"Sustainable Natural Resource and Forest Management in Key Mountainous Areas Important for Globally Significant Biodiversity"

Uzbekistan

Mid-Term Review FINAL Report

GEF Agency:	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Implementing Partner:	State Committee on Ecology and Environmental protection (Goskomecology)
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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

APR	Annual Progress Report
AWP	Annual Work Plan
BCIMS	Biodiversity Conservation Information Management System
CDR	Combined Delivery Report
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CPD	Country Programme Document
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
FNR	Fifth National Report
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographic Information System
HCVF	High Conservation Value Forest
ITA	International Technical Advisor
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LD	Land Degradation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIM	National Implementation Modality
NPC	National Project Coordinator
NSLEP	National Snow Leopard Ecosystem Protection Priorities
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PA	Protected Area
PIF	Project Identification Form
PIR	Project Implementation Review
PM	Project Manager
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PUA	Pasture Users Association
RBM	Results Based Management
SBR	State Biosphere Reserve
SCR	Survey, Capture Recapture
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound (indicator)
SMART	Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (Patrol)
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
USD	United States Dollar
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the UNDP-supported-GEF-Financed-Government of Uzbekistan Project "*Sustainable Natural Resource and Forest Management in Key Mountainous Areas Important for Globally Significant Biodiversity*." This MTR was performed by an Independent Evaluation Team composed of Mr. Jean-Joseph Bellamy, Team Leader and Mr. Rustam Muradov on behalf of UNDP.

Uzbekistan is home to the westernmost outliers of the western Tian Shan and Pamir-Alai system. Collectively, these mountainous areas span an area of about 9,600,000 ha and are included in both the Conservation International's *34 Global Biodiversity Hotspots* and the WWF *Global 200 Priority Ecoregions for Global Conservation*. The protected area system in Uzbekistan comprises eight strict nature reserves (IUCN category I), two national parks (cat. II), seven natural monuments (cat. III), twelve special nature reserves (cat. IV) and one state biosphere reserve (cat. V/ VI); together covering approximately 5.4% of the territory of Uzbekistan.

Despite the existence of this protected area system, over the course of the past 15 years, the mountainous landscapes of Uzbekistan have suffered from continued degradation of grassland, forest and alpine habitats. The long-term solution to address environmental degradation of this mountainous landscapes has been facing several significant barriers that include: (i) Poor integration of environmental information into land use planning in mountainous areas; (ii) Limited resources for, and capabilities in, the expansion, planning and management of protected areas in the mountain ecosystems; (iii) Unsustainable pasture and forest management practices in mountainous areas; and (iv) Incomplete information and knowledge management systems for management decision-making and trans-boundary cooperation in mountain ecosystems.

As a response to these threats and barriers, the project has been implementing a landscape conservation and management approach aiming at high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan. The project is spatially contained to the snow leopard distribution range in Uzbekistan, which comprises 3 discrete "*snow leopard landscapes*". Most project activities focus on two of these three "*snow leopard landscapes*": (i) the Ugam-Chatkal snow leopard landscape, located on the western spurs of the Chatkal, Pskem and Ugam Ranges in the Western Tien Shan; and (ii) the Gissar snow leopard landscape on the western slopes of the Gissar ridge in the Pamir Alai.

The project objective is "*to enhance the conservation, and sustainable use, of natural resources in the biodiverse high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan*". It will be achieved through the delivery of four components (outcomes) and 9 outputs:

1) Landscape-level planning and management decision-making
2) Strengthening key biodiversity areas
3) Sustainable economic development incentives for communities
4) Promoting cooperation and collaboration

Table 1: Project Information Table

Project Title:	Sustainable Natural Resource and Forest Management in Key Mountainous Areas Important for Globally Significant Biodiversity.		
UNDP Project ID (PIMS #):	5438	**PIF Approval Date:**	June 4, 2015
GEF Project ID (PMIS #):	8031	**CEO Endorsement Date:**	August 29. 2016
Award ID:	00090383	**Project Document (ProDoc) Signature Date (date project began):**	May 15, 2017
Country (ies):	Uzbekistan	**Date project manager hired:**	August 1, 2017
Region:	CIS	**Inception Workshop date:**	September 21, 2017
Focal Area:	Biodiversity	**Midterm Review date:**	September-November 2019
GEF-6 Strategic Programs:	BD-1 pg. 2 BD-2 pg. 3 BD-4 pg. 9 LD-3 pg. 4 SFM-1, 2 & 3	**Planned closing date:**	May 14, 2022
Trust Fund:	GEF-6	**If revised, proposed closing date:**	n/a

Executing Agency:	State Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection (Goskomecology)	
Other Execution Partners:		
Project Financing	at CEO endorsement (USD)	at Midterm Review (USD)
(1) GEF financing:	6,209,863	6,209,863
(2) UNDP contribution:	300,000	300,000
(3) Government:	25,000,000	25,000,000
(4) Total co-financing [2+3]:	25,300,000	25,300,000
Project Total Cost [1+4]:	31,509,863	31,509,863

This mid-term review report documents the achievements of the project and includes four chapters. Chapter 1 presents an overview of the project; chapter 2 briefly describes the objective, scope, methodology, evaluation users and limitations of the evaluation; chapter 3 presents the findings of the evaluation, chapter 4 presents the main conclusions and recommendations and relevant annexes are found at the back end of the report.

Key Findings

A summary of the main conclusions of this MTR is presented below.

Project Strategy

a) The project is relevant for Uzbekistan: The project is aligned with national strategies and programmes as well as the UNDP and GEF-6 focal areas strategies. It is a direct response to national priorities by: (i) enhancing the quality of information on key ecosystems, habitats and species of the high altitude mountains; (ii) expanding, and building the management capacity of core conservation zones located within two targeted snow leopard landscapes; (iii) encouraging more sustainable levels of use of high altitude pastures and indigenous forests located within two targeted snow leopard landscapes; and (iv) promoting cooperation and collaboration in the conservation of snow leopard and their ecosystems, including trans-boundary planning and management. The project focuses on four strategic areas: landscape level planning; strengthening biodiversity areas; community economic incentives; and cooperation and collaboration.

b) The project is implemented in the context of a fast-changing environment, but it is not enough connected with decision-makers making these changes: In just over two years, the government has enacted 22 pieces of legislation all related to a certain degree with the implementation of the project. The enhancement of this enabling environment conducted by the government provides excellent opportunities to the project to institutionalize and sustain its achievements over the long-term. Meanwhile these changes require the project implementation team to "*keep an ear on the ground*" and ensure that project activities keep their alignment with government decisions and priorities. The project is not involved enough with the government agenda to improve this enabling environment. It needs to be more involved with these changes and participate to negotiations for these changes; bringing project achievements (demonstration results) to the negotiations.

c) This is an ambitious project focusing on many activities to be implemented as opposed to focusing on expected results to be achieved: The project strategy is too focused on activities to be implemented as opposed to expected results to be achieved. Additionally, the project strategy detailed in the project document does not include any expected outcomes. In the section on "*Project Goal, Objective, Outcomes and Outputs/Activities*", not much details are provided on each component, some details are provided for each output but more details are provided for the 100 anticipated specific activities to be undertaken. It rendered the project strategy more activity-based as opposed to results-based. This design led the project implementation team to a compliance approach to "*tick the box*" once an activity is completed as opposed to reaching a set of expected results through the implementation of needed activities to achieve these results. It has led the implementation team to use an activity-based management approach as opposed to using a results-based management (RBM) approach.

Progress Towards Results

d) The progress made to date is moderately satisfactory: The project is progressing moderately satisfactorily towards its targets. Its progress is uneven at the time of this MTR but there are still about two

and a half more years of implementation to go to achieve the targets expected by the end of the project. The project management team has been implementing activities as planned in the project document with the help of good short term national and international expertise. The project has produced the following key deliverables:

- Under ***Component 1***, a BCIMS (Biodiversity Conservation Information Management System) and a BURC (Biodiversity Hub Resource Center) are being developed to provide up-to-date quality environmental information; and a national snow leopard monitoring programme is under development using modern surveying methods for population estimate.
- Under ***Component 2***, the project has supported the creation of a buffer zone of 11,231 ha in the Gissar State Reserve and started the development of a zonation plan and assembled the scientific justification for creating a new National Park (tentatively called "Surkhan") covering an area adjacent to the Gissar Reserve. The project has also completed a study/survey assessing tourism potential in three target PAs. The project supported the government to finalize the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) for 2019–2028. A SMART patrol system is under development.
- Under ***Component 3***, the project supported the drafting of the Law on Pastures. A package to document the creation of pasture users' cooperative was prepared and approved by competent authorities. A pilot pasture cooperative was created in Akhangaran district for the management of abandoned pastures and an agreement has been reached to create a cooperative in Shakhrisabz District; both should sustainably manage over 4,000 hectares of mountain pastures that were previously not regulated. Nine micro grants projects were identified, and financed with the expectation that 400 families, 1,256 individuals, of which 717 are women will benefit from these projects and that it should reverse the degradation of 800 ha of forests. Three pilot tree nurseries were established to provide tree saplings to target local communities.
- Under ***Component 4***, the project has supported the development of a draft *Programme and Action Plan for Snow Leopard Conservation*. It has also supported the drafting of an international agreement (MOU) to facilitate the transboundary cooperation for snow leopard conservation in the region (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan).

e) The strategies and activities guiding the implementation of the pasture management programme as well as the micro-grant programme needs to be reviewed: In a recent report from the international pasture expert, it is recommended to "*define more systematically the objectives, components and expected outputs of the sub-component on pastures*," including reviewing the role of forest enterprises in the management of pastures and the need for additional research on economic valuation of extensive pasture resources. Regarding the micro-grant programme, its logic to fund alternative activities to reduce pressure on natural forests and pastures is somewhat questionable. While it is a valid aim to reduce livestock grazing on these pastures, limiting/managing the summer influx of animals coming from the Fergana Valley to the Ugam-Chatkal snow leopard landscape may be a more effective way to reduce pressure on pastures and forest in this region. However, this micro-grant programme is also effective in creating alternative sources of incomes for these remote communities. It should be used as incentives in the context of setting up pasture user cooperatives, supporting the implementation of community-based pasture management plans.

f) The numerous activities underway in several technical areas in two large geographical areas led to an implementation in silos with limited cross-coordination: The broad scope of the project with interventions in several areas such as protected areas in mountain ecosystems, pasture management practices, management of mountain forests and snow leopard monitoring, led the implementation of project activities in "*silos*" with limited coordination/communication among these areas. Each of these areas is led by a project implementation team member supported by national and international experts and in close collaboration with key stakeholders. However, there is limited communications and coordination happening across these areas among stakeholders; hence reinforcing this "*silo*" approach. The only mechanism to communicate and coordinate across project focal areas is the PSC meetings. It is not the best mechanism for communicating and exchanging technical progress made by the project.

g) The broad scope of the project leads to the risk that project resources are spread too thin and that capacity being developed may not be enough to secure the sustainability of project achievements: Despite the progress made by the project to increase capacities in its first half, there is a risk that these capacities

developed with the support of the project may not be enough to ensure the long-term sustainability of project achievements. All project interventions are valid and are needed; however, the numerous activities implemented in many areas may not be enough to ensure that overall capacities will be in place by the end of the project. It is the case of initiatives such as the economic valuation of mountain ecosystem services, the establishment of pasture user associations, the development of a SMART patrol system, etc. Will they be mostly ad-hoc interventions to respond to specific local needs of the moment with the help of international experts or capacities of relevant stakeholders will be developed enough to sustain these initiatives over the long term? It is the main challenge to ensure sustainability of project achievements.

Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

h) Management arrangements are adequate, but the project implementation team needs to increase its use of adaptive management: The project is implemented by a good technical team of professionals bringing together a broad range of skills and knowledge in protected areas, forestry and pasture management, biodiversity conservation, local livelihood, and capacity development. However, the project implementation team does not use adaptive management enough to plan activities, allocate project resources and implement these activities. Using adaptive management is one way to review what is working, what is not working and modify the approach to drive the project closer to its intended purpose. Increasing the use of an adaptive management approach would allow the project management team to adapt to changes and tailor its approach to the current realities face by the project.

i) The compartmentalization of the project is also affecting the engagement of stakeholders: Stakeholders are mostly engaged with the project through activities in their respective areas. As a result, most of them have a limited view on the overall project and its overall objective. There is little cross-fertilization happening among them, particularly across government entities but also between government and non-governmental organizations, and between national, regional and local organizations. Besides the PSC, which is not the best mechanism for communicating and exchanging technical progress made by the project, there is a need to increase the communications and coordination—and by extension synergies—across the project to facilitate exchanges of information, best practices and lessons learned, while strengthening the engagement of stakeholders in the implementation of the project.

j) The disbursements of the GEF grant is significantly lower than the timeline (23% vs. 43%); the GEF grant may not be fully expended by May 2022: As of the end of June 2019, total expenditures amount to USD 1,417,044 that is 23% of the GEF grant versus an elapsed time of 43%. The remaining budget from the GEF grant is USD 4,792,819. When considering the timeline left for implementing the project (34 months), it is doubtful that the entire budget will be expended by May 2022. From an average monthly disbursement of USD 54,502, the project would need to increase its monthly disbursement to USD 140,965 for the remaining period. It is not impossible to achieve but it requires a drastic change in managing and administering the project.

k) The co-financing amount committed at the outset need to be better monitored: Co-financing commitments at the outset of the project totaled USD 25.3M, which represents about 80% of the total amount of the financial resources committed in the project document (GEF grant + co-financing). These pledged amounts include a large amount (99%) from the State Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection and the rest from UNDP as cash. So far, limited reporting is available on co-financing contributions.

l) The monitoring framework in place is workable and the project implementation team has been able to use this framework to annually report progress made by the project: Most indicators are specific enough, measurable, attainable and time bound. However, some quantitative indicators do not measure well the degree of capacities being developed rendering the set of indicators and targets not fully relevant. This M&E framework is much focused on surface areas to be covered by the project (number of ha) and on the number of participants benefitting from project activities. It lacks a greater focus on measuring the development of new knowledge and on increasing the capacity of stakeholders/beneficiaries. Nevertheless, the project implementation team has been able to use this framework to annually report progress.

m) The visibility of the project at national, regional and local levels is poor: The project lacks visibility, particularly in project interventions areas and despite having procured equipment and services. This type of

GEF-funded UNDP-implemented projects are to comply with the UNDP's branding guidelines as well as the GEF's communication and visibility guidelines. Furthermore, despite some communications done mostly through Facebook and Twitter, more communication activities – particularly in national/local media and in the production and dissemination of information products - are needed to raise awareness of stakeholders and beneficiaries and overall to increase the visibility of the project and its objective as well as to disseminate knowledge on biodiversity conservation, including snow leopard conservation.

Sustainability

n) The sustainability of project achievements is rated as moderately likely: No socio-economic, nor environmental risks were found to hamper the sustainability of project achievements. Regarding the institutional and governance risk, due to the broad scope of the project, there is a risk that capacities required by institutions involved in biodiversity conservation to ensure long term sustainability of project achievements may not be fully developed by the end of the project. A greater focus on capacity development is needed to ensure that staff and their institutions have the required skills, knowledge, procedures, mechanisms and structures. Regarding the financial risk, the project has been supporting the procurement of equipment to various stakeholders involved in implementing project activities. It has allowed project activities to be carried on with the required resources. However, once the project will end, financial resources will still be needed to maintain this equipment and at times to replace it. There will also be the need for the government to support some of these new activities such as the Snow Leopard Monitoring Programme, the SMART patrol system, the maintenance of the BCIMS, etc. As it stands currently, there is a risk of a lack of financial resources to support these activities after the project end.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this mid-term review, the following recommendations are suggested.

Recommendation 1: To increase the technical coordination of project activities through multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral technical working groups. This project is made up of many "*moving parts*" and its broad scope has led to an implementation in "*silos*". Stakeholders are mostly engaged with the project through activities in their respective areas. There is a need to increase communication and coordination—and by extension synergies—across the project to facilitate the exchange of information, best practices and lessons learned, while strengthening the engagement of stakeholders in the implementation of the project. It is recommended to set up multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral technical working groups to oversee the implementation of the project and review the strategies being piloted. These working groups could include thematic working groups such as pasture management, forestry management and biodiversity conservation monitoring but also taking into account a landscape/spatial approach such as a working group on the Gissar area including national and regional government agencies but also representatives from local communities and NGOs.

Recommendation 2: It is recommended to explore the possibility to open 2 local offices in project areas in partnership with local relevant institutions. Having local offices with 1 or 2 staff would provide the project with greater regional and local "connections" and also provide the project with an "*ear to the ground*" to facilitate the implementation of project activities. It would also provide a place to meet, network and exchange on project achievements as well as providing a more effective and efficient way to implement local activities.

Recommendation 3: It is recommended to increase the participation of the project in related policy and legislation development. Reforming the enabling environment (policy, legislation and institutions) is a rapidly evolving process in Uzbekistan. It is also an important aspect for the project to monitor carefully; it will play an important part in ensuring the long-term sustainability of project achievements. Ultimately, the value of the project is for the government to internalize project findings and eventually, adapt its enabling environment. It is important that the project implementation team increase its participation in the review and update of the enabling environment, possibly to use working groups, to communicate project results and participate in the drafting of new policy and legislative instruments. This participation could take the form of workshops on particular topics to review the existing enabling environment, results from demonstrations and proposal(s) to improve the policy and/or legislation around these topics. It could also be studies requested by relevant government entities to review the existing situations of particular areas; a proposal to improve the policy/legislation in a particular area, etc.

Recommendation 4: It is recommended to develop a project communication strategy and action plan, including the need to rapidly increase the visibility of the project. Despite that the project has been producing many good deliverables in several areas, the visibility of the project is poor, and its implementation is somewhat compartmentalized with limited coordination among focal areas. The result is the constitution of a good body of knowledge on managing snow leopard landscapes but with limited cross-fertilization across thematic areas and limited dissemination/use of this knowledge. A communication strategy and action plan is needed, detailing how to increase the visibility of the project, identify information products and information channels to use.

Recommendation 5: It is recommended to conduct capacity assessments and allocate project resources to consolidate capacities during the remaining implementation period of the project. It is an ambitious project with a broad scope and with limited resources to do it all. There is a risk that capacities developed with the support of the project may not be enough to ensure the long-term sustainability of project achievements. Conducting capacity assessments and action plans of key organizations are needed to identify possible capacity gaps and how they can be addressed, focusing on skills and knowledge but also on strengthening organizational processes and systems; and including the allocation of project resources.

Recommendation 6: It is recommended to review the strategies guiding the pasture management programme and the micro-grant programme. Regarding the pasture management programme, it is already a recommendation from the international pasture expert to review and define more systematically the objective of this programme. Regarding the micro-grant programme, it is effective in creating alternative sources of incomes for remote communities. However, its logic to fund alternative activities to reduce pressure on natural forests and pastures should be reviewed and used more directly as incentives in the same communities where other project activities are taking place such as improving the management of pastures and forests.

Recommendation 7: It is recommended to strengthen gender mainstreaming in project activities. To date, there is a limited focus on mainstreaming gender in project activities. As reported in progress reports, gender is being considered mostly within the implementation of the micro-grant programme. In this area, the project seeks to involve as many women as possible, including as beneficiaries of micro-grants. A *Gender Analysis and Plan* was developed during the inception phase of this project. It contains an extensive set of guidelines on how the project will mainstream gender in project activities. It is recommended to review this plan and identify actions to be implemented to mainstream gender in project activities.

Recommendation 8: It is recommended to increase the use of adaptive management. The project implementation team does not use adaptive management enough to plan activities, allocate project resources and implement these activities. There are opportunities and innovative ways which could be used but are not considered if they are not part of the detailed project strategy. Overall, using adaptive management is one way to review what is working and what is not working and modify the approach to make project activities more effective.

Recommendation 9: It is recommended to address the inefficiencies in the procurement of goods and services. The procurement of project goods and services is too lengthy, and it is affecting negatively the ability of the project team to quickly respond to investment needs and implement activities efficiently. Within the context of *UNDP Support Services to National Implementation Modality (NIM)*, the procurement process needs to be more transparent/participative with key stakeholders. The objective should be to reduce the time it takes to procure goods and services to project beneficiaries.

Recommendation 10: It is recommended to monitor the financial status of the project and request a no-cost time extension of the project if the GEF grant will not be expended by May 2022. As of end of June 2019, total expenditures amount to USD 1.4M that is 23% of the GEF grant versus an elapsed time of 43%. It is doubtful that the entire budget will be expended by May 2022. From an average monthly disbursement of USD 54,502, the project would need to increase its monthly disbursement to USD 140,965. Another important point to justify a time extension is the fact that the few months delay in starting the project, prevented activities to be implemented during the summer season of 2017.

Recommendation 11: It is recommended to monitor project management expenditures in order to keep them

aligned with the allocated budget of 4.8%. To date, 47% of the project management budget has been spent, which represents a ratio of just under 10% of total expenditures to June 2019. This ratio is more than twice the planned ratio of 4.8% allocated to project management. The actual ratio needs to be monitored carefully to stay in line with the budgeted ratio of 4.8%.

Recommendation 12: It is recommended to review co-financing commitments and request yearly estimates from the State Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection. To date, limited reporting has been made on co-financing contributions. The cash contribution from UNDP is available in the Atlas system, however, no figures are available from the State Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection.

Recommendation 13: It is recommended to develop an exit strategy for the project. Since its inception, the project has been supporting various additional activities, including procurement of equipment, seeking to improve biodiversity of these ecosystems. After the end of the project, some of this procured equipment will need at times to be replaced and some new activities will need to be supported by extra resources such as the Snow Leopard Monitoring Programme. It is recommended to develop an exit strategy, setting key milestones to reach before the end of the project, laying out what, when, where and how much some activities need to be continued, and handover procedures for some activities/products.

Lessons Learned

Several lessons learned are presented below:

- A design focusing on activities and lacking clear expected outcomes (higher level results) leads the implementation team to use an activity-based management approach as opposed to a results-based management approach.
- When the project covers a large geographic area, a strong communications program is vital to project success; including its visibility.
- Implementation through government entities as custodians of project achievements is conducive to good long-term sustainability.
- When gender considerations are almost inexistent in the project strategy, there is a high risk that gender mainstreaming will be limited; particularly if it is not part of measuring the performance of the project.
- Sustainability of projects is much correlated with capacities being developed during the lifetime of a project. The greater capacities are developed the more sustainable project achievements will be.
- A project that is a response to clear national needs and priorities is often highly relevant for beneficiaries and its chance of being implemented effectively are maximized.
- Involving stakeholders in the implementation of project activities including their participation in decision-making enables conflict minimization and improve ownership of solutions.

MTR Ratings and Achievement Summary Table

Below is the rating table as requested in the TORs. It includes the required performance criteria rated as per the rating scales presented in Annex 9 of this report. Supportive information is also provided throughout this report in the respective sections.

Table 2: MTR Ratings and Achievement Summary Table

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Project Strategy	N/A	
Progress Towards Results		
Objective Achievement:	**MS**	The objective is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings.
Outcome 1 Achievement:	**MS**	The outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings.

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Outcome 2 Achievement:	**MS**	The outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings.
Outcome 3 Achievement:	**MS**	The outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings.
Outcome 4 Achievement:	**MS**	The outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings.
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	**MS**	Implementation of most of the seven components—management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, stakeholder engagement, reporting, and communications—is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management, with some components requiring remedial action.
Sustainability	**ML**	Moderate risks, but expectations that at least some outcomes will be sustained due to the progress towards results on outcomes at the Midterm Review

1. CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT[1]

1. Uzbekistan is located in the heart of Central Asia. It borders Kazakhstan to the north, Afghanistan to the south, Turkmenistan to the west, and Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to the east, and is one of the only two double-landlocked countries in the world. Its population of above 33 million is the largest in Central Asia, and youth makes up almost 60% of the population. The physical environment of Uzbekistan is diverse, ranging from the flat, desert topography that comprises a large portion of the country's territory to mountain peaks in the east reaching about 4,500 meters above sea level and representing about 22% of the total land area of the country. The south-eastern portion of Uzbekistan is characterized by the foothills of the Tian Shan mountains, which rise higher in neighboring Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and are a natural border between Central Asia and China.

2. Four distinct major biogeographical zones have been distinguished in Uzbekistan according to their ecological conditions and composition of their flora and fauna: lowland deserts; sub-montane semi-deserts; mountain ecosystems; and wetland and riparian ecosystems. The submontane semi-deserts are located in the foothills, extending up to altitudes of 800-1,200 m and comprising two-thirds of mountain territories. The mountain ecosystems include: deciduous forests concentrated in the Western Tian Shan mountains at altitudes from 800 to 2,000 m; juniper forests in the Pamir-Alai above 2000m; mountain steppes at altitudes up to 2,600 m; and sub-alpine and alpine meadows between 2,800 m and 3,700 m. Uzbekistan is home to the westernmost outliers of the western Tian Shan and Pamir-Alai system. Collectively, these mountainous areas span an area of about 9,600,000 ha and are included in both the Conservation International's *34 Global Biodiversity Hotspots* and the WWF *Global 200 Priority Ecoregions for Global Conservation*.

3. The most common vegetation of the mountainous areas is the mountain steppe, which occurs at elevations between about 1,000 m and 2,600 m. Subalpine meadows of mixed grasses and cereals extend up to almost 3,000 m on the moist northern slopes. The montane semi-desert areas, mountain steppe and sub-alpine meadows are subject to significant pressures from livestock grazing. Montane forests are found principally on the northern slopes and range between elevations of about 1,500 and 3,000 meters. Juniper forests constitute the principal mountain forests in the western Tien Shan, the Turkestan Range and the south-western tip of the Gissar Mountains. Deciduous forests occupy small areas, alternating with steppe and meadow areas or bare rocks, and are concentrated in the western Tian Shan mountains. They are located at altitudes from 800 m to 2,000 m and contain relict forests of walnut mixed with wild apple, apricot, plum, and other fruit tree species. The montane forests of these mountainous areas are home to fifteen nesting bird-of-prey species of conservation concern. In addition, the forests of western Tian Shan in Uzbekistan host wild relatives of commercially important fruit and nut species, including the Pistachio, Persian Walnut and Sievers Apples.

4. The protected area system in Uzbekistan comprises eight strict nature reserves (IUCN category I), two national parks (cat. II), seven natural monuments (cat. III), twelve special nature reserves (cat. IV) and one state biosphere reserve (cat. V/ VI); together covering a total area of 2,402,077 ha, which is approximately 5.4% of the territory of Uzbekistan.

5. Despite the existence of this protected area system, it does not adequately conserve the country's varied habitats and ecosystems. Additionally, over the course of the past 15 years, the mountainous landscapes of Uzbekistan have suffered from continued degradation of grassland, forest and alpine habitats. Key drivers of environmental degradation of these mountain ecosystems, and their native wildlife (notably snow leopard and prey) include: (i) Unsustainable levels of grazing in the mountainous areas; (ii) High dependence of communities on montane forests for energy needs (heating and cooking); (iii) Extensive poaching and retaliatory killing of wildlife; (iv) Impacts of climate change as well as the country's ability to cope with these impacts; and (v) Underlying social, political and economic issues.

6. As a response to these threats, the long-term solution is to: (i) prevent the further fragmentation and degradation of the mountain landscapes; (ii) maintain and/or restore the quality of habitats within these mountain landscapes; (iii) increase native wildlife numbers (particularly snow leopard and prey) across the mountain landscapes to promote viable populations; (iv) facilitate a transformative shift to more sustainable

1 Information in this section has been summarized from the project document.

levels of natural resource use in the montane steppes, meadows and forests; (v) reduce the impacts of predation and mortality of livestock, and decrease retaliatory killing of predators in mountainous areas; and (vi) improve the planning, administration, enforcement and monitoring capacities of institutions responsible for the conservation stewardship of these mountainous regions. However, the implementation of this solution has been facing a number of significant barriers that include:

- Poor integration of environmental information into land use planning in mountainous areas;
- Limited resources for, and capabilities in, the expansion, planning and management of protected areas in the mountain ecosystems;
- Unsustainable pasture and forest management practices in mountainous areas;
- Incomplete information and knowledge management systems for management decision-making and trans-boundary cooperation in mountain ecosystems

7. The project was formulated to address some of these barriers and contribute to the sustainable management, use and conservation of natural resources in high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan through: (i) enhance the quality of information on key ecosystems, habitats and species of the high altitude mountains that are home to snow leopard and prey populations; (ii) expand, and build the management capacity of the core conservation zones located within two targeted snow leopard landscapes; (iii) encourage more sustainable levels of use of the high-altitude pastures and indigenous forests located within two targeted snow leopard landscapes; and (iv) promote improved cooperation and collaboration in the conservation of snow leopard and their ecosystems, including trans-boundary planning and management.

8. The project is spatially contained to the snow leopard distribution range in Uzbekistan, which comprises 3 discrete "*snow leopard landscapes*" - Ugam-Chatkal snow leopard landscape in the western Tien Shan; and the Gissar and Zaamin snow leopard landscapes in the Pamir-Alai. However, most activities supported by the project are focusing in two of these three "*snow leopard landscapes*": (i) the Ugam-Chatkal snow leopard landscape, located on the western spurs of the Chatkal, Pskem and Ugam Ranges in the Western Tien Shan; and (ii) the Gissar snow leopard landscape on the western slopes of the Gissar ridge in the Pamir Alai (*see maps in Annex 2*).

9. The project objective is "*to enhance the conservation, and sustainable use, of natural resources in the biodiverse high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan*". It will be achieved through the delivery of four components (outcomes) and 9 outputs (*see more detailed about the project strategy in Annex 1*):

5) Landscape-level planning and management decision-making
6) Strengthening key biodiversity areas
7) Sustainable economic development incentives for communities
8) Promoting cooperation and collaboration

10. This is a project supported by UNDP, the GEF, and the Government of Uzbekistan. It is funded by a grant from the GEF of USD 6,209,863 and a total co-financing of USD 25,300,000; including a cash contribution from UNDP (TRAC) of USD 300,000 and a contribution from the government (State Committee on Ecology and Environmental protection (Goskomecology)) of USD 25,000,000. The total financing of the project is USD 31,509,863. The project was approved by GEF on August 29, 2016; it started on May 15, 2017; the inception workshop was held on September 21-22, 2017; and the project duration is 5 years to be completed by May 14, 2022. It is implemented under the "National Implementation Modality (NIM)". The implementing partner is the State Committee on Ecology and Environmental protection (Goskomecology) (*previously known as the State Committee on Nature Protection*).

2. REVIEW FRAMEWORK

11. This mid-term review—a requirement of UNDP and GEF procedures—has been initiated by UNDP Uzbekistan the Commissioning Unit and the GEF Implementing Agency for this project. This review provides an in-depth assessment of project achievements and progress towards its objectives and outcomes.

2.1. Objectives

12. The objective of the MTR was to assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and

outcomes as specified in the Project Document and Project Inception Report, and assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying possible changes to be made in order to keep/set the project on-track to achieve its intended results. The MTR also reviewed the project strategy and its risks to sustainability.

2.2. Scope

13. As indicated in the TORs for this MTR (*see Annex 3*), the scope of this review covered four categories of project progress, in accordance with the "*Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*". A summary of the scope of this MTR is presented below:

A. Project Strategy:
- Review of the Project Design
- Review of the Results Framework/Log-frame:

B. Progress Towards Results
- Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis:
- Progress to Impact Analysis:

C. Project Implementation and Adaptive Management
- Management Arrangements:
- Work Planning:
- Finance and co-finance:
- Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:
- Stakeholder Engagement:
- Reporting:
- Communications:
- Risk Management:
- Safeguard and Gender Mainstreaming:

D. Sustainability
- Review risks and risk ratings
- Assess risks to sustainability in term of financial risks, socio-economic risks, institutional framework and governance risks, and environmental risks.

2.3. Methodology

14. The methodology that was used to conduct this mid-term review complies with international criteria and professional norms and standards; including the norms and standards adopted by the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG).

2.3.1. Overall Approach

15. The review was conducted in accordance with the guidance, rules and procedures established by UNDP and GEF as reflected in the UNDP "*Guidance for Conducting Mid-Term Reviews of UNDP-supported, GEF-Financed Projects*[2]", and the UNEG Standards and Norms for Evaluation in the UN System. The review was undertaken in-line with GEF principles which are: *independence, impartiality, transparency, disclosure, ethical, partnership, competencies/capacities, credibility* and *utility*. The process promoted accountability for the achievement of project objectives and promoted learning, feedback and knowledge sharing on results and lessons learned among the project's partners and beyond.

16. The evaluation adopted an *Utilization Focused Evaluation (UFE)* approach, which is predicated on maximizing the practical value of the evaluation to project stakeholders. The MTR was planned and conducted in ways that enhanced the likely utilization of both the findings and of the process itself to inform decisions and improve performance of the project. Using this approach, the Evaluation Team did not make decisions independently of the intended users, but they rather facilitated decision making amongst the people who will use the findings of this mid-term review.

2 UNDP Evaluation Office, 2012, *Project-Level Evaluation – Guidance for Conducting Mid-Term Review of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects.*

17. The Evaluation Team developed review tools in accordance with UNDP and GEF policies and guidelines to ensure an effective project review. The review was conducted, and findings are structured around the GEF five major evaluation criteria; which are also the five internationally accepted evaluation criteria set out by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). There are:

- *Relevance* relates to an overall assessment of whether the project is in keeping with donors and partner policies, with national and local needs and priorities as well as with its design.
- *Effectiveness* is a measure of the extent to which formally agreed expected project results (outcomes) have been achieved or can be expected to be achieved.
- *Efficiency* is a measure of the productivity of the project intervention process, i.e. to what degree the outcomes achieved derive from efficient use of financial, human and material resources. In principle, it means comparing outcomes and outputs against inputs.
- *Impacts* are the long-term results of the project and include both positive and negative consequences, whether these are foreseen and expected, or not.
- *Sustainability* is an indication of whether the outcomes (end of project results) and the positive impacts (long term results) are likely to continue after the project ends.

18. In addition to the UNDP and GEF guidance for reviewing projects, the Evaluation Team applied to this mandate its knowledge of review methodologies and approaches and its expertise in biodiversity conservation, sustainable livelihood, land and forest management and more generally in environmental management issues. It also applied several methodological principles such as (i) *Validity of information*: multiple measures and sources were sought out to ensure that the results are accurate and valid; (ii) *Integrity*: Any issue with respect to conflict of interest, lack of professional conduct or misrepresentation were immediately referred to the client if needed; and (iii) *Respect and anonymity*: All participants had the right to provide information in confidence.

19. The evaluation was conducted following a set of steps presented in the table below:

Table 3: Steps Used to Conduct the Evaluation

I. Review Documents and Prepare Mission ▪ Start-up teleconference/finalize assignment work plan ▪ Collect and review project documents ▪ Draft and submit **Inception Report** ▪ Prepare mission: agenda and logistic	**III. Analyze Information** ▪ In-depth analysis and interpretation of data collected ▪ Follow-up interviews (where necessary) ▪ Draft and submit **draft review report**
II. Mission / Collect Information ▪ Fact-findings mission to Uzbekistan ▪ Interview key Stakeholders and conduct field visits ▪ Further collect project related documents ▪ Mission debriefings / **Presentation of key findings**	**IV. Finalize Review Report** ▪ Circulate draft report to UNDP-GEF and relevant stakeholders ▪ Integrate comments and submit **final Review Report**

20. Finally, the Evaluation Team signed and applied the "*Code of Conduct*" for Review Consultants (*see Annex 4*). The Evaluation Team conducted review activities, which were *independent*, *impartial* and *rigorous*. This MTR clearly contributed to learning and accountability and the Evaluation Team has personal and professional integrity and was guided by propriety in the conduct of its business.

2.3.2. Review Instruments

21. The review provides evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. Findings were triangulated through the concept of "*multiple lines of evidence*" using several review tools and gathering information from different types of stakeholders and different levels of management. To conduct this review the following review instruments were used:

Review Matrix: A review matrix was developed based on the review scope presented in the TOR, the project log-frame and the review of key project documents (*see Annex 5*). This matrix is structured along the five evaluation criteria and includes all review questions; including the scope presented in the guidance. The matrix provided overall directions for the review and was used as a basis for interviewing people and reviewing project documents.

Documentation Review: The Evaluation Team conducted a documentation review in Canada and in Uzbekistan (*see Annex 6*). In addition to be a main source of information, documents were also used to prepare the fact-findings mission in Uzbekistan. A list of documents was identified during the start-up phase and further searches were done through the web and contacts. The list of documents was completed during the fact-findings mission.

Interview Guide: Based on the review matrix, an interview guide was developed (*see Annex 7*) to solicit information from stakeholders. As part of the participatory approach, the Evaluation Team ensured that all parties viewed this tool as balanced, unbiased, and structured.

Mission Agenda: An agenda for the fact-findings mission of the Evaluation Team in Uzbekistan was developed during the preparatory phase (*see Annex 8*). The list of Stakeholders to be interviewed was reviewed, ensuring it represents all project Stakeholders. Then, interviews were planned in advance of the mission with the objective to have a well-organized and planned mission to ensure a broad scan of Stakeholders' views during the limited time allocated to the fact-findings mission.

Interviews: Stakeholders were interviewed (*see Annex 9*). The semi-structured interviews were conducted using the interview guide adapted for each interview. All interviews were conducted in person with some follow up using emails when needed. Confidentiality was guaranteed to the interviewees and the findings were incorporated in the final report.

Field Visits: As per the TORs, visits to project sites were conducted during the fact-finding mission of the Evaluation Team in Uzbekistan; including project sites in the Tashkent region and Kashkadarya region. It ensured that the Evaluation Team had direct primary sources of information from the field and project end-users (beneficiaries). It gave opportunities to the Evaluation Team to observe project achievements and obtain views from stakeholders and beneficiaries at the regional and local levels.

Achievement Rating: The Evaluation Team rated achievements according to the guidance provided in the TORs. It included a 6-point rating scale to measure progress towards results, project implementation and adaptive management and a four-point rating scale for sustainability (*see Annex 10*).

2.4. MTR Users

This MTR, initiated by UNDP Uzbekistan, will provide Project Implementing Partner Managers at national, regional and local levels and UNDP-Uzbekistan with an in-depth review of how well the project is progressing and—as needed—recommendations to correct and adjust the overall project strategy, work plan and timetable for the purpose of enhancing the achievement of project objectives and outcomes. It will also provide the basis for learning and accountability for these managers.

2.5. Limitations and Constraints

22. The approach for this mid-term review was based on a planned level of effort of 28 days. It comprised a two-week fact-finding mission to Uzbekistan to interview key stakeholders, collect evaluative evidence; including visits to project sites in the Tashkent region and Kashkadarya region where the project support activities. Within the context of these resources, the Independent Evaluation Team was able to conduct a detailed assessment of actual results against expected results and successfully ascertains whether the project will meet its main objective—as laid down in the project document—and whether the project initiatives are, or are likely to be, sustainable after completion of the project. The Evaluation Team also made recommendations for any necessary corrections and adjustments to the overall project work plan and timetable and also for reinforcing the long-term sustainability of project achievements.

3. EVALUATION FINDINGS

23. This section presents the findings of this MTR adhering to the basic structure proposed in the TOR and as reflected in the UNDP project review guidance.

3.1. Project Strategy

24. This section discusses the assessment of the project strategy — including its relevance—and its overall design in the context of Uzbekistan.

3.1.1. Project Design

25. Uzbekistan is home to the westernmost outliers of the western Tian Shan (Chatkal, Pskem, Ugam and Kuramin ranges) and Pamir-Alai (Gissar, Turkestan and Zeravshan ranges) system. The western Tian Shan lies north of the Fergana Valley. The highest peak is in the Chatkal range (4,503 meters), and the predominant elevations vary between 2,300 and 3,200 meters. To the south of the country, the western Tian Shan range meets the Pamir Alai. The Pamir Alai borders the Fergana Valley in the south and extends chiefly east and west. Located on the border between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, the highest peak is in the Gissar range (Khazret Sultan at 4,643 meters). These high-altitude mountains are home to the endangered snow leopard and provide important habitat for its key prey species, the Argali and Siberian Ibex, as well as the locally endemic Menzbier's marmot.

26. Despite the existence of a protected area system – which provides a good level of protection to natural habitats in mountain forests and high mountains, it does not adequately conserve the country's varied habitats and ecosystems. According to the *Fifth National Report of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Conservation of Biodiversity to the CBD* (FNR, 2015), 22.8% of the vertebrate animal species are protected in the mountain nature reserves. The National Parks (Ugam-Chatkal and Zaamin) support mainly the conservation of biodiversity of mammals' species in the mountain nature reserves adjacent to their territories. This is against a recognized international standard of a territorial form of protection covering 80% of vertebrate animals included in the Red Data Book.

27. According to the project document formulated in 2016, the mountainous landscapes of Uzbekistan have suffered from continued degradation of grassland, forest and alpine habitats since early 2000s. As per the FNR 2015, three major factors threaten the biodiversity of Uzbekistan:

1) Loss of habitats and degradation of natural ecosystems;
2) Decrease in population size and loss of species (of flora and fauna), including economically valuable species;
3) Erosion/loss of genetic diversity and natural resistance of species (to diseases and to climatic changes).

28. Furthermore, the project document described five key drivers of environmental degradation of these mountain ecosystems and their native wildlife (notably snow leopard and preys): (i) Unsustainable levels of grazing in the mountainous areas; (ii) High dependence of communities on montane forests for energy needs (heating and cooking); (iii) Extensive poaching and retaliatory killing of wildlife; (iv) Impacts of climate change as well as the country's ability to cope with these impacts; and (v) Underlying social, political and economic issues.

29. In order to reduce the pressures on, and threats to, the biodiversity of the western Tian-Shan and Pamir Alai mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan, the long-term solution described in the project document was to: (i) prevent the further fragmentation and degradation of the mountain landscapes; (ii) maintain and/or restore the quality of habitats within these mountain landscapes; (iii) increase native wildlife numbers (particularly snow leopard and preys) across the mountain landscapes to promote viable populations; (iv) facilitate a transformative shift to more sustainable levels of natural resource use in the montane steppes, meadows and forests; (v) reduce the impacts of predation and mortality of livestock, and decrease retaliatory killing of predators in mountainous areas; and (vi) improve the planning, administration, enforcement and monitoring capacities of institutions responsible for the conservation stewardship of these mountainous regions.

30. However, in describing this long-term solution, it recognized that there are a number of significant barriers to the country's ability to implement this solution; they include:

- *Poor integration of environmental information into land use planning in mountainous areas*: Land use planning in mountain landscapes does not adequately integrate environmental information, or use ecosystem-based decision-support tools, to guide their development. Critical environmental data is often being left outside the land use planning processes due to lack of

capacities and knowledge on how to objectively incorporate it into decision-making.

- *Limited resources for, and capabilities in, the expansion, planning and management of protected areas in the mountain ecosystems*: While the IUCN Category I (Strict Nature Reserve), II (National Parks), III (Natural Monuments) and IV (Special Nature Reserves) protected areas in Uzbekistan should provide a safe haven for wildlife, and secure the preservation of their natural habitats, in practice the conservation status of a protected area does not always imply effective protection on the ground. In the mountainous areas of the country, only the Strict Nature Reserves are being adequately resourced, and actively managed, to achieve conservation outcomes. However, even the Strict Nature Reserve budgets are barely sufficient to cover core staff salary costs. The remaining categories of protected areas (i.e. IUCN categories II, III and IV) are collectively suffering from inadequate human and financial resources, with conservation actions only being partially implemented—if at all—in these categories of protected areas.
- *Unsustainable pasture and forest management practices in mountainous areas*: ***Pasture***: the available mountain pastures are under increasing grazing pressure, resulting in the incremental degradation and loss of productivity of these pastures as a result of overstocking and a reliance on the same mountain areas every season for grazing. While there are already well-established traditional (e.g. seasonal grazing systems, seasonal burns) and modern approaches (e.g. rotational grazing, supplementary feeding, stock number controls, rehabilitation of degraded areas) to address this challenge, there is no strategic approach to coordinate efforts to improve the management of pasture lands across the mountainous landscapes in Uzbekistan. ***Forest***: while the Law on Forests conceptually provides for all the main elements of sustainable forest management, few of these are actually being implemented in practice because of a lack of technical knowledge, limited experience of forest staff and/or institutional resource constraints. There is a general trend of decreasing investment in the maintenance and replacement of equipment in the forest business units, with the bulk of the annual state budget allocations being committed to human resource costs. The national inventory of forests (and state forest fund land) is not being regularly maintained due to resource constraints, while many of the 10-year forest plans are not being reviewed and updated in accordance with the requirements of the Law on Forests.
- *Incomplete information and knowledge management systems for management decision-making and trans-boundary cooperation in mountain ecosystems*: There is a significant lack of awareness and understanding of local wildlife (in particular, snow leopard and their prey species); the value of these wildlife and their natural habitats; and the local and regional consequences of the ongoing degradation of ecosystems. This is true at all levels of society within and outside the high mountain ranges, from local people to officials and from the private sector to the general public. The challenge of conserving snow leopards is further exacerbated by the lack of adequate scientific information.

31. Through a landscape conservation and management approach, the project was formulated to address some of these barriers and contribute to the sustainable management, use and conservation of natural resources in high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan through: (i) enhance the quality of information on key ecosystems, habitats and species of the high altitude mountains that are home to snow leopard and prey populations; (ii) expand, and build the management capacity of the core conservation zones located within two targeted snow leopard landscapes; (iii) encourage more sustainable levels of use of the high-altitude pastures and indigenous forests located within two targeted snow leopard landscapes; and (iv) promote improved cooperation and collaboration in the conservation of snow leopard and their ecosystems, including trans-boundary planning and management.

32. The focus of the project is on the snow leopard distribution range in Uzbekistan, which comprises 3 discrete "*snow leopard landscapes*" - Ugam-Chatkal snow leopard landscape in the western Tien Shan; and the Gissar and Zaamin snow leopard landscapes in the Pamir-Alai. Furthermore, most activities supported by the project are located in two of these three "*snow leopard landscapes*": (i) the Ugam-Chatkal snow leopard landscape, located on the western spurs of the Chatkal, Pskem and Ugam Ranges in the Western Tien Shan; and (ii) the Gissar snow leopard landscape on the western slopes of the Gissar ridge in the Pamir Alai (*see maps in Annex 2*). The project objective is "*to enhance the conservation, and sustainable use, of natural resources in the biodiverse high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan*". It is to be achieved through the delivery of 4 components and 9 outputs (*see more detailed about the project strategy in Annex 1*): 1)

Landscape-level planning and management decision-making; 2) Strengthening key biodiversity areas; 3) Sustainable economic development incentives for communities; and 4) Promoting cooperation and collaboration.

33. Within this context, the project is fully relevant for Uzbekistan, supporting the government to strengthen its capacity to implement a landscape conservation and management approach in mountain forests and high mountains. At the time of the formulation of the project, it was well aligned with several institutional, legislative and programme instruments related to the management of pastures, livestock, forests and biodiversity conservation. However, since the inception of the project, the relevance of the project with related government instruments has even been greater. The government has been enhancing its enabling environment for the management of pastures, livestock, forests and biodiversity conservation. The key new instruments include:

- Provisional Resolution #03/1-867 (February 7, 2017) on Organizing Efficient Use of Pastures and Hayfields
- Presidential Decree #UP-5024 (April 2017) on improving the governance system for the management of natural resources and environmental protection;
- Presidential Resolution #PP-2915 (April 2017) on responsibilities of the State Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection;
- Presidential Resolution #PP-2915 (April 2017) on creating the State Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection;
- Presidential Decree #PP-2966 (May 2017) on the responsibilities of the State Committee on Forestry;
- Presidential Decree #UP-5041 (May 2017) on establishing the State Committee for Forestry;
- Cabinet Resolution #13 (January 2018) on regulations for visiting protected natural areas;
- Presidential Resolution #PP-3514 (February 2018) on measures to accelerate the development of domestic tourism;
- Cabinet Resolution #367 (May 2018) on the creation of the Ugam-Chatkal State Biosphere Reserve;
- Cabinet Resolution #471 (June 2018) to create the specialized state forestry entities in Shumanai, Kanlykol, Shakhrisabz and Fozilmon;
- Cabinet Resolution #890 (October 2019) on livestock development in the Akhangaran District
- Cabinet Decree #1062 (December 2018) to approve the regulations for the Ugam-Chatkal State Biosphere Reserve
- Presidential Decree #PP-4254 (March 2019) on responsibilities of the State Committee for Veterinary and Development of Livestock;
- Presidential Decree #UP-5696 (March 2019) on measures to improve the government system of veterinary and animal breeding activities;
- Presidential Decree #PD-4247 (March 2019) on measures to improve the administration of protected natural areas;
- Law on Pastures #ZRU-538 (May 2019) to regulate the use and the protection of pastures;
- Cabinet Regulation #484 (June 2019) to approve the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action plan 2019-2028;
- Cabinet Resolution #689 (August 2019) approving the regulations for maximum allowable rates for livestock grazing and pasture management;
- Presidential Decree #PP-4424 (August 2019) on additional measures to improve the efficiency of forest use;
- Cabinet Resolution #737 (September 2019) to improve the system for environmental monitoring;
- Program and Action Plan for Snow Leopard Conservation – 2020-2030;
- The Sixth National Report on the Conservation of Biological Diversity (2018);
- Presidential Decree #5853 (October 23, 2019) to approve the Agriculture Development Strategy for 2020-2030;
- Presidential Decree #5863 (October 30, 2019) to approve the concept of environmental protection until 2030.

34. In just over two years, the government has enacted 22 pieces of legislation; all related to a certain degree

with the implementation of the project. It is a high level of legislation activities. It was noted that the enactment of the Law on Pastures was also done with the support of the project. The enhancement of the enabling environment conducted by the government and related to the management of pastures, livestock, forests and biodiversity conservation provides excellent opportunities to the project to sustain its achievements over the long-term.

35. However, as it is discussed in other sections of this report and despite the role played by the project to support the development of the Law on Pastures, the project is not close enough from Decision-Makers developing these new instruments. Considering the nature of this project, it should be more connected to Decision-Makers and participate as much as possible — including the provision of project resources—to the development of these new instruments; using the achievements of the project. Part of the expected outcomes of this project is to demonstrate a new approach to the management of protected areas and a community-based pasture management approach as well as an overall landscape management approach in mountain forests and high mountain ecosystems to conserve snow leopards. The more these achievements will be integrated in the enabling environment, the greater the success of the project.

Gender Considerations

36. The Evaluation Team found that gender considerations were not included in the design of the project. There is no discussion on gender and no presentation of gender status in Uzbekistan within the context of the interventions of the project. The only gender considerations included in the project document is that when measuring the performance of the project, some indicators are to be gender disaggregated, such as "*Total number (of which are women) of individuals from targeted villages who have completed project funded skills training courses*".

37. Nevertheless, since the inception of the project, a *Gender Analysis and Plan* has been developed. It is a succinct analysis and a plan of activities to "*address some of these gender-related issues*". It contains a rather extensive set of guidelines on how the project will mainstream gender in project activities such as *(a) facilitate the employment, training and equipping of woman as park rangers, smart patrol trainers, community liaison officers, forest business unit enforcement staff, local environmental inspectors and nursery maintenance staff; (b) actively encourage the equitable use of women labor and supervisors from local rural villages in the development of tourism and recreational facilities and services; the planning and implementation of pasture management plans; the planning and restoration of degraded high altitude pastures; the establishment and management of tree nurseries and the planning and rehabilitation/restoration of high altitude forests; and (c) ensure that women-owned and/or managed businesses participate equitably in the procurement of project-funded equipment, technical services and infrastructure*.

38. Despite being succinct, it is an ambitious plan to mainstream gender in all project interventions. However, when reviewing the progress report of the last two years and based on observations and interviews made during the mission of the Evaluation Team, there is a limited focus on mainstreaming gender in project activities. For the most part and as reported in progress reports, gender is being considered mostly within the implementation of activities related to the implementation of the micro-grant programme supported by the project. In this area, the project seeks to involve as many women as possible, including as beneficiaries of micro-grants. It is reported in the 2019 progress report that *3 micro-grants where given to 3 women: 1) beekeeping; 2) establishment of a small production line for processing fruits and vegetables; and 3) clothing production. A total of 12 new jobs for local women were created and an additional 20 women and girls were trained so far*. It is recommended that the project strengthen its gender mainstreaming approach in its activities.

UNCT/UNDP Strategy in Uzbekistan

39. According to the independent evaluation of the UNDAF 2010-2015, the UN System in Uzbekistan is well-recognized by the Government and other development partners as a trusted and respected partner largely responsive to national development needs. It found that the UN System is well positioned to support the implementation of national priorities by offering a clear business case as a preferred and non-political partner for the Government and by engaging on issues that other development partners may not. This evaluation recommended that the next UNDAF focuses on key development outcomes while applying the five core UN programming principles of a human rights-based approach (HRBA), gender equality, environmental sustainability, capacity development and Results Based Management (RBM).

40. The current United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF - 2016-2020) were developed through an intensive consultation process with the Government of Uzbekistan and other implementing national partners. It supports national priorities and is in line with the nascent Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) tailored to the Uzbek context. It focuses on benefitting the most vulnerable populations in Uzbekistan and is linked to Uzbekistan's obligations under its ratification of various international human rights instruments.

41. Under this UNDAF 2016-2020, eight outcomes have been selected in four strategic focus areas to respond to national needs and make use of the United Nations' comparative advantages. They include a) Inclusive economic development, with a focus on employment and social protection; b) Quality health and education, to fully realize human potential; c) Environmental protection, to ensure sustainable development; and d) effective governance, to enhance public service delivery and the protection of rights. The total cost of this assistance framework was estimated at about USD 145M.

42. Under the third strategic focus area, the UNDAF 2016-2020 intervenes in five areas: a) Integrating the principles of sustainable development into national legislation and policymaking and elaborating evidence-based policies to promote sustainable development; b) Further improving the efficiency of use of land and water resources for sustainable agricultural development and food security; c) Climate change mitigation and adaptation, climate risk management and disaster risk reduction; d) Further improving energy efficiency and promoting access to energy; and e) Biodiversity conservation.

43. UNDP - as part of the UNCT - interventions in Uzbekistan are guided by the provisions of the *UNDP Standard Basic Assistance Agreement (SBAA)* and a *Letter of Agreement for the Provision of Support Services* both signed by the Government of Uzbekistan and UNDP on June 10, 1993 and on April 30, 2010 respectively. The UNDP *Country Programme Document (CPD)* for the period 2016-2020 is fully aligned with three key priorities of the UNDAF 2016-2020 and is made up of four outcome areas: (a) inclusive economic development; (b) environmental protection; (c) effective governance to enhance public service delivery; and (d) protection of rights.

44. Under the CPD second outcome—environmental protection—the aim is to promote sustainable, transparent, equitable and accountable management of natural resources; upscale interventions in energy efficiency; and promote renewable energy. Six outputs are expected under this outcome.

45. The project is well aligned with this programme; particularly with expected outputs 3 (*Sustainable natural resource/forest management supported in key areas important for globally significant biodiversity*) and 4 (*Integrated management of rangeland/forests promoted to reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses and improve socioeconomic well-being of rural communities*). It focuses on two key snow leopard landscapes and seeks to develop the capacity of implementing a landscape conservation and management approach in mountain forests and high mountains. The project supports demonstrations of new approaches to manage protected areas and—through a community-based approach — to manage pastures, which ultimately should reduce competing land uses and improve livelihoods of local communities.

GEF Focal Area Strategy

46. As described in the project document, the project was developed (and is funded) under the GEF-6 cycle. As mentioned in the project document, the project has been consistent with the objectives of, as well as contributing to several outcomes and outputs of the GEF's Biodiversity, Land Degradation and Sustainable Forest Management Focal (SFM) Focal Area Strategies for the GEF-6 period. In particular, the project is well aligned with the biodiversity objectives BD-1: Improve sustainability of protected area systems; BD-2: Reduce threats to globally significant biodiversity; and BD-4: Mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes and seascapes and production sectors. It is well aligned with the land degradation objective LD-3: Integrated landscapes: reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape. Finally, the project is also well aligned with three sustainable forest management objectives SFM-1: Maintained Forest Resources: Reduce the pressures on high conservation value forests by addressing the drivers of deforestation; SFM-2: Enhanced Forest Management: Maintain flows of forest ecosystem services and improve resilience to climate change through SFM; and SFM-3: Restored Forest Ecosystems: Reverse the loss of ecosystem services within degraded forest landscapes.

47. In conclusion, this project is well aligned with legislated national strategies and programmes as well as the UNDP and GEF-6 focal areas strategies. It is a direct response to national priorities by: (i) preventing the further fragmentation and degradation of snow leopard and prey landscapes in Uzbekistan including status of high conservation value forests in the targeted key biodiversity areas; (ii) maintaining and/or restoring the quality of key snow leopard and prey habitats within these landscapes; (iii) improving the conservation status of, and sustainability of pasture and forest use in these habitats; and (iv) reducing the direct threats to the survival of snow leopards and prey populations. The project interventions focus on four strategic areas: enhance the quality of information on key ecosystems, habitats and species of the high-altitude mountains that are home to snow leopard and prey populations; expand, and build the management capacity of, the core conservation zones located within the two targeted snow leopard landscapes; encourage more sustainable levels of use of the high-altitude pastures and indigenous forests located within the two targeted snow leopard landscapes; and promote improved cooperation and collaboration (including transboundary) in the conservation of snow leopard and their ecosystems.

3.1.2. Results Framework / Log-frame

48. The *Strategic Results Framework* identified during the design phase of this project presents a weak set of expected results. No changes were made to the objective, components and outputs in the *Strategic Results Framework* during the inception phase. This framework also includes—for each component—a set of indicators and targets to be achieved at the end of the project and that are used to measure the performance of the project. Contrary to changes made to project results, the Evaluation Team noted that several changes were made during the inception phase to the set of indicators and targets to be used to measure the performance of the project.

49. The review of the strategy of the project indicates a moderately unsatisfactory "chain of results" – Activities ➔ Outputs ➔ Outcomes ➔ Objective. The strategy is much too focused on activities to be implemented as opposed to expected results to be achieved. Project resources have been allocated to implement a set of indicative activities under each expected output (9) and components (4), which together should contribute to achieve the overall objective of the project. No expected outcomes were identified during the formulation of the project3 rendering the project strategy much activity-based as opposed to results-based.

50. The aim of the project is to promote a landscape conservation and management approach contributing to the sustainable management, use and conservation of natural resources in high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan, including the conservation of snow leopards and their prey species, as well as the sustainable local community development. Responding to national priorities, the project has four characteristics: (i) enhance the quality of information on key ecosystems, habitats and species of the high altitude mountains that are home to snow leopard and prey populations; (ii) expand, and build the management capacity of the core conservation zones located within two targeted snow leopard landscapes; (iii) encourage more sustainable levels of use of the high-altitude pastures and indigenous forests located within two targeted snow leopard landscapes; and (iv) promote improved cooperation and collaboration in the conservation of snow leopard and their ecosystems, including trans-boundary planning and management.

51. The logic model of the project presented in the *Strategic Results Framework* is summarized in table 4 below. It includes one objective, four components and nine outputs. For each expected component, targets to be achieved at the end of the project were identified. Targets in green are those which were modified during the inception phase.

Table 4: Project Logic Model

Expected Results	Targets at End of Project
Project Objective: To enhance the conservation, and sustainable use, of natural resources in the biodiverse high-altitude	1. >549,000 ha of protected areas within the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes under a more secure, and effectively managed, monitoring and enforcement regime

3 The Evaluation Team noted that some statements to describe the project outcomes are presented in the CEO Endorsement Request but not in the project document.

Expected Results	Targets at End of Project
mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan	2. 55,000 ha (a reduction of approximately 18% out of an estimated 307,412 ha of degraded alpine pastureland in the Ugam Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes) 3. 105,900 ha of improved conservation status of biodiversity important forests within targeted Protected Areas 4. Equal to or greater than baseline: a. Siberian Ibex: >3,800-4,000 b. Siberian roe deer: >250-300 c. Boar: >1,838 d. Menzbier's marmot: >4,300 e. Long-tailed marmot: >7,994 5. >50 total snow leopard population within the snow leopard landscapes of UZ 6. Involvement: >1500 (>60%) and direct benefits: >450 (>60%) women (as a proportion of the total) involved in, and directly benefiting from project investments in the conservation and sustainable use of high-altitude montane habitats and species within the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes
Component 1 – Landscape-level planning and management decision-making • ***Output 1.1:*** Improve the quality of environmental information for state Cadastre • ***Output 1.2:*** Enhance the state of knowledge on snow leopard and prey populations	7. Mini atlas produced with maps showing up to date environmental information related to biodiversity, pastures, and HCVFs in Ugam Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes 8. Population estimated annually with a >75% confidence level (lowest possible estimated population / highest possible estimated population, i.e. 20/50 = 40%)
Component 2 – Strengthening key biodiversity Areas • ***Output 2.1:*** Strengthen the management effectiveness of the core conservation zones in Ugam-Chatkal National Park • ***Output 2.2:*** Extend, and improve the conservation security of, Gissar Strict Nature Reserve • ***Output 2.3:*** Enhance community involvement in, and beneficiation from, protected areas	9. 237,700 ha - total extent (ha) of core conservation areas managed as IUCN Category I or Category II protected areas within the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes 10. METT scores: a. Chatkal SBR: 57 b. Ugam-Chatkal State National Nature Park: 45 c. Gissar SNR: >56 11. (i) <40/annum and (ii) <155/annum (i) poaching (of snow leopard and prey); and (ii) other illegal (encroachments for crops and grazing, wood harvesting) incidents recorded (and prosecuted) per annum by ranger patrol staff from the core conservation areas of Ugam-Chatkal State NNP (including Chatkal SBR) and Gissar SNR 12. >100 (>60) total number (of which are women) of individuals from targeted villages who have completed project funded skills training courses. 13. >150 (>80) per annum - Number per annum (of which are women) of individuals from the targeted villages who financially benefit from the management of the protected areas within the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes.
Component 3 – Sustainable economic development incentives for communities • ***Output 3.1:*** Incentivize sustainable pasture management practices • ***Output 3.2:*** Encourage more sustainable levels of forest use	14. Legal or regulatory mechanism in place to pilot Pasture User Associations 15. 2 PUAs with approved pasture management plans under implementation in the high-altitude pastures of the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes 16. A total of >120, households (average of ~6 individuals/ household) in the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes directly benefiting from project technical and grant funding support for: (a) improving the health and well-being of free-ranging livestock; (b) development of alternative local income-generating enterprises; and (c) establishment of intensive livestock farms; according to the below approximate breakdown: • (a) >90 (b) >30 (c) >8 17. Extent (ha) of degraded high-altitude forests of the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes under active rehabilitation or restoration: under restoration: 1,000 ha; under sustainable management with communities: 15,000 ha 18. A total of >130 households (average of ~6 individuals/ household) in the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes directly benefiting from project technical and grant funding support for: (a) establishment and maintenance of small plantations/woodlots; (b) establishment of food-producing fruit and nut orchards and herb gardens; and (c) installation and maintenance of alternative

Expected Results	Targets at End of Project
	energy and fuel technologies and systems; according to the below approximate breakdown: • (a) >5 (b) >25 (c) >100
Component 4 – Promoting cooperation and collaboration • ***Output 4.1:*** Improve inter-agency coordination in conservation, monitoring and enforcement • ***Output 4.2:*** Strengthen the capacity for trans-boundary planning and management	19. Action plan approved and under implementation as defined by a. At least one stakeholder meeting (under cooperative governance structure) following approval to develop snow leopard priority landscape integrated landscape management plan b. Snow leopard and prey monitoring program established with data being collected and analyzed annually, and published at least once in a "State of the Snow Leopard" report c. Scientifically validated detailed GIS map of snow leopard habitat range published d. At least one field-based activity undertaken in accordance with action plan to reduce threats to snow leopards (e.g. predator-proof corral constructed in high risk area, snow leopard-related education and awareness activity carried out, etc.) 20. 50% of border security officials receiving in-service wildlife monitoring and enforcement training and skills development among those employed in Ugam Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes 21. 2 annual international events related to snow leopard and mountain ecosystem conservation where Uzbekistan is represented and presents information on project activities 22. International agreement between Uzbekistan and at least one bordering country under implementation regarding at least one of the below issues: a. Cooperation on law enforcement at border points regarding illegal wildlife trade b. Illegal hunting by border guards c. Data sharing on snow leopard monitoring

Source: project document

52. In addition to the fact that the project strategy is too focused on activities to be implemented as opposed to expected results to be achieved, the review of the scope of outputs and indicative activities indicates that it is an ambitious project. The implementation plan is much detailed with a list of 100 indicative activities to be conducted under nine outputs and four components. The review of these activities indicates a good set of activities; however, there are too many of them. Additionally, it renders the project implementation team in a compliance mode to "*tick the box*" once an activity is completed as opposed to provide an expected results framework that the team should reach through the implementation of what is needed to achieve these results. It "*forces*" the implementation team to use an activity-based management approach as opposed to using a results-based management (RBM) approach.

53. The review of project interventions under each output confirms the large scope of the project. They could be grouped into four main areas: (i) strengthening the protected area system in Uzbekistan focusing on the core conservation zones in Ugam-Chatkal National Park and the Gissar Nature Reserve; (ii) demonstrate new sustainable pasture management practices; (iii) strengthen the management of mountain forests; and (iv) develop a national snow leopard monitoring programme. It is anticipated that these areas would contribute to reaching the objective that is "*to enhance the conservation, and sustainable use, of natural resources in the biodiverse high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan*". Each of these 4 areas could be a project in itself.

54. When considering the context of the project in Uzbekistan - including a complex environment (institutional, legislative and policy frameworks) - in which the project is to be implemented and also the overall reforms that are underway in Uzbekistan with the enactment by the government of 22 related pieces of legislation in the last 2 years (*see Section 3.1.1*), it *goes without saying* that implementing this project is a difficult task. It is a lot for one project, a timeframe of 5 years and a GEF financing of $6.2M. As discussed in subsequent sections, there is a risk that the implementation of the project ends up in a series of distinct achievements in each area without the anticipated overall impact to enhance the conservation, and sustainable use, of natural resources in the biodiverse high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan. It is recommended that the project implementation team tightens its interventions by increasing coordination and communication among components, and among project stakeholders; seeking greater synergies among its interventions.

55. Regarding the set of indicators and their respective targets to measure the performance of the project, 6

indicators were identified to measure how well the project is progressing toward its objective; 2 indicators to monitor the progress under component 1; 5 indicators to monitor the progress under component 2; 5 indicators to monitor the progress under component 3; and 4 indicators to measure the progress made under component 4 for a total number of indicators of 22. For a project of this size, it is a good number of indicators.

56. As said earlier, this set of indicators and targets was revised during the inception phase. There were made SMARTer and more realistic/appropriate for measuring the progress of this project in the context of Uzbekistan. The Evaluation Team noted that the set of indicators is a mix of qualitative and quantitative indicators and where possible gender monitoring has been taken into consideration to collect disaggregated information by gender (*see also Section 3.3.5*).

57. In conclusion, the review of the project strategy and the national context for this project indicates that this strategy is a direct response to national needs and priorities. However, it is an ambitious project intervening in several areas, resulting in an extended list of activities planned to be implemented over the lifetime of the project. It focuses on four main strategic areas: (i) strengthening the management of protected areas; (ii) demonstrate new sustainable pasture management practices; (iii) strengthen the management of mountain forests; and (iv) develop capacity for a national snow leopard monitoring programme. It is a complex project strategy that is well documented in the project document, but it is lacking the identification of expected outcomes. As a result, the project implementation team is much focused on managing the implementation of activities as opposed to reaching expected results using a results-based management approach (RBM).

3.2. Progress Towards Results

58. This section discusses the assessment of project results; how effective the project is to deliver its expected results and what are the remaining barriers limiting the effectiveness of the project.

3.2.1. Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis

59. As presented in Sections 3.1, the project has been implemented through four (4) components. The implementation progress is measured though a set of 22 indicators and 22 targets. On the next page is a table listing key deliverables achieved so far by the project against each outcome and their corresponding targets. A color "*traffic light system*" code was used to represent the level of progress achieved so far by the project. Finally, a discussion of results achieved so far is presented at the end of this section[4].

Target achieved On target to be achieved Not on target to be achieved

4 The analysis presented in this Section have been conducted with the assumption that the project will terminate in May 2022.

Table 5: List of Delivered Results

Expected Results	Project Targets	Results (Deliverables)	MTR Assess.
Project Objective: To enhance the conservation, and sustainable use, of natural resources in the biodiverse high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan.	• > 549,000 ha of protected areas within the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes under a more secure, and effectively managed, monitoring and enforcement regime	• 161,060 hectares: This figure represents the area of protected areas within the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes where a more secure and effective management, monitoring and enforcement regime have been promoted by the project. Specifically, by target PAs: a) Gissar State Reserve core zone—80,986 hectares and buffer zone—11, 231 hectares; b) Chatkal State Biosphere reserve core zone – 24,706 hectares; c) Ugam-Chatkal State Biosphere Reserve core zone—11,018 hectares, buffer zone–5,198 hectares and transition zone—27,921 ha. • Besides, three (3) hunting concessions were established in the territory of the Ugam-Chatkal Park where also management, monitoring and enforcement regime has been strengthened. The NGO "Uzbekokhotribolovobedinenie" (Uzbek hunting and fishing association) manages 47,877 hectares, and "*Falcon Hunting Solutions*" – Bustonliq hunting concession manages 35,541 hectares (http://fhs.uz/). In total, the territory of hunting concessions in Ugam Chatkal Park accounts for 83,418 hectares where also secure and effective management, monitoring and enforcement regime is being practiced. • The project has supported the creation of a buffer zone of the Gissar State Reserve (11,231 ha) in the Kashkadarya part of the reserve. • The Government of Uzbekistan has approved the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for 2019–2028 (http://lex.uz/ru/docs/4372841) on 11 June 2019. The project provided its full support and assistance to the project's implementing partner (Goskomecology) on drafting and finalizing the NBSAP document.	
	• 55,000 ha (a reduction of approximately 18% out of an estimated 307,412 ha of degraded alpine pastureland in the Ugam Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes)	• 23,000 ha of high-altitude pastures are being piloted for more regulated and sustainable management regime. • The project is continuing to work on practice of regulated and sustainable management of high-altitude pastures with local communities in two pilot districts (Shakhrisabz district of Kashkadarya and Akhangaran district of Tashkent regions) to pilot the mechanism of Pasture Use Associations. • A pilot community-level cooperative has been established in Akhangaran District for sustainable management of abandoned pastures. • Formation of the same cooperative in Shakhrisabz district has been agreed. With the launch of both cooperatives, it is now possible to sustainably manage over 4,000 ha of high-altitude pastures that before were used uncontrollably. • Preliminary negotiations were held with local forest and farm enterprises, as the main pasture users in the area, on the use of pasture jointly with the cooperatives of pasture users. • The capacity of representatives of the government, the legislative chamber and specialists of national agencies on pasture management has been raised by means of reviewing and discussing a draft Law "On Pastures" with a particular focus on joint pasture use and management. At the	

Expected Results	Project Targets	Results (Deliverables)	MTR Assess.
		national level, a roundtable was held to review the draft Law "On Pastures" and share the project's experience on creation of community cooperatives as a form of joint pasture use in Uzbekistan.	
	● 105,900 ha of improved conservation status of biodiversity important forests within targeted Protected Areas	● Three pilot nurseries were established (one in Ugam-Chatkal and two in Gissar Alay snow leopard landscapes) for the provision of tree saplings to pilot local communities. The project plans to increase the number of nurseries in the target forest enterprises (covering both snow leopard landscapes) to support restoration of degraded forest patches in the project's target areas. ● Forest restoration activities around the protected areas and buffer zones should ensure the conservation of HCVF nearby and inside the target protected areas.	
	● Equal to or greater than baseline: ○ Siberian Ibex: >3,800-4,000 ○ Siberian roe deer: >250-300 ○ Boar: >1,838 ○ Menzbier's marmot: >4,300 ○ Long-tailed marmot: >7,994	● The first stage of research and monitoring of snow leopard and its prey species started in the second half of 2018 and continuing in 2019. There is official data on population monitoring available from PAs and forest enterprises, but it should be verified. ● A national expert on environmental information analysis provided data on status and population trends of primary snow leopard prey populations based on existing spatial and non-spatial data for WTS (Western Tian Shan) and GA (Gissar Alay) snow leopard landscapes (incl. data on distribution and number). GIS maps on species distribution provided including current records, actual and potential distribution area. ● Field experts provided data on the number of Siberian ibexes, Siberian roe deer, boars and two marmot species in Western Tien Shan and Pamir Alay during testing the occupancy survey that uses spatial replicates in the selected Snow Leopard grids.	
	● >50 total snow leopard population within the snow leopard landscapes of Uzbekistan	● The Snow leopard monitoring programme in Uzbekistan was prepared and discussed with the project's partners. It is based on the Snow Leopard Grid approach and includes occupancy survey with spatial replicates, capture-recapture survey using camera-trapping and non-invasive genetics. ● National experts received a training on the snow leopard monitoring (methodology) and took part in a pilot survey at the end of 2018. ● During the snow leopard research and monitoring activities, signs of presence of snow leopard were noted and identified (scat, excrements). Total seven (7) samples of snow leopard presence were collected for DNA analysis and estimation of the population number. ● The Project held a training for field experts and genetic laboratory staff on collection and analysis of snow leopard samples (DNA training) on June 12-18 and July 8. ● The Snow Leopard occupancy survey in the selected grids will continue in Western Tien Shan throughout the year of 2019. ● The needed equipment (camera traps & accessories) for the capture-recapture survey was purchased and the launch of the survey is scheduled for the second part of 2019 that will identify the number	

Expected Results	Project Targets	Results (Deliverables)	MTR Assess.
		and distribution of species. Camera traps will be installed in 2019 and initial data analysis will be available in 2020.	
	• Involvement: >1500 (>60%) and direct benefits: >450 (>60%) women (as a proportion of the total) involved in, and directly benefiting from project investments in the conservation and sustainable use of high-altitude montane habitats and species within the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes	• Nine (9) micro grants projects were identified, and financing agreements were concluded so far: five in Ugam-Chatkal and four (4) in Gissar Alay snow leopard landscapes. It is expected that 400 families, 1,256 individuals, of which 717 are women will benefit from these projects. The micro-grant projects are expected to reverse degradation of 800 ha of forests thus reducing the pressure on natural forests and shift from conventional community livelihoods (livestock grazing in highland pastures) to alternative sources of income. • Three (3) projects were granted to livestock farms on creation of fences and production of feedstock for intensive livestock breeding. One (1) project was granted for development of beekeeping in a community. One (1) project was granted to a community for opening a sewing workshop for women to produce hand-made clothes for children, men and women. One (1) project was granted to a household for drying and storing fruits and vegetables. Three (3) micro-grant projects were granted to three local communities on creation of 50 ha of fruit orchards, 47 ha of vineyards and almond plantations and irrigation water supply for orchards resulting in water provision to 124 families in the target local communities.	
Component 1 – Landscape-level planning and management decision-making • ***Output 1.1:*** Improve the quality of environmental information for state cadaster • ***Output 1.2:*** Enhance the state of knowledge on snow leopard and prey populations	• Mini atlas produced with maps showing up to date environmental information related to biodiversity, pastures, and HCVFs in Ugam Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes	• A BCIMS (Biodiversity conservation information management system) as well as the BURC (Biodiversity Hub Resource Center) is being developed in a flexible manner to allow the beneficiary (State Ecology Committee) to integrate other types of necessary environmental data type (based on the requirements of the State Cadasters for Plants and Animals), in addition to the identified 6 types of environmental data, based on the need. All needed equipment for the systems has been procured. • Data is collected to update 7 categories of environmental data: o Geographical data (rivers, water reservoirs, elevations); o Administrative data (country, region, district, settlements); o Infrastructure (roads, railroads); o Ecosystems data (mountain forest, steppe, sub-alpine and alpine meadows, glacier, rocks, etc.); o Land-user data (farmers, orchards, forest enterprises land, PAs, hunting concessions, etc.); o Biodiversity data (flora and fauna, key biodiversity areas, important bird areas); o Threats data (poaching, fire incidences, overgrazing, illegal tree cutting, illegal fishing, etc.).	
	• Population estimated annually with a >75% confidence level (lowest possible estimated population / highest possible estimated population, i.e. 20/50 = 40%)	• Project supported development of the National Snow Leopard Monitoring Programme using the Snow Leopard Grid system. 510 SL grids were selected (5 x 5 km) in the target areas. National consultants and staff of Protected Areas (Chatkal Biosphere Nature Reserve, Gissar State Nature Reserve, Ugam-Chatkal National Park) were trained on snow leopard data collection and data analysis using most accurate and popular methods as occupancy survey with spatial replicates; SCR (Survey Capture Recapture) with camera-trapping and non-invasive genetics with DNA analysis of snow leopard scats samples. It is expected that about 200 Snow Leopard Grids will be covered by	

Expected Results	Project Targets	Results (Deliverables)	MTR Assess.
		survey until the end of this year. The use of modern surveying methods for population estimate along with identification of each individual (to avoid double counting) will help to increase the accuracy of national snow leopard population estimate. The first results will be obtained in 2020.	
Component 2 – Strengthening key biodiversity Areas • ***Output 2.1:*** Strengthen the management effectiveness of the core conservation zones in Ugam-Chatkal National Park • ***Output 2.2:*** Extend, and improve the conservation security of Gissar Strict Nature Reserve • ***Output 2.3:*** Enhance community involvement in, and benefit from protected areas	• 237,700 ha - total extent (ha) of core conservation areas managed as IUCN Category I or Category II protected areas within the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes	• Cumulative progress at 116,795 ha. • The project has supported the creation of the buffer zone of 11,231 ha in the Kashkadarya part of the Gissar State Reserve (IUCN Category I) • The Gissar State Reserve borders Surkhandarya region with the upper reaches of the Tupalang River (snow leopard landscape) as an area for expansion. The project currently develops a zonation plan and scientific justification for the Cabinet of Ministers to create a new National Park (tentatively called "Surkhan") with core zones to cover the snow leopard landscapes in the area. Both documents will be finalized in 2019 and submitted to the Government in early 2020. The territory of the Natural Park will preliminarily be around 200,000 ha. • An ecological corridor should be established in Ugam-Chatkal snow leopard landscape between the Bashkizilsay site (a core zone of Ugam-Chatkal State Biosphere Reserve) and Maidantal site (a core zone of Chatkal State Biosphere Reserve). The current Law on Protected Areas has no provisions or includes no notion on ecological corridors prevailing the Project from creating one. However, the project will support the creation of additional buffer zones to connect the two isolated core zones, which is line with the Law on Protected Areas. • In parallel, the project works on introducing of an ecological corridor concept into the Law on Protected Areas. • The Government of Uzbekistan has approved the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for 2019–2028 (http://lex.uz/ru/docs/4372841) to which the project extended its full support on development of the document together with the project implementation partner (Goskomecology). The recently endorsed NBSAP mentions conservation of key indicator species of the country, including the snow leopard. Therefore, the project's proposals for effective management and monitoring of two snow leopard landscapes will significantly contribute to the implementation of the NBSAP. • According to the decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan 05.01.2019, № УП 564, "On additional measures for the accelerated development of tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan", certain protected areas have to carry out a zonation to develop ecotourism/tourism. In this regard, one of the project's pilot PA, the Gissar State Reserve, has to change a strict protection regime to a buffer zone regime for 2,000 ha to allow for tourism activities. Thus, the core zone of the Gissar reserve will change from 80,986 ha to 78,986 ha, but the whole territory of the reserve will remain unchanged. The regime change in above-mentioned sites will allow the Gissar State Reserve conduct eco-/touristic activities for additional funding and benefit the local communities. Areas to be excluded	

Expected Results	Project Targets	Results (Deliverables)	MTR Assess.
		from the core conservation zone of the Reserve and converted to the buffer zone are largely peripheral areas of marginal biodiversity importance: o A route to the Hazrat Sultan area (a cultural religious spot); o The cave of Amir Timur is an important and popular site among tourists visiting the place as a tribute to the great commander and the Creator of statehood; o Waterfall "Suvtoshar" - a popular touristic site.	
	• METT scores: o Chatkal SBR: 57 o Ugam-Chatkal State National Nature Park: 45 o Gissar SNR: >56	• Chatkal SBR: 44 • Ugam-Chatkal State National Nature Park: 28 • Gissar SNR: 44 • Ugam-Chatkal State Biosphere Reserve – (2018 – 39, 2019 – 43). The first METT for the Ugam-Chatkal state biosphere reserve was conducted in November 2018 showing an increase in METT scores on the following grounds: legal framework for operation of the PA has improved, monitoring and law enforcement activities can be conducted by inspectors, training of inspection staff conducted, etc.).	
	• (i) <40/annum and (ii) <155/annum (i) poaching (of snow leopard and prey); and (ii) other illegal (encroachments for crops and grazing, wood harvesting) incidents recorded (and prosecuted) per annum by ranger patrol staff from the core conservation areas of Ugam-Chatkal State NNP (including Chatkal SBR) and Gissar SNR	• Number of illegal incidents in pilot protected areas for the period of 2018 and first half of 2019 are as follows: o Ugam-Chatkal SNP: in 2018 - 734 (poaching -38), and in 2019 - total 333 (poaching 17); o Chatkal SBR: in 2018 - 4 (no poaching), in 2019 - total 2 (no poaching); o Gissar SNR: in 2018 - 47 (poaching - 3), in 2019 - total 6 (no poaching). • A SMART patrol system is under development. All necessary equipment has been procured as well as the establishment of SMART patrol centers in the two pilot protected areas. • The anti-poaching group "*Snow Leopard*" under the Goskomecology has been established this year (Resolution of Goskomecology #247, dated 01/06/2019). It is staffed with experienced inspectors and will support the project's efforts on reducing illegal encroachments and poaching as well as facilitate the project's work with local communities.	
	• >100 (>60) total number (of which are women) of individuals from targeted villages who have completed project funded skills training courses	• Initial validation workshop has been conducted this year to identify the needs for skills development of community members. Skill needs of local communities were identified, and training courses will be launched in 2020. Local communities are largely interested in developing the following skills: o Training on basic vet services; o Training on aquaculture development; o Growing medicinal plants; o Provision of guesthouse services/eco-tourism; o Training women on sewing and weaving techniques; o Establishment of handicraft training centers (carpentry, furniture assembly, window and door manufacturing);	

Expected Results	Project Targets	Results (Deliverables)	MTR Assess.
		○ Vehicle maintenance services.	
	• >150 (>80) per annum - Number per annum (of which are women) of individuals from the targeted villages who financially benefit from the management of the protected areas within the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes	• The project completed the study/survey assessing tourism potential in three target PAs (Ugam-Chatkal National Nature Park, Ugam-Chatkal Biosphere Reserve and the created buffer zone of the Gissar State Reserve) mainly focused on tourists visiting Uzbekistan as mountains have always been attractive to internal/local visitors. • 5,756 respondents from 72 countries took part in the survey, out of which 55% are men and 45% are women, with age categories of 35-45 (1,679 individuals), 25-34 (1,316 individuals), 45-54 and beyond 55 (2,164), and 25 and younger (597 individuals). Only 3.7% of respondents were interested in ecotourism while in Uzbekistan, and popular places of visit were Charvak and Chimgan (Ugam-Chatkal Park area). In particular, only 12.6% of tourists that visit protected areas use the services of tourism companies.	
Component 3 – Sustainable economic development incentives for communities • ***Output 3.1:*** Incentivize sustainable pasture management practices • ***Output 3.2:*** Encourage more sustainable levels of forest use	• Legal or regulatory mechanism in place to pilot Pasture User Associations	• Pasture Law was endorsed/approved by the President of Uzbekistan on 20 May 2019, #ЗРУ–538 (https://theworldnews.net/uz-news/prezident-podpisal-zakon-o-pastbishchakh; https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2019/05/21/pastures/). • Drafting the pasture law was a joint effort of this and another UNDP/GEF project on "Reducing Pressures on Natural Resources from Competing Land Use in Non-Irrigated Arid Mountain, Semi-Desert and Desert Landscapes of Uzbekistan". • A package of updated documentation (11 documents in total) on creation of pasture users' cooperative has been prepared and approved by competent authorities on the ground, submitted to local administrations in the project areas for further implementation. These documents cover such important issues as the charter of a cooperative of pasture users, application for pasture use of the cooperative, a decree template of the district administration on allocation of pastureland to the cooperative, application template for state registration, a business plan template, a plan of pasture use, a contract template of pasture use between the cooperative and local communities. • The project conducted 4 training workshops at the local level and 1 roundtable at the national level on joint pasture use for local specialists, potential members of a cooperative, administration as well as representatives of national agencies and Oliy Majlis (Parliament) of Uzbekistan in the Akhangaran District (pilot site of the project). Total 122 people participated in the project training activities, of which 21 were women. • Draft guidelines for the government on economic aspects for establishment of Pasture User Associations were prepared, including plans for further improvement and subsequent stages of conducting a situational analysis and economic justification.	
	• 2 PUAs with approved pasture management plans under implementation in the high-	• A pilot pasture cooperative (as a form of PUA) has been established in Akhangaran district for the management of abandoned (not used) pastures. An agreement has been reached on creation of a cooperative in Shakhrisabz District. With the creation of the two cooperatives, it is now possible to	

Expected Results	Project Targets	Results (Deliverables)	MTR Assess.
	altitude pastures of the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes	sustainably manage over 4,000 hectares of mountain pastures that were previously not regulated. Preliminary negotiations were held with local forest and farm enterprises, as the main pasture users, on joint pasture use together with the cooperatives of pasture users. • Two (2) pilot sites of 3.5 ha for primary seed production of forage plants were established. Four (4) drought resistant fodder species were sown, of which three plant species were successful (Kochia, Ceratioids, Sainfoin). Reasons for poor germination of Agropyron is being studied. Seed materials should be ready for distribution among cooperative members next year. • Geobotanical surveys of pastures in the project pilot areas of Akhangaran and Shakhrisabz districts were carried out and conditions of pastures during the two seasons of annual use determined. Results of this work serve a basis for the development of pasture user plans. • In collaboration with the national research Institute of Agricultural Economics the project increased capacities of local communities to organize cooperatives and other forms for joint pasture management through the following activities: o economic assessment of production capacity of local pastures, including comparative analysis of existing forms of production with alternative ones; o prepared and provided in an electronic form a set of economic and mathematical methods for assessment of pasture capacity, including the carrying capacity, its economic efficiency and planning of production use; o trainings of local specialists on methods of economic and mathematical analysis of rangelands and planning the load on pastures in the long term; o recommendations and practical guidance on the use of economic and mathematical calculations in the planning of pasture use; o the initial version of the plan for the use of pastures by the local communities and the load on pastures in terms of economic feasibility in the long term has been prepared and transferred for practical use by local pasture users and the district administrations.	
	• A total of >120, households (average of ~6 individuals/ household) in the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes directly benefiting from project technical and grant funding support for: (a) improving the health and well-being of free-ranging livestock; (b) development of alternative local income-generating enterprises; and (c) establishment of intensive	• a) and c). Three (3) households in the Ugam-Chatkal snow leopard landscapes obtained technical and grant funding support for improving the health and well-being of free-ranging livestock and for establishment of intensive livestock farms. • b) Two (2) households and one (1) VCC (Village council of citizens) (10 women from different households employed) were funded for the development of alternative local income-generating opportunities such as creation of fruit drying and storage complex, beekeeping and sewing workshop.	

Expected Results	Project Targets	Results (Deliverables)	MTR Assess.
	livestock farms; according to the below approximate breakdown: (a) >90; (b) >30; (c) >8		
	• Extent (ha) of degraded high-altitude forests of the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes under active rehabilitation or restoration: under restoration: 1,000 ha; under sustainable management with communities: 15,000 ha	• The project has reached an agreement with the administration of the Ugam-Chatkal Park on the establishment of a biolab to combat the forest diseases occurring in the Ugam-Chatkal snow leopard landscape for biological protection of forests, one of the reasons for tree loss leading to sanitary cuttings for fuelwood. Reforested areas by forest enterprises are also subject to loss due to diseases putting to risk the reforestation activities of the project in the future as well. Annual capacity of the biolab will allow production of entomophagous for 10,000 ha of forest. Currently, the procurement documents are prepared, and it is expected that the biolab will be established in the fourth quarter of 2019. • 3 pilot tree nurseries were established (one in Ugam-Chatkal and two in Gissar Alay snow leopard landscapes) for the provision of tree saplings to target local communities. It is expected that the nurseries will provide the target local communities with free tree saplings during the project lifetime starting from 2020. Besides, the saplings will be used for forest restoration activities. • In collaboration with the National Scientific-Research Institute of Horticulture, Viticulture and Wine-Making the project raised capacities of local communities in the target landscapes, through implementation of the following capacity building activities: o developed a methodological guidance and training materials for improved maintenance of fruit and other trees based on field surveys conducted in two pilot areas of the project; o conducted 4 training workshops on awareness raising and skill enhancement in for local communities in the project areas covering cultivation and use of fruit and forest trees, with a focus on current environmental issues specific to the target area; o developed recommendations on types, parameters, structure, expected effectiveness of fruit and other trees for dissemination among local communities. Research, analysis and generalization of opportunities conducted to improve the use of fruit and forest trees in the project areas. • The project, in collaboration with the National Research Institute for Forestry has conducted a study of issues and practical implementation of forest management in mountain areas, and produced the following documents: o analytical note on the current state of management of forestry enterprises on the ground, including a description of the organizational and economic structure of forest management, features of production and technological processes, problems of management of economic and environmental aspects, and ways to solve them within the framework of current economic conditions, as well as the national and international organizations that can be involved in the process of improving the mechanism of forest management; o an action plan for the restoration of forest areas in the highlands, the identification of an optimal set of tree species, tillage (e.g. ploughing, use of fertilizers), management and restoration	

Expected Results	Project Targets	Results (Deliverables)	MTR Assess.
		methods (e.g. sowing, enriching planting, terracing, etc.), as well as measures to be implemented for their maintenance; ○ a set of legislative and normative documents on improving the management of forests, including the establishment of a mechanism of joint forest management with communities. • In collaboration with the National Scientific Innovation Center "Eko-energiya» the project raised awareness of local communities on renewable energy sources, through the following activities: ○ preparation of methodological, demonstration and training materials on alternative energy sources and their distribution in mountain communities on the ground; ○ training workshops in the project areas on increasing awareness and skills of the local population for the use of alternative sources of energy and fuel; ○ research, analysis and opportunities for alternative energy sources in project areas, development of recommendations on types, parameters, structure, expected effectiveness and provision of necessary means of technical support, as well as subsequent support in the acquisition, installation and maintenance of equipment and devices for obtaining alternative fuels and energy.	
	• A total of >130 households (average of ~6 individuals/ household) in the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes directly benefiting from project technical and grant funding support for: (a) establishment and maintenance of small plantations/woodlots; (b) establishment of food-producing fruit and nut orchards and herb gardens; and (c) installation and maintenance of alternative energy and fuel technologies and systems; according to the below approximate breakdown: (a) >5; (b) >25; (c) >100	• (a) 0 households: No application received for establishing small plantations/woodlots during the current grant cycle • (b) 124 households are directly benefitting from fruit and nut orchards and vineyards on 152 ha with the support of the micro-grant programme. Grant agreements were concluded with "Serob", "Hisor" and "Changak" VCCs in the Gissar snow leopard landscape. • (c) 0 households. No applications received during the current grant cycle on installation and maintenance of alternative energy and fuel technologies and systems	
Component 4 – Promoting cooperation and collaboration • ***Output 4.1:*** Improve inter-agency coordination in conservation,	• Action plan approved and under implementation as defined by: ○ At least one stakeholder meeting following approval to develop snow leopard landscape integrated landscape management plan	• The final draft Programme and Action Plan for snow leopard conservation has been agreed with Goskomecology. It will now go through rounds of discussions with key nature conservation agencies in the country and will be submitted to the Government for adoption later this year. The recently endorsed NBSAP includes the Programme and Action Plan for snow leopard conservation meaning that the approval and implementation of the Programme will also be part of the implementation of the NBSAP.	

Expected Results	Project Targets	Results (Deliverables)	MTR Assess.
monitoring and enforcement • ***Output 4.2:*** Strengthen the capacity for trans-boundary planning and management	○ Snow leopard and prey monitoring program established with data being collected and analyzed annually, and published ○ Scientifically validated detailed GIS map of snow leopard habitat range published ○ At least one field-based activity undertaken in accordance with action plan to reduce threats to snow leopards		
	• 50% of border security officials receiving in-service wildlife monitoring and enforcement training among those employed in Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes	• Thematic training modules were developed, and guidebooks are being finalized for publication and use for trainings. Trainings for border security officials and customs officers will take place in late 2019	
	• 2 annual international events related to snow leopard and mountain ecosystem conservation where Uzbekistan is represented and presents information on project activities	• During this reporting period Uzbekistan presented information on project activities at the following five (5) international events: ○ Consultative Workshop "*Transboundary Cooperation for Snow Leopard Conservation*", July 16-20, 2018, Tashkent, Uzbekistan ○ International Conference for Snow Leopard Conservation, Sept. 3-7, 2018, Shenzhen, China ○ 70th session of the CITES Standing Committee, Sochi, Russia, October 1-5, 2018 ○ Regional workshop "*Transboundary aspects of conservation of snow leopard ecosystems*" April 10-12, 2019, Khujand, Tajikistan ○ International Conference on Snow Leopard Conservation: Population, Management & Trans-boundary Cooperation, July 3-4, 2019, Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan.	
	• International agreement between Uzbekistan and at least one bordering country under implementation regarding at least one of the below issues: ○ Cooperation on law enforcement at border points regarding illegal wildlife trade ○ Illegal hunting by border guards ○ Data sharing on snow leopard monitoring	• Draft MOU and action plan were developed and circulated among counterparts in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan for review. Comments were collected on the draft MOU and it was discussed at the regional workshop on "*Transboundary aspects of conservation of snow leopard ecosystems*" in Khujand, Tajikistan, on 10-12 April 2019. • The next step is to sign the MOU in the coming months once all four countries will endorse this MOU.	

Source: Adapted from project progress reports, mostly from PIR 2019 and PIR 2018.

60. The Evaluation Team also reviewed the GEF tracking tools for this project, which include the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT), the Biodiversity (BD) Tracking Tool, the land degradation Portfolio Monitoring and Assessment Tool (PMAT), and the Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) Tracking Tool. Tracking tools are instruments developed by the GEF Secretariat to measure progress in achieving the impacts and outcomes established at the portfolio (global) level. The information contained in these tracking tools is collated together at the global level to provide a global summary on the progress made in each GEF focal area.

61. Regarding the PMAT and the SFM tracking tool, no major differences were noted between the dataset completed at the outset of the project and the dataset completed at the time of the MTR. The only noted additions were: (a) 4,000 ha of pastures are now under sustainable management through the 2 pasture users cooperatives out of a target of 71,000 ha at project end; and (b) no area (ha) of forest are yet under SFM practices at the time of the MTR.

62. Regarding the METT, the main output of this tool is the METT score that is also an indicator (indicator #10) used to measure the performance of the project. The table below shows the scores for each protected area at the time of the inception phase, at the MTR time, and at project end (targets). These scores indicate only a marginal improvement so far.

Table 6: METT Scores

Protected Area	METT Scores		
	at Inception	at MTR	at Project End
Chatkal Biosphere Reserve	42	44	57
Ugam-Chatkal State National Park	24	28	45
Ugam-Chatkal Biosphere Reserve	39 (2018)	43	?
Gissar State National Park	43	44	56

Sources: Project document, Inception report, PIR 2019 and information collected from the Project Team.

63. As discussed in section 3.1.2, this is an ambitious project with many "*moving parts*". Its broad scope is reflected in the rather long list of achievements presented in table 5 above. The project management team has been implementing activities as planned in the project document referred to as indicative activities. With the help of good short term national and international expertise, the project has produced good deliverables.

64. However, as discussed later in the report, the broad scope of the project led to a certain compartmentalization of its implementation. The result is a broad set of distinct deliverables, which for the time being are not coming together with the sense of achieving the objective of the project that is "*to enhance the conservation, and sustainable use, of natural resources in the biodiverse high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan*." At this point in time and due to this limited cohesiveness among these deliverables, the project is progressing moderately satisfactorily towards its targets. However, it has about two and a half more years of implementation to go, that is plenty of time to ensure a greater cohesion of these deliverables. Below is a summary of key deliverables under each component:

65. Under ***Component 1*** (*GEF budget USD 992,200 – Used USD 354,657 or 36%*), the project has been intervening in two main areas: (i) ***Environmental Information***: a BCIMS (Biodiversity Conservation Information Management System) and a BURC (Biodiversity Hub Resource Center) are being developed to provide up-to-date quality environmental information. This system and hub resource center will be hosted by the State Committee on Ecology and the State Committee on Cadastre will also have access to this information; (ii) ***Snow Leopard Monitoring Programme***: a national programme is under development. The programme uses the snow leopard grid system and 510 snow leopard grids were selected (5 x 5 km) in the target areas. National consultants and staff of Protected Areas (Chatkal Biosphere Nature Reserve, Gissar State Nature Reserve, Ugam-Chatkal National Park) were trained on snow leopard data collection and data analysis using most accurate and popular methods as occupancy survey with spatial replicates; SCR (Survey Capture Recapture) with camera-trapping and non-invasive genetics with DNA analysis of snow leopard scats samples.

The use of modern surveying methods for population estimate along with identification of each individual (to avoid double counting) will help to increase the accuracy of national snow leopard population estimate. The first results will be obtained in 2020.

66. Based on the progress to date, this component it should be completed by the end of the project. As a result of this component, Uzbekistan should be better equipped with up-to-date environmental information on Snow Leopard Landscapes and a Snow Leopard Monitoring Programme to monitor the population of snow leopards in Uzbekistan.

67. Under ***Component 2*** (*GEF budget USD 2,445,000 – Used USD 390,627 or 16%*), the project has intervened in several areas:

- ***Zoning of PAs***: The project has supported the State Committee on Ecology to create a buffer zone of 11,231 ha in the Kashkadarya part of the Gissar State Reserve (IUCN Category I). In addition, the project started the development of a zonation plan and has assembled the scientific justification for a submission to the Cabinet of Ministers to create a new National Park (tentatively called "Surkhan") covering the upper reaches of the Tupalang River that is adjacent to the Gissar Reserve. The proposal for this National Park will include around 200,000 ha and should be submitted for review and approval to the government in early 2020. In Ugam-Chatkal snow leopard landscape, an ecological corridor is needed between the Bashkizilsay site (a core zone of Ugam-Chatkal State Biosphere Reserve) and Maidantal site (a core zone of Chatkal State Biosphere Reserve). However, due to the current Law on Protected Areas, which does not include provisions for ecological corridors, the project has been supporting the creation of additional buffer zones to connect the two isolated core zones. In the meantime, the project has been working on introducing an ecological corridor concept into the Law on Protected Areas.
- ***Eco-tourism in PAs***: Following a Presidential Decree (#564 – January 2019) to accelerate the development of tourism in Uzbekistan, certain protected areas have to carry out a zonation to develop ecotourism/tourism. As a result, the Gissar State Reserve has to change an area of 2,000 ha that is currently under a strict protection regime to a buffer zone regime to allow for tourism activities. This change will permit the development of eco-tourism activities with the objective of having socio-economic benefits for local communities. Within this context, the project has also completed a study/survey assessing tourism potential in three target PAs (Ugam-Chatkal National Park, Ugam-Chatkal Biosphere Reserve and the created buffer zone of the Gissar State Reserve). Out of 5,756 respondents from 72 countries only 3.7% of respondents were interested in ecotourism and Charvak and Chimgan (Ugam-Chatkal Park area) were the most popular areas to be visited.
- ***NBSAP***: With the support of the project, the Government of Uzbekistan has approved the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) for 2019–2028. It includes key indicators for biodiversity conservation monitoring, including snow leopards.
- ***METT***: The first METT measurement for the Ugam-Chatkal state biosphere reserve was conducted in November 2018 showing an increase in METT scores on the following grounds: legal framework for operation of the PA has improved, monitoring and law enforcement activities can be conducted by inspectors, training of inspection staff conducted, etc.
- ***SMART Patrol***: A SMART patrol system is under development. All necessary equipment has been procured as well as the establishment of SMART patrol centers in the two pilot protected areas. Additionally, an anti-poaching group "Snow Leopard" under the State Committee on Ecology has been established. It is staffed with experienced inspectors who will support the project's efforts on reducing illegal encroachments and poaching as well as facilitate the project's work with local communities.

68. Based on the progress to date, this component should be completed by the end of the project. As a result of this component, the conservation of biodiversity as well as the management of the protected area system in mountain areas of Uzbekistan should be strengthened and a more efficient patrol system to reduce poaching should be in place with greater skills and knowledge.

69. Under ***Component 3*** (*GEF budget USD 2,014,600 – Used USD 440,080 or 22%*), the project has also intervened in several areas:

- ***Management of Pastures***: The project supported the drafting of the Law on Pastures, which was enacted by the President of Uzbekistan on May 20, 2019, (ZRU-538). A package to document the creation of pasture users' cooperative has been prepared and approved by competent authorities on the ground and submitted

to local administrations in the project areas to help them in setting up these cooperatives with local communities. Training on joint pasture use for local specialists, potential members of a cooperative, administration as well as representatives of national agencies and Oliy Majlis (Parliament) of Uzbekistan in the Akhangaran District with the participation of 122 people of which 21 were women. Drafted guidelines for the government on economic aspects related to the establishment of Pasture User Associations, including plans for further improvement and subsequent stages of conducting a situational analysis and economic survey. Finally, a pilot pasture cooperative was created in Akhangaran district for the management of abandoned pastures and an agreement has been reached to create a cooperative in Shakhrisabz District; both should sustainably manage over 4,000 hectares of mountain pastures that were previously not regulated. Within these 2 pilot areas, geobotanical surveys of pastures were carried out; two (2) pilot sites of 3.5 ha for primary seed production of forage plants were established; and in collaboration with the National *Research Institute of Agricultural Economics* awareness activities were conducted with local communities on the benefit of pasture user associations.

- ***Micro-grants***: Nine (9) micro grants projects were identified, and financing agreements are concluded: five in Ugam-Chatkal and four (4) in Gissar Alay snow leopard landscapes. It is expected that 400 families, 1,256 individuals, of which 717 are women will benefit from these projects. The micro-grant projects are expected to reverse degradation of 800 ha of forests thus reducing the pressure on natural forests and shift from conventional community livelihoods (livestock grazing in highland pastures) to alternative sources of income.
- ***Management of Forests***: The project has reached an agreement with the administration of the Ugam-Chatkal Park for the establishment of a biolab to combat the forest diseases occurring in the Ugam-Chatkal snow leopard landscape, which are the reasons for tree loss leading to sanitary cuttings for fuelwood. Reforested areas by forest enterprises are also subject to losses due to forest diseases putting to risk reforestation activities. The lab should be established in the fourth quarter of 2019. 3 pilot tree nurseries were established (one in Ugam-Chatkal and two in Gissar Alay snow leopard landscapes) to provide tree saplings to target local communities. Awareness activities and training sessions have been organized with local communities in the targeted landscapes, in collaboration with the *National Scientific-Research Institute of Horticulture, Viticulture and Winemaking* to raise capacities on growing and using fruit and forest trees. The same type of activities was conducted with the collaboration of the *National Scientific Innovation Center "Eko-energiya»* on the use of alternative energy sources. A study on issues and practical implementation of forest management practices in mountain areas was conducted in collaboration with the *National Research Institute for Forestry*. It includes an action plan to restore degraded mountain forests as well as a set of legislative and normative documents on improving the management of forests, including the establishment of a joint forest management mechanism with communities.

70. Based on the progress to date, this component should also be completed by the end of the project. As a result of this component, an innovative approach to improve the management of pastures is being demonstrated, including the implementation of a micro-grant programme as an incentive mechanism to reduce pressure on local pastures and forests.

71. However, despite the progress made in piloting 2 pasture users cooperatives and funding 17 alternative income-generation projects through the project micro-grant programme, the review of these activities reveals that the strategies guiding these activities need to be reviewed. In a recent report from the international pasture expert, it is recommended to "*define more systematically the objectives, components and expected outputs of the sub-component on pastures*", including reviewing the role of forest enterprises in the management of pastures and the need for additional research on economic valuation of extensive pasture resources and livestock management.

72. Regarding the micro-grant programme, the concept developed to guide this programme includes the need for proposals to plan alternative activities to reduce pressure on natural forests and pastures. It is a valid objective, however, the logic of the programme is somewhat questionable. Funding micro-projects to reduce pressure on pastures implies a reduction of livestock grazing these pastures. While it is a valid aim, it is also done in the context where thousands of animals (mostly sheep) are coming from the Fergana Valley, every summer, to graze in the Ugam-Chatkal snow leopard landscape. If the objective of the micro-grant programme is to reduce pressure on pastures and forests, limiting/managing the summer influx of animals coming from the Fergana Valley may be a more effective way to reduce pressure on pastures and forest in this region. Meanwhile, this micro-grant programme is effective in creating alternative sources of incomes for these remote

communities. It should be directly used as incentives in the context of setting up pasture cooperatives whereby alternative sources of incomes should help the implementation of community-based pasture management plans.

73. Under ***Component 4*** (*GEF budget USD 462,355 – Used USD 93,008 or 20%*), the project has supported the development of a draft *Programme and Action Plan for Snow Leopard Conservation*, which is also part of the recently adopted NBSAP 2019-2028. Finally, in parallel to this national initiative, the project has also been supporting the drafting of an international agreement (MOU) to facilitate the transboundary cooperation for snow leopard conservation in the region (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan), including the participation of representatives of Uzbekistan in international events related to the conservation of snow leopards. It is anticipated that this MOU should be signed in the coming months.

74. Based on the progress to date, this component should be completed by the end of the project. As a result of this component, the government of Uzbekistan should have a state programme to conserve snow leopards and an MOU in place to facilitate the cooperation on snow leopard conservation with neighboring countries.

75. Overall, the project has been producing many deliverables such as studies, training and awareness events, technical assistance, micro-grants, equipment, etc. The implementation of the project is adhering to its strategy designed at the outset; particularly the list of indicative activities. As discussed in section 3.1.2, this is a project with a broad scope, and it provides services and goods in four main areas: improving the protected areas system in mountain ecosystem, demonstrating new pasture management practices, strengthening the management of mountain forests and developing a snow leopard monitoring programme. It is anticipated that all these deliverables will contribute to reaching the objective of the project that is "*to enhance the conservation, and sustainable use, of natural resources in the biodiverse high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan"*.

76. However, despite the progress made by the project in its first half, the review of the project strategy and its current achievements raises two critical questions: a) Is the project "*spreading its resources too thin*" due to too many intervention areas and too many activities to be implemented running the risk of not achieving its objective? b) How sustainable capacities developed with the support of the project will be? When considering the broad spectrum of interventions of the project, distributed throughout a large geographical area, there is a risk that the project ends up with a series of distinct achievements in each area without being able to achieve the anticipated overall impact that is to enhance the conservation, and sustainable use, of natural resources in the biodiverse high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan. Furthermore, all project interventions are about producing changes, which will depend greatly on how well the project will have developed all necessary capacities for these changes and how well they will be sustained over the long term. When considering all the areas where the project has been attempting to initiate changes, there is a risk that capacities developed with the support of the project will not be enough to sustain project achievements over the long term.

77. These two key questions are somewhat related, and, at this point, the success of the project will rely mostly on its capacity to sustain its achievements over the long term. The Evaluation Team found that sustainability of project achievements is the main challenge for the project to go ahead. It needs to be reviewed carefully and the project needs to continue to invest project resources in the development of capacities to ensure/maximize the long-term sustainability of these achievements.

78. For instance, the project has contracted an international expert to conduct a study on the economic value of mountain ecosystem services in the Ugam-Chatkal snow leopard landscape. This assignment is still ongoing, but it already produced 2 main (good) deliverables: a review of international experiences in ecosystem valuation; and the development of a methodology and approach to use for conducting this economic valuation. This is an excellent assignment which should provide evidence and arguments to be used to make the economic case for investing in the conservation of snow leopard habitat, and to support the development of incentives and sustainable financing mechanisms. Overall, this study is to build awareness of the value of ecosystem services, increase the policy and budgetary priority given to biodiversity and ecosystems, and strengthen the economic and financial viability of conservation in the Ugam Chatkal landscape. However, when considering the relatively low level of resources allocated to this area, there is a risk that the contribution of this study will mostly be limited to the identification of an economic value of the Ugam-Chatkal snow leopard landscape; and that despite its excellent objective, limited capacities will be developed in Uzbekistan

to carry on with this innovative approach to strengthen economic and financial viability of biodiversity conservation.

79. The same risk exists for other project interventions such as the support for the establishment of 3 tree nurseries and 2 pilot sites for the production of forage plant seeds, the development of an action plan with legislative documents on improving the management of forests, the creation of 2 pasture user associations, the development of a SMART patrol system, etc. All of them are valid interventions and are needed. However, will the project interventions be sustained over the long-term and scaled-up or will they be mostly ad-hoc interventions to respond to specific local needs of the moment? More activities will be implemented in each of these areas between now and the end of the project but as discussed above, due to many intervention areas, project resources may be spread too thin. As a mitigative measure, it is recommended to review the strategy of the project and assess the existing capacities and capacity needs to identify where project resources should focus for the remaining implementation period of the project and maximize the long-term sustainability of project achievements.

80. In conclusion, the project has made some progress and it has over 30 more months of implementation. The implementation adheres to the project strategy detailed in the project document; including the list of indicative activities that is used as a "*blue-print*" by the project implementation team. However, due to the broad scope of this project with many intervention areas, the question remains as to wondering if project resources are not spread too thin, which could hamper the sustainability of project achievements. A recommendation is made above to mitigate this risk.

3.2.2. Remaining Barriers to Achieve the Project Objective

81. The project started in May 2017 and will end in May 2022. At the time of this review, the project is in its 29th month of implementation with 31 more months to go before it ends. At this point, there is no critical barriers limiting its implementation over the remaining implementation period. As discussed in the previous section, the overall effectiveness of the project will depend much on how sustainable capacities developed with the support of the project will be. So far, good progress has been made in most planned intervention areas; however, this is an ambitious project with a broad scope and the question remains as to will activities supported by the project be enough to sustain the achievements over the long term and produce the desired changes?

82. At the strategic level, the rationale and justification of the project for enhancing the conservation, and sustainable use, of natural resources in the biodiverse high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan was to remove four critical barriers that are preventing the implementation of the long-term solution, which consists in preventing the further fragmentation and degradation of the mountain landscapes; maintaining and/or restoring the quality of habitats within these mountain landscapes; increasing native wildlife numbers (particularly snow leopard and preys) across the mountain landscapes to promote viable populations; facilitating a transformative shift to more sustainable levels of natural resource use in the montane steppes, meadows and forests; reducing the impacts of predation and mortality of livestock, and decrease retaliatory killing of predators in mountainous areas; and improving the planning, administration, enforcement and monitoring capacities of institutions responsible for the conservation stewardship of these mountainous regions. These barriers were: (i) Poor integration of environmental information into land use planning in mountainous areas; (ii) Limited resources for, and capabilities in, the expansion, planning and management of protected areas in the mountain ecosystems; (iii) Unsustainable pasture and forest management practices in mountainous areas; and (iv) Incomplete information and knowledge management systems for management decision-making and trans-boundary cooperation in mountain ecosystems.

83. The project — through its activities—has been addressing these four barriers, which ultimately will gauge the overall effectiveness of the project at the end. Removing these barriers is critical for improving biodiversity conservation in high-mountain areas; including Snow Leopard conservation. As discussed in previous sections, this project is timely and responds to national priorities. It is making progress in strengthening the management of snow leopard landscapes with an emphasis on biodiversity conservation, while at the same time seeking to introduce alternative sources of income for local communities in order to improve their livelihoods; to reduce pressure on mountain forests and pastures; and to ensure they become good stewards of the local biodiversity. However, the project strategy is broad and ambitious and as discussed above, the main challenge is to ensure the long-term sustainability of project achievements. Considering the

time left to implement the second part of this project, it is recommended to conduct capacity assessments of key organizations and staff and identify any remaining gaps, which could/should be addressed before the end of the project.

3.3. Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

84. This section discusses the assessment of how the project has been implemented. It assessed how efficient the management of the project has been and how conducive it is to contribute to a successful project implementation.

3.3.1. Management Arrangements

85. The management arrangements of this project are as follows:

- The *GEF Agency* for this project is UNDP. At the request of the Government of Uzbekistan, the UNDP Country Office provides *Direct Project Services (DPS)*, including procurement of goods and services, contracting, human resources management, and financial services (*this function is funded by UNDP TRAC funds*).
- The *Implementing Partner* of the project is the State Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection[5]. It is responsible for the overall realization of project results, including the facilitation of all project activities (*this function is funded by the government*).
- The project is guided by a *Project Steering Committee (PSC)* as the executive decision-making body of the project. It is composed of the main government entities related to biodiversity conservation and forest management as well as few NGOs, the Uzbekistan railways company (JSC) and local administrations. It provides strategic oversight and guidance based upon project progress assessments and related recommendations from the Project Manager (PM). The PSC ensures that the project remains on course to deliver the desired outcomes of the required quality. The PSC met two times since the inception of the project: December 27, 2017 and December 12, 2018.
- A *National Project Coordinator (NPC)* was appointed by the State Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection (*this function is funded by the government*).
- A *Project Manager (PM)* was hired by UNDP and approved by the PB. He is tasked with the day-to-day management of project activities, as well as with financial and administrative reporting. He is responsible for project implementation and will be guided by Annual Work Plans, following UNDP Results Based Management (RBM) standards. The Project Manager prepares Annual Work Plans (AWPs) in advance of each successive year and submit them to the Project Board for approval (*this function is funded by the GEF grant*).
- A *Project Implementation Unit (PIU)* was established at the beginning of the project; it is located on the premises of UNDP in Tashkent. It is headed by the PM and provides project administration, management and technical support as required by the needs of day-to-day operations of the project. The unit is composed of the following staff (*all funded by the GEF grant*):
    i. Project Manager (PM) – Full time
    ii. Project Financial Assistant – Full time
    iii. Field Coordinator (knowledge management) – Full time
    iv. Field Coordinator (protected areas) – Full time
    v. Field Coordinator (pastures and forests) – Full time
    vi. Project Grant Manager – Full time
    vii. Driver – Full time
- An *International Technical Advisor (ITA))* was appointed part time to provide overall professional and technical backstopping to the project. He supports the provision of the required professional and technical inputs, reviewing and preparing Terms of Reference (TORs) and reviewing the outputs of service providers, experts and other sub-contractors. He reports directly to the NPC and the PM (*this function is funded by the GEF funds*).
- The PIU is technically supported by *contracted teams of national experts, international NGO's,*

5 At the time of formulation of the project, the State Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection was called the State Committee on Nature Protection (SCNP).

international consultants and companies. The recruitment of specialist support services and procurement of any equipment and materials for the project is done by the PM with the support of the PIU, in consultation with the NPC, and in accordance with relevant recruitment and procurement rules and procedures of UNDP and of the government of Uzbekistan.

86. The project is implemented under the "*UNDP Support Services to National Implementation Modality (NIM)*". In this modality, UNDP is requested to provide support services to nationally implemented projects, which must be done following UNDP rules and regulations. UNDP undertakes procurement/commitment actions as well as disbursements. It conducts transactions from requisitions to disbursements, with no cash being transferred to the implementing partner. The UNDP Resident Representative is accountable for the provision of services, including their quality and timeliness. The implementing partner has full programmatic control, however, and so full accountability for and ownership of project activities. This provision of services was the object of a Letter of Agreement between the Government of Uzbekistan and UNDP signed on April 30, 2010.

87. The review indicates that the management arrangements as planned at the outset of the project are adequate in the context of Uzbekistan for the implementation of the project. The project is implemented by a good technical team of professionals bringing together a broad range of skills and knowledge in protected areas, forestry and pasture management, biodiversity conservation, local livelihood, and capacity development areas. Meanwhile, the Evaluation Team noted that despite project interventions in two remote geographical areas away from Tashkent, the project does not have local representations. Having regional/local offices would allow a greater coordination and communication between local and regional partners, national partners and the project implementation team, which is, as discussed in the next section, a weakness of the project.

88. Despite adequate management arrangements, the Evaluation Team found that the project implementation team does not use an adaptive management approach enough to plan activities, allocate project resources and implement these activities. Instead, using the project document as a "*blue-print*", activities are implemented in relatively strict compliance with this "*blue-print*" without much deviance from what is described in the project document. Yet, as the Evaluation Team found out, there are opportunities and innovative ways which could be used but are not considered if they are not part of the detailed project strategy that is contained in the project document. One minor example is the procurement of material for the snow leopard monitoring team. The Evaluation Team was told that only staff from the State Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection can receive this equipment as per the project document; yet experts from the Institute of Zoology are involved in this programme bringing good expertise but cannot benefit from the support of the project to acquire equipment. Another example is the micro-grant programme. A concept was developed to identify the objective of the micro-grant fund, as well as its criteria and other guidelines for communities to apply. Due to the relatively complex bidding process to submit proposals, the result has been that a limited number of proposals have been submitted so far and very few from the communities close to the protected areas. Using adaptive management is one way to review what is not working and modify the approach to make this project instrument closer to its intended purpose. Overall, it is recommended that adaptive management be used more in relation with a greater coordination of project activities among key stakeholders, particularly if changes are made to adapt the project to local realities.

3.3.2. Stakeholder Engagement

89. As discussed in section 3.1.1, the project is relevant to national priorities and it is a response to stakeholders' needs. As per the project document, the project was developed in close contact with stakeholders at the national and local levels. All affected national and local government institutions were directly involved in project development, as were key donor agencies. Consultations occurred with all of the above stakeholders to discuss different aspects of project design, including meetings with key institutions and agencies; consultative field visits and meetings with relevant organizations in the project target areas; and a consultative workshop to present the detailed project design and secure the financial commitments of project partners.

90. In the meantime, the project also conducted a stakeholder analysis during the project preparation phase to identify key stakeholders and assess their interests in the project and defines their respective roles and responsibilities in project implementation. The table below is a summary of the plan to involve stakeholders developed at the outset of the project.

Table 7: Initial Stakeholders Involvement Plan

Stakeholder	Proposed Role in Project
Information-Analytical Department for Agriculture and Water Resources, processing of agricultural products and consumer goods of the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan	• The Department will provide guidance on matters relating to land use and land use planning.
Information-Analytical Department for Health, Ecology and Environmental protection of the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan	• The Department will provide guidance on development of the Programme and Action Plan on Snow Leopard Conservation.
Committee on Agriculture, Water resources and Ecology of the Senate of Oliy Majlis	• The Committee will provide guidance on drafting the new Pasture Law, particularly in respect of the establishment of a 'pasture user association' (PUA) by local communities.
Committee on Agriculture and Water resources issues of the Legislative Chamber of Oliy Majlis	• The Committee will provide guidance and continuous feedback on drafting the new Pasture Law, particularly in respect of the establishment of a 'pasture user association' (PUA) by local communities.
Committee on the issues of Ecology and Nature protection of the Legislative Chamber of Oliy Majlis	• The Committee will be involved for strong advocacy and awareness raising activities on conservation of snow leopard and its prey, especially in the communities within the project domain.
Committee for Nature Protection (Goskompriroda) - State Biological Control Service (Gosbiokontrol)	• Goskompriroda is the focal point for implementation of the CBD in Uzbekistan. It has also been identified as the lead executing agency of this project and will take overall responsibility for coordinating, monitoring progress and reporting on the project. Goskompriroda will chair the project Steering Committee. It will play a leading role in implementing the project outputs and activities through its central and regional administrations. Gosbiokontrol will be the key institution within Goskompriroda responsible for coordinating project activities to ensure the delivery of the agreed project outcomes. It may be independently represented on the project Steering Committee.
Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources - Main Department of Forestry (MDF)	• The Ministry will be represented on the Steering Committee of the project to ensure the full alignment of project activities with national forest and pasture legislation, policies and programmes. • The MDF will play a leading institutional role in the implementation of project outputs and activities, primarily through the Glavohota, Uzgiprourmonloyiha and forestry business units located in mountainous areas. The MDF will be represented on the project Steering Committee.
Committee for Land Resources, Geodesy, Cartography and National Cadastre	• The Committee will serve as a reference for, and provide guidance on matters relating to, land use and land use planning.
Committee for State Border Protection	• The Committee will be represented on the Steering Committee of the project to ensure effective consultation relating to any project activities that may affect and/or involve national security issues along mountain border control areas.
The Academy of Sciences - Institute of the Gene Pool of Plants and Animals (IGPPP)	• The Academy will provide scientific support and advisory services, through its research institutions, to the project outputs and activities. The Academy may be represented on the Steering Committee of the project and the IGPP may be contracted to implement targeted project outputs and activities.
Regional government (viloyat)	• A representative khokim of the affected viloyats will sit in the project steering committee and will mediate two-way communication between national policy directives and local project activities and actions to ensure that there is good alignment between them.
District Government (rayon)	• The rayons will play an important role in supporting the implementation of the project in selected mountain areas (in the project domain). They are likely to be direct beneficiaries of capacity development activities.
Mahallas (in khishlaks and auls)	• The mahallas will provide the mechanism for the ongoing consultation will local villages and rural settlements in the mountainous regions on project outputs and activities.

Stakeholder	Proposed Role in Project
Local and national NGOs (e.g. Society for the protection of birds in Uzbekistan, Uzbekistan Zoological Society, Ecosan, Eco-movement)	● The NGOs will provide specific communication and awareness support to ensure that the project is clearly understood and to encourage active involvement and participation in the project and its activities. NGOs may also be contracted to implement specific project activities.
Rural communities in auls and kishlaks	● Local residents in the targeted project areas will be actively engaged in the project, especially in relation to alternative livelihoods and improving sustainable land use practices. They are likely to be direct beneficiaries of project-funded activities and support services that are linked to community beneficiation. They will be consulted in the planning of all project activities affecting local communities and may contribute to the implementation of activities likely to benefit individuals, villages and rural settlements.
Secretariat of the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection programme (in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan)	● These partners will participate in knowledge sharing and technology transfer exercises as well as communications on data collection and sharing, best practices for planning and priority-setting
Panthera	● May provide technical and scientific advice to the project. Panthera may also be contracted to implement specific project activities.
Development partners (e.g. German Government, World Bank, FAO)	● Development partners supporting conservation projects and initiatives to improve the sustainable management of high mountain habitats in Uzbekistan will be important project partners. They will share, coordinate and collaborate with the project as and where relevant. They may be represented on the project Steering Committee.

Source: project document

91. During the formulation of the project, a *Stakeholder Involvement Plan and Coordination with Other Related Initiatives* was developed and be part of the project document. This plan is an extensive plan to involve stakeholders in the implementation of this project. It includes the results of the stakeholder analysis, set the approach for stakeholder participation on the basis of principles and identify the mechanisms to facilitate the involvement of stakeholders, which include:

- Project inception workshop to enable stakeholder awareness of the start of project implementation;
- Constitution of PSC to ensure representation of stakeholder interests in project;
- Establishment of a PIU to oversee stakeholder engagement processes during project;
- Project communications to facilitate ongoing awareness of project;
- Stakeholder consultation and participation in project implementation;
- Formal structures to facilitate stakeholder involvement in project activities;
- Capacity building.

92. The Evaluation Team found that an adequate framework had been designed for engaging stakeholders in the implementation of the project. Since the outset of the project, most activities are implemented with and for key stakeholders/beneficiaries. As per the planned management arrangements, a PSC was setup and met twice since the inception of the project. However, based on observations and interviews conducted by the Evaluation Team, it found that not enough communication and coordination is being done by the project to keep all project partners/stakeholders up to date about the overall progress of the project; including stakeholders at national level but also stakeholders at regional and local levels. The limited communication and coordination contribute to the perceived fragmentation of the project and prevent a more integrated approach to bring all project activities and deliverables together into an overall strategy "*to enhance the conservation, and sustainable use, of natural resources in the biodiverse high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan*".

93. As discussed in section 3.2.1, the project has been producing many deliverables; however, for the time being, the implementation of activities is being done in "*silos*". The project provides services and goods in four main areas: protected areas in mountain ecosystems, pasture management practices, management of mountain forests and snow leopard monitoring. As a result of this broad scope, the implementation of project activities led to a certain compartmentalization of its implementation. Each of these four areas is led by a project implementation team member supported by national and international experts and in close collaboration with key stakeholders. The Evaluation Team found that there is limited communications and coordination—and by extension synergies—happening across these four areas; hence contributing to this

"*silo*" approach. The only mechanism to communicate and coordinate across the focal areas (4) of the project is the PSC meetings. However, it met only twice since the start of the project and it is not the best mechanism for communicating and exchanging technical progress made by the project. It is recommended to strengthen the communication and coordination functions of the project to facilitate the exchange of information, best practices and lessons learned between the four focal areas of the project but also between the national, regional and local levels and also strengthen the engagement of stakeholders in the implementation of the project.

3.3.3. Work Planning

94. Project Annual Work Plans (AWPs) were produced every year from 2017. These AWPs were developed following UNDP project management guidelines, including the calendar year cycle (January to December for each year). Once finalized, these AWPs were reviewed and endorsed by the PSC and approved by UNDP. These AWPs details the list of main activities to be conducted during the coming year following the structure of the log frame (objective, components, and outputs) of the project. For each activity, they include a tentative schedule (per quarter) when each activity will be implemented and a corresponding budget from the GEF grant.

95. Based on the information collected, the Evaluation Team compared the budgeted annual work plans with the actual annual disbursements, the results are presented in the table below:

Table 8: Annual Work Plans versus Actual Expenditures (GEF grant)

Years	AWP Budgets	Actual Expenditures	% Spent
2017	200,000	173,865	87%
2018	1,271,346	830,836	65%
2019	1,570,655	n/a	n/a

Sources: Project AWPs and UNDP-Atlas CDR Reports

96. Numbers presented in the table above reveal that work planning has not been too efficient since the start of the project in 2017. Actual expenditures were under budget for the year 2017 (87% was expended) and well under budget for 2018 representing 65% of the approved AWP-2018 budget. In 2019, as of end of June, only 26% of the approved AWP-2019 has been expended versus 50% of the time (6 months). With a remaining budget this year of USD 1,158,312 for the next 6 months, it is doubtful that the figure for the actual expenditures will meet the approved budget.

97. When considering the remaining GEF budget to be expended between July 2019 and May 2022, the yearly average of project expenditures would need to significantly increase for the entire GEF grant to be expended by May 2022. A quick calculation of the remaining GEF grant as of end of June 2019 indicates that the expenditures during the remaining 30 months of implementation should be about USD 1,917,128 per year; a significant increase over the previous years (a 230% increase over 2018). The review conducted for this MTR indicates that it is unlikely that this remaining budget will be spent by May 2022 (*see also Section 3.3.4 below*).

98. Within this context of slow disbursements and considering that the project implementation modality is NIM, few stakeholders also mentioned the lengthy UNDP procurement process and the need for more transparency/participation of key stakeholders in procuring project goods and services. During the field mission in Uzbekistan, the Evaluation Team heard this complaint several times, including one case whereby the purchase of camera traps took about one year from the day the decision was made to request the procurement of a particular brand of camera trap. It goes without saying that this process is much too long to be acceptable. It is recommended to review the procurement process and identified the bottleneck(s), which could be improved to reduce the time it takes to procure goods to the project.

99. As discussed in section 3.1.2, the design of the project is much focus on the identification of a list of activities to be implemented and less on a set of expected results to reach by the end of the project. This is

illustrated by the fact that instead of having four outcomes to reach, the project is divided into four components. As a result, the implementation has been much more activity-based as opposed to be more results-based, rendering the project implementation team in a compliance approach including "*ticking the box*" once an activity is completed. It "*forces*" the implementation team to use an activity-based management approach as opposed to using a results-based management (RBM) approach.

3.3.4. Finance and Co-finance

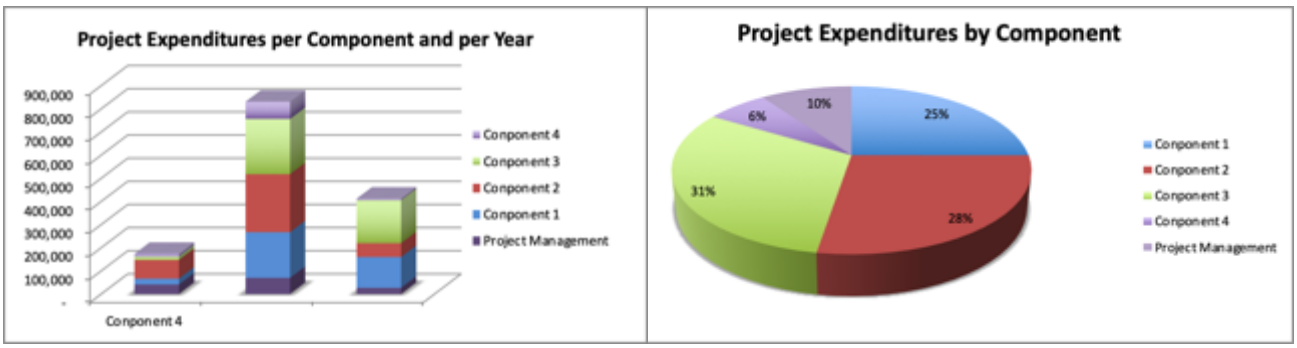
100. As discuss in Section 3.3.1, the implementation modality of the project to allocate, administer and report on project resources is the *UNDP Support Services to National Implementation Modality (NIM)*. In this modality, UNDP is requested to provide support services to the nationally implemented project, which must be done following UNDP rules and regulations. UNDP undertakes procurement/commitment actions as well as disbursements. It conducts transactions from requisitions to disbursements, with no cash being transferred to the implementing partner. The UNDP Resident Representative is accountable for the provision of services, including their quality and timeliness. The implementing partner has full programmatic control, however, and so full accountability for and ownership of project activities. Project activities are carried out by the Project Team in partnership with the State Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection and reports to UNDP as per the guidelines.

101. At the time of this evaluation, the review of financial records as recorded in the UNDP Atlas system indicates that the actual expenditures allocated against the GEF project grant for the years 2017 to June 2019 (26 months) represent about 23% (USD 1,417,044) of the approved budget of USD 6,209,863 versus an elapsed time of 43% (26 months out of 60). The breakdown of project expenditures by outcome and by year is presented in the table below.

Table 9: UNDP-GEF Project Funds Disbursement Status (in USD)

Component	Budget (USD)	2017	2018	2019[6]	Total (USD)	Total/ Budget
Component 1	**992,200**	25,315	196,834	132,509	**354,657**	**36%**
Component 2	**2,445,000**	80,206	250,809	59,611	**390,627**	**16%**
Component 3	**2,014,600**	14,773	238,865	186,442	**440,080**	**22%**
Component 4	**462,355**	12,146	74,345	6,517	**93,008**	**20%**
Project Management	**295,708**	41,426	69,983	27,264	**138,673**	**47%**
TOTAL	**6,209,863**	173,865	830,836	412,343	**1,417,044**	**23%**

Sources: UNDP Atlas Financial Reports (CDRs) and information collected from the Project Team.



102. As discussed in section 3.3.3, these financial figures indicate a relatively low disbursement rate by the project. With a project starting date of May 2017, the project expended USD 1,417,044 to the end of June 2019

6 Figures for 2019 are from January to June 2019.

that is 23% of the GEF grant versus 43% of the project timeline (26 months out of 60 months). As of July 1, 2019, the remaining budget from the GEF grant is USD 4,792,819 (77%). When considering the timeline left for implementing the project (34 months), it is doubtful that the entire budget will be expended by May 2022. Taking as a benchmark the average monthly disbursement of the first 26 months of USD 54,502, the average monthly disbursement for the remaining period of 34 months needs to be USD 140,965 to totally expend the GEF grant. It is equal to two and half time the current monthly expenditures (USD 54,502) over the remaining period of 34 months. It is not impossible to achieve but it requires a drastic change in managing and administering the project with a significant increase of project activities and disbursements to reach this average.

103. In the meantime, the project is moving ahead with its implementation plan. Based on the financial assessment of the project conducted for this MTR, including discussions with the project implementation team, it is anticipated that the GEF grant may not be totally expended by May 2022. In the case this situation becomes a reality, the Evaluation Team recommends a no-cost time extension to consolidate project achievements.

104. The review of project expenditures against budgets per component reveals an unequal level of spending. The table above and the diagram indicate that almost 36% of the budget for component 1 (Landscape Level Planning) has been expended to June 2019 but only 16%, 22% and 20% of the budget for respectively component 2 (Strengthening Biodiversity Areas), 3 (Community Economic Incentives) and 4 (Cooperation and Collaboration) have been expended. In the meantime, 47% of the project management budget has been spent, which represents a ratio of just under 10% of the total expenditures to June 2019. This ratio is over double the planned ratio of 4.8% allocated to project management. If the project would have expended its budget as per the timeline, this ratio would be OK. However, if disbursements are still kept lower, the project management expenditures would need to be monitored carefully to be in line with the budgeted ratio of 4.8%.

Co-financing

105. Co-financing commitments at the outset of the project totaled the amount of USD 25,300,000 (*see table below*), which represented about 80% of the total amount of the financial resources required in the project document of USD 31,509,863 (GEF grant + co-financing) for the implementation of the project.

Table 10: Co-financing Status

Partner	Type	Commitments (USD)
State Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection	In-kind	25,000,000
UNDP TRAC	Cash	300,000
	Total (USD)	**25,300,000**

Source: Project Document

106. A large amount of this co-financing (99%) was to come from the government of Uzbekistan as in-kind contribution, and UNDP was to provide 1% through TRAC. The pledged amounts listed in the table above were supported by co-financing letters.

107. At the time of the MTR, limited reporting has been made on co-financing contributions. No information on co-financing reporting from the State Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection were obtained by the Evaluation Team. Regarding UNDP contribution, the amount logged in the Atlas system for this project as of End of June 2019 is USD 138,369 or about 46% of their commitment at the outset of the project. In order to complete the actual figures for the overall financing of this project, it is recommended that the project implementation team reviews the commitment made by the State Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection and request yearly co-financing reports.

108. In the meantime, the Evaluation Team confirmed that Implementing Partner has contributed critical resources to the implementation of this project as well as other partners such as the State Committee on Forestry and the State Committee for Land Resources, Geodesy, Cartography and National Cadastre. As discussed in previous sections, project activities are being implemented with and for the relevant stakeholders,

including regional and local institutions.

3.3.5. Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

109. A good M&E plan was developed during the formulation of the project — including sex disaggregated indicators—in accordance with standard UNDP and GEF procedures. A relatively low budget of USD 127,000 was allocated to M&E, representing about 2% of the GEF grant. The Evaluation Team noted that, during the inception phase, several changes were made to the set of indicators and targets to be used to measure the performance of the project.

110. The M&E plan was reviewed during the inception phase and beside the changes made to the indicators and targets during the inception phase, no changes were made to the M&E plan. A summary of the operating modalities of the M&E plan are as follows:

- *Performance indicators:* A set of 22 indicators with their respective baselines and targets at the end of the project were identified and documented in the *Strategic Results Framework*.
- *Inception workshop*: It was conducted on September 21, 2017 in Tashkent. The project design was explained in detail, including the *Strategic Results Framework* and the available resources for implementing the project. Discussions were facilitated on roles and responsibilities of the *Implementing Agency*, the *Implementing Partner*, other partners/stakeholders and the *Project Implementation Team*. The 2017 and 2018 annual work plan were reviewed and endorsed. Finally, the main changes proposed after the inception phase were presented and endorsed by the PSC. They included changes/update on the context of the project such as the institutional and legislative context and the related risks; changes to the set of indicative activities to be implemented; and changes to the set of indicators and targets to be used to measure the progress of the project. The review of the project context and all these changes above were documented in the inception report.
- *Quarterly Progress Reports*: Quarterly progress were planned to monitor the progress and record it in the UNDP Enhanced Results Based Management Platform. Risks are also reviewed quarterly and updated in the Atlas system when needed.
- *Annual Project Review/Project Implementation Review (APR/PIR)*: These annual progress reports, combining both UNDP and GEF annual reporting requirements, are submitted by the Project Manager to the PSC, using a UNDP/GEF template for project progress reporting. These APRs/PIRs includes a summary of results achieved against the overall targets identified in the project document and a summary of deliverables implemented during the reporting period. They follow the GEF annual cycle of July 1st to June 30th for each year.
- *Periodic Monitoring through Site Visits*: UNDP Country Office and the UNDP Regional Coordination Unit (RCU) have been conducting visits to project sites to assess firsthand project progress. Field Visit Reports were prepared and circulated to the project implementation team.
- *External mid-term and final evaluations*: The mid-term evaluation (MTR) is underway (this report); a final evaluation will take place three months prior to the final PSC meeting and will follow UNDP and GEF evaluation guidelines. The GEF's tracking tools were completed for the MTR and will be updated before the final evaluation.
- *Project Terminal Report*: This comprehensive report will summarize the results achieved (objectives, outcomes, outputs), lessons learned, problems met and areas where results may not have been achieved. It will also lay out recommendations for any further steps that may need to be taken to ensure sustainability and replicability of project's results.
- *Learning and Knowledge Sharing*: Results from the project are to be disseminated within and beyond the project intervention zone through existing information sharing networks and forums. The project is due to identify and participate, as relevant and appropriate, in scientific, policy-based and/or any other networks, which may be of benefit to project implementation though lessons learned. The project is to identify, analyze, and share lessons learned that might be beneficial in the design and implementation of similar future projects. A two-way flow of information between this project and other projects with a similar focus is also encouraged.
- *Communications and visibility requirements*: Full compliance is required with UNDP's Branding Guidelines and the GEF's Communication and Visibility Guidelines, including the use of the UNDP and GEF logos. For other agencies and project partners that provide support through co-financing, their branding policies and requirements should be similarly applied.

- *Audits*: Audits are conducted in accordance with UNDP Financial Regulations and Rules and applicable audit policies on UNDP projects and funded through UNDP-TRAC funds.

111. The revised set of indicators presented in the *Strategic Results Framework* and documented in the inception report was reviewed during this review. It includes a set of 22 indicators — each one with a baseline and a target by the end of the project—to monitor the performance of the project at the objective and component level. The list of indicators and targets is presented in the table below. Targets in green are those which were modified during the inception phase.

Table 11: List of Performance Indicators

Project Objective & Outcomes	Indicators	Targets
Project Objective: To enhance the conservation, and sustainable use, of natural resources in the biodiverse high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan.	1. Area (ha) of protected areas within the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes under a more secure, and effectively managed, monitoring and enforcement regime	• >549,000
	2. Area (ha) of high-altitude mountain pasture areas within the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes under sustainable management for reduced degradation	• 55,000 ha (a reduction of approximately 18% out of an estimated 307,412 ha of degraded alpine pastureland in the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes)
	3. Improved conservation status of biodiversity important forests within targeted Protected Areas	• 105,900 ha
	4. Number of primary snow leopard prey populations within the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes: o Siberian Ibex (LC) o Siberian roe deer (LC) o Boar (LC) o Menzbier's marmot (VU) o Long-tailed marmot (LC)	• Equal to or greater than baseline: o Siberian Ibex: >3,800-4,000 o Siberian roe deer: >250-300 o Boar: >1,838 o Menzbier's marmot: >4,300 o Long-tailed marmot: >7,994
	5. Total snow leopard population within the snow leopard landscapes of Uzbekistan	• >50
	6. Number of women (as a proportion of the total) involved in, and directly benefiting from project investments in the conservation and sustainable use of high-altitude montane habitats and species within the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes	• Involvement: >1500 (>60%) and direct benefits: >450 (>60%)
Component 1 – Landscape-level planning and management decision-making • ***Output 1.1:*** Improve the quality of environmental information for state cadaster • ***Output 1.2:*** Enhance the state of knowledge on snow leopard and prey populations	7. Coverage of comprehensive, up-to-date baseline environmental and land use information for the snow leopard distribution range	• Mini atlas produced with maps showing up to date environmental information related to biodiversity, pastures, and HCVFs in Ugam Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes
	8. Quality and coverage of snow leopard monitoring data in Uzbekistan as indicated by estimated accuracy and timeliness of national snow leopard population estimate	• Population estimated annually with a >75% confidence level (lowest possible estimated population / highest possible estimated population, i.e. 20/50 = 40%)
Component 2 – Strengthening key biodiversity Areas	9. Total extent (ha) of core conservation areas managed as IUCN Category I or Category II protected areas within the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes	• 237,700 ha

Project Objective & Outcomes	Indicators	Targets
• ***Output 2.1:*** Strengthen the management effectiveness of the core conservation zones in Ugam-Chatkal National Park • ***Output 2.2:*** Extend, and improve the conservation security of, Gissar Strict Nature Reserve • ***Output 2.3:*** Enhance community involvement in, and beneficiation from, protected areas	10. METT scores for: ○ Chatkal SNR ○ Ugam-Chatkal State National Nature Park (excluding Chatkal SBR) ○ Gissar SNR	• METT scores: ○ Chatkal SBR: 57 ○ Ugam-Chatkal State National Nature Park: 45 ○ Gissar SNR: >56
	11. Number of: (i) poaching (of snow leopard and prey); and (ii) other illegal (encroachments for crops and grazing, wood harvesting) incidents recorded (and prosecuted) per annum by ranger patrol staff from the core conservation areas of Ugam-Chatkal State NNP (including Chatkal SBR) and Gissar SNR	• (i) <40/annum and (ii) <155/annum
	12. Total number (of which are women) of individuals from targeted villages who have completed project funded skills training courses.	• >100 (>60)
	13. Number per annum (of which are women) of individuals from the targeted villages who financially benefit from the management of the protected areas within the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes.	• >150 (>80) per annum
Component 3 – Sustainable economic development incentives for communities • ***Output 3.1:*** Incentivize sustainable pasture management practices • ***Output 3.2:*** Encourage more sustainable levels of forest use	14. Legal or regulatory mechanism in place to pilot Pasture User Associations	• Yes
	15. Number of PUAs with approved pasture management plans under implementation in the high-altitude pastures of the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes	• 2
	16. Number of households (average of ~6 individuals/household) in the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes directly benefiting from project technical and grant funding support for: ○ (a) improving the health and well-being of free-ranging livestock; ○ (b) development of alternative local income-generating enterprises; and ○ (c) establishment of intensive livestock farms.	• A total of >120, households as per below approximate breakdown: (a) >90; (b) >30; (c) >8
	17. Extent (ha) of degraded high-altitude forests of the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes under active rehabilitation or restoration	• Forests under restoration: 1,000 ha; under sustainable management with communities: 15,000 ha
	18. Number of households (average of ~6 individuals/household) in the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes directly benefiting from project technical and grant funding support for: ○ (a) establishment and maintenance of small plantations/woodlots; ○ (b) establishment of food-producing fruit and nut orchards and herb gardens; and ○ (c) installation and maintenance of alternative energy and fuel technologies and systems.	• A total of >130 as per below approximate breakdown: (a) >5; (b) >25; (c) >100

Project Objective & Outcomes	Indicators	Targets
Component 4 – Promoting cooperation and collaboration • ***Output 4.1:*** Improve inter-agency coordination in conservation, monitoring and enforcement • ***Output 4.2:*** Strengthen the capacity for trans-boundary planning and management	19. Approved and implemented Programme and Action Plan for snow leopard conservation	• Action plan approved and under implementation as defined by: ○ At least one stakeholder meeting (under cooperative governance structure) following approval to develop snow leopard priority landscape integrated landscape management plan ○ Snow leopard and prey monitoring program established with data being collected and analyzed annually, and published at least once in a "State of the Snow Leopard" report ○ Scientifically validated detailed GIS map of snow leopard habitat range published ○ At least one field-based activity undertaken in accordance with action plan to reduce threats to snow leopards (e.g. predator-proof corral constructed in high risk area, snow leopard-related education and awareness activity carried out, etc.)
	20. Percentage of border security officials receiving in-service wildlife monitoring and enforcement training and skills development among those employed in Ugam Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes	• 50%
	21. Number of annual international events related to snow leopard and mountain ecosystem conservation where Uzbekistan is represented and presents information on project activities	• 2
	22. Level of international cooperation and coordination with Uzbekistan border countries regarding illegal wildlife trade, biodiversity management in borderland protected areas, and snow leopard monitoring	• International agreement between Uzbekistan and at least one bordering country under implementation regarding at least one of the below issues: ○ Cooperation on law enforcement at border points regarding illegal wildlife trade ○ Illegal hunting by border guards ○ Data sharing on snow leopard monitoring

Source: Project Document and PIRs

112. As discussed earlier this set of 22 indicators and their respective targets were revised during the inception phase. Those in green in the table above, were modified during the inception phase. The revised set has been used yearly to report progress made in the APRs/PIRs. The review of these indicators and their respective targets reveals that these indicators are a mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators. However, the Evaluation Team found that, overall, lot of indicators are much focused on numeric values such as areas (hectares) and number of [*things such as annual international events*]. Regarding the measurement of how well the project is reaching its objective is a set of 6 indicators; targets for all of them are numeric values.

113. Quantitative indicators give a clear measure of things and are numerically comparable. They also provide an easy comparison of a project progress over time and are easy to monitor and do not require too much resources to collect data. However, quantitative indicators also do not depict the status of something in

more qualitative terms. Degree of capacity developed are often better captured by qualitative indicators. For example, how to measure the increased capacity of targeted institutions to implement a more secure, and effective management, monitoring and enforcement regime of protected areas within the Ugam-Chatkal and Gissar snow leopard landscapes? The answer to this question may not only be over 549,000 ha of protected areas. Using an additional capacity-based indicator may not measure in strict quantitative terms, but it can be graded based on qualitative findings. In order to achieve this target, lots of capacities will need to be developed including the capacity to manage, monitor and enforce protected areas regulations as well as the capacity of local communities to adopt these new measures and regulations. The target institutions will need to improve their structures, mechanisms and procedures, and staff in these organizations will need to have the capacity to identify, plan, implement and monitor these new concepts. Measuring the degree to which these capacities are in place will be critical when assessing the sustainability of project achievements at the end of the project.

114. When measuring the progress made by capacity development initiatives such as this project that is "*to enhance the conservation, and sustainable use, of natural resources in the biodiverse high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan*", using a mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators allows the project implementation team to better measure the change toward a landscape approach for biodiversity conservation in high-altitude mountain ecosystem. A mix of both types of indicators would be more suited for the measurement of the performance of this project offering quantity and quality information about project achievements.

115. Overall, the review of these indicators indicates that some of them could be SMART [7]… er! Most of them are specific enough, measurable, attainable and time bound. However, the lack of indicators to measure the degree of capacities being developed render the set of indicators and targets not fully relevant. This M&E framework is much focused on surface areas to be covered by the project (number of ha) and on the number of participants benefitting from project activities as opposed to focusing more on the development of new knowledge and on increasing the capacity of stakeholders/beneficiaries. Nevertheless, despite the weakness of the set of indicators and their respective targets, the monitoring framework in place is workable and the project implementation team has been able to use this framework to annually report progress made by the project. As it stands at the time of this MTR, it is expected that the project will meet its targets by May 2022.

3.3.6. Reporting

116. Management reports have been produced according to UNDP project management guidelines. They include AWPs that when finalized are endorsed by the PSC and annual APRs/PIRs (Annual Progress Reports/Project Implementation Reviews). The Evaluation Team was able to collect the 2017, 2018 and 2019 AWPs, and the APR/PIRs for 2018 and 2019. Overall, progress made by the project is being satisfactorily reported, following UNDP project progress reporting guidelines. The APRs/PIRs document the progress made against the project objective and outcomes on a yearly basis using indicators and targets set at the outset of the project and reviewed in the previous section. These annual reports include also a review and update of the risks identified at the outset of the project and the steps taken to mitigate these risks when rated as critical.

117. The ratings given in APRs/PIRs were also reviewed. The progress made against the overall development progress (DO) has been rated as *Moderately Satisfactory (MS)* in both the 2018 and 2019 APR/PIR, and the same rating was given to the implementation progress (IP) in both of these reports. Based on the review conducted for this MTR, the Evaluation Team found that the ratings given in the APRs/PIRs (*DO=MS* and *IP=MS*) are well justified. In the meantime, when considering the recommendations made by this MTR to focus on consolidating capacities being developed and on increasing communications and coordination among project partners, the project has a definite potential to be overall satisfactory by the end of the project.

3.3.7. Communications / Knowledge Management

118. Communication and knowledge management functions are not "embedded" in the project strategy (*Strategic Results Framework*); i.e. they are not part of the expected results/deliverables. As a result, they are not part of the performance monitoring of the project; no indicators are tracking communication activities. However, they are part of the M&E plan whereby under learning and knowledge sharing "*results from the*

7 SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound.

project are to be disseminated within and beyond the project intervention zone through existing information sharing networks and forums". The project is also due to identify and participate, as relevant and appropriate, in scientific, policy-based and/or any other networks, which may be of benefit to project implementation through lessons learned. As per the M&E plan, the project also needs to identify, analyze, and share lessons learned that might be beneficial in the design and implementation of similar future projects. A two-way flow of information between this project and other projects with a similar focus is also encouraged. Unfortunately, the Evaluation Team noted that no budget was planned for this activity in the M&E plan.

119. From a branding perspective, the Evaluation Team noted the poor visibility of the project. Despite many visits and observations conducted by the Evaluation Team during the two-week facts-finding mission in Uzbekistan, no UNDP nor GEF logos were observed. This type of GEF-funded UNDP-implemented projects are to comply with the UNDP's branding guidelines as well as the GEF's communication and visibility guidelines[8]. It includes UNDP guidelines such as "*In order to accord proper acknowledgement to GEF for providing funding, a GEF logo would appear on all relevant GEF project publications, including among others, project hardware and vehicles purchased with GEF funds. Any citation on publications regarding projects funded by GEF would also accord proper acknowledgment to GEF.*" It is recommended to make a special effort to quickly increase the visibility of the project; particularly in project intervention areas.

120. On the communication side, the Evaluation Team noted that some communications have been done, using mostly Facebook and Twitter as media channels. However, more communications are needed, particularly in the production of information products and in the dissemination of these products through national/local media channels. So far, the project has accumulated a good body of knowledge on managing snow leopard landscape; this knowledge needs to be disseminated. Increasing the communication of project knowledge would contribute to a better cross-fertilization across thematic areas and more generally to raise awareness of stakeholders and beneficiaries on biodiversity conservation, including snow leopard conservation. In the meantime, it would contribute to a greater visibility of the project.

121. At this time, the project should develop a communication strategy seeking to raise awareness of stakeholders and beneficiaries and overall to emphasize the visibility of the project and its objective using the knowledge accumulated so far by the project. It should include the development of information products such as flyers, booklets, articles, videos, and, through the use of various communication channels such as project events but also other types of events, disseminate knowledge on biodiversity conservation, including snow leopard conservation, throughout Uzbekistan.

3.4. Sustainability

122. This section discusses how sustainable project achievements should be over the long-term. It includes a review of the management of risks and specific risks such as financial risk, socio-economic risks, institutional framework and governance risks, and environmental risks.

123. Project risks were identified at the formulation stage and documented in the project document; including the mitigation measures for each identified risk. It included a list of 4 risks. These risks and their respective risk significance were reviewed during the inception phase and resulted in an expanded list of risks and their risk significance updated. The revised list includes 8 additional risks for a total of 12 risks, which were documented in the inception report and are presented in the table below. For each one, mitigation measures were also identified. Risks in green are those identified during the inception phase.

Table 12: List of Risks Identified at the outset of the project

Project Risks	Risk Significance
1. The state institutions directly responsible for the administration of protected areas, pastures and forests do not have adequate capacity, to plan, administer and enforce sustainable natural resource use in the snow leopard landscapes.	**High**

8 GEF, April 26, 2011, *Proposal for Enhancing the Visibility of the GEF*

Project Risks	Risk Significance
2. Low levels of compliance with environmental legislation, and a reluctance to adopt more sustainable natural resource use practices, by communities leads to the further degradation of, and loss of productivity in, snow leopard and prey habitats.	**High**
3. Low levels of coordination and cooperation between public institutions, tenure holders, rights holders, landowners, NGOs/CBOs and natural resources users leads to conflicts over any changes in use rights in SPNAs and high-altitude pastures and forests	Moderate
4. The increasing aridisation of high-altitude habitats, as a result of the effects of climate change, results in more intensive and extensive grazing pressures on high altitude pastures, potentially leading to the local extirpation of snow leopard and medium-sized prey.	Moderate
5. One of the project's targets is to ensure the passage of the Pasture Law (Output 3.1). There are two aspects of risk related to this result. First, the project may be able to make inputs to the draft Pasture Law, but actual passage of the law is a dynamic and complex national process involving many stakeholders, well beyond the scope of the project, and there is little the project can do to force the final passage of the Pasture Law. Second, focusing on passage of the Pasture Law may take project attention and resources away from the actual desired result, which is to implement sustainable pasture management in the targeted areas. The project document saw the Pasture Law as a vehicle to open the possibility for creation of Pasture User Associations, but there may be other mechanisms by which the Pasture User Associations (or other means of implementing sustainable pasture management) can be instituted.	Moderate
6. There is a risk that project community forestry activities in state forest lands will be unsuccessful if the project is not able to identify and arrange long-term tenure agreements between state forest management units and local resource users. Under Output 3.2 the project envisions instituting community-based forestry models. However, this is targeted to be done in state forest lands, where local resource users have no land tenure. There have been some previous negative experiences in Uzbekistan instituting community forestry in state forest lands without secure long-term tenure for resource users.	**High**
7. One of the two targeted project areas—the Ugam-Chatkal PA complex—is under the institutional mandate of institutions other than the national implementation partner. This could lead to potential difficulties in coordination of integrated management planning in Ugam Chatkal region (Output 2.1), due to multiple stakeholders, and primary institutional responsibility with Goskomles and National Railroad Company, which is outside the primary national institutional partner (Goskomecology). The situation is even more complicated because Chatkal Reserve is financed by the Tashkent regional administration, rather than Goskomles. One additional problem is that the legal status of Ugam-Chatkal Reserve does not comply with existing legislation, which leads to come barriers such as conducting anti-poaching work, etc.	Moderate
8. No previous experience with a key partner in relation to Ugam Chatkal Reserve (including Bashkyzilsay site) (under Output 2.1); the National Railroad Company has been designated as the management authority for this PA, although they are not a "traditional" biodiversity conservation entity, and the company does not have relevant experience in protected area management. It is uncertain how this partnership will proceed given this lack of previous experience, although initial indications are very positive. If unforeseen issues arise in relation to this partnership however, the project may have difficulty achieving its goals in this PA, and within the wider Ugam Chatkal landscape.	Moderate
9. Currently the process of providing the necessary legal status (of biosphere reserve) to the Ugam Chatkal Reserve is in progress through the adoption of a resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers, which may take a long time. This current legal uncertainty may affect the ability of the project to implement some planned activities in this site in the near term.	Moderate
10. The scope of project work in relation to the EIMS (Output 1.2) is not well defined, which could cause the project to spend a long time working to clearly define the scope of work in order to develop technical specifications and requirements for this activity.	**High**
11. Both of the targeted project areas are in border regions, and certain planned activities are likely to require cooperation and coordination with the border patrol service, which requires high levels of government approval. This could delay some project activities or make them less effective (if it becomes necessary to move ahead without involvement of border control).	Low
12. The project micro-grants program has a large budget, and there is a risk that the targeted communities will not be able to absorb the amount of funds into locally driven qualified proposals for quality micro-grants projects, even with the support of the SGP. In addition, depending on the final form of the program, there is a risk to the long-term sustainability of this aspect of the project.	Moderate

Source: Project Document, Inception Report and UNDP-Atlas Risk Log.

124. Since the outset of the project, the project implementation team has been monitoring these risks and particularly those with a high-risk significance (4). As per the reporting guidelines for annual progress reports, risks are to be reported as critical when the impact and probability are high. The status of these high risks was, therefore, reported in each APRs/PIRs (2018 and 2019) under the section *E - Critical Risk Management*, which includes management measures undertaken during the reporting period to mitigate these risks. In addition, the same project high risks are also logged into the UNDP-Atlas system and updated regularly.

125. The review of these risks and their respective risk significance reveal that there are covering key aspects of the project where issues can arise, and the level of risk significance is appropriate. It includes the risk related to the capacities needed for the state institutions directly responsible for the administration of protected areas, pastures and forests to ensure the sustainability of project achievements, which is an issue related to the broad scope of the project and which was discussed in section 3.1.2 and also in section 3.2.1 of this report.

126. Overall, as the project implementation progresses, these risks are regularly reviewed, and their mitigation measures updated to reflect the current situation; hence decreasing the chance that these risks would materialize.

3.4.1. Financial risk to Sustainability

127. When reviewing the sustainability of project achievements, financial risk is an area where some questions related to the long-term sustainability of project achievements need some attention. In section 3.1.1, the existing barriers to implement the long term solution to reduce the pressures on, and threats to, the biodiversity of the western Tian-Shan and Pamir Alai mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan include "*the limited resources for, and capabilities in, the expansion, planning and management of protected areas in the mountain ecosystems*". Within this context, the project has been supporting the procurement of equipment to the various stakeholders involved in implementing project activities. It includes equipment for rangers, staff to conduct fieldwork, park administration, regional agencies, etc. This support has been much appreciated as, for the most part, these organizations are underfunded. It has allowed project activities to be carried on with the required resources. However, once the project will end, financial resources will still be needed to maintain this equipment and at times to replace it. There will also be the need for the government to support some of these new activities such as the Snow Leopard Monitoring Programme, the SMART patrol system, the maintenance of the BCIMS, etc. As it stands currently, there is a risk of a lack of financial resources to support the ongoing activities after the project end. So far, the government is committed to the project objective. Monitoring the snow leopard population is now part of national biodiversity conservation priorities stated in the NBSAP 2019-2028. Developing eco-tourism is also another national priority whereby strengthening the snow leopard landscapes would be a key contributor. It is expected that the government will continue to support the project achievements with the necessary financial resources from the national budget and possibly from other funding sources. In order to facilitate the sustainability of project achievements, it is recommended that the project prepare an exit strategy, laying out what, when, where and how much some activities need to be continued.

3.4.2. Socio-economic risk to Sustainability

128. The review indicates that there is no socio-economic risk to sustainability. In the worst-case scenario, if the project has very limited impact, it should not affect negatively the project beneficiaries and the "business as usual" scenario would continue. Nevertheless, the project is progressing well, including the micro-grant scheme. It is expected that these micro-grants, supporting biodiversity friendly livelihoods, should have a positive socio-economic impact on the livelihood of local communities in the project areas. Despite that the strategy of this approach is not necessarily to increase income from alternative sources, but to demonstrate, pilot and implement livelihood practices that are biodiversity friendly, it should nevertheless have positive socio-economic impacts on local livelihoods.

3.4.3. Institutional framework and governance risk to Sustainability

129. This is another area where there is a certain risk to sustainability of project achievements. As discussed previously in this report, the project is a direct response to the government agenda to strengthen its approach

for biodiversity conservation, including strengthening its protected area network and developing a snow leopard monitoring programme. The project is "rooted" in national priorities, including its NBSAP 2019-2028. The project seeks to enhance the conservation, and sustainable use, of natural resources in the biodiverse high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan. It has been supporting capacity development activities to strengthen institutions dealing with the management of biodiversity in Uzbekistan, including strengthening the legislation and the regulatory framework in this area. However, as discussed in sections 3.1.2 and 3.2.1, there is a risk that due to the broad scope of the project, capacities required by institutions involved in biodiversity conservation — including the governance framework—to ensure long term sustainability may not be fully developed by the end of the project. A recommendation is made to strengthen the focus on capacity development of project partners to ensure that by project end, the achievements will be sustained over the long term. Meanwhile, it is also anticipated that the government will build on project achievements in the foreseeable future. These achievements are already partially institutionalized; they should be sustained in the medium-term. Overall, once the project will be completed, Uzbekistan should be better equipped for managing/conserving its biodiversity in high-altitude mountain ecosystems.

3.4.4. Environmental risk to Sustainability

130. The review did not find any environmental risks to the sustainability of project outcomes. The project supports the implementation of measures to improve biodiversity conservation, including the development of capacities of national, and sub-national stakeholders to implement these measures. Ultimately, the achievements of the project that is *to enhance the conservation, and sustainable use, of natural resources in the biodiverse high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan.*, should have a medium and long-term positive environmental impact over the natural resources in the project areas. A better zoning of protected areas, better pasture management practices and better management of mountain forests as well as an established programme to monitor snow leopards, should render the management of these high-mountain ecosystems more sustainable over the long-term.

4. Conclusions, Recommendations and Lessons Learned

4.1. Conclusions

Project Strategy

a) The project is relevant for Uzbekistan.

131. The project is aligned with national strategies and programmes as well as the UNDP and GEF-6 focal areas strategies. It is a direct response to national priorities by: (i) enhancing the quality of information on key ecosystems, habitats and species of the high altitude mountains that are home to snow leopard and prey populations; (ii) expanding, and building the management capacity of the core conservation zones located within two targeted snow leopard landscapes; (iii) encouraging more sustainable levels of use of the high-altitude pastures and indigenous forests located within two targeted snow leopard landscapes; and (iv) promoting cooperation and collaboration in the conservation of snow leopard and their ecosystems, including trans-boundary planning and management. The project focuses on four strategic areas: landscape level planning; strengthening biodiversity areas; community economic incentives; and cooperation and collaboration.

b) The project is implemented in the context of a fast-changing environment, but it is not enough connected with Decision-Makers making these changes.

132. In just over two years, the government has enacted 22 pieces of legislation; all related to a certain degree with the implementation of the project. The enhancement of the enabling environment conducted by the government and related to the management of pastures, livestock, forests and biodiversity conservation provides excellent opportunities to the project to institutionalize and sustain its achievements over the long-term. Meanwhile these changes require the project implementation team to "*keep an ear on the ground*" and ensure that project activities keep their alignment with government decisions and priorities. The project is not involved enough with the government agenda to improve the related enabling environment. It needs to be more involved with these changes by being closer to Decision-Makers and participate to negotiations for these

changes; bringing project achievements (demonstration results) to the negotiations.

c) This is an ambitious project focusing on many activities to be implemented as opposed to focusing on expected results to be achieved.

133. The project strategy is too focused on activities to be implemented as opposed to expected results to be achieved. Additionally, no expected outcomes were identified during the formulation of the project rendering the project strategy more activity-based as opposed to results-based. The implementation plan is much detailed with a list of 100 indicative activities to be conducted under nine outputs and four components. This design led the project implementation team to be in a compliance mode to "*tick the box*" once an activity is completed as opposed to provide an expected results framework that the team should reach through the implementation of what is needed to achieve these results. It has led the implementation team to use an activity-based management approach as opposed to using a results-based management (RBM) approach.

Progress Towards Results

d) The progress made to date is moderately satisfactory.

134. The project is progressing moderately satisfactorily towards its targets and it has about two and a half more years of implementation to go. The project management team has been implementing activities as planned in the project document with the help of good short term national and international expertise. The project has produced good deliverables to date; including the following key ones:

- Under ***Component 1***, a BCIMS (Biodiversity Conservation Information Management System) and a BURC (Biodiversity Hub Resource Center) are being developed to provide up-to-date quality environmental information, and a national snow leopard monitoring programme is under development using modern surveying methods for population estimate to increase the accuracy of national snow leopard population estimate.
- Under ***Component 2***, the project has supported the creation of a buffer zone of 11,231 ha in the Kashkadarya part of the Gissar State Reserve and started the development of a zonation plan and assembled the scientific justification for creating a new National Park (tentatively called "Surkhan") covering the upper reaches of the Tupalang River that is adjacent to the Gissar Reserve. The project has also completed a study/survey assessing tourism potential in three target PAs (Ugam-Chatkal National Park, Ugam-Chatkal Biosphere Reserve and the created buffer zone of the Gissar State Reserve). The project supported the government to finalize the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) for 2019–2028, which includes key indicators for biodiversity conservation monitoring, including snow leopards. A SMART patrol system is under development. All necessary equipment has been procured as well as the establishment of SMART patrol centers in the two pilot protected areas.
- Under ***Component 3***, the project supported the drafting of the Law on Pastures and a package to document the creation of pasture users' cooperative has been prepared and approved by competent authorities. A pilot pasture cooperative was created in Akhangaran district for the management of abandoned pastures and an agreement has been reached to create a cooperative in Shakhrisabz District; both should sustainably manage over 4,000 hectares of mountain pastures that were previously not regulated. Nine (9) micro grants projects were identified, and financed: five in Ugam-Chatkal and four (4) in Gissar Alay snow leopard landscapes with the expectation that 400 families, 1,256 individuals, of which 717 are women will benefit from these projects and that it should reverse the degradation of 800 ha of forests. The project has reached an agreement with the administration of the Ugam-Chatkal Park for the establishment of a biolab to combat the forest diseases occurring in the Ugam-Chatkal snow leopard landscape. 3 pilot tree nurseries were established (one in Ugam-Chatkal and two in Gissar Alay snow leopard landscapes) to provide tree saplings to target local communities.
- Under ***Component 4***, the project has supported the development of a draft *Programme and Action Plan for Snow Leopard Conservation*. It has also supported the drafting of an international agreement (MOU) to facilitate the transboundary cooperation for snow leopard conservation in the region (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan). It is anticipated that this MOU should be signed in the coming months.

e) The strategies and activities guiding the implementation of the pasture management programme as well as the micro-grant programme needs to be reviewed.

135. Despite the progress made in piloting 2 pasture users cooperatives and funding 17 alternative income-generation projects through the project micro-grant programme, the strategies guiding these activities need to be reviewed. In a recent report from the international pasture expert, it is recommended to "*define more systematically the objectives, components and expected outputs of the sub-component on pastures*", including reviewing the role of forest enterprises in the management of pastures and the need for additional research on economic valuation of extensive pasture resources and livestock management. Regarding the micro-grant programme, its logic to fund alternative activities to reduce pressure on natural forests and pastures is somewhat questionable. While it is a valid aim to reduce livestock grazing on these pastures, it is also done in the context where thousands of animals (mostly sheep) are coming from the Fergana Valley, every summer, to graze in the Ugam-Chatkal snow leopard landscape. Limiting/managing the summer influx of animals coming from the Fergana Valley may be a more effective way to reduce pressure on pastures and forest in this region. However, this micro-grant programme is also effective in creating alternative sources of incomes for these remote communities. It should be used as incentives in the context of setting up pasture user cooperatives whereby alternative sources of incomes should help the implementation of community-based pasture management plans.

f) The numerous activities being implemented in several technical areas in two large geographical areas led to a certain compartmentalization of the project with limited cross-coordination.

136. The broad scope of the project with interventions in several areas such as protected areas in mountain ecosystems, pasture management practices, management of mountain forests and snow leopard monitoring, led the implementation of project activities in "*silos*" with limited coordination/communication among these areas. Each of these areas is led by a project implementation team member supported by national and international experts and in close collaboration with key stakeholders. However, there is limited communications and coordination—and by extension synergies—happening across these areas; hence reinforcing this "silo" approach. The only mechanism to communicate and coordinate across project focal areas is the PSC meetings. However, it met only twice since the start of the project and it is not the best mechanism for communicating and exchanging technical progress made by the project. A good coordination mechanism is missing.

g) The broad scope of the project leads to the risk that project resources are spread too thin and that capacity being developed may not be enough to secure the sustainability of project achievements.

137. Despite the progress made by the project in its first half, the broad scope of the project leads to the risk that capacities developed with the support of the project may not be enough to ensure the long-term sustainability of project achievements. All project interventions are valid and are needed; however, the numerous activities implemented in many areas may not be enough to ensure that capacities will be in place by the end of the project. There is a risk that the project ends up with a series of distinct achievements in each intervention area without being able to achieve the anticipated overall impact that is to enhance the conservation, and sustainable use, of natural resources in the biodiverse high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan. The sustainability of project achievements is the main challenge for the project to succeed.

Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

h) Management arrangements are adequate, but the project implementation team needs to increase its use of adaptive management.

138. The project is implemented by a good technical team of professionals bringing together a broad range of skills and knowledge in protected areas, forestry and pasture management, biodiversity conservation, local livelihood, and capacity development areas. A PSC is in place and met yearly since the outset of the project. However, the project implementation team does not use adaptive management enough to plan activities, allocate project resources and implement these activities. Using the project document as a "*blue-print*", activities are implemented in relatively strict compliance with this "*blue-print*" without much deviance from what is described in the project document. Yet, there are opportunities and innovative ways which could be

used, and which could increase the effectiveness of the project. Using adaptive management is one way to review what is working, what is not working and modify the approach to drive the project closer to its intended purpose. Increasing the use of an adaptive management approach would allow the project management team to adapt to changes and tailor its approach to the current realities face by the project.

i) The compartmentalization of the project is also affecting the engagement of stakeholders.

139. The broad scope of the project led to its implementation in "*silos*" with limited coordination and communication across these "*silos*". Stakeholders are mostly engaged with the project through project supported activities in their respective areas. As a result, most of them have a limited view on the overall project and its overall objective and there is little cross-fertilization happening among them, particularly across government entities but also between government and non-governmental organizations, and between national, regional and local organizations. The main mechanism for stakeholders to communicate and exchange on the progress of the overall project is the PSC mechanism, which has met twice since the outset of the project and which is not the best mechanism for communicating and exchanging technical progress made by the project. There is a need to increase the communications and coordination—and by extension synergies—across the project to facilitate the exchange of information, best practices and lessons learned, while strengthening the engagement of stakeholders in the implementation of the project.

j) The disbursements of the GEF grant is slower than the timeline (23% vs. 43%), the GEF grant may not be fully expended by May 2022.

140. As of end of June 2019, total expenditures amount to USD 1,417,044 that is 23% of the GEF grant versus an elapsed time of 43% (26 months out of 60 months). The project has a remaining budget from the GEF grant of USD 4,792,819 (77%). To the end of June 2019, almost 36% of the budget for component 1 (Landscape Level Planning) has been expended but only 16% of the budget for component 2 (Strengthening Biodiversity Areas), 22% for component 3 (Community Economic Incentives) and 20% for component 4 (Cooperation and Collaboration). Meanwhile, 47% of the project management budget has been spent, which represents a ratio of just under 10% of total expenditures to June 2019. This ratio is over double the planned ratio of 4.8% allocated to project management. When considering the timeline left for implementing the project (34 months), it is doubtful that the entire budget will be expended by May 2022. From an average monthly disbursement of USD 54,502, the project would need to increase its monthly disbursement to USD 140,965 for the remaining period of 34 months to totally expend the GEF grant. It is not impossible to achieve but it requires a drastic change in managing and administering the project with a significant increase of project activities and disbursements to reach this average.

k) The co-financing amount committed at the outset need to be better monitored.

141. Co-financing commitments at the outset of the project totaled USD 25,300,000, which represents about 80% of the total amount of the financial resources committed in the project document (GEF grant + co-financing). These pledged amounts were supported by two co-financing letters. It includes a large amount (99%) from the State Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection, the Implementing Partner of the project and the rest from UNDP as cash. So far, limited reporting has been made available on co-financing contributions. The main project partner has been certainly contributing critical resources to the implementation of this project. However, these co-financing contributions need to be better monitored through yearly requests.

l) The monitoring framework in place is workable and the project implementation team has been able to use this framework to annually report progress made by the project.

142. Most indicators are specific enough, measurable, attainable and time bound. However, some quantitative indicators do not measure well the degree of capacities being developed rendering the set of indicators and targets not fully relevant. This M&E framework is much focused on surface areas to be covered by the project (number of ha) and on the number of participants benefitting from project activities. It lacks a greater focus on measuring the development of new knowledge and on increasing the capacity of stakeholders/beneficiaries. Nevertheless, the project implementation team has been able to use this framework to annually report progress made by the project.

m) The visibility of the project at national, regional and local levels is poor.

143. The project lacks visibility, particularly in project interventions areas and despite having procured equipment and services. This type of GEF-funded UNDP-implemented projects are to comply with the UNDP's branding guidelines as well as the GEF's communication and visibility guidelines. Goods and services provided by the project need to accord proper acknowledgement to GEF for providing funding and UNDP. Furthermore, more communication activities — using various communication channels—are needed to raise awareness of stakeholders and beneficiaries and overall to increase the visibility of the project and its objective as well as to disseminate knowledge on biodiversity conservation, including snow leopard conservation, throughout Uzbekistan.

Sustainability

n) The sustainability of project achievements is rated as moderately likely.

144. As defined by GEF and UNDP, sustainability is analyzed through an analysis of risks. No socio-economic, nor environmental risks were found to hamper the sustainability of project achievements. Regarding the institutional and governance risk, due to the broad scope of the project, there is a risk that capacities required by institutions involved in biodiversity conservation — including the governance framework—to ensure long term sustainability of project achievements may not be fully developed by the end of the project. A greater focus on capacity development is needed to ensure that staff and their institutions have the required skills, knowledge, procedures, mechanisms and structures.

145. Regarding the financial risk, the project has been supporting the procurement of equipment to various stakeholders involved in implementing project activities. This support has been much appreciated as, for the most part, these organizations are underfunded. It has allowed project activities to be carried on with the required resources. However, once the project will end, financial resources will still be needed to maintain this equipment and at times to replace it. There will also be the need for the government to support some of these new activities such as the Snow Leopard Monitoring Programme, the SMART patrol system, the maintenance of the BCIMS, etc. As it stands currently, there is a risk of a lack of financial resources to support the ongoing activities after the project end.

4.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this mid-term review, the following recommendations are suggested.

Recommendation 1: It is recommended to increase the technical coordination of project activities through multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral technical working groups.

Issue to Address

146. When considering the context of the project in Uzbekistan - including a complex environment (institutional, legislative and policy frameworks) - in which the project is to be implemented and also the overall rapidly evolving reforms that are underway with the enactment by the government of 20 pieces of legislation in the last 2 years, implementing this project is a difficult task. This is also a project with many "*moving parts*" and its broad scope has led to an implementation in "*silos*". Stakeholders are mostly engaged with the project through project supported activities in their respective areas. There is little cross-fertilization happening among them, particularly across government entities but also between government and non-governmental organizations, and between national, regional and local organizations. There is a need to increase communication and coordination—and by extension synergies—across the project to facilitate the exchange of information, best practices and lessons learned, while strengthening the engagement of stakeholders in the implementation of the project. It is recommended to set up multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral technical working groups to oversee the implementation of activities and progress made as well as to review the strategies being piloted. These working groups could include thematic working groups such as pasture management, forestry management and biodiversity conservation monitoring but also taking into account a landscape/spatial approach such as a working group on the Gissar area including national and regional government agencies but also representatives from local communities and NGOs.

Recommendation 2: It is recommended to explore the possibility to open two local offices in project areas.

Issue to Address

147. Most activities supported by the project are taken place in two project intervention areas: the *Ugam-Chatkal Snow Leopard Landscape* and the *Gissar Snow Leopard Landscape*. The location of these activities is mostly in remote areas. Commuting from Tashkent, implies a lot of driving but also a limited coordination with local authorities and regional governmental agencies. Having local offices with 1 or 2 staff would provide the project with greater regional and local "connections" and also provide the project with an "*ear to the ground*" to facilitate the implementation of project activities. It would also provide a place to meet, network and exchange on project achievements as well as providing a more effective and efficient way to implement local activities. It is recommended to explore the feasibility of setting up two local offices in the regions, including the possibility of co-financing/partnering with local relevant institutions.

Recommendation 3: It is recommended to increase the participation of the project in related policy and legislation development.

Issue to Address

148. Since the outset of the project, reforming the enabling environment (policy, legislation and institutions) is a rapidly evolving process in Uzbekistan. It is also an important aspect for the project to monitor carefully; it will play an important part in ensuring the long-term sustainability of project achievements. Strategically, the project is to demonstrate a new approach for the management of protected areas and a community-based pasture management approach as well as an overall landscape management approach in mountain forests and high-mountain ecosystems to conserve snow leopards. In addition to the objective of succeeding in demonstrating new approaches, the real value of these demonstrations is ultimately for the government to internalize the findings and eventually, adapt the enabling environment. It is recommended that the project implementation team increase its participation to the review and update of the enabling environment. The use of working groups could also be part of the solution to communicate project results and participate in the drafting of new policy and legislative instruments.

Recommendation 4: It is recommended to develop a project communication strategy and action plan, including the need to rapidly increase the visibility of the project.

Issue to Address

149. The project has been producing many good deliverables in several areas: management of protected areas in mountain ecosystems, pasture management practices, management of mountain forests, snow leopard monitoring and biodiversity information management. In the meantime, the visibility of the project is poor and, moreover, its implementation is somewhat compartmentalized with limited coordination among focal areas. The result is the constitution of a good body of knowledge on managing snow leopard landscapes but with limited cross-fertilization across thematic areas and limited dissemination of this knowledge due mostly to the lack of communicating this knowledge and having no public access to this knowledge. It is recommended to develop a communication strategy and action plan, detailing how to increase the visibility of the project but also identify information products to develop and information channels to use. It should include the development of information products such as flyers, booklets, articles, videos, and, through the use of various communication channels such as project events but also other types of events, disseminate knowledge on biodiversity conservation, including snow leopard conservation, throughout Uzbekistan.

Recommendation 5: It is recommended to conduct capacity assessments and allocate project resources to consolidate capacities during the remaining implementation period of the project.

Issue to Address

150. This project is timely and responds to national priorities. It seeks to remove barriers to improve biodiversity conservation in high-mountain areas—including snow leopard conservation—while at the same time seeking to introduce alternative sources of income for local communities in order to improve their livelihoods; to reduce pressure on mountain forests and pastures; and to ensure they become good stewards of the local biodiversity. It is an ambitious project with a broad scope and with limited resources to do it all, there

is a risk that capacities developed with the support of the project may not be enough to ensure the long-term sustainability of project achievements. In order to ensure the long-term sustainability of project achievements, it is recommended to conduct capacity assessments and action plans of key organizations to identify possible capacity gaps and how they can be addressed, focusing on skills and knowledge but also on strengthening organizational processes and systems; and including the allocation of project resources.

Recommendation 6: It is recommended to review the strategies guiding the pasture management programme and the micro-grant programme.

Issue to Address

Despite the progress made in piloting 2 pasture users cooperatives and funding 17 alternative income-generation projects through the project micro-grant programme, the strategies guiding these activities need to be reviewed. Regarding the pasture management programme, it is already a recommendation from the international pasture expert to review and define more systematically the objective of this programme, including the role of forest enterprises in pasture management and more research on economic valuation of pastures. Regarding the micro-grant programme, its logic to fund alternative activities to reduce pressure on natural forests and pastures is somewhat questionable. However, this micro-grant programme is effective in creating alternative sources of incomes for remote communities. It should be used more directly as incentives in the context of setting up pasture user cooperatives whereby alternative sources of incomes should help the implementation of community-based pasture management plans. It is recommended to review the strategies of these two programmes integrating the lessons learned so far and redefining their way forward.

Recommendation 7: It is recommended to strengthen gender mainstreaming in project activities.

Issue to Address

151. Gender considerations were not included in the design of the project. At the inception, the project developed a *Gender Analysis and Plan*, which was an ambitious plan to mainstream gender in all project interventions. However, to date, there is a limited focus on mainstreaming gender in project activities. For the most part and as reported in progress reports, gender is being considered mostly within the implementation of activities related to the implementation of the micro-grant programme supported by the project. In this area, the project seeks to involve as many women as possible, including as beneficiaries of micro-grants. It is recommended to review the *Gender Analysis and Plan* and identify actions to be implemented to mainstream gender in project activities.

Recommendation 8: It is recommended to increase the use of adaptive management.

Issue to Address

152. The project implementation team does not use adaptive management enough to plan activities, allocate project resources and implement these activities. The project document is used as a "blue-print" and activities are implemented in relatively strict compliance with this "blue-print", without much deviance from the project document. Yet, there are opportunities and innovative ways which could be used but are not considered if they are not part of the detailed project strategy. Overall, using adaptive management is one way to review what is working and what is not working and modify the approach to make project activities more effective. It is recommended that adaptive management be used more in relation with a greater coordination of project activities among key stakeholders; particularly when changes need to be made to adapt the project to local realities.

Recommendation 9: It is recommended to address the inefficiencies in the procurement of goods and services.

Issue to Address

153. The procurement of goods and services by the project is too lengthy and it is affecting negatively the ability of the project team to quickly respond to investment needs and implementation activities efficiently. Within the context of *UNDP Support Services to National Implementation Modality (NIM)*, the procurement process needs to be more transparency/participative with key stakeholders. It is recommended to review the procurement process and identified the bottleneck(s), which could be improved to reduce the time it takes to

procure goods and services to the project.

Recommendation 10: It is recommended to monitor the financial status of the project and request a no-cost time extension of the project if the GEF grant will not be expended by May 2022.

Issue to Address

154. As of end of June 2019, total expenditures amount to USD 1,417,044 that is 23% of the GEF grant versus an elapsed time of 43% (26 months out of 60 months). With a remaining GEF grant of USD 4,792,819, it is doubtful that the entire budget will be expended by May 2022. From an average monthly disbursement of USD 54,502, the project would need to increase its monthly disbursement to USD 140,965 for the remaining implementation period. It would require a drastic change in managing and administering the project with a significant increase of project activities and disbursements to reach this average. It is recommended to monitor the disbursements in the coming year and if needed recommend a no-cost time extension of the project to consolidate its achievements. Another important point to justify a time extension is the fact that the few months delay in starting the project, prevented activities to be implemented during the summer season of 2017.

Recommendation 11: It is recommended to monitor project management expenditures in order to keep them aligned with the allocated budget of 4.8%.

Issue to Address

155. The review of project expenditures against budgets per component reveals that 47% of the project management budget has been spent, which represents a ratio of just under 10% of total expenditures to June 2019. This ratio is over double the planned ratio of 4.8% allocated to project management. If the project would have expended its overall budget as per the timeline (43%), this ratio would be OK. However, if disbursements are still kept low, the project management expenditures would be high. It is recommended to monitor carefully these expenses to be in line with the budgeted ratio of 4.8%.

Recommendation 12: It is recommended to review co-financing commitments and request yearly estimates from the State Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection.

Issue to Address

156. To date, limited reporting has been made on co-financing contributions. The cash contribution from UNDP is available in the Atlas system indicating as of end of June 2019 a contribution of USD 138,369 or about 46% of UNDP's commitment. However, no figures are available from the State Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection. It is recommended that the project implementation team reviews the commitment made by the State Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection and request yearly co-financing reports.

Recommendation 13: It is recommended to develop an exit strategy for the project.

Issue to Address

157. At the outset of the project, a barrier to improve biodiversity conservation of the western Tian-Shan and Pamir Alai mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan was the limited available resources. Since its inception, the project has been supporting various additional activities, including procurement of equipment, seeking to improve biodiversity of these ecosystems. After the end of the project, some of this procured equipment will need at times to be replaced. Moreover, activities such as the Snow Leopard Monitoring Programme, the SMART patrol system, the maintenance of the BCIMS, etc. will need to be supported by extra resources. It is recommended to develop an exit strategy, setting key milestones to reach before the end of the project, laying out what, when, where and how much some activities need to be continued, and handover procedures for some activities/products.

4.3. Lessons Learnt

158. Several lessons learned are presented below. There are based on the review of project documents, interviews with key informants and analysis of the information collected for this evaluation:

- A design focusing on activities and lacking clear expected results leads the implementation team to use an activity-based management approach as opposed to a results-based management approach.
- When the project covers a large geographic area, a strong communications program is vital to project success; including its visibility.
- Implementation through government entities as custodians of project achievements is conducive to good long-term sustainability.
- When gender considerations are almost inexistent in the project strategy/project document, there is a high risk that gender mainstreaming will be limited; particularly if it is not part of measuring the performance of the project.
- Sustainability of this type of projects, is much correlated with capacities being developed during the lifetime of a project. The greater capacities are developed the more sustainable project achievements will be.
- A project that is a response to clear national needs and priorities is often highly relevant for beneficiaries and its chance of being implemented effectively are maximized.
- Involving stakeholders in the implementation of project activities including their participation in decision-making enables conflict minimization and improve ownership of solutions.

Annex 1: Project Expected Results and Planned Activities

The table below was compiled from the list of expected results and planned activities as anticipated in the project document. It is a succinct summary of what is expected from this project.

***Project Objective*: To enhance the conservation, and sustainable use, of natural resources in the biodiverse high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan.**

Intended Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Budget per Outcome	Indicative Activities
Component 1 – Landscape-level planning and management decision-making.	***Output 1.1:*** Improve the quality of environmental information for state cadaster.	**GEF: $992,200**	*(i)* Revise and update distributional mapping of different types of land uses (e.g. crop agriculture, plantations, livestock pastures, protected areas, villages, settlements, service infrastructure, mining, hunting concessions, etc.); *(ii)* Collect and collate baseline environmental information on inter alia: habitats (e.g. forests, steppe), key species (e.g. keystone, rare and/or endemic species), ecosystem services (e.g. water catchments) and environmental threats, risks and/or hazards (e.g. invasive species, climate change effects, fire risks, erosion); *(iii)* Assess feasibility of piloting a payment for ecosystem services scheme (related to water flow, erosion avoidance, and grazing) in a single watershed in Ugam Chatkal region, and potential use for PA financing; identify options for any other PA financing from ecosystem services (e.g. tourism, hunting, etc.); *(iv)* Update existing information on land tenure (use rights, lease agreements, forest use guidelines) and the current state—and underlying causes—of degradation of high-altitude montane forests; *(v)* Collate environmental (e.g. soil types, above-ground plant biomass, grass species composition and quality, disturbance levels) and land tenure (e.g. use rights, lease agreement, pasture use guidelines, territorial zoning) information for high altitude pastures; *(vi)* Collate baseline data on distribution and extent of livestock farming (e.g. livestock numbers, livestock distribution, proprietary rights to livestock, distribution of camps, seasonal movements, etc.) in high altitude pastures; *(vii)* Develop thematic maps (e.g. vulnerability and risks, estimates of standing biomass, forage quality, extent of degradation, distribution of winter and summer grazing, pasture infrastructure, etc.) in support of pasture planning and management for high altitude pastures; *(viii)* Identify biodiversity 'hotspots' and prioritize natural forests and grassland pasture areas requiring conservation and/or restoration and rehabilitation interventions; *(ix)* Integrate key environmental information collected under this output into the database of state cadaster and maintain all geo-referenced data in the national environmental information database.
	Output 1.2: Enhance the state of knowledge on snow leopard and prey populations.		*(i)* Design a national environmental information management system (EIMS) which can store, manage, verify, protect, retrieve and archive spatial and non-spatial environmental data for Uzbekistan; (scope to be defined with Goskomecology prior to initiation) *(ii)* Procure the requisite computer equipment (software, hardware and networking) for the EIMS; (scope to be defined with Goskomecology prior to initiation) *(iii)* Establish and staff a centralized facility (within Goskomecology) to host and maintain the EIMS; (scope to be defined with Goskomecology prior to initiation) *(iv)* Source, validate and integrate all existing electronic (GIS data, spreadsheets, images, reports, etc.)

Intended Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Budget per Outcome	Indicative Activities
			environmental information into the EIMS; (scope to be defined with Goskomecology prior to initiation) *(v)* Design a snow leopard research and monitoring program on estimation of snow leopard and prey populations, determinations of snow leopard home ranges, identification of snow leopard and prey migration corridors, and ongoing assessments of the nature and scale of threats to snow leopard, prey and habitats; *(vi)* Host a series of specialist training sessions for researchers, scientists, academics, forestry and environmental field staff, environmental inspectors, students, NGOs, etc. on the EIMS and snow leopard monitoring and research program (scope to be defined with Goskomecology prior to initiation); *(vii)* Increase the coverage of camera and video traps (ensuring adequate sample size and capture probability), and linked database of individual cat photo identifications; *(viii)* Increase the coverage of aerial surveys, aerial photography (using lightweight unmanned aerial vehicles) and foot patrol counts of medium-sized mountain ungulates across the snow leopard range; *(ix)* Evaluate the cost-effectiveness of monitoring snow leopard populations using fecal DNA analysis.
Component 2 – Strengthening key biodiversity areas.	***Output 2.1:*** Strengthen the management effectiveness of the core conservation zones in Ugam-Chatkal National Park.	**GEF: $2,445,000**	*Zonation, governance and management planning (Ugam-Chatkal NNP)* *(i)* In consultation with affected stakeholders, prepare a zonation plan for Ugam-Chatkal State NNP. It is envisaged that the designation of the 'core conservation zones' for Ugam-Chatkal State NNP would be expanded to include the existing Chatkal State Biosphere Reserve and Ugam Chatkal Reserve, with a wildlife corridor between Maidantal and Bashkyzilsiy portions of the two PAs, the upper reaches of the Pskem river, and the Akbulak catchment; *(ii)* Develop guidelines for the desired resource use and visitor experience conditions to be achieved for each use zone, and appropriate management activities needed to achieve those desired resource and visitor experience conditions; *(iii)* Review and rationalize the governance of, and administrative arrangements for, Chatkal State NNP in order to improve management efficiencies; and *(iv)* In consultation with affected stakeholders, prepare an Integrated Park Management Plan for Ugam-Chatkal State NNP. This park management plan will incorporate the revised zonation scheme and the rationalized governance and management structures, as well as aligning the existing management plan for Chatkal SBR and the 10-year forest plans for the two forestry business units so that the forests are managed in line with HCVF principles; (iv.2) Develop business plan for Ugam Chatkal State National Nature Park for PA financing (new activity utilizing majority of budget allocation from activity 1.1.iii.) *Patrol staff, equipment and supplies (core conservation zones)* *(v)* Contract additional ranger staff to supplement the existing patrol complement; *(vi)* Procure additional high-quality summer and winter staff uniforms and staff safety and camping equipment for all patrol ranger staff; *(vii)* Supplement the daily patrol rations for patrol ranger staff; *(viii)* Supplement the basic monthly insurance cover (injury and life) for patrol ranger staff; *(ix)* Procure essential transport for patrol and management staff, including two 4x4 vehicles, ranger horses (with tack) and one horse-drawn carriage. *Smart patrol information technology (core conservation zones)*

Intended Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Budget per Outcome	Indicative Activities
			(x) Design a smart patrol system and database that will enable the collection, collation and curation of the spatial and attribute data to be collected by patrol ranger staff; *(xi)* Procure and install (in the central smart patrol planning and data center the hardware, software and networks required to maintain the patrol database; *(xii)* Procure GPS-enabled data collection devices for patrol ranger staff; and *(xiii)* Develop an application for the GPS-enabled data collection devices to capture the spatial and attribute data collected by patrolling rangers. *Patrol staff training and performance assessment (core conservation zones)* *(xiv)* Design, develop and implement a comprehensive smart patrol ranger training program comprising basic training (~2 weeks), advanced training (~2-4 days) and annual refresher training (1-2 days) courses - for all patrol and selected management staff; *(xv)* Implement a 'train-the-trainer' project for nominated staff in Goskomecology and the Goskomles who would be responsible for initiating the smart patrol training in other protected areas. *(xvi)* Facilitate regular meetings and/or workshops between managers, patrol ranger staff, communities and other stakeholders in and around the park to discuss and analyze smart patrol data outputs, and collaboratively identify ways to address ongoing threats; and *(xvii)* Document the lessons learnt from, and good practices in, the development and implementation of smart patrols to guide the future expansion of smart patrols to other protected areas. *Supporting infrastructure and equipment (core conservation zones)* *(xviii)* Wherever practicable, establish and maintain some form of boundary delineation — such as signage, stone cairns, concrete markers, woven wire fencing, etc.—in order to clearly demarcate the borders of the different 'core conservation zones'; *(xix)* Upgrade and equip an existing building that could serve as a central smart patrol planning and data center for the park; *(xx)* Upgrade at least two patrol ranger outposts in Chatkal SBR; *(xxi)* Repair the access dirt road (7km) from the Nevich village to the field station (Bash Kyzylsay) in Chatkal SBR. (to be reviewed and discussed with stakeholders)
	Output 2.2: Extend, and improve the conservation security of, Gissar Strict Nature Reserve.		*Patrol staff, equipment and supplies (Gissar SNR)* *(i)* Procure additional high-quality winter uniforms and supplement the safety equipment and camping equipment for ranger patrol staff *(ii)* Supplement the daily patrol rations for ranger patrol staff; *(iii)* Supplement the basic monthly insurance cover (injury and life) for ranger patrol staff; *(iv)* Procure essential transport for patrol and management staff, including 1 4x4 vehicle and saddles and bridles for ranger patrol horses; and *(v)* Supplement fuel supplies for reserve patrol vehicles. *Smart patrol information technology (Gissar SNR)* *(vi)* Design a smart patrol system and database that will enable the collection, collation and curation of the spatial and attribute data to be collected by ranger patrol staff;

Intended Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Budget per Outcome	Indicative Activities
			(vii) Procure and install the hardware, software and networks required to maintain the ranger patrol database; *(viii)* Procure GPS-enabled data collection devices for ranger patrol staff; *(ix)* Develop an application for the GPS-enabled data collection devices to capture the spatial and attribute data collected by patrolling rangers. *<u>Patrol staff training and performance assessment (Gissar SNR)</u>* *(x)* Design, develop and implement a comprehensive smart patrol training program comprising basic training (~2 weeks), advanced training (~2-4 days) and annual refresher training (1-2 days) courses for all ranger patrol and selected management staff; *(xi)* Facilitate regular meetings and/or workshops between managers, ranger patrol staff, communities and other stakeholders in and around the reserve to discuss and analyze smart patrol data outputs, and collaboratively identify ways to address ongoing threats; *(xii)* Document the lessons learnt from, and good practices in, the development and implementation of smart patrols to guide the future expansion of smart patrols to other protected areas. *<u>Supporting infrastructure and equipment (Gissar SNR)</u>* *(xiii)* Install a communications network for the reserve; *(xiv)* Procure and install power supplies in four patrol ranger outposts in the reserve; *(xv)* Upgrade and equip an existing building that could serve as a central smart patrol planning and data center for the reserve; *<u>Reserve boundaries (buffer area and upper reaches of Tupulang river)</u>* *(xvi)* Complete the formal designation, and use zoning, of the proposed buffer area of Gissar SNR (see draft Gissar Reserve Management Plan, 2014), revisiting forest management regimes to be reconciled with principles of High Conservation Value Forest management; *(xvii)* Assess the feasibility of expanding Gissar SNR (and its buffer zones) into the upper reaches of the Tupulang river in order to better secure the conservation integrity of the migration corridors for snow leopard and prey. *(xviii)* Wherever practicable, establish and maintain some form of boundary delineation in order to clearly demarcate the borders of the reserve buffer area/s.
	Output 2.3: Enhance community involvement in, and beneficiation from, protected areas.		*(i)* Develop an education and outreach program for Ugam-Chatkal State NNP (including Chatkal SNR) and Gissar SNR (including the buffer zone); *(ii)* Contract, train and equip 4 community liaison officers (2 for Gissar and 2 for Ugam-Chatkal) to implement the education and outreach program, and to facilitate social development and economic development activities, in the surrounding rural villages; *(iii)* Design and publish information and educational materials and media (posters, brochures, booklets, DVDs, etc.) for use in the education and outreach program; *(iv)* Develop and present informational and awareness-raising 'road shows' in targeted villages in Ugam-Chatkal NNP, and in villages around Gissar SNR; *(v)* Upgrade the information center and provide guided walking tours through the existing Chatkal museum facility in Parkent;

Intended Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Budget per Outcome	Indicative Activities
			(vi) Establish a visitor and information center for Gissar SNR with educational facilities for school children and local community members, and the potential of increased revenue generation through advertising for tourism activities and sale of local handcrafts and souvenirs *(vii)* Provide short course skills training for community members; *(viii)* Wherever practicable, facilitate the preferential appointment or procurement of contract staff, services and supplies from the pre-trained community members in support of the implementation of project activities in protected areas; *(ix)* Recruit a small corps (5-6 per snow leopard landscape) of environmental inspectors from the pre-trained community members to support the patrol rangers of Ugam-Chatkal State NNP, Chatkal SBR and Gissar SNR in implementing the smart patrol system; *(x)* Establish a local insurance scheme (for each snow leopard landscape) that makes provision for compensating pastoralists for the loss of livestock as a result of predation by native wildlife living in the protected areas (e.g. snow leopard, wolf, lynx, bear); *(xi)* Assess economically viable opportunities for, and pilot the development, management and maintenance of, a tourism/recreational facility in Ugam-Chatkal State NNP and/or the buffer zone of Gissar SNR. A preliminary proposal is: (a) the establishment and maintenance of a summer 'gateway' entry point to the core conservation area of Pskem; (b) the construction and maintenance of shaded picnic areas alongside the Pskem river; (c) the construction of a number of day walking trails of varying difficulty and points of interest; (d) the establishment of a linked small tea garden/restaurant; (e) provision of safety, security and cleaning services; and (e) the marketing of the picnic areas and trails (and nearby attractions and accommodation options).
Component 3 - Sustainable economic development incentives for communities.	***Output 3.1:*** Incentivize sustainable pasture management practices.	**GEF: $2,014,600**	<u>*Pasture management planning*</u> *(i)* Identify and develop legal and regulatory mechanisms to be applied for the establishment of a 'pasture user association' (PUA) by local communities. Support development of national Law on Pastures in line with these provisions. *(ii)* Pilot the establishment of a PUA in each of the two snow leopard landscapes; *(iii)* Assist the PUAs to prepare a pasture management plan; *(iv)* Facilitate the alignment of pasture management plans with relevant 10-year management plans of forestry business units and any issued (pasture) 'certificates of use', (pasture) 'lease agreements' and/or registration of livestock; *(v)* Assist members of the PUA to negotiate longer-term lease agreements with the Goskomles. <u>*Grant funding for, and technical support to, the implementation of pasture management plans*</u> *(vi)* Provide technical and grant funding support (through the PUAs) to assist in improving the health and well-being of free-ranging livestock; *(vii)* Provide technical and grant funding support to households impacted by the enforcement of stricter pasture management regimes. It is envisaged that this support would then provide some form of compensation to pastoralists who lose an existing source of income from extensive livestock farming due to a reduction in livestock numbers, or a loss of access to pasture areas; *(viii)* Strengthen the capacities of the relevant PUA and forestry business units to monitor and enforce the regulations, norms and standards contained in pasture management plans and the individual pasture lease agreements.

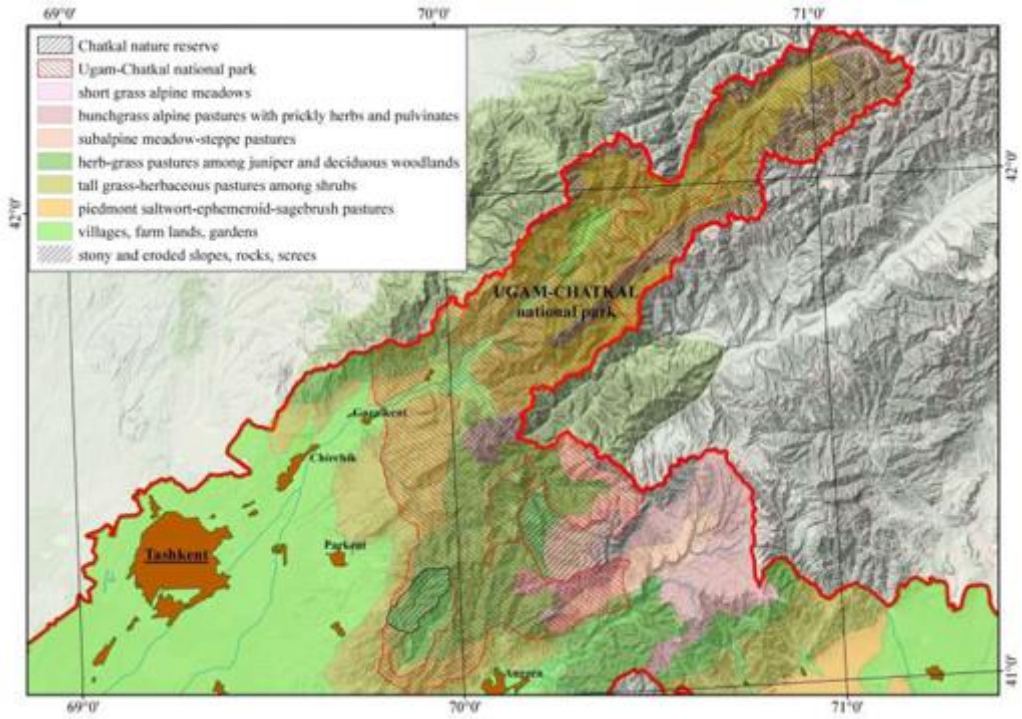
Intended Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Budget per Outcome	Indicative Activities
			Restoration and rehabilitation of heavily degraded grasslands *(ix)* In collaboration with the relevant PUA, identify and prioritize the selection of degraded high-altitude grassland sites for active rehabilitation/restoration, primarily through grazing management based on improved development and application of grazing management plans for sustainable levels of grazing. Small pilot restoration activities of seeding or full livestock exclusion may be undertaken on small plots of 1-10+ hectares; *(x)* Review the national and regional best practices in grassland rehabilitation/restoration; *(xi)* Develop a basic rehabilitation/restoration plan for each site. The restoration/rehabilitation plan will identify the optimal management approach, restoration/rehabilitation methodologies and maintenance measures to be implemented; *(xii)* Erect and maintain livestock fencing (and gates), relocate livestock farming infrastructure and manage livestock numbers in order to control and manage the impact of grazing on the restoration/rehabilitation efforts; and *(xiii)* Support the implementation and monitoring of the pasture rehabilitation/restoration plan in each site.
	Output 3.2: Encourage more sustainable levels of forest use.		*Practical community-based forest management activities (16,000 ha of forests):* *(i)* Establish and maintain a network of local tree nurseries as a source of material for the natural forest restoration efforts, the establishment of woodlots or plantations, and the development of commercial fruit and nut orchards in and around targeted villages. *(ii)* Provide technical and grant funding support to the establishment and maintenance of small plantations/woodlots in and around targeted villages; *(iii)* Provide technical and grant funding support to the establishment of food-producing fruit and nut orchards and herb gardens in and around targeted villages; *(iv)* Provide technical and grant funding support to the installation and maintenance of alternative energy and fuel technologies and systems, including natural gas; wind turbines; solar panels; generators; small hydro-electric power facilities; coal; biogas; liquid natural gas; and connection to the national electricity grid; *(v)* In collaboration with the relevant forest business units, identify and prioritize the selection of 6-10 degraded high-altitude forest patches to plan for their regeneration; *(vi)* Review the national and regional best practices in community-based forest management. *(vii)* Develop a basic forest management / regeneration plan for each identified forest patch; *(viii)* Establish and maintain a system of firebreaks and electric fencing around each identified forest to reduce the impact of wildfire and illegal grazing on the restoration/rehabilitation efforts; *(ix)* Support the implementation and monitoring of the forest restoration/rehabilitation plan in each identified forest patch. *Improved monitoring and enforcement* *(x)* Consult with rural communities from the targeted villages on a range of measures that could be implemented to improve the sustainability, and reduce the environmental impacts, of the harvesting of wood and other forest products from natural high-altitude forests; *(xi)* Improve the scientific basis for the determination of the sanitary cutting requirements for the high-altitude forests; and *(xii)* Strengthen the capacities of the relevant forestry business units to monitor and enforce the forest regulations,

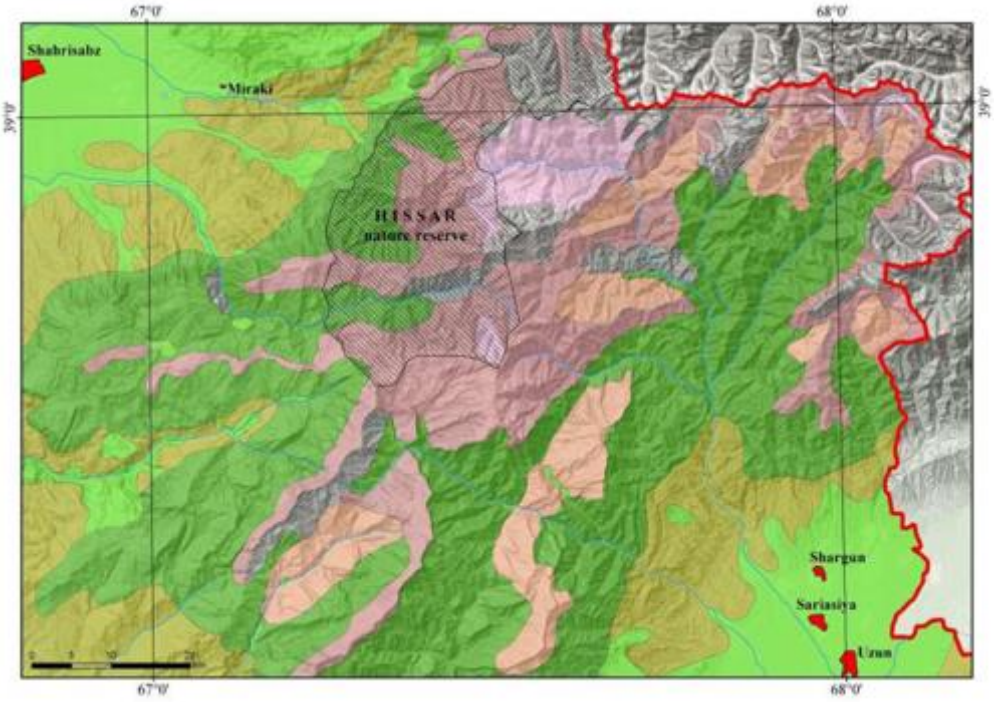
Intended Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Budget per Outcome	Indicative Activities
			norms and standards around the targeted villages.
Component 4 - Promoting cooperation and collaboration.	***Output 4.1:*** Improve inter-agency coordination in conservation, monitoring and enforcement	**GEF: $462,355**	*(i)* Develop a Program and Action Plan for Conservation of Snow Leopard in Uzbekistan for formal adoption by the Government of Uzbekistan; *(ii)* Assess the feasibility of a range of different mechanisms for financing the implementation of the Program and Action Plan; *(iii)* Implement a fund-raising strategy to supplement state funding for the implementation of the Program and Action Plan; *(iv)* Establish and maintain a cooperative governance structure under the stewardship of the Goskomecology - to coordinate, monitor and report on the efforts of different partner institutions, organizations and individuals in the implementation of the Program and Action Plan.
	Output 4.2: Strengthen the capacity for trans-boundary planning and management.		*(i)* Establish joint working groups—one for the Gissar-Alai and one for the west Tien-Shan trans-boundary snow leopard landscapes—with counterparts in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan to facilitate transboundary collaboration in managing migrating snow leopard and prey populations across country borders *(ii)* Design, develop materials for, and implement an ongoing in-service wildlife monitoring and enforcement training and skills development program for border security officials deployed in the snow leopard landscapes; *(iii)* Organize visits to snow leopard range countries for key decision-makers, rangers, managers and researchers in order to share lessons learned, experiences in PA management, and community-based wildlife management; and *(iv)* Facilitate the active participation of scientists, researchers and academics in regional/international snow leopard research and monitoring initiatives and involvement in GSLEP report-back meetings.
Project Management		**GEF: $295,708**	
Total Financing		**GEF: $6,209,863 + Co-financing: $25,300,000 = Total: $31,509,863**	

Source: Project Document

Note: Activities highlighted in yellow are activities revised during the inception phase and documented in the inception report.

Annex 2: Maps of Project Intervention Areas





Annex 3: MTR Terms of Reference

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

TERMS OF REFERENCE / INDIVIDUAL CONTRACT

UNDP-GEF Midterm Review International Consultant

Project name:	Sustainable natural resource and forest management in key mountainous areas important for globally significant biodiversity
Post title:	International Consultant for the Midterm Review (MTR) of full-sized UNDP-GEF project
Type of contract:	Individual Contract (IC)
Assignment type:	International Consultant
Country / Duty Station:	Home Based with one mission of minimum 10 working days to Uzbekistan (not including weekends)
Expected places of travel (if applicable):	Tashkent and Kashkadarya regions
Languages required:	English
Starting date of assignment:	12 September 2019
Duration of Contract:	28 working days
Payment arrangements:	Lump-sum contract (payments linked to satisfactory performance and delivery of results)
Administrative arrangements:	Travel and logistics arrangements will be made by the UNDP CO in accordance with all UNDP rules and procedures.

1. INTRODUCTION

This is the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the UNDP-GEF Midterm Review (MTR) of the *full*-sized project titled "*Sustainable natural resource use and forest management in key mountainous areas important for globally significant biodiversity"* (PIMS#00090383) being implemented jointly with the *State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Ecology and Environmental protection (Goskomecology)*. The project started on *21 September 2017* and is in its *third* year of implementation. In line with the UNDP-GEF Guidance on MTRs, this MTR process was initiated before the submission of the second Project Implementation Report (PIR). This TOR sets out the expectations for this MTR. The MTR process must follow the guidance outlined in the document *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The project was designed to support improved and effective management of protected areas as well as sustainable use and management of mountain pastures and forests, and biodiversity conservation in two snow leopard landscapes (Western Tian Shan and Pamir Alay) of Uzbekistan.

Project Goal, Objective, Outcomes and Outputs/activities

The project objective is "To enhance the conservation, and sustainable use, of natural resources in the biodiverse high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan".

In order to achieve the project objective, the project is structured into four components, with each component comprising a complementary suite of two to three outputs.

Component 1: Landscape-level planning and management decision-making. The first component will enhance the quality of information on key ecosystems, habitats and species of the high-altitude mountains that are home to snow leopard and prey populations. Information collected under this component will be used to support sectoral land use planning and decision-making in these mountainous regions. Work under this component will be focused around two key areas of project support: (i) Improve the quality of environmental information for state Cadastre in the snow leopard distribution range (Output 1.1); and (ii) Enhance the state of knowledge on snow leopard and prey populations (Output 1.2).

Component 2: Strengthening key biodiversity areas. The second component will seek to expand and build the management capacity of the core conservation zones and high conservation value forests located within the two targeted snow leopard landscapes. Outputs and activities in this component will be directed at securing the conservation security of the key snow leopard and prey migration corridors within the two snow leopard landscapes. Work under this component will be focused around three key areas of project support: (i) Strengthen the conservation tenure, and improve the management effectiveness, of the core conservation zones in Ugam-Chatkal National Park (Output 2.1); (ii) Extend, and improve the conservation security of, Gissar Strict Nature Reserve (Output 2.2); and (iii) Enhance community involvement in, and beneficiation from, the protected areas (Output 2.3).

Component 3: Sustainable economic development incentives for communities. The third component will seek to encourage more sustainable levels of use of the high-altitude pastures and indigenous forests located within the two targeted snow leopard landscapes. Outputs and activities under this component will contribute to improving the ecological integrity and productivity of forest and grassland habitats in the snow leopard landscapes. Work under this component will be focused around two key areas of project support: (i) Incentivize the adoption of more sustainable pasture management practices (Output 3.1); and (ii) Reverse the trend of unsustainable forest use in, and degradation of, natural forests (Output 3.2).

Component 4: Promoting cooperation and collaboration. The fourth component will promote improved cooperation and collaboration in the conservation of snow leopard and their ecosystems. It is envisaged that more integrated planning, stronger cooperative governance structures and improved institutional and individual capabilities of all partner agencies and institutions will improve the collective national capacity to conserve and sustainably use snow leopards, their prey and their ecosystems. Work under this component will be focused around two key areas of project support: (i) Improve inter-agency coordination in conservation, monitoring and enforcement (Output 4.1); and (ii) Strengthen the capacity for trans-boundary planning and management (Output 4.2).

The project implementation period is 2017-2022. The time is based on activities that will provide implementation of best practices, their assessment and primer dissemination of recommendations on their replication in other similar regions of Uzbekistan. Building of sufficient capacity and practical know-how within essential state institutions and local authorities will take too long to allow project sustainability. One of the main lessons learned by UNDP and other development partners in Central Asia in the last 15 years is that to change and reform existing institutions and mind-sets is an extremely time-consuming process if it is to be achieved effectively. This has been a clear lesson from most of UNDP and other development actors' initiatives in the area and a key reason for many projects to not achieve the full results expected. Thus, it is of paramount importance that in the project a realistic timeframe for the systematic implementation of the various project activities is planned in order to mitigate this risk. This is an additional reason why the timeframe of 5 years has been considered necessary.

The project budget planned for the period of implementation is in table below. The actually used donors' funds are indicated by UNDP and GEF ($6,509,863).

Total resources required	$31,509,863
Total allocated resources (grants)	$6,509,863
- UNDP	$300,000
- GEF	$6,209,863
- Government (in-kind)	$25,000,000
In-kind Contributions	$0

The project will instigate institutional change with the true understanding and support of the institutions themselves for the change to be effective and sustainable. The major aim of the project is to build the experience, know-how and technical capacity of key national, regional and district level institutions so that they themselves are better able to understand and deliver change that responds to the evolving natural resources use situation in Uzbekistan. This is the most significant factor in making such institutions sustainable and continuing to be sustainable despite inevitable climate and economic "shocks" that may occur in the future.

The project activities are implemented under coordination of Goskomecology of Uzbekistan, as the national implementation agency of the project. Goskomecology is responsible for regulatory framework related to ecology, environmental protection and biodiversity use and conservation. Ministries and agencies of the country are involved in the project implementation through a mechanism of interactions through Goskomecology and are represented with members of the national Project Board (project steering committee) (the list is indicated below).

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE MTR

The MTR will assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document and assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying the necessary changes to be

made in order to set the project on-track to achieve its intended results. The MTR will also review the project's strategy and its risks to sustainability.

4. MTR APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

The MTR must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The MTR team will review all relevant sources of information including documents prepared during the preparation phase (i.e. PIF, UNDP Initiation Plan, UNDP Environmental & Social Safeguard Policy, the Project Document, project reports including Annual Project Review/PIRs, project budget revisions, lesson learned reports, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the team considers useful for this evidence-based review). The MTR team will review the baseline GEF focal area Tracking Tool submitted to the GEF at CEO endorsement, and the midterm GEF focal area Tracking Tool that must be completed before the MTR field mission begins.

The MTR team is expected to follow a collaborative and participatory approach9 ensuring close engagement with the Project Team, government counterparts (the GEF Operational Focal Point), the UNDP Country Office(s), UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisers, and other key stakeholders.

Engagement of stakeholders is vital to a successful MTR.10 Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities, including but not limited to *(GEF Operational Focal Point, Goskomecology, State Committee on Forestry, State Committee for Land Resources, Geodesy, Cartography and State Cadaster, Academy of Sciences, regional and district authorities, rural communities, , and other national and international nature conservation NGOs);* executing agencies, senior officials and task team/component field coordinators, key experts and consultants in the subject area, Project Board, project stakeholders, academia, local government and CSOs, etc. Additionally, the MTR team is expected to conduct field missions to *(Tashkent and Kashkadarya Regions of Uzbekistan),* including the project sites.

The final MTR report should describe the full MTR approach taken and the rationale for the approach making explicit the underlying assumptions, challenges, strengths and weaknesses about the methods and approach of the review.

5. DETAILED SCOPE OF THE MTR

The MTR team will assess the following four categories of project progress. See the *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for extended descriptions.

i. Project Strategy

Project design:

- Review the problem addressed by the project and the underlying assumptions. Review the effect of any incorrect assumptions or changes to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document.
- Review the relevance of the project strategy and assess whether it provides the most effective route towards expected/intended results. Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated into the project design?
- Review how the project addresses country priorities. Review country ownership. Was the project concept in line with the national sector development priorities and plans of the country (or of participating countries in the case of multi-country projects)?
- Review decision-making processes: were perspectives of those who would be affected by project decisions, those who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the process, taken into account during project design processes?
- Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were raised in the project design. See Annex 9 of *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for further guidelines.
- If there are major areas of concern, recommend areas for improvement.

Results Framework/Logframe:

- Undertake a critical analysis of the project's logframe indicators and targets, assess how "SMART" the midterm and end-of-project targets are (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound), and suggest specific amendments/revisions to the targets and indicators as necessary.
- Are the project's objectives and outcomes or components clear, practical, and feasible within its time frame?

9 For ideas on innovative and participatory Monitoring and Evaluation strategies and techniques, see UNDP Discussion Paper: Innovations in Monitoring & Evaluating Results, 05 Nov 2013.

10 For more stakeholder engagement in the M&E process, see the UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results, Chapter 3, pg. 93.

- Examine if progress so far has led to or could in the future catalyze beneficial development effects (i.e. income generation, gender equality and women's empowerment, improved governance etc...) that should be included in the project results framework and monitored on an annual basis.
- Ensure broader development and gender aspects of the project are being monitored effectively. Develop and recommend SMART 'development' indicators, including sex-disaggregated indicators and indicators that capture development benefits.

ii. Progress Towards Results

Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis:

- Review the logframe indicators against progress made towards the end-of-project targets using the Progress Towards Results Matrix and following the *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*; color code progress in a "traffic light system" based on the level of progress achieved; assign a rating on progress for each outcome; make recommendations from the areas marked as "Not on target to be achieved" (red).

Table. Progress Towards Results Matrix (Achievement of outcomes against End-of-project Targets)

Project Strategy	Indicator	Baseline Level	Level in 1st PIR (self-reported)	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	Midterm Level & Assessment	Achievement Rating	Justification for Rating
Objective:	Indicator (if applicable):							
Outcome 1:	Indicator 1:							
	Indicator 2:							
Outcome 2:	Indicator 3:							
	Indicator 4:							
	Etc.							
Etc.								

Indicator Assessment Key

Green= Achieved	Yellow= On target to be achieved	Red= Not on target to be achieved

In the causal pathways of a project, its outputs are expected to lead to its intended outcomes. Although achievement of outcomes is not certain, most UNDP-GEF projects may be expected to achieve the targeted outcomes at implementation completion. The evaluators should, therefore, assess the progress toward the expected outcomes. They should also assess the factors that may affect outcome achievement, e.g. project design, project's linkages with other activities, extent and materialization of co-financing, stakeholder involvement, etc.

Outcome ratings will take into account the outcome achievements of the projects against its expected targets. Project outcomes will be rated on three dimensions:

a. **Relevance:** Were the project outcomes congruent with the GEF focal areas/operational program strategies, country priorities, and mandates of the Agencies? Was the project design appropriate for delivering the expected outcomes?

b. **Effectiveness:** The extent to which the project's actual outcomes commensurate with the expected outcomes?

c. **Efficiency:** Was the project cost-effective? How does the project cost/time versus output/outcomes equation compare to that of similar projects?

In addition to the progress towards outcomes analysis:

- Compare and analyze the GEF Tracking Tool at the Baseline with the one completed right before the Midterm Review.
- Identify remaining barriers to achieving the project objective in the remainder of the project.
- By reviewing the aspects of the project that have already been successful, identify ways in which the project can further expand these benefits.

Progress to Impact Analysis:

It is usually too early to assess the long-term impacts of the project at the project mid-term. This said, some evidence on progress towards long-term impacts, and the extent to which the key assumptions of the project's theory of change hold, may be available and it may be feasible to assess and report on the progress. The evaluators should also assess the extent to which the progress towards long-term impact may be attributed to the project.

The evaluators should report the available qualitative and quantitative evidence on environmental stress reduction (e.g. GHG emission reduction, reduction of waste discharge, etc.) and environmental status change (e.g. change in population of endangered species, forest stock, water retention in degraded lands, etc.). When reporting such evidence, the evaluator should note the information source and clarify the scale/s at which the described environmental stress reduction is being achieved.

The evaluators should cover project's contributions to changes in policy/ legal/regulatory framework. This would include observed changes in capacities (awareness, knowledge, skills, infrastructure, monitoring systems, etc.) and governance architecture, including access to and use of information (laws, administrative bodies, trust-building and conflict resolution processes, information-sharing systems, etc.). Contribution to change in socioeconomic status (income, health, well-being, etc.) should also be documented.

Where the environmental and social changes are being achieved at scales beyond the immediate area of intervention, the evaluators should provide an account of the processes such as sustaining, mainstreaming, replication, scaling up and market change, through which these changes have taken place. The evaluators should discuss whether there are arrangements in the project design to facilitate follow-up actions, and should document instances where UNDP and the GEF promoted approaches, technologies, financing instruments, legal frameworks, information systems, etc., were adopted/implemented without direct support from, or involvement of, the project. Evidence on incidence of these processes should be discussed to assess progress towards impact.

When assessing contributions of GEF project to the observed change, the evaluators should also assess the contributions of other actors and factors. The evaluators should assess merits of rival explanations for the observed impact and give reasons for accepting or rejecting them. Where applicable, the evaluators are encouraged to identify and describe the barriers and other risks that may prevent further progress towards long-term impacts.

The evaluators should document the unintended impacts—both positive and negative impacts—of the project and assess the overall scope and implications of these impacts. Where these impacts are undesirable from environmental and socio-economic perspectives, the evaluation should suggest corrective actions.

iii. Project Implementation, Execution, and Adaptive Management

The assessment of the implementation and execution of UNDP-GEF full size projects will take into account the performance of UNDP and project executing entities (EAs) in discharging their expected roles and responsibilities. The performance of these agencies will be rated using a six-point scale (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory).

Quality of Implementation: Within the GEF partnership, UNDP, as a GEF Agency, is involved in activities related to a project's identification, concept preparation, appraisal, preparation of detailed proposal, approval and start-up, oversight, supervision, completion, and evaluation. To assess performance of UNDP, the evaluators will assess the extent to which the agency delivered effectively on these counts, with focus on elements that were controllable from UNDP's perspective. The evaluator will assess how well risks were identified and managed by UNDP.

Quality of Execution: Within the GEF partnership, the EAs are involved in the management and administration of the project's day-to-day activities under the overall oversight and supervision of the GEF Agencies. The EAs are responsible for the appropriate use of funds, and procurement and contracting of goods and services to the GEF Agency. To assess EA performance, the evaluators will assess the extent to which it effectively discharged its role and responsibilities.

Management Arrangements:

- Review overall effectiveness of project management as outlined in the Project Document. Have changes been made and are they effective? Are responsibilities and reporting lines clear? Is decision-making transparent and undertaken in a timely manner? Recommend areas for improvement.
- Review the quality of execution of the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner(s) and recommend areas for improvement.
- Review the quality of support provided by the GEF Partner Agency (UNDP) and recommend areas for improvement.

Work Planning:

- Review any delays in project start-up and implementation, identify the causes and examine if they have been resolved.
- Are work-planning processes results-based? If not, suggest ways to re-orientate work planning to focus on results?
- Examine the use of the project's results framework/ logframe as a management tool and review any changes made to it since project start.

Finance and co-finance:

- Consider the financial management of the project, with specific reference to the cost-effectiveness of interventions.

- Review the changes to fund allocations as a result of budget revisions and assess the appropriateness and relevance of such revisions.
- Does the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allow management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allow for timely flow of funds?
- Informed by the co-financing monitoring table to be filled out, provide commentary on co-financing: is co-financing being used strategically to help the objectives of the project? Is the Project Team meeting with all co-financing partners regularly in order to align financing priorities and annual work plans?

Project-level Monitoring, Reporting, and Evaluation Systems:
- Review the monitoring tools currently being used: Do they provide the necessary information? Do they involve key partners? Are they aligned or mainstreamed with national systems? Do they use existing information? Are they efficient? Are they cost-effective? Are additional tools required? How could they be made more participatory and inclusive?
- Examine the financial management of the project monitoring and evaluation budget. Are sufficient resources being allocated to monitoring and evaluation? Are these resources being allocated effectively?
- Assess how adaptive management changes have been reported by the project management and shared with the Project Board.
- Assess how well the Project Team and partners undertake and fulfil GEF reporting requirements (i.e. how have they addressed poorly rated PIRs, if applicable?)
- Assess how lessons derived from the adaptive management process have been documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners.

Stakeholder Engagement:
- Project management: Has the project developed and leveraged the necessary and appropriate partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders?
- Participation and country-driven processes: Do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project? Do they continue to have an active role in project decision-making that supports efficient and effective project implementation?
- Participation and public awareness: To what extent has stakeholder involvement and public awareness contributed to the progress towards achievement of project objectives?

Communications:
- Review internal project communication with stakeholders: Is communication regular and effective? Are there key stakeholders left out of communication? Are there feedback mechanisms when communication is received? Does this communication with stakeholders contribute to their awareness of project outcomes and activities and investment in the sustainability of project results?
- Review external project communication: Are proper means of communication established or being established to express the project progress and intended impact to the public (is there a web presence, for example? Or did the project implement appropriate outreach and public awareness campaigns?)
- For reporting purposes, write one half-page paragraph that summarizes the project's progress towards results in terms of contribution to sustainable development benefits, as well as global environmental benefits.

Risk Management
- Validate whether the risks identified in the Project Document, Annual Project Review/PIRs and the ATLAS Risk Management Module are the most important and whether the risk ratings applied are appropriate and up to date. If not, explain why.

Safeguard and Gender Mainstreaming:
- Environmental and Social Safeguards: The evaluator will assess whether appropriate environmental and social safeguards, including those on mainstreaming of gender concerns, were addressed in the project's design and implementation. It is expected that a GEF project will not cause any harm to environment or to any stakeholder and, where applicable, it will take measures to prevent and/or mitigate adverse effects.
- Gender Concerns: The evaluator will determine the extent to which the gender considerations were taken into account in designing and implementing the project. The evaluator should report whether a gender analysis was conducted, the extent to which the project was implemented in a manner that ensures gender equitable participation and benefits, and whether gender disaggregated data was gathered and reported on beneficiaries. In case the given GEF project disadvantages or may disadvantage women, then this should be documented and reported. The evaluator should also determine the extent to which relevant gender related concerns were tracked through project M&E.

iv. Sustainability

The mid-term review will assess the likelihood of sustainability of outcomes at project termination and provide a rating.

The assessment of sustainability will weigh risks to continuation of benefits from the project. The assessment should identify key risks and explain how these risks may affect continuation of benefits after the project ends. The analysis should cover financial, socio-political, institutional, and environmental risks. The overall sustainability of project outcomes will be rated on a four-point scale (Likely to Unlikely) based on an assessment of the likely incidence and magnitude of the risks to sustainability. Higher levels of risks and magnitudes of effect imply lower likelihood of sustainability. Assess the following risks to sustainability:

Financial risks to sustainability:

- What is the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once the GEF assistance ends (consider potential resources can be from multiple sources, such as the public and private sectors, income generating activities, and other funding that will be adequate financial resources for sustaining project's outcomes)?

Socio-economic risks to sustainability:

- Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outcomes? What is the risk that the level of stakeholder ownership (including ownership by governments and other key stakeholders) will be insufficient to allow for the project outcomes/benefits to be sustained? Do the various key stakeholders see that it is in their interest that the project benefits continue to flow? Is there sufficient public / stakeholder awareness in support of the long-term objectives of the project? Are lessons learned being documented by the Project Team on a continual basis and shared/ transferred to appropriate parties who could learn from the project and potentially replicate and/or scale it in the future?

Institutional Framework and Governance risks to sustainability:

- Do the legal frameworks, policies, governance structures and processes pose risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project benefits? While assessing this parameter, also consider if the required systems/ mechanisms for accountability, transparency, and technical knowledge transfer are in place.

Environmental risks to sustainability:

- Are there any environmental risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project outcomes?

Conclusions, Lessons, and Recommendations

The MTR team will include a section of the report setting out the MTR's evidence-based conclusions, in light of the findings.

Lessons should be summarized and based on direct experience from the project, while including generalized statements that have broader applicability to other projects with UNDP's portfolio,

Recommendations should be succinct suggestions for critical intervention that are specific, measurable, achievable, and relevant. Recommendations should include a specific timeframe for the recommendation to be completed, and the specific target audience for the recommendation. A recommendation table should be put in the report's executive summary. See the *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for guidance on a recommendation table.

The MTR report should include a maximum of approximately 15 recommendations.

Ratings

The MTR team will include its ratings of the project's results and brief descriptions of the associated achievements in a *MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table* in the Executive Summary of the MTR report. See Annex E for ratings scales. No rating on Project Strategy and no overall project rating is required.

Table. MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table for project "Sustainable natural resource use and forest management in key mountainous areas important for globally significant biodiversity"

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Project Strategy	N/A	
Progress Towards Results	Objective Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 1 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	

	Outcome 2 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 3 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Etc.	
Relevance	(rate 6 pt. scale)	
Effectiveness	(rate 6 pt. scale)	
Efficiency	(rate 6 pt. scale)	
Progress Toward Impact		
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	(rate 6 pt. scale)	
Quality of Implementation	(rate 6 pt. scale)	
Quality of Execution	(rate 6 pt. scale)	
Sustainability	(rate 4 pt. scale, based on below: no higher than the lowest rating below)	
Financial	(rate 4 pt. scale)	
Socio-economic	(rate 4 pt. scale)	
Institutional Framework and Governance	(rate 4 pt. scale)	
Environmental	(rate 4 pt. scale)	

6. TIMEFRAME

The total duration of the MTR will be approximately *(28 days)* over a time period of *(4 weeks)* starting *(September 12, 2019),* and shall not exceed five months from when the consultant is hired.

The suggested breakdown of days per task is as follows, although the MTR team is welcome to develop their own workplan for the successful completion of tasks for the MTR:

Task	**Expected number of days**
Desk review of project documents and completion of inception report	*4 days*
MTR Mission travel to Uzbekistan	*10 days*
Follow-ups, additional desk-based data collection, including from other Key Informants (e.g. phone interviews with international consultants, UNDP Regional Technical Advisor, etc.)	*2 days*
Data analysis and drafting of MTR report	*10 days*
Finalization of MTR report	*2 days*

The tentative MTR timeframe is as follows:

TIMEFRAME	**ACTIVITY**
June 17	Application closes
June 30	Select MTR Team
September 2	Prep the MTR Team (handover of Project Documents)
September 12-15	Document review and preparing MTR Inception Report
September 16-17	Finalization and Validation of MTR Inception Report
~10 days within period September 17-October 25	MTR mission: stakeholder meetings, interviews, field visits; dates to be confirmed in consultation with MTR team.
Last day of MTR mission	Mission wrap-up meeting & presentation of initial findings
November 8	Draft MTR report
November 8-20	UNDP / Project team review of MTR report and provision of feedback.

November 27	Final MTR report based on feedback received, including audit trail of feedback.
optional	Concluding Stakeholder Workshop (not mandatory for MTR team)

Options for site visits should be provided in the Inception Report.

7. MIDTERM REVIEW DELIVERABLES

#	Deliverable	Description	Timing	Responsibilities
1	**MTR Inception Report**	MTR team clarifies and specifies objectives and methods of Midterm Review	No later than 2 weeks before the MTR mission: September 12	MTR team submits to the Commissioning Unit and project management
2	**Presentation**	Initial Findings	Last day of MTR mission.	MTR Team presents to project management and the Commissioning Unit
3	**Draft Final Report**	Full report (using guidelines on content outlined in Annex B) with annexes	Within 3 weeks of the MTR mission, latest by November 8	Sent to the Commissioning Unit, reviewed by RTA, Project Coordinating Unit, GEF OFP
4	**Final Report***	Revised report with audit trail detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final MTR report	Within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on draft: November 27	Sent to the Commissioning Unit

*The final MTR report must be in English. If applicable, the Commissioning Unit may choose to arrange for a translation of the report into a language more widely shared by national stakeholders.

8. MTR ARRANGEMENTS

The principal responsibility for managing this MTR resides with the Commissioning Unit. The Commissioning Unit for this project's MTR is the UNDP Uzbekistan office. Prior to approval of the final report, a draft version shall be circulated for comments to UNDP-GEF team (including UNDP RB, Istanbul), government counterparts, including: National Project Coordinator (The State Committee of the Republic Uzbekistan on Ecology and Environmental protection), Project Manager and UNDP-Uzbekistan Country Office.

The commissioning unit will contract the consultants and ensure the timely provision of travel arrangements within Uzbekistan for the MTR team. The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the MTR team to provide all relevant documents, set up stakeholder interviews, and arrange field visits.

9. TEAM COMPOSITION

A team of two independent consultants will conduct the MTR—one team leader—International Consultant (with experience and exposure to projects and evaluations in other regions globally) and one team expert – Local Consultant, usually from the country of the project. The consultants cannot have participated in the project preparation, formulation, and/or implementation (including the writing of the Project Document) and should not have a conflict of interest with project's related activities.

The selection of consultants will be aimed at maximizing the overall "team" qualities in the following areas:

- Technical knowledge of and experience with integrated natural resource management issues, including:
  - Effective management of protected areas, including regulatory monitoring and enforcement, such as SMART patrol systems;
  - Conservation and scientific field monitoring of biodiversity;
  - Sustainable forest management;
  - Sustainable land and pasture management, including transhumance;
  - Sustainable rural and natural-resource based livelihoods;
- Experience in the evaluation of international development projects (particularly nature conservation projects), including experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios;
- Experience working with UNDP or GEF project-level evaluations;
- Experience working in Central Asia countries, especially in Uzbekistan is an advantage;
- Work experience in relevant technical areas for at least 5 years;
- Demonstrated understanding of issues related to gender and sustainable natural resources use and management; knowledge of the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP) is an advantage;
- Experience in gender sensitive evaluation and analysis;
- Excellent communication skills;

- Demonstrable analytical skills;
- Project evaluation/review experiences within United Nations system will be considered an asset;
- A Master's degree in biology, environmental science, natural resources management, or a closely related field. Sound knowledge of sustainable rural development, land management, in particular in mountain areas and capacity development is critical.

10. PAYMENT MODALITIES AND SPECIFICATIONS

The service provider will be responsible for all personal administrative and travel expenses associated with undertaking this assignment including office accommodation, printing, stationary, telephone and electronic communications, and report copies incurred in this assignment. For this reason, the contract is prepared as a lump sum contract.

The remuneration of work performed will be conducted as follows: lump sum payable in 2 installments, upon satisfactory completion and approval by UNDP of all deliverables, including the Final MTR Report.

60 % of payment upon approval of the final MTR Inception Report and submission of the draft MTR report,
40 % upon finalization of the MTR report.

11. APPLICATION PROCESS

Recommended Presentation of Proposal:

a) **Letter of Confirmation of Interest and Availability** using the template provided by UNDP;
b) **CV** and a **Personal History Form** (P11 form);
c) **Brief description of approach to work/technical proposal** of why the individual considers him/herself as the most suitable for the assignment, and a proposed methodology on how they will approach and complete the assignment; (max 1 page)
d) **Financial Proposal** that indicates the all-inclusive fixed total contract price and all other travel related costs (such as flight tickets, per diem, etc.), supported by a breakdown of costs, as per template attached to the Letter of Confirmation of Interest template. If an applicant is employed by an organization/company/institution, and he/she expects his/her employer to charge a management fee in the process of releasing him/her to UNDP under Reimbursable Loan Agreement (RLA), the applicant must indicate at this point, and ensure that all such costs are duly incorporated in the financial proposal submitted to UNDP.

All application materials should be submitted by e-mail *indicating the following reference in the subject line:* **"IC/007/19 - International Consultant for the Midterm Review (MTR) of full-sized UNDP-GEF project "Sustainable natural resource use and forest management in key mountainous areas important for globally significant biodiversity of Uzbekistan (Mountain Ecosystems)" to the following email address ONLY: azizbek.bustonov@undp.org** *by **15:00 Tashkent time (GMT+5) June 17, 2019.*** Incomplete applications will be excluded from further consideration.

Criteria for Evaluation of Proposal: Only those applications which are responsive and compliant will be evaluated. Offers will be evaluated according to the Combined Scoring method – where the educational background and experience on similar assignments will be weighted at 70% and the price proposal will weigh as 30% of the total scoring. The applicant receiving the Highest Combined Score that has also accepted UNDP's General Terms and Conditions will be awarded the contract.

TOR ANNEX A: List of Documents to be reviewed by the MTR Team
TOR ANNEX B: Guidelines on Contents for the Midterm Review Report
TOR ANNEX C: Midterm Review Evaluative Matrix Template
TOR ANNEX D: UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluators/Midterm Review Consultants
TOR ANNEX E: MTR Ratings
TOR ANNEX F: MTR Report Clearance Form
TOR ANNEX G: Audit Trail Template

Annex 4: UNEG Code of Conduct for Reviewers and 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 imitations, findings and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

Mid-Term Review Consultant Agreement Form

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

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

Signed in Ottawa on September 9, 2019

Signature: _____

Name of Consultant: ***Jean-Joseph Bellamy***

Signed in Tashkent on November 5, 2019

Signature: _____

Name of Consultant: ***Rustam Muradov***

Annex 5: Review Matrix

The evaluation matrix below served as a general guide for the review. It provided directions for the review; particularly for the collection of relevant data. It was used as a basis for interviewing people and reviewing project documents. It also provided a basis for structuring the review report as a whole.

Reviewed Component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
Review criteria: Relevance *- How does the project relate to the main objectives of the GEF, UNDP and of Uzbekistan to strengthen its capacity to sustainably manage, use and conserve natural resources in high-altitude mountain ecosystems?*				
Is the Project relevant to the GEF objectives?	▪ How does the Project support the related strategic priorities of the GEF? ▪ Were GEF criteria for project identification adequate in view of actual needs?	▪ Level of coherence between project objectives and those of the GEF	▪ Project documents ▪ GEF policies and strategies ▪ GEF web site	▪ Documents analyses ▪ Interviews with government officials and other partners
Is the Project relevant to UNDP objectives?	▪ How does the project support the objectives of UNDP in this sector?	▪ Existence of a clear relationship between project objectives and country programme objectives of UNDP	▪ Project documents ▪ UNDP strategies and programme	▪ Documents analyses ▪ Interviews with government officials and other partners
Is the Project relevant to Uzbekistan's capacity to sustainably manage, use and conserve natural resources in high-altitude mountain ecosystems?	▪ Does the project follow the government's stated priorities? ▪ How does the Project support the sustainable management, use and conservation of natural resources in high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan? ▪ Does the project address the identified problem? ▪ How country-driven is the Project? ▪ Does the Project adequately take into account national realities, both in terms of institutional framework and programming, in its design and its implementation? ▪ To what extent were national partners involved in the design of the Project?	▪ Degree to which the project supports the sustainable management, use and conservation of natural resources in high altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan ▪ Degree of coherence between the project and national priorities, policies and strategies; particularly related to the sustainable management, use and conservation of natural resources in high altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan ▪ Appreciation from national stakeholders with respect to adequacy of project design and implementation to national realities and existing capacities? ▪ Level of involvement of Government officials and other partners into the project ▪ Coherence between needs expressed by national stakeholders and UNDP criteria	▪ Project documents ▪ National policies, strategies and programmes ▪ Key government officials and other partners	▪ Documents analyses ▪ Interviews with government officials and other partners
Does the Project address the needs of target beneficiaries?	▪ How does the project support the needs of target beneficiaries? ▪ Is the implementation of the project being inclusive of all relevant Stakeholders? ▪ Are local beneficiaries and stakeholders adequately involved in project formulation and implementation? ▪ Were gender issues incorporated in the project design?	▪ Strength of the link between project expected results and the needs of target beneficiaries ▪ Degree of involvement and inclusiveness of beneficiaries and stakeholders in project design and implementation	▪ Beneficiaries and stakeholders ▪ Needs assessment studies ▪ Project documents	▪ Document analysis ▪ Interviews with beneficiaries and stakeholders
Is the Project internally	▪ Was the project sourced through a demand-driven approach? ▪ Is there a direct and strong link between project expected results (*Strategic Result Framework*) and the project design (in terms of project	▪ Level of coherence between project expected results and internal project design logic	▪ Program and project documents	▪ Document analysis ▪ Key Interviews

Reviewed Component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
coherent in its design?	components, choice of partners, structure, delivery mechanism, scope, budget, use of resources etc.)? ▪ Are the assumptions made at the outset still valid? ▪ Is the length of the project conducive to achieve project outcomes?	▪ Level of coherence between project design and project implementation approach	▪ Key project stakeholders	
How is the Project relevant in light of other donors?	▪ With regards to Uzbekistan, does the project remain relevant in terms of areas of focus and targeting of key activities? ▪ How does the GEF help to fill gaps (or give additional stimulus) that are crucial but are not covered by other donors?	▪ Degree to which the project was coherent and complementary to other donor programmes in Uzbekistan ▪ List of programs and funds in which future developments, ideas and partnerships of the project are eligible?	▪ Other Donors' policies and programming documents ▪ Other Donor representatives ▪ Project documents	▪ Documents analyses ▪ Interviews with other Donors
Future directions for similar Projects	▪ What lessons have been learnt and what changes could have been made to the project in order to strengthen the alignment between the project and the Partners' priorities and areas of focus? ▪ How could the project better target and address priorities and development challenges of targeted beneficiaries?		▪ Data collected throughout evaluation	▪ Data analysis
***Review criteria: Effectiveness** – To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved?*				
How is the Project effective in achieving its expected outcomes?	▪ How is the project being effective in achieving its expected outcomes/components? ○ Landscape-level planning and management decision-making ○ Strengthening key biodiversity areas ○ Sustainable economic development incentives for communities ○ Promoting cooperation and collaboration ▪ Is the project strategy feasible within the timeframe of the project? ▪ Does the project mainstream gender considerations into its implementation? ▪ Does (or will) the project catalyzes unintended beneficial development effects? ▪ Are environmental and social safeguards appropriately addressed in the project implementation?	▪ New methodologies, skills and knowledge ▪ Change in capacity for the sustainable management, use and conservation of natural resources in high altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan ▪ Change in capacity for awareness raising ○ Stakeholder involvement and government awareness ○ Change in local stakeholder behavior ▪ Change in capacity in policy making and planning to improve the sustainable management, use and conservation of natural resources in high altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan: ○ Policy reform ○ Legislation/regulation change ○ Development of national and local strategies and plans ▪ Change in capacity in implementation and enforcement ○ Design and implementation of risk assessments ○ Implementation of national and local strategies and action plans through adequate institutional frameworks and their maintenance ○ Monitoring, evaluation and promotion of pilots ▪ Change in capacity in mobilizing resources ○ Leverage of resources ○ Human resources ○ Appropriate practices ○ Mobilization of advisory services ▪ Gender disaggregated data in project documents	▪ Project documents ▪ Key stakeholders including UNDP, Project Team, Representatives of Gov. and other Partners ▪ Research findings	▪ Documents analysis ▪ Meetings with main Project Partners ▪ Interviews with project beneficiaries

Reviewed Component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
How is risk and risk mitigation being managed?	▪ How well are risks and assumptions being managed? ▪ What is the quality of risk mitigation strategies developed? Are they sufficient? ▪ Are there clear strategies for risk mitigation related with long-term sustainability of the project?	▪ Completeness of risk identification and assumptions during project planning ▪ Quality of existing information systems in place to identify emerging risks and other issues? ▪ Quality of risk mitigations strategies developed and followed	▪ Atlas risk log ▪ Project documents and evaluations ▪ UNDP, Project Staff and Project Partners	▪ Document analysis ▪ Interviews
Future directions for similar Projects	▪ What lessons have been learnt for the project to achieve its outcomes? ▪ What changes could have been made (if any) to the formulation of the project in order to improve the achievement of project's expected results? ▪ How could the project be more effective in achieving its results?		▪ Data collected throughout evaluation	▪ Data analysis
***Review criteria: Efficiency** – Has the project been implemented efficiently, cost-effectively and in-line with international and national norms and standards?*				
Is Project support channeled in an efficient way?	▪ Is adaptive management used or needed to ensure efficient resource use? ▪ Is the implementation in line with the timeline of the project? ▪ Does the Project *Strategic Results Framework* and work plans and any changes made to them used as management tools during implementation? ▪ Are the accounting and financial systems in place adequate for project management and producing accurate and timely financial information? ▪ How adequate is the M&E framework? Does it measure well the performance of the project? ▪ How SMART are indicators & targets? ▪ Are progress reports produced accurately, timely and responded to reporting requirements including adaptive management changes? ▪ Is project implementation as cost effective as originally proposed (planned vs. actual) ▪ Are financial resources utilized efficiently? Could financial resources have been used more efficiently? ▪ Is the leveraging of funds (co-financing) happened as planned? ▪ How is RBM used during project implementation? ▪ Is the project decision-making effective? ▪ Does the government provide continuous strategic directions to the project's formulation and implementation? ▪ Have these directions provided by the government guided the activities and outcomes of the project? ▪ Are there an institutionalized or informal feedback or dissemination mechanisms to ensure that findings, lessons learned and recommendations pertaining to project formulation and implementation effectiveness were shared among project stakeholders, UNDP staff and other relevant organizations for ongoing project adjustment and improvement?	▪ Availability and quality of financial and progress reports ▪ Timeliness and adequacy of reporting provided ▪ Level of discrepancy between planned and utilized financial expenditures ▪ Planned vs. actual funds leveraged ▪ Cost in view of results achieved compared to costs of similar projects from other organizations ▪ Adequacy of project choices in view of existing context, infrastructure and cost ▪ Quality of RBM reporting (progress reporting, monitoring and evaluation) ▪ Occurrence of change in project formulation/ implementation approach (i.e. restructuring) when needed to improve project efficiency ▪ Existence, quality and use of M&E, feedback and dissemination mechanism to share findings, lessons learned and recommendation on effectiveness of project design. ▪ Cost associated with delivery mechanism and management structure compare to alternatives	▪ Project documents and evaluations ▪ UNDP, Representatives of Gov. and Project Staff ▪ Beneficiaries and Project partners	▪ Document analysis ▪ Key Interviews

Reviewed Component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
How efficient are partnership arrangements for the Project?	▪ Is the government engaged? ▪ How does the government demonstrate its ownership of the projects? ▪ Did the government provide a counterpart to the project? ▪ To what extent partnerships/linkages between institutions/ organizations are encouraged and supported? ▪ Which partnerships/linkages are facilitated? Which one can be considered sustainable? ▪ What is the level of efficiency of cooperation and collaboration arrangements? (between local actors, UNDP and relevant government entities) ▪ Which methods were successful or not and why?	▪ Specific activities conducted to support the development of cooperative arrangements between partners, ▪ Examples of supported partnerships ▪ Evidence that particular partnerships/linkages will be sustained ▪ Types/quality of partnership cooperation methods utilized	▪ Project documents and evaluations ▪ Project Partners ▪ UNDP, Representatives of Gov. and Project Staff ▪ Beneficiaries	▪ Document analysis ▪ Interviews
Does the Project efficiently utilize local capacity in implementation?	▪ Was an appropriate balance struck between utilization of international expertise as well as local capacity? ▪ Does the project support mutual benefits through sharing of knowledge and experiences, training, technology transfer among developing countries? ▪ Did the Project take into account local capacity in formulation and implementation of the project? ▪ Was there an effective collaboration with scientific institutions with competence in sustainable management, use and conservation of natural resources in high altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan?	▪ Proportion of total expertise utilized taken from Uzbekistan ▪ Number/quality of analyses done to assess local capacity potential and absorptive capacity	▪ Project documents and evaluations ▪ UNDP, Project Team and Project partners ▪ Beneficiaries	▪ Document analysis ▪ Interviews
Future directions for similar Projects	▪ What lessons can be learnt from the project on efficiency? ▪ How could the project have more efficiently addressed its key priorities (in terms of management structures and procedures, partnerships arrangements etc.…)? ▪ What changes could have been made (if any) to the project in order to improve its efficiency?		▪ Data collected throughout evaluation	▪ Data analysis
Review criteria: Impacts - *Are there indications that the project has contributed to enhancing the conservation, and the sustainable use of natural resources in the biodiverse high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan?*				
How is the Project effective in achieving its long-term objective?	▪ Will the project achieve its objective that is *to enhance the conservation, and sustainable use, of natural resources in the biodiverse high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan*? ▪ Are there any qualitative and quantitative evidence on environmental stress reduction and environmental status change	▪ Changes in capacity: o To pool/mobilize resources o To provide an enabling environment, o For implementation of related strategies and programmes through adequate institutional frameworks and their maintenance, ▪ Changes in use and implementation of sustainable alternatives ▪ Changes to critical threats to biodiversity in mountainous landscapes: o Unsustainable levels of grazing in the mountainous areas	▪ Project documents ▪ Key Stakeholders ▪ Research findings	▪ Documents analysis ▪ Meetings with UNDP, Project Team and project Partners ▪ Interviews with project beneficiaries and other stakeholders

Reviewed Component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
		○ High dependence of communities on montane forests for energy needs ○ Extensive poaching, and retaliatory killing, of wildlife ○ Impacts of climate change ○ Underlying social, political and economic issues ▪ Changes to the quantity and strength of barriers such as change in: ○ Poor integration of environmental information into land use planning in mountainous areas ○ Limited resources for, and capabilities in, the expansion, planning and management of protected areas in the mountain ecosystems ○ Unsustainable pasture and forest management practices in mountainous areas ○ Incomplete information and knowledge management systems for management decision making and trans-boundary cooperation in mountain ecosystems		
How is the Project impacting the local environment?	▪ What are the impacts or likely impacts of the project on? ○ Local environment; ○ Poverty; and, ○ Other socio-economic issues.	▪ Provide specific examples of impacts at those three levels, as relevant	▪ Project documents ▪ Key Stakeholders ▪ Research findings	▪ Data analysis ▪ Interviews with key stakeholders
Future directions for the Project	▪ How could the project build on its successes and learn from its weaknesses in order to enhance the potential for impact of ongoing and future initiatives?		▪ Data collected throughout evaluation	▪ Data analysis
Review criteria: Sustainability *- To what extent are there financial, institutional, social-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?*				
Are sustainability issues adequately integrated in Project design?	▪ Were sustainability issues integrated into the formulation and implementation of the project? ▪ Does the project employ government implementing and/or monitoring systems? ▪ Is the government involved in the sustainability strategy for project outcomes?	▪ Evidence/Quality of sustainability strategy ▪ Evidence/Quality of steps taken to address sustainability	▪ Project documents and evaluations ▪ UNDP, project staff and project Partners ▪ Beneficiaries	▪ Document analysis ▪ Interviews
Did the project adequately address financial and economic	▪ Did the project adequately address financial and economic sustainability issues? ▪ Are the recurrent costs (if any) after project completion sustainable?	▪ Level and source of future financial support to be provided to relevant sectors and activities after project end? ▪ Evidence of commitments from international partners, governments or other stakeholders to financially support relevant sectors of activities after project end ▪ Level of recurrent costs after completion of project and funding sources for those recurrent costs	▪ Project documents and evaluations ▪ UNDP, project staff and project Partners ▪ Beneficiaries	▪ Document analysis ▪ Interviews

Reviewed Component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
sustainability issues?				
Organizations arrangements and continuation of activities	▪ Are results of efforts made during the project implementation period well assimilated by organizations and their internal systems and procedures? ▪ Is there evidence that project partners will continue their activities beyond project support? ▪ Has there been a buy-in process, or was there no need to sell the project and buy support? ▪ What degree is there of local ownership of initiatives and results? ▪ Are appropriate 'champions' being identified and/or supported?	▪ Degree to which project activities and results have been taken over by local counterparts or institutions/organizations ▪ Level of financial support to be provided to relevant sectors and activities by in-country actors after project end ▪ Number/quality of champions identified	▪ Project documents and evaluations ▪ UNDP, project staff and project Partners ▪ Beneficiaries	▪ Document analysis ▪ Interviews
Enabling Environment	▪ Are laws, policies and frameworks addressed through the project, in order to address sustainability of key initiatives and reforms? ▪ Are the necessary related capacities for lawmaking and enforcement built? ▪ What is the level of political commitment to build on results of the project?	▪ Efforts to support the development of relevant laws and policies ▪ State of enforcement and law-making capacity ▪ Evidence of commitment by the political class through speeches, enactment of laws and resource allocation to priorities	▪ Project documents and evaluations ▪ UNDP, project staff and project Partners ▪ Beneficiaries	▪ Document analysis ▪ Interviews
Institutional and individual capacity building	▪ Is the capacity in place at the national and sub-national levels adequate to ensure sustainability of results achieved to date?	▪ Elements in place in those different management functions, at appropriate levels (national and sub-national levels) in terms of adequate structures, strategies, systems, skills, incentives and interrelationships with other key actors	▪ Project documents and evaluations ▪ UNDP, Project staff and project Partners ▪ Beneficiaries ▪ Capacity assessments available, if any	▪ Interviews ▪ Documentation review
Social and political sustainability	▪ Did the project contribute to key building blocks for social and political sustainability? ▪ Did the project contribute to local Stakeholders' acceptance of the new practices?	▪ Example of contributions to sustainable political and social change with regard to improving the sustainable management and conservation of natural resources in high altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan	▪ Project documents and evaluations ▪ UNDP, project staff and project Partners ▪ Beneficiaries	▪ Interviews ▪ Documentation review
Replication	▪ Were project activities and results replicated elsewhere and/or scaled up? ▪ What was the project contribution to replication or scaling up of innovative practices or mechanisms to improve the sustainable management, use and conservation of natural resources in high altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan? ▪ Does the project have a catalytic role?	▪ Number/quality of replicated initiatives ▪ Number/quality of replicated innovative initiatives ▪ Volume of additional investment leveraged	▪ Other donor programming documents ▪ Beneficiaries ▪ UNDP, project staff and project Partners	▪ Document analysis ▪ Interviews
Challenges to sustainability of the Project	▪ What are the main challenges that may hinder sustainability of efforts? ▪ Have any of these been addressed through project management? ▪ What could be the possible measures to further contribute to the sustainability of efforts achieved with the project?	▪ Challenges in view of building blocks of sustainability as presented above ▪ Recent changes which may present new challenges to the project	▪ Project documents and evaluations ▪ Beneficiaries	▪ Document analysis ▪ Interviews

Reviewed Component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
			▪ UNDP, project staff and project Partners	
Future directions for the Project	▪ Which areas/arrangements under the project show the strongest potential for lasting long-term results? ▪ What are the key challenges and obstacles to the sustainability of results of project initiatives that must be directly and quickly addressed? ▪ How can the experience and good project practices influence the strategies to improve the sustainable management, use and conservation of natural resources in high altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan? ▪ Are national decision-making institutions (Parliament, Government etc.) ready to improve their measures to improve the sustainable management, use and conservation of natural resources in high altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan?		▪ Data collected throughout evaluation	▪ Data analysis

Annex 6: List of Documents Reviewed

European Bank, Uzbekistan Country Strategy – 2018-2023

Evgeniy Botman, Forest Rehabilitation in the Republic of Uzbekistan

FAO, 2014, Global Forest Resources Assessment 2015 – Country Report – Uzbekistan

FAO, Government of Uzbekistan, Country Programming Framework for the Republic of Uzbekistan 2014-2017

FAO, July 15, 2015, Kyrgyzstan Treats its Pastures as "National Treasure"

Fauna & Flora International, UNEP, CMS, January 2015, Aspects of Transboundary Snow Leopard Conservation in Central Asia – Report of the FFI/CMS Workshop Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, December 1, 2, 2014

FLERMONECA, Assessment of the Land Condition in the Kyrgyz Republic with Respect to Grazing and a Possible Development of a Quoting System on the Local Governmental Level

FLERMONECA, November 17-19, 2014, Pasture Management in Central Asia: Lessons from the First Practitioners' Conference on Advancement of Sustainable Pasture Management in Central Asia

John D. Farrington, Dawa Tsering, Human-Snow Leopard Conflict izn the Chgang Tang Region of Tibet, China (Biological Conservation (237 (2019)))

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GEF, August 2, 2016, GEF-6 FSP Project for Endorsement

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Annex 7: Interview Guide

Note: This is a guide for the Review Team (a simplified version of the review matrix). Not all questions were asked to each interviewee; it was a reminder for the interviewer about the type of information required to complete the review exercise and a guide to prepare the semi-structured interviews. Confidentiality was guaranteed to the interviewees and the findings once "triangulated" were incorporated in the report.

I. RELEVANCE - *How does the project relate to the main objectives of the GEF, UNDP and of Uzbekistan to strengthen its capacity to sustainably manage, use and conserve natural resources in high altitude mountain ecosystems?*

I.1. Is the Project relevant to the GEF objectives?
I.2. Is the Project relevant to UNDP objectives?
I.3. Is the Project relevant to Uzbekistan's capacity to sustainably manage, use and conserve natural resources in high altitude mountain ecosystems?
I.4. Does the Project address the needs of target beneficiaries?
I.5. Is the Project internally coherent in its design?
I.6. How is the Project relevant in light of other donors?

Future directions for similar projects

I.7. What lessons have been learnt and what changes could have been made to the project in order to strengthen the alignment between the project and the Partners' priorities and areas of focus?
I.8. How could the project better target and address priorities and development challenges of targeted beneficiaries?

II. EFFECTIVENESS – *To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved?*

II.1. How is the Project effective in achieving its expected outcomes?
- Landscape-level planning and management decision-making
- Strengthening key biodiversity areas
- Sustainable economic development incentives for communities
- Promoting cooperation and collaboration

II.2. How is risk and risk mitigation being managed?

Future directions for similar projects

II.3. What lessons have been learnt for the project to achieve its outcomes?
II.4. What changes could have been made (if any) to the formulation of the project in order to improve the achievement of project's expected results?
II.5. How could the project be more effective in achieving its results?

III. EFFICIENCY - *Was the project implemented efficiently, cost-effectively and in-line with international and national norms and standards?*

III.1. Is adaptive management used or needed to ensure efficient resource use?
III.2. Do the *Strategic Results Framework* and work plans and any changes made to them used as management tools during implementation?
III.3. Are accounting and financial systems in place adequate for project management and producing accurate and timely financial information?
III.4. How adequate is the M&E framework (indicators & targets)?
III.5. Are progress reports produced accurately, timely and respond to reporting requirements including adaptive management changes?
III.6. Is project implementation as cost effective as originally proposed (planned vs. actual)
III.7. Is the leveraging of funds (co-financing) happening as planned?
III.8. Are financial resources utilized efficiently? Could financial resources have been used more efficiently?
III.9. How is RBM used during project implementation?
III.10. Are there an institutionalized or informal feedback or dissemination mechanism to ensure that findings, lessons learned and recommendations pertaining to project formulation and implementation

effectiveness were shared among project stakeholders, UNDP Staff and other relevant organizations for ongoing project adjustment and improvement?

III.11. Does the project mainstream gender considerations into its implementation?
III.12. Is the government engaged?
III.13. To what extent are partnerships/ linkages between institutions/ organizations encouraged and supported?
III.14. Which partnerships/linkages are facilitated? Which one can be considered sustainable?
III.15. What is the level of efficiency of cooperation and collaboration arrangements? (between local actors, UNDP, and relevant government entities)
III.16. Is an appropriate balance struck between utilization of international expertise as well as local capacity?
III.17. Did the project take into account local capacity in design and implementation of the project?

Future directions for the project

III.18. What lessons can be learnt from the project on efficiency?
III.19. How could the project have more efficiently addressed its key priorities (in terms of management structures and procedures, partnerships arrangements, etc., …)?

IV. IMPACTS - *Are there indications that the project has contributed to enhancing the conservation, and the sustainable use of natural resources in the biodiverse high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan?*

IV.1. Will the project achieve its objective that is *to enhance the conservation, and sustainable use, of natural resources in the biodiverse high-altitude mountain ecosystems of Uzbekistan*?

Future directions for the project

IV.2. How could the project build on its successes and learn from its weaknesses in order to enhance the potential for impact of ongoing and future initiatives?

V. SUSTAINABILITY - *To what extent are there financial, institutional, social-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?*

V.1. Were sustainability issues adequately integrated in project formulation?
V.2. Does the project adequately address financial and economic sustainability issues?
V.3. Is there evidence that project partners will continue their activities beyond project support?
V.4. Are laws, policies and frameworks being addressed through the project, in order to address sustainability of key initiatives and reforms?
V.5. Is the capacity in place at the national and local levels adequate to ensure sustainability of results achieved to date?
V.6. Are there any environmental risks linked to the implementation of the project?
V.7. Does the project contribute to key building blocks for social and political sustainability?
V.8. Are project activities and results being replicated elsewhere and/or scaled up?
V.9. What are the main challenges that may hinder sustainability of efforts?

Future directions for the project

V.10. Which areas/arrangements under the project show the strongest potential for lasting long-term results?
V.11. What are the key challenges and obstacles to the sustainability of results of project initiatives that must be directly and quickly addressed?

Annex 8: Fact-Finding Mission Agenda

Itinerary for Mid-Term Review - TENTATIVE AGENDA

of the mission of Mr. Jean Joseph Bellamy and Mr. Rustam Muradov, evaluation experts for the mid-term evaluation of the UNDP-GEF project "*Sustainable natural resource use and forest management in key mountainous areas important for globally significant biodiversity*"

September 18 – October 3, 2019, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Wednesday, September 18, 2019			
Time	**Venue**	**Participants**	**Activities**
7:00	Arrival in Tashkent, Uzbekistan Flight # TK0368	**Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph**, International Consultant on Mid Term Evaluation	Check in for accommodation
Thursday, September 19, 2019, Meetings in Tashkent			
Time	**Venue**	**Participants**	**Activities**
09:00 – 17:00	Project office	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE *Project personnel:* - Mr. Abbos Akhadov, project manager; - Ms. Zulfiya Mamadalieva, project grants manager; - Mr. Sergey Zagrebin, field coordinator on protected areas; - Ms. Elena Bykova, national consultant on knowledge management; - Mr. Umid Nazarkulov, field coordinator on pastures and forests; - Mr. Almaz Temirbekov, Admin-Finance Assistant; - Mr. Oybek Khayitov, senior procurement assistant; - Mr. Nurbek Ochilov, microgrants programme assistant; - Mr. Alisher Karimov, driver.	Introduction Mission schedule discussion List of required project's documentation Preliminary discussion of mission activities and situation analysis
17:00 – 18:00	GIZ office in Uzbekistan	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE *GIZ personnel:* Experts, officers	Introduction and exchange of information
Friday, September 20, 2019, Meetings in Tashkent			
10:00 – 13:00	UNDP Country Office in	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph	

	Uzbekistan	Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE *UNDP personnel:* - Ms. Doina Munteanu, Deputy Resident Representative; - Mr. Hurshid Rustamov, Sustainable Development Cluster Leader; - Ms. Gaukhar Kudaybergenova, Programme Associate of Sustainable Development Cluster; - Ms. Kamila Alimdjanova, Resource Management Associate.	Introduction and discussion of the visit objectives
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch break		
14:00 – 16:00	State Ecology Committee	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE Translator *State Ecology Committee personnel:* - Mr. Uktam Choriev, Deputy Chairman; - Mr. Ulmas Sobirov, National project coordinator; - Mr. Khalilulla Sherimbetov, Head of Protected Areas Department of the Main Department on Protected Areas and Biodiversity Conservation of State Ecology Committee; - Ms. Indira Akramova, Head of Scientific Information Center Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development (SIC ICSD) Uzbekistan branch.	Introduction and discussion of the visit objectives
16:30 – 18:00	FAO Representation office in Uzbekistan	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE *FAO personnel:* Experts, officers	Introduction and exchange of information
18:00	Dinner and accommodation in a hotel IN TASHKENT		
Saturday, September 21, 2019, meetings in Tashkent region			
Time	**Venue**	**Participants**	**Activities**
09:00-13:00	Departure to project sites in Tashkent region and meeting with project partners.	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE Translator *Ugam Chatkal State National Nature Park:* Park Authority	Introduction and exchange of information
13:00-14:00	Lunch break		

14:30-18:00	Meeting with project partners	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE Translator *Chatkal State Nature Reserve and Ugam-Chatkal State Biosphere Reserve:* Two reserve authorities	Introduction and exchange of information
18:00	Dinner and accommodation in a hotel **OUTSITE TASHKENT**		
Sunday, September 22, 2019, meetings in Tashkent region			
Time	**Venue**	**Participants**	**Activities**
09:00 – 17:00	Departure to Pskem settlement in Bustanlik District and meetings with project beneficiaries	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE Translator *Project personnel:* Mr. Abbos Akhadov, project manager. Mr. Alisher Karimov, driver *Micro grants programme grantees:* Micro grants beneficiaries	Introduction and exchange of information
17:00 – 19:00	Departure to Angren District, Tashkent region	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE Translator *Project personnel:* Mr. Abbos Akhadov, project manager. Mr. Alisher Karimov, driver	Dinner and accommodation in a hotel
Monday, September 23, 2019, meetings in Tashkent region			
Time	**Venue**	**Participants**	**Activities**
10:00 – 11:00	Meeting with Akhangaran state forestry enterprise	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE Translator *Akhangaran state forestry enterprise:* Forestry enterprise authorities	Introduction and exchange of information
11:00 – 13:00	Field visit to a project pilot site, tree nursery	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE Translator *Project personnel:*	Introduction and exchange of information

		Mr. Abbos Akhadov, project manager. Mr. Alisher Karimov, driver *Akhangaran state forestry enterprise:* Forestry enterprise authorities	
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch break		
14:00 – 16:00	Departure to Akhangaran District and meeting with a pasture users committee "Muminobod Chorva"	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE Translator *"Muminobod Chorva" pasture users committee:* Community representatives	Introduction and exchange of information
16:00-18:00	Field visit to pasture nursery	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE Translator *Project personnel:* Mr. Abbos Akhadov, project manager. Mr. Alisher Karimov, driver *"Muminobod Chorva" pasture users committee:* Community representatives	Introduction and exchange of information
18:00	Dinner and accommodation in a hotel		
Tuesday, September 24, 2019, meetings in Tashkent region			
09:00 – 10:30	Akhangaran district administration (khakimiyat)	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE Translator *Akhangaran district administration:* District administration authorities	Introduction and exchange of information
10:30 – 17:00	Field visits and meetings with project microgrants programme grantees	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE Translator *Micro grants programme grantees:* Micro grants beneficiaries	Introduction and exchange of information
17:00 – 18:00	**Return to Tashkent city**, dinner and accommodation in a hotel		
Wednesday, September 25, 2019, meetings in Kashkadarya region			

Time	Venue	Participants	Activities
8:00 – 14:00	Departure Shakhrisabz District, Kashkadarya region	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE Translator *Project personnel:* Mr. Abbos Akhadov, project manager. Mr. Alisher Karimov, driver	Discussion on the way
14:00 – 18:00	Gissar State Reserve	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE Translator *Project personnel:* Mr. Abbos Akhadov, project manager. Mr. Alisher Karimov, driver *Gissar State reserve:* Reserve authorities	Introduction and exchange of information
18:00	Dinner and accommodation in a hotel **OUTSIDE TASHKENT**		
Thursday, September 26, 2019, meetings in Kashkadarya region			
09:00 -18:00	Field visit to Kizilsuv section of Gissar State Reserve	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE Translator *Gissar State reserve:* Reserve authorities	Introduction and exchange of information
18:00	Return to Shakhrisabz city and accommodation in a hotel		
Friday, September 27, 2019, meetings in Kashkadarya region			
Time	**Venue**	**Participants**	**Activities**
09:00 – 10:00	Meeting with Shakhrisabz forest enterprise	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE Translator Forest enterprise authorities	Introduction and exchange of information
10.00 – 13.00	Field visit to project pilot site, tree nursery	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE Translator	Introduction and exchange of information

		Project personnel: Mr. Abbos Akhadov, project manager. Mr. Alisher Karimov, driver Forest enterprise authorities	
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch break		
14.00 – 18:00	Trip to Kamar settlement in Shakhrisabz District for a meeting with a pasture users committee "Gissar yaylovlari", and field visit to a pasture nursery	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE Translator *Project personnel:* Mr. Abbos Akhadov, project manager. Mr. Alisher Karimov, driver *"Gissar Yaylovlari" pasture users committee:* Community members	Introduction and exchange of information
18:00	Return to Shakhrisabz District and accommodation in a hotel		
Saturday, September 28, 2019, meetings in Kashkadarya region			
Time	**Venue**	**Participants**	**Activities**
9:00 – 10:00	Shakhrisabz district administration (khakimiyat)	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE Translator *Shakhrisabz district administration:* District administration authorities	Introduction and exchange of information
10:00 – 18:00	Field visits and meetings with project microgrants programme grantees in Shakhrisabz and Yakkabag districts	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE Translator *Project personnel:* Mr. Abbos Akhadov, project manager. Mr. Alisher Karimov, driver *Micro grants programme grantees:* Micro grants beneficiaries	Introduction and exchange of information
18:00	Dinner and accommodation in a hotel		
Sunday, September 29, 2019			
Time	**Venue**	**Participants**	**Activities**

08:00 – 14:00	Return to Tashkent city	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE Translator *Project personnel:* Mr. Abbos Akhadov, project manager. Mr. Alisher Karimov, driver	Return to Tashkent city from Shakhrisabz District, Kashkadarya region
14:00	Rest time ACCOMODATION IN **TASHKENT**		
Monday, September 30, 2019, meetings in Tashkent			
Time	**Venue**	**Participants**	**Activities**
10:00 – 13:00	State Forestry Committee	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE Translator *State Forestry Committee:* Committee authorities	Introduction and exchange of information
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch break		
15:00 – 18:00	Institute of Zoology, Academy of Sciences	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE Translator *Institute of Zoology:* Institute authorities and staff	Introduction and exchange of information
18:00	Dinner and accommodation in a hotel		
Wednesday, October 2, 2019, meetings in Tashkent			
Time	**Venue**	**Participants**	**Activities**
09:30 – 11:30	Main Department of Protected areas and Biodiversity of State Ecology Committee	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE Translator *Main Department of Protected areas and Biodiversity:* Main department authorities and staff	Exchange of findings
11:30 – 13:00	UNDP Country Office in Uzbekistan	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE *UNDP personnel:* - Ms. Doina Munteanu, Deputy Resident Representative;	Exchange of findings

		- Mr. Hurshid Rustamov, Sustainable Development Cluster Leader; - Ms. Gaukhar Kudaybergenova, Programme Associate of Sustainable Development Cluster; - Ms. Kamila Alimdjanova, Resource Management Associate.	
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch break		
14:00 – 18:00	Project office	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph Mr. Rustam Muradov, National Consultant for MTE *Project personnel:* All project staff	Exchange of findings
18:00	Dinner and accommodation in a hotel		
Thursday, October 3, 2019, meetings in Tashkent			
Time	**Venue**	**Participants**	**Activities**
2:50	Departure from Tashkent	Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph	Departure from Tashkent, flight # TK0371

Annex 9: List of People Interviewed

List of People met during MTR fact-finding mission

Date	Time	Location	Participants
19.09.2019	9.30 – 11.00	Project office	Umid Nazarkulov, field coordinator on pastures and forests
	11.00 – 12.00	Project office	Zulfiya Mamadalieva, project grants manager
	13.30 – 15.00	Project office	Elena Bykova, national consultant on knowledge management
	15.00 – 16.30	Project office	Sergey Zagrebin, field coordinator on protected areas
	17.00 – 18.00	GIZ Office	Mukhabat Kamolova, Programme Assistant Grigoriy Samoylov, Coordinator
20.09.2019	10.30 – 12.30	UNDP Country Office	Hurshid Rustamov, Sustainable Development Cluster Leader Gaukhar Kudaybergenova, Programme Associate of Sustainable Development Cluster
	14.00 – 16.00	State Ecology Committee	Uktam Utaev, Deputy Chairman Ulmas Sobirov – Head of Inspection for control in the field of ecology and environmental protection Indira Akramova, Head of Scientific Information Center Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development (SIC ICSD) Uzbekistan branch J. Talipov – Chief expert at International Cooperation and Projects Department
	17.00 – 18.00	UNDP Country Office	Alisher Shukurov - Assistant FAO Representative in Uzbekistan
21.09.2019	11.20 – 13.00	Ugam Chatkal State National Nature Park Office	Jahongir Pirmetov – Deputy director of Ugam Chatkal State National Nature Park Alisher Tursunov – Accountant Bahrom Boboev—Inspector—ranger Azimboy Yuldashev—Inspector — ranger
	15.00 – 16.30	Chatkal State Nature Reserve Office	Alexandr Esipov—Deputy Director Chatkal State Nature Reserve for Research Bakhtier Aromov—Research Department Officer
	16.30 – 18.00	Chatkal State Nature Reserve Office	Inomjon Muhiddinov – Head of Ugam-Chatkal State Biosphere Reserve
22.09.2019	15.40 - 16.30	Takayongoq Setlement	Arzigul Bertaeva - beekeeping family

Date	Time	Location	Participants
	17.50 – 18.20	Parkent District	Dilorom Ergashboeva – refrigerator for fruit
23.09.2019	10.00 – 11.00	Ahangaran Forestry	Komiljon Ahmatov—Director of Ahangaran Forestry Nusrat Golipov—Deputy Director of Ahangaran Forestry
	12.00 – 13.00	Ahangaran Forestry Tree Nursery	Mahmudjon Bozorov - Ahangaran Forestry inspector Dilmurod Avazov - Ahangaran Forestry inspector
	15.30 – 17.30	Pasture users committee "Muminobod Chorva"	Abduvali Holturaev – Veterinarian of "Muminobod Chorva" Pasture users committee Nuraddin Uribaev – Project National Consultant on Livestock Management Oybek Holturaev – Director of "Muminobod Chorva" Pasture users committee
24.09.2019	09:00 – 10:30	Akhangaran district Khakimiyat	Abduvohid Turdiboyev - Akhangaran district Khakim Abdurasul Abdullaev – Deputy Chairman of State Committee on Veterinary and Livestock Development Alisher Kadirov – deputy head of Akhangaran district Livestock Department
		Qodir Erkin Ezgusi Livestock Farm	Abdulla Qodirov – Head of Qodir Erkin Ezgusi Farm Shuhrat Jumaev – Veterinarian of Qodir Erkin Ezgusi Farm Lutfillo Azimov – worker
		Baraka Kavsar Goat Farm	Mirzakul Shodimatov—Head of Baraka Kavsar Goat Farm Asror Shodimatov — Worker of Baraka Kavsar Goat Farm
25.09.2019	16.00-18.00	Gissar State Reserve	Giyos Yahshiboev—Director of Gissar State Reserve Murod Muradov—Deputy Director of Gissar State Reserve
26.09.2019	11.30 – 14.30	Miraki Cordon of Gissar State Reserve	Giyos Yahshiboev – Director of Gissar State Reserve Murod Muradov – Deputy Director of Gissar State Reserve Rashid Mardonov—Inspector—ranger Jumanazar Toshboev—Inspector — ranger Farhod Boboev—Inspector — ranger Gulomjon Saparov—Inspector — ranger
27.09.2019	9.00 – 10.30	Shakhrisabz forestry	Abdusalom Hikmatov—Deputy Director of Shakhrisabz forest enterprise Farhod Hudaynazarov — Senior Forester of Shakhrisabz forest enterprise
	11.00 – 12.30	Shakhrisabz forestry tree nursery	Abdusalom Hikmatov - Deputy Director of Shakhrisabz forest enterprise Farhod Hudaynazarov – Senior Forester of Shakhrisabz forest enterprise Bobur Toshev – nursery gardener

Date	Time	Location	Participants
			Elbek Goipov - nursery gardener Shoira Hojieva - nursery gardener Zarifa Qilicheva - nursery gardener Rano Siddiqova - nursery gardener Gulshan Oripova - nursery gardener
	14.30 – 15.00	Sewing workshop at Kamar settlement	Iskandarova Muslima – Head of sewing workshop Barno Mahkamova - Sewing workshop operator Nodira Ganieva - Sewing workshop operator Karima Shukurova - Sewing workshop operator Vasila Nurmatova - Sewing workshop operator Komila Urakova - Sewing workshop operator Nigora Shomansurova - Sewing workshop operator
	15.30 – 16.00	Raifed garden in Gilon settlement	Bolta Gulomov – Head of Gilon community
	16.30 – 17.00	Pasture users committee "Gissar yaylovlari"	Ilhom Yusupov – head of Pasture users committee "Gissar yaylovlari"
	17.30 – 18.00	"Kitay Anvarjon" farm	Anvarjon Yusupov – head of "Kitay Anvarjon" farm
28.09.2019	11.30 – 12.30	Jumaeva Maysara Almond household	Jumaeva Maysara - Almond Garden holder Jumaeva Sabina – family member
30.09.2019	10.30 – 12.00	State Forestry Committee	Olim Hakimov – Deputy Chairman of State Forestry Committee Latipov Muzzafar – Forestry Development and Reclamation Department Sobirjon Umarov – Head of International Department Farhod Zohidov – Head of Forestry Protection Department
	12.30 – 14.00	Project office	Josh Brann – Project International Technical Adviser
	15.00 – 17.00	Institute of Zoology, Academy of Sciences	Bahtiyor Holmatov – Director of Institute of Zoology
2.10.2019	9.30 – 11.00	Main Department of Protected areas and Biodiversity of State Ecology Committee	Harullo Sherimbetov – Head of Authority

Date	Time	Location	Participants
	11.30 – 13.00	Miran Hotel	Hurshid Rustamov, Sustainable Development Cluster Leader Gaukhar Kudaybergenova, Programme Associate of Sustainable Development Cluster Josh Brann – Project International Technical Adviser
	15.00 – 18.00	Project Office	Ulmas Sobirov—Head of Inspection for control in the field of ecology and environmental protection Aleksey Velikov—deputy Head of Inspection for control in the field of ecology and environmental protection
21.10.2019	8.00 – 9.00	Skype	Mark Anstey, Pasture Expert/Consultant
22.10.2019	9.00 – 10.00	Skype	Stefan Michel, Protected Area Expert/Consultant
28.10.2019	10.00 – 11.00	Skype	Mikhail Paltsyn, Snow Leopard Monitoring Expert/Consultant
29.10.2019	8.30 – 9.30	Skype	Lucy Emerton, Ecosystem Valuation Expert/Consultant
1.11.2019	8.00 – 9.00	Skype	Tanya Rosen, Environmental Education and Awareness Expert/Consultant
4.11.2019	8.00 – 9.00	Skype	Mariya Gritsina, Snow Leopard Monitoring Programme Coordinator

Met a total of 82 people (22 women and 60 men).

Annex 10: MTR Rating Scales

As per UNDP-GEF guidance, the MTR Reviewer used the following scales to rate the project:

- A 6-point scale to rate the project's progress towards the objective and each project outcome as well as the Project Implementation and Adaptive Management: Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Moderately Satisfactory (MS), Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), or Highly Unsatisfactory (HU).
- A 4-point scale to rate the sustainability of project achievements: Likely (L), Moderately Likely (ML), Moderately Unlikely (MU), and Unlikely (U).

Ratings for Progress Towards Results: (one rating for each outcome and for the objective)		
6	Highly Satisfactory (HS)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve or exceed all its end-of-project targets, without major shortcomings. The progress towards the objective/outcome can be presented as "good practice".
5	Satisfactory (S)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets, with only minor shortcomings.
4	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings.
3	Moderately Unsatisfactory (HU)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve its end-of-project targets with major shortcomings.
2	Unsatisfactory (U)	The objective/outcome is expected not to achieve most of its end-of-project targets.
1	Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	The objective/outcome has failed to achieve its midterm targets, and is not expected to achieve any of its end-of-project targets.

Ratings for Project Implementation & Adaptive Management: (one overall rating)		
6	Highly Satisfactory (HS)	Implementation of all seven components—management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, stakeholder engagement, reporting, and communications—is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management. The project can be presented as "good practice".
5	Satisfactory (S)	Implementation of most of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management except for only few that are subject to remedial action.
4	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Implementation of some of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management, with some components requiring remedial action.
3	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Implementation of some of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive, with most components requiring remedial action.
2	Unsatisfactory (U)	Implementation of most of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.
1	Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	Implementation of none of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.

Ratings for Sustainability: (one overall rating)		
4	Likely (L)	Negligible risks to sustainability, with key outcomes on track to be achieved by the project's closure and expected to continue into the foreseeable future
3	Moderately Likely (ML)	Moderate risks, but expectations that at least some outcomes will be sustained due to the progress towards results on outcomes at the Midterm Review
2	Moderately Unlikely (MU)	Significant risk that key outcomes will not carry on after project closure, although some outputs and activities should carry on
1	Unlikely (U)	Severe risks that project outcomes as well as key outputs will not be sustained

Annex 11: Audit Trail

The audit trail is presented in a separate file.

Annex 12: Evaluation Report Clearance Form

EVALUATION REPORT CLEARANCE FORM

for the Mid-Term Evaluation Report of the UNDP-GEF-Government of Uzbekistan Project:
"Sustainable Natural Resource and Forest Management in Key Mountainous Areas Important for Globally Significant Biodiversity"
(PIMS 5438)

Evaluation Report Reviewed and Cleared by

UNDP Country Office

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

UNDP RTA

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____