

Terms of Reference for ICs and RLAs through /GPN ExpRes

Services/Work Description: UNDP/GEF Project Midterm Evaluation

Project/Programme Title: Conservation and sustainable use of globally important agro-biodiversity Project

Consultancy Title: Midterm Review Evaluator

Duty Station: Online consultancy (Azerbaijan)

Duration: 10th of June – 18th of July, 2020

Expected start date: 10th of June, 2020

1. BACKGROUND

Azerbaijan is considered to be part of Vavilov's *Asia Minor* center of origin of cultivated plants.

In general, the wild relatives of cultivated crops in Azerbaijan are genetically diverse, locally adapted and represent a potential source of genes and alleles for adapting crops to the ever-changing environmental conditions and human needs of the country.

The project seeks to: (i) improve the protection of viable populations of indigenous wild relatives of crops and local landraces in their natural habitats; (ii) augment the conservation of indigenous wild relatives of crops and local landraces in plant gene banks to ensure an adequate source of genetic resources for plant breeding; and (iii) increase the production, and extent of use, of local landraces in agricultural small holdings and commercial farms.

The project implemented in three rayons of Azerbaijan - Sheki, Goranboy and Goychay. Within these three rayons, the project will further focus on selected crop wild relatives, cultivated native species and cultivated landraces of wheat, vegetable and forage crops.

The project has been structured into three complementary components.

The first component will seek to expand the state of knowledge of agro-biodiversity, enhance the conservation of this agro-biodiversity and increase the intensity and extent of use native crops in the agricultural sector in the three project rayons. Work under this component will be focused around four key areas of project support, as follows: (i) Improve the knowledge base of crop wild relatives (CWRs) and local crop landraces (Output 1.1); (ii) Establish and manage a network of conserved areas for CWRs (Output 1.2); (iii) Establish and maintain field gene banks for crop landraces (Output 1.3); and (iv) Increase the production, storage and distribution of native crop seeds (Output 1.4).

The second component will seek to build the capacities of, and improve the collaboration and cooperation between, agricultural institutions and small farmers in order to improve agricultural productivity and reduce land degradation using native crops (i.e. the targeted crop species) in the three project rayons. Work under this component will be focused around three key areas of project support: (i) Build the capacity of agricultural institutions (Output 2.1); (ii) Support the development of local farmer organisations (Output 2.2); and (iii) Improve the knowledge and skills of local farmers (Output 2.3).

The third component will seek to strengthen incentives that encourage the planting of, and improve access to commercial markets for agricultural products derived from, the targeted native crop species across the three rayons.

Work under this component will be focused around two key areas of project support: (i) Strengthen the agricultural incentives toolbox for farmers (Output 3.1); and (ii) Improve access to markets for local farmers (Output 3.2).

2. SCOPE OF WORK, RESPONSIBILITIES AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED WORK

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, its risks to sustainability.

MTR APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

The MTR must provide evidence based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The MTR evaluator 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 evaluator considers useful for this evidence-based review). The MTR 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 mission begins.

The MTR evaluator is expected to follow a collaborative and participatory approach¹ 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.² Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities; executing agencies, senior officials and task team/ component leaders, key experts and consultants in the subject area, Project Board, project stakeholders, academia, local government and CSOs, etc. Additionally, the MTR evaluator is expected to conduct interviews with farmers of the following project sites as Sheki, Goychay and Goranboy.

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. Taking into account the current situation with Covid-19, Azerbaijan, like other countries, has imposed a quarantine and travel restrictions for an indefinite period. In this regard, the Mid-term evaluator will have to conduct the Mid-term evaluation online. To do this, evaluator will need to prepare a list of the required documents. Develop questionnaires for all parties involved in the project. Schedule an online interview.

The consultant will be responsible for the design of the evaluation methodology. This may include:

1. Desk review of all documents related to the work programme and the project. The project manager will ensure that the evaluator receives all relevant documentation to enable a thorough desk review.
2. An electronic **questionnaire** will be sent to all participants in the activities supported by the project, and to the staff involved in the project. The questionnaire will be prepared by the evaluation consultant, and will be reviewed by the project manager.
3. **Interviews with selected relevant staff and stakeholders of the project** will take place via phone, skype, zoom etc. The project manager will provide the list with contact details.

The project manager will provide support and further explanation to the evaluation consultant when needed.

DETAILED SCOPE OF THE MTR

The MTR evaluator 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.

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.

¹ For ideas on innovative and participatory Monitoring and Evaluation strategies and techniques, see [UNDP Discussion Paper: Innovations in Monitoring & Evaluating Results](#), 05 Nov 2013.

² 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.

- 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?
- Examine if progress so far has led to, or could in the future catalyse 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.

3. Expected Outputs and deliverables

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*; colour 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 ³	Baseline Level ⁴	Level in 1 st PIR (self-reported)	Midterm Target ⁵	End-of-project Target	Midterm Level & Assessment ⁶	Achievement Rating ⁷	Justification for Rating
Objective:	Indicator (if applicable):							
Outcome 1:	Indicator 1:							
	Indicator 2:							
Outcome 2:	Indicator 3:							
	Indicator 4:							
Outcome 3:	Indicator 5:							
	Indicator 6:							

Indicator Assessment Key

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

In addition to the progress towards outcomes analysis:

- Compare and analyse 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.

Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

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?

³ Populate with data from the Logframe and scorecards

⁴ Populate with data from the Project Document

⁵ If available

⁶ Colour code this column only

⁷ Use the 6 point Progress Towards Results Rating Scale: HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU

- 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 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?

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?

Reporting:

- 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.

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.

iv. Sustainability

- 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.
- In addition, 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 & Recommendations

The MTR evaluator will include a section of the report setting out the MTR's evidence-based conclusions, in light of the findings.⁸

Recommendations should be succinct suggestions for critical intervention that are specific, measurable, achievable, and relevant. 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 evaluator should make no more than 15 recommendations total.

TIMEFRAME

⁸ Alternatively, MTR conclusions may be integrated into the body of the report.

The total duration of the MTR will be approximately 6 weeks starting from 10th of June, 2020. The tentative MTR timeframe is as follows:

TIMEFRAME	ACTIVITY
(June 10-12) 2 days	Prepare the list of the required documents and electronic questionnaire
(June 13-June 19) 7 days	Document review and preparing MTR Inception Report
(June 20) 1day	Finalization and Validation of MTR Inception Report- latest start of MTR mission
(June 21-June28) 8 days	MTR mission: stakeholder interviews
(June 29) 1 day	Mission wrap-up meeting & presentation of initial findings- earliest end of MTR mission
(June 30-July 09) 10 days	Preparing draft report
(July 10) 1day	Incorporating audit trail from feedback on draft report/Finalization of MTR report
(July 10-July 16) 7 days	Preparation & Issue of Management Response
(July 18)	Expected date of full MTR completion

4. Institutional arrangements/reporting lines

Table. MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table for “Conservation and sustainable use of globally important agro-biodiversity” Project.

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.	
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	(rate 6 pt. scale)	
Sustainability	(rate 4 pt. scale)	

MIDTERM REVIEW DELIVERABLES

#	Deliverable	Description	Timing	Responsibilities
1	MTR Inception Report	MTR evaluator clarifies objectives and methods of Midterm Review	No later than 2 weeks before the MTR mission	MTR evaluator submits to the Commissioning

				Unit and project management
2	Presentation	Initial Findings	End of MTR mission	MTR evaluator 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	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	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.

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 Country Office.

The commissioning unit will contract the consultants and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the MTR evaluator. The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the MTR evaluator to provide all relevant documents, set up stakeholder interviews, and arrange online meetings.

5. Experience and qualifications

I. Academic Qualifications:

- An academic degree in agricultural economics or other related fields: agriculture; agrobiodiversity, project assessment **(20 points)**

II. Years of experience:

- Recent experience (minimum 5 years) with result-based management evaluation methodologies and applying SMART indicators, reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios; **(30 points)**
- Work experience in relevant technical areas for at least 10 years (sustainable management of agriculture and/or productive systems); **(30 points)**
- Project evaluation/review experiences within United Nations system; **(20 points)**
- Experience working with the GEF or GEF-evaluations will be considered as an asset;
- Competence in Adaptive Management, as applied to conservation or natural resource management will be considered as an asset;

- Demonstrated understanding of issues related to gender and *(fill in GEF Focal Area)*; experience in gender sensitive evaluation and analysis will be considered as an asset.
- Demonstrable analytical skills

III. Language:

- Excellent communication skills in English (written and spoken)

IV. Competencies:

- Demonstrate commitment to UNDP's mission, vision and values;
- Displays cultural, gender, religion, race, nationality and age sensitivity and adaptability

6. Payment Modality

Payment to the individual contractor will be made based on the actual number of days worked, deliverables accepted and upon certification of satisfactory completion by the manager.

- 10% of payment upon approval of the final MTR Inception Report
- 30% upon submission of the draft MTR report
- 60% upon finalization of the MTR report