			0	6,900
Zhalgas farm	In-kind									0	3,395			0	3,395
	Grant									0	16,200			0	16,200
Tan Sari farm	In-kind									0	3,334			0	3,334
	Grant									0	14,500			0	14,500
Tulpar farm	In-kind									0	1,515			0	1,515
Yerbol farm	In-kind									0	2,730			0	2,730
Aizat farm	Grant									0	1,500			0	1,500
Kairat farm	Grant									0	62,795			0	62,795
Iglikov individual proprietor/ Adikov individual proprietor	Grant									0	606			0	606
Metebayev Zhanat	In-kind									0	20,914			0	20,914
Sub-total, Private Sector:										2,786,667	1,667,707			2,786,667	1,667,707
Academic/Research Institutions*:															

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UNDP PIMS ID: 4855; GEF Project ID: 4584

Cofinancing Source	Type	GEF Agency		Government		Non-governmental Organizations		Multilateral Agencies		Private Sector		Academic/Research Institutions		Total Cofinancing	
		Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
Kazakh State University of Agriculture, Forest, Land & Water Resources Dept.	Grant											672,152	0	672,152	0
	In-kind											216,000	0	216,000	0
Kazakh State University of Agriculture, Water Resources, Land Reclamation & Irrigation Dept.	Grant											160,800	0	160,800	0
	In-kind											268,000	0	268,000	0
Almaty Kazakh Research Institute of Livestock Breeding & Fodder Production	Grant											120,000	0	120,000	0
	In-kind											200,000	0	200,000	0
Shymkent Kazakh Research Institute of Livestock Breeding & Fodder Production	Grant											80,000	0	80,000	0
	In-kind											120,000	0	120,000	0
Sub-total, Academic/Research Institutions:												1,836,952	0	1,836,952	0
Total Cofinancing for Project Implementation:		700,000	700,000	12,629,954	35,650,053	1,142,720	1,155,514	83,000	0	2,786,667	1,667,707	1,836,952	0	19,179,293	35,547,225

Notes:

Cost figures in United States dollars (USD)

Figures confirmed at project entry obtained from the approved CEO Endorsement Request; actual figures provided by the project team through information obtained from cofinancing partners.

Flora & Fauna International*

6 conservation projects aimed at studying and conserving the biodiversity of deserts (landscape, saiga antelopes) were implemented in Ustyurt region with the support of the FFI in 2013-2018 (total budget USD 602,218). Implementation of projects in Ustyurt region through the Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan

Public association "Taldykorgan Inter-district Society of Hunters and Fishermen"

The Kelte wetland site was selected during the preparation of the project document. This lakes system is located in the delta region of River Karatal. The original intention was to clean Karatal river beds and to construct a dam to feed the lakes. It was planned that Taldykorgan Inter-district Society of Hunters and Fishermen would participate and cofinance the demo project. The state of the pilot site was assessed by water experts in 2014. According to their findings, the Kelte lakes system is supported mainly by the natural influx of water from River Karatal and there is hydrological threat affecting the nature of Kelte in low-water years, however all these threats being common to the entire downstream part of the river. Construction of water intake pipes in the Karatal riverbed to feed the Kelte lakes system in low-water years is technically possible but because of geological and hydrological conditions construction of such facilities will be costly and economically infeasible.

KAP-AC Gas Limited Partnership

According to the project document it was planned to implement a demo project for the rehabilitation of saxaul forests within Kop Kuduk hunting area. The owner of the hunting concession was KAP-AC Gas Limited Partnership with cofinancing of USD 1,286,667. Since that the pilot site was located in Syrdarya district of Kyzylorda region being too remote from the Aral project area the Project Steering Committee (PSC decision of 29.07.2015) recommended to select another pilot site to demonstrate sustainable practices in rehabilitating saxaul forests in the Aral district. As a result, pilot project on the reconstruction of the Aral forest nursery (4 ha) was implemented with cofinancing from The Coca-Cola Foundation (USD 94,100).

Fund for Financial Support of Agriculture JSC

FFSA's cofinance sum is indicated in 2014 year's KZT:USD rate (182.3)

In accordance with the Grant Agreement signed (27.10.2015), FFSA's contribution is KZT 275,325,000. The sum comprised USD 1,510,285 in 2014 (KZT:USD rate = 182.3), including KZT 183,550,000 KZT (USD 1,006,856) is monetary contribution and KZT 91,775,000 (USD 503,428) is in-kind contribution of the FFSA.

The Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (carec)

Collaboration with carec was aimed at conducting joint training activities (workshops and training) relating to payments for ecosystem services, providing consultation and sharing experiences in this field as at the time of the project start carec had methodological and practical experience in implementing PES in Central Asia. The project team requested carec to provide a final indication of cofinancing by the end of the project. At the time of submitting the TE report, carec had not responded to the request.

Academic/Research Institutions*

Experts from the Kazakh Research Institute of Animal Breeding (based in Almaty) were involved in the implementation of pilot projects on sustainable management of rangelands and irrigated lands. The project team requested this partner to provide a final indication of cofinancing by the end of the project. At the time of submitting the TE report, CARECE had not responded to the request.

Annex 7: Evaluation Consultant Code of Conduct Agreement Form

Evaluators / Consultants:

1. Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded.
2. Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.
3. Should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They should provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and: respect people's right not to engage. Evaluators must respect people's right to provide information in confidence, and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate individuals, and must balance an evaluation of management functions with this general principle.
4. Sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing while conducting evaluations. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is any doubt about if and how issues should be reported.
5. Should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relations with all stakeholders. In line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality. They should avoid offending the dignity and self-respect of those persons with whom they come in contact in the course of the evaluation. Knowing that evaluation might negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate its purpose and results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.
6. Are responsible for their performance and their product(s). They are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/ or oral presentation of study limitations, findings and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

TE Consultant Agreement Form

Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System

Name of Consultant: James Lenoci

I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.

Signature:

Budapest, 10 April 2018



James Lenoci, International Consultant

Annex 8: Rating Scales

Outcome Ratings

The overall ratings on the outcomes of the project are based on performance on the following criteria:

- a. Relevance
- b. Effectiveness
- c. Efficiency

Project outcomes are rated based on the extent to which project objectives were achieved. A six-point rating scale is used to assess overall outcomes:

- Highly satisfactory (HS): Level of outcomes achieved clearly exceeds expectations and/or there were no short comings.
- Satisfactory (S): Level of outcomes achieved was as expected and/or there were no or minor short comings.
- Moderately Satisfactory (MS): Level of outcomes achieved more or less as expected and/or there were moderate short comings.
- Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): Level of outcomes achieved somewhat lower than expected and/or there were significant shortcomings.
- Unsatisfactory (U): Level of outcomes achieved substantially lower than expected and/or there were major short comings.
- Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): Only a negligible level of outcomes achieved and/or there were severe short comings.
- Unable to Assess (UA): The available information does not allow an assessment of the level of outcome achievements.

The calculation of the overall outcomes rating of projects considers all the three criteria, of which relevance and effectiveness are critical. The rating on relevance determines whether the overall outcome rating will be in the unsatisfactory range (MU to HU = unsatisfactory range). If the relevance rating is in the unsatisfactory range then the overall outcome is in the unsatisfactory range as well. However, where the relevance rating is in the satisfactory range (HS to MS), the overall outcome rating could, depending on its effectiveness and efficiency rating, be either in the satisfactory range or in the unsatisfactory range.

The second constraint applied is that the overall outcome achievement rating may not be higher than the effectiveness rating.

During project implementation, the results framework of some projects may have been modified. In cases where modifications in the project impact, outcomes and outputs have not scaled down their overall scope, the evaluator should assess outcome achievements based on the revised results framework. In instances where the scope of the project objectives and outcomes has been scaled down, the magnitude of and necessity for downscaling is taken into account and despite achievement of results as per the revised results framework, where appropriate, a lower outcome effectiveness rating may be given.

Sustainability Ratings

The sustainability is assessed taking into account the risks related to financial, sociopolitical, institutional, and environmental sustainability of project outcomes. The evaluator may also take other risks into account that may affect sustainability. The overall sustainability is assessed using a four-point scale.

- Likely (L). There is little or no risks to sustainability.
- Moderately Likely (ML). There are moderate risks to sustainability.
- Moderately Unlikely (MU). There are significant risks to sustainability.
- Unlikely (U). There are severe risks to sustainability.
- Unable to Assess (UA). Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability.

Project M&E Ratings

Quality of project M&E is assessed in terms of:

- Design
- Implementation

Quality of M&E on these two dimensions is assessed on a six point scale:

- Highly satisfactory (HS): There were no short comings and quality of M&E design / implementation exceeded expectations.
- Satisfactory (S): There were no or minor short comings and quality of M&E design / implementation meets expectations.
- Moderately Satisfactory (MS): There were some short comings and quality of M&E design/implementation more or less meets expectations.
- Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): There were significant shortcomings and quality of M&E design / implementation somewhat lower than expected.
- Unsatisfactory (U): There were major short comings and quality of M&E design/implementation substantially lower than expected.
- Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): There were severe short comings in M&E design/ implementation.
- Unable to Assess (UA): The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of M&E design / implementation.

Implementation and Execution Rating

Quality of implementation and of execution is rated separately. Quality of implementation pertains to the role and responsibilities discharged by the GEF Agencies that have direct access to GEF resources. Quality of Execution pertains to the roles and responsibilities discharged by the country or regional counterparts that received GEF funds from the GEF Agencies and executed the funded activities on ground. The performance is rated on a six-point scale.

- Highly satisfactory (HS): There were no short comings and quality of implementation / execution exceeded expectations.
- Satisfactory (S): There were no or minor short comings and quality of implementation / execution meets expectations.
- Moderately Satisfactory (MS): There were some short comings and quality of implementation / execution more or less meets expectations.
- Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): There were significant shortcomings and quality of implementation / execution somewhat lower than expected.
- Unsatisfactory (U): There were major short comings and quality of implementation / execution substantially lower than expected.
- Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): There were severe short comings in quality of implementation / execution.
- Unable to Assess (UA): The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of implementation / execution.

Annex 9: Terms of Reference for Terminal Evaluation

TERMS OF REFERENCE

English Expert to undertake Thematic Learning Review of UNDP-GEF Ecosystems and Biodiversity Team's Portfolio of Projects on Protected Areas

Type of Contract:	Individual Contract
Location:	Home based with mission travel
Category	Sustainable Development
Languages Required:	English
Starting Date	November 27, 2017
Duration of Initial Contract:	68 days through 31 July 2018
Supervisor:	Head of Ecosystems and Biodiversity

Background:

Within UNDP's Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS), the Ecosystems and Biodiversity (EBD) cluster under the Global Environmental Finance unit is engaged in supporting developing countries to access finance from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and other sources on issues relating to biodiversity and the sustainable management of forests, crop and rangelands. The EBD cluster additionally provides support through global projects on related policy, finance and capacity development.

The EBD portfolio includes national projects in over 120 countries, with oversight and technical support provided by a Senior Technical Advisor (STA) and Regional Technical Advisors (RTAs), as well as global initiatives coordinated through the UNDP-GEF unit providing policy (BES-Net), capacity (NBSAP Forum) and finance (BIOFIN) support to countries. Teams work out of different locations and regions, requiring both staff and consultants to be flexible in order to produce results.

As an implementing agency of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), UNDP oversees a portfolio of projects in the Focal Areas of biodiversity, climate change, international waters, ozone-depleting substance phase-out, land degradation, and persistent organic pollutants. These are implemented through UNDP's network of more than 130 Country Offices located in developing countries, as well as numerous UN and other agency partners.

UNDP's work in Ecosystems and Biodiversity (EBD) has as an overall strategic objective to maintain and enhance the goods and services provided by biodiversity and ecosystems in order to secure livelihoods, food, water and health, enhance resilience, conserve threatened species and their habitats, and increase carbon storage and sequestration. The value of all UNDP-managed biodiversity and ecosystems projects currently in planning or under implementation is US\$1.6 billion, with UNDP supporting 132 countries to access GEF and other vertical funds' grant finance. Through this project portfolio UNDP provides support to work in three programming areas: (i) Integrating biodiversity and ecosystem management into development planning and production sector activities; (ii) Unlocking the potential of protected areas, including indigenous and community-conserved areas to contribute towards sustainable development; and (iii) Managing and rehabilitating ecosystems for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

The UNDP Global Environmental Finance (UNDP-GEF) Unit is seeking the services of two international consultants to work as part of a team that will prepare a Thematic Learning Review. This review will be based on EBD protected area projects monitoring and evaluation reports. Most of these reports have been already prepared, and nine (9) will need to be prepared by the team. One consultant will serve as the overall Team Leader, who will take overall responsibility for the finalization of the Thematic Learning Review report that will be widely disseminated to support future project/programme design and implementation by UNDP and beyond.

Scope of work:

The Thematic Learning Review, which will be coordinated by the Team Leader, will focus on a collection of approximately 120 GEF-financed protected area projects under the GEF-3, -4 and -5 funding cycles. Nine monitoring and evaluation reports will also need to be prepared by the team, following standard UNDP-GEF guidance on conducting mid-term reviews and terminal evaluations. The Thematic Learning Review report must be ready for publication in September 2018, and to be launched in November 2018 at the CBD COP 14 in Egypt.

The Thematic Learning Review will be based on a review framework developed and agreed to at the beginning of the assignment. The report will include an in-depth exploration of themes (to be identified by the team) that advance understanding of solutions that have worked or not worked within the UNDP-GEF EBD protected areas portfolio of projects, so as to improve the design and implementation of ongoing and/or future projects.

Tasks and Responsibilities:

- Prepare two (2) project evaluation reports, following UNDP-GEF guidance. These reports will be cleared by and payment approved by the relevant RTA and with input from the UNDP Country Office concerned. Additional quality assurance support will be provided by the UNDP-GEF Directorate as needed.
- Prepare input from the two project reports to the TLR in line with the TLR framework. The Team Leader will review the outputs related to the Thematic Learning Review.

Expected outputs and deliverables:

The total contract duration will be 68 days through 31 July 2018 according to the following plan:

- Contribute to development of Thematic Learning Review framework, review questions, Thematic Learning Review report structure and detailed timeline by July 2018;
- Prepare two (2) evaluation reports, following UNDP-GEF guidance, and use these reports as input to the Thematic Review in line with the TLR framework. Each report will take approximately 30 days, including mission travels, and 8 days allocated for supporting the Thematic Learning Review by July 2018 (the expected dates for the eight evaluations are shown in Table 1 and will be confirmed in consultations with the relevant CO and the project team);
- Provide feedback on draft full Thematic Learning Review report by July 2018.

Table 1 Expected Timeline for Evaluations

TLR Team Member	Oct-17	Nov-17	Dec-17	Jan-18	Feb-18	Mar-18	Apr-18	May-18
Team Member					4393 Mongolia // TE		4855 Kazakhstan // TE	

Payment schedule:

- Contribute to development of Thematic Learning Review framework, review questions, Thematic Learning Review report structure and detailed timeline by 31 July 2018 - 10%;
- Undertake and prepare two (2) monitoring and/or evaluation reports each, following UNDP-GEF guidance, and use these reports as input to the Thematic Review:
 - Evaluation work plan and framework for the two evaluation exercises: by 31 December 2017 - 10%
 - Delivery and approval of first finalized report (4393 Mongolia): by 31 March 2018 - 40%
 - Delivery and approval of second finalized report (4855 Kazakhstan): by 31 May 2018 - 40%

Information on Working Arrangements:

- The consultant will work from home with mission travel;
- The Consultant will be given access to relevant information necessary for execution of the tasks under this assignment;
- All templates and reports will be provided by UNDP;
- The Consultant will be responsible for providing his own working station (i.e. laptop, internet, phone, scanner/printer, etc.) and must have access to a reliable internet connection;
- Consultant will be supervised by the UNDP-GEF Head of EBD team based in New York, USA;
- Given the global consultations to be undertaken during this assignment, the consultant is expected to be reasonably flexible with his/her availability for such consultations taking into consideration different time zones;
- Payments will be made upon submission of a certification of payment form, and acceptance and confirmation by the Supervisor on days worked and outputs delivered.

Travel:

- Two (2) missions will be required. The exact duration of the mission will vary for each project;
- Mission travel must be approved in advance and in writing by the UNDP-GEF Head of EBD;
- Consultant will liaise with the corresponding Country Offices to set up stakeholder interviews, arrange field visits, coordinate with the government, etc. Country offices will likely contract in-country national consultant(s) to support the team members while in-country;
- The [Advanced and Basic Security in the Field II courses](#) successfully completed prior to commencement of travel;
- Individual Consultants are responsible for ensuring they have vaccinations/inoculations when travelling to certain countries, as designated by the [UN Medical Director](#);
- Consultant is required to comply with the UN security directives set forth under <https://dss.un.org/dssweb/>;
- Consultant is responsible for obtaining any visas and security clearances needed in connection with travel with the necessary support from UNDP;
- The consultant will be responsible for making his/her own mission travel arrangements (including travel claims) in line with [UNDP travel policies](#);
- All related travel expenses will be supported by the project travel fund and will be reimbursed as per UNDP rules and regulations upon submission of an F-10 claim form and supporting documents. Costs for airfares, terminal expenses, and living allowances should not be included in the financial proposal.

Competencies:

Corporate Competencies:

- Demonstrates integrity by modelling the UN's values and ethical standards;
- Promotes the vision, mission, and strategic goals of UNDP;
- Displays cultural, gender, religion, race, nationality and age sensitivity and adaptability;
- Treats all people fairly without favoritism.

Technical Competencies:

- Demonstrated ability to coordinate processes to collate information and facilitate discussion and analysis of material;
- Technical competencies in undertaking complex evaluations which involve multiple countries and variety of stakeholders;
- Demonstrated strong research and analytical skills.

Communications:

- Excellent writing skills in English;
- Demonstrated knowledge of UN terms, language and style;
- Excellent communication skills and experience in conducting structured interviews with a variety of stakeholders.

Professionalism:

- Demonstrated ability to meet deadlines and work under pressure;
- Demonstrated excellent organizational skills.

Required skills and experience:**Education:**

- Master's degree or higher in a discipline relevant to natural resources management, biological sciences, forestry, agriculture, agro-economics, geography, climate sciences, international development, public policy, social sciences, economics, public administration, finance or other closely related fields.

Experience:

- At least 5 years of working experience in Biodiversity and/or Marine and coastal ecosystems;
- Experience working with international institutions, civil societies and/or governmental authorities, and experience working with and in developing countries;
- At least 5 years of work experience in one or more of the following UNDP locations: Africa, Eastern Europe & CIS, Asia & Pacific, and/or global;
- At least 5 years of relevant experience in Monitoring and evaluation/ knowledge management, including at least 2 years' experience in GEF work in: Project and programme design and development, Project and programme management and implementation, and/or Monitoring and evaluation/ knowledge.

Language:

- Proficient in written and spoken English.

Annex 10: Signed TE Final Report Clearance Form

Terminal Evaluation Report Reviewed and Cleared By:	
UNDP Country Office	
Name:	
Signature:	Date:
UNDP GEF Regional Technical Advisor	
Name:	
Signature:	Date: