Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Biodiversity of the Kazakhstani Sector of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion

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Kazakhstan

GEF OP4: Mountain Ecosystems
GEF Strategic Priority Biodiversity: Catalyzing Sustainability of Protected Areas

Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan
Forestry & Hunting Committee, Ministry of Agriculture

United National Development Program (UNDP)

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In addition, at the UNDP-CO, Aliya Akhmetova organized timely delivery of the visa registration number and the document that allowed the international consultant into the country.

The evaluation is intended to give a summary of what has been achieved in the project as well a glean some of the lessons that can be learned from it in what was a relatively short period. In the report, we have tried to offer constructive criticism where we think it is warranted and we hope that those involved in the project take it as such.

Finally, it is a pleasure to be welcomed to a new country (at least for one of us), to be shown around with such evident pride and to see wonderful places. We saw the results of the dedication and enthusiasm that people had put into the work of conserving important places in the world. We would like to offer them our thanks and wish them every success in their continuing endeavours.

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Executive Summary

The Terminal Evaluation was carried out by one International Consultant and one National Consultant with a mission to Kazakhstan between 16 – 26 November 2011. The Terminal Evaluation took place four months before the project was due to close on 31 March 2012 (having received approval for a three-month, no-cost extension of the project). During the mission, the evaluation team met and interviewed a large number of stakeholders including i) members of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) from the Forestry and Hunting Committee of the Ministry of Agriculture, and from the Ministry of Environmental Protection, ii) from the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) of the project, iii) representatives from the protected areas covered by the project, members of local government – including the Deputy Akim from Katon-Karagai Municipal Akimat, iv) representatives of local NGOs supported over the course of the project, and v) beneficiaries of the SGP.

Key Findings

The project had an extended development period (starting in 2001) when it was originally conceived as part of a tri-national initiative. There would be a Mongolian project and a bi-nation regional project between Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation. Because of differing commencement dates, this changed to two, single nation projects. For Kazakhstan, this was originally conceived as a medium-sized project until it was realized that this would be insufficient to accomplish the activities and outcomes for a project in the Kazakhstani sector of the Altai-Sayan Mountain Ecoregion. Moreover, an MSP would not have permitted a realistic contribution to strengthening of Kazakhstan's national protected area system. Thus, a full-sized project was developed with the goal "*to enhance the sustainability and conservation effectiveness of Kazakhstan's National PA system through demonstrating sustainable and replicable approaches to conservation management in the protected areas in the Kazakhstani sector of Altai-Sayan ecoregion*."

GEF-CEO endorsement for the project was received on 26 September 2006 under Operational Programme 4: Mountain Ecosystems and as part of Strategic Priority Biodiversity 1 "Catalyzing sustainability of Protected Areas". UNDP-GEF signed the Project Document with the Government of Kazakhstan on 10 January 2007 and first disbursements were made on 27 January. The project was designed as a five-year project and was, therefore, due to be completed by January 2012. The PSC granted a three-month extension to the project, which is now due to close on 31 March 2012.

The project was designed within the partnership between the FHC and the UNDP-CO. The projects that fall under this partnership are complementary and work in synergy to strengthen Kazakhstan's protected area system as a whole while also, at a local level, working to address the most pressing threats to the protected areas and enhancing protected areas' sustainability and effectiveness.

The project was well managed and implemented, and the results were commensurate with the project's objectives (both original and as modified). The results were largely relevant and consistent with both the project's identified focal area and operational program strategies. The project also contributed significantly to achieving the country's development priorities, with the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion having been identified as one of ten areas for tourism development within the country. The project

was implemented in a cost-effective – and thus, efficient – way using a number of approaches to be cost-effective.

Key results

Overall, the project has made a significant contribution to the global environment. The approaches and implementation represent best practices and warrant replication and scaling-up to the rest of the protected area system of Kazakhstan, as indeed has already started.

Item	Rating	Comment
Overall Project Results	**HS**	The project has achieved all of its major objectives and yielded satisfactory benefits, with no significant shortcomings
IA & EA Execution		
Overall quality of implementation & execution	**HS**	The implementation may have taken a little time to become fully focused and may have become a little distracted with the "German Project," but with corrective measures applied after the MTE, the implementation has been excellent.
Implementation Agency Execution	**HS**	The FHC, as the IA, has provided full support for the project, committing itself to ensuring sustainability of the results and achievements. It provided the project the space with which to carry out its tasks to its fullest capacity
Executing Agency Execution	**HS**	UNDP, particularly in the latter stages of the project, provided excellent support for the project. The implementation was NEX with direct payments by UNDP. In no way was this a barrier to project implementation; on the contrary, this was an efficient mechanism for implementation. The project was monitored by the UNDP-CO and by the UNDP Regional Office in Bratislava, receiving useful support and feedback. The PIU team were trained in UNDP procurement and accounting processes (and use of ATLAS).
M&E		
Overall quality of M&E	**S**	See comments below.
M&E design at project start-up	**HS**	The M&E design appeared to be adequate, with satisfactory monitoring events in place.
M&E plan Implementation	**S**	The most satisfactory aspect of the M&E implementation was that the MTE (obviously itself part of the M&E plan implementation) spurred the project and UNDP i) to focus more strongly on some of the aspects of the project that were otherwise lagging and ii) to make adjustments to some of the design aspects of the project. In short and despite the misunderstandings, the MTE was an effective catalyst to effective project delivery. However, on the other hand, that it was necessary at all, speaks of a less than satisfactory beginning to the project in so far as M&E was concerned. Following on from the MTE, the support provided by the UNDP-CO and UNDP Regional Office in Bratislava was excellent.
Outcomes		
Overall quality of project outcomes	**HS**	See Conclusions
Relevance	**S**	In general, the project kept a tight focus on the design in the project document and has delivered on the outcomes and outputs – and more. Many of the outcomes are very relevant and the contribution to the global environment significant. However, as discussed elsewhere in the Terminal Evaluation (and, notably, in the MTE) the linkage between activities and biodiversity conservation has not always been very tight. It appears as if some of the activities were justified, *post hoc*, to conservation. This comment should not detract from the vast amount that the project

Item	Rating	Comment
		has achieved but whether some of the activities carried out by the project actually lead to conservation impacts will be seen in the long-term.
Effectiveness	**HS**	The project has been effective as the outcomes of the project were commensurate with the original (and modified, where this occurred) objectives of the project. The project was designed such that the outcomes, outputs and indicators did not just measure the outputs and inputs; rather the focus was on outcomes and impacts. By achieving the outputs and outcomes, the project has been highly successful and there were no shortcomings to achieving its objectives.
Efficiency	**HS**	The project was very cost effective in its delivery of the outcomes and outputs. It adopted a number of measures to ensure its cost effectiveness on different levels: i) from the strategic partnership between the UNDP-CO and FHC, ii) the incorporation of the "German Project" – albeit slightly unconventional – was an opportunistic, cost effective option. On a day-to-day management level, the project used procurement modalities to ensure good value for money.
Sustainability		
Overall likelihood of risks to sustainability	**L**	
Financial resources	**L**	The government and specifically the FHC is committed to the protected areas and financing them. In addition, i) the project has worked to find other revenues streams by which the PAs can boost their budgets and ii) the Steppe project is working to find mechanisms to ensure financial sustainability of the protected area system as a whole (as part of the UNDO-CO/FHC partnership). These will contribute to ensuring financial sustainability.
Socio-economic	**ML**	The rating of 'Moderately Likely' is based on the assumption that the NGOs and small enterprises in the vicinity of the protected areas will continue to grow. All evidence at present points to this being the case with NGOs such as Mametek already being independent and growing. However, any risk can be mitigated further i) if the SGP remains active in the area, providing financial and technical support if and when it is needed and ii) if the UNDP-CO continues to monitor the situation on the ground.
Institutional Framework and governance	**ML**	While the institutions themselves are now resilient and robust, there is one challenge to institutional sustainability: this is the recruitment and retention of good quality staff. The project has made some headway to reduce this risk (through training) but the quality of the staff is relatively low and any good staff may be attracted away from the PAs with the training that they received. Until the FHC can provide competitive conditions to attract and retain protected area staff, this risk will remain.
Environmental	**L**	The project has made significant gains to ensure environmental sustainability through i) improving the management of KKNP and MZ, ii) expanding the protected area coverage, iii) reducing the incidence of fire, iv) improving the environmental framework for local community livelihoods and v) contributing to amending the legislative/regulatory framework – to ensure environmental sustainability.
Catalytic Role		
Production of a Public Good	**HS**	The project has made significant gains at all levels of catalysis through demonstration, replication and, in some instances, scaling-up of practices: i) in piloting new technologies and approaches that have been scaled-up or replicated elsewhere in the country (e.g., fire fighting systems; working with local communities and establishing public associations as mechanism for livelihood work;
Demonstration	**HS**	
Replication	**HS**	
Scaling up	**HS**	

Item	Rating	Comment
		construction of artifical nesting sites), ii) successful training of PA staff, iii) finding mechanisms for involving stakeholders in construction projects thereby accelerating bureaucracy, iv) building awareness among local communities, v) high levels of media coverage, vi) tourism frameworks (thresholds and guidelines), vii) building databases (ecosystem-based monitoring and documents).

Key Issues

There were a few, relatively minor issues:

- The monitoring of the co-finance expenditure has been poor and co-finance expenditure remains unknown. In the final four months of the project, the PIU should ensure that these data become available.
- The project retained a sharp focus on the logical framework and the indicators therein. This meant that while the indicators (and more) have been achieved, the project was implemented with the faith that these would lead to the intended impacts. In short, monitoring of the impacts and outcomes could have been improved.
- A few things remain to be done in the final four months of the project (see section on recommendations).

Key lessons learned

The lessons learned from the project are presented towards the end of the evaluation report, but, in summary, they include:

- The government was fully supportive of and committed to the project: thus the government created an environment in which the project could succeed.
- The project emerged out of a strong and well-conceived strategic partnership between the UNDP-CO and the FHC.
- The project had a well-chosen National Project Manager - he was locally respected and knew the system well enough to know how to achieve results within its framework.
- Understanding local conditions and building trust was critical to the success of the project.
- Projects must be based where the work takes place or have local representation on the ground.
- Too sharp a focus on the project document and the indicators can result in reduced innovation and some missed opportunities

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ASE	Altai-Sayan Ecoregion
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CCF	Country Cooperation Framework (of UNDP)
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
EA	Executing Agency
EKO	Eastern Kazakhstan Oblast
FHC	Forestry and Hunting Committee (of MA)
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GoK	Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan
IA	Implementing Agency
IC	Incremental Cost
IUCN	World Conservation Union
KASE	Kazakhstani (part of) Altai-Sayan Ecoregion
KKNP	Katon-Karagaiskyi National Park
MAB	Man and the Biosphere Program (of UNESCO)
MEP	Ministry of Environmental Protection
MA	Ministry of Agriculture
MSP	Medium-sized Project
MSR	Markakolskyi State Reserve (zapovednik)
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NPAS	National Protected Area System
NTFP	Non-timber Forest Product(s)
PA	Protected Area
PD	Project Director
PDF-B	Project Development Facility, Block B (GEF)
PM	Project Manager
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PT	Project Territory
RCC	Regional Coordinating Committee
REC	Regional Environment Centre
RoK	Republic of Kazakhstan
SGP	Small Grants Program (of UNDP/GEF)
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNDP-CO	United Nations Development Program Country Office
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

1 Introduction

1. The Terminal Evaluation of the UNDP-GEF project "Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Biodiversity of the Kazakhstani Sector of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion" was carried out according to the UNDP-GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy. Thus, it was carried out with the aim of providing a systematic and comprehensive evaluation of the performance of the project by assessing its design, processes of implementation, achievement relative to its objectives. Under this overarching aim, its objectives were i) to promote accountability and transparency for the achievement of GEF objectives through the assessment of results, effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, sustainability and impact of the partners involved in the project, and ii) to promote learning, feedback and knowledge sharing on the results and lessons learned from the project and its partners as a basis for decision-making on policies, strategies, programme management and projects, and to improve knowledge and performance. As such, this Terminal Evaluation was initiated by UNDP Kazakhstan as the GEF Implementation Agency for the "Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Biodiversity of the Kazakhstani Sector of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion Project" to determine its success in relation to its stated objectives and to understand the lessons learned through the implementation of the project.

2. The Terminal Evaluation was conducted by two consultants – one international and national. Both consultants were independent of the policy-making process, and the delivery and management of the assistance to the project. Neither consultant was involved in the design, implementation and/or supervision of the project.

3. The Terminal Evaluation was carried out over a period of 28 days from 01 November 2011, four months before the project was due to close (on 31 March 2012), despite being originally planned to coincide with the closure of the project. Indeed, the project's implementation was extended by the Project Steering Committee (PSC) until 31 March 2012. This no-cost extension to the project was agreed one week before the Terminal Evaluation mission began. Nonetheless, carrying out the Terminal Evaluation at this point remained in line with UNDP/GEF policy for Terminal Evaluations.

1.1 Approach and methodology

4. The approach for the Terminal Evaluation was determined by the Terms of Reference (TOR, see Annex I). The TOR were followed closely but the evaluation has focused on assessing i) the concept and design of the project, ii) its implementation in terms of quality and timeliness of inputs, financial planning, and monitoring and evaluation, iii) the efficiency, effectiveness and relevance of the activities that were carried out, iv) whether the desired (and other undesirable but not intended) outcomes and objectives were achieved, v) the likelihood of sustainability of the results of the project, and vi) the involvement of stakeholders in the project's processes and activities.

5. The Terminal Evaluation included a thorough review of the project documents and other outputs, documents, monitoring reports, Annual Project Reports (APR), Project Implementation Reviews (PIR), relevant correspondence and other project related material produced by the project staff or their partners. The evaluation assessed whether a number of recommendations that had been made following the

Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) and two subsequent monitoring and support visits from members of the Biodiversity staff of UNDP's Regional Centre in Bratislava had been implemented and to ascertain the explanations if they had not been.

6. The Terminal Evaluation also included a mission to Kazakhstan between 16 – 26 November 2011. The evaluation process during the mission followed a participatory approach and included a series of structured and unstructured interviews, both individually and in small groups. Site visits were also conducted i) to validate the reports and indicators, ii) to examine, in particular, any infrastructure development and equipment procured, iii) to consult with protected area staff, local authorities or government representatives and local communities, and iv) to assess data that may be held only locally. The evaluators worked with the staff of the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) and particularly with the National Project Manager (NPM) throughout the evaluation. Particular attention was paid to listening to the stakeholders' views and the confidentiality of all interviews was stressed. Whenever possible, the information was crosschecked among the various sources. A full list of people consulted over the course of the mission and by telephone, skype or email thereafter is given in Annex III.

7. The evaluation was carried out according to the UNDP/GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy. Therefore, activities and results were evaluated for their: i) Relevance – thus, the extent to which the results and activities were consistent with local and national development priorities, national and international conservation priorities, and GEF's focal area and operational programme strategies, ii) Effectiveness – thus, how the project's results were related to the original or modified intended outcomes or objectives, and iii) Efficiency – thus, whether the activities were carried out in a cost effect way and whether the results were achieved by the least cost option. The results, outcomes, and actual and potential impacts of the project were examined to determine whether they were positive or negative, foreseen or unintended. Finally, the sustainability of the interventions and results were examined to determine the likelihood of whether benefits would continue to be accrued after the completion of the project. The sustainability was examined from various perspectives: financial, social, environmental and institutional.

8. In addition, the evaluators took pains to examine the achievements of the project within the realistic political and socio-economic framework of Kazakhstan over the last five years of the project's implementation and particularly those of the remote, rural areas of East Kazakhstan.

9. The logical framework of the project had been amended during the project's inception period. The amended logframe was published in the Inception Report and it was endorsed by the Project's Steering Committee (PSC) in their meeting that followed from the Inception Report. The Project Implementation Unit (PIU) used this logframe as the basis for implementing the project. However, the indicators of the logframe were further amended following the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) (see Section 3.1) resulting in a logframe with Outcomes, Outputs and indicators towards which the PIU worked and which formed the basis of the Terminal Evaluation.

10. According to the GEF policy for Terminal Evaluations, the relevant areas of the project were evaluated according to performance criteria (Table 1).

Table 1. The ratings that were assigned to the various aspects of the project, in accordance with UNDP/GEF policies.

Rating	Explanation
Highly satisfactory (HS)	The aspect had no shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency
Satisfactory (S)	The aspect had minor shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	The aspect had moderate shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	The aspect had significant shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency
Unsatisfactory (U)	The aspect had major shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	The aspect had severe shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency

11. There were no aspects of the project that were deemed Not Applicable (N/A) or Unable to Assess (U/A).

12. In a similar way, the sustainability of the project's interventions and achievements were examined using the relevant UNDP/GEF ratings (Table 2).

Table 2. The ratings that were assigned to the different dimensions of sustainability of the interventions and achievements of the project.

Rating	Explanation
Likely (L)	Negligible risks to sustainability, with key outcomes expected to continue into the foreseeable future
Moderately Likely (ML)	Moderate risks, but expectations that at least some outcomes will be sustained
Moderately Unlikely (MU)	Substantial risk that key outcomes will not carry on after project closure, although some outputs and activities should carry on
Unlikely (U)	Severe risk that project outcomes as well as key outputs will not be sustained
Highly Unlikely (HU)	Expectation that few if any outputs or activities will continue after project closure

13. A summary of the results of the evaluation was given to the Head of UNDP-Kazakhstan's Energy and Environment Programme at the end of the mission in Kazakhstan, however, no formal debriefing was held.

14. The Terminal Evaluation was carried out with a number of audiences in mind, including: i) the Forestry and Hunting Committee (FHC) of the Ministry of Agriculture – that has the mandate for the development and management of the principal protected areas in the country (including *zapovedniks* and national parks) – the members of the FHC that the evaluators met over the course of the mission made it explicitly clear that the potential for further replication of the good practices and results produced by the project across the country's protected area system depended on the Terminal Evaluation and the project's Final Report; ii) the UNDP-CO – for two primary reasons – first, as an assessment of how their overall strategy for making

gains in the conservation sector in Kazakhstan is progressing and, second, to make recommendations for the areas in which they may need to focus in the other projects that complement the KASE project and which continue to be implemented. It is also hoped that some of the lessons learned and recommendations will be useful i) for other development programmes in Kazakhstan and ii) for other GEF projects in Kazakhstan that are both still being implemented, those that are currently being developed and those that shall be developed in the future. In addition, it is hoped that the lessons learned and recommendations will be useful for GEF and other development programmes across the globe, particularly those of similar political and socio-economic standing as Kazakhstan.

15. The report follows the structure of Terminal Evaluations recommended in the UNDP Evaluation Guidance for GEF-Financed Projects. As such, it first deals with a description of the project and the development context in Kazakhstan (Section 2), it then deals with the Findings (Section 3) of the evaluation within three sections (Project Formulation, Project Implementation and Project Results, respectively). The report then draws together the Conclusions, Recommendations and Lessons from the project (Section 4).

2 Project Description and Development Context

16. The Project Document provides a concise and coherent summary of the project's design history and associated rationale:

> "During the project preparation several alternatives were considered for the project design. As the project represents one integral element of a tri-national initiative involving complementary biodiversity conservation projects in Mongolia, Russia and Kazakhstan, in 2001, PDF-B funds were provided to Russia and Kazakhstan for the development of a single bi-national GEF project that would complement the project in Mongolia. In the course of the PDF-B, however, primarily on account of differences in the time of commencement of PDF-B activities in Russia and Kazakhstan, it was decided that two national projects should be developed and submitted to the GEF with explicit integrated trans-boundary elements incorporated into each of them. The PDF-B process resulted in the development of a full-size project in Russia, which was approved in 2004, and in the detailed analysis of threats and the definition of required initiatives to conserve globally significant biodiversity in the Kazakhstani sector of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion. While it was originally envisaged that a medium-sized GEF project would be developed for the Kazakhstani part of the eco-region, the assessment conducted during the PDF-B, indicated that the complex systemic and institutional capacity barriers to effective biodiversity conservation in Kazakhstan cannot be addressed by a MSP. Moreover, an MSP would not have permitted a realistic strengthening of Kazakhstan's national protected area system. Thus, a request for PDF-A funding was subsequently prepared and approved for the development of a full size project to enhance the sustainability and conservation effectiveness of Kazakhstan's National PA system through demonstrating sustainable and replicable approaches to conservation management in the protected areas in the Kazakhstani sector of Altai-Sayan ecoregion."

17. Replenishment issues meant a delay in seeking sufficient funds for a full-sized project and, therefore, the PDF-A was submitted to GEFSec on 02 June 2005. This became operational on 02 August 2005 with GEF-CEO approval into the GEF pipeline being obtained on 20 December 2005. However, again because of financial considerations, the GEF Secretariat deferred the inclusion of biodiversity proposals in the January 2006 Work Programme until the June Council meeting. Following receipt of and responses to comments, GEF-CEO endorsement was received on 26 September 2006 as a Full-sized Project under Operational Programme 4: Mountain Ecosystems and as part of Strategic Priority Biodiversity 1 "Catalyzing sustainability of Protected Areas" of the GEF Business Plan. UNDP-GEF signed the Project Document with the Government of Kazakhstan on 10 January 2007, thereby commencing the Project. First disbursements were made on 27 January. Project inception workshops were organized and the Inception Report was produced in August 2007.

18. The project was designed as a five-year project and was, therefore, due to be completed by January 2012.

19. The project was designed within the portfolio of partnership between the FHC and the UNDP-CO. The projects that fall within this portfolio are complementary and work in synergy to strengthen Kazakhstan's protected area system as a whole while also, at a local level, working to address the most pressing threats to the protected areas and enhancing protected areas' sustainability and effectiveness. At the system level, the portfolio is conceived to serve as a catalyst through the implementation of necessary reforms pertaining to protected area management and, thereby, enhancing the system's ecological, financial and institutional sustainability.

20. As mentioned above, the principal stakeholders are the FHC of the Ministry of Agriculture. However, the project was more inclusive and included the Akimats at the Oblast level (specifically the East Kazakhstan Oblast) and at the rayon level (e.g., Ridder and Katon-Karagai rayons). Additionally, the project targeted local communities living in the areas adjacent to Katon-Karagai National Park and Markakol Zapovednik.

3 Findings

3.1 Project Formulation

21. The project was designed to address identified threats to biodiversity by addressing their root causes and by overcoming the barriers to effective management of protected areas. The threats to the biodiversity of the Kazakhstani portion of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion (KASE) can be summarized as being: i) the loss, fragmentation and degradation of valuable habitats especially in montane forests (in turn, through fire, destructive forestry operations and illegal logging, and unorganized and uncontrolled tourism and recreation), ii) the loss of significant species (in turn, through poaching, collection and use of NTFPs and illegal trade in threatened species).

22. The root causes of these threats and the barriers to effective management of protected areas were identified in the project development process to be: i) a conflicting policy framework for biodiversity conservation, ii) inadequate institutional capacity (and, specifically, institutional fragmentation, poor staffing of protected areas, poor enforcement capacity, and poor equipment and infrastructure), iii) incomplete protected area coverage and the exclusion of key habitats at both local and systemic levels, iv) information deficiencies, and v) the exclusion of local communities from protected area development and management processes.

23. The project was, therefore, designed to overcome the above described root causes and barriers.

24. The overall goal of the project was: "*To help secure the globally significant biodiversity values of the Kazakhstan.*"

25. The project's objective was: "*To enhance the sustainability and conservation effectiveness of Kazakhstan's National PA system through demonstrating sustainable and replicable approaches to conservation management in the protected areas in the Kazakhstani sector of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion*."

26. Two indicators were identified to measure achievement of the project's objective. The first focused on populations of charismatic species (snow leopards *Uncia uncia*, Altai argali *Ovis ammon*, black storks *Ciconia nigra* and Imperial eagles *Aquila heliaca*). Barring catastrophic collapses of any one of these populations, the selection of the populations of these species as indicators for the achievement of the project's Objective were, arguably and as indicated in the MTE, inappropriate because they are rare or uncommon species and, as a result, they are very difficult to census accurately or with sufficient short-term sensitivity to be used as indicators for the success (or otherwise) of a five-year project. In addition, as K-selected species, any population growth (from a small baseline at the beginning of the project) would be difficult to detect over a five-year project.

27. One additional comment should also be made regarding these species. There is a strong focus in the language of the project documents on the appropriateness of these species because they appear on the national Kazakhstani Red List. It should be remembered that one of the principal raison d'être of GEF funding is to achieve global environmental benefits.

28. The second indicator was the forest coverage in the two focal protected areas for the project: Katon-Karagai National Park and Markakol *Zapovednik*. The project document gives some indication of the appropriateness of this indicator. Of an estimated 1,712,000ha of forest in East Kazakhstan, a maximum of 50,000ha (or 2.9%) is lost every year. However, what the project document does not give is the coverage of forest within these two protected areas and any indication of rates of forest loss in the protected area in the years proceeding the project – and thus, whether the project would be making an impact (or otherwise).

29. In summary, we question the relevance of these indicators and **recommend** that overall project indicators be relevant to the project's intended impact both in the mid- and long-term. We do not believe that there is a problem with repeating Outcome level indicators at the Objective level, if they are relevant to demonstrating project impact. Thus, for example, in the case of the KASE project, alternative Objective level indicators could have been: i) the coverage of effectively managed protected areas (as measured by the legal status, the cumulative area and the METT scores of the protected areas) or ii) any globally important biodiversity, ecosystems and/or ecological processes, previously unprotected or unmanaged that become effectively protected or managed over the course of the project.

30. The five Outcomes that were designed to achieve the above objective and, ultimately, the project's goal were:

31. Outcome 1: "*The Special Protected Area (SPA) network is expanded and PAs management efficiency is improved.*" This Outcome specifically targets a number of the root causes of the threats to biodiversity and the barriers to effective management to protected areas, including: i) the coverage of protected areas within the country in absolute terms but also the exclusion of important habitats at a local level, and ii) the institutional capacity in terms of institutional structuring and operational capacity. The project aimed to overcome these root causes and barriers to effective management of protected areas by expanding protected areas and improving their management (see Table 3).

Table 3. The activities, indicators and baseline figures for the outputs associated with Outcome 1.

	Activities	**Indicator**	**Baseline**
Output 1.1 – New PAs established and existing boundaries altered	Establishing new protected areas	Total protected area coverage	718,517ha in two protected areas
	Altering the boundaries of existing protected areas	Legally defined boundaries of PAs	Existing PA boundaries
	Through these processes, include key habitats	Inclusion of identified key habitats	Key habitats have no PA status
Output 1.2 – Organizational structures, staffing standards and performance accountability improved	Redefining organizational structures	METT scores for two PAs	MZ – 46 KKNP - 47
	Training protected area staff		
	Ensure that PA staff have terms of reference or job descriptions, and that these form the basis of annual performance reviews		
Output 1.3 –	Management plans are		

Operational capacity is enhanced	developed and implemented for each protected area		
	Adequate equipment is provided to ensure that protected area staff can carry out their tasks		
Output 1.4 – Biodiversity information in protected areas is improved	Information on biodiversity of the area is improved		
	Protected areas are provided with methodologies that will enable them to monitor effectively the biodiversity		
	Monitoring stations will be established in the protected areas		

32. From the layout of Table 3, it is immediately apparent that no activities were measured, in the form of indicators, for Outputs 1.2 – 1.4 with the exception of the Monitoring Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT). We believe that despite being outputs (cf. impacts or outcomes), the inclusion of endorsed management plans and annual biodiversity monitoring reports as indicators would have been relevant (and as discussed below, the project delivered on these in any case). Nonetheless, when applied effectively as a management planning tool, as well as a mechanism for measuring improvements in management, on an annual basis, the METT is an effective tool.

33. In terms of the design, there is one further issue. The METT was applied to KKNP and MZ – but not to any of the other protected areas with which the project was involved – specifically West Altai Zapovednik and Ontustyk Zakaznik. While Ontustyk Zakaznik is not fully operational, the METT can still be applied (as indeed progress towards effective management can then be monitored). However, it became apparent that West Altai Zapovednik applies the monitoring mechanism used by the FHC. We strongly **recommend** that the UNDP-CO convenes a meeting with the FHC to come to an agreement about which tool is most effective for motivating effective management and which, thereafter, monitors it efficiently. If need be, one or other can be adapted, or the two merged to form a bespoke monitoring tool for Kazakhstan and, thereafter, adopted by all protected areas in the country. It would probably be most efficient if this work was carried out under the auspices of one of the other UNDP-GEF protected areas projects that is currently under way.

34. Outcome 2: "*Awareness level among the public in the field of biodiversity conservation and PAs is increased and support in all levels within PAs' work on biodiversity conservation is rendered.*" This Outcome was linked to the lack of awareness that was identified in the barriers analysis. Indeed, over the course of the Terminal Evaluation, all interviewees were of the opinion that improving the awareness levels particularly among local communities would result in changes to behaviour.

35. Notwithstanding questions that may emerge about whether improving awareness does actually lead to changes in behaviour, three indicators were identified to measure achievement of this Outcome. The first two focus on measuring the levels of

awareness in adult populations: i) of biodiversity conservation issues and support for its conservation among "various stakeholders" and ii) of protected areas' roles, boundaries and regulations among "indigenous populations" (see Table 4). The third indicator measured the incidence of anthropogenic fires in the protected areas. Even though there were actually no fires over the course of the project (see result section below), the linkage between this result and the awareness that had been created over the course of the project is, arguably, tenuous (although when coupled with improved fire fighting capacity, this should contribute to reducing the incidence of fires).

36. Finally, the groups to be targeted, both in the awareness campaigns as well as in the surveys (undertaken to determine the degree of awareness) are very loosely defined in the description of the activities and, moreover, in the indicators. A more closely defined target group would probably have been warranted, linked directly with the threats, root causes and barriers analysis.

Table 4. The activities, indicators and baseline figures for the outputs associated with Outcome 2

	Activities	**Indicator**	**Baseline**
Output 2.1 – Project Communications Strategy	Prepare and implement a Communications Strategy		
Output 2.2 – Biodiversity awareness raising program developed and implemented & Output 2.3 – Visitor/ community information centres are established*	Raising awareness among all stakeholders; ~~Summer camps for youth~~ ** Prepare and distribute materials Support environmental NGOs to build awareness	Awareness levels of biodiversity conservation issues and support for its conservation among various stakeholders	40% of adults show awareness
		Awareness of PAs' role, boundaries and regulations among indigenous people	30%
		Incidence of human caused fires in PAs	Average number of human caused fires in PAs 2000 – 2005

* Notes: Because the information centres were seen to target local communities directly, this output was moved to become merged in Output 4.2 (see below).

** Indicator deleted in Inception Report

37. Outcome 3: "*Existing legal and institutional framework is enhanced for the purpose of the PAs system strengthening.*" This Outcome was designed to deal with the barrier of conflicting policies and legislation.

Table 5. The activities, indicators and baseline figures for the outputs associated with Outcome 3

	Activities	**Indicator**	**Baseline**
Output 3.1 – Essential enabling legislative and regulatory reforms are facilitated	Review and facilitation of required changes to legislation	Appropriate legislation and regulations	Current obstacles and constraints to effective PA management (additional financing opportunities, tourism regulation and control, no public involvement)
		Annual recurrent costs	External donors: USD

		for PAs' management do not requires additional donor support*	41,000/yr RoK: USD 2 million/ year
~~Output 3.2 – Oblast Akimat PA Advisory Council is established~~ **			
Output 3.3 – Trans-boundary collaboration agreements and conservation programs are formulated and implemented	Bilateral agreements (Russia – RoK) – conservation; border habitat protection; migratory corridors Land use planning; monitoring impacts; information exchange Endangered species conservation plans Ban on trophy export	Collaboration in transboundary territories management	There are no transboundary agreements and programmes

* The MTE recommended deleting this indicator.

** Outputs deleted in Inception Report

38. Legislative and regulatory change is often included in GEF Biodiversity projects but it probably represents one of the most challenging aspects. This is primarily because projects have the ability: i) to review legislation and ii) to recommend changes (and possibly drafting legislation) but, thereafter, actual enactment is subject to the whims of government. In this case, there was further challenge introduced by attempting to get two governments (Russia and RoK) together to sign a transboundary agreement.

39. There is crucial text missing from the logframe text regarding the indicator: "Annual recurrent costs for PAs' management do not requires additional donor support." In the project document, another pivotal phrase is included: "PA budgets benefiting from ecotourism by Yr 5." If this outcome was achieved by the end of the project, it would imply legislative change had taken place.

40. Finally, it should be noted that Output 3.2 was deleted in the Inception Report.

41. Outcome 4: "*Involving of local communities in activities on biodiversity conservation and alternative livelihoods within PAs and buffer zones are being supported.*" The outputs under this outcome were reduced during the Inception Report and some of the indicators were amended following the MTE.

42. The inclusion of output 4.4 *Local Community Conservation Councils are established* remains slightly mysterious even though, in principle and particularly in national parks and zakazniks, these would be beneficial. The involvement of local communities in the development and management of protected areas is not supported within current legislation; altering the legislation to allow for this would sit better in Outcome 3 than here. However, this is also discussed in more depth later in the report.

Table 6. The activities, indicators and baseline figures for the outputs associated with Outcome 4

	Activities	Indicator	Baseline
Output 4.1 – Sustainable livelihood options are facilitated	Links with SGP Demonstration projects	The number of sustainable enterprises initiated or expanded by project support*	None
		Income of enterprises recipient of project support deliver profits in their first year of operation and increased profits (above inflation) in their second year*	KZT 13,000 (USD 121)
~~Output 4.2 – Ecology and guide/ranger training camps for children and youth~~ **			
Output 4.3 – Local NGOs are supported	Establish and support local NGOs for awareness programmes and natural resource management		
~~Output 4.4 – Local Community Conservation Councils are established~~ **		Participation of stakeholders in decision-making processes for PA management	Fragmented and uncoordinated

* Indicators altered following recommendations in MTE

** Outputs deleted in Inception Report

43. Outcome 5: "*Monitoring and evaluation of the project activities are carried out. Cooperation between SPAs is established, the Project positive results and experience are introduced within PAs' work of the RK.*" This outcome pivots primarily around the principle that the portfolio of UNDP-GEF/FHC partnership projects should be scaled-up and replicated across the protected area system of Kazakhstan. In addition, the inclusion of monitoring and evaluation as an output, over and above the "normal" processes, emphasizes it to a greater extent.

Table 7. The activities, indicators and baseline figures for the outputs associated with Outcome 5

	Activities	Indicator	Baseline
Output 5.1 – M&E and adaptive management	M&E carried out Adaptive management employed		
Output 5.2 – Lessons learned and best practices are replicated at the national level	Support establishment and use of management training facility Results disseminated	The number of methods, approaches and lessons for replication have been demonstrated within other PAs in Kazakhstan	None

		The number of methods, approaches and lessons for replication have been demonstrated to other countries	None

44. In conclusion, the design was, in general, relatively straight forward protected areas project with a focus on two protected areas: Katon-Karagai National Park and Markakol Zapovednik with the idea that good practices and lessons learned would be incorporated elsewhere in Kazakhstan's protected area system. There were design issues, some of which were addressed in the Inception Report while others were addressed following recommendations provided in the MTE. As discussed above, some design issues or questions remained.

3.1.1 Role of UNDP-CO

45. The UNDP-CO has a strong and coherent partnership with the FHC of the Ministry of Agriculture. The partnership has led to the development of a coherent conservation – and specifically a protected areas – strategy in which it is envisaged that projects will be developed and implemented in all of the major ecosystems found within Kazakhstan. Already and with funding from GEF, the partnership has covered wetlands (through the "Integrated Conservation of Priority Globally Significant Migratory Bird Wetland Habitat: A Demonstration in Three Sites" project for which the Terminal Evaluation was carried out in 2011), southern montane areas (through the "In-Situ Conservation of Kazakhstan's Mountain Agro-biodiversity" project for which the Terminal Evaluation was also carried out in 2011), steppe (through the "Steppe Conservation and Management" project) and the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion (this the project currently being evaluated). In addition, the partnership is developing a project for desert ecosystems (the implementation of which is due to commence in 2012). The partnership does not only extend to the ecosystem coverage of the protected area system of Kazakhstan but it is also targets different functional aspects of the protected area system. As a consequence, the partnership can incrementally address the various barriers to effective management of protected areas within the system including those such as: i) the policy and legislation framework, ii) the institutional framework and iii) the financial sustainability of the system. This synergy among projects that targets a strengthened protected area system, as a whole, is a cost-effective strategy that is to be commended and, where possible, replicated in other countries. Overall, this places UNDP in a unique and strong position with a fruitful partnership with the FHC.

3.1.2 Stakeholder participation.

46. The project maintained close contact with key stakeholders: the Forestry and Hunting Committee (FHC), the Ministry of the Environmental Protection, the UNDP-CO, the East Kazakhstan Oblast Akimat, the rayon, rural and municipal akimats, NGOs, schools and libraries, the private sector, and local communities. The project also worked with academic organizations and government departments for different aspects of the project's implementation. In addition to these groups within Kazakhstan, the project developed relations, through the Regional Steering Committee (RSC), with counterparts in Russia to nurture the transboundary process

along. Furthermore, the project formed a strong partnership with the GEF SGP; the SGP linked in with NGO and alternative livelihood activities.

47. In addition to this, as discussed in the results section below, awareness both of the project and of the protected areas, as measured in an independent evaluation, reached saturation.

48. In summary, stakeholder participation appears to have been excellent. The only caveat to this was that once the Oblast Akimat PA Advisory Council and the Local Community Conservation Councils were deleted from the project's logframe, the project worked with these groups to a high degree but did not find innovative mechanisms by which to integrate them to into PA management or conservation processes. For example, while the legislation does not allow for formal councils, the project could have formed (initially) informal forums that brought together stakeholders at the different levels (oblast and rayon, respectively) that, in the long term, would have demonstrated their effectiveness (or otherwise) to the FHC. Thus, we find that stakeholder participation has been **Satisfactory**.

3.2 Project Implementation

49. The project was implemented as one of an ongoing portfolio of projects within the partnership between the FHC and the UNDP-CO. Indeed, the current Terminal Evaluation is the third carried out by the UNDP-CO this year. The lessons for these projects were incorporated into the project design, for example, there was poor inter-sectoral coordination (resulting in an inter-sectoral Project Steering Committee).

3.2.1 Implementation modalities and project management

50. The project was implemented under the National Execution (NEX) modality through the Ministry of Agriculture and implemented by the Forestry and Hunting Committee (FHC). However, with the exception of a float that was granted to the PIU for small costs (that were approved through the annual workplans and accounted normally), all contractual payments were made directly by the UNDP-CO. As such, the UNDP-CO managed all project funds, including budgetary planning, monitoring, revisions, disbursements, record keeping, reporting and auditing. In conclusion, the project was implemented under a NEX modality with UNDP making direct payments. Unlike in other places around the globe, this arrangement was in no way an obstacle or barrier to efficient implementation of the project; on the contrary, this has been a very effective mechanism for implementation.

51. Project oversight was carried out by a Project Steering Committee (PSC) that was comprised of ten members drawn from national and oblast government bodies. The PSC was chaired by the first Vice-Chairman of the FHC, Mr Igor Koval, while the PIU provided secretariat services to the PSC. The MTE recommended that the PSC be expanded to include local representatives and, possibly, representatives from NGOs. With the exception of the NGO representation (primarily because of a conflict of interest as they were recipients of funding from the project and/or from the SGP), this was successfully implemented.

52. Two PSC meetings were held per year throughout the duration of the project. One of these (the winter meeting) was held in Astana, while the other (the summer meeting) was held in Ust-Kamenogorsk. This led to a low attendance of the summer meetings and the members of the PSC were attended by people designated to represent them. This was also noted in the MTE. In ongoing and future projects, we

recommend that all meetings take place in Astana (thereby facilitating the attendance of all members of the PSC) but that the PIU organize two or three field visits for the members of the PSC. Such visits may be timed around one-third of the way through the project (thereby preparing the members of the PSC for the MTE) and in the final quarter of the project (so that they can see the impacts of the project and prepare themselves for the Terminal Evaluation).

53. The project's activities were implemented by the PIU and, where appropriate, by contracted persons or organizations. All contracts and procurement were awarded after a competitive tendering process, adhering to UNDP procurement rules. The PIU prepared all tender documents and terms of reference and the UNDP-CO, through the direct payment modality, was the contracting agency on contracts.

54. At the republican level, the project, through the NPM, had an excellent working relationship with the FHC and the members of the PSC. In addition, the PIU formed good working relationships with the Akimats at both the Oblast and Rayon levels. The representatives of the Akimats who were met over the course of the Terminal Evaluation mission displayed respect for the NPM and his team, and knowledge of the project and its objectives.

55. The PIU was established in Ust-Kamenogorsk; the city was the hub for project activities, with different sites at the end of different roads that radiated from the hub. While this was logical, it did prove problematic – something that was also noted by the MTE. The area is vast, the distances huge and the logistics of visiting the areas – particularly in winter – challenging. For five months of the year, from mid-November to mid-April, inclement weather and primarily heavy snowfalls can prevent visits to the field. Indeed, we could not visit Markakol Zapovednik during the Terminal Evaluation mission for this very reason. In summary, by achieving what they have with only a three-month extension to the project, the PIU has done an outstanding job.

56. However, because the PIU was located at some distance from the demonstration sites, the MTE recommended that the project employ a Liaison Officer to be based in the field. In the event, the project hired two local people to fill this position and this proved useful and cost-effective. Herein lies a **lesson**: the project must have local representation, on the ground, to ensure follow-up of activities and to facilitate cost-effective implementation. The Liaison Officers in the latter stages of this project, for example, i) managed to distribute all awareness materials, ii) organize meetings well ahead of the arrival of the team and iii) ensure follow-up of the activities.

Item	Rating	Comment
IA & EA Execution		
Overall quality of implementation & execution	**HS**	The implementation may have taken a little time to become fully focused and may have become a little distracted with the "German Project," but with corrective measures applied after the MTE, the implementation has been excellent.
Implementation Agency Execution	**HS**	The FHC, as the IA, has provided full support for the project, committing itself to ensuring sustainability of the results and achievements. It provided the project the space with which to carry out its tasks to its fullest capacity
Executing Agency Execution*	**HS**	UNDP, particularly in the latter stages of the project, provided excellent support for the project. The implementation was NEX with direct payments by UNDP. In no way was this a barrier to project implementation; on the contrary, this was

		an efficient mechanism for implementation. The project was monitored by the UNDP-CO and by the UNDP Regional Office in Bratislava, receiving useful support and feedback. The PIU team were trained in UNDP procurement and accounting processes (and use of ATLAS).

*While there may be some confusion about nomenclature, UNDP is taken as the Executing Agency for this analysis.

3.2.2 PIU and project staff

57. The composition of the PIU changed through the course of the project and it was a source of considerable concern and focus during the MTE. Again, the Terminal Evaluation took pains to understand the source of that concern and to determine whether appropriate changes had been taken to ensure that project implementation in the latter stages of the project proceeded in a timely, efficient and effective manner.

58. The NPM changed in the early stages of project implementation but thereafter has remained constant:

Iskander Mirkhashimov January – May 2007

Vladimir Cheranev July 2007 – March 2012

59. As noted in the MTE, there was no overlap between the two NPMs and thus there is no information as to why the initial NPM left.

60. There was a turnover of staff over the course of the project's implementation but not beyond what might be expected (Table 8). The staff turnover can also be explained by the requirements of the additional funding provided by the German Government.

Table 8. The staff employed by the PIU over the implementation of the project, their positions and their duration of employment in the PIU.

Name	Position	Period of service
Rosa Kumargazhina	PR and Awareness-building Expert	Jan – Dec 2007
Natalia Blokh	PR and Awareness-building Expert	June 2008 – Dec 2009
Oleg Chugunkov	PR and Awareness-building Expert	March 2010 – Nov 2011
Meruyert Sarsembayeva	Economics Expert, Outcome 4	Jan 2007 – July 2011
Olga Klimanova	Social Expert, Outcome 4	Jan 2007 – Dec 2009
Akmaral Agazhayeva	Social Expert, Outcome 4	Feb – Sept 2010
Agadyl Sundutpayev	Biodiversity and Protected Areas Expert, Outcome 1	Jan 2007 – Dec 2008
Dina Almatova	Biodiversity and Protected Areas Expert, Outcome 1	Aug 2009 – Nov 2011
Olga Sushkova	Financial & Administrative Assistant	Feb 2009 – Dec 2010
Ardak Sailaubayeva	Financial & Administrative Assistant; Procurement Expert	Jan 2007 – Nov 2008; Nov 2008 – Dec 2010
Aigul Januzakova	Financial and Administrative Assistant	June 2011 – March 2012

61. It was notable that the MTE found that there was significant discord among the PIU team and the report dwells on this as a potential obstacle for the implementation

of the project. At the stage of the Terminal Evaluation, we noted that none of the poor relationships that were described in the MTE had persisted; on the contrary, the team appeared to be strong, cohesive and effective. However, neither of the two members of staff who had previously expressed concern about the NPM were still employed within the PIU.

3.2.3 Adherence to logframe

62. The PIU adhered strongly to the logframe as a guide to the implementation of the project. In addition, the logframe was used as the principal means of monitoring and evaluating the project. However, there were significant misunderstandings and confusions at the MTE regarding the logframe in use. Indeed, the MTE used the original logframe from the Project Document for the evaluation despite the changes that had been made to it during the Inception Report. At the beginning of the Terminal Evaluation, pains were taken to understand the root of the misunderstandings and to ensure that the Terminal Evaluation was based on the logframe i) that the PIU used for implementation and ii) that was agreed, with amendments, by the PSC over the course of the implementation of the project.

63. In the case of the original Outputs 3.2 and 4.4 (the establishment of the Oblast Akimat PA Advisory Council and the Local Community Conservation Councils, respectively, which we note were deleted in the Inception Report), that the specific language logframe proved to be a hindrance rather than a guide. In principle, the involvement of the oblast akimats and local communities in protected area management has widespread support in Kazakhstan. However, the project document and, more specifically, the logframe was too specific in its language. If the language had been looser – say, "*find and trial mechanisms to involve oblast akimats and local communities in planning, establishing and managing protected areas and demonstrate the effectiveness of these mechanisms for more formal adoption and replication in the protected area system*," then, first, we are sure that the reception would have been positive and we would have positive results to replicate elsewhere in the system. As it turned out, the project *did* find mechanisms for involving both the oblast akimats and local communities, to some extent, but once these Outputs were altered or removed, through the PIU's own initiative and intuition.

64. Finally, it was notable that not all outputs were measured in the logical framework by indicators and targets (see Tables 3-7 above). Because the project retained a sharp focus on the achievement of the targets, this may have led to a slightly uneven implementation across the Outcomes.

3.2.4 The Sub-Project financed by the International Climate Initiative of the BMU of Germany: "Expansion of the protected areas network for the conservation of the Altai-Sayan Region"

65. A note, at this stage, must be made of what became to be known as the "German Project" by the PIU. Once the project had already begun, the Government of Germany made funds available for a project "Expansion of the Protected Areas Network for the Conservation of the Altai-Sayan Region" (Project ID: 08_II_039_KZZ_M_Altai). This project began in February 2009 and was completed by June 2010. The value of the grant, specifically to FHC, was € 1,869,181. Because of the synergy between this grant and the UNDP-GEF KASE project, the UNDP-CO and FHC agreed with the Government of Germany that the PIU implement this grant.

The German grant was implemented under a separate agreement, with separate procurement and management processes including separate workplans and budgeting. The members of staff necessary for the implementation of certain aspects of the German grant were also recruited separately. Overall, there are three conclusions that can be drawn from this. First, while slightly unconventional, this represents opportunistic, adaptive management that resulted in improved cost efficiency. Second, the injection of the German grant, with its specific focus on procurement of fire-fighting equipment and additional contribution to expansion of the protected area system, significantly boosted the profile of the project, particularly at a local level within the East Kazakhstan Oblast and the Rayons surrounding the protected areas. Finally, had the "German Project" been implemented by another team instead of by the UNDP-GEF PIU, it may well have led to confusion, fatigue and possible alienation of the stakeholders – particularly the local communities. However, on the flip side, the project appears to have distracted the focus on the team from their 'regular' GEF activities and applied significant pressure on the team. In conclusion, while there have been significant benefits to the integrated implementation of the UNDP-GEF funding and the German grant (primarily cost-efficiency, effectiveness and raising the profile of the project), it has not been without its costs.

3.2.5 Financial Planning

66. The project was funded by GEF with substantial co-finance, including both cash and in-kind co-finance from the Government of Kazakhstan (see Table 9).

Table 9. The value of the KASE project including the funding from GEF and sources of co-finance and leveraged funds (both cash and in-kind).

Type	Donor	Value (USD)
UNDP-managed grants	GEF	2,421,000
	Govt. of Germany	2,418,000
	UNDP	40,000
Partner-managed grants	Govt. of Kazakhstan	9,213,000
	Eco-Altai (private sector)	45,000
	Guardians of Altai (NGO)	12,000
In-kind donations	Government of Kazakhstan	6,400,000
	Ecology Tourist Centre (NGO)	187,000
	Eco-Altai (private sector)	160,000
	ZUBR Consulting Centre (private sector)	152,000
	Guardians of Altai (NGO)	63,000
	"Ecobiocentre" (private sector)	57,000
	UN Agency	10,000
TOTAL		**21,178,000**

67. The implementation of the project followed usual UNDP-GEF procedures with the workplan and associated budget being examined and endorsed by the PSC each

year. The annual budget for GEF funds, by Outcome, with associated expenditure is shown in Table 10.

Table 10. The budget (as it appears in the annual, approved workplan) and actual expenditure, by Outcome and funding source, for the project. Note that 2011 expenditure has not been added; this partially accounts for the low actual expenditure.

	GEF			Co-Finance			Total		
	Budgeted	Actual	%	Budgeted	Actual	%	Budgeted	Actual	%
Outcome1	1,147,223.00	850,600.02	74						
Outcome2	359,143.00	293,226.63	82						
Outcome3	114,040.00	20,424.56	18						
Outcome4	634,546.00	449,586.90	71						
Outcome5	527,478.00	484,639.61	92						
Total	2,782,430.00	2,098,477.72	76						

68. The planned budget was not evenly distributed by Outcome (see Figure 1). Indeed, 41% of the project's budget was allocated to Outcome 1; in contrast, Outcome 3 accounted for only 4% of the project's budget.

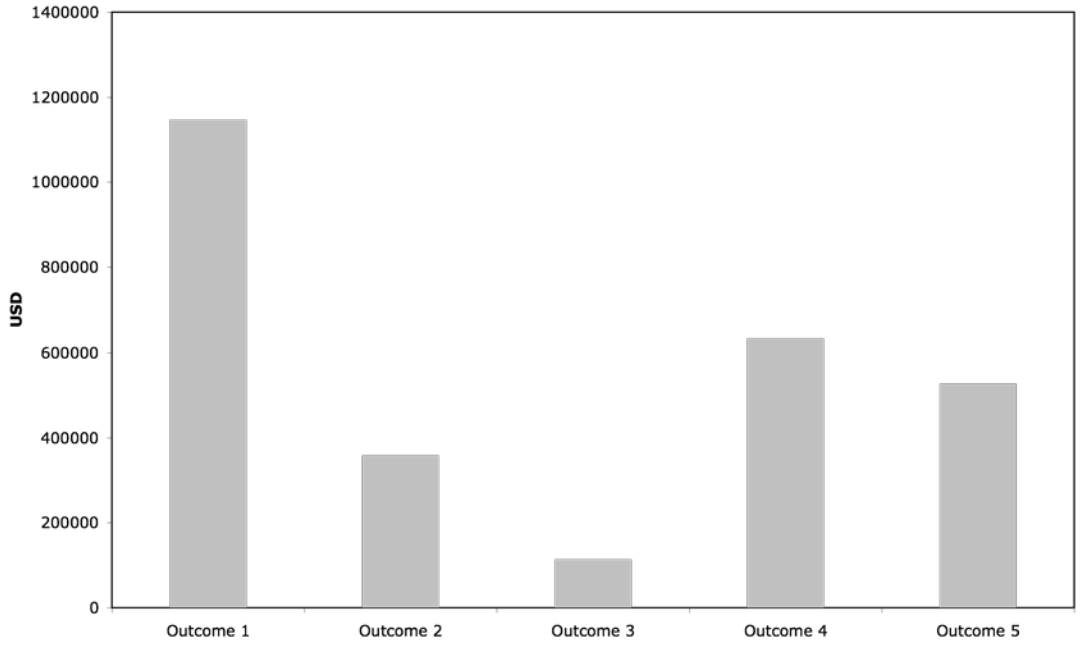

Figure 1. The distribution of budgeted funds across the different outcomes.

69. In terms of implementation of the budget, the project consistently underspent the approved budget (see Figure 2). Because Figure 2 represents the total expenditure against the total budget, it hides the fact that this was not always the case across all outcomes and across all years. For example, expenditure on outcomes 2 and 4 in the first year of project implementation (2007) was significantly overspent relative to the approved budget (see Table 11).

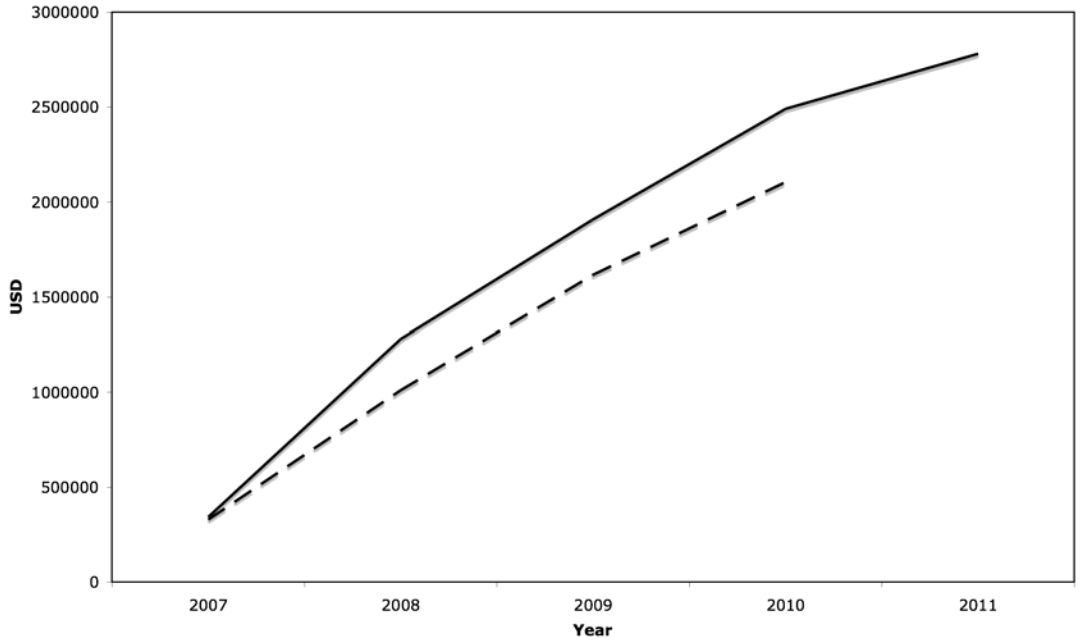

Figure 2. The cumulative actual expenditure (dashed line) relative to the approved budget (solid line) illustrating that across all Outcomes, the project consistently underspent its budget.

70. The monitoring of the co-financing situation has been poor and the co-financing situation, at the time of Terminal Evaluation, remained unknown. Rather than try to gather the data just before the Terminal Evaluation, it would have been more useful for the project to monitor the co-financing situation throughout the project's implementation. This would, first, ensure that these data were always available and, second, accustom the partners and co-financers to the fact that this information is necessary and needed.

71. The project was audited by an external independent auditor (Febel, Werner & Schnittke GmbH) for the period 01 January – 31 December 2009 and from 01 January – 31 December 2010. The audit reports from both of these years were positive and their analysis indicated that the Statements of the Cash Position and of the Assets and Equipment were presented "fairly, in all material respects."

Table 11. The detailed annual expenditure of GEF funds, by year and by outcome, relative to the approved budget.

	2007			2008			2009		
	Budgeted	**Actual**	**%**	**Budgeted**	**Actual**	**%**	**Budgeted**	**Actual**	**%**
1	142220.00	115188.50	81	389127.00	293860.35	76	254452.00	232954.68	92
2	30420.00	39115.59	129	127858.00	95387.88	75	80768.00	78211.76	97
3	20500.00	11868.52	58	20800.00	6596.18	32	21000.00	1384.13	7
4	57726.00	81313.32	141	254940.00	153760.73	60	173416.00	112133.99	65
5	90280.00	81596.00	90	144645.00	131774.73	91	99516.00	180253.52	181
Total	341146.00	329081.93	96	937370.00	681379.87	73	629152.00	605474.31	96

	2010			2011			Total		
	Budgeted	**Actual**	**%**	**Budgeted**	**Actual**	**%**	**Budgeted**	**Actual**	**%**
1	260924.00	208596.49	80	100500.00			1147223.00	850600.02	74
2	83554.00	80511.40	96	36543.00			359143.00	293226.63	82
3	33900.00	575.73	2	17840.00			114040.00	20424.56	18
4	112124.00	102378.86	91	36340.00			634546.00	449586.90	71
5	91237.00	91015.36	100	101800.00			527478.00	484639.61	92
Total	581739.00	488199.60	84	291323.00			2782430.00	2104135.71	76

3.2.6 Cost effectiveness

72. The project has adopted a number of approaches to improve cost-effectiveness. First, it is part of a portfolio of projects that fall under the UNDP-CO/FHC partnership. This partnership has adopted a systemic approach through a number of projects. One aim of the partnership is to ensure synergy among the projects such that they do not only conserve the biodiversity of the ecosystem of their focus but that they also contribute to enhancing aspects of the protected area system. In addition, where one project leaves off, another takes up the baton to ensure that issues are addressed rather than left half-completed. This complementarity among the projects demonstrates significant planning between UNDP-CO and FHC, and significant cost-effectiveness.

73. A second demonstration of cost-effectiveness by the UNDP-CO and the project was their willingness to assume responsibility for implementing the "German Project."

74. Third, the NPM was disallowed from travelling from Astana to Ust-Kamenogorsk by train. This takes over 30 hours (cf. the 2 hours by commercial aircraft) on the grounds that it was not effective use of his time.

75. Fourth, the project followed the usual UNDP rules for procurement of project personnel, studies, consultants, and materials and equipment such that cost-effectiveness was assured.

76. In summary, the project has been cost effective and adaptive in its use of resources to achieve the targeted outcomes and outputs.

3.2.7 Monitoring and evaluation

77. Monitoring and evaluation, in the design of the project, was sufficiently important to be part of Outcome 5 (rather than as a usual part of the project's implementation as it is in some many other projects). The budget allocated for M&E was also sufficient.

78. Following the MTE, the monitoring and evaluation of the project appears to have adequate. The UNDP-CO and members of the UNDP Regional Centre in Bratislava regularly visited the project. The project was otherwise monitored by the PSC and the PIU produced all necessary reports.

79. There are only two critical comments that can be made about the monitoring and evaluation. The first was the lack of focus on the impacts, both planned and unintended, that the project may have been having. In other words, the monitoring and evaluation focused largely on the achievement of outputs and checking off the indicators – without great analysis of whether the outcomes or whether the intended impacts on biodiversity conservation were being achieved. This could be further extended to the relative lack of linkage between some of the activities (e.g., awareness creation) and biodiversity conservation. The second is the lack of monitoring of the partners' co-financing situation. As a result of this, the status of co-finance expenditure, at the stage of the Terminal Evaluation, remains unknown.

80. In summary, the Terminal Evaluation finds the monitoring and evaluation of the project to be **Satisfactory**.

Item	Rating	Comment
M&E		
Overall quality of M&E	**S**	See comments below.

M&E design at project start-up	**HS**	The M&E design appeared to be adequate, with satisfactory monitoring events in place.
M&E plan Implementation	**S**	The most satisfactory aspect of the M&E implementation was that the MTE (obviously itself part of the M&E plan implementation) spurred the project and UNDP i) to focus more strongly on some of the aspects of the project that were otherwise lagging and ii) to make adjustments to some of the design aspects of the project. In short and despite the misunderstandings, the MTE was an effective catalyst to effective project delivery. However, on the other hand, that it was necessary at all, speaks of a less than satisfactory beginning to the project in so far as M&E was concerned. Following on from the MTE, the support provided by the UNDP-CO and UNDP Regional Office in Bratislava was excellent.

3.3 Project Results

81. As the project approaches its closure, it has achieved the majority of its objectives as measured by the indicators for the different Outcomes and Outputs. Indeed, it has done this and more. Under each outcome and output, the project has delivered more than simply the results as measured by the indicators.

3.3.1 Attainment of objectives

82. The project's objective was: "*To enhance the sustainability and conservation effectiveness of Kazakhstan's National PA system through demonstrating sustainable and replicable approaches to conservation management in the protected areas in the Kazakhstani sector of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion*."

83. Notwithstanding the issues surrounding the selection of indicators for the overall objective of the project (as discussed above), within the partnership between the FHC and UNDP-CO, the project has demonstrated sustainable and replicable approaches to establishment, development and management of protected areas in the Kazakhstani sector of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion. The project has yielded results, some outstanding and many positive lessons learned for institutionalization within the FHC and for incorporation into ongoing and future development and GEF-funded projects in Kazakhstan.

84. The analysis of the five outcomes were as follows:

85. Outcome 1: "*The Special Protected Area (SPA) network is expanded and PAs management efficiency is improved.*" This outcome received the lion's share of the attention and funding ($913,982 budgeted from GEF funding), and, partly as a consequence, it has been very successful.

86. Output 1.1: *New protected areas are established and the boundaries of existing ones are adjusted to improve their long-term conservation effectiveness.*

87. The project has successfully established one protected area complex: the Ontustyk Altai Zakaznik (of a total of 197,623ha), which, in turn, is comprised of discrete four areas (Kabinsky of 65,759ha; Bast-Teretki of 17,246ha; Kaldjir of 43,851ha; and Kizil-tas of 53,833ha). The project carried out the process to establish this protected area complex from scratch: i) carrying out the surveys to identify important areas, ii) carrying out the feasibility study, which justified the values of each component of the

complex, proposed boundaries, determined the protected area category, determined the resources, both human and financial, necessary to manage the area effectively, included an infrastructure master plan (thus, those required for tourism as well as for management of the area), and iii) submitted the feasibility study to the FHC. The feasibility study has been approved by the Scientific Board of the FHC (Board Meeting Minutes #2 of 18 November 2009) and the protected area complex has been included in the pipeline for the final legal steps in 2012. The Government of Kazakhstan has approved the establishment of Ontustyk Zakaznik (Resolution No. 924 of 10 September 2010) and the functional establishment has been scheduled for 2012 under the *Zhysyl Damu* (or "green growth") programme. Thus, the allocation of adequate financial and human resources to the development and subsequent management of the area will commence in 2012. Despite this guarantee, the evaluators still **recommend** that in the final four months of the project, the combined partnership of the PIU, the FHC and the UNDP-CO remains vigilant and takes every opportunity to keep the momentum on this initiative going until the process is complete.

88. In addition to Ontustyk Altai Zakaznik, the project has worked to establish two other protected areas: Tarbagatai National Park and the Ecological Corridor that links Katon-Karagai National Park, West Altai Zapovednik and the Low Turgusun Zakaznik. The Tarbagatai National Park (of 138,000ha) is of less relevance to this evaluation because it falls outside of the area defined as the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion but the project has prepared all the documents to allow the GoK to take the formal legal steps to establish this new protected area; these, too, have been approved by the Scientific Board of the FHC (Board Meeting Minutes #3 of 19 November 2009). However, quite when the formal and final legal steps will take place remains a question because, at present, the government is committed and adhering to a policy to legally establish one new protected area per year.

89. With regard to the Ecological Corridor (of 379,800ha), again, the project has prepared all the documents to allow the government to formally establish this protected area. However, there are differences with the Ecological Corridor. First, it is a new category of protected area, the concept of which was developed under the auspices of the project. Second, unlike other protected area categories, it requires legal endorsement at the oblast (as opposed to republican) level. Thus, the project submitted all the relevant documents to the departments within the oblast akimat. This proceeded successfully but a number of comments were received from the akimat's department of justice. Following a further consultation with the land management committee, the documents have been accordingly adjusted and await re-submission through each of the relevant akimat departments for final approval. The project evaluators strongly **recommend** that the PIU works to secure all approvals and agreements regarding appropriate human and financial resources for the management of the Ecological Corridor before the project closes on 31 March 2012.

90. The second aspect of output 1.1 was the alteration of existing boundaries. Following appropriate studies, only the boundaries of Markakol Zapovednik were altered. The alteration was to incorporate the breeding areas of the Altai lenok *Brachymystax lenok* in the Kalzhir river into the zapovednik. This process is complete and approved (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan Decree No. 1214 of 11 December 2007) and has resulted in a 27,931ha expansion of the protected area.

91. A further step taken by the project under this output was the establishment of buffer zones surrounding Katon-Karagai National Park and Markakol zapovednik of 46,774.1ha and 61,437.5ha, respectively. The buffer zones were approved at the oblast level.

Figure 3. This illustrates two things: i) the degree of participation in project processes (all these people were invovled and signed off on the buffer zones) and ii) the lengths to which the project went to secure approvals.

92. In summary, the project has resulted in a total of 916,132ha of protected area coverage in the project area (without including the yet to be approved Ecological Corridor and also without the approved buffer zones even though human activities in the buffer zones is regulated). This is an increase of 197,615ha from the baseline coverage of 718,517ha (an increase of 27.5%). Once the Ecological Corridor (of 379,800ha) is approved and included in this total, the gain in protected area coverage is obviously significantly greater.

93. Through these steps (i.e., the formation of the Ontustyk Altai Zakaznik and the Ecological Corridor, and the expansion of the Markakol Zapovednik) and on the basis of scientific analyses, the project has fulfilled the other aspect of output 1.1, namely, the inclusion of key habitats.

94. Output 1.2. *Organizational structures, staffing standards and performance accountability are improved.* Under this output, the project provided extensive

training for the protected area staff. For example, for the staff of Katon Karagai National Park, training included:

- Training for PA rangers "Teaching the methodology of conducting the census of the snow leopard and argali".
- Training for PA rangers "Training to use camera traps" - 5 persons.
- Training for PA rangers as part of the workshop "Monitoring of snow leopard groupings: methods, planning field works, installing camera traps, interpretation of the data obtained" - 5 persons.
- Training for the PA staff at the certified (licensed) courses "Introduction to ArcGIS I (for ArcView 9, ArcEditor 9 and Arclnfo 9). Introduction to ArcGIS II (for ArcView 9, ArcEditor 9 and Arclnfo 9)" - 3 persons.
- Organizing trainings on how to develop PA management plans - 3 trainings.
- Training for the PA rangers "Keeping records (documents) and rules for making protocols".
- Training for fire fighting vehicle drivers - 30 persons.
- Training for the heads (leaders) of firefighting groups - 25 persons.

95. A similar list of training was carried out for Markakol zapovednik. Training was also provided to West Altai zapovendik.

96. However, some of the activities under this out proved the most challenging of those of Outcome 1. The project did provide advice to the protected areas on organizational structures (which were certainly adopted by West Altai Zapovednik); they provided support, through the management planning processes, to develop job descriptions for the staff, and there was discussion regarding the staffing standards and performance accountability (primarily using the FHC's own performance accountability), but it remained unclear as to how fully these were being adopted and implemented by the protected areas. This may also be coupled with the monitoring and evaluation processes of the management plans themselves. If there is inadequate monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the management plans, unrelated parameters (such as the personality and strengths of the protected area directors) will become the variable that decides whether or not the management plans are effectively implemented.

97. There are certainly challenges that protected areas face in recruiting well-qualified personnel. An independent analysis undertaken (though not by the project) of the salary-levels in all organizations of the civil service in Kazakhstan showed that protected area staff working for FHC were the lowest paid civil servants in the country. In addition, there is a general trend of young people moving from rural areas as they gravitate towards urban centres. The result has been that the recruits for protected areas have tended to be the least qualified people. One anecdotal example was a ranger that the mission met in the West Altai Zapovednik. When asked why he had opted to work as a ranger for the zapovednik, he replied that it was simply because he had lost his job with the zinc mines (on health grounds) and could not find other forms of employment.

98. These are issues that were identified as barriers to effective management of protected areas in the project document. The FHC and UNDP-CO remain aware of

the challenges that the issues present and for long-term sustainability of the protected area system will continue to work to overcome.

99. Output 1.3. *Operational capacity is enhanced.* Here the activities included: i) developing management plans for the protected areas and ii) provision of equipment to ensure that lack of equipment is not a barrier to the protected areas in fulfilling their management responsibilities. The project delivered, with no reservations, on the output.

100. Each of the protected areas now has a fully operational management plan in place. These management plans are written to international standards and will provide an excellent basis for managing the protected areas for the coming five years. In addition, each of the management plans has been approved by the FHC for implementation. One particular area in which the project proved most helpful was the preparation of budgets and their justification. This has significantly empowered the protected areas as they can now develop accurate and meaningful budgets which they can successfully defend when they have to present them to the FHC.

101. The monitoring of the implementation of the management plans currently requires a protected areas to submit the sixth-month, ninth-month and annual reports (thus, three reports per year) to the FHC; the reports describe their activities with the FHC verifying whether these activities were in line with the management plan and how efficiently they were performed.

102. In addition to the management plans, the project also produced a zonation plan for Katon-Karagai National Park. The plan separated out five zones including i) those of zapovednik (i.e., strict nature reserve) status and ii) areas that allow for tourist access including eight tourist routes.

103. In addition, the project delivered all equipment to allow the protected area staff to carry out their tasks (see Table 1 in Annex 5). The delivery of fire-fighting equipment has been a particular success. Not only has it allowed the fire-fighters to play an important role in preventing or reducing the impact of forest fires, but also i) the delivery of the fire-fighting equipment significantly improved the profile of the project among all stakeholders, ii) allowed collaboration and cooperation among akimat departments (e.g., protected areas, emergency and land management) and iii) facilitated local collaboration and cooperation as the fire-fighting teams will assist neighbours with fires.

104. The model of fire fighting that was developed and implemented by the project has been one of its principal successes to date and the model has already been replicated to 24 protected areas in the country.

105. Output 1.4. *Biodiversity information in protected areas is improved.* The activities identified under this output included: i) addressing gaps in key information, ii) focusing on building information on indicator and rare or threatened species. Furthermore, the project has aspirations of developing an ecoregion-wide system of biodiversity monitoring (thus, in collaboration with counterparts in Mongolia and Russia) and an ecosystem-based monitoring programme in the protected areas.

106. Over the project's life, a significant volume of information has been collected, monitoring equipment (including camera traps for monitoring species such as snow leopards) has been delivered and personnel have been trained in monitoring techniques. The collected information has led to the development of a GIS-database. Activities included: i) carrying out an aerial survey of wild ungulates; ii) building an

inventory of Kazakhstani Red List bird species in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion, iii) assessing the fish resources of the area; and iv) mapping snow leopard habitat. A full list of publications produced by the project is found in Annex 4.

107. The project created the basis for ecosystem-based monitoring. In order to do so, the project took the ecosystem-based monitoring system and database that had been developed by the UNDP-GEF project "*Integrated Conservation of Priority Globally Significant Migratory Bird Wetland Habitat: A Demonstration in Three Sites*" and replicated it for the Altai-Sayan project. Thus, at present, the monitoring databases have been established for Katon-Karagai National Park, Markakol zapovednik and West Altai zapovednik; the protected area have been trained to collect data and enter the data into databases; ecosystem maps of the protected areas were produced; and a species handbook was produced. The development of ecosystem-based monitoring was supported by the government and, as a consequence, these activities are expected to be sustainable.

108. However, the project may not have taken this quite as far as they might have. One obvious example is the fact that the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion is the watershed for two of the world's largest rivers – the Ob and Yenisey (which account for 40% of the river flow into the Artic Ocean), with the Yenisey's largest tributary, the Upper Irtysh, arising in Kazakhstan. In addition, research has shown that the glaciers of the Altai-Sayan are shrinking (a loss of 16.4% and 18.1% in volume from 1952 – 2000[1]). Yet in the region (and in the project) there has been little focus on watershed management – even around Lake Markakol which forms the core of the Markakol zapovednik. In addition, despite the predominant threat of forest fires and the project's focus on fire fighting in the important forests that are harboured within the ecoregion, the project did not explore the possibilities of monitoring the extent of the forests using remote-sensing technology.

109. The lack of depth of ecosystem- or landscape-level data apparently reflects the situation in the country (and as such, the UNDP-GEF projects are providing demonstrations of the usefulness of this type of planning/monitoring). While we appreciate that the UNDP-CO/FHC partnership has been taking an ecosystem approach to developing biodiversity projects in the country, we **recommend** that the UNDP-CO/FHC incorporate ecosystem- and landscape-level planning and management into the other projects that are still ongoing or are being planned.

110. Outcome 2: "*Awareness level among the public in the field of biodiversity conservation and PAs is increased and support in all levels within PAs' work on biodiversity conservation is rendered.*"

111. Output 2.1. *The project Communications Strategy is developed and implemented.* The Communication Strategy that was prepared and implemented by the project appeared to be excellent.

112. The project, the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion and the conservation of its biodiversity appeared in numerous publications (including national and regional newspapers) and on a number of television spots in the news. The results of the project have been more than adequately disseminated.

[1] Nikitin, S., A. Surazakov & V. Aizen (2009) Area and volume of Altai-Sayan glaciers. Proceedings of an *International Workshop devoted to Climatic, Environmental, Land cover-Land use Change Studies at High Elevation*. Bishkek, Kyrgyr Republic, 9-15 September 2009.

113. Output 2.2. *Biodiversity awareness raising programme is developed and implemented.* Notwithstanding any questions that may arise about whether improving awareness actually leading to changes in behaviour that are necessary for conservation impacts (as previously discussed), the project has made significant impacts on the awareness with regard knowledge of and support for biodiversity conservation issues, and knowledge of protected area roles, boundaries and regulations. Therefore, by the stage of the Terminal Evaluation, recognition of the importance of biodiversity conservation increased from an initial level of 27.5% to 99.6% of the adult population, while community support for protected areas' activities in biodiversity conservation had risen from 27.5% to 85% of the adult population. Similarly, knowledge of the protected areas' boundaries and regulations had increased among the local communities from initial levels of 24% of surveyed people to 89% of surveyed people by the end of the project (see Table 12). It is notable that the awareness levels at the end of the project were assessed by independent national consultants.

Table 12. Impacts of the awareness campaigns among the stakeholder groups, as measured by the project and, in Year 5, by an independent assessor.

Parameter	Year 1	Year 3	Year 5
Recognized importance of biodiversity conservation	27.5%	62.5%	99.6%
Supported protected areas' activities	27.5%		85%
Knowledge of PA boundaries and regulations	24%	65%	89%

114. In conclusion, the project has outperformed its targets in raising awareness. It remains to be seen whether these changes in awareness actually lead to either people changing their behaviour such that their impacts on biodiversity are minimized or, for those that previously had limited impacts, they maintain these minimal impacts on biodiversity. While the evaluators did not wish to display their scepticism, everyone that was interviewed over the course of the Terminal Evaluation mission was positive that these results would bear fruit and have long-term positive impacts on biodiversity conservation in the region.

115. Output 2.3. *Visitor/community information centres are established.* The feasibility study for the establishment of the visitor and community information centres in Katon-Karagai National Park and Markakol zapovednik, respectively, took place and the buildings in which the information centres will be housed were identified. As the project approaches its closure, the furniture and capital equipment that have been used in the PIU offices in Ust-Kamenogorsk will be transported to furnish the information centres.

116. In the final four months of the project, the remaining members of the PIU will have to work hard to ensure that these information centres are not only furnished and functional but also that the relevant people within the protected area staff, including the directors, take ownership of the information centres such that they are thereafter used to their full capacity. This may require some level of training and we **recommend** that the project consider retaining the current PR and Awareness Building Expert to assist with ensuring that the project delivers on this output satisfactorily by the end of the project.

117. Outcome 3: "*Existing legal and institutional framework is enhanced for the purpose of the PAs system strengthening.*" This Outcome was designed to deal with the barrier of conflicting policies and legislation.

118. Output 3.1. *Essential enabling legislative and regulatory reforms are facilitated.* As previously noted, ensuring that legislative and regulatory reforms are enacted by closure of a project often represents a significant challenge in projects such as these. However, the current project benefits significantly from the strength of the partnership between the UNDP-CO and the FHC and by being one of a portfolio of projects that has been developed and implemented under this partnership.

119. Therefore, in coordination with the other projects, a number of studies have been undertaken, with their respective outputs. Among these have been proposed amendments to existing laws and regulations that have been submitted to the FHC, including:

- Guidelines for Financial Staff of Nature Conservation Institutions, 2008. This was a non-binding, advisory document regarding the problems encountered by Financial Staff of protected areas.
- Report "Analysis of the Current Legislation and Proposals to Improve Legislation in the Field of Environmental Protection", 2008.
- Action Plan of the Project "Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in Kazakhstan Part of Altai-Sayan Ecoregion" for Proposing Amendments and Supplements to the Regulatory and Legal Framework to Ensure Efficient Management and Conservation of Biodiversity, 2008.
- Proposals for the Draft Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Making Amendments and Supplements to Some Legislative Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the Issues of Forestry, Wildlife and Protected Areas", 2010.
- Concept of the Draft Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Making Amendments and Supplements to Some Legislative Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the Issues of Forestry, Wildlife and Protected Areas", 2009.

120. According to the RoK legislation, the project was not entitled to submit proposals or suggestions for the amendment of legislation direct to the government. As such, these proposals/suggestions/concept papers were submitted to the FHC. The concepts were, thereafter, discussed at a seminar, titled "Discussing and working out proposals to improve the legal and regulatory framework in the field of PA and forestry" held in Almaty in March 2009. The seminar was attended by all UNDP-GEF project managers and the concepts were honed and finalized. The amendments to the relevant legislation were passed by/within Laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan No.188-IV as of 17 July 2011, No. 464 as of 20 July 2011, No. 242-IV as of 21 January 2011, No. 452- IV as of 05 July 2011, respectively.

121. In summary, the project, in coordination with other GEF projects and the UNDP-CO, has significantly contributed to reforming legislation and regulations that will assist with creating an enabling environment for biodiversity conservation in the country.

122. Output 3.2. *Legal mechanisms for improved collaboration between all stakeholders at the local level on SPA related issues are established.* The primary focus of the project under this output has been to engender coordination among stakeholders at a local level with regard to fire fighting. This they have managed to

do successfully with the development of a Provision for the Oblast level Forest Fire Fighting Service. The issues of coordinating the activities between the fire fighting services and the forest protection service on the local level are reflected in the document: "*Procedure for Making Rapid Interaction Plans when Extinguishing Big Fires*" as approved and recommended for use in the Minutes as of 10 March 2011 signed by G.V. Pinchuk, Deputy Akim of East Kazakhstan Oblast.

123. Output 3.3. *Transboundary collaboration agreements and conservation programmes are formulated and implemented*. While reforming legislation and regulations may be challenging, to formulate and implement transboundary agreements within a five-year project is ambitious indeed. And yet, under the leadership of the project, significant steps have been taken resulting in the signature of an Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Government of the Russian Federation on Establishment of "Altai" Transboundary *Reservat* on 15 September 2011 in Astrakhan city (Russia).

124. The Agreement envisages the establishment of a transboundary *reservat* that will incorporate Katon-Karagai State National Nature Park (Republic of Kazakhstan) and Katunskiy Biosphere Reserve (Russian Federation).

125. The entities responsible for the implementation of the Agreement shall be as follows: i) for the Republic of Kazakhstan – Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan and ii) for the Russian Federation – Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation.

126. The activities carried out under the Agreement shall be coordinated by a Joint Kazakh-Russian Commission that is to be established. The first meeting of the Commission shall be held within a year after the effectiveness of the Agreement; indeed, the project aims to bring together the Commission during the first quarter of 2012.

127. The areas for cooperation are as follows:

- protection of natural ecosystems and sites;
- prevention and suppression of environmental offences;
- exchange of information on potential impact of the transboundary *reservat* on the ecosystems;
- providing the appropriate conditions for unhindered migration of wild animals throughout the *reservat* territory.

128. The following forms of cooperation have been set forth by the Agreement:

- Joint environmental research and monitoring
- Exchange of experience
- Arranging joint environmental awareness campaigns.

129. The Agreement shall be valid for 5 years with a possibility of automatic extension, unless either of the parties should provide notification of the Agreement termination.

130. Recommendations for further development of cooperation under the Agreement:

- UNDP support provided to the establishment of the Joint Commission;

- Mandatory inclusion of the public representatives in the Joint Commission composition;
- Technical support of the participation of the public representatives in the Joint Commission's meetings.

131. The first meeting of the Joint Commission or Steering Committee is planned for early 2012; the project will be instrumental to ensure that this does take place.

132. Outcome 4: *Involving of local communities in activities on biodiversity conservation and alternative livelihoods within PAs and buffer zones are being supported.*

133. Output 4.1. *Sustainable alternative livelihood options are facilitated through demonstration projects*. Realizing the achievements in this output has not been without its challenges. The project encountered high degrees of apathy among the local communities and while it could have 'spoon-fed' the people in order to achieve the necessary targets, the PIU realized that this would be unproductive and unsustainable. As such, the project went to great lengths to reach out to the most dynamic and productive people in the community.

134. From the outset, the project carried out a baseline survey in 47 villages of the two project sites to identify socio-economic indicators, threats to biodiversity as perceived by the local communities, measures for mitigation of these threats, and the means by which the local communities could participate in resource management. In addition, a community mobilisation exercise was conducted by a team of national and international consultants (20 July – 03 August 2008). The mobilisation was attended by over 300 people through five big meetings, seven small group meetings and many meetings with individuals. As a result, an Initiative Group was formed by the villagers, proposing people who they respect, trust, and who are capable of expressing the interests of local communities.

135. This group agreed an action plan to address the key threats to biodiversity – over-consumption of firewood, land degradation, and fires, and the secondary threats – inefficient use of natural resources and uncontrolled tourism. Various alternative livelihood ideas were put forward to address these threats:

- Over-consumption of firewood: i) plant fuel plantations, ii) improving heating devices, iii) use of pressed animal dung;
- Land degradation: i) improving pastures and hayfields by sowing permanent grasses, ii) organization of pasture rotation schemes, iii) seasonal use of distant pastures;
- Inefficient use of products: i) processing forest by-products, ii) processing of agriculture by-products, iii) medicinal herb plantations, iv) beekeeping;
- Uncontrolled tourism: i) guest houses for tourists, ii) tourism services.

136. The realization of the alternative livelihood schemes was facilitated by the GEF Small Grants Program (SGP). In order to introduce the SGP to local communities, two rounds of outreach trips to all rural districts were undertaken with the participation of local authorities and villagers (20 meetings with total participants numbering 200 people). During the first round, thematic priorities and application procedures were discussed, while the second concentrated on specific ideas and projects.

137. Six pilot projects were initiated and underway by June 2010. This number has now grown to nine pilot projects with one currently under development:

- Mitigation of land degradation processes by organizing sustainable pasture management – through rotational grazing of a limited number of livestock – around Katon-Karagai village. Based on the results of this demonstration, surrounding villages experiencing land degradation problems are replicating the experience of Katon project while the project around Katon-Karagai continues without project support. Results of this intervention include: increase in weight of cattle and horses (by an average of 50kg and 70kg, respectively) – which equates to additional economic income per person
- Mitigation of land degradation processes by facilitating the re-emergence of a system of transhumance – thus, allowing people and their livestock access to grazing areas within the mountains (and thus within the zoned national park). The system continues without the support of the project
- Mitigation of forest degradation caused by over-consumption of firewood and poor forest rehabilitation practices by developing a plantation of fast-growing species (poplar)
- Mitigation of forest degradation caused by over-consumption of firewood through the demonstration of energy-efficient Buleryan stove to decrease firewood consumption in seven villages where people face the firewood shortages. Results to date indicate up to four fold decrease in fuel wood consumption (2-3 fold decrease on average)
- Processing wool (that was previously simply a by-product) and production of traditional domestic and decorative goods and to market and promote a brand of environment-friendly products from the eco-region
- Development of a wood-processing workshop for producing domestic goods for the local market and souvenirs for promoting the image of the Altai region among tourists; the market is currently being addressed
- Processing non-timber forest products (e.g., berries and mushrooms), and marketing and branding these at the local and regional level
- Mitigation of land degradation through the restoration of pastures in the vicinity of Katon-Karagai village through the plantation of appropriate, perennial grasses; 750ha of degraded land restored to date.
- Reducing unsustainable harvest of natural resources through creation of a nursery for the propagation of the Siberian cedar (otherwise known as the Siberian ston pine, *Pinus sibirica*)
- Reducing unsustainable harvest of natural resources through commercial production of medicinal herbs

138. In addition to the grants provided through the SGP, the project also worked with the East Kazakhstan Oblast to establish a micro-credit facility specifically targeting the development of alternative livelihoods and businesses in the project area. These were to have an environmental component – thereby justifying their inclusion into the project. The establishment of the micro-credit facility followed from an assessment of the main economic activities in the project areas. The micro-credit facility was developed for the local communities of the project area during 2008-

2009. The assessment determined the priority alternative livelihoods to be funded, principles of mobilisation for potential loan holders, terms and procedures, and monitoring and evaluation of the funded projects. The project signed an agreement with the "JSC Fund of Financial Support for Agriculture;" the agreement allowed the project to act on their behalf. This Fund was the only one that would accept any building (including wooden ones) as collateral and also had the lowest interest rates for loans to individuals (currently 9.5% pa). The project participated in the award of loans, thereby formulating the portfolio of loans, as well as providing information, and consultative and methodological support to beneficiaries. The East Kazakhstan Oblast Akimat also agreed to provide KZT 10 million (US$ 66,667) to the Fund for 2009, with similar amounts to be considered for each year thereafter. Outreach seminars were conducted in six rural districts from 29 May – 4 June 2009 for a total of 166 people covering business start-up, business planning, financial planning, micro-credit opportunities, and loan application documents and procedures. Disbursements were made to successful applicants thereafter (see Table 13).

Table 13. Alternative livelihood projects in Katon-Karagai rayon funded under the micro-finance facility within the framework of cooperation between East Kazakhstan branch of "Fund for Financial Support of Agriculture" JSC, East Kazakhstan Oblast Akimat and the project

Project name	Area	Environmental context	Social-economic context	Project site	Project cost, KZT	Project implementers
Creating a bakery	Creating enterprises improving rural infrastructure	Reducing the volume of wood used	There were no bakeries in the selskiy okrug (rural district); the price of bread delivered to the village is KZT 70-90 per loaf. Most of the village dwellers are employees of the state-financed institutions and pensioners with an average income of KZT 14,000. Creating a bakery will provide 3 new jobs and reduce the price of bread	Pechi village, Korobikha selskiy okrug	800,000	Gulfairuz Toktassynova, Bakyt Toktassynova
1. Creating a greenhouse in the household land plot. 2. Creating a bakery. 3. Creating a public catering.	1. Creating enterprises improving rural infrastructure. 2. Developing national traditions: demonstrating the national cuisine to the tourists	Developing the production of environmentally friendly agricultural products	There are no catering places either in this selskiy okrug or within a radius of 100 km of the village, which creates barriers to attracting tourists. The project will create 3 new jobs, and an abandoned building will be repaired and used.	Uryl village, Uryl selskiy okrug	800,000	Marzhan Nurkasynova
Creating a guest house	Sustainable tourism development	Ecotourism development	Promoting ecotourism and attracting tourists to the region, creating rural infrastructure.	Shyngystai village, Katon-Karagai selskiy okrug	600,000	Gulmira Mukhametzhanova
Creating a guest house	Sustainable tourism development	Ecotourism development	Promoting ecotourism and attracting tourists to the region, creating rural infrastructure.	Akkainar village, Akkainar selskiy okrug	1,500,000	Vera Klimova

139. Output 4.2. *Programme for SPA-based sustainable tourism will be developed and implemented.* This output was one that had been altered in the Inception Period. The activities that the project carried out towards this output included: i) carrying out studies to determine the tourist 'carrying-capacities' within the protected areas – but more specifically in Katon-Karagai National Park that has tourism areas, ii) carrying out the zonation of Katon-Karagai National Park with the identification of the zones that were open for tourism, including the identification of the eight tourist routes, and iii) carrying a study to determine the infrastructure needs for tourism along the eight tourist routes.

140. In addition and as indicated in Output 4.1 (see above), the project, in partnership with the micro-finance mechanism, has been supporting people to develop infrastructure and services for tourists.

141. The project developed a number of products specifically targeting tourists and tourist development in the region, including:

- Guest Houses: ABC's to Success, 2009. (A Handbook produced by the project).
- "Assessment of the Current Status of Tourism and Recreation Activities on the Territory of the Project "Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in Kazakhstan Part of Altai-Sayan Ecoregion", A report produced by the project, 2009.
- Tourism Management Plan for Katon-Karagai State National Nature Park, 2009.
- Rare and Endangered Plants in Kazakhstan Part of Altai-Sayan Ecoregion. Small Folder Book, 2009.
- Rare and Endangered Animals in Kazakhstan Part of Altai-Sayan Ecoregion. Small Folder Book, 2009.
- IRBIS - The Snow leopard, 2011.
- Snow Leopard – Symbol of Sky Mountains, 2009.

142. In summary, the project has managed to provide the framework for tourism development in KKNP. With only 2,500 visitors in 2010 (out of the 40,000 that is the carrying capacity of the park, as calculated by the park in collaboration with the project), there is much development to do.

143. Indeed, future development of tourism in KKNP should focus on marketing, linkages with sustainable tourism operators and markets, tourism chain analysis, private sector tourism operators (who may be interested to invest in tourism development within the area) and, possibly, determining whether the park could establish tourism concessions within the tourist-use areas within the park.

144. Output 4.3. *Local NGOs are supported.* By the Terminal Evaluation, the project had supported four NGOs, led by the NGO Mametek. Herein lies some overlap with Output 4.1: the project used the NGOs as vehicles to demonstrate the alternative livelihood mechanisms. As such, the three pasture programmes (the pasture restoration, the transhumance models of pasture use and the rotational grazing of livestock) were all developed and trialled under the auspices of Mametek.

145. For their activities and development, Mametek received two grants, one of USD 31,000 from project and the second, of USD 25,000 from the GEF SGP. The majority of these funds were used to procurement of materials and transport to allow the herders to take their livestock to the upland grazing areas. The work was carried out in collaboration with the akimic farm, which helped with the rehabilitation and construction of the road to take the materials to the upland grazing meadows.

146. Throughout, Mametek worked in close collaboration with the municipal akimat of Katon-Karagai and they have relied on this relationship to ensure that appropriate land has been allocated for their activities.

147. The MTE noted, with some scepticism, that Mametek was "just like any other NGO in Kazakhstan, they are not willing to organize and implement a project, without outside financial support." On the contrary, while in 2010, the NGO was indeed reliant on the project and SGP for financial support, in 2011 it has operated independently.

148. Outcome 5: "*Monitoring and evaluation of the project activities are carried out. Cooperation between SPAs is established, the Project positive results and experience are introduced within PAs' work of the RK.*"

149. Output 5.1. *M&E and adaptive management applied to project.* The monitoring and evaluation was criticized during the MTE and a visit from the UNDP Regional Centre in Bratislava suggested more could be done with regard to impact monitoring.

150. In response, the PIU increased team cohesion, held weekly meetings and facilitated open sharing of information. In addition, the UNCP-CO and the UNDP Regional Office in Bratislava visited and monitored the progress of the project to a greater degree. Regular phone calls were also scheduled with the UNDP-CO.

Environment and Sustainable Development portfolio - MONITORING TABLE FOR 2011
ALTAY-SAYAN project -
Award ID 44821
Project ID 52843

#	activity	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
I	REPORTS												
1	QOP report (GEF-150 words)	3			3			3			3		23
2	PIR						20						
3	Annual report 2011												7
4	Final Report												12
5	Final Lesson Learnt Report											23	
6	Final Evaluation Report											15	
7	Quartely Progress Review Report (UNDP)				23			23			23		
8	Atlas quartely report (Risks, Issues etc)			23			23			23			23
9	Inventory		10									30	
10	CDR				TBC								
11	SEFs		10		10			10			10		
12	VAT return	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
13	Success story											23	
14	Monthly Leave Report	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	1
15	NEX Audit			TBC									
II	PLANS												
16	Procurement Plan	27											
17	BR					TBC							
18	SC						TBC					TBC	
19	Field visit by RTA (Maxim Vergeichik)							TBC					
20	FE visit							TBC					
21	Exit Strategy		20										
22	Monitoring visit by CO			20			20			20		TBC	
23	monitoring meeting		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Figure 4. A simple illustration of the regular contact between the PIU and UNDP-CO: this is their schedule for communication.

151. The result has been better awareness among the project staff and UNDP regarding the progress of the project and the PIU has responded by focusing on those

areas of the project that were previously receiving less attention. Therefore, the monitoring of the project has resulted in a positive response by the PIU. This means that, in general, progress has been good and the project will not require the nine-month no-cost extension as recommended by the MTE. Instead, only a three-month extension (until 31 March 2012) will be necessary.

152. There are two further observations that can be made about the monitoring and evaluation of the project.

153. First, it was apparent that there was a good deal of confusion during the MTE. The confusion stemming primarily about which logframe was being used for project implementation, and monitoring and evaluation – the result being that the MTE evaluated the project on the original logframe rather than the one actually in use. The consequence was that the MTE was critical about aspects that were not being implemented by the project.

154. Second, while the design of the project meant that the inputs were not measured as indicators, the outcomes or impacts on global biodiversity that are the ultimate objectives of such project were not always focused upon. In other words, the PIU and other stakeholders did not appear always to have in the back of their minds the question: "what will be the biodiversity impact of this activity?" Rather, the team focused primarily on the indicators (but see comment below). This has implications for analyses of relevance, effectiveness as well as efficiency.

155. Output 5.2. *Lessons learned and best practices are replicated at the national level.* At the point of the MTE, the project had done "little in the way of replicating best practices and lessons learned."

156. In contrast, much has now been accomplished to disseminate the results of the project and to ensure replication of the best practices. Mostly, the focus on replication has been within Kazakhstan but initial interest has been received outside of Kazakhstan (from Belarus) and there is the potential for more to follow.

157. More specifically, the following activities and results have been replicated elsewhere in the protected area system of Kazakhstan:

- In cooperation with the Emergency Department of the East Kazakhstan Oblast, the project presented the model for fire fighting and the results to stakeholders. As a result, the FHC has adopted the model for replication in 24 other protected areas.
- The focus of the project was specifically Katon-Karagai National Park and Markakol Zapozednik. Because of the successes in these areas, the West Altai Zapovednik was also included into the project so as to replicate practices – including demonstration of how to calculate, present and justify budgets to the FHC.
- By initiating the formation of a forum of National Project Managers – thus, the NPMs of all the GEF projects in the country – the project has facilitated the sharing of experiences and lessons learned. The forum meets on a quarterly basis but, since it has been formed, the NPMs are in regular contact on an informal basis by email and telephone. In addition, the forum has facilitated i) joint planning and joint training, ii) the sharing of information and databases on consultants, iii) the sharing of technical information through outlets such as the journal "*Pearls of Kazakhstan*", among other things.

158. In addition, the project cooperated with the training centre, *Tabigat Elemi*, that has been established for training PA managers and staff.

159. At an international level, there have been two successes regarding replication and the sharing of experiences. First, in the cooperation with the Russian side of the Altai-Sayan and through the process to negotiate the transboundary agreement, there has been the sharing of experiences. Not only has the agreement now been signed, but there is also a joint program on the conservation of migratory species. Second, as previously mentioned, the project found and demonstrated a mechanism to overcome bureaucratic barriers when constructing the mobile fire fighting bases. Similar bureaucratic hurdles exist elsewhere but the mechanism developed by the project has been adopted by similar projects in Belarus.

160. Finally, the FHC admitted that it was primarily waiting for the Final Report of the project before scaling-up the best practices and lessons learned from the project. The two members of the FHC that the evaluation mission met stated strongly that this was their preferred route for learning the lessons and observing the best practices from the project. As such, we **recommend** that when the Final Report is prepared by the PIU and the NPM in particular, special attention is paid on those best practices and lessons learned that warrant replication across the protected area system of the country. In addition, we applaud the UNDP-CO strategy and vision across the protected area system of Kazakhstan as this remains a key mechanism by which the best practices and lessons learned are replicated through the system.

Item	Rating	Comment
Outcomes		
Overall quality of project outcomes	**HS**	See Conclusions
Relevance	**S**	In general, the project kept a tight focus on the design in the project document and has delivered on the outcomes and outputs – and more. However, as discussed elsewhere in the Terminal Evaluation (and, notably, in the MTE) the linkage between activities and biodiversity conservation has not always been very tight. It appears as if some of the activities were justified, *post hoc*, to conservation. This comment should not detract from the vast amount that the project has achieved but whether some of the activities carried out by the project actually lead to conservation impacts remains questionable.
Effectiveness	**HS**	The project has been effective as the outcomes of the project were commensurate with the original (and modified, where this occurred) objectives of the project. The project was designed such that the outcomes, outputs and indicators did not just measure the outputs and inputs; rather the focus was on outcomes and impacts. By achieving the outputs and outcomes, the project has been highly successful and there were no shortcomings to achieving its objectives.
Efficiency	**HS**	The project was very cost effective in its delivery of the outcomes and outputs. It adopted a number of measures to ensure its cost effectiveness on different levels: i) from the strategic partnership between the UNDP-CO and FHC, ii) the incorporation of the "German Project" – albeit slightly unconventional – was an opportunistic, cost effective option. On a day-to-day management level, the project used procurement modalities to ensure good value for money.

Table 14. Summary of project achievements by Outcome and Output, relative to the performance indicators from the baseline at the start of the project and the targets. For delivery status, green = successful achievement, yellow = expected achievement by EOP, red = unlikely to be completed by EOP

Outcome	#	Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target for EOP	Delivery Status at Terminal Evaluation	Means of verification and comments	HS	S	MS	MU	U	HU
Project objective: *To enhance the sustainability and conservation effectiveness of Kazakhstan's National PA system through demonstrating sustainable and replicable approaches to conservation management in the protected areas in the Kazakhstani sector of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion*		Populations of globally significant species (snow leopard, Altai argali, Imperial eagle, Black Stork)	Est.12-15 Snow Leopard Est. 15-16 Altai argali Est. <10 Imperial eagle Est. < 25 couples Black Stork	Populations of endangered species not decreased below baseline levels by year 5 and show an increase (over longer term than project)	Snow leopard and argali and black stork: no change from baseline Imperial eagle increased (43)	Verified by data from wildlife censuses For discussion of this indicator, Section 3.1						
		Current total area of forest cover in two existing PAs (MSR and KKNP)	Total forest cover year 1 (2006) 309,900 ha	Monitoring in year 5 indicates that there has been no reduction in the total area of forest cover from 2006 baseline	No change from baseline (no loss)	Verified by data from forest resource census; this indicator is also discussed at length in Section 3.1, but there will be long-term impacts of improved PA management, fire fighting capacity and awareness campaigns.						
Outcome 1: *The Special Protected Areas (SPA) network is expanded and*	1.1	Total protected area coverage	718,517 ha. total for the 2 PAs	Total increase up to 814,557 ha (11%)	Total increase up to 916,132ha (27.5%) not including buffer zones or	Verified by: approved buffer zone maps; Resolution no. 924 of 10 Sept						

Outcome	#	Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target for EOP	Delivery Status at Terminal Evaluation	Means of verification and comments	HS	S	MS	MU	U	HU
PAs management efficiency is improved					Ecological Corridor KKNP: 643,477ha (+ new buffer zone: 46,774.1ha) MZ: 75,032ha (+ new buffer zone: 61,437.5ha) West Altai: no change from baseline (and no project inputs) Ontustyk Altai Zakaznik: 197,623ha Proposed Ecological Corridor: 379,800ha	2010; *Zhasyl Damu* programme; this represents a significant increase in the coverage of protected areas.						
	1.2	METT scores for two PAs	For MSR – 46 For KKNP - 47	Annual increase in METT scores for both PAs for duration of the project	2011 data: KKNP = 67 MSR = 58	Verified by published METT score report						
	1.1	Legally defined new boundaries of PAs	Existing PA boundaries	New PA boundaries are legally defined	KKNP & MSP: Land Acts obtained and boundaries demarcated;	Verified by: approved buffer zone maps; boundary demarcations;						

Outcome	#	Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target for EOP	Delivery Status at Terminal Evaluation	Means of verification and comments	HS	S	MS	MU	U	HU
					buffer zones legally approved Ontustyk Altai Zakaznik: government approval (resolution no. 924 of 10 September 2010) and inclusion for establishment in *zhysyl damu* programme for 2012; boundaries agreed with local government bodies	Resolution no. 924 of 10 Sept 2010; minutes of Land Committee and Kurchum rayon akimat. The Ecological Corridor, at the time of the Terminal Evaluation, still awaits approved by the East Kazakhstan Oblast Akimat.						
	1.1	Inclusion of identified key habitats in PAs	Key habitats have no PA status	Viable areas of identified key habitats are under PA status	4 key habitats identified through scientific surveys (Kyzyltas, Bast-terekty, Kabinskiy, Kalzhir) and included into Ontustyk Altai Zakaznik Kalzhir river included in MZ	Scientific reports regarding distribution of endangered species and ecosystems; resolution no. 924 of 10 Sept 2010						
Outcome 2:	2.2	Awareness levels	27.5% of adults	Awareness of	By Terminal	Reports from the						

Outcome	#	Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target for EOP	Delivery Status at Terminal Evaluation	Means of verification and comments	HS	S	MS	MU	U	HU
Awareness level among the public in the field of biodiversity conservation and PAs is increased and support in all levels within PAs' work on biodiversity conservation is rendered		of biodiversity conservation issues and support for its conservation among various stakeholders	show awareness	biodiversity conservation issues increased by 60% and support for its conservation increased by 30% above baseline among surveyed stakeholders	Evaluation, 99.6% of surveyed adults recognized importance of biodiversity conservation and 85% of survey adults supported biodiversity conservation	final surveys were carried out by an independent evaluator (Analysis and Forecast Institute of East Kazakhstan Oblast) using multiple-choice type questionnaires.						
	2.2	Awareness of PAs' role, boundaries and regulations among indigenous people	24% of local communities knew of boundaries and regulations	Awareness of PAs' role, boundaries and regulations confirmed in 60% of adult community members surveyed	Surveys indicated that 89% of the surveyed people were aware of PA boundaries and regulations	As above.						
	2.2	Incidence of human caused fires in PAs	Number of human caused fires in PAs, 2000 – 2005. This was 29 fires, 22 of which were anthropogenic in origin.	Incidence of human-caused fires in PAs reduced by 50% compared to baseline average from previous 5 years	Over the 5-year period of the project, there were no anthropogenic fires in the project area.	Records of Oblast Akimat and FHC with fire data. All recorded (n=17) fires in the project area over the past five years were natural (e.g., caused by lightning), with six where the						

Outcome	#	Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target for EOP	Delivery Status at Terminal Evaluation	Means of verification and comments	HS	S	MS	MU	U	HU
						cause was unknown (but not attributable to humans).						
Outcome 3: *Existing legal and institutional framework is enhanced for the purpose of the PAs system strengthening*	3.1	Legislation and enabling regulations	Current legal constraints to effective PA management (self-financing opportunities, tourism regulation and control, no public involvement)	Legal obstacles and constraints to effective PA management are considered removed through independent evaluation	Concepts for amendments to legislation developed and submitted to the FHC, including concept submitted in 2010 for amendments and supplements to Forestry Code; Legal recognition of "School Forestries" obtained	Verified through concepts submitted to FHC. With the transboundary agreement, this represents the most ambitious aspect of the project; despite this, the project developed and submitted a number of concepts and recommendations for amendments to legislation and regulations.						
	3.3	Trans-boundary collaboration in management effort	No existing agreements and programmes	Essential trans-boundary agreements developed, signed, and implemented (research, anti-poaching, CITES compliance)	Agreement signed (14 Sept 2011 by both Presidents in Astrakhan); further developments underway first meeting of steering	Verified through signed agreement on 14 Sept 2010 and minutes of steering committee. The agreement takes a large step forward but there are still						

Outcome	#	Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target for EOP	Delivery Status at Terminal Evaluation	Means of verification and comments	HS	S	MS	MU	U	HU
					committee planned Jan 2012	functional details to agree upon and implement.						
	3.1	Annual recurrent costs for PAs' management do not require additional donor support	External donors: $41,000/year Government: 2,000,000/year	External donors: 0 Government: cover all the recurrent costs	Government budget for $ 2,106,331 (KKNP & MSR); zero from donors	Verified by PA annual workplans and budgets; 5-year management plans with budgets; Government is committed to PAs, with the resources that they require.						
Outcome 4: *Involving of local communities in activities on biodiversity conservation and alternative livelihoods within PAs and buffer zones are being supported*	4.4	Stakeholder participation in decision-making processes on management of protected areas	Fragmented and uncoordinated	Decisions involve all PA stakeholders	Project developed and piloted regulatory mechanisms (KKNP only) for interaction between PAs and local communities over use of NTFP	Verified by project's Final Report. Legislation (law on PAs) does not allow for local community involvement in PA management						
	4.1	The number of alternative sustainable activities	None at present	The number of people involved in Biodiversity conservation activities, increased by 15% 10 examples of Alternative	Three fully implemented alternatives (implemented by Mametek), 6 projects under development and implementation (purchased	Verified by project's PIR and APR. Target met despite local community apathy. Project also opted not to 'spoon-feed' but instead to						

Outcome	#	Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target for EOP	Delivery Status at Terminal Evaluation	Means of verification and comments	HS	S	MS	MU	U	HU
				livelihood projects	equipment and preparation under way but no sales to date to markets: including production of souvenirs, and wool, berry and mushroom products); tenth project prepared (production of medical herbs) and application under consideration by SGP	encourage and engender initiative of people						
	4.1	The ratio of income of population participating in alternative projects to the average income of population over the region	Ratio = 1 (incomes equal at an average income of 13 000 KZT (USD 100))	Ratio > 1 with income of participants > average	No data to date	Indicator amended under MTE recommendation; endorsed by PSC following MTE in minutes and by Scientific Council on 18 Nov 2010	Unable to rate.					
Outcome 5: *Monitoring and evaluation of the project activities are*	5.2	The number of cited replicates of approaches demonstrated and lessons learned	None	Management models and approaches from project replicated in 3 other PAs in	A number of project results have been replicated: i) fire management	Verified through other projects' reports; letter from FHC to oblast akims.						

Outcome	#	Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target for EOP	Delivery Status at Terminal Evaluation	Means of verification and comments	HS	S	MS	MU	U	HU
carried out. Cooperation between SPAs is established, the Project positive results and experience are introduced within PAs' work of the RK		from the project in other protected areas in Kazakhstan		Kazakhstan with specific reference to lessons of this project	systems (to 24 PAs in country), ii) processes for construction of fire hangers and chemical stations (speeding process); iii) calculation of tourism thresholds & guidelines; iv) construction of artificial nests for threatened bird species, v) formation of public associations for alternative livelihoods (e.g., Mametek & pasture mgt) in process); vi) production of database of materials & documents.	While the project has actively achieved these replications, two other factors will boost replication on completion of the project: i) the FHC awaits a detailed Final Report from the project before replicating best practices through the protected area system and ii) the FHC and UNDP-CO strategic partnership means that the best practices will be replicated in all the ongoing and future biodiversity projects on which they cooperate						
	5.2	The number of replicates of approaches demonstrated and	None	Management models and approaches from project replicated	Project results have been adopted by two states: the	Verified by transboundary Steering Committee						

Outcome	#	Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target for EOP	Delivery Status at Terminal Evaluation	Means of verification and comments	HS	S	MS	MU	U	HU
		lessons learned by the project within other national protected area systems		in 2 other countries	Russian Federation (fire management systems; climate change adaptation programme) and Belarus (adopted process for building fire hangers & fire chemical station - process by including key stakeholders in development)	minutes; other projects' reports. Targets met; transboundary processes will engender further replication						

3.3.2 Replication

161. The project has made significant efforts, primarily through the UNDP-CO, to disseminate its results and lessons, and, thereby, try to ensure that good practices are replicated and lessons learned. In addition to the UNDP-CO, the FHC has been receptive to results, good practices and lessons learned. Moreover, as is their practice, the FHC specifically awaits the final report of the project. They will analyse the report and ensure that all good practices and lessons learned are replicated throughout the protected area system. It is, therefore, imperative, that the PIU spends sufficient time on the project's Terminal (or Final) Report, highlighting those aspects that warrant replication and scaling-up.

162. The project's efforts to share results and lessons have included: i) being an active participant of the forum of National Project Managers (NPMs) for all UNDP-GEF projects in the country; this forum was established with the specific purpose of sharing experiences and lessons; ii) reporting regularly to the FHC and the PSC to ensure that all results and lessons were being shared with the potential for replication elsewhere in the protected area system; iii) convening forums for disseminating results (e.g., the seminar that was organized, with the participation of the East Kazakhstan Oblast, for sharing the fire-fighting experiences).

163. The efforts for replication are proving fruitful. As examples, the following aspects of the project have been replicated or scaled-up:

- The fire-fighting methods, protocols, team organization and equipment needs have been replicated among 24 protected areas in the country to date (by order of the FHC – thereby representing a scaling-up of the activities of the project).
- The development of alternative livelihoods among local communities through the formation of public associations. The successes of the NGO Mametek and specifically i) the rotational grazing practices and ii) the restoration of pastures has been recognized and is being replicated elsewhere.
- The methodology use to calculate the carrying capacity for tourists in any given area and the guidelines for tourism development are being used by other protected areas
- The practice, piloted by the project, of providing artificial nests for uncommon species is being replicated in some protected areas and projects.
- The practice of including key stakeholders in the process of construction work – as a mechanism to accelerate bureaucratic processes – has been replicated not only within the country but has been adopted in Belarus as well.
- The project used the ecosystem-based monitoring system developed by the UNDP-GEF project *Integrated Conservation of Priority Globally Significant Migratory Bird Wetland Habitat: A Demonstration in Three Sites*.
- The project has developed a database for collecting documents; this has been replicated in other areas.

3.3.3 Country ownership

164. The evaluation team's International Consultant was very impressed with the considerable buy-in to and, indeed, ownership of the project and to biodiversity conservation in general.

165. First, the country continues to establish *zapovednik* (or Strict Nature Reserve, IUCN Category I) protected areas. The represents a remarkable contribution to the global environment. The Kazakhstani portion of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion – the area of focus for the project – contains two zapovedniks (West Altai and Markakol zapovedniks) and the zonation process for the Katon-Karagai National Park resulted in large parts of the area being given zapovednik status. This, we believe, is an outstanding indicator of the country's commitment to the global environment, ownership of the protected areas and ownership of the project.

166. Second, it is evident that once the FHC has agreed to an action, it commits to it completely. The word "obliged" came up many times during the mission – such that there was no question whatsoever in the minds of the interviewees that there was any way but for the FHC to work to fulfil the commitment. As such, the number of things to which the FHC committed to in this project is a second indicator of the country's ownership of the project.

167. Third, the FHC is committed to the partnership with the UNDP-CO such that they are working together on an ecosystem approach across the country, initiating projects (often GEF funded) to cover the different ecosystems in the country. To date, projects have covered:

- The mountain ecosystems of the Altai-Sayan (current project *Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Biodiversity of the Kazakhstani Sector of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion*)
- The mountains of the Tien Shan (through the recently closed project *In-situ Conservation of Kazakhstan's Mountain Agrobiodiversity*)
- Wetlands (through the recently closed project *Integrated Conservation of Priority Globally Significant Migratory Bird Wetland Habitat: A Demonstration in Three Sites*)
- Steppe (through the ongoing project *Steppe Conservation and Management*)
- Desert (project development currently underway).

168. Again, the strength of the partnership displays mutual trust.

169. Fourth, the Government of Kazakhstan has supported the bilateral negotiations with the Russian Federation to establish a transboundary conservation area and agreements. This culminated in the signature of the agreement for the Establishment of "Altai" Transboundary *Reservat* on 15 September 2011 in Astrakhan in Russia.

3.3.4 Mainstreaming

170. Mainstreaming was not emphasized in the project's design: indeed, the word "mainstream" or any of its derivatives does not appear once in the project document.

171. Indeed, mainstreaming appears to be more a target of the UNDP-CO's strategic partnership with FHC.

3.3.5 Sustainability

172. The Terminal Evaluation assessed the sustainability of the activities and results of the project, taking into account the different facets of sustainability. This is particularly important in two cases: i) in the cases of the zapovedniks and ii) in the case of the newly established protected areas.

3.3.5.1 Institutional Sustainability

173. Institutional sustainability was assured through four mechanisms: i) ownership of the project and institutions with which the project worked by the FHC, ii) building the capacity of the partner organizations, iii) the UNDP-CO partnership with the FHC and iv) involvement of all stakeholders, including those of the oblast and rayon government levels, in the project and its processes.

174. Institutional sustainability warrants a little more discussion because it was identified as one of the principal barriers to effective management of protected areas. In the early 2000s, there were a series of institutional re-arrangements, changes and re-organizations that reduced protected area management efficiency and effectiveness.

175. The only area in which institutional sustainability will continue to be challenged is the ability of the protected areas – particularly those in remote areas such as the Markakol zapovednik – is to recruit and retain good staff. Ultimately, this requires offering attractive benefits to the staff: competitive salaries, good conditions, training, opportunities for promotion. In summary, a set of incentives that will attract and allow protected areas to retain good quality and well-qualified staff. Indeed, in this area, the project has taken steps in its efforts to start to nudge in legislative reforms.

176. However, by the beginning of the project in 2007, these institutional rearrangements settled into the structures that we see today and there is no indication that further rearrangements will occur in the near future. Even if they do, we are confident that the UNDP-CO will be in a position to ensure the sustainability of the results that have been achieved by the project.

3.3.5.2 Financial Sustainability

177. Financial sustainability remained in the forefront of the minds of the project implementers, primarily because the global financial crisis of 2008 commenced during the period during which the project was being implemented. In addition, the project's results demand higher financial inputs from the FHC because: i) the project built protected area capacity and processes – all of which demands more human and financial resources, ii) the project established a new protected area complex with its associated financial and human resource demands, and iii) the project installed fire fighting equipment and teams in various locations, again, all of which come with their associated financial and human resource demands.

178. The project has worked for financial sustainability in a number of ways:

- Primarily by ensuring buy-in from the FHC into all protected area developments. In order to do this, the FHC was involved at all stages of development, kept informed and, as a member of the PSC, they oversaw the processes. As such, the FHC is fully aware and committed to the financial responsibilities that they have on closure of the project.
- The project has trained the protected area staff to calculate, present and justify their budgets. These have been incorporated into the protected area management plans but they shall also be calculated and presented on an annual basis to the FHC.
- Similarly, where other stakeholders are involved – such as the East Kazakhstan Oblast – the stakeholders are involved in all stages of

development and kept informed such that they are not just aware of their responsibilities but they are committed to them as well.

- The project has worked, at a local level, with the protected areas to explore mechanisms by which they can increase their budgets through retention of revenues that they accrue. However, they cannot retain certain revenues – or "taxes" levied – such as those from the 'sale' of fuelwood. Tourist revenues, on the other hand, can be retained by the protected areas.

179. In addition to the steps that the project took towards financial sustainability, the UNDP-GEF project "Steppe Conservation and Management" has a particular focus on financial sustainability of the protected area system. Indeed, over the course of the KASE project, a consultant from the Steppe project visited Katon-Karagai National Park to evaluate and assess possibilities for raising revenues. As such, as members within a (future) protected area system that is financially sustainable, the protected areas in the Altai-Sayan will benefit from what will be the outcome of the UNDP-CO and FHC partnership.

180. There is one other thing of note for financial sustainability: this is the financial sustainability of the zapovedniks. As strict nature reserves (i.e., akin to IUCN protected area category I), by definition, they cannot collect revenues. [This is not strictly true because they have developed tourism in their newly formed buffer zones. In addition, they collect fees from researchers – although these rather nominal fees are paid direct to the republic's treasury.] Thus, these areas are and will remain entirely dependent on the state for their financial sustainability. In order to assist them with this process, the UNDP-CO must assist the FHC in every way it can: i) continuing to work to find mechanisms that ensure financial sustainability of the protected area system as a whole while recognizing that the zapovedniks will continue to be cross-subsidized ad infinitum, ii) to support the FHC by lobbying the government for the finances necessary for the management of these areas, and iii) by carrying out the relevant environmental economic studies, assisting with ensuring that the value – in every sense of the word – of biodiversity, ecosystems and ecological processes becomes fully recognized by the government. The ultimate goal here is to have the economists in the Ministry of Finance as the principal defenders of the protected area system's annual budget!

181. If there is one regret that we have in the field of financial sustainability over the course of the current Altai-Sayan project it is that there was a missed opportunity for raising significant funding from the voluntary carbon markets from avoided deforestation. If the data presented in the project document is correct, then prior to the project, the rate of deforestation through fire and (the perverse and abused) "sanitary" cleaning of forests after fires can be estimated to be a maximum of 50,000ha/year[2]. The project has effectively reduced the rate of deforestation by reducing the incidence of fires: this "avoided" deforestation could have been sold on the voluntary carbon market. Similarly, the reforestation and afforestation that is currently underway (through the plantation of poplar woodlots) is marketable through the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).

[2] Using figures presented in the Threats section of the Project Document.

3.3.5.3 Social Sustainability

182. The project has grown in strength in its latter stages with respect to social sustainability as its work with emerging local NGOs and with alternative livelihood work has flourished. From the initial work with the NGO Mametek, it has worked with three other emergent NGOs. These have all had linkages with the demonstration of alternative livelihoods but the result is that the project, first, commands respect for the work it has done among the local communities and, second, there is much interest to replicate the demonstrations elsewhere locally but also in the country as a whole.

183. In addition, the project made significant investment into building awareness. There are signs that the processes that the project has planted (e.g., taking the "March for Parks" from the local to the Oblast levels) will take root and become institutionalized.

184. Finally, as the protected areas achieve their institutional sustainability and the economy around them grows – for example through a growing tourism industry – the remoteness of the protected areas means that they will become the drivers of the local economies. If such a state is achieved and is well managed, then there can be a positive feedback loop where each facet of sustainability is mutually reinforced.

185. The summary is that social sustainability can only be improved.

3.3.5.4 Economic sustainability

186. We have already touched on economic sustainability above – with the potential for the protected areas to become the drivers of local economies. This is primarily true, in the project's area, of Katon-Karagai National Park (with its ability to attract tourists) and of Ontustyk Zakaznik (with its ability to ensure sustainable natural resource use and management.

187. As strict nature reserves, the West Altai and Markakol Zapovedniks are already contributing to (an as yet uncalculated but definitely undervalued) economic sustainability: with no threats to their biodiversity, ecosystems and ecological processes, their contribution to i) the global (environmental) economy cannot be overstated and ii) the country's economy will become increasingly realized and valued as these things become increasingly quantified.

3.3.5.5 Conclusion on sustainability

188. In conclusion, the project has put into place everything necessary to achieve sustainability of its activities and results. However, these are underpinned by two assumptions. The first is that the FHC remains committed to the protected areas of East Kazakhstan. Given the commitment shown to the project by the FHC over the course of this project, this represents a negligible risk. The second assumption is that the socio-economic activities started by the project through public associations (or NGOs) and the private sector not only continue but gain momentum and are replicated through the area. All the signs indicate that they will but if the SGP remains active in the area and the UNDP-CO continues to monitor the situation in the project area, the chances of success will be higher. This support can realistically be delegated to partners in the area (e.g., through NGOs that receive a small grant through the SGP to carry out this work).

Item	Rating*	Comment
Sustainability		
Overall likelihood of risks to sustainability		

Financial resources	L	The government and specifically the FHC is committed to the protected areas and financing them. In addition, i) the project has worked to find other revenues streams by which the PAs can boost their budgets and ii) the Steppe project is working to find mechanisms to ensure financial sustainability of the protected area system as a whole (as part of the UNDO-CO/FHC partnership). These will contribute to ensuring financial sustainability.
Socio-economic	ML	The rating of 'Moderately Likely' is based on the assumption that the NGOs and small enterprises in the vicinity of the protected areas will continue to grow. All evidence at present points to this being the case with NGOs such as Mametek already being independent and growing. However, any risk can be mitigated further i) if the SGP remains active in the area, providing financial and technical support if and when it is needed and ii) if the UNDP-CO continues to monitor the situation on the ground.
Institutional Framework and governance	ML	While the institutions themselves are now resilient and robust, there is one challenge to institutional sustainability: this is the recruitment and retention of good quality staff. The project has made some headway to reduce this risk (through training) but the quality of the staff is relatively low and any good staff may be attracted away from the PAs with the training that they received. Until the FHC can provide competitive conditions for protected area staff, this risk will remain.
Environmental	L	The project has made significant gains to ensure environmental sustainability through i) improving the management of KKNP and MZ, ii) expanding the protected area coverage, iii) reducing the incidence of fire, iv) improving the environmental framework for local community livelihoods and v) contributing to amending the legislative/regulatory framework – to ensure environmental sustainability.

* As per *Guidelines for GEF Agencies in Conducting Terminal Evaluations* and *UNDP Evaluation Guidelines for GEF-Financed Projects*, sustainability is rated as: Likely (L), Moderately Likely (ML), Moderately Unlikely (MU), Unlikely (U), Highly Unlikely (HU).

3.3.6 Catalytic role

189. The project has played an important catalytic role in a number of ways but probably the most immediate has been i) the establishment of a fire management and particularly the 'mobile' units, ii) the establishment of a transboundary conservation area and iii) the work that they managed to achieve with local communities and local NGOs in pasture restoration, rotational grazing and grazing in mountain meadows based on the resurrection of a transhumance system.

190. First, the fire management system has been a particular success. There has been widespread recognition of this (both at the oblast level – in the oblast Emergency Department and the Forestry and Protected Areas Authority, and at the central level within the FHC) and replication to other forested protected areas is underway. The principal innovations here were the creation of effective systems for fire control and extinguishing, including i) establishing a fire warning system – thus, an effective radio-communication system throughout the area, ii) improving the equipment and machinery available for fighting fires, and the formation of 18 mobile units of five people each (fully trained and equipped by the project) that are based in strategic locations, iii) developing operational coordination plans for different services and agencies engaged in fire management. Additionally, the project found innovative ways to construct three bases (one in Ust-Kamenogorsk, one in Katon-Karagai and one in Markakol; the metal 'hanger' bases using existing technology) but in such a way that by-passed bureaucracy that would have otherwise have slowed the process immeasurably.

191. Second, in the absence of the project, the transboundary process with the Russian Federation would not have proceeded. As discussed above, the process culminated in the signature of the agreement between the two countries. Already, there is agreement on the conservation of migratory species and the established steering committee will now continue to work on other functional aspects of the agreement.

192. Third, when the project was initiated in 2007, it was viewed as a 'cash cow' by a largely apathetic local population. By the stage of the Terminal Evaluation, we see a situation in which i) ten livelihood activities have been established with different groups of people (including individuals, private sector organizations and NGOs), ii) awareness has grown such that appreciation of the protected areas and the biodiversity they harbour is widespread and iii) the practices used by the project are being replicated both locally and elsewhere in the country. In short, the project has acted as a catalyst to provoke significant action locally that has the potential to transform the area.

Item	Rating	Comment
Catalytic Role		
Production of a Public Good	**HS**	The project has made significant gains at all levels of catalysis through demonstration, replication and, in some instances, scaling-up of practices: i) in piloting new technologies and approaches that have been scaled-up or replicated elsewhere in the country (e.g., fire fighting systems; working with local communities and establishing public associations as mechanism for livelihood work; construction of artifical nesting sites), ii) successful training of PA staff, iii) finding mechanisms for involving stakeholders in construction projects thereby accelerating bureaucracy, iv) building awareness among local communities, v) high levels of media coverage, vi) tourism frameworks (thresholds and guidelines), vii) building databases (ecosystem-based monitoring and documents).
Demonstration	**HS**	
Replication	**HS**	
Scaling up	**HS**	

3.3.7 Impact

193. Arguably, the project has not been particularly effective about monitoring the impacts that it might be having. Instead, it has chosen to carry out its work

effectively and efficiently with a sharp focus on the project's indicators and the activities as described in the project document and inception report. As such it has had faith that the project was designed effectively and that the feedback from monitoring and evaluation processes – including the MTE and visits from the UNDP-CO and the UNDP Regional Centre in Bratislava – would be sufficient to ensure that the project's activities and, therefore, ultimate impacts would be satisfactorily achieved. While this strategy might have gone awry (after all, there were deep misunderstandings during the MTE), the project will have profound impacts. In addition, having ensured the sustainability of the majority of the activities and results, the impacts should continue to grow.

194. The long-term impacts of the project pivot on the levels of sustainability attained. As indicated above, the project has worked hard to ensure sustainability but there remain a few assumptions to that sustainability (as discussed above). As long as the partners remain vigilant and mitigate risks to sustainability, the project will have achieved significant long-term impacts.

4 Conclusions, Recommendations and Lessons

195. One of the pleasures of carrying out such evaluations is to come across a place where these projects are working and having an impact. We confess that one of the often-repeated sentiments during the mission, once we had seen some of the work of the project was, "if all GEF projects around the world achieved as much as this project had, the world would be a different place!" Indeed, we feel **highly satisfied** by the overall work and results of the project. The project offers examples of best practices that should be replicated, not only within Kazakhstan but also elsewhere in the world. The contribution of the project to global biodiversity, ecosystem and ecological process conservation is significant (albeit not always directly intentional!). The corollary is that global biodiversity is better off because of the project.

Item	Rating	Comment
Overall Project Results	**HS**	The project has achieved all of its major objectives and yielded satisfactory benefits, with no significant shortcomings

4.1.1 Recommendations

196. The project has less than four months remaining and it still has much to accomplish. The PIU is well aware of the issues remaining, including:

- Finalizing the legal establishment of the Ecological Corridor (all the work is at the Oblast level and to ensure that the Oblask Justice Department endorses the Corridor)
- Completion of the visitor/community information centres at Katon-Karagai National Park and Markakol zapovednik, respecitively. As long as funding allows for it, we recommend that the current PR and Awareness Building expert is retained to assist with the completion of these centres.
- The project will take the lead on ensuring that the next steps for the transboundary agreements and conservation areas are taken. Most importantly, this is to ensure that the Steering Committee meets early in 2012.
- Collecting the data for the indicator for which there are no data at present: "*The ratio of income of population participating in alternative projects to the average income of population over the region*"
- The final enactment of the Ontustyk Zakaznik: while the FHC is obliged to enact the new protected area, any support that the project can provide in the coming months will help the process.
- Most importantly – because the FHC attributes so much importance to it for the replication of best practices – the remaining members of the PIU will have to produce an outstanding and detailed Final Report. In the report, they will have to highlight those success that warrant replication elsewhere in the protected area system of Kazakhstan in such a way as to ensure that these are taken up by the FHC.

- Finally, the PIU must collect all the co-finance expenditure from the project partners for incorporation into the Final Report. The UNDP-CO should assist with the process of collecting these data.

197. The observations above refer directly to the tasks that remain for the PIU over the forthcoming four months. The remainder of this section on recommendations refer to longer-term processes in the Altai-Sayan project area.

198. First, for the sake of sustainability, we recommend that the GEF Small Grants Program (SGP) remains active in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion and considers projects from NGOs that work on aspects that specifically reduce the risk of unsustainability.

199. A good example is that of protected area staff. As described above, the project has provided training for the protected area staff. However, a number of risks surrounding the protected area staff, for example: i) the best may not be retained (conditions are better elsewhere), ii) recruitment of good, well-qualified people remains challenging and iii) adoption of new technologies has not been as high as the project would have liked. There are two organizations and one set of organizations that must remain vigilant to institutional sustainability: the FHC, the UNDP-CO (operating through their partnership with the FHC) but also NGOs that remain active in the area. Through the SGP, these NGOs can be funded to fill in gaps in capacity, as they are identified, by providing further training or by establishing partnerships with the protected areas themselves.

200. Second, the UNDP-CO must agree with the FHC, as soon as possible, which protected areas management effectiveness tracking tool will be used throughout the country. There may be strengths and weaknesses of both the METT (used in this project in Katon-Karagai National Park and Markakol zapovednik) and the tracking tool that, apparently, is otherwise used in the protected areas of Kazakhstan. However, it does not seem sensible to have two systems in place in the country. It may be worthwhile (possibly through hiring a consultant – funding permitting) to carry out an assessment of both tools and to generate a hybrid that incorporates the strengths of both tools but that is specific to the context of Kazakhstan. This hybrid can then be used throughout the protected area system. Protected area staff need then only be trained once in its use, and if and when protected area personnel move around the country, they will find the same systems in use in the area to which they move.

201. Third, while the project has taken many steps to ensure the financial sustainability of the protected areas in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion in East Kazakhstan and while we understand that financial sustainability of the protected area system of the country is, at least in principle, being addressed within the "Steppe Conservation and Management" project, we recommend that this takes the broadest view possible. For example, it should be noted that the zapovedniks, by definition, will not be able to accrue revenue from 'traditional' revenue stream (e.g., tourism) or even the maturing carbon markets. Mostly, they will be dependent on cross-subsidization from other, more lucrative protected areas and from budget allocation from the government itself. In addition, the Altai-Sayan project may have missed an opportunity for raising funds from the voluntary carbon market through avoided deforestation: the development of the financial sustainability mechanisms for the country need to be cognizant of all opportunities and mechanisms, and be prepared to be adaptive to 'out-of-the-box' opportunities.

202. Fourth, involvement of local communities in the management of natural resources has been demonstrated elsewhere in the world to enhance the sustainability of protected areas. This is particularly the case where involvement translates into a genuine transfer of responsibility to local communities or their representatives. Indeed, examples from Ethiopia have demonstrated that a transfer of responsibility (without any other benefits, financial or otherwise) is sufficient to bring about the change in behaviour that is necessary for sustainable natural resource management or the conservation of biodiversity. As such, in those areas where involvement of local communities is possible (and we acknowledge that the involvement of local communities in zapovedniks is neither possible nor desirable), the FHC should facilitate pilots to be trialled to demonstrate what can and cannot be achieved in the context of Kazakhstan. Again, the partnership between the UNDP-CO and the FHC offers an excellent opportunity and platform to trial such pilots among the portfolio of projects that they are jointly implementing.

4.1.2 Lessons Learned

203. Lessons learned are generally of processes. They are reflections on or answers to the questions: i) of the things that worked in the project, why did they work? and ii) of the things that either did not work or did not work so well, why did they not work optimally? An easier way of thinking about the lessons learned from the project is to imagine (or, better still, actually to try to articulate) the explanation to a colleague from, say, Ethiopia of why the project had succeeded where it had and why the project had fallen short in those areas that it had. These, then, are the lessons from the project.

4.1.2.1 Why the project was successful: lessons learned

204. **The government was fully supportive of and committed to the project**. These are subtly different things: one facilitates the implementation of the project; the other ensures the sustainability of the activities and results. In this case, the government – and particularly the FHC – fulfilled both of these things. A further aspect of the government's commitment is that once the FHC has agreed to something (e.g., the establishment of Ontustyk Zakaznik) and entered into a programme such as the *Zhasyl Damu* ("green growth") programme, they are "obligated" to see it through. Such demonstrations of good governance – that engender trust – are by no means universal!

205. **The project emerged out of a strong and well-conceived strategic partnership**. In this case, the partnership is between the UNDP-CO and the FHC. The strength of the partnership and the systemic vision, ensuring synergy among all the projects that they are implementing, presents a real opportunity to make significant gains for the protected area system in Kazakhstan. Such a partnership should be nurtured and supported.

206. **A well-chosen National Project Manager**. For all his whims, clashes with some of the members of his team and his sense of humour, much of the success of the project can be attributed to the NPM. He was locally respected and knew the system well enough to know how to achieve results within its framework. Other, lesser people could be floored by this system.

207. **Understand local conditions and building trust**. The PIU had a good grasp of local conditions; local conditions in which 'strangers' are not always much trusted particularly when they come to meddle in local affairs. Thus, the team knew where

and how they could best influence the situations. For example, they understood that the most effective mechanism for raising awareness was to do this through teachers and doctors (the two most highly respected professions in the communities), and through children. As we were told, "the people would rather learn something from their children than from strangers …." Knowledge and understanding of the local situations, which might have otherwise have been a barrier to the success of the project, was one of the keys to the project's successes.

208. A further aspect to this lesson is that where possible, **projects must be based where the work takes place** – thus, in the field. Where this is not possible, as was the case in the current project, the project must the have representation on the ground. The local representatives or liaison officers can follow-up activities on a day-to-day basis, organize meetings well before they are scheduled, distribute materials, etc. This also builds trust among stakeholders.

4.1.2.2 Why the project was less than successful in some areas: lessons learned

209. **Too sharp a focus on the project document and the indicators**. This is not to say that the project was not adaptive; on the contrary, the team demonstrated good adaptive management within the framework of the project design. However, as adaptive as they were and beyond the changes that happened at the Inception Report, they also did not seek amendments to the project document or the indicators of the project to reflect changing dynamics of the world. Thus, the project was designed (over a long period of time) as a standard biodiversity/protected areas project. And yet, over its life from the original concept in 2001 to today – a decade later – a number of concepts have grown in strength and it would have been a positive reflection on the project had they adopted and incorporated some of these. Examples include: i) the missed opportunity to raise funding from avoided deforestation and the CDM through afforestation/reforestation and ii) the lack of focus on ecosystems and ecological processes (e.g., watersheds). In summary, by focusing too closely on the project document and the indicators therein, the project has missed a few opportunities.