United Nations Development Programme/Global Environment Facility
Government of the Russian Federation

Biodiversity Conservation in the Russian Portion of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion

("Altai-Sayan Project")

PIMS 1685

Project Final Evaluation Report

Max Kasparek

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Project Executing Partners

Executing Agency:	Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) of the Russian Federation
Principal Participating Partners:	Regional Governments and Administrations in the Russian Part of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion
GEF Implementing Agency:	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Evaluation Responsibility

This Final Evaluation is undertaken by the UNDP Project Support Office in the Russian Federation and the UNDP Bratislava Regional Centre as the GEF Implementing Agency for this project.

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List of Abbreviations

APR	Annual Project Review
ASE	Altai-Sayan Ecoregion
BMU	Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz und Reaktorsicherheit (Germany)
CBO	Community-based Organisation
CO	Country Office
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of OECD
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH (former: GTZ)
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH (now: GIZ)
ICI	International Climate Change Imitative
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MNR	Ministry of Natural Resources
MTE	Mid-term Evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NSC	National Steering Committee
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PA	Protected Area
PIR	Project Implementation Report
PIU	Project Implementing Unit
PSC	Project Steering Committee
SGP (GEF SGP)	Small Grants Programme of GEF
TE	Terminal Evaluation
TEK	Traditional Environmental Knowledge
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

Executive Summary

Description of project

The goal of the Altai-Sayan Project has been defined as „Conservation and sustainable use of globally significant biological diversity in Russia's Altai-Sayan Ecoregion", and the objective as "Ecosystem-based approach to biodiversity conservation is operationalized in the Russian territory of the Altai-Sayan Mountain ecoregion*".* This objective was intended to be achieved through two outcomes and seven outputs:

Outcome 1: **Strengthened and expanded Protected Areas System.**

- *Output 1:* *Conservation of rare and endangered species.*
- *Output 2:* *Strengthening and expanded protected areas system.*
- *Output 3:* *Strengthened legal and institutional framework for biodiversity conservation and transboundary management.*
- *Output 4:* *Increased levels of biodiversity awareness among major stakeholder groups and the rural population.*

Outcome 2: **Strengthened enabling environment for ecosystem-based biodiversity conservation.**

- *Output 5:* *Improved information on biodiversity, including TEK, and its use in decision-making.*
- *Output 6:* *Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into regional decision making process.*
- *Output 7:* *Development of alternative livelihoods and involvement of local communities in natural resource management.*

In December 2009, additional funding was secured from the German Government through the International Climate Change Initiative (ICI), and a third outcome was added to the log frame:

Outcome 3: Expansion of the protected area network, protection of the carbon pools within the expanded PAs system and setting up climate resilient PAs networks in the ASE region.

- *Output 8:* *Expansion of the Protected Areas Network for the conservation of the Altai-Sayan Region*
- *Output 9:* *Fire Management interventions in place in existing and new protected areas*
- *Output 10:* *Assist in adapting natural ecosystems to climate changes in specific protected areas.*
- *Output 11:* *Enable alternative livelihood incentives and encourage sustainable use of natural resources among local communities.*

Activities for this third outcome have not been completed yet and may continue for at least another year. This outcome is not subject of this evaluation accordingly. Preliminary observations on project performance regarding this outcome are given in the Annex.

The project is executed by the *Ministry for Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation* with the direct joint participation of the Regional Governments and Administrations of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion. The Russian part of the ecoregion is divided administratively into six regions, or subjects of federation. They are Krasnoyarsky and Altaisky krai, Republics of Tuva, Altai and Khakasiya, and Kemerovskaya oblast. No project sites have been identified in the Republic of Buryatia and Irkutsk Oblast, which partially overlap with the eastern part of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion.

The GEF grant comprised approximately US$3.9 million (including US$0.35 million for PDF-B). Co-financing was estimated at project onset US$11.6 million including a contribution of US$5.8 million by the Government of Russia. Actual co-financing at project closure is estimated over US$30 million, with most of which being in-kind contributions or cash parallel co-funding, but also includes leveraged cash co-financing of US$4.4 million by the German Government.

The project began in mid-2006 and will end in December 2011. Almost all activities of the last project year were funded through co-financing (German funds). UNDP/GEF funded activities thus extended over 4 ½ (5 ½) years. It is expected that co-funded activities will end in December 2012. The period required for project preparation exceeded implementation time.

Context and purpose of the evaluation

The evaluation was conducted in August-October 2011, i.e. two to three months prior to project closure. In accordance with UNDP/GEF Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) policies and procedures, the evaluation should determine to what extent the project had been successful in fulfilling its objectives and obtaining the expected results and whether it was a cost-effective way of obtaining those results. It is thus a comprehensive and systematic account of the performance of the project by assessing its design, process of implementation, achievements, and any other results.

The project was assessed along the lines laid out in the OECD/DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. Coherence & coordination was used in line with several international donors as an additional criterion, and Project management was used as a further criterion to analyse the reasons for success and failure.

Three data collection techniques were used for information collection with target groups: (1) Documentary review (desk study review of all relevant project documentation and documents), (2) Detailed interviews and discussions with individual stakeholders, (3) Managed group discussions ("Focus Groups"), and (4) Field visits. In addition to information collection at central institutions in Moscow, site visits were paid to a selection of project sites: Tigireksky Nature Reserve, Altaisky Nature Reserve and Teletskoye Lake Area, and the Uch-Enmek Nature Park. The mission was thus confined to the Republic of Altai and the Altai Region (Altai Krai).

For the grading of the results, the following scores were used: Highly Satisfactory (HS = 1), Satisfactory (S = 2), Marginally Satisfactory (MS = 3), Marginally Unsatisfactory (MUS = 4), Unsatisfactory (US = 5), and Highly Unsatisfactory (HUS = 6).

Main Findings

Altogether, the Altai-Sayan Project has remarkable achievements and it is fully justified that this project is often used as flagship project in the region. Certain shortcomings are mainly the result of the project's overall approach: one cannot expect too much impact on the ground from a roughly 3.5 million dollar project over 5 years for an intervention area as large as Germany and France together. It is evident that the overall impact must be limited with this restricted amount of time and resources. Overall project rating is "Satisfactory".

Relevance: The project is rated as "Highly Satisfactory" (HS) in respect to its relevance as it, among other aspects, addresses issues of global importance for biodiversity conservation including the preservation of globally threatened species and their habitats, pursues a systemic approach through combining ecological with socio-economic goals, and addresses both the enhancement of the enabling environment for biodiversity conservation with concrete action on the ground. The demonstration sites selected provide a suitable starting point for replication and dissemination. The project is furthermore in line with international commitments made by the Russian Federation. The intervention strategy shows certain weaknesses; there is, for example, no clear flow from output over outcome to objective and goal, and some problems described would require local rather than regional solutions.

Effectiveness: In respect to its effectiveness, the project is rated "Satisfactory" (S) as it, among other aspects, achieved more or less the targets of the indicators of success. Unfortunately, it is not possible to keep track completely due to some problems in the monitoring system, and the monitoring system also included an unrealistic indicator. The rating of the two project outcomes was "Highly Sat-

isfactory" and "Satisfactory", respectively. As some of the outputs are actually very similar to outcomes, and not all outputs were unambiguously attributable to one of the outcomes, also the delivery rate of outputs was rated: Three times "Highly Satisfactory" and three times "Satisfactory", and once "Marginally Unsatisfactory".

The Project made a significant contribution towards reducing the level of poaching through a combined approach of control, deterrence and awareness raising, it successfully assisted the Government in establishing a transboundary biosphere reserve with Kazakhstan with an agreement signed by the Presidents of the two states in 2011; the Project further brought some 556,446 ha of different habitat types area under legal protection (further 469,900 ha were already proclaimed as Protected Areas before project start based on the initiative of WWF and UNDP/GEF during project preparation) and initiated establishing Protected Area Community Councils, a forum for local people in which their interests are being represented, initiated a wide range of livelihood activities in and around protected areas through which the local population could generate income and get a more positive attitude towards PAs. The Project did not systematically pursue mainsteaming of biodiversity conservation into key economic sectors as foreseen in the design of the project (the TE believes that the latter should have not been put into the focus of the project at the very early design stage).

Efficiency: The project is rated "Highly Satisfactory" (HS) in regard to its efficiency, as it, among other aspects, conducted most project activities in a timely manner and achieved most project outcomes in line with the time and resource planning of the annual work plans. It usually selected the most cost-effective way in order to achieve the intended objective and did not conduct activities which do not contribute to the project objective. Local NGOs (CBOs) were usually contracted as service providers on a competitive basis following public tendering procedures. The Project successfully established partnerships with other UNDP/GEF projects, and generated synergies in particular with the UNDP/GEF Kamchatka project.

Impact: The project is rated with regard to its impact as "Satisfactory" (S), as it, among other aspects, made a significant contribution to safeguard the highly threatened population of Altai Argali, Snow Leopard, and Saker Falcon. The survival of these species in the Altai-Sayan region is nowadays more likely than at the beginning of the project. The protected area administrations in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion are nowadays stronger than at the onset of the project and can better fulfil their tasks, and through awareness building, there is now more support towards protected areas by the public. The Project created models for integrating resource users living in and around protected areas in PA management issues. These models, however, are still in a fledgling stage and require much effort for upscaling and dissemination. The Project furthermore developed various forms of alternative livelihood, of which, however, only ecotourism reached a stage that has some ecoregional rather than local impact.

Sustainability: The project is rated "Satisfactory" (S) in respect to its sustainability as it, among other aspects, is built on a high project ownership by all project partners from the government and other institutions, and can build on increasing state budgets (federal and regional) for PA management. The capacities of PA Administrations have been strengthened. The Project successfully enhanced public awareness for protected areas resulting in an increased PA acceptance. In particular awareness building among school children was very successful as information on biodiversity and protected areas could be integrated into curricula. Long-term impact and sustainability very much depends on WWF, who runs a long-term programme in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion, and whose continued role as motor and facilitator is crucial.

The Project also initiated the establishment of a micro-credit facility as self-help approach, which is in a very early stage and still has limited scope, but which is seen an important step for local people to get independent from donor money.

Coherence and Coordination. The project was rated as "Highly Satisfactory" (HS) in respect to Coherence and Coordination as it, among other aspects, established strong partnerships with other UNDP/GEF projects such as the Kamchatka project with the aim to learn from each other, formed a

strong partnership with WWF, who has a long-term commitment to the area, and established close contacts with the German government and leveraged significant funding that even exceeds UNDP/GEF funds.

Project Management: The project is rated "Highly Satisfactory" (HS) as regards overall management as it, among other aspects, was managed by a highly dedicated and professional team with a high personal continuity throughout the project's lifespan. All project executing partners - on national, regional and local levels – show a high ownership for the project. The Project did not fully grasp the opportunities to work extensively with individuals and organisations from outside the project region for the purpose of enhancing knowledge transfer and innovation.

Recommendations and Lessons Learned

1. Concentrate on upscaling of alternative livelihood activities rather than testing

The Project has developed a large array of alternative livelihood activities, extending from felt production over ecotourism and medicinal plants cultivation to honey production. All of them were more or less successful, created jobs and generated income. However, with the exception of ecotourism, the number of beneficiaries was relatively limited and the overall impact on the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion remained modest. With the exception of ecotourism neither time nor resources were sufficient to scale-up these approaches and to gain "real" impact on ecoregional level. By investing more into feasibility and marketing studies at project start, a strategy could be developed as regards which kind of livelihood activities to concentrate on. The professional in-depth management of 2-3 promising types of alternative livelihood measures can result in a higher impact than dealing with an array of activities.

2. Defend a sound and consistent project concept

In the Altai-Sayan Project, there are a few cases which seem to be driven more by donor interests/requirements rather than the real needs of the project region and the intervention logic, and this has compromised project achievements. Dropping the anticipated second phase of the UNDP/GEF Project without adapting the outcomes and outputs is a typical example. Ironically, the Project Document is still based on a two-phases approach with upscaling of successful phase I measures being the focus of the second phase. It is also suspected that Output 6, which deals with mainstreaming, has been drafted not only as a response to certain needs identified during project identification, but possibly also in order to add the right key word to the project proposal. "Mainstreaming" had been popular among conservationists and project planners particularly in the early and mid-2000s, when the project had been designed. Later, the Project did not spend too much efforts to operationalize this output. Finally, when the Project leveraged co-funding in the amount of 3 million EUR, it made a commitment to bring within a two-year period 636,000 ha of land under legal protection and to provide certain equipment to the newly established PA administrations. It is not surprising that all these measures take more time, and the Project had to ask for a no-cost extension just before the end of the two-year period. A longer planning horizon from the beginning would have allowed a smoother implementation approach.

3. Replace population level indicators with indicators measuring impacts on pressures and behaviour

GEF is always keen of using biodiversity indicators for project monitoring, and these indicators should provide a simple and reliable basis for assessing change or performance. However, the time-scale on which meaningful changes in different attributes of biodiversity (e.g. population size) can be measured is often significantly longer than that of a normal project cycle. Furthermore, virtually all elements of biodiversity show natural variation at a wide range of temporal and spatial scales. Such

natural variations depend on a large number of factors and often do not reflect the impact imposed by project interventions. In the case of the Altai-Sayan Project, surely all experts knew from the beginning that population indicators for species such as Snow Leopard or Argali Sheep must fail; it is evident that nobody is able to monitor these species with a sufficient accuracy, and no capacities (and funds) are available to conduct comprehensive surveys on an annual basis. Consequently, population level indicators should be dropped and replaced by indicators measuring the impact on pressures and behaviours affecting biodiversity. Number of human-wildlife conflicts, number of poaching violations of the law, level of disturbance, ranger patrol intensity, etc. are parameters which could be considered to be taken into account for defining project indicators which give a more realistic picture of project impacts. It also needs to be considered to define indicators for certain sample areas rather than for the entire project area.

4. Define the specific objectives of transboundary cooperation in the project context

The Altai-Sayan Project and its sister projects in Mongolia and Kazakhstan have set ambitious goals for transboundary cooperation from the beginning, and justified them with a few animal species. Transboundary cooperation is sometimes mystified by conservationists and some hope or even expect impacts even beyond the environment. In practice, transboundary cooperation often becomes an issue that is very time-consuming and is not fully under the control of the project. For an effective and efficient project approach, it is therefore necessary first to define the purpose of transboundary cooperation: which ecosystems and habitats, and which species will benefit from transboundary cooperation? Are there joint threats? Is there a significant proportion of these ecosystems, habitats and animal and plant populations situated in the border area, and does this portion justify the efforts? In the second step, a set of legal, institutional, and practical actions needs to be defined. While the project has undertaken efforts to coordinate work e.g. with Mongolia and Kazakhstan (conservation of the Argali sheep, establishment of Sailugem NP and Katunskiy Reserve), coordination mechanisms remain weak at the end of the project.

5. Don’t take responsibility for something which is beyond your direct sphere of influence

One of the aims of the Project was to enlarge the Protected Area System (PAS) in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion, and the Project defined indicators of achievement based on the surface area of the PAS. While this seems logical at first view, it does not fully take into account that the establishment of a protected area is always a multi-stakeholder process with many organisations involved and includes processes which are not linked to the project; the establishment of a protected area is finally also always a political decision beyond the direct influence of the project. So it is not surprising that some protected areas had “not only one mother” and there were divergent opinions between the Project Team and the TE as to which new protected areas are to be appraised as achievements of the Project. The design of a M&E plan should therefore always take into account that only achievements are measured which are clearly attributable to efforts of the project.

1. Introduction

The Terminal Evaluation Report is divided into four sections. The first two sections provide general background of the Project "Biodiversity Conservation in the Russian Portion of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion" ("Altai-Sayan Project"), the purpose of evaluation, the project implementation setup, partners/stakeholders and evaluation methodology. The next section dwells on findings from the reports and from interactions with stakeholders. In the fourth section, conclusions from the observations and findings are discussed in the context of project objectives. These also pertain to sustainability and replicability of project and lessons learnt. The section also provides lessons learnt / recommendations for promoting natural resource management in the region and for designing similar projects elsewhere.

Purpose of the Evaluation

In accordance with UNDP/GEF Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) policies and procedures, all regular projects supported by GEF should undergo a final evaluation upon completion of implementation. This Terminal Evaluation is intended to assess the relevance, performance and success of the project. It looks at signs of potential impact and sustainability of results, including the contribution to capacity development and achievement of global and national environmental goals.

The evaluation shall determine to what extent the project had been successful in fulfilling its objectives and obtaining the expected results and whether it was a cost-effective way of obtaining those results. The purpose of this Terminal Evaluation is thus to give an account of the level of achievement of the project objectives. The evaluation aims at meeting this basic concern among the key actors involved in the project and to assess the relevance of the action. The final evaluation shall thus provide a comprehensive and systematic account of the performance of a completed project by assessing its project design, process of implementation, achievements vis-à-vis project objectives endorsed by the GEF including any agreed changes in the objectives during project implementation, and any other results.

This evaluation pursues – in accordance with the GEF guidelines for conducting terminal evaluations – four complementary purposes:

- To promote accountability and transparency, and to assess and disclose levels of project accomplishment;
- To synthesize lessons that may help improve the selection, design, and implementation of future GEF activities;
- To provide feedback on issues that are recurrent across the portfolio and need attention, and on improvements regarding previously identified issues;
- To contribute to the GEF Evaluation Office databases for aggregation, analysis, and reporting on the effectiveness of GEF operations in achieving global environmental benefits and on the quality of M&E across the GEF system.

The Final Evaluation also identifies and documents lessons learned and makes recommendations that project partners and stakeholders might use to improve the design and implementation of other similar projects and programmes. In line with these purposes, the evaluation report addresses three main target groups:

- The Government of the Russian Federation and in particular Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, and the Regional Governments and Administrations in the Russian Part of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion to get an independent view of the outcomes of the project and to allow a comparison of project performance with internationally recognised standards;
- The GEF Implementing Agency, UNDP, to assess project achievements and to make possible a comparison of project performance with other similar projects especially those ones implemented in the region, and to provide a tool for country planning;

- The GEF Secretariat to assess how the project contributed to GEF's overall performance and to the indicators of achievement.

Other groups such as the local stakeholders who have been directly involved in project implementation may also benefit from the evaluation exercise and from this report, although this was not a primary purpose.

Key Issues Addressed

The project was assessed along the following lines, as laid out in the DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance:

- **Relevance** – the extent to which the activity is suited to local and national development priorities and organizational policies, including changes over time.
- **Effectiveness** – the extent to which an objective has been achieved or how likely it is to be achieved.
- **Efficiency** – the extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible.
- **Impact** (sometimes also called "results") - the positive and negative changes produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. This involves the main impacts and effects resulting from the activity on the local social, economic, environmental and other development indicators.
- **Sustainability** - Sustainability is concerned with measuring whether the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn. Projects need to be environmentally as well as financially sustainable.

While the DAC Criteria provide an excellent basis to show the achievements and non-achievements of a project, they are less suitable as analytical tool (Why was a project successful? What were the critical aspects? What are the success factors?). The performance of the project management team and the environment in which the team operates are critical in this context, but is insufficiently reflected in the DAC Criteria. An additional criterion has therefore been added:

- **Project Management Performance** – the management factors (in a wide sense) that influence the performance of the project (institutional arrangements, personnel structure, steering at micro and macro level, guidance by implementing agency and partner institutions).

The DAC Criteria are furthermore incomplete regarding the cooperation of the project with the projects and programmes of the government and other donors. In line with standards set up by some donors (such as the European Commission), coherence and coordination was therefore added as an additional criterion:

- **Coherence and coordination** – the kind of complementary (resp. degree of complementary) with the projects and programmes of other bilateral and multilateral donors.

Methodology of the Evaluation

The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with the "GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy"[i]. It was based on a crosscutting qualitative descriptive and analytical approach. Four data collection techniques were used for information collection with target groups:

- Documentary review: Desk study review of all relevant project documentation and documents on the related environment;
- Detailed interviews and discussions with individual stakeholders;
- Managed group discussions ("Focus Groups"); and
- Field visits.

The interviews and discussions included consultations with the main stakeholders on national and regional level and on the level of pilot sites and comprised representatives of governmental, non-governmental, and scientific organisations. Extensive interviews were made with stakeholders directly responsible for project implementation (Project Steering Committee, Project Implementation Unit, UNDP, etc.); site visits included Tigireksky Nature Reserve, Altaisky Nature Reserve and Teletskoye Lake Area, and the Uch-Enmek Nature Park. The mission was thus confined to the Republic of Altai and the Altai Region (Altai Krai). This part of the project region has been selected by the International Evaluator in cooperation with the Project Manager prior to the beginning of the evaluation mission. The limited time did not allow visiting all project intervention sites.

While the entire project implementation period starting from April 2006 and ending in December 2011 (i.e. approximately 5 and a half years) was taken into account, special focus was put on the period 2009-2011, i.e. the period after a mid-term review (MTE) has been conducted. This was done in the assumption that the main issues for the 2006-2009 period have been captured in the MTE and do not need further detailed assessment.

Interviews in Moscow were carried out on 31st August and 9th September, 2011, and field visits between 1st and 8th September, 2011. A detailed itinerary and a list of persons interviewed are given in Annex 3-4.

A critical issue in reporting was that the evaluation has been carried out along the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, but the structure of report as requested by the TORs does not fully follow these lines. I therefore follow the reporting structure as laid down in the TORs, but use the OECD/DAC criteria for an overall assessment of the project (conclusion).

In addition to a descriptive assessment, several criteria were rated using the following six scales: Highly Satisfactory, Satisfactory, Marginally Satisfactory, Marginally Unsatisfactory, Unsatisfactory, and Highly Unsatisfactory. This six-step scale was applied throughout the report, although some UNDP/GEF documents (including the MTE of this project) apply a four-step scale.

Table 1: Criteria used to evaluate the Project and of some of its components.

Highly Satisfactory	HS	1	Project is expected to achieve or exceed **all** its major global environmental objectives, and yield substantial global environmental benefits, without major shortcomings. The project can be presented as "good practice".
Satisfactory	S	2	Project is expected to achieve **most** of its major global environmental objectives, and yield satisfactory global environmental benefits, with only minor shortcomings.
Marginally Satisfactory	MS	3	Project is expected to achieve **most** of its major relevant objectives but with either significant shortcomings or modest overall relevance. Project is expected not to achieve **some** of its major global environmental objectives or yield some of the expected global environment benefits.
Marginally Unsatisfactory	MU	4	Project is expected to achieve **some** of its major global environmental objectives with major shortcomings or is expected to achieve only **some** of its major global environmental objectives.
Unsatisfactory	U	5	Project is expected **not** to achieve **most** of its major global environment objectives or to yield any satisfactory global environmental benefits**.**
Highly Unsatisfactory	HU	6	The project has failed to achieve, and is not expected to achieve, **any** of its major global environment objectives with no worthwhile benefits.

2. The Project and its Development Context

2.1 Project Data

Project development experienced a lengthy preparation period, which exceeded the time budget available for implementation. The first ideas for the Project were developed towards the end of the last century, and the Project entered the GEF pipeline on 1 April, 2000. On 16 April, 2000, a PDF-B proposal was approved. Actual project implementation began in 2006 with the release of the first disbursement in April and hiring a project manager in May.

Such long project preparation phases were typical for most GEF operations in those days and have been subject to serious criticism[ii]. It is thus not to blame those responsible for the preparation of this specific project, but it was a system-immanent malfunction.

WWF Russia played an important role during project development. It was WWF, who developed the first ideas for an Altai-Sayan project, and WWF was later contracted by UNDP/GEF to develop a Conservation Action Plan using PDF-B funds. Complementary to PDF-B and an important contribution to project development was a feasibility study for the establishment of a transboundary biosphere reserve funded by the German Government through BMZ-GTZ in 2002-2004.

Project completion was scheduled for 31 December, 2010, but this date was re-scheduled in 2010 and is now 31 December, 2011. Net duration of the Altai-Sayan Project was thus 5 ½ years. Only very few UNDP/GEF funded project activities took place in 2011 as most activities in 2011 were related to BMU-ICI co-financing: In December 2009, UNDP received a grant by the German Government through the International Climate Change Initiative (BMU-ICI) for an additional component. This component is going to be closed in December 2011 along with the UNDP/GEF mother project. However, the project applied to BMU-ICI for a no-cost extension until December 2012.

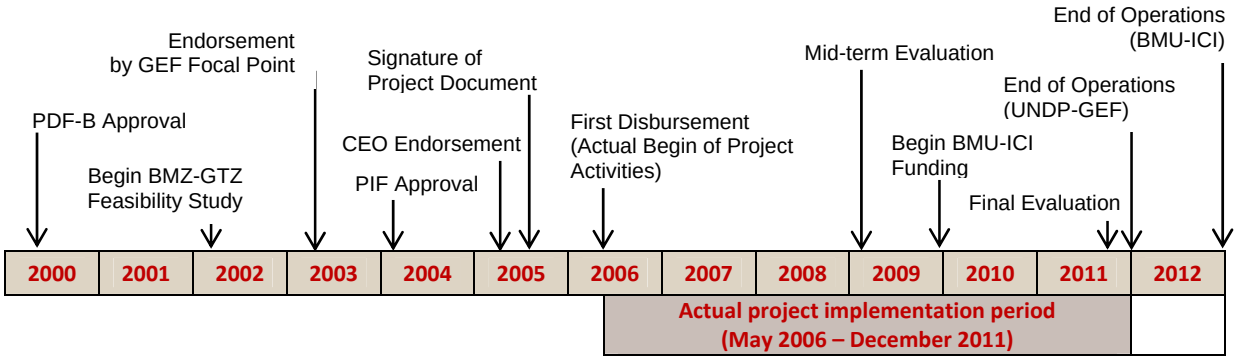

Fig. 1. Important milestones in the development and implementation of the Altai-Sayan Project. For the complementary BMI-ICI component, the end of operations is assumed to be end of 2012, although no decision has been taken yet at the time of the UNDP/GEF Terminal Evaluation (September 2010).

The project costs on GEF side were estimated at the onset at US$3.9 million (including US$0.35 million for PDF-B). Co-financing was estimated that time at US$11.6 million including a contribution of US$5.8 million by the Government of Russia.

The project is executed by the Ministry for Natural Resources of the Russian Federation with the direct joint participation of the Regional Governments and Administrations. The Russian part of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion is divided administratively into six regions, or subjects of federation. They are Krasnoyarsky and Altaisky krai, Republics of Tuva, Altai and Khakasiya, and Kemerovskaya oblast. Two more administrative regions of Russia – Republic of Buryatia and Irkutsk Oblast – partially overlap

with the eastern part of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion; however, no project sites were identified in those regions.

The project had been submitted to GEF under the Operational Programme 4 – „Mountain Ecosystems".

Table 2: Project budget as reflected in the Project Document.

GEF		
GEF (incl. PDF)	US$	3,865,000
Subtotal	**US$**	**3,865,000**
Co financing		
Regional Government	US$	5,830,000
WWF	US$	1,200,000
Sayan Ring	US$	4,630,000
Subtotal	**US$**	**11,660,000**
Project Total	**US$**	**15,175,000**

2.2 Problems to be Addressed by the Project

The project has been designed to assist the Government of the Russian Federation to address the main threats and underlying causes to biodiversity in the Russian part of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion. During project preparation, the following threats have been identified:

Poaching and illegal wildlife trade: Due to dire economic conditions and weakened management and control systems, local people have turned in greater numbers to poaching to meet subsistence needs as well as for economic gain. This is resulting in the rapid decrease of rare species populations, which can result in genetic isolation and ultimately population unviability. Species affected include the highly endangered Snow Leopard, Argali Sheep and other rare species.

Uncontrolled tourism: Tourism has been described as a rapidly growing threat, mainly in the Altai Republic, and if not carefully addressed would also represent a lost opportunity to link economic development directly with biodiversity conservation. The recreational value of the Altai Republic among Russian tourists has increased in the last decade, and the majority of Russian tourists camp along the Katun River and near Lake Teletskoye. This unorganised and uncontrolled tourism is resulting in growing significant habitat disturbance, increased frequency of forest fires, accumulation of garbage and waste on the banks of rivers and lakes, and uncontrolled development of accommodations and other tourism infrastructures. These threats are particularly prevalent in areas of high biodiversity value and especially those that are being proposed as future protected areas. Tourism impacts are, however, not as significant in other parts of the region due to their relative remoteness and near absence of appropriate infrastructure.

Overgrazing by livestock: Traditional systems in the Altai relied upon seasonal migrations of herders with their livestock, which, coupled with low human population density, ensured sustainable use of pastures. In the Soviet era, however, nomadic herders were forced to break with traditional lifestyles and settle in communities, a factor leading to both under-exploitation of some former pastures and dramatic overgrazing of others. Overgrazing is in particular a serious problem in the Tuva and Khakasiya Republics, and potentially in the Altai Republic. In the Tuva and Khakasiya Republics the remaining herds are no longer moved between pastures, leading to a rapid increase in overgrazing, erosion and loss of productivity.

Deforestation: Forest fires present a serious and increasing threat to biodiversity with the number of fires averaging over 1,100 annually on a territory of 0.5 million ha over the past fifty years. This threat is particularly significant in the Republics of Altai, Tuva and Khakasiya. In Tuva, for example, practically all forests are thought to have been subjected to fire. There are numerous reasons for this increase in fire frequency, including the presence of more people in the forests, carelessness with fire, purposeful burning of forests in order to obtain a license for "salvage" cutting, and the spread of fire from burning for agricultural land clearing. Commercial logging is not an important industry in the area at present, with logging operations confined primarily to the northern part of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion. These limited operations have already led to habitat degradation and fragmentation in buffer areas and potential protected areas.

Mining: It is estimated that the region possesses approximately 200 mineral deposits that are exploited or may become so in the next 25 years. The locations of 72 of these coincide with buffer zones of existing PAs and locations of proposed new PAs, occupying 2% of their territory. Mining has increased dramatically over the past few years at an annual rate of over 20 percent, with gold as the mineral exploited most recently.

2.3 Project Objective and Expected Outcomes

The project goal has been defined as „Conservation and sustainable use of globally significant biological diversity in Russia's Altai-Sayan Ecoregion", and the objective as "Ecosystem-based approach to biodiversity conservation is operationalized in the Russian territory of the Altai-Sayan Mountain ecoregion*"*. This objective was intended to be achieved through two outcomes and seven outputs:

Outcome 1: **Strengthened and expanded Protected Areas System.**

- *Output 1:* *Conservation of rare and endangered species.*
- *Output 2:* *Strengthening and expanded protected areas system.*
- *Output 3:* *Strengthened legal and institutional framework for biodiversity conservation and transboundary management.*
- *Output 4:* *Increased levels of biodiversity awareness among major stakeholder groups and the rural population.*

Outcome 2: **Strengthened enabling environment for ecosystem-based biodiversity conservation.**

- *Output 5:* *Improved information on biodiversity, including TEK, and its use in decision-making.*
- *Output 6:* *Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into regional decision making process.*
- *Output 7:* *Development of alternative livelihoods and involvement of local communities in natural resource management.*

Originally, there had been 9 outputs, but in the Inception Phase, the outputs from the original project document have been brought under one title to eliminate multiple overlapping activities with smaller budgets. It makes the use of the project funds more efficient and provides a more comprehensive approach towards meeting the project objectives and output indicators.

In December 2009, additional funding was secured from the German Government through the International Climate Change Initiative (ICI), and a third outcome was added to the log frame:

Outcome 3: Expansion of the protected area network, protection of the carbon pools within the expanded PAs system and setting up climate resilient PAs networks in the ASE region.

- *Output 8:* *Expansion of the Protected Areas Network for the conservation of the Altai-Sayan Region*
- *Output 9:* *Fire Management interventions in place in existing and new protected areas*

Output 10: *Assist in adapting natural ecosystems to climate changes in specific protected areas.*

Output 11: *Enable alternative livelihood incentives and encourage sustainable use of natural resources among local communities.*

2.4 Main Stakeholders

The Altai-Sayan Project includes a multiplicity of stakeholders ranging from local resource users over regional decision-makers to members of the Federal Government.

- Local communities, individuals and interest groups that use natural resources for sustaining their livelihood (including both those living in the pilot area and those living in the Russian part of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion outside the project intervention areas);
- Local administrations either within or close to Protected Areas, or even beyond;
- Protected Area administrations;
- Members of the six regional administrations (republics, krais/oblasts) in the intervention area;
- Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment as an Executing Agency;
- UNDP as the GEF Implementing Agency.

The MTE Report gives a comprehensive analysis of these stakeholders in terms of primary, secondary and tertiary stakeholders.

3. Findings and Conclusions

3.1 Project Formulation

As principal project formulation took place between 2000 and 2005, i.e. roughly 5-10 years ago, it is difficult to evaluate retrospectively, and the observations during TE towards this end are based mainly on an analysis of the Project Document and to less extent on interviews and other personal communication. Results of the MTE are not repeated here.

Project Conceptualization/Design (Overall Rating: Satisfactory)

Have the Main Challenges of Biodiversity Conservation been Identified and are they Properly Addressed? The Altai-Sayan Ecoregion covers an area that is approximately the surface size of France and Germany together. One can imagine that it would easily be possible to conduct many different biodiversity projects throughout this region targeting specific protected areas, specific threatened habitats or species, or combating specific threats through sectoral approaches. So the question is: was it the right decision to have one single comprehensive project covering so many different aspects including protected area establishment and management, species conservation, sustainable livelihood, etc.? Or would it have been better to focus on one of these aspects and, for example, to create models and best practice for replication throughout the region?

While this discussion may easily get a philosophical character which is beyond the scope of the TE, there are clear requirements for a project pursuing a comprehensive approach covering the entire Altai-Sayan Ecoregion. When taking a regional approach, one expects for example:

- A project that acts regionally, or is at least strongly focused on issues which have an impact in the entire region;
- A project that contributes to the understanding of the Altai-Sayan region as an ecoregion;
- A project that promotes practices which are applicable and are replicated throughout the region;
- A project that establishes ecological corridors between Protected Areas;

- A project that promotes institutional cooperation where necessary: cooperation between the various administrative structures within the Russian Federation on the one hand and among the institutions of the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and China on the other;
- A project that interlinks the various stakeholders in the region for exchanging knowledge and experience;
- A project that identifies the needs of the region as a whole, and that helps channelling support from national and international sources.

A regional project thus makes sense only if it is more than the sum of several sub-projects. It needs to be completely different from a small grant programme for the region, i.e. it should have a clear value-added against several small-scale measures scattered over the region. All project activities therefore need to be analysed whether they are going to have an impact on the entire ecoregion.

The Altai-Sayan Project is indeed framed in such a way that regional aspects come first. All seven outputs comprise more or less strong regional aspects, none of them is locally confined. The species conservation output, for example, targets only species with large ranges and transboundary occurrences. Or many of the protected areas to be established or strengthened in the frame of this projects are transnational reserves or cover more than one administrative unit (republics, krai/oblasts). Furthermore, mainstreaming biodiversity issues in decision-making is explicitly confined to the regional level.

The conceptualisation of the project thus is adequate at the macro (output) level and fully meets the requirement for regional approaches.

Is the Problem Analysis adequate? The main threats to the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion have been described in the Project Document: Poaching and illegal wildlife trade, uncontrolled tourism, overgrazing by livestock, deforestation, and mining (see also chapter 2.1).

According to this problem analysis, tourism is regarded as threat, which is rapidly growing mainly in the Altai Republic. The recreational value of the Altai Republic has recently been re-discovered by residents of neighbouring industrially developed Siberian regions such as Novosibirsk, Tomsk and Kemerovo oblasts, and Altaisky krai. The majority of tourists camp along the Katun River and near Lake Teletskoye resulting in growing significant habitat disturbance, increased frequency of forest fires, accumulation of garbage and waste on the banks of rivers and lakes, and uncontrolled development of accommodations and other tourism infrastructures. While this is beyond doubt a precise description of the situation, it also says that this is a local phenomenon. As local phenomenon it requires local action. A regional project is not the right answer to address this threat.

Logical Framework. The intervention strategy is grouped under two outcomes and seven outputs (see chapter 2.2). The first two outcomes are not clearly separated. For instance, a strengthened Protected Areas System already includes a strengthened enabling environment, and what has been called here “enabling environment” includes issues that are basic elements of protected area management itself (i.e., involvement of local communities). Output 2 is identical with Outcome 1.

The MTE already noted that components of the implementation strategy are repeated under the different Outcomes, and that there are elements related to the enabling environment that are distributed over both Outcomes. According to the MTE, it is thus not always clear which specific Output contributes to which Outcome and how this will contribute as a whole to the Project Objective. The MTE therefore developed an alternative strategy with 6 outcomes and altogether 13 outputs without including anything that was not explicitly already included in the Project Document. As the MTE did not make a formal recommendation to adopt this new arrangement of the intervention hierarchy, it had not been further followed up by the Project.

The third outcome, which has been added after obtaining funding from BMU-ICI, largely overlaps with both outcomes 1 and 2, but this can easily be explained by the additional and separate funding source which requires separate monitoring and reporting. Merging the new interventions retrospec-

tively with the already ongoing interventions under Outcome 1 and 2 would have created unnecessary problems for monitoring and reporting.

Do the indicators adequately reflect and define the project objective and the project achievements? The project used three sets of indicators to measure the achievements of the Project on objective level:

- Population level of flagship and focal species;
- Size of protected areas;
- Proportion of main types of ecosystems that are under protection.

Already the MTE noted that not all the indicators that were retrofitted during the Inception Phase accurately reflect the impact of the project nor give an adequate indication of the quality of biodiversity conservation management. However, the MTE did not feel that new indicators should be retrofitted to the log frame as this will also distract the project from its activities.

More specifically, the indicators used for assessing the project achievements do assess only the population level of a few animal species, and the extended protected areas. Having in mind the Project Objective ("Ecosystem-based approach to biodiversity conservation is operationalized in the Russian territory of the Altai-Sayan Mountain ecoregion"), it is evident that the project pursues a much more comprehensive goal than protecting a few animal species and enlarging the size of protected areas. These indicators thus do not reflect project achievements in the fields of institution building, capacity building, participation, co-management approaches, awareness building, transboundary biodiversity management, etc.

The project indicators on objective level are thus much too narrow. Only a combination of the indicators on objective and outcome level reflect the full scope of interventions.

Country-ownership/Drivenness

The Project Document provides a full justification that the project is in line with national policies and priorities, and that the project helps implement international commitments entered by the Government of the Russian Federation.

The concept of a project targeting biodiversity conservation of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion has been suggested as a collaborative initiative of WWF and UNDP and in close collaboration with state representatives. All discussions with stakeholders indicated their high commitment and ownership to the Project. This includes in particular also state representatives both from the national (Ministry of Natural Resources) and regional/local (krai, oblast, republic) level. The country ownership for this project is thus very high and all stakeholders such as government institutions, universities, NGOs, farmers and community groups (CBOs) do participate in project activities, and are willing to use the results of the project. There is a broad consensus that the project is extremely useful and pursues objectives that are important for the development of the region as a whole.

Stakeholder Participation (Overall Rating: Highly Satisfactory)

It is a special challenge to assess and analyse stakeholder participation in the formulation of the project, as this process dates back 5-10 years. This assessment has to rely largely upon information provided by the Project Document.

Altogether, there is good evidence that project preparation had achieved a maximum of participation both from local people and from government. The project was designed through extensive consultations and the direct participation and input of large number of stakeholders throughout the PDF-B development period. This process directly involved the federal government at the national and regional levels, relevant sectoral branches of the regional governments and administrations, non-governmental organisations, representatives of communities and indigenous peoples' organisations, academia, the research community, media, and the public at large. According to the Project Document, over 500 individuals took part in the project development process. Workshops and stakehold-

er meetings were held in Krasnoyarsk, Kemerovo, Novosibirsk, Barnaul, Abakan, Gorno-Altaisk, Kyzyl, and in other, smaller communities in the region. Experts working on various aspects of the project have likewise met with all key stakeholders during project preparation. The administration and staff of PAs were directly involved throughout the project development process. A comprehensive map of stakeholders was prepared as a result of extensive public consultations organized during the PDF-B process.

It needs to be stressed that it was an objective of the project to promote participation in local decision-making regarding the use of natural resources. Local participation in natural resource management has increased over the lifespan of the project, and the end-of-project situation is quite different from the situation during the project preparation phase.

Replication Approach

The project aimed to apply a "develop-test-replicate" approach, as appropriate, to almost all activities to be implemented. Lessons learned and best practices were to be identified as an integral part of project monitoring and performance assessments. It was planned that replication will play a more prominent role in Phase II of the project, which cannot be materialised.

On the operational level, replication has in particular been promoted in the fields of education, sustainable livelihood and microcrediting. The project supported, inter alia, the following measures:

- Replicating experience in creating educational units on biodiversity conservation themes for management staff of the Altai Krai (Altai State University);
- Organising a competition on replication of experience in developing programmes for school teachers (Fund SDA);
- Replicating experience in developing training manuals for teachers and pupils that integrate biodiversity conservation issues into the school curriculum (Kemerovo State University);
- Conducting an all-Russian Conference on "Replication of experience in developing training manuals for teachers and schools" (SDA Fund);
- Replicating sustainable livelihoods for indigenous community programs via the Consultation Centre in areas central to the conservation of biodiversity (Altai Republic Protected Areas Consultation Centre, a regional NGO);
- Replicating experience on expanding artificial plantations of rare and vulnerable species of medicinal plants (Gorno-Altaisk Botanical Gardens);
- Replicating microcrediting activities in the Ulagan and Kosh-Agach districts as a means to ensure the development of alternative livelihoods among indigenous communities in protected areas and their border areas ("Assistance" Micro-crediting Fund);
- Organising an international conference on the distribution of lessons learned and experience of implementing projects to create and develop alternative livelihoods for indigenous communities (Regional movement for sustainable development "Orion").

Extensive media coverage was another strategy for replicating project results. Many project initiatives have been reported in the local and regional media and created a positive environment for awareness and replication.

This list of replication activities is not exhaustive, but clearly shows that the Project Team always has seen replication as cross-cutting issue and as an ultimate goal.

3.2 Project Implementation and Management

Implementation Approach (Overall Rating: Highly Satisfactory)

Annual activity planning. The project has used the logical framework approach in planning and implementation stages. The Project Manager in coordination with the Assistant Project Director and the UNDP coordinator and in consultation with experts and stakeholders prepared annual draft Work Plans, which were submitted to the Steering Committee. After discussing them during these meetings and modifying them as deemed necessary, the Annual Work Plans including the annual budget were approved by the Steering Committee and came therewith into force.

Unlike other projects, the Annual Work Plans have thus not been prepared in formal joint stakeholder workshops in a participatory way (with the exception of the first Annual Workplan, which was prepared during the Inception Workshop). This is an understandable practice: as the intervention area is so huge and the kind of interventions so multifaceted, hardly any of the local stakeholders has a good overview over the various challenges and project activities throughout the Altai-Sayan Region. Without having the full picture in mind, they would be unable to cope with the various issues, and unable to set priorities. The project is therefore not to blame for not relying more on local participation on annual activity planning.

Adaptive management. Several modifications of the Project Document were made during the Inception Phase of the project, and all these changes have been approved. The number of outputs was, for example, reduced from nine to seven. The Inception Phase was also used to re-define the indicators of achievement, and to update the allocation of the budget to certain budget lines.

The MTE made several recommendations as to strengthen the project approach. In a few cases, the project management team did not fully agree with these suggestions, and a management response has been prepared to justify these cases, and to follow up the suggested modifications.

Otherwise, the project almost always follows exactly the Project Document, and no relevant deviations could be noted.

Use of electronic information technologies. The project team carefully used the electronic APR and PIR instruments for monitoring project progress. UNDP CO contributed to this process.

Project steering. The Project has a Steering Committee (PSC), which consists of 13 members, one observer and one secretary:

- National Project Director, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (Chair of the Steering Committee);
- Head of Nature Resource and Environment Department of Altai Region;
- Minister of Nature Resource Management, Tuva Republic;
- Deputy Minister of Nature Resource of Altai Republic;
- Chair of the State Committee for Environment and Nature Resources of Khakasiya Republic;
- Krasnoyarsk Region Administration, Deputy Governor;
- Department of Nature Resources and Environment, Kemerovo Region Administration, Head of Department;
- Executive Director of “Strana Zapovednaya” National Foundation;
- RAIPON (Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East), Vice-President;
- WWF Russia, Director;
- Central Siberia Botanic Garden, Director;
- Sayano-Shushensky Nature Reserve (Association of Nature Reserves and Nature Parks of Altai-Sayan Ecoregion), Director;
- UNDP Russia, Head of Environment Unit;
- Ministry of Economic Development (Observer);

- Project Manager (Executive Secretary).

Some members of the Steering Committee changed in 2009 due to rotation.

The committee thus includes representatives both of national and regional/local organisations and institutions. Also representatives of indigenous peoples, NGOs, academia, etc. sit on the Steering Committee. All organisations directly deal with natural resource management. Other sectors such as tourism, business (e.g. associations of local entrepreneurs), infrastructure, etc. are not represented.

Five Steering Committee Meetings have been conducted, plus one distance meeting at project start.

Even though the Project Steering Committee played a positive role and showed a professional performance, the main driver for developing visions and implementation approaches and for acting proactively remained the project management team.

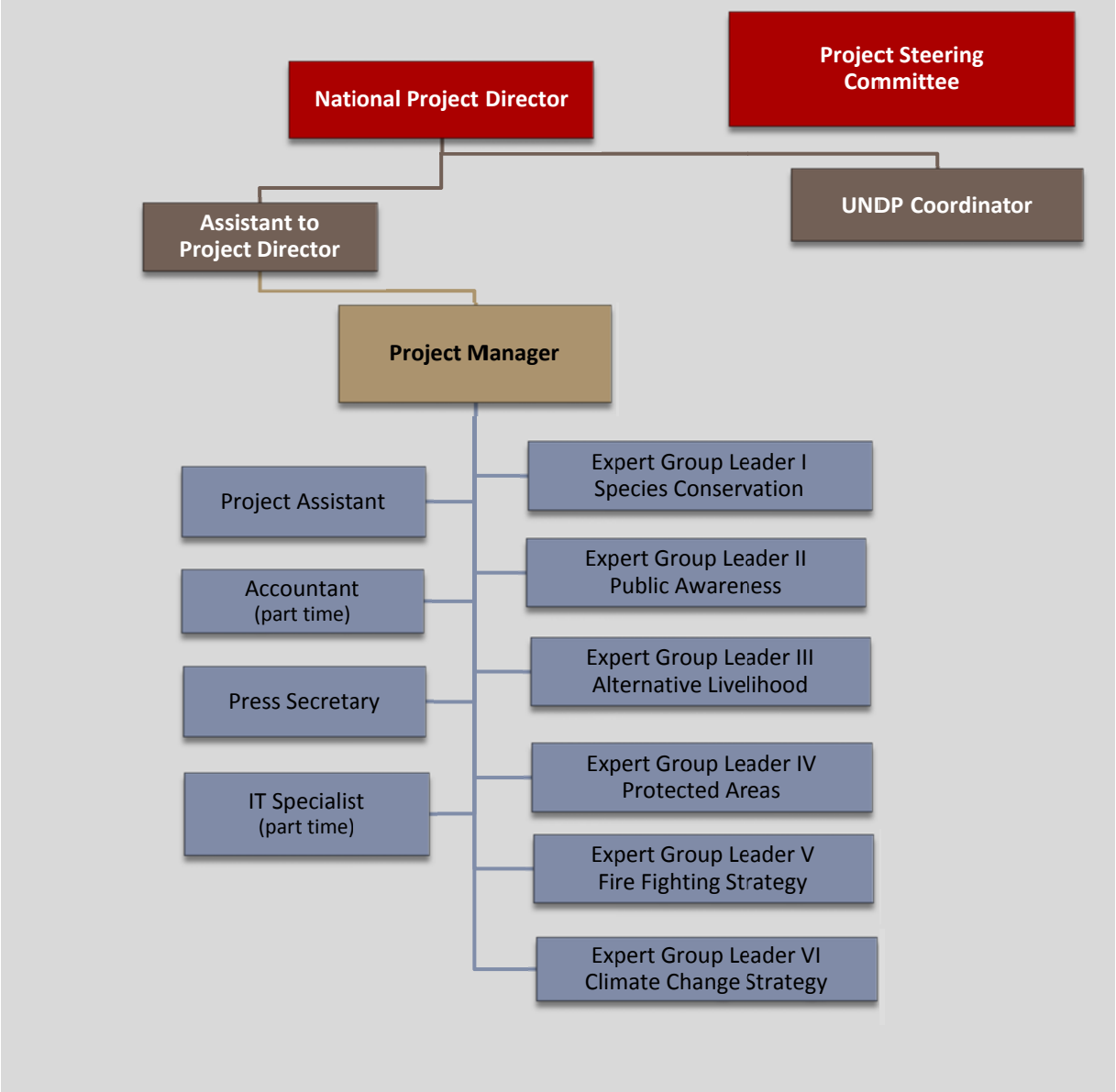

Fig. 2. General Management Structure of the Altai-Sayan Project. The National Project Director is staff of the Ministry for Natural Resources. Expert Group Leaders V+VI were fully paid by BMU-IKI (co-financing), Expert Group Leaders III+IV by BMU-IKI in 2011.

Project management structure. The project is managed by a relatively small team. The National Project Director, who is staff of the Ministry of Natural Resources, is assisted by a Moscow-based Assistant Project Director (Deputy Project Director). The Assistant Project Director serves as a hub between the National Project Director, the UNDP Coordinator and the Project Manager. He is responsible for sharing information between these parties, and for preparing the ground for decision-making. He is full-time project staff.

The National Project Director is a state employee designated by the National Executing Agency, Ministry of Natural Resources of Russia, and entrusted for the overall guidance and coordination of project implementation. It is an unpaid position covered by the Government in-kind contribution to the project. NPD is accountable to the National Executing Agency and UNDP for the production of the project outputs, appropriate use of the project resources, and coordination of the UNDP project with other programmes and projects implemented in the Russian Federation in the area of biodiversity management. In practice, most decisions are prepared beforehand by the Assistant Project Director, so that the Project Director can handle macro management issues with a relatively small time budget.

The Project Manager is responsible for the overall project management. He liaises directly with designated officials of the Federal agencies in Altai-Sayan Region, regional administrations, UNDP, NGOs, and others as deemed appropriate and necessary. He works closely with the leaders of the established thematic work group, as well as with the PA managers and other project implementing organisations. The Project Manager comes from the region and has already been involved in the design of the project including the implementation of the PDF-B phase. This means high personal continuity.

Performance of the project team was excellent. All staff showed a high level of team spirit, commitment and performance.

Team spirit. In all stages of the project, i.e. in planning, implementation and monitoring, all participating agencies were generally in a good relationship and understanding with one another. They mostly worked as a team, shared problems and issues, and looked for solutions. The TE did not hear about dissonances either within the project team or between the team and partner organisations. The high personal continuity within the project team may also be seen as evidence for a smooth and conflict-free implementation.

Guidance by UNDP. Communication between UNDP CO (now: Project Support Office) and the project team in the Altai-Sayan region is materialised mainly through the Assistant Project Director, who holds regular telephone contacts with the team and ensures that both sides are involved in all important management decisions. Additionally, the Moscow-based UNDP Coordinator regularly communicates with the project manager directly. Monitoring missions by the UNDP CO (Project Support Office) to the Altai-Sayan region took place on average once per year. Although this seems to be scarce at first view, it can be explained by the long distance between the intervention area and the UNDP office, and the high efforts required for these missions.

There were a few field visits of the Regional Technical Advisor to the project area including one brief mission of the new RTA in 2010.

The long distance between the project area and Moscow constituted an enormous challenge for UNDP's macro management and management took place mainly through remote-controlling. Despite the fact that face-to-face contacts between the team in the Altai-Sayan region and UNDP country and regional offices staff were confined to relatively scarce opportunities, UNDP managed to get involved in all major management decisions and the TE has got the impression that UNDP was always aware of all relevant activities throughout the lifespan of the project.

Partnerships and synergies. The project could rely on a number of strong partnerships on state level, with other GEF-funded projects and with several non-governmental and private organisations.

The project started from the very beginning to establish close collaboration with the teams of other GEF-funded projects in the region, which have started earlier, to avoid their mistakes as well as avoid

duplications and allow using project budget in a more cost-effective way. The Project is from the beginning in particular in continuous contact with the project team of the UNPD/GEF project "Demonstrating Sustainable Conservation of Biodiversity in Four Protected Areas of Kamchatka Oblast", and has developed a close partnership with mutual benefits. An exchange of information and experience was for example materialised concerning the establishment of a biodiversity data base, the establishment of Community Councils on co-management between PA and local stakeholders (which were developed during the first phase of the Kamchatka PA project and thus earlier than in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion), and project management (e.g. working out of TORs for subcontracts), etc. Lessons learned by the UNDP/GEF project at Kamchatka provided the basis for publications, follow-up dissemination of lessons and training programs in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion. Representatives from the Kamchatka project participated in several events organised by the UNDP/GEF Altai-Sayan Project. These included:

- An interregional training seminar on PA management planning (facilitated by an international expert) organised in 2006, which gathered participants from the PAs within Altai-Sayan Ecoregion as well as UNDP's biodiversity conservation projects at Lower Volga, Kamchatka (Russia), and Kazakhstan.
- An Interregional Workshop in Barnaul in June, 2008 on mainstreaming biodiversity conservation in curricula for Administrative Staff in Altai Region (attended by participants from eight territories of Russia, including project teams from Kamchatka and Lover Volga UNDP/GEF projects)
- An interregional workshop in Aya Nature Park (Altai Region) in November 2009 (jointly organised with WWF) to discuss the role of public councils in PA development. It was attended by 60 participants representing government and non-government conservation agencies, and representatives from the UNDP/GEF projects in Kamchatka and Kazakhstan.
- A planning workshop for developing a management plan for Ergaki Nature Park conducted by an international expert. The workshop was, inter alia, attended by representatives of the UNDP/GEF project in the Kamchatka Peninsula.
- Study visit by the NGO Orion to the UNDP/GEF project in Kamchatka Peninsula and learn from the "Sodruzhestvo" Foundation on micro-lending. Orion obtained information such as charter, rules and tender procedures from the foundation, and following the visit, they designed and launched a similar micro-loan program in Ongudaiskiy District of Altai Republic.
- Joint approach with the UNDP/GEF Kamchatka Project in 2007 to develop a database on biodiversity and Protected Areas (threatened species, GIS). Finalizing and adaptation of the databases was fulfilled at the cost of the Kamchatka UNDP/GEF Project.

Further joint activities with the UNDP/GEF Kamchatka Project and other projects have been conducted for example related to conferences and seminars.

The cooperation with the UNDP/GEF Kamchatka Project has proven itself a very efficient and cost-effective implementation approach.

Altogether, the UNDP/GEF Altai-Sayan Project is a very positive case of collaboration and partnership with other UNDP/GEF projects, and should serve as an example for similar projects.

In the area of nature conservation in the Russian part of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion, there is not much potential for cooperation and synergy with other donors, mainly due to the fact that there are almost no other donors – beside UNDP - involved in this sector. The Netherlands are investing in the Altai-Sayan region, and they work through WWF, which is already a co-financing partner of the UNDP/GEF Project. Germany supports the adaptation of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion to climate change, and these funds were leveraged by the UNDP/GEF Project.

Dissemination of project results and replication. The project undertook a series of activities to disseminate project results throughout the project region, and to promote their replication.

The project organised in particular several conferences for disseminating project experiences. The international conferences on "Sustainable Livelihoods for Local Communities as an Economic Incentive for Biodiversity Conservation" in 2009 was probably the biggest event in this respect, and was attended by 123 participants from five countries (France, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and Russia). Most other conferences had a strong regional or even local focus, even the title of many of them suggested an international character. Several of the conferences were organised in cooperation with local institutions (universities, administrations, etc.) and the project often co-funded these events.

In addition to organising conferences, representatives of the project quite frequently attended conferences organised by others and gave presentations about the project and its achievements. The long list of such participations includes:

- A science conference on "Continuous Environmental Education: Problems, Lessons, Prospects" held in Tomsk in November 2008;
- A presentation at the "International Conference on Range-Wide Conservation Planning for Snow Leopard" held in Beijing in 2008;
- National Conference on "Ecology - Priority for National Development in Russia" in Moscow in September 2008;
- Workshop on Prospects of Youth Environmental Movement for Conservation of Nature and Cultural Heritage in Saint Petersburg in November 2008;
- International Science Conference on "Biological Diversity and Sustainable Natural and Social Development in the Transboundary Altai Ecoregion" Katon-Karagaiskiy National Park (Kazakhstan) in June 2009.

Organising training seminars was another form of disseminating project experience. Example: To promote the replication of educational modules for biodiversity in-service training, the project in close collaboration with the Altai Region Administration and Altai State University held an interregional seminar, which was attended by 35 people from state agencies, environment agencies, and educational facilities of Altai, Kamchatka, and Krasnoyarsk Regions, Altai and Tuva Republic, Novosibirsk, Tomsk, Kemerovo, and Astrakhan Regions. The seminar evaluated the progress made in the Altai Region on developing educational programs focused on biodiversity conservation, and gave practical lessons to civil servants and municipal officials.

A further tool for disseminating project result is the preparation of printed materials such as textbooks, booklets, leaflets, hand-outs, manuals, etc. Annex 4 gives am impressive list of these publications, which were disseminated to specific targets groups.

The collaboration with the Kamchatka Project made it possible not only to learn from these experiences, but also to disseminate experiences. The Altai-Sayan Project, for example, developed and piloted a new approach to anti-poaching, bringing representatives of customs, police, hunting and environment departments together within "unified brigades", of which two are now operating in Tuva and Altai Republics. As the experience of brigades has proven a success, it was taken up and adopted by the Kamchatka Project.

Usage of external assistance. The project spent a significant portion of its budget to call upon external assistance by short and medium-term experts. As the services were provided mostly through service contracts with companies/NGOs, the number of person/months cannot be estimated.

The project worked almost exclusively with experts from the region. Even experts from Russia outside the Altai-Sayan Region were hired only a few times to render services to the project. International experts were hired only twice throughout the lifespan of the project: one international expert for a short-term mission on PA Planning and PA Management, and international experts for the mid-term and terminal evaluations.

Working with non-local experts is in general a widely accepted practice for identifying and promoting innovative approaches and for facilitating an exchange of knowledge and experience. Local stake-

holders often reflect and revisit their own approaches and performance in a better way, when they have to explain and justify their ideas and approaches to outsiders who are not familiar with local circumstances.

On the one hand, it is therefore surprising that the project worked almost exclusively with technical experts from the region itself (there were no budget allocations for international technical experts in the Project Document), on the other hand, the project compensated this shortcoming at least partially through establishing strong partnerships with other UNDP/GEF projects, in particular the Kamchatka Project.

Exit strategy. The closure of the project was foreseen for late 2010, but completion has been delayed after significant additional funds from BMU-ICI (exceeding GEF funding for the project) could be secured in late 2009. The closing date of the UNDP/GEF project was therefore shifted to the end of 2011. Furthermore, UNDP applied to BMU-ICI for a no-cost extension for one year, but no decision has been taken yet at the time of the TE in September 2011.

Most GEF funds have been spent till the end of 2010, and little has been left for 2011. The remaining funds are principally used for project management and evaluation (including coverage of the costs for the Terminal Evaluation) in 2011. All other operations in 2011 are funded by the BMU-ICI co-funding sources.

BMU-ICI co-funding is, among others, to be used for purchasing equipment for newly protected areas. The administrative process of establishing these PAs, however, could not be completed until the end of 2010, and this is the reason why a no-cost extension is asked for. It does not make sense to provide equipment for non-existent PA Administrations.

Project staff has gradually been reduced, being good evidence for a smooth phasing-out. For example, one of the Expert Team Leaders, former project full time staff, worked in 2011 as short-term expert with BMU-ICI funding.

The phasing-out of the project is thus clearly governed by the management of the BMU-ICI funds and the coordination between the two funding sources. Although no explicit exit strategy has been formulated, the project follows an intelligible approach to achieve the project objective within the given time frame.

Monitoring and evaluation (Overall Rating: Satisfactory)

Monitoring & Evaluation was done according to the M&E set up in the Project Document and revised in the Inception Report. Performance of monitoring as carried out by the project satisfied the bare essentials of the GEF since APRs and PIRs were prepared regularly, and independent mid-term and final evaluations were carried out. PIRs identified the action that was required for ratings of MU, U or HU and also noted the responsible party. A management response has been developed to follow-up the results of the mid-term evaluation.

The Management Effectiveness has been monitored with the help of the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT). The results are presented in the next chapter.

Monitoring of biodiversity parameters as required for assessing the achievements towards the project objective struggles with scientific standards and good practice, resulting in sometimes unreliable data (see discussion under 3.3.1). Field monitoring data are incomplete, and most figures are interpolations and estimations rather than concrete monitoring results. Some PIRs have apparently been filled with data from previous years. The reason for this situation is an inappropriate selection of target species (see below for further information).

Stakeholder participation (Overall Rating: Highly Satisfactory)

Stakeholders' participation in both project implementation and decision-making has been satisfactory to highly satisfactory. The establishment of partnerships and collaborative relationship developed

by the project both at the local and regional levels seems to have been vital and meaningful in achieving the main objective of the project.

At the local level, strong support from local communities and decision-makers has successfully facilitated the project. The participation process was initiated gradually and considering the context, it is rated as satisfactory. The reason for this gradual engagement was due to the highly centralized, vertically structured and authoritarian system, in which participatory approaches are not integral parts.

At the local level, the most outstanding project achievement is the establishment of "Protected Area Councils" (or Public Council, Community Council) of Nature Reserves. The idea of these councils was probably born in the UNDP/GEF Kamchatka Project and was adopted in the Altai-Sayan region. These councils bring together user groups and give them a voice against the Protected Area Administration. In the Teletskaya Nature Reserve, for example, there are now three local councils, comprising people such as fishermen, local tourist managers, the director of the local school, representatives from indigenous communities, old people (local leaders), etc. In some cases staff of the Nature Reserves are member of the local councils. There are many potential (and actual) conflicts between resource users and PA Administration, in particular as a few villages are situated inside the Nature Reserve, and the inhabitants have a lot of restrictions. The local councils sometimes take the role of mediators between PA Administration and resource users. From the three local councils in the Teletskaya Nature Reserve, two are not yet legal entities, and the third (and youngest) one has legally been registered as NGO. The local councils are thus not legally embedded into the PA Administration, but act outside this structure, and are herewith dependent on the good-will of the Head of PA Administration.

The lack of a legal basis for establishing PA Councils is the ultimate reason that the project could establish councils not at all intervention sites. PA Councils were established and operate at 7 PAs within 5 project intervention sites including Altaiskiy Biosphere Reserve (3 villages), Katunskiy Biosphere Reserve (only in 2011), Argut Nature Park, Tigirekskiy Reserve, Shorskiy National Park, Ergaki Nature Park and Ubsunurskaya Kotlovina Biosphere Reserve. The Heads of some other PAs were not ready to support the establishment of such councils and to work and share responsibility with them.

Civil society

The Altai-Sayan Project is implemented largely through contracts with local civil societies. This is in line with GEF policies, as the GEF in general regards civil agents as important partners for the implementation of international conventions on the environment. The large-scale support policies undertaken for this reason have decisively influenced the local NGO/CBO sector throughout the globe, but unfortunately have not always led to the desired results. Many environmental NGOs/CBOs are established just for the purpose of getting access to grants provided by the international community and for economic reasons with only little social or political attitudes.[iii] This situation is typical for the Russian Federation and many other parts of the world. In practice, it becomes sometimes difficult to distinguish between NGOs/CBOs, cooperatives and local business structures.

The ultimate question is whether these "grant-based" NGOs and CBOs will cease to exist once the external support comes to an end, i.e. whether they can provide institutional sustainability and whether they can become more than the executing agents of international environmental policies.

In the project region, WWF is probably the only organisation being less dependent on foreign support. According to the WWF-Russian Annual Report 2010, the organisation has in the Russian Federation a membership of 16,500 and generates some 20 percent of its income from national sources. This is surely not yet enough for becoming self-sufficient and self-reliant, but WWF pursues a policy of becoming less dependent from donor-money.

Little concrete information is available on the financial situation of local NGOs (CBOs) who act as subcontractors for the Altai-Sayan Project. However, as non-membership organisations, it can be concluded that they can be classified as grant-based NGOs.

Sustainability

The project attempted to achieve sustainability in several ways.

Ecological Sustainability. The ecological sustainability of the project is rated as highly satisfactory as there are no significant environmental risks which can undermine the future flow of project environmental benefits. None of the project activities pose a threat to the environment and to the sustainability of the project achievements. Strengthening already existing protected areas and adding new ones provides a framework and instrument for better managing the environment.

Financial Sustainability. For the financial sustainability, the project relies almost completely on the state budget: Federal and regional governments are responsible for providing the financial means to maintain the protected areas, and to create new ones. Both the Federal Governments and the regional governments increased their annual budget for PA Administration. While it is not a matter of dispute that these funds are significant, the amount of additional financing is not transparent (see under co-financing).

Institutional Sustainability. Capacity building was an important element of the Altai-Sayan Project. In order to strengthen PA Administrations, many activities were carried under Output 2, Activity 2.1: "Strengthen priority PAs infrastructure and staff capacity". This included the provision of infrastructure for individual PA Administrations, and of training to the staff.

Extensive training was conducted for example for rangers of the Protected Areas. In 2009, a training workshop, which was implemented in collaboration with the *Association of Nature Reserves and National Parks of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion*, was attended by 25 rangers from 10 protected areas of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion. The unit comprised 36 hours of theory and 45 hours of practice. In 2010, the training included workshops in five protected areas of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion, and was attended by 93 participants representing state environmental agencies as well as staff of 14 protected areas of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion.

In order to achieve institutional sustainability of PA Administrations and to strengthen them, the Project provided equipment to them, including three vehicles, three snowmobiles, two boats, one outboard motor and one diesel generator.

The PA state-institutions, both those belonging to the Federal Government and those belonging to the regional governments (krai, republics) enjoy stability.

CBOs in the Altai-Sayan Region are important facilitators and service providers and the project to a big extent relied on their services. The development of the capacities of these CBOs was not an explicit task of the project. As described in the paragraph on "Civil Society", these CBOs are usually non membership-NGOs and are mostly grant-based. Their institutional sustainability thus depends almost a hundred percent on financial support obtained by national and international grant-giving organisations.

Socio-economic Sustainability. Most of the achievements dealing with the local population are "owned" by the local recipient and no recurrent costs to be supported by an external organisation exist. This is in particular valid for the various activities in the field of eco-tourism, where local people generated with the help of the project self-sustaining jobs and income. Local people earn money through providing tourists accommodation and food, services as tour guide or for local transportation. They also sell souvenirs to the visitors. For purchasing equipment and making other investments, the project initiated a micro-credit programme – and thus a sustainable form of financing – instead of providing grants.

Also other income generating measures such as felt production, honey production, medicinal plants cultivation, etc. are self-sustaining and are not dependent on external support.

3.3 Project Finances

Project Spending

The GEF grant for the Altai-Sayan Project was US$3,515,000 (grant without PDF-B). 98 percent of the budget has been spent till the end of 2010, and US$3,469,000 or 98.6 percent of the project budget has been spent by late early September 2011. Less than US$40,000 had been set aside for some management expenditures including the Terminal Evaluation (output 9). The spending of the project thus represents a precise landing with regard to the available budget.

The annual expenditure reached with US$1.1 million a maximum in the second year of operations, and then decreased gradually. This is a solid and well-balanced spending pattern and reflects a smooth and regular project progress (Fig. 3).

The highest expenditures occurred for the strengthening and expansion of the Protected Area System (output 2) and the promotion of alternative livelihoods (output 7), followed by project management and evaluation (output 9) (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4 shows that project spending followed largely the pattern that had been foreseen at project onset, i.e. there were no major differences between the planned and the actual costs of the outputs. The Project Document had not foreseen a separate output for M&E, but included these expenditures in the other outputs ("cross-cutting issue"). After setting up a separate output for M&E, the actual costs of the outputs are now usually somewhat below the planned costs (Fig. 4).

Otherwise there are no instances in the spending pattern regarding the various outputs which would require attention. Project funds have been well-managed.

The project accountant had no direct access to UNDP's ATLAS system for financial management. The accountant was responsible for preparing all the documents, but final processing was made by UNDP Moscow office.

The GEF provides UNDP (and other implementing agencies) with an implementing agency fee in return for project identification, formulation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and mainstreaming services. The fee is transferred directly from UNDP-GEF headquarters to the country offices. The implementing agency fee was provided until 2006 as a fixed amount on full-size projects (flat fee of US$382,000 with premium fees above the standard amount for complex projects with long durations). Currently (2011), agencies receive a 10 percent fee from each GEF grant to cover expenses related to corporate activities and project cycle management activities. In the case of the Altai-Sayan Project, Agency fee was US$536,322[iv], which is over 15 percent of the project budget (US$3,515,000). This is above average standards.

Co-financing

In addition to the GEF grant of US$3.515 million, the project was planning at the onset cofinancing in the amount of US$11.6 million: US$5.8 million from regional governments, US$1.2 million from the NGO WWF and US$4.6 from the tour operator Sayan Ring (private sector). The actual total co-funding at the end of the project exceeds this amount by far: it is expected to reach US$33.2 million by project closure, which is approximately the threefold of the originally amount foreseen. At project closure, there will be a GEF funding:co-funding rate of 1:9.44. This is significantly above global averages, which is about 1:6.5 in GEF-4 projects[v].

While this is doubtlessly a big success of the project, the situation needs to be further analysed. The following issues are noteworthy:

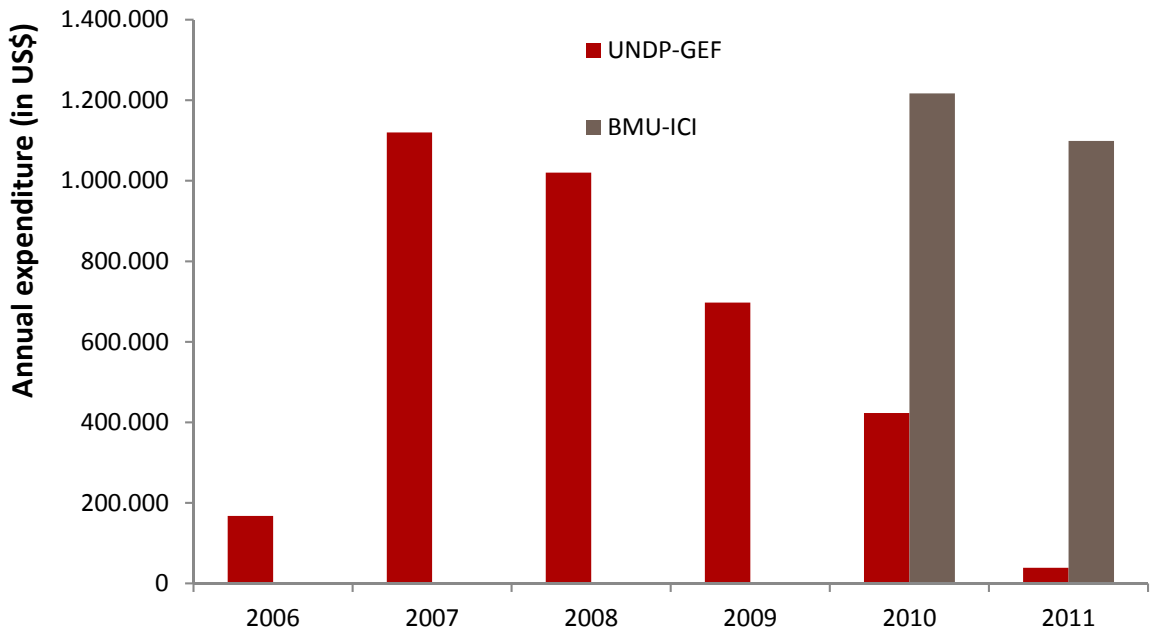

Fig. 3. Annual expenditures of the project. The values for 2011 are as per 07.09.2011 and are therefore incomplete. UNDP applied to BMU for a no-cost extension of the BMU-ICI activities till the end of 2012.

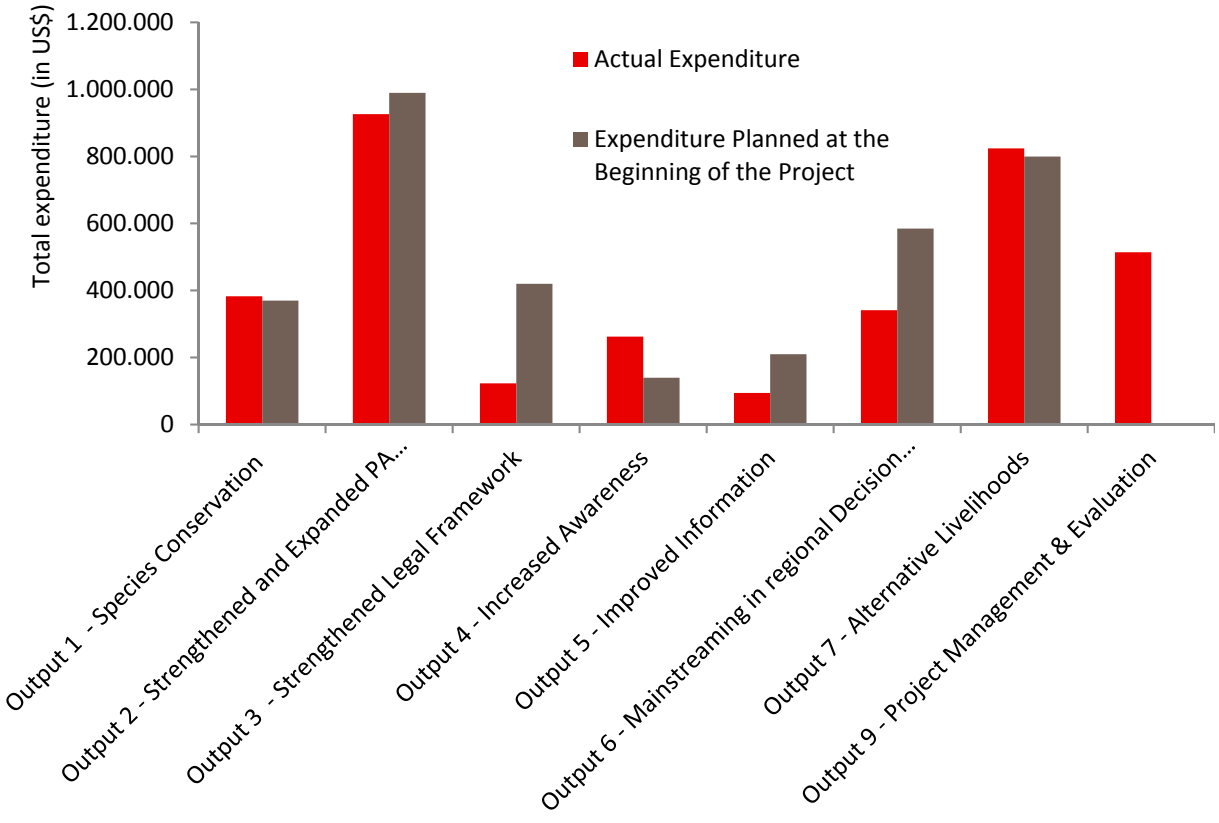

Fig. 4. Project expenditures by outputs as per 6 September, 2011. Management and evaluation expenditures were allocated to a separate output (output 9), while in the planning documents, these costs were included in the other outputs. Output 8, which comes under co-funding from BMU-IKI is not included here.

- Approximately US$9.0 million were recorded as parallel cash co-funding by the Federal Russian Government. It is not clear on what basis this highly significant amount, which exceeds the UNDP/GEF project budget by far, has been calculated and what all has been funded. The Project Team explained that this figure represents the increase of the federal PA financing over the baseline level at the project start.
- The table of co-financing gives an additional amount of approximately US$6.0 million from regional governments. 90% of this financial support was invested in the establishment of Ergaki Nature Park. The actual amount of co-financing by the end of the project is expected to become US$ 11.8 million. This is a similar situation as for co-funding from the Federal Government: it is not clear on what basis this amount has been calculated.

  Co-funding from the Federal and regional government comes up to roughly US$ 20 million over 5 years or so, which is according to local standards an enormous sum for nature conservation. Although it is said that this is cash contribution, it seems that at least a large part of it is in-kind contribution. As long as there are no standards for calculating co-financing contributions, one may always wonder whether all this money is actually "fresh money", or whether it includes baseline funding as well. Having only the totals at hand, it is also difficult to imagine what kind of goods and services have been purchased with these funds.
- WWF increased its co-financing contribution by US$1.23 million, coming up to a total of US$2.43 million for the entire project period. Still in the second project year (2007), there was no input reported from WWF due to structural and staff changes in WWF's Altai-Sayan Project team. However, WWF could secure US$1.2 million Euro for 5 years in Altai-Sayan from MAVA foundation to support activities under the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA) for strengthening of Econet system. WWF is beyond doubt a very important co-financing partner, who invests through MAVA, the Government of the Netherlands and other sources highly significant amounts in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion. There is no information available how these US$2.43 million were calculated, however, the total sum might suggest and that some funding for the non-Russian part of the Altai-Sayan-Ecoregion and/or the period beyond 2010 is included.
- UNDP allocated US$10,000 for covering increased prices for audit services from TRAC resources.
- The tourist company "Sayan Ring" terminated co-financing of the project due to organisational, structural and investment policy changes. On the other hand, other firms and CBOs made investments in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion, which were counted as project co-financing; they sum up to US$1.8 million until 30.08.2011. Although this figure is less than 40 percent of what had been planned, it is still surprisingly high. There is no transparency on the way of calculating these own contributions, mostly made "in kind".

  The source of these funds is normally the contribution by partners, who implement different activities. Small grants are usually provided on competitive basis and one of the tender condition is co-funding from applicant. Normally, one would expect to have these funds listed under in-kind contributions rather than under cash-contributions.

Table 3. Overview of project financing and co-financing. Funds used for project preparation (US$350,000 from PDF-B) are not included here. Source: PIR 2010 and pers. communication Project Manager.

	Amounts committed in Project Document	Amounts committed additionally	Total Disbursement to 30.08.2011	Expected Total Disbursement by end of project
GEF	3,515,000	0	3,469,201	3,515,000
Cash Cofinancing (UNDP managed)				
• Government of Germany	0	4,436,731,00	2,316,309	4,436,731
• UNDP (TRAC)	0	10,000	10,000	10,000

Cash Cofinancing (Partner managed)				
• Federal Governments (increment cash flow)	0	9,026,000,00	9,026,000	9,026,000
• Regional Governments	5,800,000	6,012,900,00	11,812,900	11,812,900
• WWF	1,200,000	1,230,000,00	2,430,000	2,430,000
• Private sector / CBOs	4,600,000	n/a	1,826,000	1,826,000
• Fund "Strana Zapoved-naya"	0	895,000,00	895,000	895,000
In-Kind Cofinancing	0	0	0	0
Total Cofinancing	**11,600,000**	**21,610,631**	**28,316,209**	**30,436,631**

Altogether, the project is praised for securing significant co-financing for the project. The actual amount of co-financing is less clear. Much what is usually counted as baseline financing was apparently counted by the project as co-financing, and no attempt was made to break-down and explain the level of the (cash and in-kind) contributions made available to achieve the project objective, i.e. to make the height of the contributions transparent.

This is a general feature observed in practically all GEF projects: GEF pushes a lot for identifying and leveraging co-financing sources, and under this pressure the projects count contributions as "co-financing" which would actually not deserve this name, and they estimate especially in-kind contributions much higher than their actual value is. It is, however, GEF policy not to insist on full transparency in this respect.

UNDP in 2009 could obtain a grant of US$4.4 million from the German Government through the International Climate Change Initiative (BMU-ICI). These funds were fully managed by the UNDP/GEF project and were fully used for achieving the project objective. Following GEF's strict definition[vi], these are not co-funds, but leveraged resources.

3.3 Project Achievements (Results)

3.3.1 Attainment of the Project Objective and Outcomes

(Overall rating for Project Objective and Outcomes: Satisfactory)

The goal of the Project is „Conservation and sustainable use of globally significant biological diversity in Russia's Altai-Sayan Ecoregion", and the objective has been defined as "Ecosystem-based approach to biodiversity conservation is operationalized in the Russian territory of the Altai-Sayan Mountain ecoregion".

The indicators defined for the objective of the UNDP/GEF project do not reflect the full scope of interventions necessary to achieve the objective. Furthermore, the two outcomes defined for the project are not clearly separated (see above). The TE therefore decided to assess the achievements of objective and outcomes together. This is an unusual procedure, but evaluating the indicators of the objective alone would lead to a distorted picture of project achievements.

The achievement of the project objective and outcomes was going to be measured with the help of the following indicators:

- Population size of flagship and focal species (Altai Argali, Siberian Ibex, Musk Deer, Saker Falcon) remain stable within the key project area;
- Total area under legal protection (ha);
- Percentage of main ecosystem types included in the PA system within key project territories;
- METT scores for 15 protected areas;

- Number of hectares under conservation management in new protected areas according to the Econet scheme;
- Percentage of territory of habitat for two flagship species (Altai Argali, Snow Leopard) included in the protected area system within the key project territories;
- Number of agreements for establishment of collaborative management in protected areas;
- Number of agreements between transboundary protected areas for establishment of collaborative management in biodiversity conservation;
- Biodiversity monitoring programme operational within 4 project areas (in number of project areas);
- Percentage of local population, supporting PAs;
- Number of schools where biodiversity conservation is included in school programmes;
- Number of agreements between PAs, local administrations and communities which regulate sustainable use of NTFP and ecological tourism.

Population size of flagship species. According to the monitoring results, the populations of the target species remained in most cases the same over the last four years. Only the population of the Saker Falcon has decreased according to these data. For formal reasons, the results have to be rated highly satisfactory.

According to the monitoring results (Table 4 and Annex), there were, for example, 100-130 Snow Leopards living in the project area in all three years, or 430 (±40) pairs of Saker Falcons breed in the in project area in the last three years. The size of natural animal populations is never the same over years, and field assessment accuracy and quality can also not be exactly same over years. The indicators thus suggest that they are based on rough estimations or intrapolations, or a combination of both.

The project has spent a lot of efforts to assess the population of these target species, and could rely on dedicated and experienced teams of experts to carry out the field assessments. Nevertheless, the results as presented in the table of indicators are almost useless – not because of inappropriate monitoring methodologies or insufficient skills of the surveyors, but because the Project is "asking for the impossible". The population of the selected indicator species is difficult to assess: The Snow Leopard, for example, is an animal which has hardly been seen by any of the surveyors, and its presence can only be assessed indirectly, i.e. through scats, tracks, with camera traps, etc. Complete surveys of the population of the Saker Falcon are extremely difficult and time-consuming, and it is often difficult to distinguish between breeding and non-breeding birds. The project team should be praised that it succeeded to get an idea on the population size of the target species in the project area. Annual counts, however, are simple impossible, and the figures presented in the monitoring tables represent at best rough interpolations based on sample counts.

Table 4. Results of monitoring of biodiversity parameters in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion. For further details see Annex.

	30.06.2008	30.06.2009	30.06.2010	30.06.2011	Remarks
Altai Argali	1111	1111	1140-1190	1150-1200	2x2 years the same
Snow Leopard	100-130	100-130	100-130	100-130	4 years the same
Siberian Ibex	9,690-11,060	9,255-10,640	9,255-10,640	9,255-10,640	3 years the same
Musk Deer	21,410-22,740	21,410-22,740	21,410-22,740	21,410-22,740	4 years the same
Saker Falcon (no. of pairs)	470±40	430±40	430±40	430±40	3 years the same

Expansion of the surface area of protected areas. According to the Project Document, it was planned to establish a total of 16 new protected areas, including various forms of PAs such as regional nature parks, clusters and buffer zones to existing nature reserves, migration corridors between

nature reserves, etc. This activity should be mainly funded by regional governments, WWF and other donors, while the UNDP/GEF project should directly support establishment of only a few new PAs, the most important being the transboundary Biosphere reserve on the border between China, Mongolia, Kazakhstan and Russia.

4,236,786 ha of land was under legal protection at the beginning of the project. According to the indicators defined in the Inception Phase, the project aimed at obtaining legal protection for an additional 900,000 ha of land, i.e. to have 5,136,786 ha of land under legal protection at the end of the project.

Table 5: Surface area of protected areas established or enlarged during preparation and implementation of the project, and those which are expected to be newly gazetted in the near future.

	Year	Surface area (ha)	Total (ha)
Established during project preparation			**469,900**
• Ergaki Nature Park	2005	217,000	
• Ukok Nature Park	2005	252,900	
Established in the context of the UNDP/GEF project			**556,446**
• Tokhtai Sanctuary	2007	14,367	
• Gagul Kotlovina Sanctuary	2007	24,628	
• Ergaki Nature Park (*extension*)	2008	125,873	
• Taiga Nature Park	2009	23,298	
• Sailyugem NP	2010	118,380	
• Krasnoyarskiy Sanctuary	2010	180,000	
• Kiskachinskiy Sanctuary	2010	69,900	
Planned in the context of the UNDP/BMU project			**875,292**
• Pozarym Federal Refuge	–	252,292	
• Shuiskiy Nature Park	–	98,000	
• Ush-Beldyr Nature Park	–	180,000	
• Ak-Cholushpa Nature Park	–	345,000	
GRAND TOTAL			**1,901,638**

The establishment of Ergaki Nature Park and Ukok Nature Park Quiet Zone has been discussed at least since the early 2000s, and the proclamation of these PAs had been foreseen during implementation of the UNDP/GEF project. Through the active promotion and support by WWF and the upcoming UNDP/GEF project during its PDF-B phase, Russian authorities already in 2005 officially established these protected areas. Both PAs had thus already been legally gazetted, when the project started its implementation phase in mid-2006. The Project Team, however, claims that since considerable efforts were undertaken by the Project Team during the preparatory stages of the project to promote and facilitate the establishment of both protected areas, they should not be regarded as increased baseline but as an indirect impact from the UNDP/GEF Project. The FE believes that even in this case the project should have clarified its indicators accordingly to reflect this picture, at the FSP Project Inception stage.

The remaining areas still cover a very impressive surface area of 556,446 ha, which is, however, only 62% of the target of 900,000 ha (which was defined in the assumption that Ergaki and Ukok PAs still will be established in the lifespan of the project).

The project claims that the extension of Ergaki Nature Park in 2008 and the establishment of Sailyugem National Park in 2010 should be attributed to the UNDP/BMU project component rather than

to UNDP/GEF (see Annex 7 on UNDP/BMU). This is not fully supported by the project documents. However, this would decrease the proportion of the target value from 62% to 35%.

As regards the percentage of main ecosystem types included in the PA system within key project territories (indicator 3), there were no obvious changes in the coverage pattern. There was a more or less equal increase of PA coverage in all types of ecosystems. The increase was slightly higher in mountain forests (taiga) and riparian ecosystems, but the differences are not really significant, i.e. the overall distribution pattern of PAs over the different habitat types remain more or less constant.

Management Effectiveness (METT). The Management Effectiveness (METT) was assessed three times in the lifespan of the project: at project onset in 2006 (baseline), before mid-term evaluation (MTE) in 2009 and before project closure in 2010. METT was assessed for a set of 15 protected areas: 9 federal and 6 regional protected areas.

The overall rating for the priority protected areas increased between 2006 and 2008 by 7% (from 47.5 points in 2006 to 50.8 points in 2008). Among the federal protected areas the greatest progress was made by Altaisky Nature Reserve (+12 points), and a considerable increase was noted in Sayano-Shushensky and Ubsunurskaya Kotlovina Nature Reserves, as well as Shorsky National Park. No progress has been made by Azas Nature Reserve which is still not involved in project activities, while the rating of Katunsky Biosphere Reserve has decreased. Among the regional protected areas the greatest progress has been made by Ukok Nature Park (+10 points) and Ergaki Nature Park (+8 points).

In the period 2008-2010, the overall increase in METT scores was more distinct than in the previous period. Among federal protected areas (*state reserves and national parks)* the highest level of progress (*+ 10 points, 17% increase in effectiveness*) was achieved by Altaisky Biosphere Reserve. The result can be explained, primarily, by the management qualities of Reserve Director, who has together with his team developed new approaches in collaboration with local communities as well as regional and local government. Among regional level protected areas (*nature parks*) most progress has been achieved by Yergaki Nature Park, Krasnoyarsk Region (*+5 points*). The increase in score can be explained by the implementation of a management plan designed for that area, considerable increase in equipment, stable financing due to resources allocated from the Krasnoyarsk Region budget, increase in numbers of staff, and intense development of ecological awareness raising and recreational activities. The (generally minor) increase in METT scores for other nature parks in the Altai Republic was scored on account of specific results achieved in the development of ecological tourism, ecological awareness-raising, research, equipment provision and collaboration with local and indigenous communities.

Nevertheless, the fact remains, that over the past few years the meagre number of staff allocated to nature parks in the Altai Republic remains unchanged (*5-7 individuals per park including director and head accountant*), and this impeded a further increase of METT scores. The low number of staff is not sufficient to fulfil the complex set of objectives.

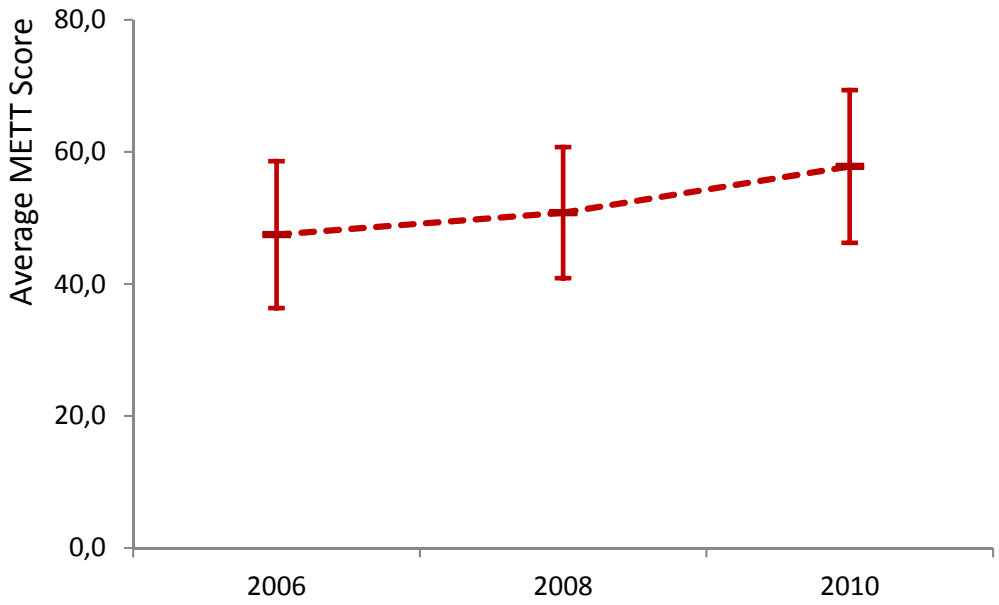

Fig. 5. Average Management Effectiveness of 15 target areas in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion. The graph gives the average and the standard deviation (N=15) for each year.

Achievements of other indicators (see details in the Annex):

- Number of hectares under conservation management in new protected areas according to the Econet scheme: 1,006,651 ha under the econet scheme, which exceeds the target (900,000 ha) significantly;
- Percentage of territory of habitat for two flagship species (Altai Argali, Snow Leopard) included in the protected area system within the key project territories: For the Argali Sheep, the target was exceeded (48.6% over 40% target), while for the Snow Leopard it was slightly below the target (38.6% over 40% target);
- Number of agreements for establishment of collaborative management in protected areas: 6 agreements were concluded, while only 3 were targeted;
- Number of agreements between transboundary protected areas for establishment of collaborative management in biodiversity conservation: 4 transboundary agreements concluded, while only 3 had been foreseen). “Transboundary” here also includes those agreements between republics/krais/oblasts within the Federal system of Russia, not necessarily international agreements;
- Biodiversity monitoring programme operational within 4 project areas (in number of project areas): 6 programmes operational at the end of the project, while only 4 had been targeted.
- Percentage of local population, supporting PAs: in the sample, 74 percent of the local population supports on average the Protected Areas compared to 40 percent at project start. The target had been 60 percent, which has been exceeded.
- Number of schools where biodiversity conservation is included in school programmes: the number of schools with biodiversity curricula is 20, which is in line with the project target.
- Number of agreements between PAs, local administrations and communities, which regulate sustainable use of NTFP and ecological tourism: the actual number exceeds the target by far: it had been planned at project start to conclude 30 agreements, but there were 90 such agreements at the end of project operations.

3.3.2 Attainments of Outputs

The project selected six pilot areas for project interventions. These areas are representative for the Altai-Sayan region in terms on biodiversity, ecosystems and socio-economic features.

The project interventions are not equally distributed over these areas. In some areas like the Central Altai and the Teletskaya Reserve, many project measures have been implemented rather intensively, while in other areas such as in the Todjinsko-Sengilenskaya area, both the variety of interventions and the intensity is relatively less.

Table 6. Project interventions by output in the six pilot areas. Three points: intensive engagement; two points medium, and one point minor engagement. According to classification by the Project Manager.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Tigirekskaya	Central Altai	Teletskaya	Gornaya Shoriya	Western Sayany	Todjinsko-Sengilenskaya
Output 1 Endangered species	●	●●	●●●	●	●●●	●
Output 2 Capacity building	●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	
Output 3 Law enforcement	●	●●	●●	●	●	●
Output 4 Awareness building	●●	●●	●●●	●●	●●●	●
Output 5 Information mgmt.	●●	●●	●●	●●	●●	●●
Output 6 Regional dec.-making	●●●	●●	●●	●●●	●●	●
Output 7 Aternative livelihoods	●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●	

Output 1: Conservation of rare and endangered species

Overall rating for Output 1: Highly Satisfactory.

The conservation of rare and endangered species of wildlife was one of the main starting points and drivers for the project and surely for many people an important motif for launching and engaging in this project. The project concentrated its activities in three fields:

- Combating poaching and illegal trade in rare and endangered species;
- Raising public awareness and involve local populations in species conservation;
- Monitoring the populations of flagship species, especially Snow Leopard and Argali Sheep.

The project successfully supported the establishment of interagency anti-poaching brigades in the Truva Republic, the Altai Republic and the Altaisky Krai. The Altai Krai Brigade, for example, was created in 2007 and staffed with 10 rangers from the Ministry of the Interior of Altai Region, Tigireksky State Nature Reserve, Federal Game Department for Altai Region, and the NGO “Geblerov Society for Environment Conservation”. The Altai Region Ministry of the Interior transferred two more officers from the militia special task force. The brigade was still continuing to operate at the end of the project. The successful work of the brigade can be understood from more than 80 raids conducted in various parts of the region, during which more than 220 cases of poacher were discovered, and approximately 110 fire arms, traps and fishing nets were confiscated.

Activities of the brigade got good coverage in the local press: the official website of the Altai Region Administration and the websites of “Bankfax”, “Amitel”, “Atmosfera” news agencies reported on it,

and the "Priroda Altaya" newspaper published an article. As these reports surely have a significant deterrent effect to poachers, the outcome of these brigades cannot be measured by the number of detained poachers or confiscated materials.

Public awareness activities were supported by various publications, for example a booklet for enforcement agencies on analysis of the market of animal species and their derivates in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion (prepared and published together with WWF).

In 2009, the project supported Sayano-Shushensky Nature Reserve in establishing a satellite monitoring system to track vehicles, vessels, and groups of rangers within protected areas. The project also supports the development of a surveillance system, through which e.g. mountain huts or mountain paths known to be regularly used by poachers are automatically monitored so that action can be taken.

A successful example for species conservation measures implemented by the project regards Saker Falcon: An agreement to install "bird guards" on power lines was concluded between Siberian Ecological Centre and Siberian Power Transmission Company which owns 80% of power lines in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion; a survey of 136 km of power lines had revealed 446 birds killed by electricity including rare species such as Imperial and Steppe Eagles, Greater Spotted Eagles, Long-legged Buzzards, Peregrine Falcons, and Eagle Owls. The project has made a highly relevant contribution to reduce these bird losses.

Poaching is still a serious problem at the end of the project. The project, however, made a significant contribution toward reducing the level of poaching through a combined effort with increased control, deterrent measures and awareness building. Some anti-poaching measures and fines are very draconic according to Western standards. Trespassers in the core areas of Protected Areas are detained, and fines and compensation claims are filed also against people who illegally took only a few kilograms of fish. The TE could not further examine this aspect, but it seems that a softer approach to non-commercial poaching may help a lot to get in good terms with the local population.

Another measure dealt with herders of Western Tuva and aimed at mitigating human-wildlife conflicts: more than 40 "corrals" (stables) were improved and protected with metal mesh to prevent Snow Leopards from penetrating, and about 100 herders are trained to improve corrals. A special manual on corral improvement was published and distributed, and three experimental electric fences were set. As a consequence, the number of livestock killed by Snow Leopards decreased 8-10 times, and there were no reported cases of killing of Snow Leopards after 2007.

As regards monitoring of endangered species, monitoring programmes for Altai Argali, Snow Leopard and Saker Falcon have been developed, and PA staff was trained in monitoring. The methodologies include high-tech monitoring techniques for Snow Leopard (e.g. camera-trapping, scat collection for DNA analysis using detection dogs). 15 PAs were equipped with GIS software with a help of ESRI Conservation Program (The ESRI Conservation Program is the non-profit support arm of the Environmental Systems Research Institute/ESRI), and 25 specialist were trained in GIS use for monitoring and conservation of biodiversity. Altogether, 17 field surveys were organised to evaluate number of Altai Argali, Snow Leopard, Saker Falcon, Siberian Ibex and Musk-Deer.

Output 2: Strengthening and expanded protected areas system

Overall rating for Output 2: Satisfactory.

The expansion of the Protected Area System has already been analysed in chapter 3.3.1 ("Attainment of the Project Objective and Outcomes"), and it was found that the project supported the Russian administration to bring 556,446 ha of land under legal protection, which is a very impressive figure, but only 62% of the target of 900,000 ha. The project was also instrumental in bringing 469,900 ha of land under legal protection already in the project preparation phase. Despite the fact that the actual achievement lags behind the target, the TE finds that this achievement is still satisfactory. The fact

that two target areas have received legal protection already before the onset of the project should have been taken into account when defining the baseline and the targets.

The Management Effectiveness of 15 selected Protected Areas increased over 20% during the lifespan of the project: While METT scores were on average 47.5 at project start, they reached 57.8 score at project closure. Other UNDP/GEF projects often have a higher impact on PAs as demonstrated by a sharper increase of the METT scores. However, these projects usually concentrate all their efforts on one or a few PAs, whereas the Altai-Sayan Project dealt with many PAs; the Altai-Sayan METT scores represent averages of 15 PAs.

The project supported the elaboration of management plans for five protected areas. These were to serve as models for the region:

- Sayano-Shushensky Nature Reserve: management plan was prepared at Project beginning. As contribution towards implementation, the Project supported repairing Bazaga Patrol Station and its equipping with a diesel power generator; 3 petrol power stations were purchased, one heavy duty pontoon bridge, two boat motors, a current converter, two inflatable boats, 25 life vests, etc.
- Shorsky National Park: A management plan was prepared with the help of the Project in 2007. To assist the implementation of the management plan, the Project purchased equipment including six wooden boats, two GPS navigators, a four wheel drive vehicle and a snow mobile.
- Ubsunurskaya Kotlovina Nature Reserve: The management plan prepared in 2007 formed a basis for a joint management plan, which the UNDP/GEF project in Mongolia prepared for the Ubsunur Transboundary Biosphere Protected Area. Additional to the management plan itself, the Project funded a study on the extension of the PA, and the purchase of equipment such as a four wheel drive vehicle, desktop and laptop computers, a multimedia projector, a felt yurt, two boilers for a boiler house, etc.
- Ukok Quiet Zone Nature Park: A management plan has been developed in 2007/2008. An office building/visitior centre was acquired and reconstructed in order to provide start-up benchmark for management plan implementation. Also a yurt visiting centre was established at the entrance to the park area.
- Ergaki Nature Park. A management plan has been developed in 2007/2008. A planning workshop for the preparation of the plan was moderated and facilitated by an international expert.

Although the management plans prepared with the support of the Project could not be analysed in detail, it seems that they are some further development of hitherto existing plans. The principal concept of management plans in Russia is that Protected Areas (in particular zaprovedniks) need strict protection and wardening, but not management. Management Plans for strictly protected areas therefore provide in principal a concept how to protect the PAs from human influence rather than a concept how to work with local people in order to decrease adverse human impacts. The management plans prepared by the Project, however, deal at least with reducing conflicts with local resource users, and the participation of the local population. Nevertheless, they take a very pragmatic approach within the existing normative framework. Local communities were consulted in the course of preparing the management plans; the degree of participation cannot be fully assessed retrospectively.

The Project promoted the participation of Community Councils (Public Councils, Protected Area Councils) in seven protected areas, namely in Altaisky Nature Reserve, Katunskiy Biosphere Reserve (only in 2011), Argut Nature Park, Tigirekskiy Reserve, Shorskiy National Park, Ergaki Nature Park and Ubsunurskaya Kotlovina Biosphere Reserve. These councils bring together user groups and give them a voice against the Protected Area Administration. The idea of these councils was probably born in the UNDP/GEF Kamchatka Project and was adopted in the Altai-Sayan region. In the Altaiskiy Nature Reserve, for example, there are now three local councils, comprising people such as fishermen, local

tourist managers, the director of the local school, representatives from indigenous communities, old people (local leaders), etc. In some cases staff of the Nature Reserve are member of these Community Councils. There are many potential (and actual) conflicts between resource users and PA Administration, in particular when villages are situated inside the Nature Reserve, and the inhabitants have to deal with a lot of restrictions. The Community Councils sometimes take the role of mediators between PA Administration and resource users. From the three councils in the Altaiskiy Nature Reserve, two are not yet legal entities, and the third (and oldest) one has been legally registered as NGO. The local councils are thus legally not embedded in the PA Administration, but act outside this structure, and are herewith dependent on the good-will of the Head of PA Administration. The establishment of Community Councils is one of the most remarkable Project achievements.

Output 3: Strengthened legal and institutional framework for biodiversity conservation and transboundary management

Overall rating for Output 3: Highly Satisfactory.

This one of the most important outputs of the project, as it targets transboundary management of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion, and hereby an issue which has been used to justify a regional project approach.

The project has specifically envisaged two transboundary protected areas:

- A biosphere reserve covering the area of Ubsunurskaya Kotlovina Nature Reserve in Russia and Uvs Nuur Nature Reserve in Mongolia. The establishment of a biosphere reserve was discussed in the Joint Commission on Environment between Russia and Mongolia in 2008, and the Project supported subsequent negotiations on this issue. In July 2010, the Project discussed again the idea of a transboundary nature reserve together with Mongolia during the international conference "Climate Change and Continuous Biodiversity Conservation in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion" which took place in the Altai Republic. In its resolution the conference called upon the governments of the two countries to expedite the establishment of Ubsunur Transboundary Biosphere Reserve. The management plan for Ubsunurskaya Kotlovina Reserve developed within the Project provided a basis for a joint management plan which the UNDP/GEF project in Mongolia prepared for the Ubsunur Transboundary Biosphere Protected Area.
- A transboundary biosphere reserve over the area of Katunsky Nature Reserve in Russia and Katon-Karagayskiy National Park in Kazakhstan. The Project supported the Altai Republic in their efforts to establish such a transboundary reserve. The international conference held in July 2010 in the Altai Republic ("Climate Change and Continuous Biodiversity Conservation in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion"), supported by the Project, issued a resolution, in which the conference called upon the governments of the two countries to expedite the establishment of Altai Transboundary Biosphere Reserve. In December 2010 the Federal Government of Russia issued a directive "On concluding an agreement between the Government of Russia and the Government of Kazakhstan for establishing Altai Transboundary Biosphere Reserve" under which negotiations with Kazakhstan and conclusion of the agreement on behalf of the Russian Government was delegated to the Ministry of Natural Resources. Finally, an agreement for the creation of a transboundary protected area Altai was signed by Russian and Kazakh Presidents in Astrakhan in September 2011[vii].

The Project has made a major contribution towards the establishment of the transboundary reserve between Russia and Kazakhstan. The Project team is praised for its efforts. The second transboundary reserve, between Russia and Mongolia, is still a pending issue. At present, it is not clear whether it will ever be realised. The Project undertook various efforts, but the pace of trans-boundary collaboration is a highly political issue beyond the direct impact of the Project.

It was originally foreseen to pursue a regional approach under the roof of a single UNDP/GEF project comprising Mongolia, Kazakhstan and Russia. Later, it turned out to be more practical and result-

oriented to conduct three different national projects. Nevertheless, a UNDP/GEF Regional Steering Committee has been established during PDF-B. This Steering Committee had so far five meetings, the last held in Kazakhstan in November 2009. A final meeting is foreseen to take place in Mongolia in late 2011. Altogether, the projects could establish some cooperation (such as joint monitoring surveys in the border area between Mongolia and Russia). Nevertheless, the strength of cooperation and the number of joint actions was higher e.g. between the UNDP/GEF Kamchatka Project and the Altai-Sayan Project than with the UNDP/GEF Altai-Sayan projects in Mongolia and Kazakhstan.

This output provides justification for some legal activities performed by the project. Commissioned by the Project, WWF drafted, for example, a bill "On Protected Areas in the regions of the Russian Federation", which proposed amendments to the Law on Protected Areas and some other laws of the Russian Federation. The bill passed the hearings in a respective committee of the State Duma (Legislative Assembly). As is the case with similar undertakings, it is difficult to gauge the impact of the Project on these issues. Many stakeholders are working on the same subject, and the outcome is not under the control of the Project. Nevertheless, it is likely that the project has a limited influence on the legal and regulatory framework.

Output 4: Increased levels of biodiversity awareness among major stakeholder groups and the rural population

Overall rating for Output 4: Highly Satisfactory.

The project has been extremely active in raising awareness and pursues awareness-building on a professional scale. It has produced, and supported partner organisations to produce, an impressive amount of high-quality materials in a variety of different and innovative media to promote awareness. Annex 4 gives an overview of the main print publications produced by the Project. The subjects covered by these materials are wide and the quality of these materials is professional. In addition to a press secretary, the Project employed a full-time expert group leader and short-time experts for conducting the awareness activities.

Awareness-building by the Project had two principal target groups:

- Local communities and resource users who live within or next to protected area. This group includes sub-groups such as shepherds, fishermen, hunters, poachers, wood-collectors, tourist service providers, etc.
- Visitors to Protected Areas including local, regional and foreign tourists;
- Children and youth.

The Project has conducted awareness events and prepared awareness material specific to these target (sub-) groups.

The project applied the full array of activities for awareness raising including seminars, workshops, conferences, publication of posters, fliers, calendars, booklets, textbooks, work with mass media (newspapers, internet, radio, TV), production of footages, photo exhibitions, public events (e.g. competitions). The Project conducted a micro grant programme on ecological awareness. Twelve CBOs received grants of US$1,000 each to raise awareness among local communities. Activities also included the establishment of (semi-) permanent visitor and education centres:

- The Project supported the establishment of a visitor centre for eco-tourism at the border of Altai Republic, which opened its door in 2008. The centre is a joint effort of the "Altai Info" NGO, the Federal Ministry for Natural Resources and the Ministry of Tourism of the Altai Republic.
- A "Mobile Visit-Centre in Nomadic Traditions" was established in the Ubsunurskaya Kotlovina Nature Reserve (Tuva Republic). In 2007, for example, the visitor centre hosted 105 lectures, 72 excursions, and 40 seminars.
- The Project financed a tourist information centre of the Altai Museum for Cultural and Ecological Heritage in the Katunsky Nature Reserve.

The Project developed and conducted a comprehensive education programme for schools, which covers subjects such as biodiversity conservation and the cultural and spiritual values of the native land. Several textbooks have been prepared, including a book on "Nature of Altai" and another on "Culture of Altai". These books have been recognised by the Russian Academy of Education as innovative and recommended them for school curricula in the Altai Republic. The textbooks also received awards in an All-Russian competition as "Best Textbook 2009" and were approved in the Kosah-Agach and Ongudai districts in 2010. In 2010, with the support of the Project, an All-Russian conference was held on „Replicating Experience of Developing Methodological Textbooks for Teachers and School Children in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion with the Aim of Including Issues of Biodiversity Conservation in the School Curriculum".

There were a few elements of the awareness raising, which need special attention:

- The project was very successful in linking up with local initiatives, CBOs, NGOs, local administration, etc. The project found strong partners, whose involvement was absolutely necessary to make the activities a success;
- The awareness programme was so diverse, comprehensive and multifaceted that the specific aims sometimes got lost; several of the awareness raising activities were not linked to concrete problems. Sometimes it has not been taken into account that successful awareness campaigns should people give a chance to react and to change something.
- Some of the awareness activities were simply too small and not enough results-oriented in order to achieve sustainable impact. The TE, for example, does not believe that the 1000 Dollar grants to CBOs have had a sustainable impact.
- The education programme for school children was particularly successful. It reached a large number of pupils. Key to success was the fact that some of the textbooks prepared and published by the Project have been recognised by the state and were thus admitted to schools.
- Printed publications have a circulation of mostly a few hundred of copies. While this is sufficient for specific target groups, it is not enough for reaching a wide audience such as school pupils.

Output 5: Improved information on biodiversity, including TEK, and its use in decision-making

Overall rating for Output 5: Satisfactory.

The Project initiated the establishment of the Altai-Sayan Biodiversity Database, which is implemented jointly by the Altaisky State University and the Central Botanical Garden of Siberia. The database provides information on the wildlife in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion of Russia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan and China, including species distribution, population, conservation status and other details to help researchers, national and non-governmental agencies and other stakeholders. The database, which is available at www.bioaltai-sayan.ru, is said to be much used in particular by students. It is evident that the database is much better elaborated for plants than for animals, for which not much information can be retrieved. The English version of the database is not well-developed as at all.

Output 5 includes the promotion of Traditional Environmental Knowledge (TEK). The Altai-Sayan region is culturally very diverse, with four language groups (Russian, Mongolian, Chinese and Turkic) and more than 20 indigenous ethnic groups (including the Shortsy, Altaians, Tuvinians, and Khakas) practicing traditional land use systems. There are also a variety of religions including Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Shamanism. The Project believes that TEK has a great value and potential for solving environmental problems due to the sustainable character of traditional nature use.

To maintain TEK and to promote the sustainable use of natural resources, the Project supported the preparation of a handbook of indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge by the Altaisky State University (Barnaul) and the Altai Regional Institute of Ecology (Altai Republic). The preparation of the handbook included extensive field surveys by a multi-disciplinary team to register and analyse traditional systems of nature use practiced by the local indigenous peoples. The publication includes a CD

with supplementary documents and has been recommended for secondary schools and higher education institutions of the region.

The collection and analysis of TEK is an important step forward. It helps scientists understand traditional land use systems, and the dissemination of information creates awareness for traditional values. Nevertheless, it cannot be seen whether or how this newly acquired knowledge leads to an enhancement of conservation efforts. So far, it is mainly a scientific assessment without direct practical implications on biodiversity conservation. On the other hand, the Project took a very sensitive approach as regards local peoples. The Project, for example, took traditional land use systems into account during the preparation of the management plan of Shorskiy National Park. The traditional hunting and fishing grounds of Shorts people were mapped using GIS and agreements were made with families/tribes; special zones for traditional use have been identified, and the regulatory arrangements to legalise traditional activities of indigenous hunters and fishers within the National Park were implemented accordingly. Similar approaches have been pursued in Khakassia and the Tyva Republic.

Traditional knowledge is often being praised for being sustainable by definition. The TE evaluator does not agree with this view: The Altai-Sayan Ecoregion is so rich in different ethnic groups, sacred sites, traditional lifestyles and traditional knowledge. However, this has not prevented the overuse of natural resources. Extensive poaching, overgrazing by livestock, trade in threatened species of animals and plants, illegal logging, over-collection of non-wood forest products, etc. are widespread in the region despite TEK, and these threats are finally also used as a justification for the UNDP/GEF interventions.

Output 6: Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into regional decision making process

Overall rating for Output 6: Marginally Unsatisfactory.

This output is the most difficult to evaluate as it is actually not an output by its own, but comprises several cross-cutting issues and the activities described under this output largely overlap with those of other outputs, which have actually already been assessed elsewhere. The project activity reports list under this output activities regarding awareness building, conference attendances, development of land use models, strengthening of enforcement capacities, anti-poaching campaigns, souvenir production, and so on and so forth. In many cases, it is not clear how these activities contribute either to mainstreaming or to the regional decision-making process, or to both.

Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into regional decision making process is a very ambitious task, and could constitute a project by its own. Pursuing a mainstreaming approach would first require an analysis what the relevant regional decision-making processes are, how they work, what role biodiversity conservation currently plays and what role it should play in the future. It seems that the Project has never carried out such an analysis and has only vague ideas, what should be done under this output and what it should achieve.

The Convention on Biological Diversity has long emphasised the need for integrating, or "mainstreaming" biodiversity into national and local development and poverty reduction strategies. The idea is that significant achievements regarding biodiversity conservation can only be achieved, if biodiversity concerns are taken by those sectors into account which have a negative effect on biodiversity. So it sounds more than reasonable to integrate biodiversity conservation into the cooperation activities of governmental administrative units.

To be clear: as the output deals with mainstreaming, it addresses sectors other than the natural resource sector (the Project Document speaks about "key economic sectors"). Most of the activities carried out by the Project under this output, however, address the natural resource sector itself, and the activities identified for obtaining this output are thus not adequate. The Project also does not say what "regional decision-making" is: whether it refers to the coordination between the republics and

krais in the Russian part of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion, or whether it refers to international cooperation with Kazakhstan, Mongolia and China.

Already the Project Document had described under this output a diverse set of activities, of which not all contribute to mainstreaming biodiversity, and did not offer a clear intervention structure. Also the MTE briefly discussed the interpretation of this output. The MTE report writes "Arguably the inter-agency brigades and good work with the customs could be considered mainstreaming. However, mainstreaming is most often poorly described and therefore little understood and it could also be interpreted as giving relevance to biodiversity in other policy sectors." However, MTE did not clearly speak out the problems with this output, and did not provide further guidance.

Output 7: Development of alternative livelihoods and involvement of local communities in natural resource management

Overall rating for Output 7: Satisfactory.

Alternative livelihood is regarded here as an integral and indispensable part of Protected Area Management. The Project has supported a wide scale of income-generating activities in the project region. These include:

- Ecotourism development: Training seminars for service providers, training for tour guides, publications, development of tourist trekking routes, provision of basic infrastructure (tourist camp), establishment of information centres;
- Skin and wool development: Training in tanning and processing;
- Souvenirs manufacturing: Training seminars, master classes for traditional craft items, provision of basic equipment;
- Medicinal plants: Training on collection and cultivation, establishment of pilot plantations;
- Honey production: Purchasing bee hives, establishing apiaries, conducting training workshops and seminars for bee-keepers;
- Non-timber Forest Products: Seminars on sustainable use of wild berries, purchase of basic equipment for processing wild berries, seminars on sustainable use of wild brackens, purchase of equipment and organizing bracken collection;
- Sustainable hunting: establishing a hunting society;
- Consulting services for alternative livelihood;
- Micro-credits: training for establishing a micro-credit scheme.

The various activities were not equally distributed over the six pilot areas. Whereas ecotourism activities, for example, have been implemented, albeit in a varying degree, in all six pilot areas, sustainable hunting through establishment of a Hunting Society was promoted only at Gornaya Shoriya. The Project thus followed a pragmatic approach und used opportunities and built on favourable local conditions.

Table 7. Promotion of Sustainable Livelihood activities by the UNDP/GEF Project in the six pilot areas.

	Tigirekskaya	Central Altai	Teletskaya	Gornaya Shoriya	Western Sayany	Todjinsko-Sengilenskaya
Ecotourism/ training	●	●	●	●	●	●
Ecotourism/ infrastructure			●	●	●	
Skin & wool		●				
Souvenirs		●			●	
Medicinal plants	●	●				
Honey		●		●		
Other NTFP			●	●		
Hunting				●		
Consulting		●		●	●	
Micro-credit		●	●			

Ecotourism: Ecotourism development was particularly successful. A lot of seminars on different topics have been organised throughout the project region. Ecotourism guide training seminars were organised, training seminars for local inhabitants on basic marketing and how to create and manage a small business. The Project also funded e.g. the construction work for a Tourist Information Centre at Ulagan, which provides visitors with information on the region's tourist services, accommodation and excursions. The centre also provides local craftsmen and craftswomen with an outlet for the sale of their products.

Skin and wool: In Chui-Ozy Nature Park, for example, a workshop was established with the support of the Project for cattle skin tanning, and training (including master classes) were conducted for local people on manufacture of traditional craft items. A contract system has been established to involve local people into production of souvenirs. Altogether 15 people work there.

Souvenirs: Uch-Enmek Nature Park (Altai Republic) is a good example for souvenir production: Park administration concluded an agreement with a local company. The administration renovated a deserted building, equipped it with machinery, and trained local people, and a local company now organises the production and marketing of souvenirs. Tens of people from Uch Enmek Nature Park nowadays earn money from this business.

Medicinal plants: The project conducted several activities for cultivating medicinal herbs. These included

- Establishment of two trial plantations within Uch Enmek and Argut Nature Parks. The plants were brought from a nursery established with the assistance of the UNDP/GEF Project in Kamlak village;
- Establishment of cooperatives and individual farms in various parts of the region including the Ongudai District; establishment of a plantation of rare medicinal plants on the farms of Taldu and Irbis including Maral root, creeping thyme, etc.
- Cultivation of Golden roots on private land in the surroundings of Tigireksky Reserve. Seedlings were produced in a laboratory in Barnaul;
- Publication of a "Manual for Cultivation and Sustainable Harvesting of Wild Medicinal and Food Plants in the Altai Republic". The brochure describes how to cultivate medicinal and food plants, and how to harvest them sustainably.

All activities regarding medicinal plants were on an experimental scale, and income generated through marketing of medicinal plants was marginal. It is doubtful whether economic impact can be achieved in this field. Marketing studies were not performed. Golden roots, for example, need 3-4 years until their roots can be harvested, which is a dis-incentive for cultivating them.

Honey: Honey production was, for example, promoted in the Tashtagolsky District (Kemerovo Region). Five families purchased several bee-hives and started this business. As a result 10 people found permanent employment and 20 seasonal employment.

Micro-credit: The Project succeeded in initiating micro-credit schemes: The approach was based on the lessons learned from "Sodruzhestvo" Micro-Loan Programme implemented within the UNDP/GEF biodiversity conservation project at Kamchatka, and a representative of the Altai-Sayan Project went to Kamchatka to learn the procedures and experiences. The Altai-Sayan Microcredit Programme established a Managing Board and a Board of Trustees, and hold meetings in six villages that were attended by approximately 500 people. The Fund could initially collect 250,000 RUR (approximately US$7,700). It includes donations of individuals, legal entities, and the village administration. The programme was broadly covered in the local press. No direct financial contributions were made by the Project. So far, more than 25 people received credits to establish their small businesses, most of them in the field of tourism development but also for establishing a sawmill or opening a felt studio. Repayment rate is very high.

The micro-credit scheme works on a micro scale. Average credits are a few hundred dollars, which is often enough to purchase some equipment or to start business. It is seed money only. The micro-

credit facility is a very encouraging initiative, particularly as it a self-help initiative. So far, the overall impact is still quite low.

The Project did a lot to disseminate the knowledge on alternative livelihood and income generation. There were many seminars and workshops in which people convened to exchange knowledge and experience, and to develop joint visions. In 2009, an international conference was held to enable participants to share lessons learnt and to strengthen collaboration. The conference was attended by over 100 participants from Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, France, and many different regions of Russia. A souvenir fair was organised in parallel to the conference. For disseminating project results regarding alternative livelihoods, the Project elaborated the publication "Sustainable Livelihoods for Communities Living in Protected Areas: Concept and Guidelines". The book is intended for conservationists, PA managers, decision makers and NGOs/CBOs.

The sustainable livelihood output comprises many small success stories. Farmers, who can supplement their income through producing felt, villagers who learnt to produce honey, or women who generate some cash income through souvenir production. From a development perspective, these sustainable livelihood activities need to be evaluated from three angles:

- Could the Project already achieve impact on the livelihood in the pilot areas through these measures: is there a relevant number of people who benefit from these livelihood activities?
- Could the Project show way how to improve the overall livelihood situation in the pilot areas or the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion as a whole? His would require, among others, a proof that a certain livelihood activity is economically viable, and a concept how to widely spread this activity (upscaling).
- Are these livelihood activities carried out as an alternative to non-sustainable economic activities, or as additional activities? Alternative livelihood activities should always be undersatood as remedy against destructive harvesting of elements of biodiversity.

The development potential of ecotourism in the area is surely very high and justifies all interventions carried out by the Project. The main target group are visitors from other parts of the Russian Federation, and to a lower extent also foreigners (high-price segment). Altai has a very positive image, and can build on increasing numbers of visitors. The Project supported measures from which local population directly benefit; such self-help approaches are supplemented by a micro-credit programme (sustainable financing), and the Project put much efforts in establishing partnerships and in disseminating lessons learnt throughout the intervention area.

The development potential of other income-generating measures is much less clear. Skin and felt processing and marketing, or processing berries and marketing berry products may generate some income for a limited number of individuals, but it needs to be analysed whether these activities constitute real development options, from which a significant number of local people can generate cash income.

Regarding the cultivation of medicinal plants, another aspects needs to be considered: Cultivating medicinal (or other) plants reduces the pressure on the wild relatives, but at the same time it also reduces the economic value of wild plants. In the long run, people who cultivate a certain medicinal plant species are no longer interested in protecting the same species in the wild as it has no longer a price tag. It also becomes difficult to justify certain restriction and protection measures in Protected Areas, when the same species is widely cultivated nearby. Cultivation, a form of ex situ protection, is therefore increasingly seen only as a "last option" for highly endangered species[viii]. This, however, is not the case for the medicinal plants cultivated with support by the Project.

Altogether, the Project spent too much effort to develop and test different kinds of livelihood approaches. Now, at the end of the Project, we roughly know what works and what does not work. But no time is left for upscaling the results and for achieving real impact on the ground (especially after dropping of the second phase of the Project). This is, by the way, a general feature of many natural resource and rural development projects: they spend too much time and efforts for testing certain

livelihood approaches, and much less time in upscaling successful measures. Instead of testing over 10 different livelihood approaches, it would have been more than adequate to concentrate all efforts on no more than 2-3 measures, with the aim to achieve higher impact. Feasibility studies for producing large supplies, marketing studies, cooperation with professional companies (public-private partnerships), etc. could be elements of a comprehensive approach.

The Project Team shares a different opinion as to whether testing approach was appropriately used for the alternative livelihood component of this particular project. The project with its very limited resources was indeed to pilot several interventions in this regard so that the testing-by-doing method would provide the local stakeholders with a better background and a clearer justification for further interventions and possible sustainable business development. Also, the main impact from the implementation of the alternative livelihood component seems to be not so much the generation of as much and stable income as possible but to pilot different activities to demonstrate benefits from PA presence to local communities and reduce current and possible conflicts between two parties. The logframe indicators were also formulated not to reflect the income generation figures but the number of agreements between PAs, local administrations and communities, which regulate sustainable use of NTFP and ecological tourism and the percentage of local population, supporting PAs. The last indicator shows critical improvement (74% at the end of the project in comparison with 40% at the project start) of local people attitude to PAs.

3.4 Assessment of Project Achievements according to OECD-DAC Standards

The OECD-DAC criteria are a standardised way how to look at the achievements of a project. Many of the issues have in principal already been dealt with in the previous chapter but from different perspectives. In order to avoid duplication, the following chapter has been drafted in a very concise way, and give some examples (rather than an exhaustive list) of achievements or non-achievements as a justification for the rating.

3.4.1 Relevance

The project is rated as highly relevant ("Highly Satisfactory" in respect to its relevance) as it, among other aspects,

- addresses issues of global importance for biodiversity conservation including the preservation of the habitats for globally threatened species;
- aims at the conservation of ecosystems, habitat types, and species for which the Russian Federation has a global responsibility;
- treats the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion as an ecological unit with complementary UNDP/GEF projects implemented in Kazakhstan and Mongolia;
- pursues a systemic approach through combining ecological with socio-economic goals;
- addresses both the enhancement of the enabling environment for biodiversity conservation with concrete action on the ground;
- selected project areas which show suitable features for demonstration, replication and dissemination;
- is in line with international commitments made by the Russian Federation (international environmental conventions);
- is built on an intervention strategy with certain weaknesses (some problems described would require local rather than regional solutions; no clear flow from output over outcome to objective);
- is in line with the priorities outlined in the GEF operational policies.

3.4.2 Effectiveness

In respect to its effectiveness, the project is rated "Satisfactory" as it, among other aspects,

- achieved more or less the targets of the indicators of success (albeit some difficulties in the monitoring system did not allow to fully keep track, and the monitoring system also included an unrealistic indicator);
- achieved Highly Satisfactory results for one outcome and Satisfactory results for the other. The delivery rate of three outputs was rated Highly Satisfactory, of other three outputs Satisfactory and of one output Marginally Unsatisfactory;
- made a significant contribution towards reducing the level of poaching through a combined approach of control & deterrence and awareness raising;
- helped better understand the population level of highly endangered species of wildlife and their conservation requirements;
- successfully promoted the establishment of a transboundary biosphere reserve over the area of Katunsky Nature Reserve in Russia and Katon-Karagayskiy National Park in Kazakhstan, with an agreement signed by the Presidents of the two states in 2011;
- directly assisted the Russian authorities to bring some 556,446 ha of different habitat types area under legal protection;
- strengthened the personal and institutional capacities of several federal and regional protected area administrations;
- initiated Protected Area Community Councils, which have advisory function, and provide for a for local people fora, in which their interests are being represented (this approach needs to be further promoted with the final aim to become an integral part of all Protected Area Administrations);
- conducted many different successful awareness campaigns on various levels and with different target groups, including work with school children that succeeded in getting biodiversity conservation integrated in school curricula;
- assessed Traditional Environmental Knowledge, but could not turn this knowledge into practical conservation work;
- not systematically pursued mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation into key sectors, although this had been anticipated in the GEF project planning documents see (the evaluator is of the opinion that the aspect of mainstreaming overloaded the project concept and should have never appeared in the project document);
- initiated a wide range of livelihood activities in and around protected areas through which the local population could generate income and protected areas could get a more positive attitude towards PAs;
- succeeded in particular in the development of ecotourism, which helped alleviate the human pressure on natural resources;
- was comparatively less successful in developing other forms of alternative livelihood (low replication potential, lower economic return, etc.).

3.4.3 Efficiency

The project is rated “Highly Satisfactory” in regard to efficiency, as it, among other aspects,

- conducted most project activities in a timely manner and achieved most project outcomes in line with the time planning of the annual work plans;
- selected usually the most cost-effective way in order to achieve the intended objective;
- has not conducted activities which are not geared to the project objective;
- has contracted local NGOs (CBOs) mostly on a competitive basis following public tendering procedures;
- could generate synergies with other UNDP/GEF projects (in particular with the Kamchatka project);
- always took care that project funds “do not leave the region”, and herewith accepted that the amount of inspiring ideas and new approaches may be less (outsiders as innovation actors).

3.4.4 Impact

The project is rated with regard to its impact as “Satisfactory”, as it, among other aspects,

- made a significant contribution to safeguard the highly threatened population of Altai Argali, Snow Leopard, and Saker Falcon. The survival of these species in the Altai-Sayan region is nowadays more likely than at the beginning of the project;
- protected area administrations in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion are nowadays stronger than at the onset of the project and do now better fulfil their tasks;
- created models for integrating resource users living in and around protected areas in PA management issues; these models are ready for disseminating and upscaling;
- helped local people to generate income from ecotourism and to disseminate the results;
- spent much efforts for initiating various kinds of alternative livelihood activities from which only a relatively small number of people benefit.

3.4.5 Sustainability

The project is rated “Satisfactory” with respect to sustainability as it, among other aspects,

- initiated the establishment of a micro-credit facility as self-help approach, albeit it still works on a very small scale;
- can rely on increasing government budgets for protected area management;
- strengthened governmental and non-governmental institutional structures on local (PA) as well as on regional level;
- made local people, particularly school children, aware of the value of biodiversity and thus laid the ground for long-term protection;
- successfully promoted awareness for the importance of biodiversity and development so that this subject now ranks much higher among decision-makers and in the public than at the onset of the project;
- is very much dependent on the continued presence and work of WWF to push things and to act as motor for the further development.

3.4.6 Coherence and Coordination

The project was successful to highly successful in respect to Coherence and Coordination (rated as “Highly Satisfactory”) as it, among other aspects,

- formed a strong partnership with WWF, who has a long-term commitment to biodiversity conservation in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion;
- established close contacts with the German government and leveraged significant funds that even exceed UNDP/GEF funds.
- established a partnership with the UNDP/GEF Kamchatka project with the aim to learn from each other.

3.4.7 Project Management

The project is rated Highly Successful (“Highly Satisfactory”) as regards overall management as it, among other aspects,

- shows a high ownership by the project executing partners on national, regional and local levels;
- was managed by a highly dedicated and professional management team;
- is built on high personal continuity throughout the project’s lifespan;
- the project management model allowed for the best possible level of cooperation with complementary/parallel interventions in the region: cofinancing resources from all levels were managed in a way to achieve a very high level of synergy and produce the best cumulative effect.

- did not fully grasp the opportunities to work extensively with individuals and organisations from outside the project region for the purpose of enhancing knowledge transfer and innovation.

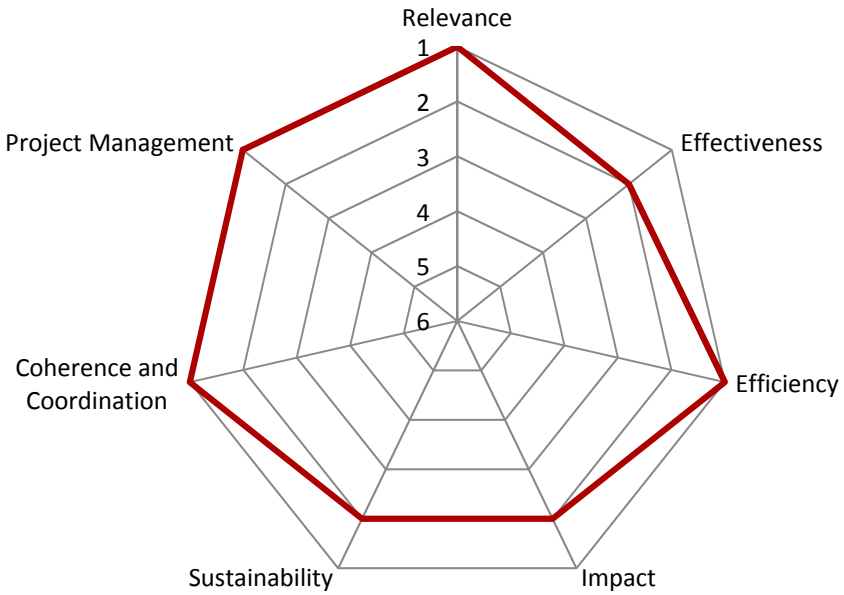

Fig. 6. Rating of the Altai-Sayan Project by using the OECD DAC criteria relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, and with coherence and coordination as well as project management as additional criteria.

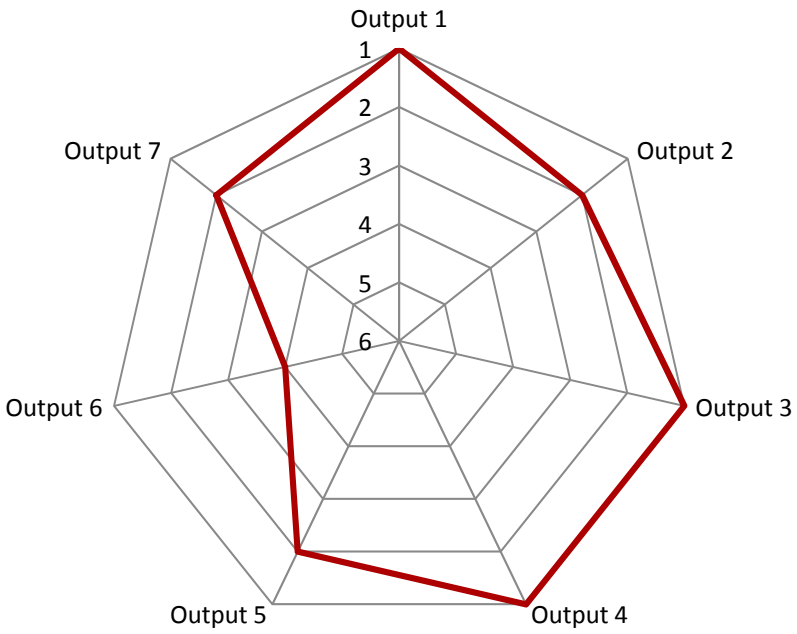

Fig. 5. Rating of the six outputs of the Altai-Sayan Project. Most of the outputs would qualify as outcomes.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

General conclusions

Altogether, the Altai-Sayan Project has remarkable achievements and it is fully justified that this project is often used as flagship project in the region. Certain shortcomings are mainly the result of the overall project approach: one cannot expect too much impact on the ground from a roughly 3.5 million dollar project implemented in a 5 years period in an intervention area as large as Germany and France together. It is evident that the overall impact must be limited with this restricted amount of time and resources. The project had originally been planned in two phases, with phase II with a much larger budget than the first phase. When it became clear that GEF policy does no longer support phased project approaches, phase II was dropped without adapting the project concept and trimming the objective and activities. The resources have subsequently not been enough to upscale various pilot activities developed by the Project. With the current capacities of PA administrations and other stakeholders in the region, it is questionable whether these activities will ever be upscaled.

A substantial part of project activities was dedicated to capacity building; the time requirement for capacity building is often under-estimated. Working with people, collective learning and changing habits require long-term engagement, and sound, lasting results cannot be expected within relatively short funding periods. The Protected Areas Community Councils, which the Project successfully initiated, are a good example. They are still at the very beginning and it may still take considerable time to get them institutionalized and to become an integral part of PA Administrations. At the moment, they are not embedded into the structure of Protected Area Administrations, and are dependent on the good-will of the Heads of Protected Area Administrations. More time is needed, and continuous moral support by an institution such as the UNDP/GEF Project.

In general, the establishment and operation of protected areas in Russia largely continue to be based on the traditional PA management philosophy of exclusion of locals in its governance type and therefore fall short in addressing their livelihoods. PAs in Russia are characterised by the almost systematic exclusion of local populations, and this makes it difficult to adequately manage the existing protected areas sustainably. In the project region, this is balanced only by the fact that population density and hence human pressure on natural resources is quite low. The traditional PA management follows a "law & order" approach. Good evidence for this is the classical PA administrative structure: while staff is foreseen for example for science, monitoring, PR and controlling, no expert staff is foreseen for meeting the needs of people living in and around protected areas, and for taking care of their livelihoods. The Project has recognised this problem. With the establishment of Community Councils, the Project intended to give local people a voice and to enhance the cooperation between local people and PA administrations. This is an encouraging undertaking, but it is still a long way until these Councils become standards for PAs, and until they will be given a say and a decision-making power.

Transboundary cooperation is a central idea of the project runs and like a common thread through the project concept. For implementation purposes, "transboundary" has been interpreted in two way: on the one side, it is taken as cooperation across international borders between governments (in the sense of the Project Document); on the other side, it is sometimes also taken as cooperation between the various republics and krais/oblasts within the intervention area.

The Project has achieved a lot as regards transboundary cooperation, with the biggest success being an agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan for establishing a joint "Altai Transboundary Biosphere Reserve". While the purpose of transboundary cooperation is somewhat vague and not well-elaborated, and it appears sometimes that transboundary cooperation is taken as a value by its own; the Project has not well defined what should be achieved through transboundary cooperation. One needs to consider that the intervention area is so large and the areas along the borders are home to only a relatively small part of the population of certain animal species. Many habitats and species do not need to be managed in a transboundary manner (mostly local threats which need local action). In order to take transboundary cooperation as a tool rather than an aim, a simple list of expected benefits and concrete achievements would have helped a lot.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

As terminal evaluation, no recommendations can be made for the future direction of the project and for the improvement of its management. Recommendations are therefore necessarily quite generic and confined to a few general subjects.

1. Concentrate on upscaling of alternative livelihood activities rather than on testing

The Project developed a large array of alternative livelihood activities, extending from felt production over ecotourism and medicinal plants to honey production. Most of them were more or less successful, created jobs and generated income generated. However, with the exception of ecotourism, the number of beneficiaries was relatively limited and the overall impact on the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion remained modest. This is a classical trap into which the project fell: it spent a lot of efforts and funds (the livelihood output most the second most expensive output) to initiate and test alternative livelihood activities, but neither time nor resources were sufficient to scale-up these approaches, and to gain "real" impact on ecoregional level.

There are always many good reasons that it does not come to significant upscaling: delay in mobilizing local communities (what always takes considerable time), dropping of the second project phase, limited resources available, etc. The only way to get out of this bottleneck is to invest at project start more in feasibility and marketing studies, before starting livelihood activities. Based on the results of these studies, a strategy can be developed which kind of livelihood activities to concentrate on rather than promoting an array of activities. The project then can elaborate 2-3 promising types of alternative livelihoods, and can promote these measures in a much more comprehensive and professional way than dealing with ten or more different livelihood measures. Project resources can thus be spent in a more strategic and more cost-effective way.

2. Defend a sound and consistent project concept

In the Altai-Sayan Project, there are a few cases which seem to be driven more by donor interests/requirements rather than the real needs of the project region and the intervention logic, and this has compromised project achievements. Dropping the anticipated second phase of the UNDP/GEF Project without adapting the outcomes and outputs is a typical example. Ironically, the Project Document is still based on a two-phases approach with upscaling of successful phase I measures being the focus of the second phase. It is also suspected that Output 6, which deals with mainstreaming, has been drafted not only as a response to certain needs identified during project identification, but possibly also in order to add the right key word to the project proposal. "Mainstreaming" had been popular among conservationists and project planners particularly in the early and mid-2000s, when the project had been designed. Later, the Project did not spend too much efforts to operationalize this output. Finally, when the Project leveraged co-funding in the amount of 3 million EUR, it made a commitment to bring within a two-years period 636,000 ha of land under legal protection and to provide certain equipment to the newly established PA administrations. It is not surprising that all these measures take more time, and the Project had to ask for a no-cost extension just before the end of the two-years period. A longer planning horizon from the beginning would have allowed a smoother implementation approach.

3. Replace population level indicators with indicators measuring impacts on pressures and behaviour

GEF is always keen of using biodiversity indicators for project monitoring, and these indicators should provide a simple and reliable basis for assessing change or performance. However, the time-scale on which meaningful changes in different attributes of biodiversity (e.g. population size) can be measured is often significantly longer than that of a normal project cycle.[ix] Furthermore, virtually all

measures of biodiversity show natural variation at a wide range of temporal and spatial scales. Such natural variations depend on a large number of factors, which often exceed the impact from project interventions. Consequently one may even suggest that population level indicators should be banned from GEF Biodiversity projects.

In the case of the Altai-Sayan Project, surely all experts knew from the beginning that population indicators regarding species such as Snow Leopard or Argali Sheep will fail. It was evident from the beginning that nobody will be able to monitor these species with a sufficient accuracy, and no capacities (and funds) are available to conduct comprehensive surveys on an annual basis.

Consequently, population level indicators should be dropped and replaced by indicators measuring the impact on pressures and behaviours affecting biodiversity. Number of human-wildlife conflicts, number of poaching violations of the law, level of disturbance, patrol intensity, etc. are possible indicators which could be considered.

4. Define the specific objectives of transboundary cooperation in the project context

The Altai-Sayan Project and its sister projects in Mongolia and Kazakhstan have set ambitious goals for transboundary cooperation from the beginning, and justified them with a few animal species. Transboundary cooperation is sometimes mystified by conservationists and some hope or even expect impacts even beyond the environment. In practice, transboundary cooperation often becomes an issue that turns out to be very time-consuming and not fully under the control of the project. For an effective and efficient project approach, it is therefore necessary first to define the purpose of transboundary cooperation: which ecosystems and habitats, and which species will benefit from transboundary cooperation? Are there joint threats? Is there a significant proportion of these ecosystems, habitats and animal and plant populations situated in the border area, and does this portion justify the efforts? In the second step, a set of legal, institutional, and practical actions needs to be defined.

5. Don't take responsibility for something which is beyond your direct sphere of influence

One of the aims of the Project was to enlarge the Protected Area System (PAS) in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion, and the Project defined indicators of achievement based on the surface area of the PAS. While this seems logical at first view, it does not fully take into account that the establishment of a protected area is always a multi-stakeholder process with many organisations involved and includes processes which are not linked to the project; the establishment of a protected area is finally also always a political decision beyond the direct influence of the project. So it is not surprising that some protected areas had "not only one mother" and there were divergent opinions between the Project Team and the TE as to which new protected areas are to be appraised as achievements of the Project. The design of a M&E plan should therefore always take into account that only achievements are measured which are clearly attributable to efforts of the project.

More specific recommendations are:

GEF mid-term and final evaluation reports follow a certain structure laid down in the Monitoring & Avaluation Guidelines and mostly in the Terms of Reference of the Consultants. This structure of the evaluation report is not fully coherent with the prerequisites made by OECD/DAC, and should be further standardized to avoid duplications within the report. It is therefore suggested

- to adapt the standard structure of evaluation report so that they are in line with OECD/DAC evaluation criteria.
- to apply a consistent rating for all GEF operations (4-scale rating versus 6-scale rating).

Endnotes

[i] See http://thegef.org/MonitoringandEvaluation/MEPoliciesProcedures/mepoliciesprocedures.html

[ii] See in particular „GEF Project Cycle“ GEF/C.31/7, May 14, 2007

[iii] See also ADB (2005): Overview of NGOs/Civil Society. Asian Development Bank.

[iv] http://gefonline.org/projectDetailsSQL.cfm?projID=1177.

[v] GEF Secretariat figures as per 31.12.2007. See e.g. GEF/GEF Country Support Programme: GEF Co-financing. Sub-regional workshop for GERF Focal Points in Asia15-16 May, 2008. Manila.

[vi] See e.g. GEF/GEF Country Support Programme: GEF Co-financing. Sub-regional workshop for GERF Focal Points in Asia15-16 May, 2008. Manila.

[vii] Information provided by the Forest and Hunting Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

[viii] Kasparek, M.: Anbau contra Wildsammlung: Königsweg Kultivierung? – Politische Ökologie 108, 2007.

[ix] M. Jenkins and V. Kapos (World Conservation Monitoring Centre - WCMC), Biodiversity Indicators for Monitoring GEF Programme Implementation and Impacts. Final Report. GEF. Sine anno.

Annex 1:
Terms of Reference

Final Evaluation of the UNDP/GEF Project 00045973
Biodiversity Conservation in the Russian Portion of the Altay-Sayan Ecoregion

I. INTRODUCTION

UNDP/GEF Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) policy

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 iii) 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 -, or as specific time-bound exercises such as mid-term reviews, audit reports and final evaluations.

In accordance with UNDP/GEF M&E policies and procedures, all regular and medium-sized projects supported by the GEF should undergo a final evaluation upon completion of implementation. Final evaluations are intended to assess the relevance, performance and success of the project. It looks at early signs of potential impact and sustainability of results, including the contribution to capacity development and the achievement of global environmental goals. It will also identify/document lessons learned and make recommendations that might improve design and implementation of other UNDP/GEF projects.

This evaluation is to be undertaken taking into consideration the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation policy (http://gefeo.org/gefevaluation.aspx?id=140) and the UNDP/GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy (http://www.undp.org/gef/monitoring/index.html).

Project objectives

The overall goal of the project is to ensure long-term conservation and sustainable management of the globally significant biodiversity in the Russian part of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion (ASE). The project was designed to improve the current development framework of the Ecoregion by strengthening national capacity to prepare and implement a set of integrated actions that collectively will avoid the default scenario and secure global biodiversity benefits. The GEF-funded part of the project was launched in 2005 with the following expected outcomes and outputs:

Outcome 1. Strengthened and expanded protected areas system:
Output 1. Conservation of Rare and Endangered Species
Output 2. Strengthening and Expanding Protected Areas System
Output 3. Strengthened Legal and Institutional Framework for Biodiversity Conservation and Transboundary Management
Output 4. Increased Levels of Biodiversity Awareness Among Major Stakeholder Groups and the Rural Population

Outcome 2. Strengthened enabling environment for ecosystem-based biodiversity conservation:

Output 5. Improved Information on Biodiversity, Including TEK, and its Use in Decision-Making
Output 6. Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into regional decision making process
Output 7. Development of alternative livelihoods and involvement of local communities in natural resource management

Later on, in late 2009 yet another component funded by the German government was incorporated into the project design, becoming the project **Outcome 3**: Expansion of the PA network, protection of the carbon pools within the expanded PA system and setting up climate resilient PA networks in the ASE region.

Project location: Krasnoyarsky Krai, Altaisky Krai, Republics of Tuva, Altai and Khakasiya, and Kemerovskaya oblast'
Project sites:): (1) – Tigirekskaya, (2) - Central Altai, (3) – Teletskaya, (4) – Gornaya Shoriya, (5) – Western Sayan (Zapadnyie Sayany), (6) - Todjinsko-Sengilenskaya.
Project Implementation Unit: Krasnoyarsk

The project is executed by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation (MNRE). Project activities are coordinated by the Project Implementation Unit based in Krasnoyarsk, and the overall management of the project is the responsibility of Project Manager.

Project website: www.altai-sayan.com

Mid-term evaluation of the project was completed in 2009. Mid-term evaluation report will be made available for the Evaluation team selected for this assignment.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

This Final Evaluation is initiated by the UNDP Russia as the Implementation Agency for this project and it aims to provide managers (at the Project Implementation Unit, UNDP Russia Country Office and UNDP/GEF levels) with a comprehensive overall assessment of the project and an opportunity to critically assess administrative and technical strategies, issues and constrains associated with large international and multi-partner initiatives. The evaluation will also collate and analyze lessons learn and best practices obtained during the period of the project implementation that can be further taken into consideration during development and implementation of other GEF projects in Russia and elsewhere in the world.

The purpose of the Evaluation is:

- To assess overall performance against the Project objectives as set out in Project Document and other related documents (Inception report, METT, PIR, MTE – how recommendations of mid-term evaluation were implemented)
- To assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the Project
- To critically analyze the implementation and management arrangements of the Project
- To assess the sustainability of the Project's interventions.
- To list and document initial lessons concerning Project design, implementation and management
- To assess Project relevance to national priorities.

Project performance will be measured based on Project's Logical Framework (see Annex III), which provides clear performance and impact indicators for project implementation along with their corresponding means of verification.

The Report of the Final Evaluation will be stand-alone document that substantiates its recommendations and conclusions.

III. EVALUATION

3.1. Products expected from the evaluation

The evaluation report outline should be structured along the following lines (see Annex I):

1. Executive summary
2. Introduction
3. The project(s) and its development context
4. Findings and Conclusions
   - Project formulation
   - Implementation
   - Project Finances
   - Results
5. Recommendations
5. Lessons learned
6. Annexes

The length of report normally should not exceed 50 pages in total. The draft report will be submitted to UNDP/GEF and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment no later than October 1, 2011. Based on the feedback received from stakeholders a final report will be prepared by October 31, 2011.

The report will be submitted electronically in English.

The report will be supplemented by a table on Cofinancing (Annex II) and Rate Tables (Annex IV).

3.2. Methodology for evaluation approach

The Final Evaluation will be done through a combination of processes including a desk study, selected site visits and interviews - involving all stakeholders (but not restricted to): MNR, UNDP, Government officials on different levels, Regional administrations and local municipalities, local NGO's, communities etc.

Evaluators should seek guidance for their work in the following materials:

- GEF Monitoring and Evaluation policy (http://gefeo.org/gefevaluation.aspx?id=140)
- UNDP/GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy (http://www.undp.org/gef/monitoring/index.html)
- Measuring Results of the GEF Biodiversity Programme (http://www.thegef.org/gef/node/2229)

The methodology for the evaluation is envisaged to cover the following areas:

- Desk study review of all relevant Project documentation
- Consultations with Government, UNDP , Project implementation unit
- Field site visit within project territories
- Interviews with stakeholders

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

In preparation for the evaluation mission, the project manager, with assistance from UNDP country office, will arrange for the completion of the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT). The tracking tool will be completed / endorsed by the relevant implementing agency or a qualified national research /scientific institution, and not by the international consultant or UNDP staff. The tracking tool will be submitted to the international evaluation consultants, who will need to provide his/her comments on it. Upon incorporation of the comments from the international evaluation consultant to the tracking tool, it will be finalized and attached as a mandatory annex to the final evaluation report.

3.3. **Evaluators qualifications**

The evaluation will be conducted by an International Consultant who
should possess the following qualifications:

- Expertise in areas of international projects' monitoring and evaluation with the focus on biodiversity conservation, protected areas;
- Knowledge/understanding of Russian conservation policies and legislation, institutional system, protected areas system, additional knowledge on NGO/indigenous community would be an asset.
- A physical ability to travel to Russia (ASE region and Moscow) is needed

More specifically the candidate should demonstrate:

(i) Recent experience with result-based management evaluation methodologies;
(ii) Experience applying participatory monitoring approaches;
(iii) Experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios;
(iv) Recent knowledge of the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy;
(v) Recent knowledge of UNDP's results-based evaluation policies and procedures
(vi) Competence in Adaptive Management, as applied to conservation or natural resource management projects;
(vii) Recognized expertise in the management and sustainable use of biodiversity;
(viii) Familiarity with protected area policies and management structures in Russia;
(ix) Demonstrable analytical skills;
(x) Work experience in relevant areas for at least 10 years;
(xi) Experience with multilateral or bilateral supported conservation projects;
(xii) Project evaluation experiences within United Nations system will be considered an asset;
(xiii) Excellent English communication skills.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

<u>Evaluation management arrangements</u>

- Role of Project Manager (located in Krasnoyarsk)
  - Coordination of evaluation activities and logistics in ASE region
  - Arrangement of field site visits

  - Organization of meetings with selected stakeholders
  - Compiling and providing to the evaluator necessary project reports and materials produced by the project
- Role of UNDP
  - Coordination of evaluation activities in Moscow
  - Administrative and logistical support for the evaluators in Moscow

Tentative timeframe

- Selection of evaluators — July 2011
- Briefing for evaluators — August 2011
- Desk review — August 2011
- Debriefings in Moscow — August 2011
- Trip to the field sites (including allocation for travel), interviews with local stakeholders, questionnaires — August-September 2011
- Validation of preliminary findings with stakeholders through circulation of initial reports for comments, meetings and other types of feedback mechanisms — September 2011
- Preparation and submission of preliminary report — by 1 October 2011
- Preparation and submission of final evaluation report — by 31 October 2011

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

Annex 2:
Itinery of the Terminal Evaluation Mission

Date	Activity / Meetings
30.08.	Travel from Germany to Moscow, accommodation Moscow
31.08.	• Meeting with UNDOP CO (Irinia Bredneva) • Meeting with Deputy Project Director (Armen Grigoryan) Flight to Barnaul
01.09.	Arrival at Barnaul • Meeting with Tigireksky Nature Reserve Administration • Meeting with Altai State University (members of Institute of Botany, Southern Siberian Botanical Garden) Accommodation Barnaul
02.09.	Travel to Gorno-Altaisk • Meeting with the Project team (Michael Paltsyn – Specie conservation expert group leader) • Meeting with the Deputy Minister on Forestry for the Altai Republic • Meeting with the Altai Ecology Institute Accommodation Gorno-Altaisk
03.09.	• Meeting with the head of the Altaisky Nature Reserve and his team (Gorno Altaisk) Travel to the Altaisky Nature Reserve (Artybash village and Yailyu settlement) • Meeting with Deputy Head on Awareness Raising for Altaisky Nature Reserve • Meeting with Expert on the rare species monitoring • Meeting with Head of the Altaisky Nature Reserve Public Council Accommodation Artybash village.
04.09.	• Meeting with the Public Council on Teletskoye Lake Area Travel to Gorno-Altaisk. • Meeting with the Project team (Tatyana Yashina –Leader of climate component) Accommodation Gorno Altaisk.
05.09.	• Meeting with “Assistance” Micro-Crediting Fund • Meeting with Altai Republic Consultation Center (NGO) • Meeting with “FSDA – Fund for Sustainable Development of Altai” (NGO) • Meeting with Altai Tour Operators Association • Meeting with other project partners and implementers
06.09.	Travel to Gorno-Altaisk Botanical Garden • Meeting with the Head of the Gorno-Altaisk Botanical Garden Travel to Inya settlement • Meeting with local community members Accommodation Chui-Ozy travel hotel
07.09.	Travel to Inegen village • Meeting with local community members Travel to Uch-Enmek Nature Park • Meeting with the Head of the Uch-Enmek Nature Park and experts Travel to Gorno Altaisk
08.09.	Travel to Barnaul • Internal meeting with the Project Manager

	Accommodation Barnaul
09.09.	Flight to Moscow • Meeting with the Ministry of Natural Resources (International Department) • Debriefing Meeting UNDP • Meeting with Ludmila Khorosheva (former UNDP Project Coordinator, now UNEP) Return flight to Germany.

Annex 3:
List of Key Persons Met

Many of the meetings were attended by several persons, in particular the community meetings. Only the names of key persons are listed here.

Name	Function
Altynai Achimova	Head of the Gorno-Altaisk Botanical Garden
Raisa Adarina	Expert of the NGO "Assistance" (Micro-Crediting Fund and Altai Republic Consultation Center)
Chagat Almashev	Head of the NGO "Fund for Sustainable Development of Altai" (FSDA)
Rimma Anchibaeva	Head of Inya Settlement
Igor Atkunov	Local Head of the NGO "Assistance" - Micro-Crediting Fund Tender Commission
Alexander Bondarev	Project Manager Altai-Sayan Project (UNDP-GEF)
Svetlana Bondarevskaya	Deputy Head on Awareness Raising for Tigireksky Nature Reserve
Irina Bredneva	UNDP Moscow project support office
Yevgeny Davydov	Deputy Head on Research, Tigireksky Nature Reserve
Joanna Dobson	Interpreter, background information on Uch-Enmek Nature Park, etc.
Irina B. Fominykh	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation, Dept. of International Cooperation (Deputy Director)
Pavel Golyakov	Director of Tigireksky Nature Reserve
Armen Grigorian	Assistant to Project Director Altai-Sayan Project (UNDP-GEF)
Igor Kalmykov	Head of the Altaisky Biosphere Reserve
Ludmila Khorosheva	UNEP Office Moscow
Irina Kudachinova	Expert of the Uch-Enmek Nature Park
Danil Mamyev	Head of the Uch-Enmek Nature Park
Vassiliy Manyshev	Deputy Minister on Forestry for the Altai Republic
Natalia Olofinskaya	UNDP Moscow Project Support Office (Head of Environment Unit)
Tatyana Pahaeva	Head of the NGO "Orion"
Mikhail Paltsyn	Expert Group Leader on Conservation of Rare and Endangered Species (UNDP-GEF)
Lyudmila Pozhidaeva	Expert of Awareness Raising Department, Tigireksky Nature Reserve
Elena Repetunova	Leader of Expert Group on Environmental Awareness Raising and Alternative Livelihoods (UNDP-GEF)
Yuri Robertus	Head of the Altai Ecology Institute
Svetlana Schigreva	Deputy Head on Awareness Raising for Altaisky Nature Reserve:
Alexander Shmakov	Head of the Southern Siberian Botanical Garden (Barnaul)
Marina Silantyeva	Assistant Professor, Botany Department, Altai University
Sergey Spitsyn	Expert on the Rare Species Monitoring and Head of the Altaisky Nature Reserve Public Council

Galina Toptygina	Head of the local NGO Izhemdi
Alexey Vaganov	Expert, Southern Siberian Botanical Garden (Barnaul)
Elena Yamaeva	Expert of the NGO “Assistance” on Micro-Crediting Fund and Altai Republic Consultation Center NGO
Tatyana Yashina	Leader of Expert Group leader on Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Development for Nature Ecosystems within Protected Areas (UNDP-GEF)
Sergey Zyablitsky	Head of the Altai Tour Operators Association

Annex 4:
List of Publications by the Altai-Sayan Project

	Year	No. of copies
Conservation of Rare and Endangered Species		
Atlas of Rare Animal Species and their Derivates (IC NGO "Siberian Ecological Center")	2007	500
2 different posters "CITES": "Border transfer of these animal species is prohibited" and "Only with a special permission" (IC NGO "Siberian Ecological Center")	2007	500
Methodical manuals for state rangers on CDs (IC NGO "Siberian Ecological Center")	2007	100
Brochure on "Penalties for Poaching in Altai Republic" in the Russian and Altaian languages (NGO "Altai Sustainable Development Foundation")	2007	2000
Booklet on penalties for poaching in Altai Region, A5, 67 pages	2008	2000
Booklet on penalties for poaching in Kemerovo Region (in the Russian and Shoria languages), A5, 67 pages	2008	2000
Wall calendars for 2009: "Let's conserve the snow leopard in our mountains!" and "Let's conserve the Altai sheep in our mountains!"	2008	400
A booklet on corral protection against the snow leopard (in the Russian and Tuvinian languages) for workshops on insurance of livestock held in Mongun-Taiga and Bai-Taiga Districts (Kozhuns) of Tyva Republic.	2008	100
"Programme of Monitoring the Altai Mountain Sheep in the Russian Federation"	2009	100
"Programme of Monitoring the Snow Leopard in the Russian Federation"	2009	1000
"Responsibility for Poaching in Krasnoyarsk Region"	2009	1000
Wall calendars for 2010: "Let's conserve the snow leopard in our mountains!" and "Let's conserve the Altai sheep in our mountains!"	2009	400
"Human and Bear in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion. Conflict-Free Coexistence"	2009	500
'Study of Wildlife and Their Derivates in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion in 2005 – 2008'	2010	200
'Sustainable Game Management in Protected Areas'	2010	200
Articles of the Interregional Applied-Science Conference 'Biodiversity Monitoring in Protected Areas'	2010	200
'The Bear in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion'	2010	1000
'Use of Electric Fences for Livestock Protection from Snow Leopard Attacks'	2010	500
'Photo-Traps in Snow Leopard Population Survey'	2010	100
'Scat Detection Dogs and Sample Collection for DNA Analysis of Snow Leopard Scat'	2010	200
Protected Areas		
Recommendations for establishing regional protected areas	2008	500
Posters "The Altai-Sayan Ecoregion: Krasnoyarsk Region"	2008	100
Booklet "Altai Golden Mountains"	2009	500
Booklet "Problems and Recommendations for Protected Area Legislation" (Legislation survey and draft of the new federal law On Protected Areas), in collaboration with WWF Russia.	2009	200
'Teletskoye Lake- UNESCO World Heritage Site'	2010	900
Education and Awareness		
Three types of posters: "Rare and endangered animal species in the south of Western Siberia", "Rare and endangered plant species in the south of Western Siberia", "Poisonous plants in the south of Western Siberia" (Kemerovo State	2007	300

	Year	No. of copies
University)		
Three types of hand-outs for students: "Rare and endangered animal species in the south of Western Siberia", "Rare and endangered plant species in the south of Western Siberia", "Poisonous plants in the south of Western Siberia" (Kemerovo State University)	2007	300
Brochure for teachers "Handbook to posters to conduct lessons on "Plants and Animals in the south of Western Siberia" (Kemerovo State University)	2007	300
Text-book "Trip with plants in Gornaya Shoriya" (Kemerovo State University)	2007	300
Manual on guides training for educators (NGO "Altai Sustainable Development Foundation")	2007	30
Manual on guide training for educators and students (NGO "Altai Sustainable Development Foundation")	2007	30
Pocket calendars for 2008 (Shushenskiy Bor National Park)	2007	500
Five types of posters: Biodiversity, PAs Categories of Russia and Altai region, Ecological Monitoring, Pesticides, Our Apartment (Altai State University)	2007	100
Booklet "Rare and Endangered Plants and Animals of Desert-Steppe Ecosystems of Tyva (Tyva State University Strengthening capacity for PAs	2007	100
Brochure "Methodical recommendations on protection activities in state nature reserves and national parks" (project office)	2007	500
Visual aids (posters), 5 types of design, A2: "Biodiversity", "Pesticide Pollution in Altai Region", "Status of Protected Areas in Altai Region", "Environment Safety in Cities", "Environment Monitoring" (Altai State University);	2008	100
The reference book with CD "Foundations of Ecology, Nature Use, Environment Conservation, and Environmental Law" Altai State University);	2008	200
The textbook for schools "Travel with Plants in Gornaya Shoriya" (Kemerovo State University)	2008	100
Reference book with CD for tourist guide training ("Following sacred trails of Altai Mountains"	2008	500
Booklet "Argut Nature Park" under the project activity "Increased awareness of Argut Nature Park among Local People and Tourists";	2008	200
Within the activity "Public Support for Belukha Nature Park" implemented by NGO Istoki: A) Posters "It's a wonderful world...", 4 types of design B) Nature Diaries; C) Desktop calendars for 2009.	2008	600
"Biodiversity Conservation in Managerial Decision-Making"	2009	500
Materials of the International Science Conference "Collecting Biodiversity Data: Experience, Problems, Solutions"	2009	100
Bibliography "Biodiversity and Protected Areas of Altai Republic"	2009	500
Textbook "Natural Environment of Altai"	2009	500
Alternative Livelihood		
Recommendations for cultivating medicinal plants and sustainable wild plant harvesting.	2008	200
Booklet "The Altai-Sayan Ecoregion. Directions for Development. Experience of UNDP/GEF Project "Biodiversity Conservation in the Russian portion of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion" in Developing Alternative Livelihoods for Local Communities"	2009	500
Handbooks "Sustainable Livelihoods in Protected Areas: Concept and Practical Guidelines"	2009	400
'Ecocamp from A to Z'	2010	400
'Green House. Rural Tourism'	2010	1000

	Year	No. of copies
'Organizing Optimal Grazing in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion'	2010	200
Project Promotion		
Pocket calendars for 2007 (two types)	2007	4000
A poster of the UNDP/GEF project «Our Nature - Our Future»	2007	100
Informational booklet on project activities in Russian and English;	2007	1000
Corporate folders		500
Pocket calendars for 2008 (six types)	2007	6000
Table calendars for 2008 – 2009	2007	1000
Promotional materials with the project corporate style (flags, badges, adhesive labels, T-Shirts, caps, pens, table flags, notebooks)	2007	4000
Various (information management, traditional knowledge)		
Reference book "Indigenous Peoples' TEK for Use of Natural Resources in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion"	2009	500
Materials of the National Science Conference "Traditional Environmental Knowledge of Indigenous Peoples in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion"	2009	100
Materials of the International Science Conference "Collecting Biodiversity Data: Lessons, Problems, Solutions"	2009	100
'Natural Environment of Altai'	2010	1000
'Teletskoye Water Paintings'	2010	100
Articles of the International Meeting 'Climate Change and Integrated Biodiversity Conservation in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion'	2010	200

Annex 5: Project Indicators

Based on information given in the annual PIRs.

Description of Indicator	Baseline	Target	30 June 2008	30 June 2009	30 June 2010	30 June 2011
1. Population of flagship and focal species remain stable within the key project territories						
1.1 Altai Argali (transboundary population within Russian-Mongolian border)	1060-1140	1,060-1140	1111	1111	1140-1190	1150-1200
1.2 Snow Leopard	100-130	100-130	100-130	100-130	100-130	100-130
1.3 Siberian Ibex	9,280-10,900	9,280-10,900	9,690-11,060	9255-10640	9255-10640	9,255-10,640
1.4 Musk Deer	21,300-22,000	21,300-22,000	21,410-22,740	21,410-22,740	21,410-22,740	21,410-22,740
1.5 Saker Falcon (no. of pairs)	470±40	470±40	470±40	430±40	430±40	430±40
2. Total area under legal protection (ha)	4,236,786	5,136,786	4,756,666	4,873,857	4,993,537	4,993,537
2.1 Project site #1	196,200	296,200	196,200	196,200	196,200	196,200
2.2 Project site #2	702,374	702,382	702,374	702,374	783,104	783,104
2.3 Project site #3	1,591,807	1,941,807	1,847,011	1,847,011	1,883,661	1,883,661
2.4 Project site #4	375,230	375,230	375,230	375,230	375,230	375,230
2.5 Project site #5	1,017,305	1,317,305	1,282,981	1,399,172	1,401,472	1,401,472
2.6 Project site #6	353,870	503,862	353,870	353,870	353,870	353,87
3. Percentage of main ecosystem types included in the PA system within key project territories - total, including:	27.4	33.0 (+6%)	30.6	30.6	31.6	31.6
3.1 Glacier	41.6	55	52.3	52.3	52.3	52.3
3.2 Mountain tundra and alpine meadow	31.9	40	36.5	36.8	37.5	37.5
3.3 Mountain Forest (taiga)	26.1	29	28.6	29.9	29.9	29.9
3.4 Forest steppe	28.2	29	28.2	28.4	28.4	28.4
3.5 Steppe	6.9	9	8.9	8.9	8.9	8.9
3.6 Riparian	25.2	29	28.2	29.1	29.1	29.1
3.7 Water area (lakes and rivers)	38.9	44.0	41.8	41.8	41.8	41.8
4. METT scores for 15 protected areas in total including:	712	864 (+20%)		763	763	867
4.1 State Nature Reserve Tigerekskiy	41	50	41	42	42	51
4.2 State Biosphere Nature Reserve Katunskiy (WHS)	59	71	59	56	56	69
4.3 Regional Nature Park Belukha (WHS)	32	40	32	36	36	44
4.4 Regional Nature Park Argut	33	40	33	37	37	31
4.5 Regional Nature Park Uch-Enmek	59	70	59	59	59	60
4.6 Regional Nature Park Chui-Ozy	58	70	58	58	58	57
4.7 Regional Nature Park Ukok Quit Zone (WHS)	25	35	25	35	35	48

Description of Indicator	Baseline	Target	30 June 2008	30 June 2009	30 June 2010	30 June 2011
4.8 State Biosphere Nature Reserve Altaiskiy (WHS)	50	60	50	60	60	72
4.9 State Nature Reserve Khakasskiy	56	68	56	59	59	63
4.10 State Biosphere Nature Reserve Ubsunurskaya Kotlovina (WHS)	46	55	46	51	51	65
4.11 State National Park Shorskiy	43	52	43	45	45	53
4.12 State Biosphere Nature Reserve Sayano-Shushenskiy	60	72	60	65	65	71
4.13 Regional Nature Park Ergaki	49	58	49	57	57	66
4.14 State Nature Reserve Azas	44	53	44	45	45	50
4.15 State National Park Shushenskiy Bor	57	70	57	57	57	67
5. Number of hectares under conservation management in new protected areas according to the Econet scheme	0	900,000	519,888	637,071	756,751	1,006,651
6. Percentage of territory of habitat for two flagship species included in the protected area system within the key project territories						
6.1 Altai Argali	25.9	40	41.4	41.4	48.6	48.6
6.2 Snow Leopard	33.7	40	37.8	37.8	38.6	38.6
7. Number of agreements for establishment of collaborative management in protected areas	0	4	2	4	6	6
8. Number of agreements between transboundary protected areas for establishment of collaborative management in biodiversity conservation	0	3	2	2	2	4
9. Biodiversity monitoring program operate within 4 project territories (in number of project territories)	0	4	4	4	4	6
10. Percentage of local population, supporting PAs (by annual survey of the local populations at each site), including (cumulative in this row)	40	60		61	74	74
10.1 Project site #1	70	80	40	72	63	63
10.2 Project site #2	45	65	72	62	77	77
10.3 Project site #3	45	60	62	60	74	74
10.4 Project site #4	80	90	60	65	90	90
10.5 Project site #5	40	60	65	47	71	71
10.6 Project site #6	n/a	n/a	40	n/a	84	84
11. Number of schools where biodiversity conservation is included in school programs	0	20	5	5	16	20
12. Number of agreements between PAs, local administrations and communities, which regulate sustainable use of NTFP and ecological tourism	0	30	15	50	65	90

Annex 6: Project Ratings

This table of project ratings is taken from the Terms of Reference and is filled in according to the requirements of the TORs. A proposal has been made to bring the project ratings better in line with the standard structure of the evaluation report and with OECD/DAC standard evaluation criteria.

	Rating
Ratings of Relevance, Efficiency and Effectiveness (Highly Satisfactory, Satisfactory, Marginally Satisfactory, Marginally Unsatisfactory, Unsatisfactory, Highly Unsatisfactory)	
Project Formulation	
Overall Project Formulation (Relevance)	
• Conceptualization/design	Satisfactory
• Stakeholder participation	Highly Satisfactory
Project Implementation	
Implementation Approach (Efficiency)	Highly Satisfactory
• Use of the logical framework	Highly Satisfactory
• Adaptive management	Highly Satisfactory
• Use/establishment of information technologies	Satisfactory
• Operational relationships between the institutions involved	Highly Satisfactory
• Technical capacities	Highly Satisfactory
Monitoring and Evaluation	Satisfactory
Stakeholder Participation	Highly Satisfactory
• Production and dissemination of information	Highly Satisfactory
• Local resource users and NGOs participation	Highly Satisfactory
• Establishment of partnerships	Highly Satisfactory
• Involvement and support of governmental institutions	Highly Satisfactory
Project Results	
Overall Achievement of Objective and Outcomes (Effectiveness)	
• Objective	Satisfactory
• Outcome 1	Highly Satisfactory
• Outcome 2	Satisfactory
Sustainability Ratings (Likely, Moderately Likely, Moderately Unlikely, Unlikely)	
Sustainability	Satisfactory
• Financial sustainability	Satisfactory
• Institutional sustainability	Satisfactory
• Socio-economic sustainability	Satisfactory
• Ecological sustainability	Highly Satisfactory
Overall Project Achievement and Impact	**Satisfactory**

Annex 7: The BMU/ICI Project Component

Background

The Altai-Sayan Project had been planned as a two-phase operation; as described in the UNDP/GEF Terminal Evaluation Report, GEF funding for a second phase could not be materialised due to changes in GEF policies. The Project was therefore looking for other funding opportunities.

UNDP in cooperation with the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Project team prepared a proposal for funding from the German Government through the *International Climate Change Initiative* (ICI). ICI invests revenues from the auctioning of emissions trading certificates in national and international climate protection. In 2007 the German cabinet adopted the "Integrated Energy and Climate Programme of the Federal Government", and the German government has decided in the context of this programme to use the revenue from the sale of emissions certificates to finance climate protection measures and to incorporate it into the budget of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU). Initially Euro 400m have been made available for the Climate Protection Initiative (2008), of which Euro 280m are available for the national component and Euro 120m for the international component of the Initiative.

Through its *International Climate Protection Initiative* the Federal Ministry supports climate protection projects around the world in developing and emerging countries as well as in the transition countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The aim of the Initiative, as an innovative financing mechanism, is to support partner countries in their climate protection efforts. With this new form of environmental cooperation, the BMU is adding a new component to the German government's existing development cooperation. In the context of topping up eligible ODA (Official Development Assistance) resources, considerably more funds have become available for international environmental cooperation than has previously been the case.

The application for ICI funds for the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion has been made by the Ministry of Natural Resources of the Russian Federation through the UNDP Regional Coordination Unit for Europe and CIS, and the BMU/ICI grant was provided to UNDP as BMU's contracting partner.

Project Data

BMU/ICI funding has been used to expand the UNDP/GEF operation and provide it with a "carbon" dimension. The BMU/ICI investment was targeted to (objective of BMU/ICI component):

> "To expand the protected areas network in the Russian Altai Sayan Ecoregion so as to build resilience to climate change induced threats and protects carbon sinks."

There is one outcome, which reads as

"Establishment of new regional protected areas: 636,000 ha (expanding of the territory of Ekgaki Park (Krasnoyarsk), new Nature Parks 'Ush Beldyr' and 'Shui' in Tyva Republic, newly established federal protected area 'Saylugem'. The planned enlargement of protected areas will help to protect additional carbon stocks of 12 million t of Carbon, and to avoid further emissions. Two of the new protected areas are located in the Republic of Tyva which is the area with

the largest number of fires in Altai-Sayan. Forest carbon pools protected from forest clearance and climate risks associated with fire, managed as part of protected area operations."

According to the Project Application, the Project contributes to ICI's Funding Windows "adaptation to climate change" and "securing of natural habitats of relevance to the climate". The objective of the BMU/ICI operations was to be achieved through measures in the following four areas:

1. Establishing new protected areas;
2. Fire Management interventions in place in existing and new protected areas;
3. Piloting adaptation measures in selected protected areas;
4. Support to alternative livelihoods and sustainable use incentives for local communities.

The following funding has been provided by BMU/ICI (Table 1):

Personnel Expenditure	156,300
Administrative Expenditure	1,476,764
Investment Expenditures	1,093,508
UNDP Administration Fee	272,657
Total Grant	**EUR 2,999,230**

The project period is from 11/2009 till 12/2011. The first funding was released in early 2010.

Evaluation Approach

The BMU/ICI Project has so far not undergone through a formal evaluation (e.g. mid-term evaluation). The operations of the BMU/ICI Project are expected to be completed in 12/2012, i.e. a year after completion of UNDP/GEF operations (see below for application for extension). As many project measures funded by UNDP/GEF are blended with measures funded by BMU/ICI, the UNDP/GEF Terminal Evaluation could gain an insight into achievements by the BMU/ICI Projects as well. Some of these observations are reported here. Nevertheless, this exercise cannot be understood as a formal and full assessment of BMU/ICI operations. It is important to stress here that UNDP/GEF operations were assessed at end-of-operations, while BMU/ICI operations are likely to continue for more than another year.

Project Design and Management

Project Conceptualisation, Participation of Stakeholders in Project Planning. After submission of a general project outline, BMU invited UNDP to submit a full project proposal on 16.10.2008. After some revisions, the final proposal was submitted on 6.10.2009, and the project was approved on 11.11.2009. There was thus almost one year time for project development, and it took then a month to get the project approved. These are very reasonable turn-around periods, and in comparison with GEF procedures, they are extremely rapid.

The Project has been designed largely by the UNDP/GEF Project Team and the UNDP Regional Coordination Unit for Europe and CIS in cooperation with the Ministry of Natural Resources and

Environment of the Russian Federation. A wider preparatory process that included e.g. participation of stakeholders at the target group level has not been conducted. As the Project builds largely on the UNDP/GEF funded project, this does not deemed necessary.

Stand-alone Approach. According to the Project Proposal, "The project enjoys cooperation with an ongoing UNDP/GEF project. Some of the costs of the project will be shared (i.e. some of the personnel costs) to achieve maximum synergy and higher efficiency of results. Yet, the current proposal to BMU is a standalone project and the implementation of its objective and activities does not dependent on any third party funding." This is not fully correct. For a stand-alone project, a quite different design of the BMU/ICI Project would have been necessary. The current BMU/ICI Project largely depends on the infrastructure and personnel of the UNDP/GEF Project, on its established cooperation structures, and its achievements. It would, for example, not be possible to implement the BMU/ICI Project in the same time frame as a stand-alone project with a different project team.

Financial Management. Money appears to be fully accounted for and used for the purpose for which it was allocated. Anecdotal evidence suggests that considerable care was taken spending money properly.

The first project spending happened in 2010, and the Project spent somewhat more than half of the budget till September 2011. As it is not realistic to spend the remaining budget till the end of 2011, the Project applied to BMU/ICI for a no-cost extension for one year (Table 2).

2010	1,217,045
2011 (till 07.09.2011)	1,099,263
Total	2,316,309
Ramaining (2012?)	Approx. 1,913,000
(remaining funds largely depend on the exchange rate Euro :US$)	

Almost half of the budget allocations are for "Administrative Expenditures". This expression may be mis-leading. Costs incurred under this budget line are not administrative costs *per se*, but include for example technical consulting services and service contracts.

Table 3. Equipment purchased by the Project for the various Protected Areas in the Altai Sayan Ecoregion. Amounts in US$; only equipment with a value >5000 US$ is listed here.

Tigireksky Nature Reserve	Fire extinguishing installation	6,800
	Pickup press	12,836
	Tractor trailer	6,900
	Tractor	23,880
	Disc mowing machine	5,083
	Weather station	34,357
Khakassky Nature Reserve	Vehicles (2)	27,800
	Weather station	5,299
Katunsky Nature Reserve	Motor-row boat	7,663
	Vehicle	16,333
	Weather stations (2)	15,948
Altaisky Nature Reserve	Motor boat (4)	32,000

	Weather station	34,754
Stolby Nature Reserve	Motor boat	9,200
	Outboard motors (3)	21,667
	Vehicle	24,330
	Weather station	8,240
Shushensky Bor National Park	Blower	6,120
	Vehicle	8,383
	Fire engine	35,817
	Weather station	3,984
Ubsunurskaya Kotlovina Nature Reserve	Vehicles (2)	27,866
	Outboard motor	5,500
	Weather station	14,297
Sayano-Shushensky Nature Reserve	Outboard motor	15,092
	Speed boat	42,400
	Weather station	15,792
Kuznetsky Alatau Nature Reserve	Tractor	39,617
	Vehicle	35,150
	Weather station	24,838
Ergaki Nature Park	Weather station	7,393
Shorsky National Park	Weather station	4,844
	Outboard motor (2)	10,000
	Fire engine	31,167
TOTAL		**US$ 621,350**

Project Management. The Project is being managed by the same team as the UNDP/GEF Project, and applies the same rules and regulations. As component of the overall UNDP/GEF Project, the BMU/ICI funded component is also steered by the same Steering Committee. All what has been said about management of the UNDP/GEF Project is therefore valid for the BMU/ICI funded operations as well.

Attainment of Project Outcomes

Note: The BMU/ICI Project is going to achieve its objective through four outcomes. After integration of the BMU/ICI Project into the UNDP/GEF intervention logic, the BMU/ICI objective became an outcome of the overall project, and the outcomes have to be treated as outputs. Nevertheless, we continue to speak about the BMU/ICI "objective" and its "outcomes".

Outcome 1: Establishing new protected areas

Natural undisturbed forests store more carbon and for longer period of time. According to the project proposal submitted in October 2009, the project intended to focus on improving protection of larch and Siberian Pine Forests in: (i) southern part of Krasnoyarsk by expanding the existing Nature Park Ergaki by 126,000 ha; (ii) Altay Republic by establishing new federal strictly PA "Saylugem" on 100,000 ha; (iii) Tyva Republic by establishing two new Nature Parks: "Shui" (230,000 ha) and "Ush-Beldyr" (180,000 ha). The establishment of these high conservation status PAs should maintain carbon sinks and stop the release of the forests' stored carbon on 636,000 ha.

The expected outputs regarding this outcome are:

- New protected areas legally gazetted; feasibility studies, including assessment of carbon sequestration potential finalized;
- Management infrastructure for newly established PAs in place.

By August 2011, the Project achieved the following as regards the extension of the PA System:

	Year	Surface area (ha)	Total (ha)
Established in the context of the UNDP/GEF components*			**556,446**
• Tokhtai Sanctuary	2007	14,367	
• Gagul Kotlovina Sanctuary	2007	24,628	
• **Ergaki Nature Park (*extension*)****	**2008**	**125,873**	
• Taiga Nature Park	2009	23,298	
• **Sailyugem NP****	**2010**	**118,380**	
• Krasnoyarskiy Sanctuary	2010	180,000	
• Kiskachinskiy Sanctuary	2010	69,900	
Planned in the context of the UNDP/BMU project			**875,292**
• Pozarym Federal Refuge	–	252,292	
• Shuiskiy Nature Park	–	98,000	
• Ush-Beldyr Nature Park	–	180,000	
• Ak-Cholushpa Nature Park	–	345,000	

*not including those areas established during project preparation (see main report)
**see remarks on these PAs in the text

The project claims that UNDP/BMU funding was crucial for successfully establishing the extension of Ergaki Nature Park and Sailyugem National Park. However, the extension of Ergaki Nature Park was materialised already in 2008, while the UNDP/BMU project component was approved only in 11/2009. The expectation of new PA funding may have positively influenced the decision of Russian authorities to establish the Nature Park, but as no BMU funding was available for supporting this process at that time, the TE does not see the park extension as a direct achievement of UNDP/BMU funding.

A very similar situation is true for Sailyugem National Park. The Government of Russia issued the directive on establishing the park in January 2010, two months after the onset of the UNDP/BMU project (November 2009). Taking into consideration that establishing protected areas are long and complex processes, and it is not realistic that they can be facilitated within such a short period.

It is evident that GEF, WWF and BMU/ICI altogether played a crucial role in establishing these two protected areas through supporting the Russian authorities in their efforts to give these two areas a legal protection status. It is in the nature of such multi-stakeholder processes that it is not always clear who has finally initiated what, who is finally responsible for what outcome, and who has to be praised for successful achievements. The upcoming BMU/ICI funding was surely important for opening the door for new protected areas, but as there was no direct financial and/or technical support provided by BMU/ICI towards Ergaki and Sailyugem, the TE is reluctant to attribute the establishment of these two PAs to the achievements of BMU/ICI.

Establishing and extending Protected Areas is being done in close cooperation with WWF. For establishing the Pozarym Nature Sanctuary and the Shuiskiy Nature Park, for example, WWF has funded the necessary feasibility studies (biological and ecological justification), while the documentation has been prepared by the responsible ministries in Khakassia and Tyva Republics. The BMU/ICI Project surely played a crucial role in lobbying for the establishment of these and other protected areas and for providing the enabling environment, but the specific input is not always tangible.

Outcome 2: Fire Management interventions in place in existing and new protected areas

Wildfire, in response to changing climate has the potential to significantly affect the carbon storage capacity of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion's forests. The existing capacities for fire control are extremely weak, especially in Tyva Republic. The Project has therefore foreseen the following outputs:

- An integrated fire fighting strategy, based on evaluation of the main wildfire causes developed;
- A fire training programme including fire prevention measures developed and implemented;
- Enhanced presence and access of forest PA rangers by ensuring higher mobility and surveillance capacity;
- Specific locations for camping and fire places designated and mapped on tourist maps;
- Fire fighting field equipment for rangers.

The Institute of Forest has been contracted by the Project to develop a Strategy for Decreasing Wildfire Hazards in Protected Areas in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion. Natural and actual wildfire occurrences and their causes have been analysed, fire impact on the main ecosystems evaluated, carbon sinks for the ecoregion and specific protected areas calculated. As a result, concrete measures were suggested for preventing and fighting fires under area-specific conditions. Maps were developed showing actual fire occurrence and natural fire hazard in the region.

It was found that in the period 2000-2009 17,700 of fires occurred in the Russian portion of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion. 36% of natural fires took place in forests, while the rest of them damaged open areas, mostly steppes and grasslands. 60-90% of these fires are caused by human activities. Fires have a cyclic distribution from year to year but show a clear tendency to increase within the last decade from 750 in 2000 to 2,500 in 2009 with a correspondent increase of damaged territory from 2,500 km² in 2000 to 11,150 km² in 2009.

Carbon stock for the Russian portion of the Altai-Sayan was estimated as 2,736 million tons (Mt), 96% of which is harboured in forests. The Altai-Sayan forests also act as a carbon pool annually accumulating 20.69 Mt of carbon, while an annual carbon emission from natural fires does not exceed 0.26 Mt.

Altogether 10 PAs were provided with fire fighting field equipment, four-wheel cars with water tanks, radio communication stations, etc., with budget allocations mostly between 1.5 and 2.0m Rubel (see also Table 3):

- Altaiskiy Reserve (1.5m RUR);
- Shushenskiy Bor National Park (1.8m RUR);
- Katunskiy Reservem (1.9m RUR);

- Ubsunurskaya Kotlovina Reserve (2.1m RUR);
- Sayano-Shushenskiy Reserve (2.0m RUR);
- Tigirekskiy Reserve (2.0m RUR);
- Kuznetskiy Alatau Reserve (2.1m RUR);
- Khakasskiy Reserve (2.0m RUR);
- Azas Nature Reserve (2.1m RUR);
- Ergaki Nature Park (2.1m RUR).

Purchased equipment will help to prevent carbon emission caused by forest fires on the territory of 28,636 km² with an accumulated carbon stock of 137.5 Mt.

A special 40-hour fire management training programme for the PA staff was developed and includes natural fire prevention measures as well as the new equipment use for fire fighting; a training course was conducted for the senior staff of PAs. Additionally, office and field manuals for natural fire prevention and fire-fighting were published and distributed to the relevant PAs.

Outcome 3: Piloting adaptation measures in selected protected areas

Outcome 3 was going to be achieved through the following activities:

- Design and establish a system for monitoring climate change impacts for Russian portion of Altai-Sayan Ecoregion based on ecosystem approach;
- Implementation of special protection measures for most vulnerable species/ecosystems.

WWF has been subcontracted to conduct a vulnerability assessment for the ecoregion. The report provides a profile of existing knowledge in certain thematic areas including climate change assessment and forecast, the potential response of vegetation, and the ecoregion's water resources and ecosystem services. The assessment is an early step in compiling the comprehensive information basis required for further studies. It was found that certain climate issues are insufficiently studied to be included in the assessment report, in particular regarding the fauna. The main challenge of the assessment was the lack of microclimatic forecasts of events causing adverse impact on certain species, including the well-known flagship species of the ecoregion, the Snow Leopard and Argali. Currently there is no reliable prognosis of climate change in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion. Altogether, the Vulnerability Assessment is a solid study onto which one can build further work.

The Project developed a comprehensive programme for climate and ecosystem impact monitoring: 11 protected areas (Altaiskiy, Katunskiy, Khakasskiy, Kuznetskiy Alatau, Tigirekskiy, Sayano-Shushenskiy, Stolby and Ubsunurskaya Kotlovina Reserves, Shorskiy and Shushenskiy Bor National Parks and Ergaki Nature Park) were selected as monitoring stations, and automatic equipment was purchased and staff trained to use it. The programme includes monitoring the treeline ecotone in protected areas in the ecoregion according to methodologies and standards developed by the Institute of Plant and Animal Ecology (Ural Division of the Russian Academy of Science), monitoring of alpine ecosystems and monitoring of cryosphere (snow cover and glaciers) and water resources. For each type of monitoring the methodology and field guide were developed and published (e.g. Guidelines for monitoring of snow cover in protected areas of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion Guidelines for monitoring the water balance of high-altitudinal catchments, both developed by the experts from the Altai State University, Guidelines for hydrometeorological monitoring developed by experts of the Lomonosov's Moscow State University).

Monitoring work is closely attached to the international GLORIA programme ("Global Observation Research Initiative in Alpine Environments"), which helps set standards and achieve internationally comparable results. The first monitoring results were presented at international gatherings including ones in Germany and Great Britain (GLORIA).

Remotely Sensed Data (RSD) is recognized as useful tool for monitoring ecosystem change, so the protected areas were provided with a time series of the satellite images and special training was conducted by the experts from the Lomonosov's Moscow State University, who also developed appropriate guidelines for interpreting RSD. For processing the monitoring data, an interactive database has been developed.

The Project also organised an international conference titled 'Climate Change and Connectivity Conservation in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion', held in July 2010 in the Katunskiy Biosphere Reserve and organized together with IUCN-WCPA.

In the frameworks of the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy development, two conferences were organized: "Options of adaptation to climate change in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion" (May, 2011) and "Climate Change in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion – Strategies of Adaptation and Mitigation" (October, 2011). As the result of the discussions the first draft of the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for Biodiversity Conservation was compiled.

While the Project is very successful in establishing a climate change monitoring system according to international standards and in preparing the ground for future climate change-related activities through conducting a vulnerability assessment, one would expect under this outcome more activities related to adaptation to climate change. Actually, adaptation measures *per se* with pilot activities "in selected project areas" are not conducted at all.

There is surely a certain discrepancy between the heading of this outcome and the underlying activities. However, it has never been said what kind of adaptation measures should be developed and piloted. By contrast, the other outcomes covering issues such as fire prevention and fire fighting, extension of the Protected Area System and rural livelihood must already be regarded as adaptation measures.

Outcome 4: Support to alternative livelihoods and sustainable use incentives for local communities

The purpose of this outcome is to demonstrate community-based solutions to mitigate overexploitation of natural resources by local population within newly established PAs and provide visible and measurable benefits from establishing of PAs. The Outcome is going to be achieved through the following activities:

- Successful experience and best practices in income generation and sustainable use made available to and introduced in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion local communities;
- Trainings delivered to local communities and entrepreneurs;
- Develop and implement pilot alternative livelihood activities within the territory of newly established PAs.

The Project developed a wide array of activities, most of them together with the UNDP/GEF Project and other organisations such as WWF. Alone over 200 consultations were held with local people on protected area activities, tourism development and regulatory requirements for small

businesses. About 500 people attended workshops and consulting meetings; over 1000 people visited festivals and conferences; over 100 people used consulting services. Over 20 users of consulting services received grants of up to 300,000 RUR and over 40 people received up to 50,000 RUR from the federal programme for small businesses.

The Project for example carried out 6 workshops for the residents of Ust-Koksinskiy, Turochakskiy and Mongun-Taiginskiy Districts to teach them how to start a business and apply for a loan. The workshops were attended by around 200 people. More than 40 people used consulting services. The Project helped establish micro-loan programmes in Bai-Taiga and Mongun-Taiga Districts of Tyva Republic. Other micro-loan programmes were initiated in the Ust-Koksinskiy and Turochakskiy Districts; this programme board received for example 14 applications, of which 8 have been approved.

The alternative livelihood is very comprehensive and it would exceed the tasks of this report to review the individual activities one by one. The individual activities are usually not clearly separated from those funded by UNDP/GEF and others. It often happened, for example, that certain activities started with UNDP/GEF money and promoted by UNDP/GEF until the end of 2010, and then continued with BMU/ICI funds in 2011.

Logically, one comes to the same conclusion as for the UNDP/GEF livelihood measures: The Project is on the one side very successful in promoting different kinds of alternative livelihoods and in generating income for the local population. With the exception of the development of ecotourism, the impact of these measures remained so far restricted to relatively small groups of beneficiaries. As was shown in the UNDP/GEF Terminal Evaluation Report, the Project used too much energy for identifying and testing new approaches, and this happened at the cost of upscaling approaches which have already been shown to be successful, and which have the potential for high-impact.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Project Management. The project is managed by a highly dedicated and professional team and shows a high personal continuity throughout the project's lifespan. The entire team (all staff and most short-term consultants) is practically identical with the team of the UNDP/GEF Project team insofar they have been contracted through BMU/ICI once the funds of UNDP/GEF have been expired. All project executing partners - on national, regional and local levels – show a high ownership for the project.

Project Duration. Establishing Protected Areas are complex and time-consuming processes with an array of legal and institutional implications, which are not easy to handle and to overcome. Also adaptation measures and the development of alternative livelihoods for are issues which need much time. These measures are not well suited to the rapid implementation required in this project. Not surprisingly, project implementation has delayed, and lead to a request for no-cost extension of the Project with all uncertainties, whether this will actually be granted. This request is herewith fully supported.

New Protected Areas. There are different views between the project and the TE as regards the role of BMU/ICI in establishing Ergaki and Sailyugem Protected Areas. While the project counts these PAs as an achievement of BMU/ICI funding, the TE wishes to draw attention to the fact

that Ergaki Nature Park was established already more than a year before BMU/ICI funding was approved, and Sailyugem National Park was established only two months after approval of BMU/ICI funding. While the expectation of a new funding source may have influenced the decision of Russian authorities to establish these PAs, the TE is reluctant to count them as an achievement of BMU/ICI.

As the establishment of new protected areas is always both a multi-stakeholder process and a highly political decision, there is inevitably an attribution gap between the efforts of the project and the size and number of new protected areas. It is therefore not seen as appropriate to use indicators such as surface area or number of protected areas to assess the achievements of a project.

The establishment of further protected areas is actively promoted by BMU/ICI, mostly in close cooperation with WWF. The project aims at 875,000 ha of new protected areas, which is much more than the 636,000 ha originally foreseen.

Fire Management. The preparation of a Strategy for Decreasing Wildfire Hazards in Protected Areas in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion, and the provision of appropriate equipment and training for preventing and fighting wild fires are very successful so far. The measures should be continued.

Piloting adaptation measures in selected protected areas. There is a discrepancy between the title of this outcome and the activities performed. Apart from constructing artificial nest platforms for Saker Falcon, a species vulnerable to climate change, practically no specific adaptation measures have been piloted in selected protected areas under this outcome. On the other hand, a very useful and professional Vulnerability Study has been conducted and a climate and ecosystem monitoring programme has been set up, which works according to international standards and in accordance with the international GLORIA System ("Global Observation Research Initiative in Alpine Environments").

Support to alternative livelihoods and sustainable use incentives for local communities. As regards alternative livelihoods, the Project is in the one side very successful in promoting different kinds of livelihoods and in generating income for the local population. With the exception of the development of ecotourism, the impact of these measures remained so far restricted to relatively small groups of beneficiaries. As was shown in the UNDP/GEF Terminal Evaluation Report, the Project used too much energy for identifying and testing new approaches, and this happened at the cost of upscaling approaches which have already been shown to be successful, and which have the potential for high-impact. A more focussed approach is recommended for the remaining project period. Almost all livelihood activities either build on UNDP/GEF activities or are implemented jointly with the UNDP/GEF Project or with other organisations. The specific contribution of BMU/ICI and the effect and impact of this contribution thus cannot be assessed as stand-alone measure.

Project Rating. Altogether, the Altai-Sayan Project has remarkable achievements and it is fully justified that this project is often used as flagship project in the region. Although the UNDP/GEF Project and the BMU/ICI Project have sometimes been described as two stand-alone projects, this does not reflect the full reality: The overall objective of these two projects can only be achieved through the close linkage between them. Neither of them could be so successful alone. The overall rating of BMU/ICI funded operations is "Satisfactory".