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**Terminal Evaluation Final Report**

**Enhancing Financial Sustainability of the Protected Area System in Georgia**

Medium Sized Project

PIMS 6138, GEF ID number: 9879

First Draft 25th September 2024

**Country:** Georgia

**Region:**  Europe & Central Asia

**Focal Area:** GEF 6: BD-1: Improve sustainability of protected area systems, Program 1- Improving Financial Sustainability and Effective Management of the National Ecological Infrastructure

**GEF Agency:** United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

**Executing Agency:** Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA)/ Agency of Protected Areas (APA)

**Opening Page**

**PROJECT DETAILS:**

**Project Name:** Enhancing Financial Sustainability of the Protected Areas System in Georgia.

**Project ID:** UNDP PIMS: 6138 GEF Project ID: 9879

**Country:** Georgia

**Region:** Europe & Central Asia

**Focal Area:** GEF-6: Land Degradation

**Focal Area Objectives:** GEF 6: BD-1: Improve sustainability of protected area systems, Program 1- Improving Financial Sustainability and Effective Management of the National Ecological Infrastructure

**Funding Source:** GEF Trust Fund (GEF 6)

**Implementing Agency:** United Nations Development Programme

**Implementation Modality:** National Implementation

**Executing Agency:** Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA)/ Agency of Protected Areas (APA)

**FINANCIALS:**

**Project Preparation Grant:** US$ -

**GEF Project Grant:** US$ 1,826,484

**Co-financing Total:** US$ 7,958,516

**GEF Agency Fees:** US$ 173,516

**Total Cost:** US$ 9,785,000

**PROJECT TIMELINE**

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**Preparation Grant Approved: -**

**Concepted Approved:** 03 September 2017

**Project Approved for** 17 August 2018

**Implementation:**

**Start Date:** 01 October 2018

**Closing Date (Planned):** 30 September 2023

**MIDTERM REVIEW DETAILS:**

**Terminal Evaluation** July - September 2024

**Timeframe:**

**TE Consultants:** Francis Hurst and Irakli Kobulia

**TA Reporting Language:** English

**Disclaimer**

The Final Report is the first deliverable of the Terminal Evaluation.

The Final Report is a Contractual deliverable of the Terminal Evaluation and once accepted becomes an integral part of the project management cycle and documentation.

The Terminal Evaluation is initiated by the UNDP commissioning unit and is independent of the Implementing and Executing Agencies.

The opinions expressed in this document represent the authors’ points of view, which are not necessarily shared by the Implementing and Executing Agencies or by the project partners and beneficiaries.

**Document Sign-off**

This Final Report, dated 25th September 2024, for the UNDP-Supported GEF-Financed Mid-Size Project “Enhancing Financial Sustainability of the Protected Areas System in Georgia", (PIMS 6138, GEF ID 9879) has been reviewed and approved by the following signatories.

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Environmental Focal Point, UNDP Georgia Country Office

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We also wish to acknowledge the support and cooperation of the participating stakeholders – NACRES, WWF, Ecotone and individual Experts who provided valuable insights and feedback throughout the evaluation process.

# Acronyms & Abbreviations

AB-PIP Annual Budget and Project Implementation Plan

ANP Algeti National Park

APA Agency of Protected Areas

APRs Annual Project Reviews

AWP Annual Work Plan

DAC Development Assistance Committee (OECD)

BFD Biodiversity and Forestry Department

BKNP Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park

BMCU Biodiversity Monitoring and Coordination Unit

BMZ German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development

BoG Bank of Georgia

CBD Convention on Biological Diversity

CBO Community Based Organizations

CDR Combined Delivery Report

CNF Caucasus Nature Fund

ECF Eco-regional Corridor Fund

ECP Eco-Regional Conservation Plan

ENPARD European Neighbourhood Program for Agriculture and Rural Development

EoP End of Project

EU European Union

GEF Global Environment Facilities

GoG Government of Georgia

IR Inception Report

JPA Javakheti Protected Areas

KBA Key Biodiversity Area

KfW Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau

KNP Kazbegi National Park

KPA Kintrishi Protected Areas

LEPL Legal Entity of Public Law

LPA Lagodekhi Protected Area

MNP Machakhela National Park

MEAP Management Effectiveness Assessment Plan

MoEPA Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture

MoV Means of Verification

MtNP Mtirala National Park

MTR Mid-Term Review

NGO Non-Government Organization

NPD National Project Director

OECD Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

PA Protected Area

PAP Programmatic Action Plan

PEB Project Executive Board

PC Project Coordinator (UNDP)

PIR Project Implementation Report

PM Project Manager (CNF)

PMU Project Management Unit

PKPA Pshav-Khevsureti Protected Areas

RP Responsible Party

RPA Responsible Party Agreement

RTA Regional Technical Advisor

SMART Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool

SOF Special Operational Fund

SPPA Support Program for Protected Areas in the Caucasus

SRF Strategic Results Framework

STDFS Sustainable Tourism Development and Financing Strategies

STDS Sustainable Tourism Development Strategies

TA Technical Assistance

TE Terminal Evaluation

TJS Transboundary Joint Secretariat for the South Caucasus

TMYWP Technical Multi-Year Work Plan

TPB Total Project Budget

TOR Terms of References

TPA Tusheti Protected Areas

UNDP United Nations Development Program

VPA Vashlovani Protected Areas

WWF Worldwide Fund For Nature

# 1 Executive Summary

Table 1 Project Information Table

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Project Details Project Milestones | | | | |
| Project Title | Enhancing Financial Sustainability of the Protected Areas System in Georgia | | PIF Approval Date: | 07/11/2017 |
| UNDP Project ID (PIMS #): | 6138 | | Approval date (MSP): | 17/08/2018 |
| GEF Project ID: | 9879 | | ProDoc Signature: Date: | 12/12/2018 |
| UNDP Atlas Business Unit, Award ID, Project ID: | 85294 | | Date Project Manager hired: | 01/01/2019 |
| Country/Countries: | Georgia | | Inception Workshop: | 28/02/2018 |
| Region: | Europe and Central Asia | | Mid-Term Review Completion Date: | 15/12/2021 |
| Focal Area: | Biodiversity | | Terminal Evaluation Completion date: | 30/09/2024 |
| GEF Operational Programme or Strategic Priorities/Objectives: | GEF 6: BD-1: Improve sustainability of protected area systems, Program 1- Improving Financial Sustainability and Effective Management of the National Ecological Infrastructure | | Planned Operational Closure Date: | 12/12/2023 Revised 30/09/2024 |
| Trust Fund: | GEF Trust fund | | | |
| Implementing Partner (GEF Executing Entity): | Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA)/ Agency of Protected Areas (APA) | | | |
| NGOs/CBOs involvement: | Caucasus Nature Fund | | | |
| Private sector involvement: | Bank of Georgia | | | |
| Geospatial coordinates of project sites: |  | 41.67904, 44.827080 | | |
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| --- | --- | --- |
| Financial Information | | |
| PDF/PPG | at approval (US$M) | at PDF/PPG completion (US$M) |
| GEF PDF/PPG grants for project preparation | - | - |
| Co-financing for project preparation | CNF contribution | 40,000[[1]](#footnote-1) |
| Project | at CEO Endorsement (US$M) | at TE (US$M) |
| [1] UNDP contribution: | 0.0 | - |
| [2] Government: | 4,750,000 | 22,624,328 |
| [3] Other multi-/bi-laterals: | 0 | - |
| [4] Private Sector: | 200,000 | 226,987 |
| [5] NGOs: | 3,008,516 | 6,410,976 |
| [6] Total co-financing [1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5]: | 7,958,516 | 29,262,291 |
| [7] Total GEF funding: | 1,826,484 | 1,826,484 |
| [8] Total Project Funding [6 + 7] | 9,785,000 | 31,088,775 |

1. **Project description:** The UNDP-GEF project “Enhancing financial sustainability of the Protected Areas (PA) system in Georgia” is a five-year medium-sized “technical assistance” project being implemented in Georgia. The project was officially signed by the Government of Georgia (GoG) in December 2018 and was scheduled to end in November 2023 but is now ending in September 2024.
2. The project is financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Georgia (Implementing Agency) with resources allocated from the GEF Operational Program for Biodiversity.
3. It is a National Implementation Modality (NIM) with UNDP Country Support project, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA)/ Agency of Protected Areas (APA) being the Implementation Partner with significant management roles delegated to the Caucasus Nature Fund (CNF) as the Responsible Party.
4. The project strategy was set out in the Project Document as three supporting components with three outcomes resulting in a project objective **to secure long-term financial sustainability and effective management to conserve globally significant biodiversity of target protected areas in Georgia.**
5. This was to be achieved through;
6. **Outcome 1: Twelve PAs covering 431,872 ha with globally important biodiversity are effectively and sustainably financed** encompassing three outputs:

**Output 1.1[[2]](#footnote-2):** A range of sustainable financing mechanisms designed and piloted for target PAs through a pool of financial resources from government and non-governmental sectors under the Caucasus Nature Fund (CNF).

**Output 1.1:** Dedicated PA accounts (allowing to retain revenue at the PA) in full piloted at 3 PAs[[3]](#footnote-3).

**Output 1.3:** Sustainable tourism development and financing strategies, including operational revenue generation schemes, are prepared and implemented for at least 9 target PAs, with additional income from tourism in target PAs delivered through (as illustrative examples) improved products and services for tourists such as better trails, zip lines, more qualified/multi-lingual staff, etc.

1. **Outcome 2: Institutional capacity for financial and operational management, and for monitoring in target PAs is improved** encompassing four outputs:

**Output 2.1:** CNF's PA Management Support Group established providing technical assistance to all target PAs on financial-administrative & operational planning, budgeting and accounting, including regular financial and technical audits completed for all target PAs at least every 3rd year.

**Output 2.2:** Standardized Management Effectiveness Assessment plans developed for and implemented in at least 9 target PAs, improving management interventions in response to key biodiversity values and threats identified.

**Output 2.3:** A suite of capacity building activities and technical assistance on operational management is designed, institutionalized, and implemented for all target PAs on the following themes (as relevant per target PA): PA management planning, patrolling & law enforcement, pasture management, infrastructure & assets maintenance, conflict resolution, waste management, communication & outreach, climate change impact assessment & mitigation.

**Output 2.4:** Community, stakeholder and societal acceptance on values and importance of target PAs is

strengthened through consolidated awareness raising activities, contributing to improved PA management effectiveness. This will involve (illustratively) systematic involvement of communities in development of tourism and protection projects, as well as pilot initiatives to increase local household income in order to reduce pressures on PAs.

1. **Outcome 3: Knowledge management, and monitoring and evaluation contributes to increased awareness of biodiversity values** encompassing two outputs:

**Output 3.1:** Knowledge management, and monitoring and evaluation contributes to increased awareness of biodiversity values. This will be achieved through the development and implementation of awareness raising plan.

**Output 3.2:** Implementation of independent technical and financial monitoring program of 3-4 target PAs per year.

Table 2 Evaluation Ratings Table

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) | Rating |
| M&E design at entry | MS |
| M&E Plan Implementation | MS |
| Overall Quality of M&E | MS |
| 2. Implementing Agency (IA) Implementation & Executing Agency (EA) Execution | Rating |
| Quality of UNDP Implementation/Oversight | S |
| Quality of Implementing Partner Execution | S |
| Overall quality of Implementation/Execution | S |
| 3. Assessment of Outcomes | Rating |
| Relevance | S |
| Effectiveness | MS |
| Efficiency | MS |
| Overall Project Outcome Rating | S |
| 4. Sustainability | Rating |
| Financial sustainability | L |
| Socio-political sustainability | L |
| Institutional framework and governance sustainability | L |
| Environmental sustainability | L |
| Overall Likelihood of Sustainability | L |

1. **Summary of findings, conclusions and lessons learned:** The design phase was unusual in that it followed a two-step procedure which appears to have had minimum scrutiny by GEF and the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP). Neither did the UNDP CO and RTA have input to the design until very late in the process and shortly before the last date by which it could be submitted. The project preparation was financed by the CNF. There was no Project Preparation Grant provided by the GEF, and it did not follow the normal design process of Project Information Form (PIF), Project Preparation Grant (PPG) and step-wise scrutiny by UNDP CO and the GEF.
2. There were a number of critical issues and weaknesses with the project design. The objective statement was unclear for the purposes of defining the project and the logical hierarchy: activities, outputs, outcomes and objective. The spread of outcomes: financial sustainability of twelve protected areas (PAs), financial, operational and monitoring effectiveness in the same twelve PAs and knowledge management and monitoring increasing awareness did not provide a sufficiently strategic and logical pathway to achieving the objective. As a result, the project strategy had mixed objectives.
3. While the project has produced a number of important and very good outputs (Financial Needs Assessment (FNA), Ecosystem Valuation (ESV), Biodiversity Monitoring, SMART patrolling and monitoring, training, etc.), nonetheless, they do not hold together as a single strategy to achieve the stated objective. However, they do largely achieve the outcome indicators and targets and they are of good quality and important developments allowing the TE to arrive at a satisfactory rating conclusion.
4. The project had a number of delays at the beginning which tested the project partners and institutional relationships, however, on the whole these have been good and a stronger working relationship has emerged which has been an important factor in the project’s achievements. The UNDP CO has played an important role in this, bringing to the project a body of experience in implementing complex and transformational projects which has strengthened the adaptive management qualities of project implementation and to an extent addressed some of the challenges resulting from the design through the management response to the Mid-Term Review (MTR)[[4]](#footnote-4). Two key interventions were the appointment of a part time Project Coordinator (in the absence of a Chief Technical Assistant) and the request to have a MTR which was agreed by the Project Executive Board (PEB). The MTR provided a number of important adjustments to the project.
5. Budget execution has on the whole been good. CNF is an effect and efficient grant management organization and the Project Manager and supporting staff have done a very creditable job. Total budget execution at July 2024 is 94.87% ($ 1,732,753)[[5]](#footnote-5). There was a budget revision of -10.9% from Outcome 1 in favour of Outcome 2 (+5.2%) and Outcome 3 (5.7%) reflecting a focus on investment in eco-tourism and the biodiversity monitoring and arguably at the expense of the financial sustainability objective.
6. There has been a significant level of leveraged co-financing (+377% over what was originally committed) reflecting the CNF’s value and effectiveness at attracting PA financing. While the leveraged co-financing is impressive the TE notes that co-financing for recurrent and operational costs gives the project a much larger size and expectations than what is actually possible in terms of transformational change given the effective spending envelope of the project’s GEF grant.
7. Despite the critical nature of the TE with regards the project’s design and its achievement of the objective, it has provided a number of important outputs which are likely to positively shape the future of PA and biodiversity management while building resilience into the system. In particular these are the ESV and FGA which provide a good framework for changing the approach to financing the PAs towards a more realistic and holistic view of the sum of all their values and possibly a move away from a culture of thinking in terms of paying their way through revenue generation and a focus on eco-tourism investment. The other very important development is the contribution to developing the systemic monitoring programme, especially with the MoEA Biodiversity and Forestry Department (BFD) and the Biodiversity Monitoring Coordination Unit (BMCU) as well as the online training platform.
8. There were no significant issues regarding the Social and Environmental Safeguarding Procedures (SESP) issues raised in the project and there were limited opportunities for mainstreaming gender in the project activities given that this was a medium-sized project and it would appear that gender was targeted at all opportunities. The TE notes that several senior positions (Project Director, Project Manager) in the project were very effectively held by women and the CNF is almost entirely staffed by women and has its own internal gender and safeguarding policies.
9. The project has made very good use of the excellent technical capacities held in the non-state sector in Georgia which is a significant and remarkable feature of the overall system with the APA partnering with non-governmental organizations to fill technical capacities which ordinarily might be extremely costly to maintain within the state sector. This has been a critical aspect of the project providing access to cost-effective technical capacities and experience vital to the project and is an important and somewhat unique and enviable feature of the Georgian protected areas and biodiversity conservation approach.
10. The TE draws three lessons from the TE of the Enhancing Financial Sustainability of the Protected Areas System in Georgia:
11. **GEF project designs need a very clear purpose and the outputs and outcomes should all contribute to the objective:** The lack of clarity of purpose in the Project Document included three important aspects of PAs: financial sustainability (without a clear definition of what that might be), biodiversity monitoring, and management effectiveness militates against achieving the objective.
12. All of these outcomes are legitimate in any GEF BD project and would contribute to expected GEF outcomes and further progress the Georgian PA system. However, in the construct of a GEF project these mixed objectives, although they may be mutually supporting, distract from the projects stated objective; *to secure long-term financial sustainability and effective management to conserve globally significant biodiversity of target protected areas in Georgia*.
13. The lesson should be that there are limitations in what the GEF resources can actually achieve within the financial and time envelope available to a project. Over-selling the project’s objective or adding on critically important activities (which might not directly contribute to the objective within the timeframe) will distract from the objective.
14. **The UNDP-GEF M&E project reporting provides an administrative and bureaucratic adaptive management framework for complex unpredictable projects which is necessary for accountability to the GEF.** GEF projects, because of their transformational expectations, carry with them considerable uncertainty which does not sit well with the necessary bureaucratic and administrative needs of managing a small, medium or large grant. While the UNDP-GEF reporting requirements can sometimes feel cumbersome, there is a purpose behind them as it ensures the administrative-bureaucratic grant accountability with the need to change tactics and even strategy in a fast-moving environment. This combination of risk management and uncertainty management creates a dissonance between the need to get things done, the need to be flexible and innovative and the need for accountability to the GEF for the fund which it has provided.
15. **Technical expertise held in the non-governmental sector is a very effective approach and appears to work very well in Georgia.** Arguably, it would not be efficient to hold the range of technical expertise and skills brought to bear in this project in a government organisation. In the TE’s opinion it would also be unlikely that a commercial sector organisation would be able to retain this type of expertise between projects or Contracts. It would simply be too expensive to maintain and there would be a periodic redundancy within any state organisation or the private sector. However, holding these technical skills and capacity within a range of national non-governmental organisations is a very progressive and cost-effective means to maintain very high professional levels of biodiversity and protected areas management experience as an integral part of the national system.

Table 3 Summary of Recommendations

| Rec  # | TE Recommendation | Entity Responsible | Time frame |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| A | Category 1: Follow-up |  |  |
| A.1 | **Develop a legacy plan before the close of the GEF-funded project:** Use the two very good reports (ESV and FNA) to good effect in advocating at a high-level to shift the institutional mindset on eco-tourism and individual revenue generation as a focus of investment to one which reflects a wider set of values, in line with the Kunming-Montreal GBF and the 2030/2050 NBSAP currently being revised. The legacy plan should take the form of policy briefing note to recognize the role that PAs and biodiversity/ ecosystem resilience *per se* will play underpinning social and economic development through ecosystem provisioning goods and services as well as disaster risk reduction. The legacy plan should develop a convincing case for PAs as an integral part of building national environmental resilience and prepare the way for PA expansion, Landscape PAs, Emerald Sites and OECMs. A Consultancy would be advisable to prepare a brief which could be circulated at the highest levels. | BFD with support from CNF | Within four months of project ending |
| A.2 | **Strengthen the financial literacy of the PA Managers:** It is important that PA Managers understand their Management Plan from a financial perspective and become familiar with the financial implications of operational management and interventions. To be clear, this is not advocating the revenue retention approach of Output 1.2 and a centralized revenue retention scheme is likely the best approach and is aligned with the overall government approach. | APA & CNF to support | 2025 |
| A.3 | **Conduct a national systemic review and institutional review of APA:** APA has guided the development of the protected areas system to its present situation which has been a remarkable feat in itself with its blend of successful partnerships with non-state actors and donors and considerable internal capacities. The challenge now is ensuring that the PA system and its management institutions are the best fit for the future. This should entail a systemic and institutional review.  The purpose of this would be to ensure that the overall system is resilient given that there are substantial changes on the horizon *vis a vis* a range of issues such as the Landscape Protected Areas, Emerald Sites[[6]](#footnote-6) and importantly, the demands which the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework[[7]](#footnote-7) will place on the overall system, its institutions and the KBA managers, climate change, and of course the direction of governance in Georgia. The review should determine the institutional arrangements necessary to ensure that the system is sufficiently adept and adaptive enough to carry all of the values of the PA system through the next few decades of change and stochastic shocks and surprises.  This sort of review would not fit easily within the structure of a GEF project and would be better suited to a bilateral approach and would require Ministerial approval. The review should be carried out by a multi-disciplinary team and led by a substantive Team Leader with high-level experience of institutional management (e.g. with experience as a senior civil servant, senior executive of a multi-national organization, etc.). Therefore:   * UNDP should open discussions with the MoEA to sensitize the Ministry regarding the purpose of such a review. * UNDP should develop a draft proposal. * There should be a joint approach to a substantive donor. | MoEA, & UNDP CO | Within one year |
| B | Category 2: GEF Project Development |  |  |
| B.1 | **The two-step procedure for approving UNDP-GEF projects should have a very clear protocol and “check-list” approach similar to the ordinary CEO approval approach.** In the experience of the TE GEF Project Documents are on the whole not characterised by their clarity of strategic approach. However, in this instance very capable and experienced partners developed a confusing project strategy with very mixed objectives and little clarity of purpose. There were considerable risks to all parties wrapped up in the project document. Fortunately, they did not materialise to any great extent. | UNDP & GEF | For future projects (GEF 8) |
| B.2 | **Future directions for GEF investment in Georgia should be support systemic monitoring and adaptive management:** The challenge of designing a successful GEF project is ensuring that there is a strategic focus on one aspect of a system which is sufficient to bring about a transformational change without being so broad that it loses its sense of direction and purpose. The TE has spoken at length about the transformative nature of the biodiversity monitoring components and the role of the BFD which was newly established at the time of the project’s design phase and the Biodiversity Coordination Monitoring Unit (BMCU) which was designed and established during the project. These mark an important development which incorporates a structured and systemic adaptive management approach which established the purpose of biodiversity monitoring for environmental audit, adaptive management and surveillance necessary to carry the integrity of the entire system through the coming decades of change and to ensure that policy and management are evidence-based. Support to this aspect of the Georgian system has the strategic focus which lends itself to a successful future of UNDP-GEF project. | MoEA, & UNDP CO | For future projects (GEF 8) |

# **2 Introduction**

1. The UNDP and GEF monitoring and evaluation (M&E) policies and procedures require all UNDP-implemented and GEF-funded (medium to large-sized) projects to undergo a Terminal Evaluation (TE) upon completion of implementation. Therefore, UNDP has commissioned the TE by contracting an independent evaluation team consisting of a National Consultant (NC) and an International Consultant (IC). The TE will be conducted following the UNDP-GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and facilitated by the UNDP Country Office, Georgia.

## **2.1 Purpose and objective of the TE**

1. The purpose of the “Enhancing financial sustainability of the Protected Areas (PA) system in Georgia[[8]](#footnote-8)" Project TE as per TORs (Annex 1), is to assess the achievement of project results and to draw lessons that can both improve the sustainability of the benefits from this project, and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP and Government programming.
2. The specific objectives of the terminal evaluation are to:

* Assess the design, implementation and, monitoring and evaluation processes;
* Assess the project’s achievements in relation to its goals, objectives and planned outcomes;
* Assess the management and potential for project results in terms of ownership, sustainability and future programme design;
* Determine whether the project contributed towards the GEF strategic objectives and global environmental benefits;
* Provide specific and practical recommendations, and document lessons learned that can be utilized for improving future projects.

## **2.2 Scope**

1. The TE has a wide-ranging scope to systematically evaluate the performance of the project using the OECD DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact, as defined and explained in the UNDP Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-supported and GEF-financed Projects[[9]](#footnote-9).
2. The TE aims to obtain and provide timely, precise and reliable information on how well the project was designed, implemented, has progressed towards project objectives achieved and how resources were used cost-effectively. The evaluation also considers the project’s impact and its sustainability through ownership and empowerment.

## **2.3 Methodology**

1. **The TE will review the Theory of Change** to the project’s strategy prepared during the projects design[[10]](#footnote-10).
2. **The Social and Environmental Screening Process (SESP)[[11]](#footnote-11)** developed during the project’s preparation will be examined against the risks and assumptions and implementation throughout the project’s cycle.
3. Gender equality and women’s empowerment will be assessed through collecting gender-disaggregated results arising from project activities, inclusion of women participants and relevant women’s groups in the evaluation interviews and specific questions regarding the extent to which they were included in project’s design and implementation and/or benefited from the project. Gender and disadvantaged groups will be included in all appropriate questions and crosschecked against specific questions related to these issues. Specific attention will be given to analyzing examples, best practices and lessons learned regarding women’s empowerment arising through the project’s scope of activities. This will be used to assess the project’s implementation of the SESP and Gender Action Plan[[12]](#footnote-12)
4. Following the data collection phase, the TE will analyze the information according to the TE guidelines and the ToR in order to draw conclusions and propose recommendations. A draft TE Report will be circulated to key stakeholders for comment and feedback. Section 6 provides a timeframe for key deliverables and milestones. The final TE Report will be submitted including an audit trail documenting the feedback from stakeholders and how these have been addressed by the TE.
5. The TE was carried out by a team consisting of an international and national Evaluator. The country visit and field work took place between the 22 June and the 1 August 2024.

## **2.4 Data Collection & Analysis**

1. The TE utilizes three sources of primary data and information:
2. **Desk review:** the documentation covering project design, implementation progress, monitoring and review studies, local and national development plans, policies and regulatory instruments. A list of documents reviewed is presented in Annex 5.
3. **Interviews, stakeholder consultations and field missions:** additional information collection and validation took place through face-to-face and where necessary, remote, consultations with a wide range of stakeholders (Annex 6), using “semi-structured interviews” with a key set of questions in a conversational format. This was accompanied by site visits to the pilot areas. The questions asked aimed to provide answers to the points listed in the evaluation matrix in Annex 3. The initial list of generic questions was refined according to specific stakeholder interviews during the field mission and any by follow up Skype/Zoom, WhatsApp, etc., calls as necessary. Interviews were confidential and the information used discreetly without accreditation. Information from interviews is triangulated and validated, where necessary, before inclusion in the analysis and reporting. Interviews started with an introduction about the aims and nature of the evaluation and informing the interviewee that they have the right not to respond if they so wish.
4. Interviews and the information collected was disaggregated to reflect the different stakeholders (e.g. Implementing Agency – Executing Agency – Project Management Unit (PMU) – implementing partners – beneficiaries as well as by gender). Information from the interviews was collated and analyzed to provide evidence-based conclusions on the overall performance, impact and achievements of the project as well as crosscutting issues. The stakeholders interviewed can be found in Annex 6.
5. **Direct observations of project results and activities:** from the project area were made during site visits to a selection of the protected areas targeted by the project namely: Algeti Protected Area (PA), Borjomi Kharagauli National Park (NP), Lagodekhi PA and Matchakhela NP.

## **2.5 Ethics**

1. The evaluation was conducted following the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluators (Evaluation Consultant Code of Conduct Agreement - attached Annex 3).
2. The rights and dignity of all stakeholders were respected, including interviewees, project participants (project, UNDP, Government staff and other project partners), beneficiaries and other evaluation stakeholders including co-financing partners. The evaluators explained and preserved the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants so that those who participated in the evaluation are free from external pressure and that their involvement in no way disadvantages them.
3. The final report of the evaluation does not indicate a specific source of citations or qualitative data to preserve this confidentiality. The confidentiality of stakeholders was ensured throughout and consultation processes were appropriately contextualized and culturally sensitive, with attention given to issues such as gender empowerment and fair representation for vulnerable groups, wherever possible.
4. Whilst every effort was made to reflect the inputs of stakeholders fairly and accurately in the report, the evaluation ratings, conclusions and key recommendations are those of the evaluators, they do not necessarily reflect the opinions and views of the GEF, UNDP, Implementing Partner and Responsible Partner or other project partners. As such they are not binding on any individual or institutional stakeholder.
5. The final draft of the TE report is accompanied by an “audit trail” of the evaluation process, the review comments, on the draft report are compiled along with responses from the TE team and documented in an annex separate from the main report in the interests of transparency.

## **2.6 Limitations to the evaluation**

1. There were no specific limitations to the TE. Ideally a period of 30+ days (per Evaluator) is more suitable for carrying out an evaluation, however, it is possible to carry out an evaluation within 25 days, although it does limit the fine-grained detail within the overall reporting.

## **2.7 Structure of the TE report**

1. This report is structured in line with the guidance given on conducting TEs of UNDP-GEF projects and in accordance with the TE Terms of Reference (ToR) provided in Annex 1:

**Section 1** provides an executive summary which gives basic information on the project, a brief description of the project and its progress to date, the TE ratings and achievement table, summary of conclusions and recommendations.

**Section 2** provides a description of the review process and methodology.

**Section 3** describes the background and context of the PA Financing project including the problems that the project sought to address, the objectives, outcomes and means of monitoring and evaluation, the implementation arrangements, a timeline and key milestones as well as a summary of project stakeholders.

**Section 4** presents the main findings of the TE on all aspects including the project’s strategy, its progress towards results, the performance of its implementation and efficiency of adaptive management as well as assessing the sustainability of the project outcomes and the TE conclusions, recommendations and main lessons.

# **3 Project Description**

1. The UNDP-GEF project “Enhancing financial sustainability of the Protected Areas (PA) system in Georgia” is a five-year medium-sized “technical assistance” project being implemented in Georgia. The project was officially signed by the Government of Georgia (GoG) in December 2018 and was scheduled to end in September 2023 but is now ending in July 2024.
2. The project is financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Georgia (Implementing Agency) with resources allocated from the GEF Operational Program for Biodiversity.
3. It is a National Implementation Modality (NIM) with UNDP Country Support project, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA)/ Agency of Protected Areas (APA) being the Implementation Partner with significant management roles delegated to the Caucasus Nature Fund (CNF) as the Responsible Party.

## **3.1 Project start and duration, including milestones**

1. The project was planned as a five-year project (60 months) – the project commenced (Project Document signature) in December 2018 and the projected end of project (EOP) date is therefore November 2023. This means that at the time of the MTR mission (September 2021) the project has been under implementation for 34 months and there are 26 months of project implementation remaining (i.e. just under half total duration). The other project milestones, including the project end date for the project, are indicated in **Error! Reference source not found.**. It should be noted that this project was developed without a PDFA grant (i.e. using a “two-step” process). Duration between the approval of the Project Information Form (PIF) (07.11.2017) and CEO Endorsement was just under one year.

Table 4 Project Milestones

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Milestone** | **Date** |
| PIF Approval | 07/11/2017 |
| CEO Endorsement | 17/08/2018 |
| UNDP Project document signed | 12/12/2018 |
| Date UNDP project office operational | 01/01/2019 |
| National Project Coordinator appointed | 01/01/2019 |
| Inception Workshop | 28/02/2019 |
| Covid 19 pandemic lockdown(s) | 02/2020 – 05/2021 |
| MTR mission commences | 29/08/2021 |
| Project extension granted | 10/07/2023 |
| Terminal Evaluation | 07 – 08/2024 |
| Projected EOP | 30/09/2024 |

## **3.2 Development context: environmental, socio-economic, institutional, and policy factors relevant to the project objective and scope**

1. The Project Document[[13]](#footnote-13) describes Georgia’s socio-economic transition since the 1990s as being characterised by unsustainable economic activities and over-use of biological resources, driven by poverty, lack of alternative livelihoods, irresponsible exploitation, limited knowledge, awareness, and understanding of nature’s values, and ineffective legislation. As a result, Georgia’s globally significant biodiversity, including in PAs, became increasingly threatened from (i) habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation, caused by the overexploitation of natural resources, including illegal logging, timber trade, fuel wood collection, grazing and infrastructure development; (ii) poaching and illegal wildlife trade; (iii) overfishing; (iv) pollution and; (v) invasive species. It further identifies climate change as having a notable impact on biodiversity and natural ecosystems. According to the Project Document, this cumulative impact from threats has reduced the ecological functioning and capacity of natural areas to provide key ecosystem services, and an overall loss of economic benefits accruing from biodiversity.
2. The Project Document also highlights the considerable support from the GoG, supported by national and international partners and donors, in the past decades significant progress is made with the expansion of the country’s PA network which has been substantively supported by legislative-institutional reforms and includes an impressive and unusual financial mechanism in the form of the Caucasus Nature Fund (CNF) which provides significant financial support to the PAs including “top up” payments to salaries and other recurrent costs. It describes Georgia as, *one of the few countries globally where protected areas (PAs) are a genuine high-level national priority, and the GoG has committed to increase the area under formal protection to 20% protection (from current 11.38% %) in the next 8 years.*
3. The Project Document[[14]](#footnote-14) describes the CNF and the overall support to the protected areas and biodiversity conservation *per se* as: an NGO founded in 2007 with the support of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), through the German Development Bank (KfW), Conservation International (CI) and WWF. In addition, a multitude of relative short-term donor projects were and are being implemented. While funding through CNF is secured and sufficiently stable to 2038*[[15]](#footnote-15)*, other donor-funded projects individually provide important capacity building support, notably on strategic planning and capital investments, but jointly are insufficiently systematic in addressing the TA needs of the PA system or other capacity gaps. Also, they are not designed to materially assist PAs in Georgia in closing their funding gap, while some may increase the funding gap, as infrastructure investment and expansion of PAs require additional financial resources needed to cover operation and maintenance costs. Overall, available funding from the various sources is insufficient to close the funding gap even for basic financing needs for PA system management.

## **3.3 Problems that the project sought to address, threats and barriers targeted**

1. The Project Document provides an, at times, confused description of the project’s objective - “*to secure long-term financial sustainability and effective management to conserve globally significant biodiversity of target protected areas in Georgia*” – and the problems that the project was addressing as well as the means to address them.
2. The project’s design identifies three barriers to establishing an effective and efficient PA system in Georgia, namely:
   1. Insufficient and insecure financing to sustainably address recurrent costs of maintaining the PA system;
   2. Weak capacity in efficient financial-administrative planning and effective operational management of the PA system; and
   3. Lack of awareness and action amongst key sector institutions, communities, media and the public, including tourists, of risks from biodiversity and ecosystem losses.
3. The Mid-Term Review (MTR) makes the following observation:

“GEF support for projects is intended to be “incremental” i.e. in this case, it provides additional financing to support existing national efforts to enhance the financial resources, especially from domestic revenues, and with it the management effectiveness and capacities for effective financial-operational and efficient budgeting based on improved information, knowledge and awareness - of an increasing number of target PAs that meet established criteria for KBAs”[[16]](#footnote-16).

1. It is not unreasonable to postulate that the project’s intention was to address the three barriers largely through increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the flow of financial resources to the protected areas although included in this were elements of administrative and operational effectiveness.

## **3.4 Immediate and development objectives of the project**

1. The project objective is “*To secure long-term financial sustainability and effective management to conserve globally significant biodiversity of target protected areas in Georgia*”.
2. Through the project, GEF incremental support is intended to enhancing the financial sustainability, and with it the management effectiveness, of targeted PAs, improving the Government’s ability to improve the status of biodiversity and ecosystem services through managing an effective system of PAs, as agreed to under national plans and international commitments.
3. To achieve this, the project’s strategic intervention will provide technical support to the GoG with the implementation of activities under three components, each with a single outcome:

Component 1: Financial sustainability of sub-system of PAs representing Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs);

Component 2: Improved management and financial effectiveness demonstrated for targeted large-scale PAs; and

Component 3: Knowledge Management and monitoring and evaluation.

## **3.5 Expected results**

Table 5 Project Objective, Outcome, Outputs & Indicators

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Objective:** To secure long-term financial sustainability and effective management to conserve globally significant biodiversity of target protected areas in Georgia | **Mandatory Indicator 1 (Output1.4.1 of UNDP SP):** Natural resources that are managed under a sustainable use, conservation, access and benefit-sharing  regime: a) Area of existing protected area under improved management (hectares)  (i.e. the total area of 12 KBAs targeted by the project)  **Indicator 2:** # of direct project beneficiaries, sex disaggregated. (# of workers at targeted PAs with improved socio-economic conditions)  **Indicator 3:** Increased PA system financing as measured by the Financial Sustainability Scorecard |
| **Outcome 1:** **Twelve PAs covering 431,872 ha with globally important biodiversity are effectively and sustainably financed** | **Indicator 4:** Increase in long-term annual funding to target 12 PAs  **Indicator 5:** Number of target PAs regularly receiving full financing support  **Indicator 6:** Increase in revenues generated from tourism activities in target PAs |
| **Output 1.1[[17]](#footnote-17):** A range of sustainable financing mechanisms designed and piloted for target PAs through a pool of financial resources from government and non-governmental sectors under the Caucasus Nature Fund (CNF).  **Output 1.2:** Dedicated PA accounts (allowing to retain revenue at the PA) in full piloted at 3 PAs.  **Output 1.3:** Sustainable tourism development and financing strategies, including operational revenue generation schemes, are prepared and implemented for at least 9 target PAs, with additional income from tourism in target PAs delivered through (as illustrative examples) improved products and services for tourists such as better trails, zip lines, more qualified/multi-lingual staff, etc. |
| **Outcome 2:** Institutional capacity for financial and operational management, and for monitoring in target PAs is improved | **Indicator 7:** Level of institutional capacities for financial-administrative planning and operational management planning as measured by Capacity Assessment Scorecard  **Indicator 8:** (CAS) values for target PAs Level of management effectiveness of target PAs as measured by METT score values  **Indicator 9:** Key biodiversity values are conserved and threats reduced by implementing harmonized Management Effectiveness Assessment plans (Species and ecosystem state indicators (baseline) have been included in the METT scorecards of each of the 12 targeted KBAs and are not repeated here to avoid redundancy. The project will aim to achieve non- deterioration/improvement in the population figures of those species, monitoring and reporting their state at final stage of project life.) |
| **Output 2.1:** CNF's PA Management Support Group established providing technical assistance to all target PAs on financial-administrative & operational planning, budgeting and accounting, including regular financial and technical audits completed for all target PAs at least every 3rd year.  **Output 2.2:** Standardized Management Effectiveness Assessment plans developed for and implemented in at least 9 target PAs, improving management interventions in response to key biodiversity values and threats identified.  **Output 2.3:** A suite of capacity building activities and technical assistance on operational management is designed, institutionalized, and implemented for all target PAs on the following themes (as relevant per target PA): PA management planning, patrolling & law enforcement, pasture management, infrastructure & assets maintenance conflict resolution, waste management, communication & outreach, climate change impact assessment & mitigation.  **Output 2.4:** Community, stakeholder and societal acceptance on values and importance of target PAs is  strengthened through consolidated awareness raising activities, contributing to improved PA management effectiveness. This will involve (illustratively) systematic involvement of communities in development of tourism and protection projects, as well as pilot initiatives to increase local household income in order to reduce pressures on PAs. |
| **Outcome 3:** Knowledge management, and monitoring and evaluation contributes to increased awareness of biodiversity values | **Indicator 10:** Community, stakeholder and societal knowledge of and acceptance on biodiversity values of, threats to, and approval for target PAs |
| **Output 3.1:** Knowledge management, and monitoring and evaluation contributes to increased awareness of biodiversity values. This will be achieved through the development and implementation of awareness raising plan.  **Output 3.2:** Implementation of independent technical and financial monitoring program of 3-4 target PAs per year. |

### 3.5.1 GEF-7 Core Indicators

1. There was no GEF 7 Core Indicators worksheet submitted at the CEO endorsement stage[[18]](#footnote-18) although there was a non-budgeted provision for them in the M&E plan[[19]](#footnote-19). The Tracking Tools (METT, CAS) were submitted with the Project Document. As these are mandatory the TE assumes that this was a result of the unorthodox design process as the Core Indicators are different from the Tracking Tools. For anyone who has experienced the febrile and sometimes painful experience of producing a GEF PPG it is perplexing how this can have happened and ultimately the responsibility would lie with the GEF to approve a project without these Core Indicators attached as they are largely for the GEF M&E provide little in the way of utility for the project management in understanding the performance and impact of the project.
2. The TE assumes, with reason, that as two GEF-7 Core Indicators were included in the Objective-level indicators in the project’s SRF: *Terrestrial protected areas under improved management effectiveness* and *Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment* there was an assumption that they were being reported through the SRF.
3. The GEF-7 Core Indicators are reported here as well as in the SRF as:

Mandatory Indicator 1: Natural resources that are managed under a sustainable use, conservation, access and benefit-sharing regime:

a) Area of existing protected area under improved management (hectares)

Baseline: 0

Mid-Term: 0

End of Project: 508 033 ha

b) Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment

Baseline: 0

Mid-Term: 310

End of Project: 323 (285 male, 38 female)

1. The only two comments would be that the baseline of the area of PA under sustainable management cannot have been accurate, perhaps not even measured as such an assessment would not have reflected the state of Georgian PAs at that time. The TE notes that a more conventional approach to project design would likely have prevented this from occurring.
2. Further, measuring GEF beneficiaries will always begin at zero before a project begins, therefore the indicator or at least the targeting is somewhat self-serving.

## **3.6 Implementation Arrangements**

1. The project is being implemented following UNDP’s national implementation modality, according to the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement between UNDP and the Government of Georgia signed on 1 July 1994, and the Country Program. The MEPA, represented by APA is the Implementing Partner. The Implementing Partner is responsible and accountable for managing this project, including the monitoring and evaluation of project interventions, achieving project outcomes, and for the effective use of GEF/UNDP resources.
2. Unusually, the MEPA/APA and UNDP agreed to assign the CNF[[20]](#footnote-20) as the Responsible Party[[21]](#footnote-21) (RP) for the execution of the project activities. According to the Project Document this arrangement was based upon the CNF’s ten-year experience of technical and financial resources management capacities, as well as the successful implementation of the GEF IV previous project[[22]](#footnote-22), effectively making it the Project Management Unity (PMU).
3. The Project Executive Board (PEB) is responsible for making by consensus, management decisions when guidance is required by the Project Manager (PM), including recommendations for UNDP/Implementing Partner approval of project plans and revisions, and addressing any project level grievances. In order to ensure UNDP’s ultimate accountability, PEB decisions should be made in accordance with standards that shall ensure management for development results, best value money, fairness, integrity, transparency and effective international competition. In case a consensus cannot be reached within the PEB, final decision shall rest with the UNDP PM. Specific responsibilities of the PEB include:

* Provide overall guidance and direction to the project, ensuring it remains within any specified constraints;
* Address project issues as raised by the PM;
* Provide guidance on new project risks, and agree on possible countermeasures and management actions to address specific risks;
* Agree on PM’s tolerances as required;
* Review the project progress, and provide direction and recommendations to ensure that the agreed deliverables are produced satisfactorily according to plans;
* Appraise the annual project implementation report, including the quality assessment rating report; make recommendations for the workplan;
* Provide ad hoc direction and advice for exceptional situations when the PM’s tolerances are exceeded; and
* Assess and decide to proceed on project changes through appropriate revisions.

Figure 1 Project Implementation Arrangements

Project Organisational Structure

Project Board/ Steering Committee

**Senior Beneficiary**

MEPA/ Agency for Protected Areas

**Executive**

National Project Director

UNDP

**Senior Supplier**

Caucasus Nature Fund

Project Assurance

EE Team Leader

UNDP Country Office

Regional Technical Adviser

Project Coordinator

(part time)

Caucasus Nature Fund – Responsible Party

Biodiversity Monitoring

(NACRES, ECOTONE, etc.)

Capacity & training suppliers

Management & operational plans service suppliers

Financial analysis

Tourism development

## **3.6 Main stakeholders**

1. The Project Document identified the project’s key stakeholders[[23]](#footnote-23) and also describes their current mandate and their role and responsibility within the project. Annex F of the Project document includes the same stakeholder table plus the addition of details on how stakeholders will be engaged at key points during implementation and mechanisms (inception workshop, project board, PA management plan development processes, etc).
2. The MTR[[24]](#footnote-24) noted that “*private sector involvement is discussed only in the context of support to tourism development however (no review or identification of private sector engagement in regard to non-tourism related sustainable financing options). This is one example of a generally low practical consideration / vision of non-tourism financing opportunities in the project document*”. The TE broadly agrees with this analysis
3. *One key stakeholder missing from the stakeholder assessment is the Department Biodiversity and Forestry (BFD). This Department within MEPA has the overall supervisory role in biodiversity sector including Policy development and implementation and monitoring. It is assumed that their absence from the stakeholder plan in the project document is due to the fact that it was not clearly established in this role at time of project preparation[[25]](#footnote-25) (the MEPA had only recently merged) and thus were not identified as a key stakeholder. It is noted that the project is now working closely with this Department in the context of biodiversity monitoring and that a representative is a regular member of the PEB[[26]](#footnote-26).*

Table 6 Stakeholders

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Stakeholder | Role / interest |
| Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA) | The MEPA is the central executive agency in charge of environmental protection and support to sustainable development of the country in the field of environment. |
| * Dept. Biodiversity and Forestry | Dept. within MEPA with overall supervisory role in BD sector, including protected areas, policy development and implementation and monitoring.  Was not clearly established in this role at time of project preparation and thus not identified as a key stakeholder |
| * Agency of Protected Areas (APA[[27]](#footnote-27)) | Within the MEPA the APA is responsible for the overall administration of Georgia’s PAs, including annual governmental financing of operational costs to target PAs. The MEPA and APA have a formally agreed long-term institutional arrangement with CNF on balance co-financing support to target PAs. |
| Local Protected Areas Administrations | Target PAs are the key organizations responsible for implementation of state policy on PA management on the ground. Target PA administrations are the key beneficiaries of government budget allocations in support of implementation of agreed management activities on-the-ground, as well as CNF’s co-financial support to maintain and strengthen practical PA management in accordance with agreed priorities and budget. |
| Private sector | Private sector companies at the national, regional or local level may constitute sources of negative impacts on target PAs and the valuable biodiversity linked to them. Through targeted investments as well as sponsor contributions, the private sector also may provide opportunities to further strengthen PA financial sustainability and management effectiveness, as well as improve the livelihood of local communities. |
| Local authorities | Local authorities of municipalities in or near target PAs are responsible for local management and use of land and natural resources, including environmental protection as stipulated by relevant national legislation.  TE comment - local municipalities have quite limited rights in terms of natural resource management. For example, until now, they almost do not own forests (except natural landscapes), pastures, mineral resources, etc. |
| Local communities | Communities near target PAs are both sources for environmental pressures on PAs as well as beneficiaries from ecosystem services provided by PAs. |
| NACRES Centre for Biodiversity Conservation and Research | NACRES will be key for implementation of the biodiversity monitoring component supporting especially results on Component 2. |
| Donor organizations - non-governmental, governmental, multilateral | A broad selection of national and/or international non-governmental and multilateral organizations, including KfW, EU, TJS, GIZ, WWF, IUCN, FFI, CzDA and others have an established streamlined coordination and cooperation with the government of Georgia[[28]](#footnote-28). |
| General public | The general public incorporates all citizens of Georgia, as well as short- and long-term visitors to the country. |

1. An observation on the stakeholder analysis is phrased as a question - just how much stakeholder analysis can actually take place within the body and process of an GEF project preparation? The stakeholders might have been phrased in terms of protected areas financing by a broad spectrum of criteria, *inter alia*: financier, beneficiary, advocacy, service provider, cost-sharing, regulator, enforcement, operational, owner, proprietor, custodian, *ad nauseum,* with many stakeholder categories playing multiple roles, at least as they relate to protected areas financing[[29]](#footnote-29).

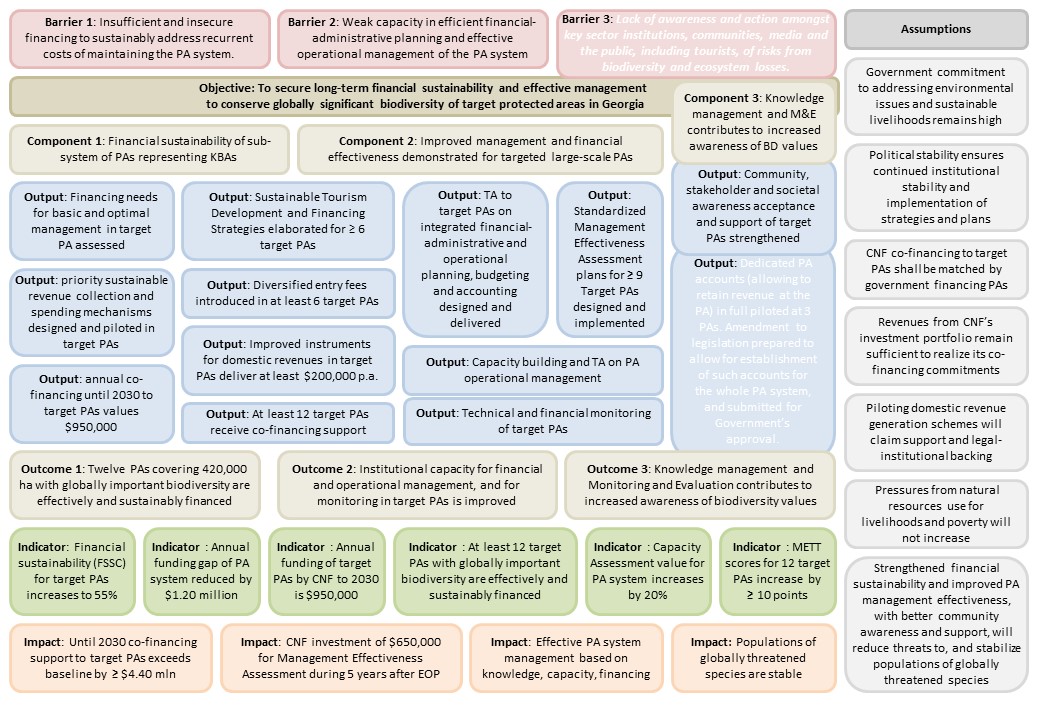
## **3.7 Theory of Change**

1. The essential distinctive elements of Theory of Change compared to other approaches in project planning and management[[30]](#footnote-30) are to:

* identify specific causal links among outputs and outcomes, with evidence;
* describe the causal pathways by which interventions are expected to have effect, and identify indicators to test their validity over time;
* be explicit about assumptions about these causal pathways, which includes an analysis of barriers and enablers as well as indicators of success.

1. The TOC is useful, in this sense, because it sets out the causal pathways from intervention through to the long-term impacts however, on the other hand, it can attempt to constrain the complexity of a system into a single A4 sheet of a MS Word document. A more detailed account of its use is given in the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) guidelines.
2. The TOC provided in the Project Document[[31]](#footnote-31) is overly-complicated and reiterates much of the project’s Strategic Results Framework (SRF) and it is hard to follow the logical hierarchy from inputs to outcomes.

Figure 2 Theory of Change from Project Document



# **4 Findings**

## **4.1 Project Design/Formulation**

1. The MTR provides a critical and very useful analysis of the project’s design which is summarised below:
   * This project “grew out of” the preceding two UNDP-GEF protected areas financing project.
   * It was developed using a “two-step” process that did not receive a PDFA grant to support the process of developing the project document based on the original approved PIF.
   * The product development process was undertaken principally by CNF (in-house plus one international consultant), plus support from UNDP CO regarding implementation aspects and standard requirements. However, the TE understands that this UNDP support was very late in the process and under pressure to submit the proposal.
   * Despite a lengthy gestation the project document’s final submission only just occurred in time for funding from the GEF 6 cycle and this may have contributed to some of the weaknesses in the design.
   * The design itself is weak and there are some considerable mismatches between objective statement, outcomes, outputs, activities and indicators.
   * The nature of the project did not provide sufficient rationale of the “additionality, innovation and incremental reasoning” [[32]](#footnote-32) for the GEF grant.
   * The lessons from previous UNDP-GEF projects do not appear to have influenced the design.
   * The project design appears to have split purposes (biodiversity monitoring, management effectiveness and financial sustainability) which only have a tangential relationship or contribution to the stated objective.
2. The MTR also noted that:

*“this is the 3rd UNDP GEF project in Georgia to address sustainable financing of the protected areas system – it is generally unusual for any country to receive more than one such GEF project grant, and thus the justification for any third such project needs to be very strong. In brief, the 1st such project (Catalysing Financial Sustainability of Georgia’s Protected Areas System 2009-12) was mainly targeted at establishing the legal and institutional environment for PA sustainable financing, and the 2nd project (Ensuring sufficiency and predictability of revenues for Georgia’s protected areas system 2010-16) targeted to the establishment and operational functionality of a conservation trust fund (CNF) to effectively support the financial sustainability of the PA system”[[33]](#footnote-33).*

1. The TE summarises these findings of previous evaluations/ reviews and along with the TE findings as; a confused project design with weak and confusing linkages between project outputs, outcomes and the stated objective and a confusing and ambiguous strategy and objective (see section 5.4 Lessons Learned).
2. The MTR noted, and the TE concurs with this analysis, that:

“In terms of the logical, accurate and realistic development of the project strategy, two main sets of issues concern the MTR team:

* *Inadequate in-depth analysis of the baseline situation and barriers that need to be overcome in order to achieve a financially sustainable and managerially effective PA system*
* *Unclear and unconvincing description of the alternative scenario compared to the baseline situation and how it justifies GEF incremental support…”[[34]](#footnote-34)*

1. In terms of design, this gives the impression of a number of things that needed to be done within the PA system, all of them important and worthy, (e.g. setting up biodiversity monitoring, developing SMART patrolling, developing revenue generation at the PA level through ecotourism, etc.), but not necessarily contributing to the overall strategic approach “*to secure long-term financial sustainability”*.

### 4.1.1 Analysis of Results Framework: project logic and strategy, indicators

1. As already discussed above, the project’s logical hierarchy – outputs, outcomes, objective – does not provide a coherent strategy mixing, as it does, biological, financial and management aspects of the system at the same time and intervening at different, but not necessarily linked, levels - administrative, operational, and site-based, of the system – it appears to lean more towards a number of activities which needed funding rather than a coherent and strategic vision of where APA and the nationally protected areas needed to go in order to be resilient for a reasonably foreseeable future. These design issues are comprehensively discussed in the MTR Report and the TE broadly agrees with that assessment.
2. The project’s SRF reflects this confused purpose and the TE notes that any plan of action needs a clear purpose which is widely understood by all of the key players. The assessment of the TE is that this was not possible based on the Project Document simply because it did not have a clearly stated purpose or objective and the strategy was a mismatch of different outputs which were probably very much needed and have been produced to a high quality during the project, but they are not in and of themselves; a strategy.
3. The SRF is the primary monitoring tool in a GEF project. It serves two purposes: a contractual function in as much as it provides an audit function (did we do what we said we would do? Which are primarily the targets), and arguably a more important adaptive management function (if we did what we said we would do; has it worked? Which is primarily the outcome). However, the selection of indicators is weak and they lack utility in terms of measuring the progress towards the outcome or indeed, the outcome describing a substantive change in circumstances which might collectively add to the objective achievement. Annex 9 provides a SMART[[35]](#footnote-35) assessment of the indicators.

### 4.1.2 Assumptions and Risks

1. The assumptions and risks developed in the Project Document SRF (pp. 30 – 33) are not convincing and point to a similar level of utility as the indicators, they are generic, and in many instances repeated across the components and indicators. For instance: i) Increased revenue allows hiring and maintaining staff, ii) Government instability and/or low salaries leads to increased staff turnover, iii) Increased revenue allows hiring and maintaining staff, iv) Staff turnover remains high, v) APA does not develop systems of staff, vi) Low turnover allows capacity to be developed, vii) and staff retained, viii) Staff turnover continues, ix) Changes in leadership at APA and PAs. They are presented as both risks and assumptions however, the issue of staff turnover and constancy does not appear in the risk log[[36]](#footnote-36).
2. The risk log itself is problematic and the risks themselves are arguably in part or whole, beyond the abilities of a single project to mitigate, but there is a marked absence of any operational risks, for instance the experience and capacity of CNF to implement complex, unpredictable, adaptive projects given that it had until the start of this project largely been involved in grant disbursement and procurement. Arguably, it would have been more prudent to focus on more mundane day to day operational issues which could go wrong than to try to name the global, supra-systemic risks, some of which were what the project was meant to be addressing.

Table 7 Project Risks

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Description** | **Type** | **Impact,**  **Probability and Risk Level** | **Mitigation Measures** | **Owner** |  |
| Risk 1: Reduced Government commitment to addressing environmental issues and sustainability results in reduced funding – for staff operating costs, etc. - committed to the country’s PA system. | Political | P: 3; I:2 | The project will maintain close working relations with all relevant Government authorities, including their involvement in public awareness raising activities planned, which will widely promote the importance of target PAs for national and local development, and the efficiency of public/private partnerships in support of their management. In addition, the project aims to reduce target PA vulnerability to financial fluctuations by strengthening domestic revenue generating services. | CNF | This was not a risk it was the reason for the project. |
| Risk 2: The centralized governance system in place for PAs in Georgia and the limited capacities at PA level to implement planning tools reduce the sustainability of project results. | Institutional | P: 2; I:2 | During the past 7 years, the Government of Georgia in close cooperation with CNF and other partners/donors has invested in strengthening the governance capacity of selected target PAs at the national and levels, specifically on financial-administrative planning, budgeting and accounting, procurement and operational planning. The project is designed to build upon the gained experiences and expand them to more target PAs, by means of increased financial support and TA as well as capacity building on non-financial issues, towards ensuring improved management effectiveness, especially at the level of individual PAs. Capacity needs assessments of government and community stakeholders will steer project training and capacity building initiatives under outcome 2, tailored to meet specific requirements of the different stakeholders to ensure that they have the skills to participate in relevant aspects of the project. | CNF | This might relate back to the poor analysis in the Project Document, that the financial sustainability (which was to be ensured) was actually a manifestation of structural inefficiencies within the overall institutional framework. Addressing financial sustainability was therefore not necessarily going to fix the problems. These are the sorts of thought processes that go into the more usual Project Preparation Grant procedures of designing GEF projects. |
| Risk 3: Climate change will alter or shift natural habitats in/beyond PAs, and as such affects the suitability of PAs to conserve globally important species. | Environmental | P: 1; I:2 | The project focuses on at least 12 target PAs, representing a broad variety of ecosystems and habitats and covering at least 80% of land under formal protection as Priority PAs in Georgia. Adaptation mechanisms to climate change will specifically be addressed in the development phases of PA Management Plans and other planning documents developed with support of the project. The project will maintain close working relations with government and donor initiatives on strengthening conservation both in PAs and in production landscapes of the country, notably the Eco-corridor project – financed by the German government through KfW – targeting better biodiversity conservation through sustainable land use management along corridors connecting PAs included in the ECP. | CNF | In the sphere of a GEF PA financing project a more strategic response might be to conduct a climate vulnerability and stress test of the system and then make the hard choices about what might be defended and what might need to be abandoned given that there will be finite financial, human and material resources available over the next fifty years.  This may seem harsh, but these are logical project responses to otherwise unmanageable risks and it would have been better to focus on the operational risks over which the project partners had more control. |
| Risk 4: Financial sustainability for Georgia’s PA system beyond the duration of the project is not ensured. | Financial | P: 1; I:2 | The project builds upon the successfully introduced public-private partnership in strengthening the government of Georgia’s financial support to maintaining its PA network, using funds provided by public and private donors, including the GEF. Specifically, the project will strengthen financial sustainability by designing and piloting selected financial mechanisms to increase domestic revenue streams for target PAs, including from entry fees, concessions, revenue sharing mechanisms from natural resources use, as well as sustainable tourism products and services. As such, the project gives CNF an additional five years to strengthen its Endowment and Sinking Funds and related income from the investment portfolio. CNF’s proven track record of generating additional donor income will continue. Overall, fund raising and management is intended to ensure operationality of CNF’s financial support to target PAs at least until 2030, i.e. 8 years beyond EOP. | CNF | At the risk of sounding facetious – wasn’t this what the project was about? |

### 4.1.3 Lessons from other relevant projects (e.g. same focal area) incorporated into project design

1. The only reference to other project’s experience is a single line “*there will be continuous information exchange between this project and other projects of similar focus in the same country, region and globally*[[37]](#footnote-37)”. There is no reference to inclusion of past experience in the project’s design, a point raised during the MTR. Despite the project appearing to have been conceived during the final stages of the previous UNDP/GEF PA Sustainable Financing project[[38]](#footnote-38), it does not mention the lessons from this previous project to the point where it is not unreasonable to state that this previous project experience was largely ignored.

### 4.1.4 Planned stakeholder participation

1. The Project Document[[39]](#footnote-39) provides a very comprehensive and impressive stakeholder engagement plan. The plan listed 7 mechanisms to involve stakeholders:

* Project inception workshop.
* Project Board.
* Project communication to stakeholders.
* Progress reports and work-plans.
* Participatory approach for involving local communities.
* Agreements with private organizations.
* Capacity building.

### 4.1.5 Linkages between project and other interventions within the sector

1. The project is linked through the CNF and APA to other initiatives within the sector given that CNF is a conduit for considerable donor support to the protected areas and APA and the latter is involved with a number of other initiatives with agencies such as KfW, GIZ, etc.
2. However, the Project Document does not provide any specific information (much as the case of the previous UNDP-GEF project experience, see section 4.1.3) another example of the unusual project design commented on during the MTR and repeated here by the TE.

## **4.2 Project Implementation**

### 4.2.1 Adaptive management

1. There have been a number of changes to the project and outputs which have been documented during the MTR as most of these took place shortly after the start up and then subsequently following the MTR through the Management Response.
2. According to the MTR and verified during the TE key informant feedback the CNF underestimated the complexity and workload entailed in implementing a project of this size and complexity. Initially the Project Manager (PM) was part time, although the Project Document stated that this position would be a fulltime role[[40]](#footnote-40). It appears that this was addressed by the Project Coordinator (PC) and the Project Manager (PM) became a fulltime position in April 2020 and bringing on board on a short-term basis of an international technical consultant to help with TORs and similar issues, and allocation of more part-time CNF staff support[[41]](#footnote-41). It is apparent that the UNDP CO project assurance role was critical in this process and also the role of the CNF PM should be acknowledged in this as well.
3. On the whole, the project Inception Report is of good quality providing the Total Project Budget (TPB) and a technical Multi-Year Work Plan (TMYWP) translating expected Outcomes and Outputs into practical project implementation activities for the duration of the project, describing specific activities planned, type of contracting modality, and envisioned timing[[42]](#footnote-42).
4. The MTR further notes:

*“Pragmatic changes to the budget and outputs were made and presented in the TMYWP. For example, during the project Inception Phase, UNDP, CNF and APA, as project beneficiary, agreed on topic and budget revisions, mainly aimed at strengthening readiness for tourism investment. Specifically, the project will focus on preparing STDFS only for those target PAs currently without such strategic documents. Another example was key budget re-allocations mainly following from recommendations by the project beneficiary to re-assign activities from component 1 to component 2 or component 3, respectively, to ensure their proper fit with strengthening target PA management capacities or monitoring and evaluation purposes[[43]](#footnote-43)”.*

1. The TE comments that this revision from Outcome 1 to Outcome 2[[44]](#footnote-44) was further diminishing the institutional organisational financial sustainability aspect of the project design, such that it was, in favour of specific direct revenue/ income focused activities, biological monitoring and management effectiveness.
2. Following the 2021 MTR, of the eleven recommendations made in that report, an appropriate Management Response was made[[45]](#footnote-45). Recommendations 1 – 4 related to future project design and were largely targeted towards UNDP-GEF. Recommendation 5, to clarify the project objective was accepted and agreed by the PEB and the UNDP Project Coordinator suggested an amended Objective to: “Will lay the basis and enhance financial sustainability and effective management to conserve globally significant biodiversity of target protected areas in Georgia”, but the SRF and indicators was not revised accordingly and the project continued to use the original indicators. However, it is worth noting that it would not be possible to change the project’s objective at the MTR stage. Ordinarily by this stage, the project’s objective will have become an immovable object and the best approach is to ensure that indicators and targets are adequately reflecting the project’s actual achievements because these can be amended and added to for the TE.
3. Recommendation 9 relating to a systematic review of the PA system was acted on and a study was undertaken[[46]](#footnote-46). The TE understands why this recommendation was made during the MTR and would support the basic premise that a systems and institutional review of the protected areas in Georgia is necessary, indeed, it may have been prudent to have carried out such a review with financial sustainability being a component of the review, rather than to focus on finance and monitoring alone.
4. However, a systems and institutional review is a considerable undertaking and needs to have high-level political support to align it with the directions of government and the civil service *per se.* Furthermore, such a review would need a broader set of skills and experience including being led by a substantive Technical Assistance with an institutional background and experience of government or large civil society organisations (e.g. a former high-level Civil Servant, senior agency executive, etc.).
5. In summary, there has been considerable adaptive management supported by the UNDP Project Coordinator (PC) in order to keep the project on track which has clearly benefited the project in achieving better results.
6. However, this has not been sufficient to overcome the initial design weakness and has lessened the strategic quality of the outcomes in favour of the immediate operational outputs.
7. The project seems to have adjusted well during the Covid-19 pandemic disruptions by switching project activities which could be carried out within the restrictions.

### 4.2.2 Actual stakeholder participation and partnership arrangements

1. The Project Document provided a comprehensive list of stakeholders and their roles in the project implementation. The principal forum for participation appears to have been the PEB where there has been an active participation. Stakeholder engagement has been extensive – at the park and NGO levels and within the Ministry – and CNF is very adept at engaging stakeholders, which was a considerable undertaking.
2. However, to what extent some components of the plan have been carried through, for instance there was little if any recognition of the project, at least from the financial sustainability perspective, at the PA-level and amongst NGOs, with most key respondents recognising the biodiversity monitoring aspect and the material benefits (SMART monitoring and other CNF benefits) but little if any recognition of the financial aspects of the project suggesting that the objective of the project, confusing as it was, was not widely understood amongst stakeholders.

### 4.2.3 Project Finance and Co-finance

1. Following the initial challenges in the first year of implementation budget execution has been efficient. A budget revision was made during the inception phase when UNDP, CNF and MoEPA/APA as project beneficiary agreed on topic and budget revisions, towards strengthening readiness for tourism investment (transferring funds from Outcome 1 to 2).

Table 8 Budget Revision Components

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Project Components** | | **Original Budget** | **Revised Budget** | **Change** |
| COMPONENT 1 | Financial sustainability of sub-system of PAs representing Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) | $569,190 | $371,000 | -10.9% |
| COMPONENT 2 | Improved management and financial effectiveness demonstrated for targeted large-scale PAs | $1,082,294 | $1,177,294 | 5.2% |
| COMPONENT 3 | Knowledge Management and monitoring and evaluation | $25,000 | $128,191 | 5.7% |
| COMPONENT 4 | Project Management | $150,000 | $150,000 | 0.0% |

Table 9 Budget Revisions Contracting Modalities

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Contract Type** | **Atlas** | **PRODOC** | **Revised MYWP** | **Change** | **COMMENTS** |
| International Consultants | 71200 | $265,000 | $172,500 | -$92,500 | Implementation of activities builds on available local expertise for relevant project activities, as such budget for international expertise relocated in favor of engaging local consultants and contractual services |
| Local Consultants | 71300 | $488,500 | $494,500 | $6,000 | Making cost-effective use of available local expertise and capacities for relevant project activities, including capacity building through training, workshops, by CNF and other parties in Georgia in recent years |
| Contractual Services - companies | 72100 | $666,984 | $797,984 | $131,000 | Making cost-effective use of available local expertise and capacities for various activities, including capacity building: training, workshops, by CNF and other parties in recent years |
| Training, Workshops, Conferences | 75700 | $136,000 | $41,000 | -$95,000 | Reallocated into assignments for local consultants and corporations, based on competitive bidding, for trainings, workshops etc. on capacity building at central and PA level. |
| Travel | 71600 | $6,500 | $16,500 | $10,000 | Additional budget allocation to ensure proper coordination by CNF management team with PA authorities during project lifetime |
| Audio-Visual and Print | 74200 | $0 | $12,500 | $12,500 | Additional budget in support of materials for capacity building trainings and workshops |
| Materials & Goods | 72300 | $60,000 | $60,000 | $0 | No changes |
| Information Technology Equipment | 72800 | $60,000 | $60,000 | $0 | No changes |
| Equipment | 72200 | $0 | $28,000 | $28,000 | Additional budget to support initial operation of biodiversity monitoring unit |
| Contractual Services individuals | 71400 | $100000 | $100000 | $0 | No changes |
| Professional Services | 74100 | $15,000 | $15,000 | $0 | No changes |
| Miscellaneous | 74500 | $5,000 | $5,000 | $0 | No changes |
| Direct Project Costs | 74596 | $23,500 | $23,500 | $0 | No changes |
| **TOTAL** |  | **$1,826,484** | **$1,826,484** | **$0** | No changes |

Table 10 Actual Budget Execution vs Planned (Project Document)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Component 1** | **Actual Year** | **YR 1 2019** | **YR 2 2020** | **YR 3 2021** | **YR 4 2022** | **YR 5 2023** | **YR 6 2024** | **Total** |
| **Outcome 1** | **Project Document** | $96,000 | $152,730 | $157,730 | $147,730 | $15,000 | 0 | $569,190 |
|  | **Latest Approved (Extension Budget)** | $65,629 | $193,710 | $50,260 | $41,611 | $20,867 | $43,686 | $415,763 |
|  | **Actual** | $65,629 | $193,710 | $50,260 | $41,611 | $20,867 | $4,135 | $376,212 |
|  | **Variance** | $30,371 | ($40,980) | $107,470 | $106,119 | ($5,867) | ($4,135) | $192,978 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | -38% |
| **Component 2** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Outcome 2** | **Project Document** | $158,500 | $334,949 | $199,448 | $199,948 | $189,449 |  | $1,082,294 |
|  | **Latest Approved (Extension Budget)** | $47,218 | $242,926 | $441,087 | $266,753 | $148,393 | $32,322 | $1,178,699 |
|  | **Actual** | $47,218 | $242,926 | $441,087 | $293,456 | $148,393 | $21,667 | $1,194,747 |
|  | **Variance** | $111,282 | $92,023 | ($241,639) | ($93,508) | $41,056 | ($21,667) | ($112,453) |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | -5% |
| **Component 3** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Outcome 3** | **Project Document** | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $25,000 |  | $25,000 |
|  | **Latest Approved (Extension Budget)** | $4,939 | $4,326 | $22,714 | $10,808 | $13,926 | $25,735 | $82,448 |
|  | **Actual** | $4,939 | $4,326 | $22,714 | $48,430 | $13,926 | $15,204 | $109,539 |
|  | **Variance** | ($4,939) | ($4,326) | ($22,714) | ($48,430) | $11,074 | ($15,204) | ($84,539) |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 222% |
| **Project Management** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | **Project Document (GEF)** | $30,200 | $29,700 | $30,200 | $29,700 | $30,200 |  | $150,000 |
|  | **Latest Approved (GEF)** | $36,017 | $19,767 | $19,699 | $21,552 | $27,330 | $25,209 | $149,574 |
|  | **Actual** | $36,017 | $19,767 | $19,699 | $21,552 | $27,330 | $10,437 | $134,802 |
|  | **Variance** | ($5,817) | $9,933 | $10,501 | $8,148 | $2,870 | ($10,437) | $15,198 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | -18% |
| **Totals** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | **Project Document** | **$284,700** | **$517,379** | **$387,378** | **$377,378** | **$259,649** | **$0** | $1,826,484 |
|  | **Latest Approved (GEF)** | **$153,802** | **$460,730** | **$533,760** | **$340,725** | **$210,516** | **$126,951** | $1,826,484 |
|  | **Actual** | **$153,802** | **$460,730** | **$533,760** | **$405,049** | **$210,516** | **$51,443** | **$1,815,300** |
|  | **Variance** | **$130,898** | **$56,649** | **($146,382)** | **($27,671)** | **$49,133** | **($51,443)** | **$11,184** |
|  |  | **-46%** | **-11%** | **38%** | **7%** | **-19%** |  | **-1%** |
| 2024 Figures in "Actual" represent expenses as of 15 Sep 2024 and does not include Advances transferred to Partners, nor Committed amount which are due by end of September 2024 | | | | | | | | |

1. Cumulative delivery against expected delivery as of 2024 is 94.87% ($ 1,732,753)[[47]](#footnote-47). The main point to note is the revision between Outcomes 1 and 2 suggesting a focus on eco-tourism investment at the PA level.
2. The co-financing has been considerable. The purpose of the CNF is to support protected areas, principally National Parks, through leveraged donor financing. As an organisation it is remarkably effective in doing this and, together with other donors’ support, (the MTR estimated that international donor support to the PA system generally between 2009 – 2019 has been approximately US$ 29.7 million[[48]](#footnote-48)) it has helped to transform the PAs in Georgia.
3. Certainly, there has been considerable co-financing (+377% over what was originally committed) and the CNF has monitored this carefully. A considerable amount of this co-financing has been monies spent on recurrent costs in the PAS. Therefore, the TE raises this observation, based upon this evaluation and a large number of other reviews and evaluations, regarding co-financing and in relation to the GEF approach to co-financing and its effect in GEF projects.
4. GEF projects are intended to bring about a situational change, to develop an alternative future scenario. This is the purpose of the GEF incremental support. Co-financing can have a transformational effect when specifically targeted to components of the overall project strategy. However, in many instances in GEF projects co-financing for recurrent costs and non-project strategy related investments is included in the total project budget giving an impression of a much larger-resourced project than is actually the case. In these situations, it is really the GEF investment alone (although the CNF co-financing has also contributed in this project) which drives any strategic situational change.
5. The CNF is undoubtedly an important and effective organisation for supporting the PA system in Georgia and the advances in PA management are very remarkable. The CNF is an interesting model in terms of innovative financing mechanisms and sits well with the Georgian approach of a progressive, mixed state and NGO involvement in biodiversity conservation.
6. However, this mixed support to the protected areas comes through in the project’s strategy, the outcomes, outputs and indicators to the point that, while money has been effectively spent in the PAs, in some instances these investments might have been incidental to achieving the project’s stated objective and while the project has produced some very high-quality outputs, arguably, these amount to two separate projects – financial sustainability and biodiversity monitoring *per se.*

Table 11 Project Co-financing

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sources of Co-financing | Name of Co-financer | Type of Co-financing | Co-financing amount Confirmed at CEO Endorsement (US$) | Actual Amount Committed at TE (US$) | Actual % of Amount (US$) |
| Government | Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA)/ Agency of Protected Areas (APA) | In-kind | $4,750,000 | $22,624,328 | 476% |
| NGO | Caucasus Nature Fund | Grant | $3,008,516 | $6,410,976 | 213% |
| Private Sector | Bank of Georgia | Grant | $200,000 | $226,987 | 113% |
|  |  | Total | $7,758,716 | $29,262,291 | 377% |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sources of Co-Financing | Name of Co- financier | Type of Co-financing | Investment Mobilized | Amount (US$) |
| Partner Agencies | Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA)/ Agency of Protected Areas (APA) | Grant | Investment Mobilized | $2,500,000 |
| Partner Agencies | Caucasus Nature Fund | In-kind | Investment Mobilized | $500,000 |
| Private Sector | Bank of Georgia | Grant | Investment mobilised | $200,000 |
| Total |  |  |  | 3,400,000 |

### 4.2.4 Monitoring & Evaluation: design at entry, implementation, and overall assessment of M&E

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Criteria | Rating |
| Monitoring & Evaluation design at entry | Moderately Unsatisfactory |
| Monitoring & Evaluation implementation | Moderately Satisfactory |
| Overall Assessment | Moderately Satisfactory |

1. The Project Document provided a comprehensive standard UNDP-GEF M&E plan[[49]](#footnote-49) including an Annual Report, Quarterly Reports, Project Implementation Report (PIR), monitoring of environmental and social risks, and corresponding management plans as relevant, supervisory meetings by UNDP CO, a MTR and TE.
2. The SRF is the principle M&E tool in any GEF project. The project’s SRF, as already discussed, was weak in its logical hierarchy – outputs, outcomes, objective. This was further exacerbated by the imprecise indicators (see Annex 9). The SRF relied heavily on the various GEF and UNDP monitoring tools (METT, Score Cards) which is reasonable as they provide an index figure. However, the other supporting indicators do not give the sort of utility necessary to monitor the strategic progress *vis a vis* financial sustainability.
3. There was no revision to the SRF following the MTR (MTR Recommendation 5: Clarify the realistic objective of the project and the broad expected impacts in its timeframe and post project (and on this basis revise and add to SRF indicators in order to provide a basis for meaningful impact monitoring) although this was agreed in the Management Response but the SRF was not addressed.
4. To be clear, the indicators have been diligently monitored by the PMU and adequately resourced, but their utility regarding the adaptive management and impact has not been addressed. The UNDP CO has monitored the SESP and the risks have remained Low. The CNF already has robust internal gender policies and the risks of the project activities were relatively benign.
5. The reporting on outputs is not systematic throughout the annual reports making it hard to follow what has been done and attributing various developments to indicators, outcomes and outputs reflecting the general weakness in the SRF and its monitoring at times.

### 4.2.5 UNDP implementation/oversight and Implementing Partner execution, overall project implementation/execution, coordination, and operational issues

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Implementation | Rating |
| UNDP implementation/ oversight | **Satisfactory** |
| Implementing Partner execution | **Satisfactory** |
| Overall project implementation/execution | **Satisfactory** |

1. **UNDP implementation/ oversight:** Notwithstanding the design challenges, the implementation has been good. UNDP CO has provided a part time Project Coordinator and there has been significant involvement from the CO to ensure that the UNDP-GEF rules have been applied.
2. The confusing project strategy and unorthodox Project Document resulting from the design process was noted in the MTR and has been raised here by the TE (section 4.1). It is important to mention that this unusual design approach meant that the UNDP CO did not have much input into the design process and was only able to carry out its project assurance responsibilities when the Project Document was at a very advanced stage and with little apparent input from the GEF STAP which may have been able to improve the project design more in line with the strategic additionality, innovation and incremental reasoning expected from a GEF project. In the end, the Project Document was submitted to the GEF very shortly before the cut-off point for GEF-6 submissions which left the UNDP CO little time to make any revisions.
3. UNDP has made considerable efforts to ensure oversight and carry out its project assurance role largely through a part-time Project Coordinator, Environment and Energy Team Leader as well as the Resident Representative attending PEB meetings and commenting on the PIRs.
4. The role of the UNDP CO has been an important one in helping the CNF (ordinarily a grant management and dispersal organisation) to take on the more technical and strategic directional aspects of a GEF project as well as facilitating the working relationship between CNF and APA.
5. The importance of this role, and the provision of a Project Coordinator should not be under-estimated. The TE (and the MTR) has noted the differences between grant dispersal and the transformational approach of GEF additionality. Both of these are legitimate and necessary in supporting PAs, however, the latter role carries with it considerable uncertainty and unpredictability; which is why the GEF takes an adaptive management approach. The original design did not anticipate this as evidenced by the absence of a Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) and it is reasonable to assume that CNF didn’t fully understand this at the beginning because the PM was initially a part time position (although full time in the Project Document) and it was the UNDP CO which steered the project more in line with the expectations of a GEF project by including a part time Project Coordinator and requesting a MTR.
6. **Implementing Partner execution:** As noted previously, the project was a NIM executed through a Responsible Partner Agreement with the CNF acting as the Responsible Partner on behalf of the APA. It is apparent that CNF underestimated the challenge of implementing the project during the first year (part time PM, developing ToR for Consultants, gaining familiarity with UNDP-GEF reporting protocols, 41.48% budget execution reported in the 2021 PIR, etc.). This does not appear in much detail in the PIR, however, key informant feedback indicated that in the initial year the implementation was challenging. The CNF organisation and experience at that time was largely in grant dispersal and the complexity and additional project monitoring and reporting requirements of a GEF project as well as the more “hands-on” technical steering of the project to achieve the strategic objective.
7. The CNF PMU consisted of a PM (paid through the GEF grant) and a part time Project Assistant (hired in 2020 and paid by CNF) with additional support from other CNF staff and the UNDP PC (engaged by the UNDP CO and paid through the GEF grant). Once over the initial start-up period implementation has been efficient and relatively effective although CNF has had to build its “in-house” technical capacities, this has been helped by the PM having a very good knowledge and experience of APA and the PA system *per se.*
8. While the CNF PMU has done well and grown with the project, it is still apparent that this was not enough to support the directional or strategic support necessary to remain focused on the strategic objective resulting at times in a focus on short term results, which while important and useful to the PA system, do not necessarily contribute directly to the longer-term impact on sustainable financing and management effectiveness.
9. To be fair, this would not have been apparent from the project’s SRF indicators and targets, nor was the project’s TOC of any utility in helping the project towards the objective.
10. **Overall project implementation/execution:**
11. The CNF has done very well in implementing the project, largely due to the skills and hard work of the PM and other CNF staff. However, operationally, the organisation is more suited to grant management and disbursement as opposed to the complex and strategic management of a large number of activities and outputs contributing to the outcomes and strategic or development objective. This is brought to the fore by the weaknesses in the project’s design and while the project has produced some very good quality outputs, only some of these have contributed to the project’s objective which cannot be said to have been achieved in full. Other equally good quality outputs have contributed to the outcomes (e.g. Outcome 2) and are important developments in biodiversity monitoring, but it is hard to see where these really contribute to the objective.
12. **Coordination and operational issues:** There have been good relations between the project partners which have undoubtedly helped the project to overcome the challenges faced by the project. The TE highlights the importance of good relationships, which are largely down to the individuals involved in all aspects of the implementation in maintaining these relationships and seeking practicable solutions to problems as they arise. Given the unorthodox design and unusual implementing arrangements, this project could easily have been derailed; but it wasn’t and has ended much better than it might have.

### 4.2.6 Risk Management, including Social and Environmental Standards (Safeguards)

1. The TE is critical of the risk identification in the Project Document because the risks are meant to be monitored and appropriate (adaptive) management responses made depending on the different values of the risk’s components. Monitoring and reporting on the risks of climate change in a five-year, fast moving protected areas financial project would be ignoring all manner of much higher probability risks related to the prosecution of the project itself or *operational risks* (e.g. the organisational fitness of CNF, a grant mechanism in prosecuting a complex technical and adaptive change project).
2. The MTR addressed many of these operational risks and indeed, the CNF recognised and addressed them supported by the PC[[50]](#footnote-50), however, it would have been useful to have reviewed the risk register at the mid-term, on the basis that the Project Document risk identification was very weak and this had not been addressed during the Inception Phase.
3. In summary, there were a number of quite significant risks related to the operational aspects of the project including in the Responsible Partner Agreement which should have identified the risks to GEF, UNDP and the project *per se* of the implementation modality because, CNF is largely was a grant disbursement organisation with little experience of managing complex adaptive interventions. A situation which would, and did, put considerable extra workload on the GEF Agency project assurance and oversight role. Clearly there was some confused thinking and mixed-massaging because Risk 4 states: “*As such, the project gives CNF an additional five years to strengthen its Endowment and Sinking Funds and related income from the investment portfolio”.*
4. An SESP[[51]](#footnote-51) was carried out during the project formulation (PPG) and the TE broadly agrees with the conclusion that all risks were considered to be low. It identifies Biodiversity Conservation and Natural Resource Management and Displacement and Resettlement as the only factors of relevance, which is also reasonable although the TE cautions over-dependence on the use of an alternative livelihoods approach as a mitigation for local community loss of access to resources within any protected area. However, it is also important to note that Georgian PAs have a management framework for agreed local access to some critical resources already in place and the development of the Forest Service Yards for social provisioning are reasonable responses.
5. The SESP has not been updated during the project, however, it has been monitored by the UNDP CO.
6. A Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) was to be set up[[52]](#footnote-52) however it is not clear whether this was actually done. There do not appear to have been any grievances reported but this may reflect the absence of a GRM or non-reporting than an absence of any grievances *per se*.

## **4.3 Project Results and Impact**

### 4.3.1 Progress towards objective and expected outcomes

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| Criteria | Rating |
| Objective | **Satisfactory** |

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| **Indicator** | **Baseline** | **MTR status** | **EOP target** | **MTR Rating** | **June 2024 PIR** | **TE Assessment** |
| **Date** | **2018** | **2021 (December)** |  |
| Mandatory Indicator 1 (Output 1.4.1 of UNDP SP): Natural resources that are managed under a sustainable use, conservation, access and benefit-sharing regime:  a) Area of existing protected area under improved management (hectares) (i.e. the total area of 12 KBAs targeted by the project) | 0 | 0 | 431,872 | **MS** | 508 033 ha  By June 2024 the total coverage of 12 target PAs that are under improved management is 508 033 ha.  Some key project activities, that contribute to the above statement include:  •All twelve target PAs have their management and operational plans updated;  •10-year Biodiversity Monitoring program have been designed and is being implemented to measure biodiversity value indicators in all target protected areas since 2020. Regular field-based monitoring on the indicators unidentified is ongoing and will continue after the end of the project with support from the CNF and active involvement of PAs.  •To strengthen institutional capacities for biodiversity monitoring planning and implementation, dedicated structural units for biodiversity monitoring in the Biodiversity and Forestry Department of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agency of Protected Areas were created and strengthened.  •To coordinate and advise the biodiversity monitoring process on individual PA and national levels, the biodiversity monitoring council is established at the Ministry involving all key stakeholders including state, academia and non-governmental organisations.  •Online training platform is placed on the server of the Ministry; technical personnel for the platform administration and maintenance are trained. New module for e-platform together with APA’s technical staff was elaborated.  •Thematic trainings were held for APA and PA administrations staff, including first aid training, effective communication, financial management and etc.  •In frames of national training program for PA system of Georgia, 5-year training plan and 10-year concept for trainings were developed and submitted to APA.  •Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool SMART is fully introduced and used in all 12 target PAs.  •The tracking tools, notably METT and CAS show increase of respective values projected for the Target PAs by the end of the project. | **Overall Objective rating: Satisfactory**  Indicator 1 rating: Satisfactory – the TE is not sure that all 12 PAs have their management plans and operational updated and the TE has raised the issue of financial planning at the PA level and the degree of financial literacy at this level.  The biodiversity monitoring has been impressive and the role of the BFD and the BMCU is highly commendable due to its drive to institutionally separate M&E and site management which improve adaptive management and accountability as well as providing data for evidence-based policy decisions.  The online training platform is an important development but it is not clear whether training and qualifications will be linked with salary and career performance in the future.  The MET and CAS scores have been increased although the bringing together of these with financial planning (note: this is very different from the Output 1.2 PA revenue retention) at the PA level reduces the achievement against the objective.  The Spatial Monitoring using the SMART tool is a significant development.  Indicator 2 rating: Moderately Satisfactory – the TE understands that this is largely measured by the salary top-up from CNF. As such it is a fairly coarse measure of what is a complex indicator which should have been better defined in the project design or any point afterwards in the project cycle.  Indicator 3 rating: Satisfactory – the TE agrees with the MTR critical analysis that, coarsely put, an increase in PA income from eco-tourism or tourism does not necessarily equate to sustainable financing. The TE would need to see a more detailed cost-benefit analysis on some of the income generating activities. The ESV study and PA financing needs gap assessment are very high quality studies, but they have not necessarily triggered the system change which might be expected given the objective of the project. |
| Indicator 2: # of direct project beneficiaries, sex disaggregated. (# of workers at targeted PAs with improved socio-economic conditions) | 0 | 310 | 500 | 366 (326 male 40 female) |
| Indicator 3: Increased PA system financing as measured by the Financial Sustainability Scorecard | 43% | 50% | Increase to at least 55% | 56%  Some key contributing activities evaluation include:  •Entrance fee study was finalized for Mtirala and Lagodekhi PAs in 2023-2024. The piloting of entrance fee is planned for the end of 2024.  •Nedzvi tourist shelter and associated tourism infrastructure were developed and are operating in Borjomi Kahragauli National Park.  •Analysis of alternative revenue generation sources to be used (partially or wholly) for the local needs and development of protected areas of Georgia has been started in 2024 and will be finalized by the September.  •The project has initiated support for the development of Business Service Yard (BSY) for timber processing, production, and selling from Nedzvi area of Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park.  •Ecosystem Service Valuation (ESV) study was conducted, based on which the was prepared and informational campaign was held involving the National Government and Parliament on importance of expansion and increased financing of the Protected Areas system Georgia. |

**Component 1**

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| Criteria | Rating |
| Outcome 1 | **Satisfactory** |

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| **Indicator** | **Baseline** | **MTR status** | **EOP target** | **MTR Rating** | **June 2024 PIR** | **TE Assessment** |
| **Date** | **2018** | **2021 (December)** |  |
| Indicator 4: Increase in long-term annual funding to target 12 PAs | USD 650,000 | USD 800,000 | USD 950,000 | **MU** | USD 1,393,277  It has increased compared to 2023 (US$ 1,374,472), while the end of the project target has been reached in already in 2021. | **Overall Outcome 1 rating: Satisfactory**  Indicator 4 rating: Satisfactory – the target has been exceeded. However, the TE agrees with the MTR that this indicator should have been disaggregated to provide a finer-grained account of how and where this funding is coming from as well as how it was addressing the individual and collective PA financing gaps.  MTR comment – “Unclear in terms of source or how it indicates project impact  Doesn’t say for example “due to increase in revenue generation” or “due to increase in state budget” or “due to additional CNF funds leveraged” etc.”  Indicator 5 rating: Moderately Satisfactory - insufficient evidence to support “full financing support”. The PA financing gap analysis appears to contradict this. However, the procedures for calculating the financial gaps has been elaborated although the TE would recommend that this should be provided as a financial plan Excel sheet at the PA level to improve financial literacy and introduce the concept of value for money and trade-offs between PA objectives, means of achievement and efficiency. If this is based upon the CNF salary top-up then it is misleading.  Indicator 6 rating: Satisfactory – the target has been exceeded. However, the TE might expect to see more analysis in this – investment costs, rate of return, maintenance costs, added costs, insurance, supervision and some sort of forecasts based on different scenarios would provide a greater level of confidence as well as important experience and data for future activities. |
| Indicator 5: Number of target PAs regularly receiving full financing support | 6 | 9 | 12 | All 12 target PAs are regularly receiving full financing support  As reported by the project  “11 of target PA’s are regularly receiving full financing support (CNF and GEF-6 Project) as indicated by reported progress for Indicator 4 above”. Source: The Caucasus Nature Fund  Again, the MTR team would suggest that it is not appropriate to use GEF TA funds as part any progress indicator related to financing.  Nonetheless, this does not alter the basic fact that at the MT point, 11 PAs are receiving “full financial support” from CNF (i.e. salary top ups) which exceeds the MT target of 9 and is only 1 PA short of the EoP target of 12 PAs |
| Indicator 6: Increase in revenues generated from tourism activities in target PAs | USD102,500 | USD130,000 | USD200,000 | The revenues generated form touristic activities in the Georgia PA system is steadily growing. For the period of 1.07.2023-30.06.2024 total US$ 4,225,727.51 was generated on a system level from tourism activities. This is over US$460,000 increase from the previous year.  As for the target PAs, for the same period, the US$ 205,110.65 was generated from renting out the camping space, equipment, hotel rooms and rendering the tourist services (e.g. zip-line).  The end of the project target has been reached. |

1. **Output 1.1[[53]](#footnote-53): A range of sustainable financing mechanisms designed and piloted for target PAs through a pool of financial resources from government and non-governmental sectors under the Caucasus Nature Fund (CNF).** This largely consisted of the entrance fee study for Mtirala and Lagodekhi PAs to be piloted at the end of 2024, tourist infrastructure (indeed there is a marked focus on tourist infrastructure, the analysis of alternative revenue generation sources to be used (partially or wholly) for the local needs and development of protected areas of Georgia started in 2024 and will be finalized by September (post TE), and support for the development of Business Service Yard (BSY) for timber processing, production, and selling from Nedzvi area of Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park (largely a social welfare activity). The MTR highlighted the focus and dependency on revenue generation and the TE comments that the term “financing mechanism” should suggests a range of more diverse and non-revenue-based approaches would be included. To this end, the ESV is a valuable contribution and needs to be used to its full effect. However, the TE should also comment that the output itself is somewhat confusing.
2. **Output 1.2: Dedicated PA accounts (allowing to retain revenue at the PA) in full piloted at 3 PAs**. This output was discontinued. However, the project did carry out a study on alternative income generating mechanisms. The TE comments that this was a reasonable decision as the PAs are state entities and whatever financial management structures are in place. Financial autonomy of PAs and revenue retention schemes are extremely challenging and more often marked by failure than success. However, dedicated PA accounts is very different from PA managers being financially literate and carrying out financial planning for their parks as part of the overall systemic organisation.
3. **Output 1.3: Sustainable tourism development and financing strategies, including operational revenue generation schemes, are prepared and implemented for at least 9 target PAs, with additional income from tourism in target PAs delivered through (as illustrative examples) improved products and services for tourists such as better trails, zip lines, more qualified/multi-lingual staff, etc**. This output and output 1.1 have little to differentiate them and illustrates the issues with the project’s design. “Sustainable tourism development and financing strategies” is insufficiently precise for an output suggests a confusion of purposes.

**Component 2**

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| Criteria | Rating |
| Outcome 2 | **Satisfactory** |

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| **Indicator** | **Baseline** | **MTR status** | **EOP target** | **MTR Rating** | **June 2024 PIR** | **TE Assessment** |
| **Date** | **2018** | **2021 (December)** |  |
| Indicator 7: Level of institutional capacities for financial-administrative planning and operational management planning as measured by Capacity Assessment Scorecard (CAS) values for target PAs | Average: 30%, including  Systemic 33%  Institutional 31%  Individual 21% | Average: 37%, including  Systemic 40%  Institutional 35%  Individual 30% | Average: 50%, including  Systemic 50%  Institutional 42%  Individual 44% | **MS** | Average: 67%, including  Systemic 66%  Institutional 75%  Individual 54% | **Overall Outcome 2 rating: Satisfactory**  Indicator 7 rating: Satisfactory - the CAS scores have improved as a result of improved skills for PA planning and management as a result of training of the financial department of APA in financial accountability and reporting via Oris Manager, elaboration of financial gap analysis and a methodology for estimation of the gap, elaboration of income generation opportunity analysis and involvement and on-job training of PA staff in development and revision of management plans of respective PAs, elaboration of 10-year biodiversity monitoring plan and establishing the Biodiversity Monitoring Coordination Unit (BMCU). However, there is insufficient evidence of this having developed a financial strategic vision for the future of APA and the PA system. At the PA level there is little evidence that PA managers have much participation in financial planning or that there is a regularly updated financial plan for the implementation of each PA management plan. As a result, financial analysis (not revenue retention) does not play a big role in their planning approaches.  Indicator 8 rating: Satisfactory – the target has been exceeded and the Management Effectiveness Management Plans are in place in 12 PAs. The TE notes that there is an over-reliance on METTs as a measure of project impact. They are the accepted standard measurement in GEF projects however, METTs tend to be carried out in the performance of a project and this bias should create a degree of caution and in this instance the increases in scores have been considerable in the space of a four-year project and given that this project had divided purposes – financial sustainability – management effectiveness – biodiversity monitoring – it might be useful to conduct an independent follow-up METT post project. The TE cautions that the individual PA staff status have not necessarily changed significantly vis a vis career structures and while SMART patrolling is a very good improvement, it is still hard to equate the substantive positive change with the level of investment in the individual PAs.  Indicator 9 rating: Unable to assess. The TE agrees with the MTR’s findings that “*Multiple issues with this indicator render it essentially meaningless. In any case any indicator measuring species or ecosystem changes based on only a few years data has little real value*”.  Using the METT to measure threat reduction or species conservation status is a problematic and at best a very coarse measure. Attributing biological change within the timeframe of a project is spurious at best. A better measure might have been to use a clear proxy indicator such as a Threat Reduction Assessment. |
| Indicator 8: Level of management effectiveness of target PAs as measured by METT score values | BKNP - 48; LPA – 48; VPA – 56; TPA/TPL – 56/41; MNP – 48; JNP – 47; KNP – 33; ANP – 43; KPA – 45; PsKPA – 24; MachNP – 47 | METT scores for the 12 target PAs have increased by on average 4 points over the baseline | METT scores for the 12 target PAs have increased by on average 10 points over the baseline | BKNP – 68; LPA-71; VPA – 66; TPA – 65; TPL – 63; MtNP- 59; JPA – 58; ANP-66; KazNP-52; KinPA-65; PshKhPA – 63; MachNP – 67 the METT scores for all target PAs exceed the pre-defined points over the baseline for the EoP period. |
| Indicator 9: Key biodiversity values are conserved, and threats reduced by implementing harmonized Management Effectiveness Assessment plans [[54]](#footnote-54) - see footnote for full text | Current status of populations and ecosystems as per individual METT | Current status of populations and ecosystems as per individual baseline METT scorecards | Non-deterioration of populations of key species mentioned in the individual METT scorecards | The individual METTs of 12 PAs show non-deterioration and/ or improvement of status of key biodiversity values as per baseline METT scorecards. |

1. **Output 2.1: CNF's PA Management Support Group established providing technical assistance to all target PAs on financial-administrative & operational planning, budgeting and accounting, including regular financial and technical audits completed for all target PAs at least every 3rd year.** CNF is essentially a grant management and dispersal organisation. While individually there are very considerable staff capacities, it is not clear to the TE that the organisational structure is the right one to provide this service. Given that certain activities are reported under different indicators and outcomes, a measure of the confused project strategy, it is hard to understand this output. Presumably the “regular financial and technical audits at least every 3rd year” would be the CAS and the METT and technical and financial monitoring procedures were developed. CNF will also continue regular financial and effectiveness monitoring (METT) post project.
2. **Output 2.2: Standardized Management Effectiveness Assessment plans developed for and implemented in at least 9 target PAs, improving management interventions in response to key biodiversity values and threats identified.** Management Effectiveness Assessment Plans (MEAP) have been produced for twelve PAs. They cover status, threats and management response indicators as well and can be linked with the biodiversity monitoring.
3. **Output 2.3: A suite of capacity building activities and technical assistance on operational management is designed, institutionalized, and implemented for all target PAs on the following themes (as relevant per target PA): PA management planning, patrolling & law enforcement, pasture management, infrastructure & assets maintenance conflict resolution, waste management, communication & outreach, climate change impact assessment & mitigation.** This output is so phrased in such a complicated manner, the TE assumes that this relates to the online training and other training activities. The project has undertaken considerable training activities however, the MTR raised the issue of a systematic and institutional character of entire system. Some very good training has taken place and is clearly appreciated at both the central and PA levels and the project has developed a National Training Strategy and Programme of the PA system.

**Output 2.4: Community, stakeholder and societal acceptance on values and importance of target PAs is strengthened through consolidated awareness raising activities, contributing to improved PA management effectiveness. This will involve (illustratively) systematic involvement of communities in development of tourism and protection projects, as well as pilot initiatives to increase local household income in order to reduce pressures on PAs.** This output is very complicated and would appear to include elements of an outcome and activities and at least one assumption. The TE considers that elements of this output were carried out and they have contributed towards the objective. These would include the study on income generating opportunities, and a number of pilot initiatives such as the Forest Service Yards, zip line, and the co-financed community income generating training and pilot projects, etc.

**Component 3**

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| Criteria | Rating |
| Outcome 3 | **Satisfactory** |

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| **Outcome 3. Knowledge management, and monitoring and evaluation contributes to increased awareness of biodiversity values.** | | | | | | | |
| **Indicator** | **Baseline** | **MTR status** | **EOP target** | **EOP Status** | **MTR Rating** | **June 2024 PIR** | **TE Assessment** |
| **Date** | **2018** | **2021 (December)** |  | **2024 (July)** |
| Indicator 10: Community, stakeholder and societal knowledge of and acceptance on biodiversity values of, threats to, and approval for target PAs | Public awareness and outreach is ad hoc, knowledge of and support for target PAs is limited, their importance and benefits are poorly communicated in society | At least 4,000 people have taken notice of, or participate in, at least 4 targeted awareness raising activities and/or materials | At least 10,000 people have been given opportunity to take notice of, or participate in, a variety of targeted awareness raising activities and materials on biodiversity values and benefits from Target PAs | Not clear | MS | Facebook posts in regards of GEF/UNDP project reached over 1,077,309 people and got in total 16,920 likes on pages of CNF, APA, Nacres and PA administrations.  Training, workshop and meeting participants - 261  The training and community awareness activities implemented during the reporting period include:  - Trainings were held for locals on eco-tourism products on following themes: 1. Traditional handicraft product business and its potential on market and basic tendencies; 2. Organic Agriculture and Agro-tourism; 3. Horse Tourism; 4. Arrangement and management of Guest Houses  - Grant program was announced for local communities who underwent to abovementioned trainings and they will be supported to improve their products.  - Community ranger program was implemented in the Tusheti PA.  - Meeting was held with eco-club members of Georgian Youth Palace on Protected Areas.  - SMART trainings were held for directors on adaptive management. | **Overall Outcome 2 rating: Satisfactory**  The TE notes that the indicator is imprecise unless it was measured by a comprehensive survey – likely a Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) survey to be repeated baseline, mid-term and EOP. This would have been extremely expensive. The indicator itself links to biodiversity values but does not utilize the work of the Ecosystem Values study and does not relate to the primary objective which is PA financing. Given that the biodiversity monitoring amounts to a single survey event it is hard to understand how this could change perceptions of biodiversity because without repeat monitoring events it is not possible to indicate trends and therefore increase awareness. Furthermore, increased awareness is somehow diffuse and hard to understand how this could be turned into improved financial or management effectiveness.  This is reflected in the project’s confused reporting of activities which are better placed (and reported) in Outcomes 1 or 2. The reported progress does not answer to the indicator.  Indicator 10 rating: Moderately Satisfactory based on the reported items. However, the project has had an impact at a higher political level in terms of M&E and PA/biodiversity finance. |

1. **Output 3.1: Knowledge management, and monitoring and evaluation contributes to increased awareness of biodiversity values. This will be achieved through the development and implementation of awareness raising plan.** It is hard to understand what this is driving at as it re-states the component title which is a standardised GEF component/outcome attached with every GEF SRF.
2. **Output 3.2: Implementation of independent technical and financial monitoring program of 3-4 target PAs per year.** Presumably this is an activity which should be monitored through the METT and CAS and the Technical Assistance Provided for the Elaboration of the Accounting Policy Document of the Agency of Protected Areas in Georgia.

### 4.3.2 Relevance

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| Criteria | Rating |
| Relevance | **Satisfactory** |

1. The Project Document provides a minimum of justification for the relevance of the project with the policy and regulatory environment, however, it is reasonable to state that protected areas financing has been high on the policy agenda at the national level for some time.
2. The project objectives align with the United Nations Partnership for Sustainable Development (UNSPF) 2016-2020/Country Programme Document (CPD) 2016-2020 Outcome*:* By 2020, communities enjoy greater resilience through enhanced institutional and legislative systems for environment protection, sustainable management of natural resources and disaster risk reduction[[55]](#footnote-55) and the UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021 Output: 2.4.1 Gender-responsive legal and regulatory frameworks, policies and institutions strengthened, and solutions adopted, to address conservation, sustainable use and equitable benefit sharing of natural resources , in line with international conventions and national legislation, as well as United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021-2025 Outcome 5/Country Programme Document (CPD) 2021-2025 Outcome 2: By 2025, all people, without discrimination, enjoy enhanced resilience through improved environmental governance, climate action and sustainable management and use of natural resource(s) in Georgia and the UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-2025 output: 1.1 The 2030 Agenda, Paris Agreement and other inter-governmentally-agreed frameworks integrated in national and local development plans, measures to accelerate progress put in place, and budgets and progress assessed using data-driven solutions.
3. The project objective and its components would appear to still be relevant to the UNDP Country programme document for Georgia (2021–2025):

Outcome 2.1. (UNSDCF indicator 5.1) [National SDG 13.2.1] Country communicated establishment of integrated policy/strategy/plan which increases country’s ability to adapt to adverse impacts of climate change, and foster

climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development.

Output 2.1. Environmental governance and institutional capacity enhanced to enable rational, equitable and sustainable use of natural/land resources, to ensure conservation of ecosystems, use of innovative and climate-friendly technologies for inclusive green economy, energy efficiency and clean energy production, and make communities more resilient to environmental shocks. Indicator 2.1.1. Targeted protected areas under improved management and annual long- term funding.

1. The project objective conforms with the GEF policy directions and objective[[56]](#footnote-56):

Objective 1: Improve sustainability of protected area systems

Program 1: Improving Financial Sustainability and Effective Management of the National Ecological Infrastructure

Outcome 1.1: Increased revenue for protected area systems and globally significant protected areas to meet total expenditures required for management.

Indicator 1.1: Funding gap for management of protected area systems and globally significant protected areas.

Outcome 1.2: Improved management effectiveness of protected areas. Indicator

1.2: Protected area management effectiveness score.

1. While the project, even with its confused purposes would seem to fit within the national and global policy framework it is worth repeating the MTR here:

“As highlighted by the TE for the previous “parent” GEF4 project, there is some question as to whether the new GEF6 project should be eligible at all for GEF financing – to quote the TE report – “*While doubtless adding a third financial sustainability project will be useful, there are questions about whether it really satisfies the core GEF philosophy and whether it really is the priority* (Page 60, para. 125), and “*Pg. xiv- there are questions about the relevance of a third GEF financial sustainability of the protected area system* [i.e., the GEF-6 project*]: does it satisfy GEF’s requirements for additionality, innovation and incremental reasoning?*””[[57]](#footnote-57).

1. While there is significant national-level for both biodiversity monitoring, PA management effectiveness, and protected areas financing, it is not unreasonable to surmise that the project’s design was in many ways responding to tactical needs of the PA system and it would have been better to focus the project efforts on just one issue.

### 4.3.3 Effectiveness

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| Criteria | Rating |
| Effectiveness | **Moderately Satisfactory** |

1. The issues with the project’s design militate the effectiveness of the project’s intervention in many ways. While the project has produced some very high-quality products; the mixed purposes of PA financing, management effectiveness and biodiversity monitoring do not, by the end of the project appear to have achieved, or may achieve without further support in the future, the stated objective to **“***secure long-term financial sustainability and effective management to conserve globally significant biodiversity of target protected areas in Georgia”.*
2. In essence, the project design provides a range of activities and products, which all contribute to improved protected areas management and the conservation of globally significant biodiversity, but they do not amount to a coherent and strategic change in circumstances.
3. Whether this is because the CNF is not necessarily the right organisation to achieve this through a GEF project or whether it is due to a weak design process which allowed the capture of different expectations and needs in the Project Document is not clear. However, a more effective design approach would have considered the future systemic needs of biodiversity in Georgia from a systemic and institutional perspective rather than the somewhat narrow lens of financing and site management effectiveness.
4. Similarly, a biodiversity monitoring perspective would have focused more on the systemic governance needs than the specific data collection of specific components of the system.
5. In short, the project strategy, such that it was with its considerable weaknesses and confusion of purposes was not the most effective means to achieve the objective, confusing and poorly worded as it was.

### 4.3.4 Efficiency

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Criteria | Rating |
| Efficiency | **Satisfactory** |

1. The project had a challenging first half which led to delays. Issues such as a part-time Project Manager, an early confusion with the UNDP-GEF project approach, reporting and M&E resulted in delays. However, even prior to the MTR the CNF and UNDP CO was addressing these issues with the earlier PEB Minutes of Meetings suggest that the CNF struggled during the first year and the RPA arrangement caused a number of delays[[58]](#footnote-58). However, CNF and UNDP CO seem to have worked closely together to resolve these issues with *inter alia:* hiring a UNDP Project Coordinator (part time), making the PM position full time (as stated in the Project Document)[[59]](#footnote-59), taking on a temporary CTA to develop Consultants TOR, aligning reporting protocols, etc., and CNF is clearly an efficient organisation and well-used to grant disbursement and accountable for considerable amounts of donor financing. Where it has been less efficient has been in its adaptive management role and the organisational capacities to critically analyse the Project Document with the GEF objective in mind and make strategic changes where necessary. In the first half of the project critical points in the project cycle were missed such as the inception phase when issues related to the design confusion could have been addressed and the TE argues that the budget revision between Outcomes 1 and 2 would have affected both the efficiency and effectiveness of achieving the project’s object by focusing on investment products as opposed to the systemic process of achieving long-term financial sustainability.
2. The project has also utilised the non-state actors to very good effect. The non-governmental sector in Georgia is remarkable, effectively a not-for-profit sector which holds considerable technical resources and capacities with functional working relationships with the PAs facilitated through APA and CNF. In this way, high quality technical capacities which would ordinarily be expensive to retain within the state institutions are a part of the overall system. It is an interesting and progressive model which works well in Georgia and creates efficiencies with the one caveat that it is still largely dependent upon external financing.
3. Therefore, the Satisfactory rating reflects the efforts of the CNF, particularly since the MTR and recognises that the CNF is now an important part of the protected areas financing, the inclusion of technical NGOs created efficiencies and while it is unrealistic to state that the objective was achieved, the investment in the systemic biodiversity monitoring and the outputs related to PA financing such as the needs assessment and ESV represent value for money.

### 4.3.5 Overall Outcome

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Criteria | Rating |
| Overall Outcome | **Satisfactory** |

1. The TE (and the MTR) have remarked at length about the confused project design and in particular, the ambiguity in the purpose of the project given that there had been two earlier projects addressing PA financing which is reflected in the rating for effectiveness. Notwithstanding these issues the project has produced a number of high-quality outputs and made an important contribution to the development of a biodiversity monitoring programme which will strengthen the evidence-based policy formulation and adaptive management capacities of the MoEPA. It has also advanced the capacities for financial planning and to some extent, expanded the range of values by which the PA system is measured allowing the TE to rate the overall outcome as Satisfactory.
2. However, it has not reached a point, largely due to the mixed purposes of the project, where it brings these threads together in a convincing manner necessary to steer the system and address the future challenges to the PA system and biodiversity conservation *per se*. That said, a good number of the constituent parts are in place and based upon the indicators, the project has achieved the end of project targets.

### 4.3.6 Sustainability: financial, socio-economic, institutional framework and governance, environmental, and overall likelihood

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Issue | Rating |
| Financial sustainability | **Likely** |
| Socio-economic sustainability | **Likely** |
| Institutional framework and governance sustainability | **Likely** |
| Environmental sustainability | **Likely** |
| Overall sustainability | **Likely** |

1. **Financial sustainability:** the CNF has extended the life of the sinking fund until 2038 and has a demonstrated track record of attracting financing which can be distributed in a manner which can support operational costs of the PA system, this is an important facet of the overall PA system. The FNA has provided a standard methodology and captured that capacity within APA to good effect and providing a means to better understand the PA system from a financial perspective and the ESV study provides a very important and useful understanding of the purpose and importance of the PA system vis a vis a range of values which support economic activities allowing a more fine-grained national accounting system which includes ecosystem goods, services and processes.
2. **Socio-economic:** the project has established a number of income-generating activities and promoted economic activity mostly in relation to eco-tourism, but also in relation to the social aspects of fuel wood through the Forest Service Yards and managed grazing schemes. It is likely that the PAs will play an increasingly important role in the socio-economic livelihoods of people living around them in the future, however, a single-minded focus on eco-tourism is risky, as was demonstrated during the Covid-19 pandemic and a more systematic approach should develop the organisational arrangements between state, civil society, non-governmental service providers and the private sector which would needed to be decided through more far-reaching systems and institutional review.
3. **Institutional framework and governance:** MoEPA and APA certainly provide a sustainable institutional framework and it is important to recognise the extraordinary progress achieved in PA management and biodiversity conservation in Georgia in the past few decades. APA has sufficient internal qualities to continue to support the system. Therefore, sustainability from this perspective is likely, but a more pertinent question might be whether the overall system is resilient given that there are substantial changes on the horizon *vis a vis* a range of issues such as the Landscape Protected Areas, Emerald Sites[[60]](#footnote-60) and importantly, the demands which the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework[[61]](#footnote-61) will place on the overall system, its institutions and the KBA managers, climate change, and of course the direction of governance in Georgia. Arguably, the Georgian PA system is already better resourced, than many other countries as demonstrated, for instance, through the CNF. So, perhaps, the long-term financial sustainability as sought after by the last three GEF projects is not the deciding factor in determining resilience, after all, the system survived the financial shock of the Covide-19 pandemic. The more pertinent question might be whether the system is sufficiently adept and adaptive enough to carry all of the values of the PA system through the next few decades of change and stochastic shocks and surprises.
4. The answer to this is not clear. Within this project there were elements such as the biodiversity monitoring and the BFD’s emphasis on data-driven planning and adaptive management which suggests a progressive and institutionally dynamic governance approach to the system. However, there is also the institutional focus on eco-tourism, revenue generation and infrastructure investment which was noted in the MTR and has been raised a number of times in the TE consultations with key informants involved in the project which can create a distracting effect on an organisation.
5. Institutionally, the system is sustainable, but PA systems (and biodiversity conservation *per* se) are complex and unpredictable because it engages with the economy, the socio-political/ administrative and environmental/ ecological drivers of change, all of which combine in often unpredictable ways to produce a high level of uncertainty. This is perhaps what the MTR was driving at when it recommended a systemic institutional review[[62]](#footnote-62); to test the institutional and organisational arrangements of the system to determine their resilience in the face of an unpredictable future. In this aspect it is important to distinguish resilience from sustainability “*as the capacity of a system to undergo disturbance while maintaining both its existing functions and controls and its capacity for future change*”[[63]](#footnote-63). In building resilience into the system, the institutional arrangements are critical because; “*resilience is determined not only by a systems ability to buffer or absorb shocks, but also by its capacity for learning and self-organisation to adapt to change*”[[64]](#footnote-64).
6. **Environmental sustainability:** notwithstanding the comments by the TE on resilience, the outputs and outcomes of the project do not give rise to any concerns on the grounds of environmental sustainability.

### 4.3.7 Country ownership

1. There appears to have been strong country ownership of the project outputs. The design phase appeared to have been largely carried out by CNF and APA with only a late scrutiny by UNDP CO prior to submission. This is reflected in the emphasis on biodiversity monitoring and investment in eco-tourism arrangements and infrastructure which were clearly wanted by the MoEA and APA. What is not as clear is the relationship with the stated financial sustainability objectives of the project which were possibly reflecting the focus on revenue generation aspects of the eco-tourism in PAs and the purpose of the CNF.

### 4.3.8 Gender equality and women’s empowerment

1. The Project Document allocates a GEN2 Gender Marker to the project. The MTR comments that it is not clear on what basis this was determined other than UNDP CO needed to allocate a gender marker to the project and this would seem reasonable given the nature and purpose of the project (i.e. gender equality was not the main objective of the project but the project would promote gender equality in a significant and consistent way).
2. This would likely entail ensuring that there was a gender balance in all activities and participation in the project decision-making and a five-point activity plan with targeted directional gender-related actions was included as an annex (Annex G) to the Project Document. Only one indicator in the project includes any specific gender sensitive aspect (Objective Indicator 2: # of direct project beneficiaries, sex disaggregated. (# of workers at targeted PAs with improved socio-economic conditions) which would reflect that the project is at a minimum, gender-targeted although the utility of this indicator is questionable as it is a fairly coarse measure of the complexity, inequalities and inefficiencies of any imbalance in the representation of women in any system and within a project. More meaningful gender-related indicators could have been included in the project’s SRF and to support this statement the systems-level institutional analysis carried out by the project did not address gender in any meaningful way and only mentions gender once in relation to the provision of housing for women being a barrier to their employment there.
3. The TE broadly agrees with the Project Document SESP risk assessment as Low[[65]](#footnote-65). However, the TE comments that had UNDP been more involved in the project design from an earlier stage there would have likely been a more rigorous and systematic inclusion of women in the project activities and the means to monitor performance and impact. It would be reasonable to say that since this project was designed both the UNDP and GEF have become more rigorous in asserting that gender and gender equality is demonstrably mainstreamed into the project’s design on the basis of fairness and also because the inequalities experienced by women in any system are a part of the reasons for that system being inefficient.
4. Notwithstanding these comments, the project has considerable involvement and representation of women. Both PM and NPD/Chairperson of the board are women, almost all senior positions at CNF are held by women (including the Director) and the organisation has its own internal gender policies and protocols, most of the service providers (e.g. NACRES, Ecotone, etc.) are well-established organisations with progressive internal policies including on gender.
5. Overall, the project could be judged to be gender targeted in its approach.

### 4.3.9 Cross-cutting Issues

1. Section 4.3.2 outlines the conformity of the project with the national expectations, UNDP CP and the anticipated indicators of the GEF global environmental benefits.
2. The most important cross-cutting outcomes of the project is the role that it has played in developing the BFD biodiversity monitoring programme and governance approach, the ESV study which will be a useful reference in the future for determining the role of the PA system (and ecosystem goods and services in general) in climate change mitigation and adaptation and mainstreaming these (along with the financial and economic aspects) into disaster risk reduction.
3. Other aspects such as the Forest Service Yard and the development of eco-tourism opportunities and benefits within local communities and the managed grazing (and monitoring) will also build resilience within local communities.

### 4.3.10 Knowledge Management and Learning

1. Given the mixed purposes (and the weakness of the indicator) of the project there is no single subject matter which can be used to illustrate the learning effect. The TE therefore identifies the ESV as an important and high-level knowledge product which can be used to advocate at a political level to invest in the protected areas and ecosystem resilience *per se.* Other knowledge products would be the biodiversity monitoring outputs, which will strengthen the evidence-based approach to policy and site management while supporting an adaptive management approach to policy formulation and site management appropriate to the highly dynamic and unpredictable nature of managing complex socio-ecosystems.

### 4.3.11 GEF Additionality

1. Given the unorthodox nature of the Project Document (including the absence of a PIF) it is hard to determine the GEF additionality. The MTR highlighted this aspect as did the TE of the previous UNDP-GEF PA financing project[[66]](#footnote-66). While the project has made some important contributions already highlighted in this report, the focus on specific investments to the PA with revenue generation objectives overshadow the actual developments of importance and it is worth noting that this two-step procedure for developing a UNDP-GEF project should carry a fairly hefty risk warning because of this. That said, the reporting of GEF additionality should be read in conjunction with the section immediately below.

### 4.3.12 Catalytic/Replication Effect

1. The TE identifies three important outputs from the project which are likely to have a replication or catalytic effect in building resilience into the protected areas system and biodiversity conservation *per se* within Georgia.
2. The biodiversity monitoring has supported strengthened and helped to grow the role of the BFD within the overall system. This is a critically important development and one which would benefit from further support because of the implications to systemic management, accountability and good governance based upon good data (evidence-based). This monitoring and evaluation function can strengthen the Georgian socio-ecosystem and the PAs in particular to be prepared for the uncertainties of the future and to be responsive when changes in the economic, socio-political and environmental drivers which shape the system change in both predictable and unpredictable ways.
3. The ESV can be, as already discussed, a powerful tool for advocacy and communication in mainstreaming ecosystem management (the sum of all the values within the ecosystem) into the national accounting process. The document can be used in conjunction with the drafting of the 2030 National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) which takes a much broader approach to biodiversity conservation. The key point is that it should be “promoted” as supporting document to promote sector policy conformity and efficiency at a high political level.
4. The Financial Needs Assessment (FNA) report and methodology can be a “game changer”. Understanding the PA system from different perspectives is critical to its efficient and effective management. There are many ways to understand the system: institutionally, spatially, socially, administratively, ecologically and of course, financially. All of these perspectives are valid. Conservation management can involve very hard choices between a resource value and the resources available to conserve it. Financial literacy, at all levels of the management system, provide a structured and transparent framework for making these difficult decisions and provide empirical data to assist what are ultimately decisions based on value judgements. However, this requires PA Managers to be well-versed in financial planning. For the avoidance of doubt, this is very different from Output 1.2: Dedicated PA accounts (allowing to retain revenue at the PA) in full piloted at 3 PAs.

### 4.3.13 Progress to Impact

1. TOC has little utility in describing the critical pathways of the project, it is simply too confusing, in providing a clear and strategic pathway towards a definable impact. Neither does the SRF provide sufficient clarity of purpose nor indicators and targets which amount to a strategic impact.
2. However, in other ways the project has been implemented with a high degree of technical capability and expertise and as a result, it has produced some very good outputs which will have real impact going forwards. These have been discussed at length and are summarised here as:

* The systemic and sophisticated monitoring and evaluation of biodiversity and other parameters within the system coupled with an adaptive management approach.
* The calculation and methodology for valuing ecosystem services is an important development which can build convincing and competitive arguments for the investment in the conservation management of biodiversity and the PA system.
* The FNA provides an approach and capacity for building financial literacy into the PA management and biodiversity conservation bringing an objectivity to value judgements and more transparent framework for decision-making when it comes to trade-offs between allocating resources and conservation management.

# **5 Main Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations & Lessons**

## 5.1 Main Findings

1. The confused arrangements of purposes of the project and the weak M&E SRF have made it challenging to judge performance and impact by the MTR and subsequently, during this TE. It is reasonable to state that this has also affected the project’s ability to manage adaptively towards achieving the stated objective. At times this has tended towards strengthening the individual components (e.g. more biodiversity monitoring, more management effectiveness and more PA income generation) as opposed to bringing these threads (such as they are) together to achieve the outcomes and objective; securing long-term financial sustainability and effective management to conserve globally significant biodiversity of target protected areas in Georgia.
2. The design, and the process followed during the design phase, has had a profound effect on the efficiency and effectiveness of project. The two-step procedure combined with the lack of GEF STAP scrutiny and the late involvement of the UNDP CO resulted in a weak project strategy to achieve the stated objective. While individually the components of the strategy were, and remain, needed, important and necessary developments for the PAs; put together they resulted in mixed objectives which have divided the effective and efficient use of the project’s resources and efforts.
3. The somewhat unorthodox approach to project development and the implementation arrangements will have made the project vulnerable and at times will have exposed the GEF, UNDP and the CNF to considerable risk. It is important to note that these risks have been skilfully avoided and mitigated by the commendable efforts of the UNDP CO and CNF. However, this is not without costs to the project and the first year appears to have tested the project’s preparedness requiring a number of adjustments such as making the PM full time, temporarily engaging a substantive TA to fill capacity gaps and UNDP engaging a part time Project Coordinator. Resulting in a 46% negative variance in the budget expenditure in the first year and arguably requiring a project extension request following the MTR. To be clear, the project partners, APA, CNF and the UNDP CO are to be commended for their efforts in keeping the project moving forwards, especially in the early years, but this has not been without significant additional efforts by all parties.
4. Critically, the project did not have Chief technical Adviser which, given CNFs structure and function as a grant management and dispersal organisation, would have been prudent, given that the expectations of GEF projects are about additionality and creating changes in circumstances whereas CNF is a much more effective operational support and capital investment organisation.
5. While these implementation issues have contributed in the ambiguous progress towards achieving the objective, the project’s strategy, as set out in the Project Document, have likely exerted a greater influence on any judgement as to whether the project has succeeded in achieving the objective. This last statement needs to be contextualised against the unrealistic objective statement of the Project Document, a view shared by the MTR[[67]](#footnote-67).
6. The three strands to the project: financial sustainability, biodiversity monitoring and management effectiveness are all legitimate components of protected areas management and biodiversity conservation *per se*. The latter two are also components of a sustainable financing strategy, but pursued individually, the purpose of the project becomes ambiguous and divided. Furthermore, it makes the project strategy vulnerable because the project’s focus can be distracted. For instance, the budget revision from Outcome 1 to Outcome 2 and the over-emphasis on eco-tourism revenue generation[[68]](#footnote-68). A fixation on revenue generation and investment in tourism or eco-tourism infrastructure does not necessarily equate to the long-term financial sustainability sough after in the project’s objective and yet there was considerable commitment of effort and resources towards this.
7. Notwithstanding these issues, the TE finds that the project has reached a satisfactory conclusion having produced a number of important outputs under `Outcome 1, most notably the ESV and FGA reports and methodologies building the financial literacy at the central level[[69]](#footnote-69). Outcome 2 has strengthened the capacities of biodiversity monitoring and supported the internal process with the MoEA’s BFD to develop a comprehensive national biodiversity monitoring programme and strengthened the partnerships between statutory agencies and the non-state sector which is an important facet of the Georgian system. Under Outcome 2 there has also been significant investment in training which has been widely appreciated and will have increased the effectiveness of PA management. The introduction of the SMART patrolling, no small undertaking in itself, has been an important development and there is clear indication in the increases in the various management effectiveness and capacity measurement tools. Although the TE notes that these tools, while useful, are a measure of change and their utility in actually building capacity or increasing effectiveness can be contested. Without significant investment in human resources, policy and regulatory development and operational resources they can be expensive and while they may provide a measure of a PA it is of equal or greater importance to understand the effectiveness of the overall system.
8. While the TE has been quite critical of the project it is also important to state that the achievements of the project have been important and do have utility and future use in supporting the cost-effective management of the PA system and the contribution to biodiversity is significant as is the introduction of SMART monitoring and linking this to the biodiversity monitoring.

## 5.2 Conclusions

1. The development of the Georgian PA system, its institutions, non-state actor involvement and capacity to attract and utilise global conservation resources to good effect is remarkable, resulting in the emergence of a fledgling, modern and progressive protected areas system.
2. As with many countries, sustainable protected areas financing has been a pressing issue as the very nature of a protected areas system means that, on the surface, large tracts of land are alienated from potential economic use and the total socio-economic benefits are poorly represented in the national accounting process; and land set aside for conservation purposes has to constantly justify itself against competing economic activities and other policy sector financing. As a result, considerable GEF investment has been allocated to the strengthening the financial aspects of the Georgian PAs and the Enhancing Financial Sustainability of the Protected Areas System in Georgia was the third such project addressing PA financing.
3. Despite the considerable weaknesses in the strategic nature of the Project Document, the project has nonetheless produced some very important developments which will persist after the closure of the GEF project and the project partners, APA, CNF and the UNDP CO, are to be recommended for achieving this.
4. There still remains, however, a focus of interest in investing in eco-tourism development and revenue generation in the PAs and a concern that politically, the PAs should justify their existence financially – through a balance sheet approach - or at least make a greater financial contribution to their overall costs. This issue was raised a number of times by key informants and was remarked on at length in the MTR as well as being reflected in some of the distribution of resources within this project.
5. Importantly, there are significant changes on the near horizon. The concept of protected areas is changing to encompass more types of PA and PA governance, there is an emerging understanding of the linkages between biodiversity and climate change, the means of financing biodiversity are also changing in recognition that the accelerating loss of biodiversity and consequent loss of ecosystem processes and functions poses an existential threat, that it is necessary to conserve biodiversity within economic processes such as agriculture and water provisioning, the emergence of the Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) as a means to maintain ecosystems and an increasing understanding that biodiversity and climate change as well as disaster risk reduction are intimately linked with far-reaching larger economic consequences. The Kunming-Montreal GBF is a far-reaching global strategy for the conservation of biodiversity requiring countries to pursue a much more aggressive and systemic approach to biodiversity than ever before as well as encompassing all of these aspects in four global goals and 23 targets which Member States will need to incorporate within their national policy frameworks, not just in compliance to their responsibilities, but because they have been arrived at by careful analysis and forecasting of the very serious social, economic and security consequences of ignoring the present catastrophic loss of biodiversity.
6. Arguably, a narrow focus on revenue generation and in particular upon eco-tourism may not be addressing the critical factors in ensuring that the system is prepared for the changes which are coming. Certainly, there is evidence that the MEPA is already thinking along these lines and the BFD role, supported by the project, is a very progressive step as it institutionally separates M&E from site management strengthening accountability and making management decisions evidence-based, both of which are important facets of any adaptive management approach[[70]](#footnote-70).
7. The TE has taken a very strategic approach in its evaluation of the project in order to understand the achievements in the absence of a clear strategy and SRF in the Project Document. The basis for this decision is that the Georgian PAs under APA already have financing to a large degree. The CNF sinking fund is now extended up until 2038 providing support to operational and recurrent costs of the Agency and the PAs for the foreseeable future, which is a somewhat envious position to be in. Furthermore, there is a history of bilateral donor support to the PAs which is likely to continue for some time. Therefore, PA financing, especially phrased as revenue generation and eco-tourism, may not be the critical factor in ensuring sustainability or resilience, and a far more pertinent question might be: what should the system, it’s institutions and internal governance and organisation look like in the future? How does the present systemic institutional arrangements measure up to the challenges that are likely to come in the next decade and beyond?

## 5.3 Recommendations

1. Based upon this analysis and the findings and conclusions, the TE makes the following five recommendations presented in Table 9.

Table 12 Recommendations

| Rec  # | TE Recommendation | Entity Responsible | Time frame |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| A | Category 1: Follow-up |  |  |
| A.1 | **Develop a legacy plan before the close of the GEF-funded project:** Use the two very good reports (ESV and FNA) to good effect in advocating at a high-level to shift the institutional mindset on eco-tourism and individual revenue generation as a focus of investment to one which reflects a wider set of values, in line with the Kunming-Montreal GBF and the 2030/2050 NBSAP currently being revised. The legacy plan should take the form of policy briefing note to recognize the role that PAs and biodiversity/ ecosystem resilience *per se* will play underpinning social and economic development through ecosystem provisioning goods and services as well as disaster risk reduction. The legacy plan should develop a convincing case for PAs as an integral part of building national environmental resilience and prepare the way for PA expansion, Landscape PAs, Emerald Sites and OECMs. A Consultancy would be advisable to prepare a brief which could be circulated at the highest levels. | BFD with support from CNF | Within four months of project ending |
| A.2 | **Strengthen the financial literacy of the PA Managers:** It is important that PA Managers understand their Management Plan from a financial perspective and become familiar with the financial implications of operational management and interventions. To be clear, this is not advocating the revenue retention approach of Output 1.2 and a centralized revenue retention scheme is likely the best approach and is aligned with the overall government approach. However, building the capacity and confidence of PA Managers to consider the financial implications of management through a simple financial plan and understanding where efficiencies and cost savings can be made is an important skill which can only improve conservation and park management in the long-term and would allow Park Managers to budget more accurately for their work plans. A PA Financial Plan can be developed by transcribing the management and operational plan into a simple Excel spreadsheet with forecast costs based on historic spending. Therefore, APA should include financial planning in the capacity building of PA Managers. | APA & CNF to support | 2025 |
| A.3 | **Conduct a national systemic review and institutional review of APA:** APA has guided the development of the protected areas system to its present situation which has been a remarkable feat in itself with its blend of successful partnerships with non-state actors and donors and considerable internal capacities. The challenge now is ensuring that the PA system and its management institutions are the best fit for the future. This should entail a systemic and institutional review.  The purpose of this would be to ensure that the overall system is resilient given that there are substantial changes on the horizon *vis a vis* a range of issues such as the Landscape Protected Areas, Emerald Sites[[71]](#footnote-71) and importantly, the demands which the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework[[72]](#footnote-72) will place on the overall system, its institutions and the KBA managers, climate change, and of course the direction of governance in Georgia. The review should determine the institutional arrangements necessary to ensure that the system is sufficiently adept and adaptive enough to carry all of the values of the PA system through the next few decades of change and stochastic shocks and surprises.  This sort of review would not fit easily within the structure of a GEF project and would be better suited to a bilateral approach and would require Ministerial approval. The review should be carried out by a multi-disciplinary team and led by a substantive Team Leader with high-level experience of institutional management (e.g. with experience as a senior civil servant, senior executive of a multi-national organization, etc.). Therefore:   * UNDP should open discussions with the MoEA to sensitize the Ministry regarding the purpose of such a review. * UNDP should develop a draft proposal. * There should be a joint approach to a substantive donor. | MoEA, & UNDP CO | Within one year |
| B | Category 2: GEF Project Development |  |  |
| B.1 | **The two-step procedure for approving UNDP-GEF projects should have a very clear protocol and “check-list” approach similar to the ordinary CEO approval approach.** In the experience of the TE GEF Project Documents are on the whole not characterised by their clarity of strategic approach. However, in this instance very capable and experienced partners developed a confusing project strategy with very mixed objectives and little clarity of purpose. There were considerable risks to all parties wrapped up in the project document. Fortunately, they did not materialise to any great extent due to the hard work of the project partners, especially the UNDP CO in bringing the Project Document closer to the basic GEF, but the risks were there nonetheless and had to be managed. The key point being to keep a strategic focus on the GEF additionality and avoid strategic drift to address pressing but diffused immediate resource needs. Therefore, any two-step procedure should have an agreed timeframe for milestones and UNDP CO approval (to reflect the UNDP project assurance and oversight role) at:   * Project concept. * First draft. * TOC and SRF. * Final draft. | UNDP & GEF | For future projects (GEF 8) |
| B.2 | **Future directions for GEF investment in Georgia should be support systemic monitoring and adaptive management:** The challenge of designing a successful GEF project is ensuring that there is a strategic focus on one aspect of a system which is sufficient to bring about a transformational change without being so broad that it loses its sense of direction and purpose. The TE has spoken at length about the transformative nature of the biodiversity monitoring components and the role of the BFD which was newly established at the time of the project’s design phase and the Biodiversity Coordination Monitoring Unit (BMCU) which was designed and established during the project. These mark an important development which incorporates a structured and systemic adaptive management approach which established the purpose of biodiversity monitoring for environmental audit, adaptive management and surveillance necessary to carry the integrity of the entire system through the coming decades of change and to ensure that policy and management are evidence-based. Support to this aspect of the Georgian system has the strategic focus which lends itself to a successful future UNDP-GEF project. | MoEA, & UNDP CO | For future projects (GEF 8) |

## 5.4 Lessons Learned

1. The TE draws three lessons from the TE of the Enhancing Financial Sustainability of the Protected Areas System in Georgia:
2. **GEF project designs need a very clear purpose and the outputs and outcomes should all contribute to the objective:** The lack of clarity of purpose in the Project Document included three important aspects of PAs: financial sustainability (without a clear definition of what that might be), biodiversity monitoring, and management effectiveness; militates against achieving the objective.
3. All of these outcomes are legitimate in any GEF BD project and would contribute to expected GEF programme outcomes and further progress the Georgian PA system. However, in the construct of a GEF project these mixed objectives, although they may be mutually supporting, distract from the projects stated objective; *to secure long-term financial sustainability and effective management to conserve globally significant biodiversity of target protected areas in Georgia*. For the avoidance of doubt, the project has provided very good quality outputs answering all these aspects, but the GEF additionality is related to the objective; a substantive change in circumstances with regards the *long-term financial sustainability* and *management effectiveness*.
4. Arguably this may be a factor of the differing GEF and CNF purposes, the CNF has a clear mandate to support operational and recurrent costs whereas the GEF is expected to be more “surgical” in bringing about a change. To be very clear, both approaches are legitimate and advance a greater good with regards to PA management and biodiversity conservation.
5. However, the project resources and time envelope does not necessarily support the twin objectives of financial sustainability and effective management and focusing on just one of these aspects would be more realistic use of a *project* as a tool to bring about change. Which leaves the issue of biodiversity monitoring, which is in itself a critically important output of the project, but (at this point in time) marginally contributes to the project’s stated objective because there is not sufficient evidence (yet) that the biodiversity monitoring links back to the management effectiveness or the better use of material and financial resources. However, the biodiversity monitoring is a critical component of the overall system.
6. The lesson should be that there are limitations in what the GEF resources can actually achieve within the financial and time envelope available to a project. Over-selling the project’s objective or adding on critically important activities (which might not directly contribute to the objective within the timeframe) will distract from the objective.
7. **The UNDP-GEF M&E project reporting provides an administrative and bureaucratic adaptive management framework for complex unpredictable projects.** GEF projects, because of their transformational expectations, carry with them considerable uncertainty which does not sit well with the necessary bureaucratic and administrative needs of managing a small, medium or large grant. While the UNDP-GEF reporting requirements can sometimes feel cumbersome, there is a purpose behind them as it ensures the administrative-bureaucratic grant accountability with the need to change tactics and even strategy in a fast-moving environment. This combination of risk management and uncertainty management creates a dissonance between the need to get things done, the need to be flexible and innovative and the need for accountability to the GEF for the fund which it has provided.
8. The UNDP-GEF reporting protocol, can appear un-necessarily burdensome on project management, however, it is the product of considerable experience in marrying accountability and adaptive management within the construct of a project gained from many years and projects. It is not ideal, but it is necessary and the value of this has been demonstrated in this project to good effect through, *inter* alia: the appointment of a Project Coordinator and the request for an MTR and appropriate Management Response.
9. Arguably, this role and the correct use of the reporting (e.g. PIR and management response) have achieved a satisfactory outcome from a mediocre project design.
10. **Technical expertise held in the non-governmental sector is a very effective approach and appears to work very well in Georgia.** Arguably, it would not be efficient to hold the range of technical expertise and skills brought to bear in this project in a government organisation. In the TE’s opinion it would also be unlikely that a commercial sector organisation would be able to retain this type of expertise between projects or Contracts. It would simply be too expensive to maintain and there would be a periodic redundancy within any state organisation or the private sector. However, holding these technical skills and capacity within a range of national non-governmental organisations is a very progressive and cost-effective means to maintain very high professional levels of biodiversity and protected areas management experience as an integral part of the national system.

# Annexes

### Annex 1 Terminal Evaluation Terms of Reference

**Terminal Evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR) Template**

**for UNDP-supported GEF-financed projects**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

In accordance with UNDP and GEF M&E policies and procedures, all full- and medium-sized UNDP-supported GEF-financed projects are required to undergo a Terminal Evaluation (TE) at the end of the project. This Terms of Reference (ToR) sets out the expectations for the TE of the *medium-sized* project titled *“*Enhancing financial sustainability of the Protected Area system in Georgia” (PIMS#6138) implemented through the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, represented by Agency of Protected Areas. The project started on December 12th, 2018 and is in its *6thy y*ear of implementation. The TE process must follow the guidance outlined in the document ‘Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects’ <https://erc.undp.org/pdf/TE_GuidanceforUNDP-supportedGEF-financedProjects.pdf> and the [‘GEF’s Guidelines for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of Full-Size Projects (2023)’](https://www.gefieo.org/evaluations/terminal-evaluations-2023)

1. **PROJECT BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

While in recent years significant progress was made on a broad specter of institutional and legislative reforms, including on environmental protection and nature conservation, and the area under formal protection was significantly expanded, three key barriers remain to establishing an effective and efficient PA system in Georgia: **Insufficient and insecure financing to sustainably address recurrent costs of maintaining the PA system;** w**eak capacity in efficient financial-administrative planning and effective operational management of the PA system** and **Lack of awareness and action amongst key sector institutions, communities, media and the public of risks from biodiversity and ecosystem losses.**

The project seeks to support the Government of Georgia in addressing the identified barriers by sustainably increasing available financing to an increasing number of Priority PAs, by improving capacities for effective financial-operational and efficient budgeting based on improved information and strengthening knowledge and awareness on the importance of biodiversity and PAs in maintaining important ecosystem services. The project will fulfill its objective by delivering project activities in 3 inter-related and mutually complementary components, focusing on (i) financial sustainability of sub-system of PAs representing KBAs; (ii) Improved management and financial effectiveness demonstrated for targeted large-scale PAs; and (iii) Knowledge Management and monitoring and evaluation,

Through increased financial resources, especially from domestic revenues, and improved management effectiveness of target PAs, the project will particularly contribute to reducing threats to, and improving the *in situ* conservation status of identified globally threatened biodiversity in target PAs that meet established criteria for Biodiversity Areas, including (i) recognized Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs); (ii) approved and candidate Emerald Sites; (iii) the Caucasus Endemic Bird Area; and (iv) tentative World Heritage Sites, covering 431,872 ha of the ecologically representative PA network in Georgia. Dedicated Management Effectiveness Assessment plans will allow to better plan and implement targeted, on-the-ground conservation and threat reduction measures assuring maintaining populations of globally threatened species at least at their 2017 level, as well as valuable species endemic to Georgia and the Caucasus Ecoregion.

1. **TE PURPOSE**

The TE report will assess the achievement of project results against what was expected to be achieved, and draw lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project, and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP programming.

The project was planned as a five-year project – thus, the projected end of project (EOP) date was 12 December 2023. However, the project requested a 9 month “no -cost” extension and the final end date was changed to 30th September 2024.

The TE will be conducted according to the guidance, rules and procedures established by UNDP and GEF as reflected in the UNDP Evaluation Guidance for GEF Financed Projects. Specifically, the TE will focus on verification and assessment of implementation and results, accountability, identification of project’s successes in order to promote replicability, actions necessary for consolidation and sustainability of results. Specific emphasis will be made on Lessons learned and informing the design of future projects.

The TE report promotes accountability and transparency and assesses the extent of project accomplishments.

1. **TE APPROACH & METHODOLOGY**

The TE report must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful.

The TE team will review all relevant sources of information including documents prepared during the preparation phase (i.e. PIF, UNDP Initiation Plan, UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure/SESP) the Project Document, project reports including annual 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 evaluation. The TE team will review the baseline and midterm GEF focal area Core Indicators/Tracking Tools submitted to the GEF at the CEO endorsement and midterm stages and the terminal Core Indicators/Tracking Tools that must be completed before the TE field mission begins.

The TE team is expected to follow a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with the Project Team, government counterparts (the GEF Operational Focal Point), Implementing Partners, the UNDP Country Office(s), the Regional Technical Advisor, direct beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

Engagement of stakeholders is vital to a successful TE. Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities, including but not limited to executing agencies, senior officials and task team/component leaders, key experts and consultants in the subject area, Project Board, project beneficiaries, academia, local government and CSOs, etc. Additionally, the TE team is expected to conduct field missions to up to 4 locations, including the following project sites (Kakheti region – Lagodekhi PAs, Samtskhe-Javakheti region – Borjomi-Kharagauli PA’s, Ajara Autonomous Republic – Machakehla NP, Kvemo Kartli region - Algeti PAs).

The specific design and methodology for the TE should emerge from consultations between the TE team and the above-mentioned parties regarding what is appropriate and feasible for meeting the TE purpose and objectives and answering the evaluation questions, given limitations of budget, time and data. Therefore, the evaluation team can determine and suggest the most suitable methods and tools for collecting and analysing data. The TE team must use gender-responsive methodologies and tools and ensure that gender equality and women’s empowerment, as well as other cross-cutting issues and SDGs are incorporated into the TE report.

The final methodological approach including interview schedule, field visits and data to be used in the evaluation must be clearly outlined in the TE Inception Report and be fully discussed and agreed between UNDP, stakeholders and the TE team.

The final report must describe the full TE approach taken and the rationale for the approach making explicit the underlying assumptions, challenges, strengths and weaknesses about the methods and approach of the evaluation.

1. **DETAILED SCOPE OF THE TE**

The TE will assess project performance against expectations set out in the project’s Logical Framework/Results Framework (see ToR Annex A). The TE will assess results according to the criteria outlined in the Guidance for TEs of UNDP-supported GEF-financed Projects *(*<https://erc.undp.org/pdf/TE_GuidanceforUNDP-supportedGEF-financedProjects.pdf> and the [‘GEF’s Guidelines for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of Full-Size Projects (2023)’](https://www.gefieo.org/evaluations/terminal-evaluations-2023)

The Findings section of the TE report will cover the topics listed below. A full outline of the TE report’s content is provided in ToR Annex C.

The asterisk “(\*)” indicates criteria for which a rating is required.

Findings

1. Project Design/Formulation

* National priorities and country driven-ness
* Theory of Change
* Gender equality and women’s empowerment
* Social and Environmental Standards (Safeguards)
* Analysis of Results Framework: project logic and strategy, indicators
* Assumptions and Risks
* Lessons from other relevant projects (e.g. same focal area) incorporated into project design
* Planned stakeholder participation
* Linkages between project and other interventions within the sector
* Management arrangements

1. Project Implementation

* Adaptive management (changes to the project design and project outputs during implementation)
* Actual stakeholder participation and partnership arrangements
* Project Finance and Co-finance
* Monitoring & Evaluation: design at entry (\*), implementation (\*), and overall assessment of M&E (\*)
* Implementing Agency (UNDP) (\*) and Executing Agency (\*), overall project oversight/implementation and execution (\*)
* Risk Management, including Social and Environmental Standards (Safeguards)

1. Project Results

* Assess the achievement of outcomes against indicators by reporting on the level of progress for each objective and outcome indicator at the time of the TE and noting final achievements
* Relevance (\*), Coherence (\*), Effectiveness (\*), Efficiency (\*) and overall project outcome (\*)
* Sustainability: financial (\*) , socio-political (\*), institutional framework and governance (\*), environmental (\*), overall likelihood of sustainability (\*)
* Country ownership
* Gender equality and women’s empowerment
* Cross-cutting issues (poverty alleviation, improved governance, climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster prevention and recovery, human rights, capacity development, South-South cooperation, knowledge management, volunteerism, etc., as relevant)
* Knowledge Management and Learning
* GEF Additionality
* Catalytic Role / Replication Effect
* Progress to impact

Main Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations and Lessons Learned

* The TE team will include a summary of the main findings of the TE report. Findings should be presented as statements of fact that are based on analysis of the data.
* The section on conclusions will be written in light of the findings. Conclusions should be comprehensive and balanced statements that are well substantiated by evidence and logically connected to the TE findings. They should highlight the strengths, weaknesses and results of the project, respond to key evaluation questions and provide insights into the identification of and/or solutions to important problems or issues pertinent to project beneficiaries, UNDP and the GEF, including issues in relation to gender equality and women’s empowerment.
* Recommendations should provide concrete, practical, feasible and targeted recommendations directed to the intended users of the evaluation about what actions to take and decisions to make. The recommendations should be specifically supported by the evidence and linked to the findings and conclusions around key questions addressed by the evaluation.
* The TE report should also include lessons that can be taken from the evaluation, including best practices in addressing issues relating to relevance, performance and success that can provide knowledge gained from the particular circumstance (programmatic and evaluation methods used, partnerships, financial leveraging, etc.) that are applicable to other GEF and UNDP interventions. When possible, the TE team should include examples of good practices in project design and implementation.
* It is important for the conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned of the TE report to incorporate gender equality and empowerment of women.

The TE report will include an Evaluation Ratings Table, as shown below:

**ToR Table 2: Evaluation Ratings Table for *(project title)***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) | Rating[[73]](#footnote-73) |
| M&E design at entry |  |
| M&E Plan Implementation |  |
| Overall Quality of M&E |  |
| Implementation & Execution | Rating |
| Quality of UNDP Implementation/Oversight |  |
| Quality of Implementing Partner Execution |  |
| Overall quality of Implementation/Execution |  |
| Assessment of Outcomes | Rating |
| Relevance |  |
| Coherence |  |
| Effectiveness |  |
| Efficiency |  |
| Overall Project Outcome Rating |  |
| Sustainability | Rating |
| Financial resources |  |
| Socio-political/economic |  |
| Institutional framework and governance |  |
| Environmental |  |
| Overall Likelihood of Sustainability |  |

1. **TIMEFRAME**

The total duration of the TE will be approximately *25 days* over a time period of *16 weeks* starting on *(June 10th)*. The tentative TE timeframe is as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Timeframe | Activity |
| *15.05.2024* | Application closes |
| *30.05.2024* | Selection of TE team |
| *10.06.-25.06.2024* | Preparation period for TE team (handover of documentation) |
| *30.06.2024 (4 days)* | Document review and preparation of TE Inception Report |
| *05.07.2024* | Finalization and Validation of TE Inception Report; latest start of TE mission |
| *15-26.07.2024* | TE mission: stakeholder meetings, interviews, field visits, etc. |
| *26.07.2024* | Mission wrap-up meeting & presentation of initial findings; earliest end of TE mission |
| *16.08.2024* | Preparation of draft TE report |
| *16.08-06.09.2024* | Circulation of draft TE report for comments |
| *13.09.2024* | Incorporation of comments on draft TE report into Audit Trail & finalization of TE report |
| *20.09.2024* | Preparation and Issuance of Management Response |
| *27.09.2024* | Expected date of full TE completion |

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

1. **TE DELIVERABLES**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| # | Deliverable | Description | Timing | Responsibilities |
| 1 | TE Inception Report | TE team clarifies objectives, methodology and timing of the TE | No later than 2 weeks before the TE mission: *(by 05.07.2024)* | TE team submits Inception Report to Commissioning Unit and project management |
| 2 | Presentation | Initial Findings | End of TE mission: *(26.07.2024)* | TE team presents to Commissioning Unit and project management |
| 3 | Draft TE Report | Full draft report *(using guidelines on report content in ToR Annex C)* with annexes | Within 3 weeks of end of TE mission: *(16.08.2024 date)* | TE team submits to Commissioning Unit; reviewed by RTA, Project Coordinating Unit, GEF OFP |
| 5 | Final TE Report\* + Audit Trail | Revised final report and TE Audit trail in which the TE details how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final TE report *(See template in ToR Annex H)* | Within 1 week of receiving comments on draft report: *13.09.2024)* | TE team submits both documents to the Commissioning Unit |

\*All final TE reports will be quality assessed by the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (IEO). Details of the IEO’s quality assessment of decentralized evaluations can be found in Section 6 of the UNDP Evaluation Guidelines.[[74]](#footnote-74)

1. **TE ARRANGEMENTS**

The principal responsibility for managing the TE resides with the Commissioning Unit - . The Commissioning Unit for this project’s TE is UNDP Georgia. *(*

The Commissioning Unit will contract the evaluators and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the TE team. The Project Team, including UNDP project coordinator and CNF Project Manager, will be responsible for liaising with the TE team to provide all relevant documents, set up stakeholder interviews, and arrange field visits.

1. **TE TEAM COMPOSITION**

A team of two independent evaluators will conduct the TE – one team leader (with experience and exposure to projects and evaluations in other regions) and one team expert, usually from the country of the project. The team leader will be responsible for the overall design and writing of the TE report, etc.) The team expert assess emerging trends with respect to regulatory frameworks, budget allocations, capacity building, work with the Project Team in developing the TE itinerary, supporting the field visits and interviews. Incl translation etc.)

The evaluator(s) cannot have participated in the project preparation, formulation and/or implementation (including the writing of the project document), must not have conducted this project’s Mid-Term Review and should not have a conflict of interest with the project’s related activities.

The selection of evaluators will be aimed at maximizing the overall “team” qualities in the following areas: (Adjust the qualifications as needed and provide a weight to each qualification. In most cases, the qualifications for the team leader and those for the team expert will differ. Therefore, there should be two different lists of qualifications or separate ToRs.)

Education

* Master’s degree in Biodiversity Conservation, Natural Resource Management, Environmental Management or other closely related field;

Experience

* At least 10 years of experience in evaluating projects and/or providing consultancy or management services to environmental projects preferably in biodiversity conservation, protected areas management or financing.
* Relevant experience with results-based management evaluation methodologies;
* Competence in adaptive management, as applied to environmental projects preferably in biodiversity conservation, protected areas management or financing.
* Experience working in UNDP/GEF or other international development agencies’ projects, preferably in protected areas and/or biodiversity conservation in the region/country.
* Experience in relevant technical areas for at least *10 years;*
* Demonstrated understanding of issues related to gender*;* experience in gender responsive evaluation and analysis;
* Excellent communication skills;
* Demonstrable analytical skills;
* Project evaluation/review experience within United Nations system, as well as Knowledge of the institutional arrangements and politics underpinning the protected areas of Georgia is a will be considered an asset.

Language

* Fluency in written and spoken English.

1. **EVALUATOR ETHICS**

The TE team will be held to the highest ethical standards and is required to sign a code of conduct upon acceptance of the assignment. This evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG ‘Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation’. The evaluator must safeguard the rights and confidentiality of information providers, interviewees and stakeholders through measures to ensure compliance with legal and other relevant codes governing collection of data and reporting on data. The evaluator must also ensure security of collected information before and after the evaluation and protocols to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of sources of information where that is expected. The information knowledge and data gathered in the evaluation process must also be solely used for the evaluation and not for other uses without the express authorization of UNDP and partners.

1. **PAYMENT SCHEDULE**

* 20% payment upon satisfactory delivery of the final TE Inception Report and approval by the Commissioning Unit
* 40% payment upon satisfactory delivery of the draft TE report to the Commissioning Unit
* 40% payment upon satisfactory delivery of the final TE report and approval by the Commissioning Unit and RTA (via signatures on the TE Report Clearance Form) and delivery of completed TE Audit Trail

Criteria for issuing the final payment of 40%[[75]](#footnote-75):

* The final TE report includes all requirements outlined in the TE TOR and is in accordance with the TE guidance.
* The final TE report is clearly written, logically organized, and is specific for this project (i.e. text has not been cut & pasted from other TE reports).
* The Audit Trail includes responses to and justification for each comment listed.

1. **APPLICATION PROCESS[[76]](#footnote-76)**

The project uses the GPN/ExpRes ONE ROSTER selection process with applicable recruitment rules and procedures in relation to hiring a consultant on IC contract.

### Annex 2 Evaluation Questions Matrix

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Evaluative Criteria Questions** | **Indicators** | **Sources** | **Methodology** |
| Relevance: How does the project relate to the main objectives of the GEF Focal area, and to the environment and development priorities at the local, regional and national level? | | | |
| To what extent are the project's objectives consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, national priorities and policies, global priorities and partners' and GEF policies and priorities? | Adequacy of activities in relation to policies and stakeholders’ needs.  Alignment of project objective and outcomes with policy objectives.  Alignment of projects strategy and theory of change with country situation and national priorities. | Conventions, Project Document, UNDP Country Programme, sector policies and regulatory frameworks, regional agreements and programmes | Interviews of stakeholders / beneficiaries  Interviews steering committee members  Review of documents |
| To what extent were decision-making processes during the project’s design phase reflecting national priorities and needs?  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, considered during project design processes? | Effectiveness of partnerships arrangements since inception, co-financing budget execution | Project Document, Inception Report, PIRs, minutes of SC meetings, TOC. | Document review, interviews with government agency stakeholders and project partners, analysis. |
| How relevant is the project strategy to the situation in the project area/ national context and circumstances?  Does it provide the most effective route towards expected/intended results?  Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated into the project design? | Coherence between project design and implementation – what changes have had to be made. Should changes have been made? Level of project resources assigned to tasks. | Project Document, Inception Report, Consultant’s studies and reports, minutes of Steering Committee/PEB and Technical Working Groups  MTR & Management Response | Document review, interviews with government agency stakeholders and project partners, analysis. |
| What was/is the problem addressed by the project and the underlying assumptions?  What has been the effect of any incorrect assumptions or changes to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document?  Was the problem correctly identified? | Suitability of specific components of the project to address issues and achieve results areas. Changes to the strategy, changes to the interventions. Completeness of interventions by mid-term. | Project Document, Inception Report, Work Plans, PIR and NSC/PEB minutes of meetings, Consultants reports, MTR report. | Documents, interviews with stakeholders, project implementing partners, PMU and project Consultants. |
| Does the project’s Theory of Change reflect the complexity, uncertainty and framework of national government agencies? | Review MTR TOC and test hypothesis against SRF.  Project TOC causal pathways, outputs and outcomes, emergent or unidentified risks, weak links in the cause and effect relationships | MTR TOC, Project Document strategy, risk register, field mission findings, PMU, implementing partners | Discussion and analysis |
| To what degree is the project’s implementation a participatory 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? If so, how is this achieved? | Gender disaggregated data, level of co-financing commitment/ expenditure, workshop and meeting attendance, degree of ownership of project community-based/ civil society initiatives | Project reports, PIR, workshop reports, co-financing records, SC meeting minutes | Documents, interviews with stakeholders, project implementing partners. |
| Do the legal frameworks, policies, governance structures and processes pose risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project benefits? | National policy priorities and strategies, as stated in official documents. Approved policy and legislation related to biodiversity, management planning, climate change, budgets, etc. | National policy and regulatory framework documents | Document review, interviews with high-level project partners. |
| Effectiveness: To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved? | | | |
| To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved? | SRF indicators & EOP targets, TOC | Project Document, SRF, PIRs, results, MTR report, Capacity Assessment Scorecard, METT score values, Management Effectiveness Assessment plans (Species and ecosystem state indicators) | Document review, analysis, interviews with stakeholders and beneficiaries |
| To what extent did the project contribute to the Country Programme outcomes and outputs, the SDGs, the UNDP Strategic Plan and Country Programme, GEF strategic priorities, and national development priorities? | Alignment and synergies of outcomes | Project Document, CPAP, SDGs, GEF strategic priorities, Capacity Assessment Scorecard, METT score values, Management Effectiveness Assessment plans | Document review, high-level stakeholder interviews, analysis |
| What factors have contributed to the achieving or not achieving intended outcomes and outputs? Could the project include alternative strategies? | Progress towards results, efficiency of project strategy, adjustments to strategy  Number of key priorities that have been met through the project  Assumptions not met / unpredictable effects | SRF, Project Document, PIR, risk log, MTR report & Management Response | Document review, interviews, analysis |
| Has the project produced unintended results - positive or negative? If there are negative results, what mitigation activities are in place? | Progress towards results, efficiency of project strategy, adjustments to strategy  Number of key priorities that have been met through the project  Assumptions not met / unpredictable effects | SRF, Project Document, PIR, risk log, MTR report & Management Response | Document review, interviews, analysis |
| To what extent the project has demonstrated: a) scaling up, b) replication, c) demonstration, and/or d) production of public good | Number of relevant initiatives not directly financed by the project, take up of initiatives outside the project realm | PIR, other project reports | Document review, interview with PMU, UNDP, PEB, stakeholder, beneficiaries, government agencies |
| What evidence is there to suggest that the project will/ has achieve the outcomes and objective by the close of the GEF-fund? | Budget execution, realism of work plans, results to date | SRF indicator EOP targets, PMU, project documentation | Document review, interviews, field visits |
| Efficiency: Was the project implemented efficiently, in line with international and national norms and standards? | | | |
| To what extent has the project completed the planned activities and met or exceeded the expected outcomes in terms of achievement of global environmental and development objectives according to schedule, and as cost-effective as initially planned? | Activity modifications (removal / adding)  Budget revisions  Circumstances for no-cost extension  Functionality of M&E system  Compliance with UNDP-GEF rules | UNDP finance & project staff  Project Director interview  Annual reports, CDR | Interviews, analysis, field visits |
| To what extent were project funds and activities delivered in a timely manner? | As above | As above | As above |
| How did the project adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic? Did the project contribute to minimizing the socioeconomic effects of the Pandemic? | Implementation adjustments (e.g., remote training, more widespread use of technology for communication / decision-making | Interviews steering committee/ PEB members  Interviews of activity implementers  Interviews of project team  Covid-19 plan | As above |
| Financing and co-financing | | | |
| Are there variances between planned and actual expenditures? What are the main reasons?  To what extend did financial controls allow the project management to make informed decisions regarding the budget?  What extra resources has the project leveraged? How have they contributed to the project's ultimate objective? | Disbursement trends  Follow-up and adjustments of procurement plan  Co-financing complementarities / substitution  M&E system updates and annual/intra-year budgetary adjustments | UNDP finance & project staff  Project Director interview  Annual reports, CDR | Interviews, analysis |
| Implementation, Oversight and Execution | | | |
| To what extent has UNDP delivered effectively on activities related to project identification, concept preparation, appraisal, preparation of detailed proposal, approval and start-up, oversight, supervision, completion and evaluation?  To what extent has the Implementing Partner effectively managed and administered the project's day-to-day activities? How was UNDP's overall oversight and supervision? | Changes in UNDP staff  Periodicity of technical meetings with project team & relevant support / timeliness of recruitments  Changes in project team staff  Activity / staff / service payment delays… | Annual reports, PIR  UNDP, MEPA & APA & project team interviews  CDR | Interviews, document review, analysis |
| Sustainability: To what extent are there financial, institutional, socio-political, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results? | | | |
| How are risks monitored and managed? | Project risk log in QUANTUM and management responses, communication with partners and stakeholders, change over from ATLAS to QUANTUM | Project Document, Annual Project Review/PIRs and the QUANTUM Risk Register, project communications strategy, MTR & Management Response | Review, interviews, analysis |
| What is the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once the GEF assistance ends? | Public and private sectors, income generating activities, and other funding that will be adequate financial resources for sustaining project’s outcomes) | National policies and plans, local policies and plans, NGO feedback, private sector feedback, project exit arrangements. Consultants and service providers reports | Review, interviews, analysis, examination of CNF |
| What are the long-term socio-political risks to the outcomes of the project? | Partner and stakeholder ownership, public / stakeholder awareness in support of the long-term objectives, sharing of information on risks, adjustments to interventions to address specific risks | National policies and plans, local policies and plans, NGO feedback, private sector feedback, project exit arrangements. Consultants and service providers reports | Review, interviews, analysis |
| What are the environmental risks to the sustainability of the project’s outcomes? How are these managed and mitigated? | Climate data and forecasts. National disaster risk reduction strategies and plans | National data, policies and plans | Review and analysis, field visits |
| Gender equality and women’s empowerment: How did the project contribute to gender equality and women’s empowerment? | | | |
| How were gender and human rights considerations integrated in the project's design, including analysis, implementation plan, indicators, targets, budget, timeframe and responsible party?  To what extent has the project contributed to gender equality, the empowerment of women and human rights of disadvantaged or marginalized groups?  To what extent did women, poor, indigenous, persons with disabilities, and other disadvantaged or marginalized groups participate and benefit from the project?  Was the UNDP Gender Marker rating assigned to the project document realistic and backed by the findings of the gender analysis?  Is there any potential negative impact on gender equality, women's empowerment, disadvantaged or marginalized groups? If so, what can be done to mitigate this?  To what extent was the SESP realistic, followed and monitored.  Were gender related/ affecting activities, gender-blind, -negative, -targeted, -responsive, - transformational? | M&E system covering gender  Activity adaptability as per gender and target beneficiaries’ types  Degree of project targeting of vulnerable people  Number of women & vulnerable people that were direct beneficiaries from project’s results  Level of participation of vulnerable groups & women in activities’ operationalization  Safeguarding actions and activities  FPIC | Gender-specific & marginalized group interviews (focus groups)  Project team interview  Municipalities interviews  Annual reports  SESP, MTR & Management Response | Documentation review, interviews, field visits, analysis |
| Other cross-cutting issues | | | |
| How have the project activities contributed to poverty reduction and sustaining livelihoods?  To what extent has the project contributed to better preparations to cope with disasters or mitigate risk, and/or addressed climate change mitigation and adaptation?  To what extend has the project incorporated capacity development activities? Were results achieved? | Increased resources through improved technology (& capacity building) / diversification  Pilot-site appropriation and empowerment | Interviews project staff  Interviews final beneficiaries  Interviews community members / representatives | Documentation review, interviews, field visits, analysis |
| Stakeholder engagement and partnerships | | | |
| Where all key stakeholders identified, were they categorised correctly?  To what extent do project stakeholders share a common understanding and are involved in the decision-making process of the project?  To what extent did stakeholder's participation mechanisms in place lead to empowerment and joint ownership of the project? What should be done better to increase their participation and engagement? | Degree of active participation in project activities / capacity building training  Project responsiveness re. final beneficiary/community needs  Degree of participation of stakeholders in project (annual) planning | Project staff & MEPA & APA interviews  Interviews of community representatives | Documentation review, interviews, field visits, analysis |
| Results framework | | | |
| To what extent the project's objectives and components are clear, practicable and feasible within its time frame?  Was there a clearly defined and robust Theory of Change?  Were the indicators in the Results Framework SMART? | Number of activities that were amended / terminated and reasons  Follow-up of Capacity Score Card indicators  Changes of indicators during implementation, number of indicators not assessed  Usability of baseline studies  Cost-effectiveness of indicators | Interviews project team  Interviews of ministry  Interviews steering committee members, SRF/ log frame  Project strategy, MTR TOC | Documentation review, interviews, field visits, analysis |
| Monitoring and evaluation | | | |
| To what extent did the Monitoring systems allow the collection, analysis and use of information to track the project's progress, risks and opportunities toward reaching its objectives and to guide management decisions?  Were the budget and responsibilities clearly identified and distributed? | Level of functionality of M&E system; updating and effective integration into decision-making (planning + adjustments)  Cost effectiveness of indicators | Interviews project team, RTA, UNDP, MTR | Documentation review, interviews, field visits, analysis |
| Risk Management, Social and Environment Standards and Adaptive Management | | | |
| To what extent were risks (both threats and opportunities) properly identified and managed?  To what extent did the project maximize social and environmental opportunities and benefits and ensured that adverse social and environmental risks and impacts were avoided, minimized, mitigated, and managed? What "safeguards" did the project implement?  Were the project's changes based on evidence? Were they properly managed? | Updating of assumptions and risks realistic  Relevant project implementation changes  M&E system operationality | Project team interviews, UNDP interview, QUANTUM risk log, PIRs, RTA, MTR | Documentation review, interviews, field visits, analysis |
| GEF additionality | | | |
| To what extent has the project lead to additional outcomes?  Global Environmental Benefits  Livelihood improvements and/or social benefits  Innovation Additionality | Overall increase / stabilization of ecosystem, revenue flows to PAs, revenue flows & capture to local communities, government subventions to PAs, flow of public goods | MoA, MoE, other implementing partners  Interviews project team  Annual reports  CPAP, SDGs, GEF strategic priorities, Capacity Assessment Scorecard, METT score values, Management Effectiveness Assessment plans | Documentation review, interviews, field visits, analysis |
| Impact: Are there indications that the project has contributed to, or enabled progress toward reduced environmental stress and/or improved ecological status? | | | |
| To what extent are there indications that the project has contributed to, or enabled progress toward increased financial stability of the PA system and has this improved conservation management and improved local communities’ livelihoods and reduced their risks | Specific changes to sector policies and operational practices  Reduction of pressures, (through behavior change and threat reduction and mitigation) | Technical reports  Monitoring reports  Interviews of implementing partners, NGOs & community representatives, Capacity Assessment Scorecard, METT score values, Management Effectiveness Assessment plans | Documentation review, interviews, field visits, analysis |

### Annex 3 Signed Consultants Form

**Evaluators/Consultants:**

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

**MTR Consultant Agreement Form**

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

Name of Consultant: **Francis Hurst**

Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

Signed atMoncarapacho, Portugal on 10th July, 2024

Signature: **Francis Hurst**

**Evaluators/Consultants:**

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

**MTR Consultant Agreement Form**

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

Name of Consultant: **Irakli Kobulia**

Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

Signed at Tbilisi, Georgia on Friday 10 July, 2024

Signature: A close-up of a signature

Description automatically generated **Irakli Kobulia**

### Annex 4 Signed TE Report Clearance Form

**Terminal Evaluation Report for** *(Project Title & UNDP PIMS ID*) **Reviewed and Cleared By:**

**Commissioning Unit (M&E Focal Point)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Regional Technical Advisor, Nature Hub, BPPS**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

### Annex 5 List of Documents Reviewed

SESP

Project Document & Annexes

Project Inception report

PIR 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 (draft)

CNF Quarterly Reports – 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023

MTR Report & Audit Trail

MTR Management Response

Country programme document for Georgia (2016-2020)

Country programme document for Georgia (2021–2025)

CNF Audit 2022 & 2024

PEB Minutes of Meetings 1 to 10

HACT Micro-Assessment CNF 2024

Responsible Party Agreements – 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024

Oversight Mission Reports, Project Coordinator – 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024

Ecosystem Service Valuation and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Investment in Georgian Protected Areas & Contract Documents

SMART Implementation & Contract Documents

Forest Ecological Monitoring in Tusheti Protected Landscape Report & Contract Documents

Technical Assistance for feasibility assessment of a Business Services Yard (BSY) for the sale of wood products at Nedzvl Managed Reserve (NMR) & Contract Documents

Technical assistance to conduct monitoring of the state of Sweet Chestnut and Chestnut Blight in Mtirala and Kintrishi Protected Areas in Georgia -National Expert & Contract Documents

Technical Assistance Provided for the Revision of the Management Plan and Elaboration of respective Operational Plan of the Lagodekhi Protected Areas in Georgia & Contract Documents

Monitoring of Short-listed Species Indicators (mammals, pastures, invasive species) in 2021 in Selected Protected Areas in Georgia & Contract Documents

Technical Assistance Provided for the Elaboration of the Accounting Policy Document of the Agency of Protected Areas in Georgia & Contractual Documents

Create Online Training Platform and prepare up to 10 priority online training programs for PA system of Georgia & Contractual Documents

Technical Assistance Provided for the Revision of the Management Plan and Elaboration of respective Operational Plan of the Mtirala National Park in Georgia & Contractual Documents

Monitoring of Species Indicators (birds) in 2021 in Selected Protected Areas in Georgia & Contractual Documents

SUPPORT IN INTRODUCTION OF SMART TEHCNOLOGY AND CONDUCT ONLINE TRAINIGS IN 12 TARGET PAs & Contractual Documents

Technical Assistance to conduct phytopathological research and elaborate applicable recommendations for forest recovery in Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park (BKNP)- International Expert & Contractual Documents

International Technical Assistance provider to conduct a Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment and Prepare Adaptation Plans for pilot target PAs in Georgia – Tusheti PAs, Kazbegi NP and Pshav-khevsureti NP & Contractual DocumentsMonitoring of Brown Trout (Salmo trutta) in Selected Protected Areas in Georgia Final report & Contract Documents

Technical Assessment and Implementation Plan for the Introduction of Entrance Fees at Mtirala National Park, Machakhela National Park and Kintrishi Protected Areas in Adjara & Contractual Documents

Technical Assistance to support the revision of the Management Plan and elaborate respective Operational Plan of the Tusheti Protected Landscape (TPLA) in Georgia & Contractual Documents

Technical assistance for an assessment of local community socio-economic benefits from six protected areas (PAs) focused on tourism and natural resource use and on support for local community income opportunities & Contractual Documents

Technical Assessment and Implementation Plan for the Introduction of Entrance Fees at Mtirala National Park, Machakhela National Park and Kintrishi Protected Areas in Adjara, UNDP-GEF PIMS6138 “Enhancing financial sustainability of the Protected Areas system in Georgia” & Contract Documents

Forest Ecological Monitoring in Mtirala and Kintrishi PAs & Contractual Documents

Technical Assistance to support the preparation of the Manual for the Procedures for Accounting and Financial Reporting Policy for the Agency of Protected Areas (APA) in Georgia & Contract Documents

Technical Monitoring of the Operational Effectiveness of CNF-supported Protected Areas in Georgia & Contractual Documents & Contract Documents

Technical Assistance to support conduct training on Fire Security for the Target PAs under the Agency of Protected Areas (APA) in Georgia & Contractual Documents & Contract Documents

Monitoring of lynx in Vashlovani PAs

Technical assistance to develop and implement Awareness Raising Program (ARP) for 2022 & Contract Documents

Technical Assistance for the development and coordination of community participatory monitoring of selected indicator species in target PAs & Contract Documents

Support successful hand-over to and effective management of the existing E-platform for professional online trainings by the final beneficiary & Contract Documents

Monitoring of Short-listed Species Indicators (Tur) in 2022 in Selected Protected Areas in Georgia & Contract DocumentsMonitoring of Brown Bear in 2022 in Selected Protected Areas in Georgia

Monitoring of Short-listed Species Indicators (Pastures, Invasive Plants) in 2022 in Selected Protected Areas in Georgia

Technical Assistance to support elaboration of detailed development plan for Biodiversity Monitoring Coordination Unit (BMCU) for Georgia

Monitoring of Species Indicators (birds) in 2022 in Selected Protected Areas in Georgia

System Level and Institutional Analysis of the Protected Areas System of Georgia and Recommendations for its Future Development & Contract Documents

Part 1 – System Analysis and Initial Recommendations for Improvements

Part 2 – Key Issues, Recommendations and Options for Enhancing the Protected Areas System

Grassland Assessment in Kazbegi National Park, 2023

Support APA and Tusheti PA administration to facilitate the process of leasing pastures in Tusheti National Park & Contract Documents

International expert to support with awareness raising and capacity building of Georgian PA system representatives on social-ecological effectiveness evaluations, Final Report

Identification and capacity building of potential service providers for extraction and transportation of timber resources to Nedvzi BSY

Technical Assistance to support elaboration and implementation of a capacity building campaign on local tourism products investment opportunities & Contract Documents

Technical Assistance to develop National Training Programme to support skills development and acquisition of required expertise for implementing effective management practice within the PA system of Georgia, Concept Paper & Final Report

Technical Monitoring of the Operational Effectiveness of CNF-supported Protected Areas in Georgia, 2023

Technical Monitoring of the Operational Effectiveness of CNF-supported Protected Areas in Georgia, 2023

Technical Assistance to provide Training of Trainers on Reporting and Monitoring in accordance with decree #629 of Government of Georgia for PA central and administrative units & Contract Documents

Technical Assistance to support development of action plan and piloting entrance fee in Mtirala and Lagodekhi PAs in Georgia, Concept, Inception, Introduction, Final

Technical Assistance to identify local climate refugia and develop the recommendations for effective management of identified sites (Kazbegi National Park, Tusheti Protected Areas and Tusheti Protected Landscape and Pshav-Khevsureti Protected Areas)

Supporting the Development and Piloting of Ecotourism Products and Services for Local Population Living Neary Protected Areas

Analysis of alternative revenue generation sources to be used (partially or wholly) for the local needs and development of protected areas of Georgia

### Annex 6 List of Persons Interviewed

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **#** | **Name** | **Institution** | **Position / role** |
| 1 | Elizabeth Messud | CNF | Executive Director |
| 2 | Tamar Pataridze | CNF | Regional Conservation Director, UNDP-GEF project manager |
| 3 | Tea Barbakadze | CNF | Country Director |
| 4 | Mariam Sulkhanishvili | CNF | Conservation and Social Officer |
| 5 | Irakli Shavgulidze | NACRES | Chair of NACRES. Project consultant/contractor for various studies, specifically on Biodiversity Monitoring |
| 6 | Maka Bitsadze | WWF Caucasus County Office | Protected Area Programme Coordinator at WWF Caucasus PO; PEB invited member |
| 7 | Rusudan Tchotchua | NGO Ecotone | Project consultant in studies a) Socio-economic assessment and b) Entrance Fee introduction |
| 8 | Carlo Amirgulashvili | MEPA. Biodiversity and Forestry Department | Head of the Biodiversity and Forestry Department (BFD), PEB member |
| 9 | Tamar Khakhishvili | APA | APA Deputy Chairman, Project national director |
| 10 | Giorgi Sulamanidze | APA / Lagodekhi PAs | Director / Project beneficiary |
| 11 | Zviad Khapava | APA / Algeti PAs | Director / Project beneficiary |
| 12 | David Khomeriki | APA / Matchakhela NP | Director / Project beneficiary |
| 13 | Levan Sabanadze | APA / Borjomi Kharagauli NP | Director / Project beneficiary |
| 14 | Stefan Michel | Independent expert | Institutional Assessment of PA System of Georgia |
| 15 | Mark Anstey | Independent expert | CTA |
| 16 | Hugo Van Zyl | International consultant | Key international consultant for Project Component 1: Enhancing Financial Sustainability of the PA system |
| 17 | Monica Moldovan | UNDP |  |
| 18 | Irakli Goradze | UNDP Georgia | Project Coordinator |
| 19 | Nino Antadze | UNDP Georgia | Energy and Environment Team Leader |
| 20 | Nils Christensen | UNDP Georgia | Deputy Resident Representative. Project board member |

### Annex 7 TE Itinerary

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **#** | **Date** | **Name** | **Institution** | **Type of meeting / Location** |
| 1 | 22 July | * Elizabeth Messud * Tamar Pataridze * Tea Barbakadze * Mariam Sulkhanishvili | CNF | Physical / Tbilisi |
| 2 | 23 July | Mark Anstey | Independent expert / CTA | Online |
| 3 | 23 July | Stefan Michel | Institutional Assessment of PA System of Georgia | Online |
| 4 | 24 July | Carlo Amirgulashvili | MEPA. Biodiversity Department | Physical / Tbilisi |
| 5 | 24 July | Rusudan Tchotchua | NGO Ecotone | Physical / Tbilisi |
| 6 | 25 July | Giorgi Sulamanidze | APA / Lagodekhi PAs | Physical / Lagodekhi |
| 7 | 26 July | Maka Bitsadze | WWF Caucasus County Office | Physical / Tbilisi |
| 8 | 26 July | Zviad Khapava | APA / Algeti PAs | Physical / Manglisi |
| 9 | 29 July | David Khomeriki | APA / Matchakhela NP | Physical / Matchakhela |
| 10 | 29 July | Irakli Goradze | UNDP Georgia | Physical / Batumi |
| 11 | 30 July | Levan Sabanadze | APA / Borjomi Kharagauli NP | Physical / Borjomi |
| 12 | 31 July | Irakli Shavgulidze | NACRES | Physical / Tbilisi |
| 13 | 31 July | Hugo Van Zyl | International consultant for Enhancing Financial Sustainability of the PA system | Online |
| 14 | 1 August | Tamar Khakhishvili | APA | Physical / Tbilisi |
| 15 | 1 August | * Nino Antadze * Nils Christensen | UNDP Georgia | Physical / Tbilisi |
| 16 | 9 August | Monica Moldovan | UNDP | Online |

### Annex 8 TE Rating Scales

|  |
| --- |
| Ratings for Outcome, Relevance, Coherence, Effectivenes, Efficiency |
| 6 = Highly Satisfactory (HS): The outcomes exceed targets and are highly relevant, coherent, and cost-effective. |
| 5 = Satisfactory (S): The level of outcomes achieved meets targets. The outcomes are relevant, coherent, and cost-effective. |
| 4 = Moderately Satisfactory (MS): The level of outcomes achieved was generally close to the targets. The majority of the targets were met or almost met, but some were not. The outcomes are generally relevant, coherent, and cost-effective. |
| 3 = Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): Overall, the level of outcomes achieved is lower than the targets, although some outcomes were substantially achieved. The outcomes are generally relevant but not sufficient given the costs or, alternatively, are generally cost-effective but not adequately relevant and coherent. |
| 2 = Unsatisfactory (U): The expected outcomes were not achieved, or achievement was substantially lower than expected, and/or the achieved outcomes are not relevant or coherent. Alternatively, the outcome was cost-ineffective compared to alternatives. |
| 1 = Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): A negligible level of outcomes was achieved and/or the project had substantial negative consequences that outweigh its benefits. |
| Unable to Assess (U/A): The available information does not allow assessment of the level of outcome achievement. |

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| Ratings for Sustainability |
| 6=Highly Likely (HL): There is negligible risk to continuation of benefits and based on the progress made so far it is expected that the long-term objectives of the project will be achieved. |
| 5=Likely (L): Either there is negligible risk to continuation of benefits or there are some risks, but the magnitude of their effect is too small and/or the probability that they will materialize is too small. Overall, it is likely that the net benefits of the project will continue. |
| 4=Moderately Likely (ML): There are some risks to sustainability, and they may have some effect on continuation of benefits if they materialize. However, probability of materialization of these risks is low. Net benefits are more likely to continue than abate. |
| 3=Moderately Unlikely (MU): There are significant risks to sustainability. The effect on continuation of benefits would be substantial if these risks materialize and the probability of materialization of these risks is significant. Overall, net benefits of the project are likely to abate. |
| 2=Unlikely (U): Because of the high risks it is unlikely that net benefits of the project will continue to accrue, and the progress made so far is likely to be lost. It is unlikely that the project will achieve its long-term objectives. |
| 1=Highly Unlikely (HU): It is expected that the project will not achieve its long-term objectives. Major risks have either already materialized and halted accrual of net benefits or have high probability of materializing soon and will halt accrual of net benefits when they materialize. |
| Unable to Assess (U/A): Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability. |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Ratings for Implementation/Execution | | |
| Rating | UNDP Implementation/Oversight | Implementing Partner Execution |
| 6 = Highly Satisfactory (HS): | Performance of the GEF Agency was exemplary. Project preparation and implementation were robust. The Agency ensured that relevant GEF policies were applied in project preparation and implementation. Project supervision was strong— the Agency identified and addressed emerging concerns in a timely manner. The Agency ensured that project implementation stayed on track and project activities were completed on time. | Performance of the executing entity was exemplary. Execution of project activities was timely and of high quality. Relevant GEF policies and requirements were adhered to. Guidance from the GEF Agency was followed, and any corrective actions required were taken promptly. Measures were undertaken to mitigate risks to sustainability, and steps were taken to support follow-up to the project. Project activities were completed on time. |
| 5 = Satisfactory (S): | Performance met expectations and did not have any salient weaknesses. Project preparation and implementation were robust, and relevant GEF policies were applied. The GEF Agency supervised the project well—it identified and addressed emerging concerns in a timely manner. The Agency ensured that project implementation was on track. | Performance met expectations and did not have any salient weaknesses. Execution of project activities was timely and of good quality. Relevant GEF policies and requirements were adhered to. Guidance from the GEF Agency was followed. Measures were undertaken to mitigate risks to sustainability of project outcomes. |
| 4 = Moderately Satisfactory (MS): | Performance had some weaknesses but met expectations overall. Project preparation and implementation were adequate and relevant GEF policies were applied, although there are some weak areas. Project supervision was adequate—the GEF Agency identified and addressed emerging concerns, although some may have been inadequately addressed. Project implementation had minor delays, and a few activities may have been dropped. | Performance had some weaknesses but met expectations overall. Execution of project activities was generally timely but with some instances of delay. Relevant GEF policies and requirements were adhered to, although some minor slip-ups may have been observed. Guidance from the GEF Agency was followed, and problems were fixed. There were some areas for improvement in execution. |
| 3 = Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): | Performance did not meet expectations, although there were some areas of solid performance. Project preparation and implementation had weaknesses, although these were not too severe. Project supervision was somewhat weak—although the GEF Agency identified most emerging concerns, many remained unaddressed or inadequately addressed. Project implementation was delayed, and a few activities were dropped or reduced in scale because of issues that were largely under Agency control. | Performance did not meet expectations, although there were some areas of solid performance. Execution of project activities was delayed, and executing entity capabilities observably limited project execution. Several slip-ups in adherence to GEF policies and requirements were observed. Guidance from the GEF Agency was generally followed and problems were fixed, but such actions usually were not timely. There were several areas for improvement in execution. |
| 2 = Unsatisfactory (U): | Performance did not meet expectations. Project preparation and implementation were weak. Project supervision was weak—emerging concerns were not identified in time and remained unaddressed or inadequately addressed. Activities were not implemented in time or were not undertaken. Project implementation was delayed, and several activities were dropped or reduced in scale. | Performance did not meet expectations. Execution of project activities was delayed, and at least some activities were dropped due to factors largely under the control of the executing entity. Many slip-ups were observed in adherence to GEF policies and requirements. Guidance from the GEF Agency was not put into practice, or was applied with considerable delay. |
| 1 = Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): | Performance had severe shortcomings. The GEF Agency mismanaged project implementation, and its supervision was poor. Emerging concerns were not identified in time, including those that should have been obvious. Although instances of mismanagement were discovered, corrective actions were not undertaken. Project activities were poorly implemented, and several had to be dropped. | Performance had severe shortcomings. There were several instances of mismanagement by the executing entity. Emerging concerns were not addressed in time, including those that should have been obvious. Most activities were very poorly executed and/or experienced delays, and some activities were dropped. GEF policies and requirements were not applied. |
| Unable to Assess (U/A):. | The available information is not sufficient to allow rating of performance | The available information is not sufficient to allow rating of performance. |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Plan and Implementation | | |
| Rating | M&E Plan | M&E Implementation |
| 6 = Highly Satisfactory (HS): | The M&E plan is a good practice and does not have any weaknesses. Its alignment with the project theory of change is robust. Complete baseline data have been provided. The specified indicators are appropriate, and arrangements for plan implementation are adequate. Overall, the M&E plan exceeds expectations and is exemplary | M&E plan implementation was excellent. Weaknesses in the M&E plan, if present, were addressed promptly. M&E activities were conducted in a timely manner, and data from M&E were used to improve project implementation. Overall, M&E implementation exceeds expectations and was exemplary. |
| 5 = Satisfactory (S): | The M&E plan is robust and has no or only minor weaknesses. Its alignment with the project theory of change is robust. Baseline data are provided or their collection is planned at project start. The specified indicators are appropriate, and arrangements for M&E plan implementation are adequate. The plan meets expectations. | M&E plan implementation was generally robust. Weaknesses in M&E were addressed in a timely manner. M&E activities were conducted in a timely manner, and data from M&E were used in improving project implementation. Overall, M&E implementation meets expectations. |
| 4 = Moderately Satisfactory (MS): | The M&E plan is solid overall. Its alignment with the project theory of change is solid. The specified indicators are generally appropriate, and arrangements for M&E plan implementation are adequate. There are areas where the M&E plan could be strengthened but, overall, it is adequate. | M&E plan implementation was generally robust, with some weaknesses. Weaknesses in M&E were generally addressed although some remained. Some M&E activities were delayed. M&E data were used for reporting but had little use in improving project implementation. Overall, M&E implementation meets expectations with some areas of low performance. |
| 3 = Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): | The M&E plan is weak overall, although it has strengths in some areas. Its alignment with the project theory of change is somewhat weak. The specified indicators are generally appropriate but additional indicators are required to adequately capture project results, and/or arrangements to gather data on indicators are not adequate. The plan needs several improvements to meet expectations. | M&E plan implementation was weak and/or did not address weaknesses in the original plan. Most M&E activities were completed, with some either dropped or delayed. M&E data were not reported in a timely manner, and there is little evidence to suggest that the data were used to improve project implementation. Overall, M&E implementation does not meet expectations, although there are some areas of adequate performance. |
| 2 = Unsatisfactory (U): | The M&E plan has severe shortcomings. Its alignment with the project theory of change is weak. No baseline data are provided nor is there any indication that these would be collected at project start. Indicators do not adequately address project outcomes and other results; relevant indicators have not been specified for several results. There are gaps in arrangements for M&E plan implementation. Either no budget or an inadequate budget has been provided for M&E. | M&E plan implementation was flawed and/ or did not address severe weaknesses in the original plan. Several M&E activities were either dropped or were incomplete. The data collection methodology was not sound. M&E data were not reported in a timely manner, and there is little evidence to suggest that the data were used to improve project implementation. M&E implementation does not meet expectations. |
| 1 = Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): | No M&E plan was prepared. | No, or negligible, M&E activity was implemented other than conduct of the project evaluation. |
| Unable to Assess (U/A): | Unable to assess because project documents are not available. | Unable to assess because the terminal evaluation does not cover M&E implementation adequately. |

### Annex 9 TE Indicator Analysis

| Description | Indicator | Baseline | Mid-term | End Project | TE Comment | SMART Criteria | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| S | M | A | R | T |
| **Objective: To secure long-term financial sustainability and effective management to conserve globally significant biodiversity of target protected areas in Georgia** | **Mandatory Indicator 1 (Output1.4.1 of UNDP SP):** Natural resources that are managed under a sustainable use, conservation, access and benefit-sharing  regime: a) Area of existing protected area under improved management (hectares)  (i.e. the total area of 12 KBAs targeted by the project) | 0 | 0 | 431,872 | The TE considers that this indicator was SMART, however, it reflects the confused objective of the project and a more appropriate indicator could have been selected. In part this is due to the expectations “to secure long-term financial sustainability” and the confused and overly complicated.  *MTR assessment: There is an a). but no b). ?*  *Means* ***to measure*** *is unclear – if METT is main basis then why target at MT is zero?*  *This lack of clarity is reflected in PIR reporting for this indicator*  *Issue: measurability METT measures only changes in effectiveness at PA level not at overall level – CAS would have been more appropriate here?*  *Issue – relevance (to whole system)* | Q | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| **Indicator 2:** # of direct project beneficiaries, sex disaggregated. (# of workers at targeted PAs with improved socio-economic conditions) | 0 | 310 | 500 | The indicator, in its mandatory form, is SMART. However, the project interpretation *“(# of workers at targeted PAs with improved socio-economic conditions*)” is questionable as to how this could be measured. It is not as simple as the CNF salary top up and “socio-economic conditions” would need a more detailed analysis of a range of factors. However, the more contentious issue would be that, although it is a worthy objective, its immediate relevance in measuring the “long-term financial sustainability” is somewhat obtuse.  *MTR assessment: The MTR team struggle to understand how the socio-economic conditions of PA staff is considered a key measure of progress towards the Objective (To secure long-term financial sustainability and effective management of PA system).*  *Issue: Why is this so relevant in this context?* | X | Q | Q | Q | ✓ |
| **Indicator 3:** Increased PA system financing as measured by the Financial Sustainability Scorecard | 43% | 50% | Increase to at least 55% | Scorecards are generally SMART providing an index measure. However, the efficacy of the Scorecard depends on the selected means of measuring and is not as simple as establishing a number of income streams. For instance, the TE would expect to see greater financial literacy at the protected area level.  As a matter of principle, an indicator should not include a verb (*increase*) because it presupposes the direction of change.  *MTR assessment: This indicator is standard and SMART – however, MTR team understanding is that not “undertaken by conducted by objective professionals” which may bring into question its objectivity. This needs clarifying/addressing by TE.*  *Issue: objectivity* | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| **Outcome 1: Financial sustainability of sub-system of PAs representing Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs).** | Indicator 4: Increase in long-term annual funding to target 12 PAs | USD 650,000 | USD 800,000 | USD 950,000 | While the indicator meets the SMART criteria the selection of targets is imprecise and a more strategic financial plan in place would be a better measure of the indicator.  MTR notes: *Unclear in terms of source or how it indicates project impact. Doesn’t say for example “due to increase in revenue generation” or “due to increase in state budget” or “due to additional CNF funds leveraged” etc.*  The TE agrees with this analysis – the targets make the indicator vague and open to a degree of different interpretations at best and *gaming* at worst which would appear to be the case because GEF funds were used and reported in the 2020 PIR in this indicator which is wrong. GEF funds should not appear in the indicators.  *MTR assessment: Indicator wording is general and not clear if referring to all funding (state, CNF and revenue, etc) or just CNF, etc. Not clear how the target figures were selected and what exactly is the basis for measuring/reporting.*  *These unclarities are reflected by the fact that in PIR GEF grant funds are included as part of “increase in annual long-term funding”. Issue: measurability* | Q | ✓ | ✓ | Q | ✓ |
| Indicator 5: Number of target PAs regularly receiving full financing support | 6 | 9 | 12 | As above and the “regularly” is ambiguous as is “full” given that PA Managers submit a list of needs (not costs) and the decision to supply those needs is made at a central level – so “full financing support” is not clear at the PA level.  *MTR assessment: Indicator is unclear – what precisely is meant my “full support” – this is mentioned in the project document numerous times but never exactly defined (though “light support” is defined on pg 11 footnote 14). Essentially this is a purely CNF activity but MoV only mentions APA records.*  *Issue: measurability.*  *It could also be questioned whether CNF inputs to supporting the PAs count as “sustainably financing” given the source is a sinking fund that will cease in 2030 – thus, do CNF funds really measure increases in the PA system sustainability?*  *Issue: relevance* | Q | ✓ | ✓ | Q | Q |
| Indicator 6: Increase in revenues generated from tourism activities in target PAs | USD102,500 | USD130,000 | USD200,000 | This would need to be calculated as profit or similar because it is not a calculation of the efficiency of these forms of revenue. Furthermore (and not advocating financial decentralization) it does not allow for a disaggregation of the management costs of increased tourist activities (e.g. supervision of tourism activities) which would be hard to calculate by a manger because the figures are effectively hidden at this level. This is a gross figure and does not take account of the costs of marketing, revenue collection, supervision, insurance, risk, etc….  *MTR assessment: This is the only indicator under this Outcome that really reflects a measure of change in PA system sustainable financing. However, not clear in prodoc how baseline was reached – is it figure for a sample year (or years) prior to project start – subsequently its not clear how to calculate MT and EoP targets. This unclarity is reflected in the PIR. In fact the baseline (as found out during MTR mission) was based on 2017, but PIR and MT figures are cumulative (mulita-year) which is not comparable. Issue: measurability. It is also noteworthy that no indicators for non-tourism revenue generation were included (i.e. resource use, state funds, offsets/compensation, PES, etc) – again a reflection of ambivalence / lack of conviction in terms of diversifying PA revenue streams in the long-term future.* | Q | Q | ✓ | Q | ✓ |
| **Outcome 2: Improved management and financial effectiveness demonstrated for targeted large-scale PAs.** | Indicator 7: Level of institutional capacities for financial-administrative planning and operational management planning as measured by Capacity Assessment Scorecard (CAS) values for target PAs | Average: 30%, including  Systemic 33%  Institutional 31%  Individual 21% | Average: 37%, including  Systemic 40%  Institutional 35%  Individual 30% | Average: 50%, including  Systemic 50%  Institutional 42%  Individual 44% | The Score Card provides an index figure.  The TE challenges the indicator which relates to the target PAs whereas the targets are more far reaching including systemic & institutional & the “target PAs” is not supported by the policy of not providing actual figures to the PA level (in fact there was a very low level of financial literacy at the PA level).  *MTR assessment: Standard CA scorecard –* | X | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Indicator 8: Level of management effectiveness of target PAs as measured by METT score values | BKNP - 48; LPA – 48; VPA – 56; TPA/TPL – 56/41; MNP – 48; JNP – 47; KNP – 33; ANP – 43; KPA – 45; PsKPA – 24; MachNP – 47 | METT scores for the 12 target PAs have increased by on average 4 points over the baseline | METT scores for the 12 target PAs have increased by on average 10 points over the baseline | The METT provides an index figure.  *MTR assessment: Standard ME tracking tool.* | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Indicator 9: Key biodiversity values are conserved and threats reduced by implementing harmonized Management Effectiveness Assessment plans (Species and ecosystem state indicators (baseline) have been included in the METT scorecards of each of the 12 targeted KBAs and are not repeated here to avoid redundancy. The project will aim to achieve non-deterioration/improvement in the population figures of those species, monitoring and reporting their state at final stage of project life.) | Current status of populations and ecosystems as per individual METT | Current status of populations and ecosystems as per individual baseline METT scorecards | Non-deterioration of populations of key species mentioned in the individual METT scorecards | The indicator is hard to comprehend. At best the indicator could be considered to be an activity.  *“The project will aim to achieve non-deterioration/improvement in the population figures of those species, monitoring and reporting their state at final stage of project life”* – is unrealistic within a 5-year project. Detecting change in complex biological systems on these short timescales is unrealistic and any attribution of change to a project intervention would be spurious at best as it would be impossible to isolate from lager systemic trends and drivers.  *MTR assessment: This indicator is quite wordy and difficult to exactly understand. Does it suggest that the inclusion of ME indicators in METT will provide basis to understand effectiveness of management and thereby allow adaption in future to improve management in the future – and thereby increase effectiveness in future? If so it is a little convoluted.*  *Also, how will inclusion of these ME indicators in the METT impact management adaption unless METT is part of some periodic review and adjustment process in the long term (post project)? Is that the intention? Finally, any indicator that intends to measure the impact on species / ecosystems through changes in a project such as this (short) lifetime is inherently unrealistic.*  *Altogether unclear on how the indicator measures the impact towards the Outcome.* | X | Q | X | Q | X |
| **Outcome 3: Knowledge management, and monitoring and evaluation contributes to increased awareness of biodiversity values.** | Indicator 10: Community, stakeholder and societal knowledge of and acceptance on biodiversity values of, threats to, and approval for target PAs | Public awareness and outreach is ad hoc, knowledge of and support for target PAs is limited, their importance and benefits are poorly communicated in society | At least 4,000 people have taken notice of, or participate in, at least 4 targeted awareness raising activities and/or materials | At least 10,000 people have been given opportunity to take notice of, or participate in, a variety of targeted awareness raising activities and materials on biodiversity values and benefits from Target PAs | The indicator is imprecise unless it was measured by a comprehensive survey – likely a Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) survey to be repeated baseline, mid-term and EOP. This would have been extremely expensive. The indicator itself links to biodiversity values but does not utilize the work of the Ecosystem Values study and does not relate to the primary objective which is PA financing. Given that the biodiversity monitoring amounts to a single survey event it is hard to understand how this could change perceptions of biodiversity because without repeat monitoring events it is not possible to indicate trends and therefore increase awareness. Furthermore, increased awareness is somehow diffuse and hard to understand how this could be turned into improved financial or management effectiveness.  *MTR assessment: This indicator fails in almost all ways the SMART criteria. Firstly, the indicator itself is unclearly worded so it is not very understandable. Secondly, the targets are bizarre (4000 people have taken notice of?)*  *Lastly, does it measure the expected impact of the Outcome? The answer to this is difficult partly because the expected impact of the outcome is also not well defined in the project document.*  *Main issue: relevance 2nd issue Measurability (taken notice of?)* | X | X | Q | X | Q |

* *Annexed in a separate file*: TE Audit Trail
* *Annexed in a separate file:* relevant terminal GEF/LDCF/SCCF Core Indicators or Tracking Tools, as applicable

1. CNF approximation [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Outputs have been abridged because of their complicated statements including justification, activities, means of implementation, etc… [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This output was dropped from the project. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Under GEF roles a MTR is discretionary in a Medium-Sized Project (MSP) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Draft PIR, 2024 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. https://www.coe.int/en/web/bern-convention/emerald-network [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. https://www.cbd.int/gbf [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Henceforth referred to as the “PA Finance project” or “the project”. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/documents/GEF/TE_GuidanceforUNDP-supportedGEF-financedProjects.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Project Document, p. 95 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Project Document, Annex G, pp. 86 - 90 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Project Document, Annex E, pp. 70 - 80 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Project Document, p. 6 - 7 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Project Document, p. 8 – 9, para. 10 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. The CNF has an endowment fund and a sinking fund (up to 2030) which has since been topped up until 2038. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. MTR Report, p. 3, para. 18 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. The Outputs have been abridged because of their complicated statements including justification, activities, means of implementation, etc… [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Pers. comm. UNDP PC [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Project Document, p. 37 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. *The Caucasus Nature Fund is a Conservation Trust Fund, established with funding and technical support from BMZ (through KfW), Conservation International, WWF Germany and the Critical Ecosystems Partnership Alliance in 2007. Programmatically operating in Georgia since 2009, CNF is governed by an independent board of directors who direct an Executive Director based in Tbilisi, Georgia. The board was fully supportive of the decision to pursue GEF-6 funds. A description of CNF’s mandate and operations can be found at following website:* [*http://caucasus-naturefund.org/*](http://caucasus-naturefund.org/) [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. CNF is acting as the Project Management Unit under a Responsible Partner Agreement with UNDP. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. *Ensuring Sufficiency and Predictability of Revenues for Georgia’s Protected Areas System, PIMS 4285, Atlas project number 00074318* [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Stakeholder Engagement Plan p. 22, Project Document and stakeholder list in annex F, pp. 81 – 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. MTR Final Report, p. 7 para. 44 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. <https://www.matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4208204?publication=0> [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. MTR Report, p. 7, para. 45 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. <https://apa.gov.ge/en/saagento/istoria> [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. At the time of the TE there is considerable uncertainty regarding the outcome of the October elections which is likely to have a significant impact upon the role of non-state actors and NGOs which until now have provided a considerable resource to the PAs. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. For instance, the Bank of Georgia is listed as a considerable co-financing partner, presumably through its corporate social and environmental responsibilities agreements, but it doesn’t make it to the stakeholder list unless grouped under the private sector. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Theory of Change Primer A STAP document, December 2019 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Project Document, Annex I [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Ensuring Sufficiency and Predictability of Revenues for Georgia’s Protected Areas System, Terminal Evaluation Report, p. xiv. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. MTR, p. 9, para. 50 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. MTR Report, p. 10, para. 55 [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timebound [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Project Document, pp. 21 - 22 [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Project Document, P. 36, para. 100 [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Ensuring sufficiency and predictability of revenues for Georgia’s protected areas system in Georgia UNDP/GEF, MSP 2010-16 [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Project Document, pp. 81 - 85 [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Project Document, p. 41, para. 122 [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. MTR Report, p. 17, para. 81 [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. ENHANCING FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROTECTED AREAS SYSTEM IN GEORGIA REPORT ON THE INCEPTION PHASE, December 2018 – March 2019, pp. 18 – 20 & Annex 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. MTR report, p. 17, para. 83 [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. ENHANCING FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROTECTED AREAS SYSTEM IN GEORGIA REPORT ON THE INCEPTION PHASE, December 2018 – March 2019, pp. 18 [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. UNDP-GEF MTR Management Response, Management response to the Midterm Review of the Enhancing financial sustainability of the Protected Areas (PA) system in Georgia, 30/12/2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. System Level and Institutional Analysis of the Protected Areas System of Georgia and Recommendations for its Future Development, Part 1 – System Analysis and Initial Recommendations for Improvements, July 20, 2023 & System Level and Institutional Analysis of the Protected Areas System of Georgia and Recommendations for its Future Development, Part 2 – Key Issues, Recommendations and Options for Enhancing the Protected Areas System, June 30, 2024 [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Draft PIR, 2024 [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. MTR Report, p. 11, para. 56 [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Project Document, pp. 35 – 37, para. 96 - 104 [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. For instance, making the PM position full time. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Project Document, Annex E, pp. 70 - 80 [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Project Document, p. 25, para. 65 [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. The Outputs have been abridged because of their complicated statements including justification, activities, means of implementation, etc… [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. (Species and ecosystem state indicators (baseline) have been included in the METT scorecards of each of the 12 targeted KBAs and are not repeated here to avoid redundancy. The project will aim to achieve non-deterioration/improvement in the population figures of those species, monitoring and reporting their state at final stage of project life.) [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. United Nations Office in Georgia, 2016. United Nations Partnership for Sustainable Development (framework document) – Georgia 2016-2020. UN House, Tbilisi, Georgia, 56 pp. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/publications/GEF-6-BD-strategy.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. MTR Report, pp. 9 – 10, para. 51 [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. See PEB MoM: 1st, 2nd, 3rd meetings. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. https://www.coe.int/en/web/bern-convention/emerald-network [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. https://www.cbd.int/gbf [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. For the avoidance of doubt, the TE considers that such a review would have needed to be much better resourced and to have had very high-level political approval. The MTR was correct to recommend the review, the project may not have fully understood the implications of such a review and APA responded reasonably in rejecting the subsequent report. The process still had utility and is the basis for a significant recommendation made by the TE. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Gunderson, L.H. (2000). Ecological resilience – in theory and application. Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics 31, 425-439. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Gunderson, L.H. and Holling, C.S. Eds. (2002). Panarchy: Understanding transformations in human and natural systems. Washington, DC. Island Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Project Document, Annex E, p. 71 [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. MTR Report, p. 10, para. 54 [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. An example of this can be seen in the SRF Indicator 6: Increase in revenues generated from tourism activities in target PAs. Arguably, this indicator has little utility as a metric to measure impact unless subject to greater scrutiny against a range of issues such as investment costs, profit, public utility, trade-offs with ecosystem goods and functions, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. The TE uses the term *financial literacy* because protected areas and biodiversity financing is a complex discipline and cannot be viewed simply through a profit and loss ledger but requires the multi-disciplinary approach as it encompasses value judgment, pricing, non-fungible assets, public good, externalized benefits which are not ordinarily nor easily priced, etc… A more reasonable approach might be to consider a value for money approach. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. The TE has the mandate to consider this incremental/additional cost reasoning (See p. 60 UNDP-GEF Guidelines on Conducting Terminal Evaluations), especially so as the Project document did not provide a coherent incremental reasoning. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. https://www.coe.int/en/web/bern-convention/emerald-network [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. https://www.cbd.int/gbf [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Outcomes, Effectiveness, Efficiency, M&E, Implementation/Oversight & Execution, Relevance and Coherence are rated on a 6-point scale: 6=Highly Satisfactory (HS), 5=Satisfactory (S), 4=Moderately Satisfactory (MS), 3=Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), 2=Unsatisfactory (U), 1=Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability is rated on a 6-point scale: 6=Highly Likely (HL), 5=Likely (L), 4=Moderately Likely (ML), 3=Moderately Unlikely (MU), 2=Unlikely (U), 1=Highly Unlikely (HU) [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Access at: <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/section-6.shtml> [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. The Commissioning Unit is obligated to issue payments to the TE team as soon as the terms under the ToR are fulfilled. If there is an ongoing discussion regarding the quality and completeness of the final deliverables that cannot be resolved between the Commissioning Unit and the TE team, the Regional M&E Advisor and Vertical Fund Directorate will be consulted. If needed, the Commissioning Unit’s senior management, Procurement Services Unit and Legal Support Office will be notified as well so that a decision can be made about whether or not to withhold payment of any amounts that may be due to the evaluator(s), suspend or terminate the contract and/or remove the individual contractor from any applicable rosters. See the UNDP Individual Contract Policy for further details:

    <https://popp.undp.org/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/UNDP_POPP_DOCUMENT_LIBRARY/Public/PSU_Individual%20Contract_Individual%20Contract%20Policy.docx&action=default> [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Engagement of evaluators should be done in line with guidelines for hiring consultants in the POPP <https://popp.undp.org/SitePages/POPPRoot.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-76)