**Terms of Reference**

**The consultant on carrying out the mid-term evaluation of the UNDP/GEF Project**

**“Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity of Kazakhstani Part of Altai-Sayan Ecoregion”**

# 1. Introduction

## Standard UNDP/GEF Monitoring and Evaluation requirements

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) policy at the project level in UNDP/GEF has four objectives: i) to monitor and evaluate results and impacts; ii) to provide a basis for decision making on necessary amendments and improvements; iii) to promote accountability for resource use; and iv) to document, provide feedback on, and disseminate lessons learned. A mix of tools is used to ensure effective project M&E. These might be applied continuously throughout the lifetime of the project e.g. periodic monitoring of indicators, PIRs – or as specific time-bound exercise such as mid-term reviews, audit reports and final evaluations.

The evaluation is to be undertaken in accordance with the “GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy”(see <http://thegef.org/MonitoringandEvaluation/MEPoliciesProcedures/mepoliciesprocedures.html>) and the UNDP/GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy: (<http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html>).

Evaluations in the GEF explore five major criteria:

1. Relevance – the extent to which the activity is suited to local and national development priorities and organizational policies, including changes over time.
2. Effectiveness – the extent to which an objective has been achieved or how likely it is to be achieved.
3. Efficiency – the extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible.
4. Results – the positive and negative, and foreseen and unforeseen, changes to and effects produced by a development intervention. In GEF terms, results include direct project outputs, short-to medium term outcomes, and longer-term impact including global environmental benefits, replication effects and other, local effects.
5. Sustainability – the likely ability of an intervention to continue delivering benefits for an extended period of time after completion. Projects need to be environmentally as well as financially and socially sustainable.

## Project objectives

The Project includes series of activities aimed at softening and liquidating the most violent threats for biodiversity in PAs and enhancing PAs management effectiveness and their sustainable development. These activities will perform the role of improvement catalyst of all PAs system in Kazakhstan by means of implementing necessary reforms in the field of PAs management for achieving ecological, financial and institutional sustainability. The Project will be based on the existing basic conditions when financing additional costs from the funds given by GEF and declared co-financing from other sources. Co-financing is given by MA, other state agencies, Akimats, private sector and other donors. The Project will carry out the assigned tasks and obtain suitable results in the period of 5 years.

The long-term goal of the Project is to help secure the globally significant biodiversity species in Kazakhstan.

The main Project’s objective is to enhance effectiveness of national PAs system in Kazakhstan for biodiversity conservation by demonstrating sustainable and replicable approaches to management in PAs in Kazakhstani part of Altai-Sayan Ecoregion.

Within the limits of the Project it is supposed to achieve the following 5 results:

* The PAs network has been expanded and PAs management effectiveness has been enhanced;
* Public awareness level in the field of biodiversity conservation and PAs has been increased and support on all levels during PAs work on biodiversity conservation has been provided;
* The existing legal and institutional framework for the purpose of strengthening the national PAs system has been enhanced;
* Local population has been involved in activities on biodiversity conservation and alternative livelihoods in PAs and buffer zones have been supported;

Monitoring and the Project activities evaluation have been carried out. PAs entered into cooperation and positive results and the Project experience are being introduced into PAs of the RK work.

The project document was signed in January 2007. Implementation of the Project started in March 2007. The total project budget is US$ 18,734,400 with GEF financing of US$ 2,395,700. The executing agency for the project is the Forestry and Hunting Committee of the Ministry of Agriculture of the RK.

# 2. Objective of the Mid-Term Evaluation

##### Evaluation Audience

The mid-term evaluation of the UNDP/GEF Project “Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity of Kazakhstani Part of Altai-Sayan Ecoregion” is initiated by UNDP as the GEF Implementing Agency. It aims to provide managers (Forestry and Hunting Committee, PIU, UNDP-Kazakhstan Project Office and UNDP-GEF levels) with strategy and policy options for achieving the project’s expected results in a more effective and efficient manner and for replicating the results. It also provides the basis for learning and accountability for managers and stakeholders.

Purpose

The overall purpose of the evaluation is to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of project activities in relation to the stated objective so far, and to produce possible recommendations on how to improve the management of the project until its completion in December 2011.

Project performance will be measured based on the indicators of the project’s logical framework (see Annex 2). Many of these indicators relate to the reduction/prevention of the key threats to biodiversity in each of the three sites.

The Mid-term Evaluation serves as an agent of change and plays a critical role in supporting accountability. Its main objectives are:

1. To strengthen the adaptive management and monitoring functions of the project;
2. To ensure accountability for the achievement of the GEF objective;
3. To enhance organizational and development learning;
4. To enable informed decision-making.

Particular emphasis should be put on the current project results and the possibility of achieving all the objectives in the given timeframe, taking into consideration the speed, at which the project is proceeding. More specifically, the evaluation should assess:

###### Project concept and design

The evaluators will assess the project concept and design. He/she should review the problem addressed by the project and the project strategy, encompassing an assessment of the appropriateness of the objectives, planned outputs, activities and inputs as compared to cost-effective alternatives, examine relevance of the project’s outcomes/outputs and whether they provide the most effective route towards results. The executing modality and managerial arrangements should also be judged. The evaluator will assess the achievement of indicators and review the work plan, planned duration and budget of the project.

## Implementation

The evaluation will assess the implementation of the project in terms of quality and timeliness of inputs and efficiency and effectiveness of activities carried out. Also, the effectiveness of management as well as the quality and timeliness of monitoring and backstopping by all parties to the project should be evaluated. In particular the evaluation is to assess the Project team’s use of adaptive management in project implementation.

###### Project outputs, outcomes and impact

The evaluation will assess the outputs, outcomes and impact achieved by the project as well as the likely sustainability of project results. This should encompass an assessment of the achievement of the immediate objectives and the contribution to attaining the overall objective of the project against the Project’s logical framework (see Annex 2). The evaluation should also assess the extent to which the implementation of the project has been inclusive of relevant stakeholders and to which it has been able to create collaboration between different partners. The evaluation will also examine if the project has had significant unexpected effects, whether of beneficial or detrimental character.

The Mid-term Evaluation will also cover the following aspects:

###### Progress Towards Results

1. Changes in development conditions: Address the following questions, with a focus on the perception of change among stakeholders:

* Have critically endangered species been properly and adequately protected within the Biodiversity Conservation Project?
* Have there been changes in local stakeholders’ behavior that have contributed to improved conservation? If not, why not?
* Is there distinct improvement in biodiversity information turnover and use in decision-making among stakeholders of the Biodiversity Conservation Project?
* Has awareness on biodiversity conservation and subsequent public participation in biodiversity monitoring and management increased as a result of the project?
* Is there adequate territorial planning in place, or in progress, ensuring long-term conservation of biodiversity and cultural values?

1. Measurement of change: Progress towards results should be based on a comparison of indicators before and after (so far) the project intervention. Progress can also be assessed by comparing conditions in the project site to conditions in similar unmanaged sites;
2. Sustainability: Extent to which the benefits of the project will continue, within or outside the project domain, after it has come to an end. Relevant factors include for example: development of a sustainability strategy, establishment of financial and economic instruments and mechanisms, mainstreaming project objectives into the economy, etc;
3. Gender perspective: Extent to which the project accounts for gender differences when developing and applying project interventions. How are gender considerations mainstreamed into project interventions? Suggest measures to strengthen the project’s gender approach.

###### Project’s Adaptive Management Framework

1. Monitoring Systems: Assess the monitoring tools currently being used:

* Do they provide the necessary information?
* Do they involve key partners?
* Are they efficient?
* Are additional tools required?

Reconstruct baseline data if necessary[[1]](#footnote-1). Reconstruction should follow participatory processes and could be achieved in conjunction with a learning exercise[[2]](#footnote-2). Ensure the monitoring system, including performance indicators, at least meets GEF minimum requirements[[3]](#footnote-3). Apply SMART indicators as necessary. Apply the GEF Tracking Tool and provide a description of comparison with initial application of the tool.

1. Risk Management: Validate whether the risks identified in the project document and PIRs are the most important and whether the risk ratings applied are appropriate. If not, explain why. Describe any additional risks identified and suggest risk ratings and possible risk management strategies to be adopted. Assess the project’s risk identification and management systems:

* Is the UNDP-GEF Risk Management System[[4]](#footnote-4) appropriately applied (with particular emphasis on the financial risks related to the capitalization ratio for the Trust Fund)?
* How can the UNDP-GEF Risk Management System be used to strengthen project management?

1. Work Planning: Assess the use of the logical framework as a management tool during implementation and any changes made to it. Ensure the logical framework meets UNDP-GEF requirements in terms of format and content. What impact did the retro-fitting of impact indicators have on project management? Assess the use of routinely updated workplans. Assess the use of electronic information technologies to support implementation, participation and monitoring, as well as other project activities. Are work planning processes result-based[[5]](#footnote-5)? If not, suggest ways to re-orientate work planning. Consider the financial management of the project, with specific reference to the cost-effectiveness of interventions. Any irregularities must be noted.
2. Reporting: Assess how adaptive management changes have been reported by the project management. Assess how lessons derived from the adaptive management process have been documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners.

###### Underlying Factors

Assess the underlying factors beyond the project’s immediate control that influence outcomes and results. Consider the appropriateness and effectiveness of the project’s management strategies for these factors. Re-test the assumptions made by the project management and identify new assumptions that should be made. Assess the effect of any incorrect assumptions made by the project

###### UNDP Contribution

Assess the role of UNDP against the requirements set out in the UNDP Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results. Please consider (1) field visits; (2) Steering Committee meetings; (3) PIR preparation and follow-up; (4) GEF guidance. Consider the new UNDP requirements outlined in the UNDP User Guide[[6]](#footnote-6), especially the Project Assurance role, and ensure they are incorporated into the project’s adaptive management framework. Assess the contribution to the project from UNDP “soft” assistance (i.e. policy advice & dialogue, advocacy, and coordination). Suggest measures to strengthen UNDP’s soft assistance to the project management.

###### Partnership Strategy

Assess how partners are involved in the project’s adaptive management framework:

* Involving partners and stakeholders in the selection of indicators and other measures of performance
* Using already existing data and statistics
* Analysing progress towards results and determining project strategies.

Identify opportunities for stronger substantive partnerships. Assess how local stakeholders participate in project management and decision-making. Include an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the approach adopted by the project and suggestions for improvement if necessary. Consider the dissemination of project information to partners and stakeholders and if necessary suggest more appropriate mechanisms.

# 3. Scope of the Evaluation

Considering the length of the project, certain activities have begun at an earlier stage than others and in conducting the evaluation it is in the interests of the Project team and UNDP Kazakhstan that the evaluators dedicate more effort to evaluate progress in the areas which have been launched, or which have achieved significant progress or which have been identified by the Project team or UNDP Kazakhstan as problematic. In this regard, the project evaluators are asked to pay particular attention to:

* Implementation of educational programs in the Project territories (trainings and training modules for PAs staff, school educational programs);
* Implementation of management plans in the PAs in the Project territory;
* The development and implementation of biodiversity-friendly alternative livelihoods in productive landscapes surrounding the priority territories.

Due to the fact that the Biodiversity Conservation Project covers a large territory and involves many various stakeholders with differing, sometimes opposing interests, it would be valuable to the Project success and conservation if the evaluation team would assess during the mid-term evaluation the involvement of the stakeholders (partnerships) – to highlight any successful examples and to identify any risks or gaps in their involvement.

Ownership of the Project by the Forestry and Hunting Committee (FHC) will be one of the key factors in the Project’s success to achieve conservation and thus, the evaluators are asked to make an objective assessment of the ownership of the project outcomes/results by the FHC, as well as to provide recommendations to ensure this ownership by the end of the project in December 2011.

# 4. Products expected from the evaluation

The key product expected from this mid-term evaluation is a comprehensive analytical report in English and Russian that should, at least, include the following contents:

* Executive summary
* Brief description of the project
* Context and purpose of the evaluation
* Main conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned
* Introduction
* Project background
* Purpose of the evaluation
* Key issues addressed
* The outputs of the evaluation and how they will be used
* Methodology of the evaluation
* Structure of the evaluation
* The Project and its development context
* Project start and its duration
* Implementation status
* Problems that the project seeks to address
* Immediate and development objectives of the project
* Main stakeholders
* Results expected
* An analysis of the situation with regard to the outcomes, the outputs and the partnership strategy;
* Key findings (including best practice and lessons learned, assessment of performance)
* Project formulation
  + - Implementation approach
    - Country ownership
    - Stakeholders participation
    - Replication approach
    - Cost-effectiveness
    - UNDP comparative advantage
    - Linkages between the project and other interventions within the sector
    - Management arrangements
* Implementation
  + - Financial planning
    - Monitoring and evaluation
    - Execution and implementation modalities
    - Management by the UNDP country office
    - Coordination and operation issues
    - Identification and management of risks (adaptive management)
* Results
  + - Attainment of objective
    - Prospects of sustainability
* Conclusions and recommendations
* Corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project
* Actions to strengthen or reinforce benefits from the project
* Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives
* Suggestions for strengthening ownership, management of potential risks
* Lessons learned
* Good practices and lessons learned in addressing issues relating to effectiveness, efficiency and relevance.
* Annexes: TOR, itinerary, field visits, people interviewed, documents reviewed, etc.

The length of the mid-term evaluation report shall not exceed 30 pages in total (not including annexes).

# 5. Evaluation approach

An outline of an evaluation approach is provided below, however it should be made clear that the evaluation team is responsible for revising the approach as necessary. Any changes should be in-line with international criteria and professional norms and standards (as adopted by the UN Evaluation Group[[7]](#footnote-7)). They must be also cleared by UNDP before being applied by the evaluation team.

The evaluation must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. It must be easily understood by project partners and applicable to the remaining period of project duration.

The evaluation should provide as much gender disaggregated data as possible.

Evaluators should seek guidance for their work in the following materials, which could be found at (www.undp.org/gef):

* UNDP Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluation for Results
* UNDP/GEF M&E Resource Kit
* Measuring Results of the GEF Biodiversity Programme

The Mid-Term Evaluation will be done through a combination of processes including a desk study, site visits, meetings and interviews with all stakeholders. The methodology to be used by the evaluation team should be presented in the report in detail. It shall include information on:

* Documentation review (desk study) - the list of documentation to be reviewed is included in the Annex 1 to the Terms of Reference;
* Interviews will be held with the following organizations and individuals at minimum: UNDP Kazakhstan, UNDP/GEF RTA, FHC, Administration of PAs located in the project territory, project team, local municipalities, local communities and NGOs;
* Field visits;
* Questionnaires;
* And other methods for the gathering and analysis of data.

# 6. Evaluation team

The Mid-term Evaluation will be carried out by team of two external consultants:

* International consultant - expert in areas of international projects’ monitoring and evaluation with the focus on biodiversity conservation, creating sustainable alternative livelihoods;
* National consultant – expert in areas of environmental management, bioresources management, additional knowledge on NGO/indigenous community would be an asset

The evaluation team is responsible for the successful completion of the evaluation and finalizing the Mid-term Evaluation report. The team is expected to be familiar with the region and have basic knowledge of the project area (such as region’s biodiversity, socio-economic and legislative context, threats to biodiversity)

Team Qualities:

* Experience with result-based management evaluation methodologies;
* Experience applying participatory monitoring approaches;
* Experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios;
* Recent knowledge of the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy;
* Recent knowledge of UNDP’s results-based evaluation policies and procedures
* Competence in Adaptive Management, as applied to conservation or natural resource management projects;
* Recognized expertise in the management and sustainable use of biodiversity;
* Familiarity with protected area policies and management structures in Kazakhstan;
* Demonstrable analytical skills;
* Work experience in relevant areas for at least 10 years;
* Experience with multilateral or bilateral supported conservation projects;
* Project evaluation experiences within United Nations system will be considered an asset;
* Excellent English/Russian communication skills.

Specifically, the international expert (team leader) will perform the following tasks:

* To lead and manage the evaluation mission;
* To design the detailed evaluation scope and methodology (including the methods for data collection and analysis);
* To determine terms of reference of the national consultant(s)
* To decide the division of labor within the evaluation team;
* To conduct an analysis of the outcome, outputs and partnership strategy (as per the scope of the evaluation described above);
* To draft related parts of the evaluation report;
* To finalize the whole evaluation report.

The National Consultant will provide input in reviewing all project documentation and will provide the International Consultant with a compilation of information prior to the evaluation mission. Specifically, the national expert will perform tasks with a focus on:

* To review documents;
* To prepare a list of the outputs achieved under project;
* To organize the mission programme and provide translation/interpretation when necessary;
* To participate in the design of the evaluation methodology;
* To conduct an analysis of the outcome, outputs and partnership strategy (as per the scope of the evaluation described above);
* To draft related parts of the evaluation report;
* To assist Team leader in finalizing document through incorporating suggestions received on draft related to his/her assigned sections;
* To proof reading of the Russian version.

Individual consultants are invited to submit applications together with their CV for a position. Applications are welcome from anyone who feels they can contribute to the team because they possess three or more of the listed qualities. Obviously the more qualities that can be demonstrated, the better the chance of selection.

Joint proposals from two independent evaluators are welcome. Or alternatively, proposals will be accepted from recognized consulting firms to field a complete team with the required expertise within the evaluation budget.

The evaluation will be undertaken in-line with GEF principles[[8]](#footnote-8):

* Independence
* Impartiality
* Transparency
* Disclosure
* Ethical
* Partnership
* Competencies and Capacities
* Credibility
* Utility

The evaluators must be independent from both the policy-making process and the delivery and management of assistance. Therefore applications will not be considered from evaluators who have had any direct involvement with the design or implementation of the project. This may apply equally to evaluators who are associated with organizations, universities or entities that are, or have been, involved in the Biodiversity Conservation Project policy-making process and/or its implementation. Any previous association with the Project, FHC or PAs administration in the Project territory, the Ministry of Environmental Protection, UNDP-Kazakhstan or other partners/stakeholders must be disclosed in the application. This applies equally to firms submitting proposals as it does to individual evaluators.

If selected, failure to make the above disclosures will be considered just grounds for immediate contract termination, without recompense. In such circumstances, all notes, reports and other documentation produced by the evaluator will be retained by UNDP.

If individual evaluators are selected, UNDP will appoint one Team Leader. The Team Leader will have overall responsibility for the delivery and quality of the evaluation products. Team roles and responsibilities will be reflected in the individual contracts. If a proposal is accepted from a consulting firm, the firm will be held responsible for the delivery and quality of the evaluation products and therefore has responsibility for team management arrangements.

# 7. Implementation Arrangements

The principal responsibility for managing this evaluation lies with UNDP Kazakhstan. It is the main operational point responsible for liaising with the project team to set up interviews with stakeholders, arrange field visits and co-ordinate with the Executing Agency and other counterparts. UNDP Kazakhstan will contract the evaluators and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the evaluation team.

The timeframe for submission of the first draft of the report: 7 weeks upon signing the Contract. The report will be submitted both electronically and in printed version, in Russian and English.

The report should be submitted to UNDP Country Office in Kazakhstan (to the attention of Ms. Victoria Baigazina, e-mail address: [victoria.baigazina@undp.org](mailto:victoria.baigazina@undp.org); mailing address: UNDP Kazakhstan, 26, Bukey Khan Street, 010000 Astana, Kazakhstan, tel. (+7-7172) 59-25-50)

Prior to approval of the final report, a draft version shall be circulated for comments to government counterparts, UNDP CO and UNDP/GEF Regional Technical Advisor for Biodiversity for Europe and CIS, the Project Director and members of the project steering group members representing the following institutions:

* Forestry and Hunting Committee of the Ministry of Agriculture of RK
* Ministry of Environmental Protection
* Ministry of Economy and Budget Planning
* Akimats
* NGOs
* UN Development Programme

If any discrepancies have emerged between impressions and findings of the evaluation team and the aforementioned parties, these should be explained in an annex attached to the final report.

The activities and timeframe are broken down as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Activity** | **Timeframes and responsibilities** |
| Desk review | 3 days – international expert, 3 days – national expert |
|  |  |
| Field visits, interviews, questionnaire, debriefing, briefing of evaluation consultants | 5 day – international expert, 5 days – national expert |
| Validation of preliminary findings with stakeholders through circulation of initial reports for comments, meetings, and other types of feedback mechanisms | 6 days – evaluation team |
| Preparation of final evaluation report (including comments) | 25 days - international expert, 25 days - national expert |

*Working days:*

Team Leader (international expert) – 39 working days

National expert – 39 working days

The proposed dates for the in-country mission to Kazakhstan are suggested for 3-21September 2007. The process should commence no later than 27 August 2007.

**Annex 1. List of documents to be reviewed by the Evaluators**

The following documents can be used as a basis for evaluation of the project (titles underlined are available in Russian with an English annotation):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Document** | **Description** |
| Project document | The Project Document and Revisions |
| Project reports | Project Inception Report  Annual Progress Reports |
| Annual Project Report to GEF | Project Implementation Reviews (PIRs) |
| Minutes | Steering group meetings  Meetings with experts, team staff etc. |
| Other relevant materials: | Financial Audit Reports for …. |
| Information materials produced by the project activities | PAs Management Plans  Natural-science study on creating PAs in the key sites of Markakol part of the Project territory  Report about inventorying flora and fauna of the Project territory (flag species)  Project Data Sheet  Information-training programs on biodiversity conservation for local population, nature users and schools.  Program on awareness level raising in the field of biodiversity conservation for 2 PAs.  Small Grants Program    Concept of microcrediting population of the Project territory for supporting alternative livelihoods  Ecotourism concept for the Project territories  Concept and project documents for creating Visit-Centre in Katon-Karagaiskyi National Park  Plan of making comfortable existing tourist routes in KKSNP, planning new ones.  Education programmes (trainings, training modules for PAs staff), methodical publications etc.  Documents on raising of awareness and informing population and stakeholders (web-site, articles, video, environmental campaigns)  Alternative livelihoods programs |

1. See p.67 of UNDP’s “Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluation for Results”, available at http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See Annex C of “Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation: approaches to sustainability”, available at http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See section 3.2 of the GEF’s “Monitoring and Evaluation Policies and Procedures”, available at http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. UNDP-GEF’s system is based on the Atlas Risk Module. See the UNDP-GEF Risk Management Strategy resource kit, available as Annex XI at http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. RBM Support documents are available at http://www.undp.org/eo/methodologies.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. UNDP Country Office can provide the necessary section on roles and responsibility from http://content.undp.org/go/userguide/results/rmoverview/progprojorg/?src=print [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See http://www.uneval.org/ [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See p.16 of the GEF’s Monitoring and Evaluation Policy [↑](#footnote-ref-8)