**Steppe Conservation and Management**

***Kazakhstan***

**GEF Agency: United Nations Development Programme**

**Executing Agency: Ministry of Agriculture: Committee on Forestry and Hunting**

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**GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Objective BD-1**

**Full-sized Project: GEF ID: 3293, UNDP PIMS: 3835**

**UNDP Atlas Project Number: 62761, Award Number: 50708**

**Mid-term Evaluation**

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**Acronyms**

ACBK Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity in Kazakhstan

ADCI Altyn Dala Conservation Initiative

APR Annual progress report

CBD Convention on Biological Diversity

CEO Chief Executive Officer

CFH Committee on Forestry and Hunting

CITES Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species

CMS Convention on Migratory Species

EIA Environmental Impact Assessment

ENO Scientific Background Report (for PA establishment)

FSP Full-size Project

FZS Frankfurt Zoological Society

GEF Global Environment Facility

GIS Geographic Information Systems

GPS Global Positioning System

GTZ German Agency for International Cooperation

ha Hectares

IBA Important Bird Area

Km Kilometers

M&E Monitoring and evaluation

MEP Ministry of Environment Protection

METT Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool

MoU Memorandum of Understanding

MTE Mid-term evaluation

N/A Not applicable

N/S Not specified

NBSAP National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan

NEX National execution

NGO Non-governmental organization

NPD National Project Director

PA Protected area

PIR Project implementation report

PIU Project Implementation Unit

PoWPA Program of Work on Protected Areas (of the CBD)

ROtI Review of Outcomes to Impacts

RSPB Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

SNR State Nature Reserve

TEO Technical Economic Justification Report (for PA establishment)

UA Unable to assess

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

USD United States dollars

WWF World Wildlife Fund

# Executive Summary

1. The Kazakhstan Steppe project is a Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded Full-size project (FSP), with GEF support of $2.22 million (not including project development funding), and originally proposed co-financing is $21.54 million United States dollars (USD), for a total project budget of $23.76 million USD. The project is executed under the United Nations Development Program’s (UNDP) National Execution (NEX) modality, with the Ministry of Agriculture (Committee on Forestry and Hunting (CFH)) as the national executing partner. The project implementation period is planned for five years.
2. The Kazakhstan Steppe project is focused on conserving biodiversity in Kazakhstan’s steppe ecosystems, both within and outside of protected areas. According to the project document, the overall project goal is “*to conserve the globally significant steppe biodiversity of Kazakhstan*” and the project objective is “*to expand the protected areas system of Kazakhstan to ensure an improved coverage of steppe ecosystems.*” The project’s strategy is to further develop Kazakhstan’s protected area system to increase the area of steppe ecosystem included, and strengthen biodiversity and protected area management capacity at multiple levels in multiple ways.
3. The project objective is planned to be achieved through three main outcomes:

**Outcome 1:** **PA system of Kazakhstan contains representative samples of steppe ecosystem under various conservation management regimes and provides effective coverage of ecosystems and ecological processes**

**Outcome 2:** **Tools for landscape-level steppe conservation planning and management are developed and implemented by key stakeholders**

**Outcome 3: The systemic, institutional and individual capacity for steppe conservation in a wide productive landscape is strengthened**

1. According to GEF and UNDP evaluation policies, mid-term evaluations are required for FSPs, and this activity was anticipated according to the project’s M&E plan. This mid-term evaluation reviews the actual performance and progress toward results of the project against the planned project activities and outputs, based on the standard evaluation criteria: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, results and sustainability. The evaluation methodology was based on a participatory mixed-methods approach, which included three primary elements: a.) a desk review of project documentation and other relevant documents; b.) interviews with key project participants and stakeholders; and c.) field visits to relevant project sites in Kazakhstan. The evaluation is based on evaluative evidence from the start of project implementation (February 2009) to February 2012, and includes an assessment of issues prior to approval, such the project development process, overall design, risk assessment and monitoring and evaluation planning. The desk review was begun in January 2012, and the evaluation mission was carried out from January 23 – February 3, 2012.
2. At the mid-point, the project is on track for achievement of the expected outcomes, though some risks remain for the rest of the implementation period. Based on the evaluative evidence collected during this mid-term evaluation, the project **Progress Toward Overall Project Achievement** **and Impact** is rated ***satisfactory***.
3. Project **relevance** is considered ***satisfactory***. At the local and national levels, the project is responsive to Kazakhstan’s national biodiversity priorities and strategies, including legislation on protected areas and wildlife conservation, as well as the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP). The project is also supporting the GEF’s biodiversity focal area strategic objective on protected areas, and contributes to Kazakhstan’s implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), and other multilateral environmental agreements.
4. Based on all aspects of project implementation and financial management, project **efficiency** is rated ***highly satisfactory***. The project implementation arrangements are well-structured, considering the institutional framework in which the project is operating. The project management unit is an independent office operating in coordination with but outside the government executing partner, the Committee on Forestry and Hunting, which is under the Ministry of Agriculture. The implementation approach and financial management are producing cost-effective results for the entire project, and one particularly good practice element is the partnership with the civil society organization Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity in Kazakhstan (ACBK) for executing Outcome 2 of the project. The project team has established open communication channels and efficient working relationships with the relevant stakeholders from the local to national levels.
5. Good progress has been made toward the two main expected project outcomes thus far, though much significant work remains for the second half of project implementation. At the mid-point, project **effectiveness** is rated ***satisfactory***. Under Outcome 1 the project is making notable progress toward the overall target of 2.2% of steppe ecosystem coverage in protected areas, in the context of the government program on protected area (PA) expansion, “Zhassyl Damu.” Key results include the establishment of the Buiritau State National Nature Park (nearly 90,000 hectares (ha)), and agreement with local authorities on the boundaries of the expected Altyn Dala State Nature Reserve (SNR) (covering nearly 490,000 ha) as well as national budget planned for establishment of this PA, which is expected in the first quarter of 2012. Further critical work has being conducted on the expected expansion of the Irgiz-Turgai SNR. The project has also contributed to the establishment of the Bokeiorda SNR, applying, for the first time in Kazakhstan, an ecosystem approach to the identification of the PAs potential boundaries to identify the most critical areas for biodiversity conservation. Critical work remains under Outcome 1 to continue with and achieve full official establishment of the foreseen PAs to reach the overall expected target.
6. Outcome 2 is executed by the project partner civil society organization ACBK. Under this outcome the project is developing a comprehensive and well-structured monitoring program that will assist in ensuring effective PA and biodiversity conservation management decisions. The monitoring system is employing a range of new and innovative methodologies for Kazakhstan, including radio collars, aerial surveys, and partnerships with local hunting cooperatives. Also under this outcome the project is operationalizing and testing, for the first time in Kazakhstan, the approach of designating wildlife corridors to meet the challenges of managing migratory species over exceedingly large spaces, where it is not possible to effectively establish functional protected areas.
7. Under Outcome 3 the project is working to strengthen the capacity of steppe PA management on multiple fronts and at the individual and institutional levels. A training needs assessment was carried out, and PA management staff have been provided with training and resources to improve biodiversity monitoring, PA management, and fire fighting. Overall project capacity results are tracked with the UNDP capacity assessment scorecard. Another key result under this outcome is the development of PA management plans, which is ongoing. The project’s extensive information sharing and public awareness activities have also made important contributions to the project’s progress thus far. Lastly under Outcome 3 is the project’s work on PA financing, which has included a preliminary assessment of PA financing in Kazakhstan.
8. Considering that the project is only halfway through implementation, mid-term evaluations are not well-placed to provide ratings on sustainability; however, this evaluation report includes a sustainability rating, as required. Based on an analysis of the four components of sustainability, the overall **sustainability** of project results is considered ***moderately likely***, given the cautiously optimistic outlook at present. One important issue is the CFH’s financial capacity to move toward fully effective management of the new PAs the project is establishing. Once established the PAs will remain, but they will not serve their purpose until the necessary resources are allocated for their management. Socio-political aspects of sustainability are positive as there is strong stakeholder support for the project objective and results. The range of stakeholders and current institutional framework presents some risks for the future, though these are not critical from the current point of view. The environmental risks the project is addressing will remain pertinent after project completion, including poaching, disease, fire, climate change and water issues.
9. The table below provides a summary of the priority issues for the remaining implementation period, in the view of this evaluation. No significant modifications to the project workplan or approach appear to be required at this stage, although some risks remain for achievement of all expected results by the end of the project.

Table Priority Issues for Remaining Implementation Period

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Risks and Priority Issues** | **Summary** | **Priority Actions or Risk Mitigation** |
| Official approval of all steppe PAs supported under the project. | There remains an important risk that the project will not succeed in securing final official government approval for all steppe PAs targeted by the project, in the context of the Zhassyl Damu program. Government mandates allow only a certain number of PAs to be established each year, and in this sense there is “competition” among PAs on the waiting list for establishment in terms of which PAs will be established at what time. Achieving the project’s overall steppe coverage targets depends on approval of all targeted PAs by the end of the project. | No alternative course of action or additional measures are proposed at this stage. The mid-term evaluation is only highlighting this issue as an important risk for the remaining implementation period. |
| Validation of ecological values of area within proposed PA boundaries following stakeholder negotiation. | In the process of reaching broad stakeholder agreement on the boundaries of the proposed Altyn Dala, Bokeiorda and Irgiz-Turgai extension PAs, some necessary accommodations were made from the originally proposed PA boundaries, relating to the rights of local land users. | The project team should include in its ongoing geospatial work an analysis of the comparative biodiversity values of areas currently proposed for inclusion in PAs relative to the originally targeted areas. In the case that targeted biodiversity values (e.g. critical habitats, key migration routes, Saiga calving grounds, flora species of conservation value, etc.) do not have adequate coverage, additional or compensatory management measures or PA coverage should be considered. |
| Ongoing exploration of a “co-management” approach to PA management in steppe zones | The project document highlights potential changes to relevant legislation to facilitate a legal basis for an approach of “co-management of protected areas with local level stakeholders. National government institutions have as yet been resistant to adopt such changes on a legal basis. The relevance of the concept of co-management is not fully clear in a context of PAs covering hundreds of thousands of hectares, in areas with extremely low population density. The distances involved and level of infrastructure limits the ability to easily bring stakeholders from different communities together. At the same time, the project team is working closely with community-level stakeholders on the establishment and management of PAs, and in some instances a significant proportion of working-age community members are employed as PA staff. | Stakeholder participation and drivenness are standard elements of all GEF work, and linking local benefits with PAs has been demonstrated as critical for achieving successful PA management. Further, in Kazakhstan, where distances are vast and infrastructure and management resources are limited, innovative approaches to effectively managing PAs covering hundreds of thousands of hectares are certainly required. Nonetheless, at present, establishing a national legislative basis for formal co-management or other similar approaches to PA management doesn’t appear to warrant the allocation of project time and resources that would be required to reach this outcome. However, such legal provisions may be valuable in the long-term future of PA management in Kazakhstan (including potentially in non-steppe zones), and should not be completely dismissed. The project team should consider providing a short technical analysis of the relevance of non-traditional management arrangements for PAs in Kazakhstan, which could serve as a starting point for any future developments on this issue. |

1. Below are the key recommendations of this evaluation report; the specific audience for the recommendation is included in brackets.
2. ***Recommendation 1:*** As previously highlighted, perhaps the most significant risk for the Kazakhstan steppe project is whether the targeted steppe PAs will be fully included before project end in the government’s plan of establishing protected areas. Since only a certain number of protected areas can be established each year, if this project is successful, protected areas for steppe ecosystems will be established ahead of other PAs covering non-steppe ecosystems. What is clearly needed in Kazakhstan is a national strategy for strengthening the PA system that appropriately rationalizes, justifies and prioritizes a representative system of protected areas in Kazakhstan covering all ecosystems. This evaluation recommends that as part of the upcoming revision of the NBSAP, national stakeholders also develop and agree on a strategic approach to further development of the national PA system. *[UNDP and National Executing Partners]*
3. ***Recommendation 2:*** The project’s objective is to expand the coverage of steppe ecosystems in the national protected area system, and good progress is being made in this direction. At the same time, once established, there must also be the necessary resources to manage the protected areas effectively. The new PAs cover a huge amount of area, and effective management requires at least a base-level of resources. The steppe project has taken some initial steps to developing a comprehensive financial resource base for Kazakhstan PAs. As Kazakhstan continues to expand its protected area system, it would be highly beneficial to have a corresponding national-level effort for strengthening the system of financing protected areas. This evaluation recommends that UNDP and relevant national stakeholder organizations initiate a national process specifically focused on enhancing the financial sustainability of Kazakhstan’s protected areas for future effective management. *[UNDP and National Executing Partners]*
4. ***Recommendation 3:*** A key element of the project’s focus is to work toward effective management in the PAs supported by the project. PA management resources (staff, equipment, etc.) are allocated based on standards and norms set for PA management in relevant government legislation. Based on current PA management needs, these metrics appear to be outdated and need to be revised to reflect appropriate metrics to meet current needs. The project should work with the relevant stakeholders to analyze the metrics applied in allocation PA staff and resources, and propose amendments to improve standards to meet international PA management norms and achieve a rational and strategic allocation of resources. *[Project team and relevant national stakeholders]*
5. ***Recommendation 4:*** This evaluation recommends the project increase attention for understanding potential impacts to steppe ecosystems of climate change, in the targeted areas where the project is working. This could involve, for example, conducting a desk review of available relevant research to develop greater understanding of how the project areas may be influenced in future climate change scenarios. Other options could be funding a small-scale baseline study in the project area to track climate influences over time (or leveraging resources of other partners), and developing linkages with relevant national and regional climate change initiatives addressing climate impacts on steppe ecosystems. To ensure the long-term sustainability of project results it will be important to understand how climate change may influence the steppe ecosystems in the protected areas established under the project. *[Project team and UNDP]*
6. ***Recommendation 5:*** The project team should work to implement a standardized approach to completion of the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) scorecard, one of the important indicators for tracking project results. One approach was applied before project start as the baseline (using independent experts), and a second approach (working with local partners) was applied after project initiation. Basing the METT calculation on a single source but using different approaches is not conducive to the METT serving as a useful measure of progress because of potential inconsistency in scoring. Having the METT completed by independent experts using a consistent methodology would be the preferred approach and should be applied for completing the METT in the future. *[Project team and UNDP]*
7. ***Recommendation 6:*** This evaluation recommends that the project seek opportunities to involve students, particularly of high school age, in PA management activities to increase environmental education and strengthen capacity. An excellent example of such an approach is being implemented in Naurzum, and could be replicated in other PAs. *[Project team and PA management authorities]*
8. ***Recommendation 7:*** This evaluation recommends the project make some small-scale efforts to catalyze a process to address the water shortage problems in Irgiz-Turgai protected area. Fully addressing this problem is far beyond the scope and capacity of the project, but multiple stakeholders noted it as an important factor that will influence project results in the future, and the project should work to catalyze other stakeholders to begin addressing this problem. *[Project team]*
9. ***Recommendation 8:*** This evaluation recommends a revision to some of the project logframe indicators, as further highlighted under individual indicators in Annex 3. Once revisions have been confirmed by the project team, they should be approved by the Project Steering Committee. *[Project team]*
10. ***Recommendation 9:*** The project objective statement could be revised to more accurately reflect the breadth of project activities and expected results. This would not be a change in the actual objective of the project, but simply an improved description to appropriately convey the scope of project results. An improved revised objective statement could read “to expand the protected areas system of Kazakhstan to improve coverage of steppe ecosystems, while enhancing PA management capacity through new mechanisms and better information for decision-making.” *[Project team and Project Board]*
11. ***Recommendation 10:*** As steppe PAs are established and expanded, they subsequently require appropriate management plans to guide management actions meetings the objectives of the PA. Work on the Irgiz-Turgai management plan has commenced, but remains to be completed to international standards. It is recommended that the project team facilitate provision of the necessary resources to the Irgiz-Turgai management staff to ensure the management plan for this PA is completed and can serve as a good practice model for subsequent PAs. *[Project team and UNDP]*

**Kazakhstan Steppe Project Mid-term Evaluation Rating Summary**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Project Component or Objective** | **Rating** |
| **Project Formulation** |  |
| **Relevance** | S |
| Conceptualization / design | MS |
| Country drivenness | S |
| Stakeholder involvement in design | S |
| **Project Implementation** |  |
| **Implementation Approach (Efficiency)** | HS |
| Management implementation | HS |
| Use of the logical framework | S |
| Financial planning and management | S |
| Adaptive management | S |
| Stakeholder participation and partnerships | HS |
| Use and establishment of information technologies | HS |
| UNDP supervision and support | S |
| Operational relationships between the institutions involved | S |
| Technical capacities | S |
| **Monitoring and Evaluation** |  |
| M&E design | MS |
| M&E plan implementation | S |
| M&E budgeting | S |
| **Stakeholder Participation** |  |
| Production and dissemination of information | S |
| Local resource users and civil society participation | HS |
| Establishment of partnerships | HS |
| Involvement and support of governmental institutions | S |
| **Project Results** |  |
| **Progress Toward Overall Achievement of Objective and Outcomes (Effectiveness)** | S |
| **Objective**: Expand the protected areas system of Kazakhstan to ensure an improved coverage of steppe ecosystems | S |
| **Outcome 1:** PA system of Kazakhstan contains representative samples of steppe ecosystem under various conservation management regimes and provides effective coverage of ecosystems and ecological processes | S |
| **Outcome 2:** Tools for landscape-level steppe conservation planning and management are developed and implemented by key stakeholders | HS |
| **Outcome 3:** The systemic, institutional and individual capacity for steppe conservation in a wide productive landscape is strengthened | S |
| **Sustainability** |  |
| **Overall Sustainability** | ML |
| Financial | ML |
| Socio-political | L |
| Institutional framework and governance | ML |
| Environmental | ML |
| **Progress Toward Overall Achievement and Impact** | S |

*Note: The ratings for the main evaluation criteria are narratively highlighted in the report; other ratings are not.*

*Ratings explanation: HS – Highly Satisfactory; S – Satisfactory; MS – Moderately Satisfactory; MU – Moderately Unsatisfactory; U – Unsatisfactory; HU – Highly Unsatisfactory; UA – Unable to Assess; N/A – Not Applicable. Sustainability ratings: L – Likely; ML – Moderately Likely; MU – Moderately Unlikely; U – Unlikely.*

# Introduction: Evaluation Scope and Methodology

1. According to GEF and UNDP evaluation policies, mid-term evaluations are required for GEF funded FSPs, and a mid-term evaluation was a planned activity of the monitoring and evaluation plan of the Kazakhstan Steppe project. The UNDP Kazakhstan office initiated the mid-term evaluation near the mid-point of the project’s planned five-year implementation period. This mid-term evaluation reviews the actual performance and progress toward results of the project against the planned project activities and outputs, based on the standard evaluation criteria: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, results and sustainability. The evaluation assesses project results based on expected outcomes and objectives, as well as any unanticipated results. The evaluation identifies relevant lessons for other similar projects in the future in Kazakhstan and elsewhere, and provides recommendations for the remaining implementation period as necessary and appropriate.
2. In addition to assessing the main GEF evaluation criteria, the evaluation provides the required ratings on key elements of project design and implementation. Further, the evaluation will, when possible and relevant, assess the project in the context of the key GEF operational principles such as country-drivenness, and stakeholder ownership, as summarized in Annex 3.
3. The evaluation methodology was based on a participatory mixed-methods approach, which included three primary elements: a) a desk review of project documentation and other relevant documents; b) interviews with key project participants and stakeholders; and c) field visits to relevant project sites in Kazakhstan. The evaluation is based on evaluative evidence from the start of project implementation (February 2009) to February 2012,[[1]](#footnote-1) and includes an assessment of issues prior to approval, such the project development process, overall design, risk assessment and monitoring and evaluation planning. The desk review was begun in January 2012, and the evaluation mission was carried out from January 23 – February 3, 2012. The list of stakeholders interviewed is included as Annex 5 to this evaluation report.
4. All evaluations face limitations in terms of the time and resources available to adequately collect and analyze evaluative evidence. With additional time, more stakeholder viewpoints and relevant data could have been gathered for this mid-term evaluation. Also, as is understandable, some documents were available only in Russian or Kazakh language, although all key documents were available in English, and the inclusion of a national consultant as a member of the evaluation team ensured that language was not a significant barrier. Altogether the evaluation challenges were not significant, and the evaluation is believed to represent a fair and accurate assessment of the project.
5. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with UNDP and GEF monitoring and evaluation policies and procedures, and in-line with United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards. The intended users of this mid-term evaluation are the project team and UNDP country and regional offices. As relevant, the mid-term evaluation report may be disseminated more widely with additional stakeholders to substantiate adaptive management decisions or share lessons and recommendations.

# Project Overview and Development Context

## Development Context[[2]](#footnote-2)

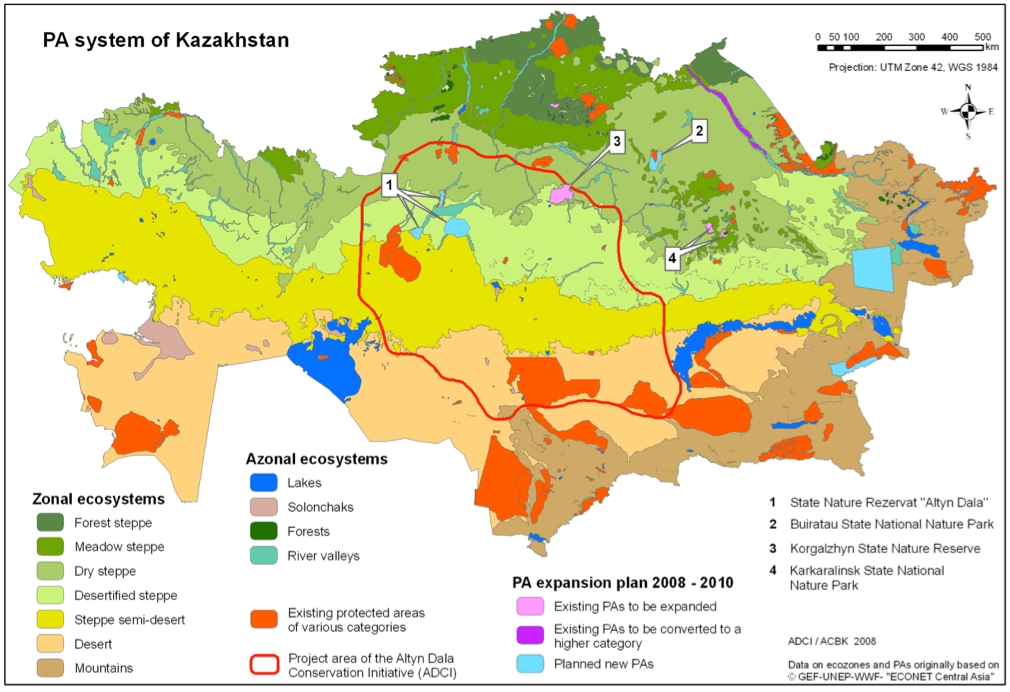
1. *Ecological Context:* Steppes are grassland communities with little or no trees. Within the Palaearctic realm, two biogeographic provinces consist of steppe: the Mongolian-Manchurian steppe (2.6 million km2) and the Pontian steppe (1.9 million km2). The Pontian steppe province, which extends some 3,500 km from the lower reaches of the Danube River in the west to the Altai Mountains in the east with a width varying from 300-900 km, contains over 24% of the world’s temperate grasslands. A significant portion of the world’s remaining natural Pontian steppe habitat is found in Kazakhstan, which covers some 2.7 million km2, or nearly the size of all of Western Europe; Kazakhstan is the world’s 9th largest country. This enormous territory includes five largely contiguous steppe ecological zones: forest steppe, meadow steppe, dry steppe, desertified steppe and steppe semi-desert. These five steppe zones stretch 160 million ha across the northern and central sections of Kazakhstan – or about 59% of the country’s territory – and include some 123 million ha of remaining ‘natural habitat’ (see Figure 1).

Figure Steppe Ecosystems and Protected Area Planning in Kazakhstan

*Source: CEO Endorsement Request*

1. Kazakhstan’s steppe zones support approximately 2,000 species of flora, including about 30 endemic species, along with unique floristic compositions. Twenty main vegetation communities have been identified, of which eight are endemic, two are rare and five represent unique relict communities. Kazakhstan’s steppe ecosystems also provide habitat for globally endangered species of steppe fauna. Of the total 178 mammal species in Kazakhstan, 73 (41%) are found in steppe areas; this figure includes nine of the 24 globally endangered mammal species occurring in the country. In addition, of 488 bird species described for Kazakhstan, 336 (68.9%) are found in the steppe. This includes 21 of the 30 autochthonous endangered bird species. Fourteen of these threatened species are steppe breeding birds, such as Sociable Lapwing, Great Bustard, Little Bustard, Pallid Harrier, and Black-winged Pratincole almost fully located inside the steppe zone.
2. Steppe ecosystems are strongly influenced by the presence of large ungulates and other herbivorous mammals. Moderate and spatially proportional grazing is essential for the stability of many steppe communities. Indeed, many steppe fauna and flora species that are now globally threatened or near threatened rely on grazing by ungulates to provide favorable habitat conditions. In the case of the Kazakh steppe, this ecological grazing balance was historically maintained by the Saiga antelope, along with other large herbivores such as the Kulan and the Przewalski Horse. Between the years 1600 and 1800, Saiga ranged across the entire steppe zone west to the Carpathians and the southern Bug and Prut rivers, including most of the forest steppe. Saiga populations were kept in check naturally by predators such as wolves, which helped to ensure the relatively stable and moderate levels of grazing pressure needed for steppe ecosystem maintenance. Following a period of decline in the 19th century, Saiga populations began to regenerate. As recently as 1974, an estimated 1.2 million Saiga roamed the Kazakh steppe.
3. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, hunting pressures linked to demand for Saiga meat and horns ranged unchecked by any effective state controls. Impoverished rural populations seeking cash or protein, together with consumers of Saiga horn in Traditional Chinese Medicine, represented twin pillars of demand. The commercial value of the horns of a male Saiga antelope was extremely high for people in rural areas, making Saiga an attractive target for poachers. As a result, between 1994 and 2003, Kazakhstan’s Saiga populations declined by some 97 per cent. At the time of the Kazakhstan Steppe project development, as few as 50,000 Saiga were estimated to remain. Other ungulates, such as the Kulan and the Przewalski Horse, are close to extinction.
4. *Socio-economic Context:* Kazakhstan is a middle-income country, with a per capita gross domestic product of approximately $13,000 USD at purchasing power parity, but this wealth is concentrated in the urban areas, with significant development disparities between urban vs. rural territory. The country is ethnically comprised of Kazakhs (63.1%), Russians (23.7%), Uzbeks (2.9%), and a number of other minorities including Ukrainians, Uighurs, Tatars, and Germans. The 2011 population is estimated at 16.6 million people. So few people spread across such a large area gives Kazakhstan one of the lowest population densities in the world at 5.94 persons / km2, surpassed only by Canada and Australia among countries with populations >9 million people. Kazakhstan is divided into 14 provinces, which are divided into districts. A provincial governor or “Akim” heads each province, and municipal Akims are appointed by the provincial Akims.[[3]](#footnote-3)
5. Comprehending the vast and sparsely populated landscape of Kazakhstan is critical for grasping the context in which the project is working. The project target sites span millions of square ha, and transportation routes are limited, as are communication networks. Towns of a few thousand people are sprinkled throughout the landscape, with huge, virtually uninhabited spaces in between. In such a situation, there is a range of challenges for effective PA management - most importantly covering such large areas with adequate monitoring and enforcement capacity (for poaching, etc.). The landscape scale and human socio-economic context must be kept in mind when considering all aspects of the Kazakhstan Steppe project, but particularly any of the field-based project activities.

## Concept Development and Project Description

### Concept Background

1. According to project participants involved in the development process, the project concept grew out of the Altyn Dala Conservation Initiative (ADCI) (see additional information in Section IV.C.iv below), which is a partnership including CFH as a government stakeholder, and civil society organizations including ACBK. The idea for a GEF-supported Saiga conservation project had been brewing in CFH since at least 2003 based on the rapidly changing status of the Saiga, and through discussions and negotiations with UNDP this was developed into the Steppe project. CFH (as the national organization responsible for PAs) and UNDP were working together on other GEF projects, so there were already established lines of communication. Once the concept was clear, a working group was established to further develop the project, with UNDP convening all relevant stakeholders to help lay out the practical steps for development of the project document, and other aspects. ACBK’s experience in the field and environmental data was notable, and it was clear that they could make a significant contribution to the project. The ADCI was also being developed at the time. Once there was multi-stakeholder agreement to move the concept forward, UNDP brought in national and international consultants to help develop the concept through discussions and negotiations with local government and community stakeholders, carrying out socio-economic assessments, and building broad stakeholder support.

### Project Description

1. The project is addressing the conservation of steppe biodiversity, which faces a range of threats. Perhaps the most significant is the disruption of ecosystem processes associated with the populations of large ungulates – particularly the globally threatened Saiga antelope. A large number of steppe flora and fauna species are dependent on a variety of ecosystem effects resulting from stable historical grazing pressure, but these large-scale ecosystem processes are have been disrupted due to the rapid decline of the Saiga antelope population. According to the project document, in the mid-1970s there were an estimated 1.2 million Saiga across the Kazakh steppe. Due to lack of regulatory enforcement and increasing demand for Saiga products for subsistence or in Traditional Chinese Medicine, the Saiga population dropped by 97% in the 1990s and early 2000s. A Kazakhstan government hunting ban on Saiga has been in place since 2001 (to be continued through 2021), but poaching remains a major threat – in March 2012 Kazakh authorities confiscated a shipment of 4,704 Saiga antelope horns on their way to China.[[4]](#footnote-4) In addition to this dramatic decline, over recent decades traditional Kazakh pastoralist lifestyles have been abandoned, further modifying historical grazing pressures. Additional threats include overgrazing in some areas by domestic livestock, tree cutting in river valleys, desertification, and unregulated collection of ornamental and medicinal plants.
2. The Kazakhstan steppe project is classified as a GEF FSP, since the funding received from the GEF is greater than $1 million USD. Total GEF support is $2.22 million (not including PPG funding), and originally proposed co-financing is $21.54 million USD, for a total project budget of $23.76 million USD. Table 4 in Section IV outlines the planned project budget breakdown, and Table 5 shows expected co-financing, and actual co-financing to date. The project is executed under UNDP’s NEX modality, with the Ministry of Agriculture (Committee of Forestry and Hunting) as the national executing partner.
3. According to the project document, the overall project goal is “*to conserve the globally significant steppe biodiversity of Kazakhstan*” and the project objective is “*to expand the protected areas system of Kazakhstan to ensure an improved coverage of steppe ecosystems.*” The project’s strategy is to further develop Kazakhstan’s protected area system to increase the area of steppe ecosystem included, and strengthen biodiversity and protected area management capacity at multiple levels in multiple ways.
4. The project objective is planned to be achieved through three main outcomes:

**Outcome 1:** **PA system of Kazakhstan contains representative samples of steppe ecosystem under various conservation management regimes and provides effective coverage of ecosystems and ecological processes**

**Outcome 2:** **Tools for landscape-level steppe conservation planning and management are developed and implemented by key stakeholders**

**Outcome 3:** **The systemic, institutional and individual capacity for steppe conservation in a wide productive landscape is strengthened**

1. The project’s key milestone dates are shown in Table 2 below. The development period from pipeline entry to GEF CEO Endorsement was 24 months, though from PIF approval this was only 10 months. It is not evident why there was a gap of 14 months between initial PIF submission and PIF approval, although Government endorsement (of the PPG request) was only received in July 2007, so clearly this contributed to the length of the process. Following CEO Endorsement, only another three months were required until project start-up. The project inception workshop was then held in in Astana, on May 11-12, 2009, following the contracting of the project team. The project inception report considers the “inception phase” to have been from August 2008 to April 2009. The project’s planned total implementation period is 60 months (five years).

Table Project Key Milestone Dates[[5]](#footnote-5)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Milestone** | **Expected date [A]** | **Actual date [B]** | **Months (total)** |
| 1. PIF Submission | Not Applicable | October 27, 2006 |  |
| 2. Government Endorsement | Not Specified | July 6, 2007 | 8 (8) |
| 3. PIF Approval | Not Specified | December 20, 2007 | 6 (14) |
| 4. Council Approval (Work Program Inclusion) | Not Specified | February 22, 2008 | 2 (16) |
| 5. PPG Approval | Not Specified | March 11, 2008 | 0.5 (16.5) |
| 6. Initial Request for CEO Endorsement | Not Applicable | August 27, 2008 | 5.5 (22) |
| 7. Final Request for CEO Endorsement | Not Applicable | October 24, 2008 | 2 (24) |
| 8. CEO Endorsement | Not Specified | October 28, 2008 | 0 (24) |
| 9. Agency Approval | Not Specified | December 30, 2008 | 2 (26) |
| 10. Implementation Start (first disbursement) | Not Specified | February 2, 2009 | 1 (27) |
| 11. Mid-term Evaluation | March 2012 | January 2012 | 36 (63) |
| 12. Project Operational Completion | April 1, 2014 | January 1, 2014 | 24 (87) |
| 13. Terminal Evaluation Completion | December 2013 | Not Applicable |  |
| 14. Project Financial Closing | January 1, 2015 | Not Applicable |  |

### Stakeholder Participation in Development

1. Table 3 below outlines the relevant stakeholder institutions, partners and beneficiaries from the local to the national levels, including international partner organizations as well. According to the project document and stakeholders interviewed for this evaluation, during the project development phase a series of consultations were held with all key national and local stakeholders, covering the majority of those included in the table below. According to the project document, the consultation process was led by ACBK, the NGO partner responsible for implementing Outcome 2 of the project. “Substantial attention was paid to coordinating with international partners such as RSPB and GTZ.” All stakeholders interviewed during the evaluation process indicated that the project development process was inclusive and took into account the input of stakeholders consulted.

Table Kazakhstan Steppe Project Stakeholder Mandates and Roles[[6]](#footnote-6)

| **Stakeholder** | **Description** |
| --- | --- |
| **National partners** | |
| Ministry of Agriculture: Committee on Forestry and Hunting and its territorial organs in Akmola, Aktyubinsk, Kostanai, Karaganda, Pavlodar and East Kazakhstan areas. | Special executive and control-monitoring functions in the fields of forestry, protection of reproduction and use of fauna (except for fish and other aquatic animals) and protected areas. Makes recommendations, develops legislation, approves studies, manages PAs, and cooperates internationally. |
| Ministry of Agriculture: Committee of Water Resources and its territorial organizations (Irtysh, Ishim, Nura-Sarysu and Tobol-Torgai River Basin Organizations). | This Committee is responsible for management of water resources, which are a critical natural resource in dry ecosystems such as steppe and semi-desert. Many wetlands are artificial (including ones in ITZ area) and it is important to maintain appropriate water levels in those wetlands. |
| Ministry of Agriculture: Protected area administrations | Administrations of existing and to-be-established PAs within the steppe zone |
| Ministry of Environment Protection (MEP): Department of Sustainable Development and Security | Responsible for developing state policies and programs on environmental conservation and sustainable development, and to coordinate with the secretary of the CBD convention. Kazakhstan is a signatory to 22 international nature protection conventions, including the CBD, the RAMSAR Convention, the Bonn Convention (having also signed a MoU concerning the protection of Saiga along with Uzbekistan and Mongolia), and CITES.  MEP and Oblast branches of MEP are responsible for Environmental impact assessments, which are needed for any of the planned activities related to conservation or use of nature resources.  The MEP hosts the Environmental Information Center, which develops GIS-based layers to inform planning processes. |
| Oblast Akimats | Responsible for establishing and management of PA of local importance. Allocation of land for planned PA of republican importance has to be done by oblast akimats. |
| Rayon Akimats | Rayon akimats have to agree on allocation of land for planned PA of republican and local importance. |
| Village Akimats | Play important role for allocation of lands for land users and for sustainable land management. |
| Agency for Land Resources Management | The Agency is responsible for development and implementation of state policy and programmes on land use planning and land management, geodesy and cartography. |
| Ministry of Economics and Budget Scheduling | Approves national budgets, develops the country’s economic sectors, and promotes the effective realization of social and economic development priorities. |
| Hydrometeorological Centre | Research centre for hydrometeorology |
| Ministry of Education and Sciences | Conducts research on all aspects of the natural environment and on the sustainable use of the steppe zone. |
| Scientific and production associations (non-government research and analytical center “Laboratory of Wild Nature”; Ecomuseum Association, Ecomuseum BioNet Association | Work with local NGOs communities to conserve and restore biodiversity in selected locations. Promote the use of biodiversity friendly alternative energy sources. Research and biodiversity conservation activities. Support PA operations, provide expert assistance to PA staff. Actively engage students in biodiversity conservation work within PAs and outside their territories |
| ACBK | Currently ACBK is the largest conservation NGO in Kazakhstan and runs several conservation programmes and projects. These include programmes for Identification and conservation of IBA in Kazakhstan, as well as the ADCI. |
| Okhotzooprom State Enterprise (operating under CFH) | Okhotzooprom is responsible for management of four State Reserved Zones and conservation of rare and threatened species of wild ungulates and Saiga. Implements the State programme “The Programme for Conservation and Restoration of Rare and Threatened Species of Wild Ungulates and Saiga 2005 – 2007”. |
| **International partners** | |
| Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) | Currently RSPB, in cooperation with ACBK, is developing an IBA programme for Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Partner of the ADCI. |
| Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) | Partner of the ADCI |
| World Wildlife Fund (WWF) | Partner of the ADCI |
| GTZ | Currently GTZ is starting a project called “Sustainable Use of Natural Resources and Conservation of Biodiversity in Central Asia.” |

### Key Elements of Project Planning and Design

1. The project document is comprehensive, based on the standard UNDP-GEF project document outline, and includes all of the required components, such as stakeholder analysis and involvement plan, threat analysis and barrier identification, risk assessment, monitoring and evaluation plan, sustainability analysis, replication plan, incremental cost analysis, etc.
2. The project document includes a well-developed qualitative description of the threats to biodiversity in Kazakhstan’s steppe ecosystems (section 1.2 of the project document), and a description of the barriers to achieving the long-term desired intermediate state (section 1.3 of the project document). However, to strengthen the validation and logical structure of the project strategy and planned outcomes, it would have been helpful for the project document to include a “threat matrix” clearly showing how specific elements of the project design address the threats and barriers identified.
3. The risk analysis in the project document is another important tool for assessing the adequacy of project preparation and design. The risk assessment for the Kazakhstan Steppe project is included in section 2.3 (Table 8) of the project document. Four individual risks are identified (including one related to climate risks, as required by the GEF), with three risk ratings given – two low and one medium. The project inception report reconsiders these risks, adding a risk value of “low” for the identified climate risk (missing in the project document), and adding a new risk related to possible delays in the establishment of steppe PAs due to reduced government financing associated with the global economic crisis. Only four or five risks is a relatively limited risk assessment for a project of this size (there could conceivably be operational risks related to a large project covering such a large amount of territory, as well as risks related to the execution structure of partnership with ACBK and government institutions), but the fact that it was not necessary to introduce a large number of new risks at the inception phase is a positive validation for the risk assessment outlined in the project document. In addition, the risk mitigation approaches described for each risk are adequately comprehensive – in contrast to some GEF projects that provide only a cursory sentence or two on risk mitigation. This can be considered as good practice among GEF projects.
4. *Design Factors Related to PA Establishment:* There are some contextual considerations related to the project design, in relation to which some elements of the project design could have been improved. First, the project design does not fully take into consideration the broad context of the development of Kazakhstan’s PA system. The government sustainable economic development program Zhassyl Damu 2010-2014 (“Green Development”) includes support for the development of the PA system, but at a measured pace based on the government resources available – specifically, it foresees the creation of 13 new PAs and the expansion of seven PAs. Thus only a certain number of PAs can be approved for creation in any given year. However the country currently lacks a strategic vision and prioritization of the creation of PAs. The goal of the Steppe Conservation project is to ensure the creation of as many PAs covering steppe ecosystems as quickly as possible – but lobbying the government on behalf of steppe PAs may delay the development of PAs for other key ecosystems within the country. It is anticipated that there will be a revision of the NBSAP in the near future, with UNDP’s support, and it will be necessary in this process to ensure the development of a strategic national prioritization of further development of the PA system to rationalize and validate the allocation of scarce resources in Kazakhstan for PA approval and management. As stated in Section V.A, this evaluation recommends further work in Kazakhstan on the strategic prioritization of the development of the national PA system.
5. There are two important contextual factors related to the establishment of PAs in Kazakhstan that are relevant for understanding the project’s objective of expanding steppe PA coverage. First, as reflected in the Zhassyl Damu program, the government of Kazakhstan has (evidently) committed to not just establishing “paper parks” and only establishing PAs that can be operationalized; this means that the establishment of any new PA requires corresponding national government budget allocation for actual implementation and start-up of management of the PA. Thus, the project’s work for establishing PAs is not simply a matter of getting stakeholder approval on documents, but represents the more meaningful (but more challenging) process of lobbying for the allocation of necessary government resources to support the PAs once they are officially established.
6. A second issue for PA establishment is that the process requires a comprehensive technical documentation approach, with two main outputs – a scientific background report (“ENO”) and technical economic justification report (“TEO”). The project document describes the process of production and approval of these documents, as excerpted in Box 1. As this description makes clear, the formal approval of a PA requires a certain amount of preparation time, and cannot just happen in a short period. This must be kept in mind in considering the project’s progress toward the achievement of the outcome/objective targets of expanded PA coverage of steppe ecosystems, as discussed in Section V.A.

Box Process for Establishing Protected Areas in Kazakhstan

According to the PA Law (175-III) and associated regulations, the process of creating or expanding any national-level PA works roughly as follows. The first step is preparation of a Scientific Background Report, or ‘ENO.’ The ENO includes ecological studies, baseline scientific description of the area, biological inventories and a geographical description. It should also include descriptions of human geography, e.g., population distribution, land use, etc. An ENO may be prepared directly by CFH or it may be prepared for them by an interested party, such as the Institute of Zoology, an NGO or another scientific organization. If prepared by another organization, CFH reviews the ENO and, if satisfied submits the document to the Ministry of Environment Protection (MEP), whose Department of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Licensing undertakes an environmental impact assessment of the proposal. This department issues an EIA report, which may or may not call for changes in the ENO. As soon as the ENO is cleared by the EIA Department, FHC can adopt the ENO. Once the ENO is completed and accepted, work can begin on a second report, the Technical Economic Justification Report, or ‘TEO.’ The TEO includes: (i) land use planning studies with detailed land-use maps and boundary delineations; (ii) land ownership maps; (iii) plans to negotiate with land-owners to reserve land and, where necessary, to buy-out lands, and; (iv) budgetary information. As with the ENO, FHC needs to clear the TEO before submitting it to MEP. Once MEP has cleared the TEO, CFH prepares a Draft Governmental Decree regarding establishment or extension of the PA, which is submitted to the Office of the Prime Minister. From there, the Document is reviewed by several ministries, prior to being signed by the Prime Minister. Following signature by the latter, the creation or extension of the PA is announced in the Official Gazette.

*(Source: Project Document)*

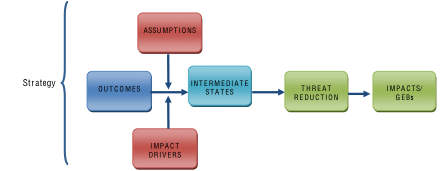
1. *Design Factors Related to Co-Management:* Another overall issue related to the project design is that the project document highlights potential changes to relevant legislation to facilitate a legal basis for an approach of “co-management of protected areas with local level stakeholders.” Development of legislation on this issue was not identified in the project logframe as a key project result, but is clearly emphasized in the project document. National government institutions have as yet been resistant to adopt such changes on a legal basis.
2. The relevance of the concept of co-management is not fully clear in a context of PAs covering hundreds of thousands of hectares, in areas with extremely low population density. The distances involved and level of infrastructure limits the ability to easily bring stakeholders from different communities together. At the same time, the project team is working closely with community-level stakeholders on the establishment and management of PAs, and in some instances a significant proportion of working-age community members are employed as PA staff. For example, during discussions in the second Steering Committee meeting on the involvement of local communities, a representative of ACBK explained: “From the very beginning we hired local rangers who knew the steppe and area, besides the governor of Zhuban town himself applied for work to ACBK and became a head of hunting concessionary. The rangers of hunting concessionary are the local people and respected by local people who are interested in conservation of the area where they live. If SNR ‘Altyn Dala’ is established it will be necessary to hire and teach more than 70 inspectors.”
3. Stakeholder participation and drivenness are standard elements of all GEF work, and linking local benefits with PAs has been demonstrated as critical for achieving successful PA management. Further, in Kazakhstan, where distances are vast and infrastructure and management resources are limited, innovative approaches to effectively managing PAs covering hundreds of thousands of hectares are certainly required. Nonetheless, at present, establishing a national legislative basis for formal co-management or other similar approaches to PA management doesn’t appear to warrant the allocation of project time and resources that would be required to reach this outcome. However, such legal provisions may be valuable in the long-term future of PA management in Kazakhstan (including potentially in non-steppe zones), and should not be completely dismissed. The project team should consider providing a short technical analysis of the relevance of non-traditional management arrangements for PAs in Kazakhstan, which could serve as a starting point for any future developments on this issue.

# Project Design and Implementation

## Kazakhstan Steppe Project Outcomes-Impacts Theory of Change

1. A project’s logical intervention approach, or theory of change, is the expression of the strategy chosen to achieve the objective. Based on the objective and strategy chosen, the project inputs and activities are designed to produce the outputs and outcomes required to eventually achieve impact level results. This “logic chain” defines the outcomes-impacts pathway. Figure 2 below indicates a generic project logic chain pathway.
2. Articulating and understanding a project’s theory of change can be a valuable step toward later assessment of the potential results. This is particularly true for a project such as the Kazakhstan Steppe project, for which large-scale results can only be expected year in the future, as species populations and ecosystems take time to respond to project interventions to the extent that changes in environmental status can be identified and documented. A draft theory of change for the Kazakhstan Steppe project is included as Annex 4 of this evaluation report, for the future reference of the project team and monitoring and evaluation actors. To assess the likelihood of impact, the GEF Evaluation Office applies the Review of Outcomes to Impacts (ROtI) methodology. The ROtI methodology acknowledges and recognizes that following completion of most GEF projects, time is required for sustained execution of the conditions processes leading to eventual changes in threats to or improved management of environmental resources.

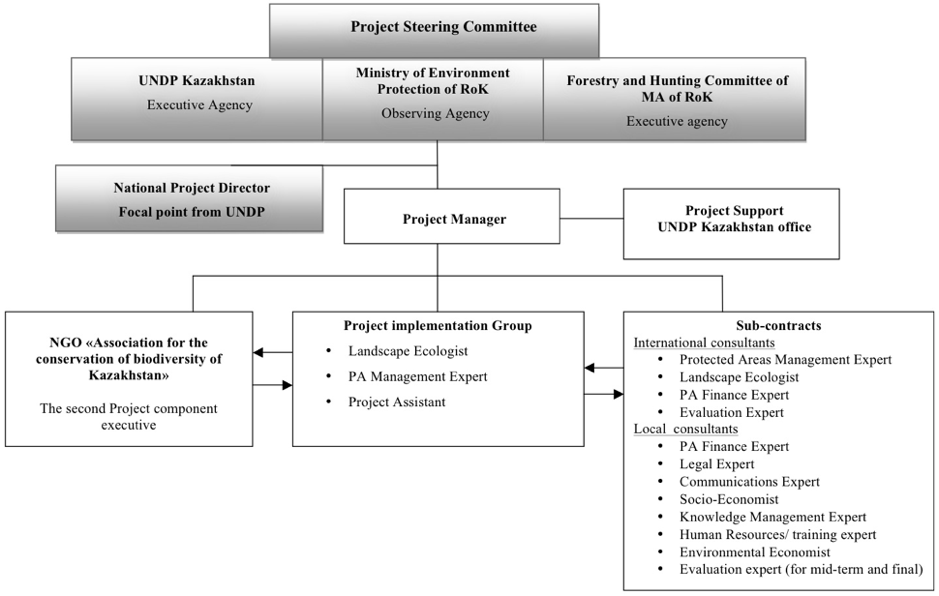
Figure Generic Theory of Change for Outcome-Impacts Pathways[[7]](#footnote-7)



## Kazakhstan Steppe Project Implementation Approach

1. A diagram of the project management arrangements is seen in Figure 3, below. The project is implemented under UNDP’s NEX approach, with the CFH under the Ministry of Agriculture as the national executing partner. The CFH is the government institution responsible for protected areas in Kazakhstan. The project has an innovative management structure, demonstrating partnership between government and a civil society organization. A high level official within the CFH serves as the National Project Director (NPD), but the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) is removed from the CFH physically, and operates as an independent unit. The CFH institutional arrangement within the Ministry of Agriculture does not afford it a strong political or institutional position for lobbying the government on protected areas issues (i.e. for establishment of new protected areas, for increased funding, etc.). The PIU’s independent external positioning facilitates the project being able to lobby the government on issues in CFH’s interest related to protected areas.
2. The PIU consists of the project manager, an administrative assistant, and multiple technical specialists working on issues such as public awareness and capacity development. The PIU physical premises are located in a rented office away from the offices of the CFH, and within a short distance of the UNDP office, which helps facilitate open communication between the project and UNDP. The national NGO ACBK is sub-contracted as the executing organization for Outcome 2 of the project, “Tools for landscape-level steppe conservation planning and management are developed and implemented by key stakeholders.” The operating relationship between the PIU and ACBK seems to be working well, with open lines of communication and coordination on all key aspects of the project workplan. ACBK is fully responsible for managing the budget for Outcome 2, with UNDP, through the PIU.
3. The Project Board[[8]](#footnote-8) is the management decision-making body for the project, consisting of relevant stakeholders and chaired by the NPD. According to the project document, “The PB will monitor the project’s implementation, provide guidance and advice, and facilitate communication, cooperation, and coordination among stakeholders and other project partners.” The project document states that there will be two Project Board meetings per year, in advance of which the project manager prepares and disseminates appropriate documentation highlighting policy issues and recommendations for decisions from Project Board members. The Project Board includes representation from 14 different institutions and organizations, but there has been some turnover in individual participation - only four individuals participated in all of the first five meetings, nine individuals participated in three of the first five meetings, and 18 individuals have participated in total. Project Board representation includes the major project stakeholder institutions. There have been six Project Board meetings not including the inception workshop: June 26, 2009; November 24, 2009; July 8, 2010; December 14, 2010; October 7, 2011; and March 2012. At Project Board meetings the project annual workplan and budget are approved, key issues discussed, and decisions taken. For example, one representative noted that the PA staff from the project’s supported PAs may make special requests of support from the project budget, and the Project Board members consider the requests to determine if they fit within the scope of the project objective and targets. The project team maintains regular communication with Project Board members, and can request time-sensitive decisions be taken on an ad-hoc basis as necessary.

Figure Kazakhstan Steppe Project Implementation Arrangements

*Source: Inception Report*

## Kazakhstan Steppe Project Relevance

1. Based on the assessment of project relevance to local and national priorities and policies, priorities related to relevant international conventions, and to the GEF’s strategic priorities and objectives, overall project **relevance** is considered to be ***satisfactory***.

### Relevance at Local and National Levels

1. The project approach of creating, expanding, and strengthening steppe ecosystem PAs has significant relevance for local level stakeholders in the regions where the project is working. In remote regions of Kazakhstan there is little opportunity for sustainable economic development, and when PAs are created there is typically a need to hire many local community members as PA staff (as highlighted earlier in Section III.B.iv). The project is also supporting development PA management capacity for the staff of steppe PAs. Local government stakeholders are supportive of the project goals, although there are some potential trade-offs between environmental and economic priorities related to the agricultural practices in the Kazakh steppe. Local-level support for the project was validated during the evaluation mission, with meetings directly with local administrative body representatives.
2. The project is relevant to and supportive of Kazakhstan’s national biodiversity conservation priorities and strategies on multiple fronts. Key national policy and legislation supported by the project include the National Environmental Action Plan, and the Conception of Environmental Safety for 2004 – 2015. In addition, the previously highlighted Zhassyl Damu (“Green Growth”) policy for 2010 – 2014 includes the establishment of PAs in collaboration with support from this project. In 2000 the government also approved the national “Concept of Development and Location of Special Protected Natural Territories of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2030.” Kazakhstan’s NBSAP was completed in 1999 and is one of the foundational documents that outlines national priorities and strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the country. The NBSAP specifically highlights the importance of continued expansion of the protected area network in Kazakhstan.

### Relevance to Multilateral Environmental Agreements

1. The GEF is a designated financial mechanism for the United Nations CBD. As such, projects funded by the GEF must be relevant to and support the implementation of this convention. Kazakhstan is a party to the CBD, having ratified the agreement on September 6, 1994. The Kazakhstan Steppe project is relevant to the CBD on multiple fronts, most notably in supporting the CBD’s protected areas program of work (PoWPA).[[9]](#footnote-9) The PoWPA has four overarching elements: 1.) Direct actions for planning, selecting, establishing, strengthening, and managing PA systems and sites; 2.) Governance, participation, equity and benefit sharing; 3.) Enabling activities; 4.) Standards, assessment and monitoring. The Kazakhstan Steppe project is directly supporting all four elements, thereby contributing to implementation of the PoWPA. In addition, the project supports broader aspects of the CBD, such as Article 8. “In-situ Conservation”; Article 12. “Research and Training”; Article 13. “Public Education and Awareness”; Article 14. “Impact Assessment and Minimizing Adverse Impacts”; Article 16. “Access to and Transfer of Technology”; and Article 20. “Financial Resources”.
2. Another relevant multilateral environmental agreement is the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), which aims to conserve terrestrial, aquatic and avian migratory species throughout their range – including species such as the Saiga antelope, sub-populations of which migrate across Kazakhstan’s borders. After accession the CMS entered into force for Kazakhstan on May 1, 2006. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), to which Kazakhstan acceded on January 20, 2000, is also supported through the Kazakhstan Steppe project, since it addresses species such as the Saiga, which is a key focus for the project.

### Relevance to GEF Strategies, Priorities and Principles

1. The GEF strategic priorities for each of its thematic focal areas (biodiversity, climate change, etc.) have evolved from one GEF phase to the next, but overall these priorities have remained roughly focused on the same broad areas of intervention. The project was approved under the strategic priorities for GEF-4 (July 2006 – June 2010), [[10]](#footnote-10) but is also being implemented under the strategic priorities for GEF-5 (July 2010 – June 2014).[[11]](#footnote-11) The project is aligned under the first GEF-4 Strategic Objective for the biodiversity focal area: “Catalyzing the Sustainability of Protected Areas”, and under this objective, it is focused on the third Strategic Program: “Strengthening Terrestrial Protected Areas Networks.” The expected outcomes under this strategic program are the improved ecosystem coverage of under-represented terrestrial ecosystem areas, and improved management of terrestrial protected areas. Indicators for these outcomes are defined as terrestrial ecosystem coverage in national protected area systems, and protected area management effectiveness as measured by individual protected area scorecards. The first GEF-5 strategic objective for biodiversity is “Improve sustainability of protected area systems,” and outcome 1.1 focuses on management effectiveness as measured by the METT, while outcome 1.2 focuses on increased revenue for PA systems to meet required management expenditures. Core outputs under this strategic objective are the number of new protected areas, and hectares of coverage of previously inadequately protected ecosystems.
2. The Kazakhstan Steppe project’s overall strategy is to contribute to the establishment and expansion of PAs covering steppe ecosystems, which clearly supports the GEF strategic priority on terrestrial PAs. The project target is to expand steppe PAs to cover approximately 3.4 million ha, or 2.2% of the ecological zone. Multiple project activities directly link to this activity, including policy support at the national level, and contributions to the technical documents required for establishment of protected areas in Kazakhstan. The steppe ecosystem is globally under-represented, and is also proportionally underrepresented in Kazakhstan’s national PA system. The project is also supporting a range of capacity development activities for the management of these protected areas, including staff training, provision of technical supplies, and education and awareness activities. The project is applying the METT – the relevant GEF biodiversity focal area indicator - to assess progress toward PA management effectiveness for steppe PAs in Kazakhstan. The project is also in line with and supports the biodiversity focal area strategic priorities for GEF-5.
3. Furthermore, as highlighted throughout this evaluation, the project is supporting and meeting the GEF’s core operational principles, as outlined in Annex 2 of this report.

### Country-drivenness, Stakeholder Participation in Implementation, and Coordination with Related Initiatives

1. The Kazakhstan Steppe project is characterized by transparency, good communication among stakeholders, and strong **stakeholder participation** and drivenness, at both the national and local levels. This aspect of the project is considered ***satisfactory***. Part III of the project document (page 56) includes the project stakeholder involvement plan.
2. As highlighted above, the NGO ACBK is fully implementing Outcome 2 of the project, which is along a strong indicator of stakeholder participation in the project. This approach has additional stakeholder involvement benefits however; a portion of the project’s work is focused in an area targeted by a government-civil society partnership known as the ADCI, highlighted in Box 2. The ADCI involves multiple international civil society organizations, and the ACBK linkage to the UNDP-GEF Steppe project facilitates coordination and cooperation with the range of other stakeholders working on the ADCI. From October 2009 to June 2012 ACBK and the FZS have been implementing the project “Wildlife Management in Kazakhstan” with support from the German Agency for International Cooperation (formerly GTZ).
3. Addressing gender equality is one of UNDP’s important areas of work, and is often reviewed in project assessments. There are no critical gender issues related to the scope of this project. As noted in the PIR, “The project maintains equal representation of men and women when conducting activities at PAs. This relates to participation in trainings and workshops organized by the project.” In addition, the project document notes that women will be included in local stakeholder consultations related to PA management planning. The project implementation team is gender balanced.

The ADCI is a large-scale programme to conserve the northern steppe, semi-desert and desert ecosystems and their biodiversity – an initiative begun in 2005 of the CFH of the Ministry of Agriculture and the MEP, implemented by ACBK in partnership with the FZS and the RSPB. ADCI focuses on the range of the Betpak-Dala population of Saiga – an area of about 56 million ha (the size of France).

ADCI Objective: Conservation of steppe and semi-desert ecosystems and their key species.

* Establishment of a network of protected areas interconnected through corridors and biodiversity friendly land use areas
* Recuperation and conservation of Saiga and other key species and their habitats
* Environmental education and raising of public awareness of Saiga and steppe conservation
* Conservation related research and gathering of baseline knowledge on ecosystems and species

*Source: ADCI public relations materials*

Box Altyn Dala Conservation Initiative Overview

1. Previous GEF programmatic evaluations, such as the Third Overall Performance Study of the GEF and Fourth Overall Performance Study of the GEF, have indicated that among the critical elements to ensure the sustainability of project results is strong stakeholder ownership of the processes and activities supported under the project. In this respect, while this is only the mid-point of the project, the prospects for sustainability of results of the Kazakhstan Steppe project can be viewed in an optimistic light. Sustainability is further discussed in Section VI.A below.

## Project Management and Cost Effectiveness (Efficiency)

1. Overall the **efficiency** of the project is rated ***highly satisfactory***. The project management arrangements, as discussed in Section IV.A describing the implementation approach, are well designed to produce cost-effective execution of the work plan. The project implementation has benefited from the fact that this is not the first GEF project implemented in Kazakhstan with the CFH and UNDP as the main implementing partners, and thus the previous experiences have helped developed effective institutional working relationships. In addition, the project team is widely respected and their work appreciated among project stakeholders from the local to national levels. One Project Board representative noted that when they learned who the individuals involved in project management would be when the project was first approved, they had no doubt of the project’s future success. The modality of the partnership with ACBK for Outcome 2 also presents efficiencies, as ACBK is able to leverage the resources of other partners and develop synergistic approaches, as discussed in the previous section of this report. Experience with other UNDP-GEF projects in the region has shown that NGO executed projects are typically highly successful and cost-effective (for example projects GEF ID 1681 and GEF ID 2730), and this trend appears to be holding in the case of the Kazakhstan Steppe project as well.
2. The project team prepares quarterly progress reports for UNDP and CFH, and annual progress reports are prepared for Project Board meetings; reporting has been comprehensive and timely. The project team also completes the annual PIR. The project management budget is planned for less than the UNDP-GEF targeted ceiling of 10% of project costs. As a NEX-executed project (see Section IV.B above on implementation arrangements), the CFH is the national executing partner, but the PIU is set-up outside of the CFH, and the project budget is managed by UNDP. Therefore there are no quarterly or annual financial transfers from UNDP to an external organization or institution, and UNDP pays all project costs directly. Financial management is done within UNDP’s ATLAS system, with annual financial reporting through UNDP’s standard Combined Delivery Report by ATLAS budget line. The project has disbursed $1.67 million USD (75.5%) of GEF funding as of March 31, 2012. In this case, the project can be considered to be over-delivering, since as of March 31, 2012 only 63.3% of the planned project duration had passed (considering first disbursement from February 2, 2009). Although an annual audit is included in the project M&E plan, because the project funds are managed by UNDP the project is not necessarily audited annually. An external audit was conducted in 2010 by the German firm Fabel, Werner & Schnittke GmbH, and found no financial management issues through December 31, 2010.
3. There have not been significant delays in project implementation per se, but the project development period did take over two years, and thus once the project was approved the project team worked urgently to keep project activities in-line with the corresponding government budgeting and development programming. It does not appear that there have been any delays that have affected project efficiency. It should be noted however that project results in terms of formal approvals by government of PA establishment and expansions have been slower than originally envisioned in the project document, and there is the risk that the project will not be able to reach all of its specific targets by the end of scheduled project completion. Should a six-month no-cost extension be required at the end of the project to further consolidate results, this would certainly not be the first project in the UNDP-GEF portfolio to take this often-necessary step, although financial resources may be limited for such an approach, considering that the project has over-delivered the budget thus far.

## Financial Planning by Component and Co-financing

1. The project’s planned expenditure by outcomes is broken down in Table 4 below. Outcome 2 of the project is the largest planned component of the project, with 39.6% of GEF funding. Outcome 3 is planned for 33.3% of GEF funding, and Outcome 1 for 17.1% of GEF funding. Project management is budgeted for $215,000 of GEF funding, or 9.7% of the total GEF financing; this is below the stated GEF threshold of 10%. Project M&E is budgeted for $187,000, but the project document or CEO Endorsement Request does not clearly specify if this amount is coming from GEF funding or partially from co-financing. The funding for M&E activities comes from across the project budget lines.
2. The planned and actual project co-financing is shown in Table 5 below. Co-financing for the project is mainly coming from government sources, as resources to go toward support for PA management and development following the establishment of PAs supported by the project. The most significant portion of co-financing is $20.62 million USD from the CFH (out of a total planned of $21.54 million). A majority of co-financing under Outcome 1 is to support the Phase II PA expansion plan on the government side during project implementation, while co-financing under Outcome 2 and 3 was to support PA management, wildlife corridors, and wildlife management. Co-financing has reached almost 70% of the planned co-financing. Execution of the expected government co-financing may be affected as a result of the global economic crisis from 2008 (when the project was approved) to 2012, a change in project context highlighted in the inception report; as noted in the report, the CFH’s government budget support was cut by 24% in 2008, and by 14% in 2009.

## Flexibility and Adaptive Management

1. The project is being implemented through a flexible, results-oriented approach, while maintaining the focus on the overall project strategy. The project workplan is developed in a open-ended enough manner to allow the project team to take advantage of synergistic opportunities throughout the year that may contribute to the project goals and objectives.
2. At the inception stage there were minor changes made to some aspects of the project. For example, from project design to inception the area of PAs in Kazakhstan increased slightly (from 8.1% to 8.28% of territory), and thus this change was referenced in the project inception report. In another example, the population numbers of Saiga had changed, so this was also updated in project references. Under planned Output 1.1 it had been expected that the project would contribute to the expansion of Korgalzhyn SNR and Karkaralinsk SNNP, but these had already been officially expanded by the time of project start, so the project has been able to focus on Altyn Dala and Buiritau PAs for the first phase of activity. As previously mentioned, one new risk on potential delays in PA establishment due to macro-economic conditions was added during the inception phase. Appropriate minor revisions to the project logframe were also made. There have not been major changes to the project workplan or budget during implementation.

## UNDP Project Oversight

1. UNDP is the responsible GEF Agency for the project, and carries general backstopping and oversight responsibilities. As described in the project document, the UNDP Kazakhstan Country Office “will support implementation by maintaining the project budget and project expenditures, contracting project personnel, experts and subcontractors, undertaking procurement, and providing other assistance upon request of the National Executing Agency. The UNDP-CO will also monitor the project’s implementation and achievement of the project outcomes and outputs, and will ensure the proper use of UNDP/GEF funds. Financial transactions, reporting and auditing will be carried out in compliance with national regulations and established UNDP rules and procedures for national project execution.”
2. Project monitoring is carried out by the UNDP environmental program staff in the Kazakhstan country office, and by the UNDP Regional Technical Advisor for biodiversity in the Bratislava Regional Center.
3. All evidence gathered during the evaluation mission indicates that UNDP is fulfilling its oversight and supervision responsibilities fully, with strong communication with key project partners and the project team. UNDP has worked with the project team to ensure comprehensive and timely financial and progress reporting. The project supervision has also benefited from the consistent personnel presence at the country level.

Table 4 Project Planned Budget and Actual Expenditure Anticipated Through March 31, 2012 *(all amounts in millions USD)*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **GEF Amount Planned** | **% of GEF Amount Planned** | **Total Planned** | **% of Total Planned** | **GEF Amount Actual** | **Actual % of GEF Amount** |
| **Outcome 1:** **PA system of Kazakhstan contains representative samples of steppe ecosystem under various conservation management regimes and provides effective coverage of ecosystems and ecological processes** | 0.38 | 17.1 | 6.91 | 29.1 | 0.28 | 73.4 |
| **Outcome 2:** **Tools for landscape-level steppe conservation planning and management are developed and implemented by key stakeholders** | 0.88 | 39.6 | 7.40 | 31.1 | 0.67 | 76.1 |
| **Outcome 3:** **The systemic, institutional and individual capacity for steppe conservation in a wide productive landscape is strengthened** | 0.74 | 33.3 | 7.07 | 29.8 | 0.56 | 75.7 |
| **Monitoring and Evaluation\*** | N/S | N/S | 0.19 | 0.8 | N/A | N/A |
| **Project Management** | 0.22 | 9.7 | 2.38 | 10.0 | 0.18 | 76.0 |
| **Total** | 2.22 |  | 23.76 |  | 1.67 | 75.5 |

*Source: Planned amounts: CEO Endorsement Request. “GEF Amount Actual”: Project Combined Delivery Report financial records for 2009 - 2011, and for March 31, 2012 .*

*\*The M&E budget is drawn from all components of the project budget, and is not additional to the amounts shown for project components and management.*

Table 5 Project Planned and Actual Co-financing✝ Through December 31, 2011 *(all amounts in millions USD)*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Co-financing (Type/Source) | IA own Financing | | Bi-lateral Donors | | National Government\* | | State Government | | Local Government | | Private Sector | | NGOs | | Other Sources | | Total Co-financing | | Percent of Expected Co-financing |
| Planned/Actual | P | A | P | A | P | A | P | A | P | A | P | A | P | A | P | A | P | A | Actual share of proposed |
| Grant | 0.05 | 0.01 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 0.05 | 0.01 | 20.0% |
| Credits |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Loans |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Equity |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| In-kind | 0.00 | 0.04 |  |  | 20.62 | 13.82 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 0.87 | 0.95 |  |  | 21.49 | 14.81 | 68.9% |
| Non-grant Instruments |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Other Types |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **TOTAL** | 0.05 | 0.05 |  |  | 20.62 | 13.82 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 0.87 | 0.95 |  |  | 21.54 | 14.82 | 69.8% |

*P=Planned; A=Actual*

*\* National government source is Committee on Forestry and Hunting.*

*Source: Planned amounts from Project Document. Actual amounts reported by project team.*

✝*Detailed co-financing figures (non-rounded) are included in Annex 8 of this evaluation report.*

# Kazakhstan Steppe Project Performance and Results (Effectiveness)

1. Keeping in mind that this is the mid-term evaluation and the project has at least two more years of implementation, considering the progress thus far toward the achievement of expected outcomes, **effectiveness** is rated ***satisfactory***. Considering all aspects of the project, **progress toward overall project achievement and impact** is assessed as ***satisfactory***. The project is generally on track, though some risks remain – in particular, reaching the overall goal of steppe zone PA coverage by the end of the project, a process that is mutually-dependent on government partners.
2. The project logframe includes two main project objective indicators – steppe zone protected area coverage (outcome level), and the population level of the Betpakdala Saiga population (impact level). The Saiga population baseline is given as 22,760 animals in 2007, and the project goal was at least a 10% annual increase. As of 2010, the population was estimated as 78,000 (increase of 47.6%) and in 2011 this number was estimated at greater than 100,000. The Saiga population is a relevant impact level indicator for the project, because the Saiga is a keystone species for the steppe ecosystem, and requires effective management and conservation of large spaces, which also generates benefits for other species. The project is also undertaking both direct and indirect activities that would benefit the Saiga population, such as anti-poaching support, and strengthening PA management capacity. However, given the scale and scope of potential influences on the Saiga population, it is difficult to draw direct conclusions about the project’s contribution to the status of the Saiga population. For example, in May 2010 approximately 12,000 Saiga perished from as-yet-not-fully-explained disease factors; in May 2011 some hundreds of Saiga died, while in April 2012 approximately 1,000 Saiga were found dead. It is likely that the most significant contribution to the increasing Saiga population is the government of Kazakhstan’s ban on hunting of Saiga, established in 2001 and currently extended until 2021. Therefore although the project’s target for an increasing Saiga population has been met, it is difficult to say that this is an adequate results-based indicator on which to base an objective assessment of progress toward the project objective.
3. As previously cited, the project objective is stated as “to expand the protected areas system of Kazakhstan to ensure an improved coverage of steppe ecosystems.” This objective statement is output-based, and the project is in fact doing much more than just expanding PA coverage. This evaluation recommends that the project objective statement could be revised to more accurately reflect the breadth of project activities and expected results. This would not be a change in the actual objective of the project, but simply an improved description to appropriately convey the scope of project results. An improved revised objective statement could read “to expand the protected areas system of Kazakhstan to improve coverage of steppe ecosystems, while enhancing PA management capacity through new mechanisms and better information for decision-making.”
4. Given the project objective of expanding the protected area system of Kazakhstan to increase steppe ecosystem coverage, the other objective indicator – hectares of PA coverage of steppe ecosystems – is an appropriate measure of project results, to the extent that expansion of coverage can be attributed to project results. In this case, the project is clearly significantly contributing to the results achieved thus far. The baseline for this indicator is 2,069,960 ha (or 1.35% of the ecological zone). Progress toward the target is broken down into two project phases, corresponding to relevant government strategies – Phase 1 through 2010, and Phase 2 through 2013. The target for Phase 1 is 2,929,960 (a project driven increment of 860,000 ha), equivalent to 1.9% of the total ecological zone. The target for Phase 2 is 3,429,960 (a project driven increment of 500,000 ha). Progress toward these targets is summarized in Table 6 below.

Table Steppe Project Contributions to Steppe PA Coverage

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Protected Area** | **Area of Steppe Zone (ha)** | **Year of Implementation** |
| Buiratau SNNP | 88,986 | March 11, 2011 |
| Altyn Dala SNR | 437,651 | Expected 2012 |
| Irgiz-Turgai SNR | 409,962 (expansion) | Expected 2012 |
| **Sub-total Increment by MTE** | **936,599** | **Strong degree of likelihood of achievement** |
| Irgiz-Turgai/Altyn Dala wildlife corridors | 200,000 (approximate) | Expected 2012 |
| Bokeiorda-Zhaiyk “reservat” | 380,000 (approximate) | Planned 2013 |
| Ulytau National Park | 54,000 (expansion - approximate) | Planned 2013 |
| **Total Increment Expected** | **1,570,599 (approximate)** |  |

1. As can be seen in the table, if the establishment of Altyn Dala and expansion of Irgiz-Turga happens in 2012 as anticipated, the project will have exceeded the Phase 1 incremental target of 860,000 ha (reaching 936,599 ha). Additionally, operationalization of the wildlife corridors will bring this total to more than 1.14 million ha. However, two additional PAs will need to be established before the end of the project to reach the total project target of 1.36 million ha of new or expanded steppe PAs (for which an additional 223,401 ha would be required). The outlook for the establishment of Bokeiorda PA is uncertain as the preliminary ENO/TEO technical documents have not been completed, and the project is “competing” with other PAs in Kazakhstan to have this PA established. It is also imperative that the Altyn Dala SNR is established and the Irgiz-Turgai SNR is expanded as expected in 2012.
2. Based on the relevant above figures, it is clear that the project has already made significant contributions to the expansion of steppe PAs in Kazakhstan, and should continue to do so. However, there is a tangible risk of failing to reach the original project target before project completion. In addition, since only a certain number of protected areas can be established each year, if this project is successful, PAs for steppe ecosystems will be established ahead of other PAs covering non-steppe ecosystems. What is clearly needed in Kazakhstan is a national strategy for strengthening the PA system that appropriately rationalizes, justifies and prioritizes a representative system of protected areas in Kazakhstan covering all ecosystems. This evaluation recommends that as part of the upcoming revision of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, national stakeholders also develop and agree on a strategic approach to further development of the national PA system.
3. Another important consideration is the “biodiversity value” of the steppe zone under protection – although the objective indicator (and indeed the GEF biodiversity focal area indicator) is only for increased area of steppe zone protected, some specific areas of the steppe zone have higher biodiversity values than others – for example, relatively small areas that Saiga use for calving. Early in the project implementation process technical ecological and landscape analysis was carried out as an input to the overall process of PA creation and expansion. The project contracted an international expert to support these issues, but because of the initial rush of activities in project implementation, it is unclear to what extent the project was able to incorporate the input of the international expert, which presumably would have strengthened the technical approach taken by the project. In addition, the project was not able to secure agreement on the originally proposed boundaries for Altyn Dala and Irgiz-Turgai, and additional scientific work is needed to ascertain and affirm the biodiversity values of the areas that will be included within the finally agreed PA boundaries. The project team should include in its ongoing geospatial work an analysis of the comparative biodiversity values of areas currently proposed for inclusion in PAs relative to the originally targeted areas. In the case that targeted biodiversity values (e.g. critical habitats, key migration routes, Saiga calving grounds, flora species of conservation value, etc.) do not have adequate coverage, additional or compensatory management measures or PA coverage should be considered.

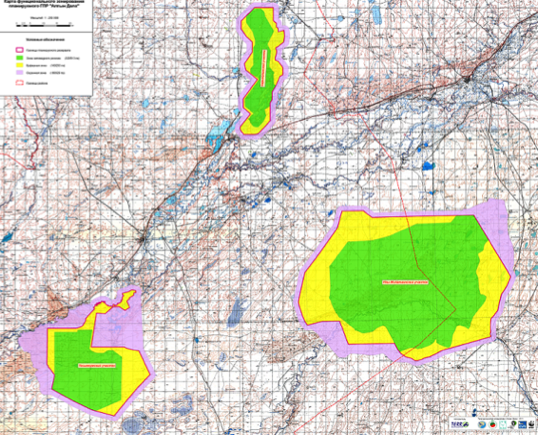
## Progress Toward Achievement of Anticipated Outcomes

1. Each of the project outcomes is implemented through a series of outputs and specific actions, as outlined in the annual project workplans. Under each of the outcomes below, the primary outputs are listed, and key results highlighted. The project logframe includes indicators and targets for each of the outcomes, which are assessed in Annex 3 with a complete review of the measureable logframe indicators. Progress toward key indicators is summarized under each of the components below. Any relevant suggested revisions to the logframe indicators and targets are also included in Annex 3.

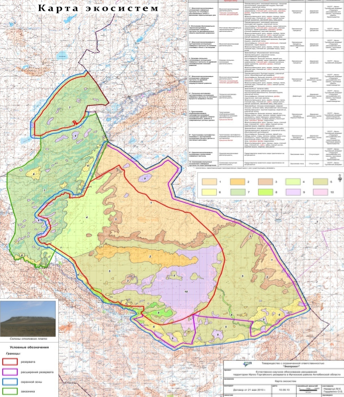
### Outcome 1: PA system of Kazakhstan contains representative samples of steppe ecosystem under various conservation management regimes and provides effective coverage of ecosystems and ecological processes

1. This outcome includes various activities focusing on the establishment and expansion of steppe zone PAs, as described under each of the outputs below. At the beginning of the project, research was conducted to identify key areas for steppe biodiversity conservation where it would be important to establish PA coverage. Roundtable discussions were held with the Kazakhstan scientific community, and based on the results of this work the project developed recommendations for new PA coverage to be included in the government’s 2010-2013 program “Zhassyl Damu” or “Green development”. This government program incorporated the expansion of Irgiz-Turgai (Aktubinskaya oblast), the expansion of Ulytau NP (Karagandinskaya oblast), and the establishment of Bokeiorda-Zhaiyk PA (West Kazakhstan). The project also supported the work on other PAs, such as Buiratau, and Altyn Dala. In addition to specific steppe ecosystem PA coverage, project indicators for this outcome include METT scores for two PAs, Naurzum and Irgiz-Turgai, with baseline scores of 59% and 34%, respectively. The target values are 74% for Naurzum, and 60% for Irgiz-Turgai, though the project team does not have information on the basis for the target values, and considers the target for Naurzum under-ambitious and the target for Irgiz-Turgai overambitious. The target for Naurzum has been exceeded, with a 2011 score of 86%, and the 2011 score for Irgiz-Turgai was 53%. The project is working closely with the Irgiz-Turgai management staff, but has conducted relatively few activities supporting Naurzum, which has an active and well-established administration.
2. Based on the results described under the outputs below, progress toward the achievement of Outcome 1 is considered ***satisfactory***.
3. *Output 1.1 Gazettement of two new and two expanded steppe zone PAs*
4. Under this output the project supported the ENO/TEO technical documents for the establishment of Buiratau SNNP (88,986 ha), and the PA was officially established by the national government on March 11, 2011, including the allocation of the budget necessary for operational start-up. For Altyn Dala SNR the in-depth stakeholder consultations for agreement on PA boundaries were carried out by the project, with an agreed area of 489,766 ha (see Figure 4) (of which 437,651 ha covers steppe zone) and the technical documentation for the PA has been completed. The government supported the PA development process with budget allocations, and on July 20, 2011 the Republic Budget Commission approved the allocation of 171.2 million KZt ($1.15 million USD) for the 2012 budget, which provides a strong indication of the forthcoming official establishment of the PA in 2012.

Figure Agreed Boundaries for Altyn Dala SNR

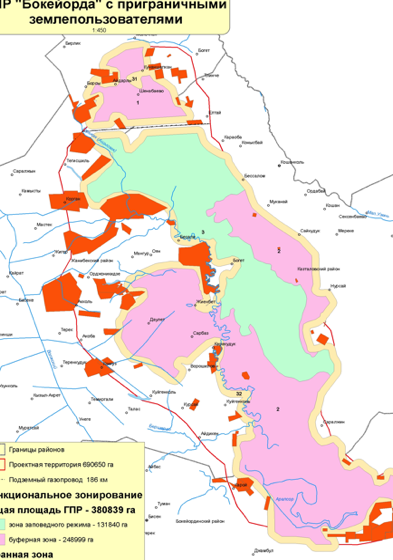


1. The formal establishment of the Altyn Dala SNR will be an excellent result of the project, but the PA boundaries had to have some adjustments to the originally proposed boundaries (based on scientific analysis) as concessions to local government and local land users. On the one hand, further research and ongoing analysis is required to assess the biodiversity values of the areas that were left outside the formal PA boundaries. On the other hand, while these excluded areas will be used for pastoral agriculture, the actual impacts on biodiversity are considered to be relatively low, because of the low concentrations of livestock in the area. It is also anticipated that the PA management staff will be able to work with the land users to help avoid threats – for example, the land users can act as additional eyes on the ground watching for potential Saiga poachers, and inform appropriate authorities of any are seen.
2. *Output 1.2 Stage II steppe PA expansion plan, with associated legal and regulatory changes*
3. The ENO report for the expansion of Irgiz-Turgai SNR was conducted, and an expansion of the PA of ~410,000 ha (see Figure 5) was recommended. The project worked with the local government authorities to set aside the land allotment for the PA expansion. The TEO was prepared, and was adopted by the CFH. Similar to Altyn Dala, there were some land-user issues regarding PA boundaries for Irgiz-Turgai also, and the project worked with local stakeholders to arrive at mutually agreeable solutions.

Figure Proposed Irgiz-Turgai SNR Expansion

1. *Output 1.3 At least one new PA gazetted, two PAs expanded and 500,000 ha of steppe ecosystems covered within the steppe ecological zones under second stage of PA expansion plan (2011-2013)*
2. This output includes the establishment of Bokeiorda-Zhaiyk SNR, in West Kazakhstan. In 2010 public consultations were held with local authorities, scientists and NGOs on issues related to the potential establishment of the PA. In 2011 the project supported the preparation of the ENO report, and working groups were formed for discussion of the PA issues. Field visits were also conducted to collect data on the biodiversity and geophysical characteristics of the targeted area (vegetation, flora, soil cover, fauna, etc.) and an environmental monitoring approach was developed. In November 2011 a meeting was held with oblast authorities where the proposed boundaries of the PA were agreed. The process still needs completion of the TEO report, and further government approvals to reach formal establishment of the PA, which is proposed to cover approximately 380,000 ha.
3. One good practice example from the project under this output was the application of an “ecosystem approach” to propose the PA boundaries (see Figure 6**Error! Reference source not found.**). According to the project team, this represents the first time in Kazakhstan that an ecosystem-based analysis has been the primary driving force for the rationale of the proposed PA boundaries. Ultimately in the discussions with local stakeholders some of the proposed areas were not included, but the precedent of taking an ecosystem-based approach for PA design is an excellent example to be replicated and carried forward in the future in Kazakhstan.

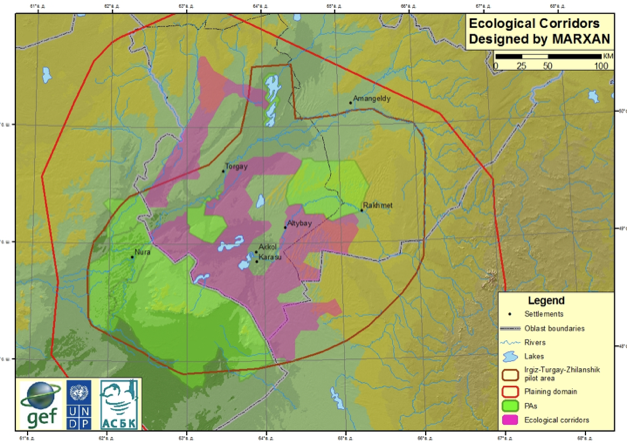
Figure Applying an Ecosystem Approach for Identification of Conservation Values of Proposed Bokeiorda-Zhaiyk PA

1. In addition to the establishment of Bokeiorda-Zhaiyk, the project is also working toward the expansion of Ultyau Sanctuary. Field visits and working meetings with local authorities have been carried out, and data on flora, fauna and ecosystems was gathered. The ENO was prepared in two versions: a. the expansion of the existing PA; and b. the establishment of a national park in the area with coverage of 54,4000 ha. The CFH recommended revisions to the ENO for establishment of the Ulytau National Park.
2. *Output 1.4 Long-term framework for steppe PA expansion*
3. This output relates to legislation and policy aspects of the PA system for steppe ecosystems in Kazakhstan. The project worked with support of an international expert on PA management to provide the CFH with recommendations on legislative amendments to strengthen the PA management approach, and addressing issues such as simplification of the PA establishment procedures. Amendments to the protected areas legislation were adopted, but not to the extent recommended by the project and international expert.
4. A key result under this output was the approval of the legislation supporting an official approach to the establishment of “wildlife corridors”, for the first time in Kazakhstan. This is a critical tool for biodiversity conservation in Kazakhstan given the vast distances involved and the migratory nature of some key species, such as Saiga. In such a context it is not possible to establish PAs all areas important for biodiversity, so approaches such as wildlife corridors – which make use of mechanisms such as temporary protection measures, community-based management partnerships (e.g. with hunting concessions), and strategic allocations of resources – are necessary. Further project work on wildlife corridors is covered under Output 2.2 below.

### Outcome 2: Tools for landscape-level steppe conservation planning and management are developed and implemented by key stakeholders

1. Outcome 2 covers two main project elements – environmental monitoring and on-the-ground aspects of wildlife corridors. There are three main indicators for this outcome, which attempt to capture the intended results through a qualitative/quantitative indicator/target approach. In general, the project has met, exceeded, or is fully expected to meet the indicator targets, as discussed in further detail in Annex 3, which includes specific information on the project logframe indicators. This outcome is fully executed by ACBK. Based on the results described under the outputs below, progress toward the achievement of Outcome 2 is considered ***highly satisfactory***.
2. *Output 2.1 Steppe ecological monitoring and knowledge management / decision support system to inform steppe land use and conservation planning*
3. ACBK has established a technically advanced but cost-effective ecological monitoring system in key project areas, building on innovative technical and partnership approaches. Data on fauna, flora and poaching is collected through a variety of harmonized methods, and aggregated in a web-based GIS monitoring database. Obviously, collecting ecological monitoring data over such vast spaces with limited infrastructure presents multiple challenges, but these are being overcome through diverse monitoring methods, including aerial censuses of Saiga, and satellite telemetry (with radio collars) which is a technique being applied in Kazakhstan for the first time under this project. In 2009-2010 40 satellite collar transmitters were attached to Saiga from the Betpakdala and Ustyurt populations. In addition, ACBK is partnering with hunting cooperatives in the project areas to provide them with some basic monitoring equipment, such as handheld GPS and binoculars, in exchange for monitoring data collected under specified protocols. ACBK’s partners in the monitoring program include: Hunting concessions of Saga, Altybay, Torgayskoye, Bokay, and Imanovskoye; Irgiz-Torgay SNR; and Okhotzooprom. Based on the data collected, the project team has produced numerous spatial analyses on biodiversity distribution and critical ecosystems, and provided this information to PA management authorities to improve decision-making. The monitoring partner organizations also have controlled online access to the monitoring data, to facilitate the entering of collected data.
4. The partnership approach and level of technical sophistication in meeting the challenges of monitoring biodiversity across Kazakhstan’s massive steppe landscapes are truly worthy of commendation, and may serve as a good practice example for biodiversity monitoring throughout Kazakhstan, and in other similar landscape contexts.
5. A naturally arising question for such activities relates to the likely sustainability of the results, but the indications are, at the stage of the mid-term evaluation, that this is not a critical issue, as ACBK is expected to continue operating and maintaining the database. There is an outstanding question however about the status of the monitoring data at the end of the project – the CFH envisions that the monitoring database will be turned over to them, while the project stakeholders are uncertain that this is a feasible exit strategy. This is a sensitive issue related to the poaching threat to Saiga – naturally, the Saiga poaching network would have a significant incentive to access detailed scientific data about the locations and migration patterns of Saiga populations. Although various environmental monitoring data sets are already shared with diverse stakeholders, the ACBK database is in a sense “classified” with limited access to ensure that the comprehensive data does not end up in the wrong hands.
6. *Output 2.2 Wildlife corridors and associated modalities for landscape-level planning and management defined at ITZ pilot area* and *Output 2.3 Operationalization of wildlife corridors at ITZ pilot area*
7. Prior to the efforts of the Kazakhstan Steppe project there was no legally-established landscape level model for biodiversity conservation and management. A key activity of the project is the introduction and successful demonstration of a model applying wildlife corridors, since, as previously highlighted, it is critical to develop conservation approaches that can adequately address the vast territory and migratory species found in Kazakhstan. The project’s progress and results on this issue are a highly important achievement of the project thus far. Participatory management of landscapes outside protected areas is critical in a situation where large distances and limited human and technical capacity constrain the ability of authorities to adequately monitor and enforce wildlife management policies. The legislative basis and justification for the corridor approach is a focus under Output 1.4, and is discussed above. The official legal status for wildlife corridors remains to be finalized with government approval.
8. The project team has worked on practical aspects under Outputs 2.2 and 2.3 to support the implementation of wildlife corridors in the ADCI focus area (including both Irgiz-Turgai and Altyn Dala PAs). Applying landscape planning methods the project identified key potential corridor areas for conservation (see Figure 7), and the relevant stakeholders to engage to implement corridors. To design the corridors, the team used MARXAN GIS-based landscape planning software. Multiple inputs were included in the analysis, including fire frequency, ecosystems, slope, hydrography, land use data, socio-economic data, normalized difference vegetation index, known Saiga migration areas, known Saiga calving grounds, bird census data, and monitoring transect counts. A zoning approach was then applied based on seasonal and biological cycles, and the necessary variable conservation measures and protection schemes to be applied.
9. Moving toward actual on-the-ground implementation of wildlife corridors, together with stakeholders the project team is defining the management objectives of the proposed corridors, preparing scientific background reports (i.e. ENO), working toward agreement on management activities including roles, responsibilities and financing, and agreeing on a workplan for participatory corridor management by stakeholders.

Figure Proposed Ecological Corridors for Conservation of Steppe Biodiversity



1. The wildlife corridors activity is one of the project areas where the “community-based management” approach was envisioned in the project document. A formal policy basis for community-based management has not been accepted by the government, but as discussed in Section III.B.iv of this evaluation report, given the context of low population density, large scale landscapes, the presence of hunting cooperatives, and involvement of communities in surrounding PA management, it is not clear that official validation of community-based management is an imperative element of successful steppe conservation in the targeted project area.

### Outcome 3: The systemic, institutional and individual capacity for steppe conservation in a wide productive landscape is strengthened

1. Outcome 3 focuses on strengthening PA management effectiveness through individual and institutional capacity development, financing of PA management, and education and awareness activities. For indicators this outcome relies heavily on the capacity development and financial sustainability scorecards often used in UNDP-GEF projects. The project also applies an indicator of PA management staff capacity to monitor and report on Saiga populations. Overall the project is making progress toward the respective indicator targets, but there are some issues with the fact that indicators and targets extend beyond the scope of the project; this is further discussed in the notes related to the logframe in Annex 3 of this evaluation report. Based on the results described under the outputs below, progress toward the achievement of Outcome 3 is considered ***satisfactory***.
2. *Output 3.1 Operationalization of five new / expanded protected areas*
3. With a focus on the outcome indicator related to reporting of environmental data by PA management staff, the project has supported technical capacity development in Irgiz-Turgai SNR through provision of specific equipment necessary for monitoring in steppe ecosystems, such as telescopes and cameras. The project contracted experts from the Institute of Zoology to hold training courses for the science department staff of Korgalzhyn SNR and Irgiz-Turgai SNR on the preparation of monitoring reports related to Saiga population, and to support experience sharing the staff of the more recently created Irgiz-Turgai SNR visited Korgalzhyn SNR. The project also supported management of these two PAs by contributed to the development of water resources in Korgalzhyn as a habitat rehabilitation measure.
4. The project addressed individual capacity development with support of an international technical advisor on PA management. A national workshop on PA staff capacity development was conducted, and a national capacity needs assessment for PA management was conducted, through questionnaires distributed to the staff of the five project pilot PAs. 43.3% of the 449 PA staff members responded to the survey (an impressive response rate). The results of this capacity needs assessment are a significant piece of work that should have long-standing value for further development of Kazakhstan’s PA management capacity. Analyzing the results of the capacity needs assessment, the project team identified the most critical management capacity needs, relative to the specific roles and positions of PA staff, since the capacity needs of directors may vary greatly compared to the needs of scientific staff, or field rangers. Based on the most critical needs an initial training program has been developed, and training workshops held for 100 PA staff members. Trainings included:

* “Arrangement and procedure to involve the force and facilities for steppe fire extinguishing”
* “Key aspects of National Park activities” for newly established Buiritau PA
* Conducting botanical research for steppe biotopes at Irgiz-Turgai SNR
* “Research and development and monitoring in PAs”
* “Organization of protection service in PAs”

1. Staff of Irgiz-Turgai SNR canvassed during the mid-term evaluation indicated that the trainings held have been extremely useful, particularly with respect to management planning and field work.
2. *Output 3.2 Management plans for new/expanded protected areas*
3. Under this output the project has primarily focused on the development of Irgiz-Turgai SNR management plan, as this PA has been recently created but does have staff and some technical capacity to conduct management activities. This activity was also carried out partially with support from the international expert on PA management. A framework management plan for Irgiz-Turgai SNR had been prepared and adopted by the government prior to 2011. The project’s focus has been to prepare the management plan for the 2012-2017 period, and for the management plan to be developed to international standards so it can serve as a good practice example within Kazakhstan. With project support the first portion of the management plan covering the technical description of the PA was prepared, and a 1:200,000 scale GIS-based map of the PA was prepared. From June 15-17, 2011 a workshop on the second stage of management plan development was held at the headquarters of the PA administration, in Irgiz town.
4. Although good progress has been made on the management plan, there is a concern that the current management plan document remains to be finalized at the level of international technical best practice standards for PA management. This evaluation recommends that the project team facilitate provision of the necessary resources to the Irgiz-Turgai SNR management staff to ensure the management plan for this PA is completed and can serve as a good practice model for subsequent PAs.
5. *Output 3.3 Institutional capacities are increased through support for improved organizational structures, staffing standards and accountability*
6. Various project activities have contributed to this output, including the capacity needs assessment. Drawing on various sources the project prepared standard job descriptions for PA staff, and developed organograms for PA administration. A key element of the project’s focus is to work toward effective management in the PAs supported by the project. PA management resources (staff, equipment, etc.) are allocated based on Kazakh national standards and norms set for PA management in relevant government legislation. Based on current PA management needs, these metrics appear to be outdated and need to be revised to reflect appropriate metrics to meet current needs. The project should work with the relevant stakeholders to analyze the metrics applied in allocation PA staff and resources, and propose amendments to improve standards to meet international PA management norms and achieve a rational and strategic allocation of resources.
7. *Output 3.4 Options to sustainably finance the management of steppe protected areas are developed and implemented*
8. This is a small but critical successfully implemented output from the project. The project team contracted an international expert on PA financing to support multiple outputs related to PA financing in Kazakhstan. The reports produced include a legislative review for the legal basis of PA financing in Kazakhstan, recommended methodology for PA economic valuation, recommended methodology for PA business planning, recommendations for financing mechanisms of Irgizi-Turgai SNR, and a overall report on the financial status and financing options for PAs in Kazakhstan. This last review found that PA financing in Kazakhstan is relatively low relative to international norms and standards, with financing in the seven years leading to 2010 at 0.02% or less of GDP, and 0.1% of the total national budget. The results of the project’s work were presented at a national roundtable meeting November 25, 2011 with participation of 35 individuals from relevant national government institutions and organizations. As Kazakhstan’s PA system expands, identifying sustainable financing sources for PA management is urgently needed.
9. Although the scope of the project in this particular realm is limited (some GEF FSPs in other countries focus entirely on PA financing), the work completed under this output is an excellent starting point for further efforts on PA financing in Kazakhstan.
10. *Output 3.5 Enhanced conservation-related knowledge and capacities among non-PA actors across the broader steppe ecosystem landscape*
11. A key activity under this output has been the development of the concept for an Irgiz-Turgai SNR Visitor Center, with architectural designs and informational and visual components. Other activities have included support for the “March of Parks” PA educational and awareness activity in sites throughout the country and in Astana. Media materials have also been produced, and information has been published in the international “Steppe Bulletin”. In 2010 the project supported multiple events to mark the international year of biodiversity, including an exhibition in the Ministry of Environment on May 28th, an event for journalists and media on June 4th (international day for the environment), and a side event on the “Symbols of the Kazakhstan Steppe” at an Asia-Pacific Conference of Environmental Ministers on November 6th. The project has also supported various exchange visits and information exchanges with other projects and initiatives in relevant countries in the region, such as a UNDP-GEF Russia Steppe project, and the international conference “Steppes of Eurasia: Status, Threats, and Adaptation to Climate Change” from September 9th - 12th, 2010 in Khutsai National Park, Mongolia.

## Priority issues for the Remainder of Implementation

1. The table below summarizes, in the view of this evaluation, the important priorities and risk factors for the remaining project implementation period.

Table Priority Issues for the Remaining Implementation Period

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Priority Issues** | **Summary** | **Priority Actions or Risk Mitigation** |
| Official approval of all steppe PAs supported under the project. | There remains an important risk that the project will not succeed in securing final official government approval for all steppe PAs targeted by the project, in the context of the Zhassyl Damu program. Government mandates allow only a certain number of PAs to be established each year, and in this sense there is “competition” among PAs on the waiting list for establishment in terms of which PAs will be established at what time. Achieving the project’s overall steppe coverage targets depends on approval of all targeted PAs by the end of the project. | No alternative courses of action or additional measures are proposed at this stage. The mid-term evaluation is only highlighting this issue as an important risk for the remaining implementation period. |
| Validation of ecological values of area within proposed PA boundaries following stakeholder negotiation. | In the process of reaching broad stakeholder agreement on the boundaries of the proposed Altyn Dala, Bokeiorda and Irgiz-Turgai extension PAs, some necessary accommodations were made from the originally proposed PA boundaries, relating to the rights of local land users. | The project team should include in its ongoing geospatial work an analysis of the comparative biodiversity values of areas currently proposed for inclusion in PAs relative to the originally targeted areas. In the case that targeted biodiversity values (e.g. critical habitats, key migration routes, Saiga calving grounds, flora species of conservation value, etc.) do not have adequate coverage, additional or compensatory management measures or PA coverage should be considered. |
| Ongoing exploration of a “co-management” approach to PA management in steppe zones | The project document highlights potential changes to relevant legislation to facilitate a legal basis for an approach of “co-management of protected areas with local level stakeholders. National government institutions have as yet been resistant to adopt such changes on a legal basis. The relevance of the concept of co-management is not fully clear in a context of PAs covering hundreds of thousands of hectares, in areas with extremely low population density. The distances involved and level of infrastructure limits the ability to easily bring stakeholders from different communities together. At the same time, the project team is working closely with community-level stakeholders on the establishment and management of PAs, and in some instances a significant proportion of working-age community members are employed as PA staff. | Stakeholder participation and drivenness are standard elements of all GEF work, and linking local benefits with PAs has been demonstrated as critical for achieving successful PA management. Further, in Kazakhstan, where distances are vast and infrastructure and management resources are limited, innovative approaches to effectively managing PAs covering hundreds of thousands of hectares are certainly required. Nonetheless, at present, establishing a national legislative basis for formal co-management or other similar approaches to PA management doesn’t appear to warrant the allocation of project time and resources that would be required to reach this outcome. However, such legal provisions may be valuable in the long-term future of PA management in Kazakhstan (including potentially in non-steppe zones), and should not be completely dismissed. The project team should consider providing a short technical analysis of the relevance of non-traditional management arrangements for PAs in Kazakhstan, which could serve as a starting point for any future developments on this issue. |

# Key GEF Performance Parameters

## Sustainability

1. While a sustainability rating is provided here as required, sustainability is a temporal and dynamic state that is influenced by a broad range of constantly shifting factors. It should be kept in mind that the important aspect of sustainability of GEF projects is the sustainability of results, not necessarily the sustainability of activities that produced results. In the context of GEF projects there is no clearly defined timeframe for which results should be sustained, although it is implied that they should be sustained indefinitely. When evaluating sustainability, the greater the time horizon, the lower the degree of certainty possible.
2. In addition, by definition, mid-term evaluations are not well-positioned to provide ratings on sustainability considering that many more activities will be undertaken before project end that may positively or negatively affect the likelihood of sustainability. Based on GEF evaluation policies and procedures, the overall rating for sustainability cannot be higher than the lowest rating for any of the individual components. Therefore the overall **sustainability** rating for the Kazakhstan Steppe project for this mid-term evaluation is ***moderately likely*.**

### Financial Risks to Sustainability

1. Questions and issues related to financial sustainability for the Kazakhstan Steppe project are big picture issues related to national financing of PAs rather than significant project-focused issues. At present sustainability in this regard can be considered *moderately likely*. The Kazakhstan Steppe project is focused on expanding the PA system in Kazakhstan, but in the long-term there will need to be a significant focus on increased financing for effective PA management, particularly considering the large areas that the PA system is covering. The project has taken some initial steps in this direction (see Output 3.4 above) but a PA system-wide effort is needed.
2. One other issue is that particular attention needs to be paid to the exit strategy for the project’s partnership with ACBK. During the years of project implementation the GEF resources have provided a considerable financial base for increasing the capacity of ACBK at the individual and institutional levels, and it will be critical to maintain this capacity once the project finishes. Civil society organizations such as ACBK are frequently donor-supported, and it natural that GEF resources will come to an end, but all partners involved in the Kazakhstan Steppe project need to ensure that subsequent donor resources become available to maintain and continue applying the capacity built under the project. This includes ensuring the continued maintenance of the ACBK-managed environmental monitoring program and database, which is a highly valuable asset for biodiversity conservation and management in Kazakhstan. Environmental monitoring work in Kazakhstan will continue to be carried forward by a new project specifically developed on this subject between UNDP and the government, with $1.2 million USD in government funding; this initiative was catalyzed by a previous UNDP-GEF project in Kazakhstan, on wetlands (GEF ID 838).

### Sociopolitical Risks to Sustainability

1. On the whole, particularly in the regions of the PAs targeted by the project, sociopolitical sustainability is considered *likely*. There is strong support for the project objectives from stakeholders from the local to national levels. Local level stakeholders recognize and understand the potential for PA-driven economic development in rural and remote areas, and local government leaders and community members strongly support the ongoing development of the Altyn Dala and Irgiz-Turgai PAs. The ongoing management of these areas is expected to provide an important number of government-financed jobs in these areas. In addition, national and local stakeholders recognize the economic significance of re-establishing the Saiga population to levels where it can be sustainably hunted for subsistence uses as well as for the more lucrative Traditional Chinese Medicine market.

### Institutional Framework and Governance Risks to Sustainability

1. Overall, sustainability under this component is considered *moderately likely*. The project results with respect to PA establishment are on relatively solid legislative footing, as the project has been well-integrated with national planning processes, including the Zhassyl Damu program. The legislative framework for the PA system does need continued evaluation and further development; as has been noted under Outcome 1, the government has only accepted a limited number of the project’s recommendations for legislative revisions and amendments. The wildlife corridor legislation may also need further development once the model has been accepted and demonstrated in Kazakhstan. As has been noted elsewhere in this report, there is a critical need for further development of the national PA financing system in Kazakhstan, and this has institutional and legislative implications. Among the most significant issues is the institutional position of the CFH within the Ministry of Agriculture, which does not provide the PA system with strong institutional support in the framework of the national government. Within the Ministry of Agriculture the CFH does not have the institutional foundation that a formalized national PAs agency would have. While all of these issues are important for the future positive development of Kazakhstan’s PA system they are not critical risks to the project results, which are being produced in the present legislative and institutional context.

### Environmental Risks to Sustainability

1. Environmental sustainability is considered *moderately likely* based on the current remaining environmental risks. There are not necessarily new environmental risks to the project’s results, but a number of the risks the project is working to address are expected to remain important after project completion. These include poaching, fire, water shortages, and impacts from climate change in Kazakhstan’s steppe ecosystems. The Saiga population has the natural capacity to increase at relatively rapid rates if it is adequately protected, and despite the pervasive negative influence of poaching and occasional mass die-offs from disease, the population has been increasing at remarkable rates in recent years thanks to the national hunting ban. If current trends continue, the return of the Saiga population to closer to historic levels will have biodiversity benefits throughout the steppe ecosystem, bringing other ecological elements into balance. This end goal remains many years in the future however, as indicated by the 2011 extension of the national hunting ban to 2021.

## Catalytic Role: Replication and Scaling-up

1. The project does not have a specific replication component, but multiple project activities are likely to contribute to catalytic results. Perhaps the most significant of these is the development and piloting of the wildlife corridors concept in Kazakhstan, as discussed previously under Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 above.   
   There is significant potential for the work of the project to be scaled-up and replicated in other regions of Kazakhstan, particularly West Kazakhstan to also support the Saiga population in this part of Kazakhstan. The project’s work on assessing the financial sustainability of Kazakhstan’s PA system will also hopefully set the foundation for further work in this regard by other stakeholders, though this remains to be seen. The information and awareness activities under Output 3.5 are also important for potential future catalytic results. This aspect of the project should be further assessed at the terminal evaluation.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

### Project Monitoring, Reporting, and Evaluation

1. The project document and the CEO Endorsement document (dated October 24, 2008) include sections that outline the project M&E plan, M&E budget, and specific M&E roles and responsibilities. The CEO Endorsement document includes (under Section “G”) the summary table of M&E activities, the responsible parties, the indicative budget, and timeframe. Overall the M&E plan is based on standard UNDP-GEF project M&E procedures, and conforms to UNDP and GEF standards and norms. The M&E plan includes: inception workshop and report, Annual Progress Report/Progress Implementation Report (APR/PIR), quarterly progress reports, technical reports, supervision field missions, independent mid-term and terminal evaluations, a terminal report, and an annual audit. The total indicative cost of planned M&E activities is in the project document is $187,000, excluding project and UNDP staff time. This equates to ~8.4% of GEF funding (although the document does not specify if full M&E funding will come from GEF resources), which is fully adequate for a project of this size. Overall the M&E plan is being implemented as envisioned, with the project team providing timely and comprehensive monitoring reports and steering committee meetings. The project team is appropriately supported by UNDP through regular informal communications for ad-hoc monitoring, and field-based oversight visits.
2. The key element of the project M&E system for a results-based approach is the project logframe (see Section II, Annex A (page 44) of the project document), with indicators, baseline data, and targets. To meet GEF and UNDP M&E minimum standard, project logframe indicators must meet SMART criteria[[12]](#footnote-12). In general the logframe indicators conformity with SMART criteria can be considered moderately satisfactory. The logframe includes indicators directly linked to the relevant GEF focal area results framework indicators such as hectares of PA coverage and METT scores. This evaluation provides some suggested revisions to the project logframe, outlined in Annex 3 of this evaluation report. The logframe includes one impact level indicator – population levels of the Betpak Dala Saiga population, with a target of a 10% annual increase.
3. Including species and ecosystem specific indicators is a valuable element of any GEF project logframe to highlight key indicators for the environmental benefits expected under the project and to support a long-term results focus for the project. At the same time, it should be recognized that it is generally quite difficult for GEF projects to demonstrate a direct contribution to significant impact level results by the end of a project.

### Environmental Monitoring

1. Output 2.1 of the Kazakhstan Steppe project is focused on environmental monitoring, and this subject is discussed in detail in Section V.A.ii. ACBK, the NGO implementing Outcome 2, has developed in association with various partners a technically advanced monitoring system for key components of biodiversity, focusing specifically on the keystone species of Saiga. The Saiga population across the Kazakh steppe influences to a significant degree the health of the overall ecosystem, and so focusing on monitoring this species is a logical approach, combined with the fact that it is among the more logistically feasible components of biodiversity to monitor at large scale (even though there are still notable technical challenges). It is anticipated that ACBK will remain in operation following the project, and will continue maintaining the monitoring program and database, although it is uncertain what scope of monitoring activities will be possible once the GEF project comes to a close. This work is expected to link with the new $1.2 million USD UNDP-Government of Kazakhstan project on environmental monitoring. At the very least it is expected that the CFH will continue the annual aerial Saiga census, so it should be possible to assess this impact indicator in the years after project completion.

## Project Impacts and Global Environmental Benefits

1. For the GEF biodiversity focal area project impacts are defined as documented changes in environmental status of species, ecosystems or genetic biodiversity resources. Global Environmental Benefits in the biodiversity focal area have not been explicitly defined, but are generally considered to involve sustained impact level results of a certain scale or significance. The project Request for CEO Endorsement specifically highlights the expected global environmental benefits of this project:

*“At the ecosystem level, important and extensive areas of Pontian steppe will be protected; like other grasslands, this ecosystem type is heavily under-represented globally and its protection inside large PAs will be an important global benefit. A large majority of the 2,000 species of flora, including about 30 endemic species, along with unique floristic compositions, found in Kazakhstan’s steppe ecosystem zones will be found within protected areas to be created / expanded under the project. Many of these will be species which had not been previously protected within the baseline PA system. This will also include most, if not all, of the twenty main vegetation formations that have been identified, of which eight are endemic, two are rare and five represent unique relict communities. In terms of fauna, the project will contribute to the conservation and reduced extinction risk facing nine endangered mammals found in Kazakhstan’s steppe ecological zones. These are: Saiga Antelope (Saiga tatarica tatarica), Kulan (Equus hemionus), Przewalski Horse (Equus przewalskii), Goitered Gazelle (Gazella subgutturosa), Desert Dormouse (Selevinia betpakdalensis), Steppe Pika (Ochotona pulsilla), Kazakhstan Argali (Ovis ammon collium), Menzbier’s marmot (Marmota menzbieri) and Palla’s Cat (Felis manul). In addition, the project is expected to benefit the country’s still viable population of grey wolf (Canis lupus). Of the four sub species, at least two inhabit the project area: the steppe wolf (Canis l. campestris) and the desert wolf (Canis l. desertorum). Finally, in terms of avifauna, project activities are expected many of the 21 autochthonous endangered bird species found in the steppe, 14 of which are steppe breeding birds.”*

1. At the present stage of project implementation it is difficult to assert that there have been specific impact level results resulting from the contribution of project activities. There may have been some avoided poaching of Saiga as a result of project support to PA management authorities, but measuring avoided or deterred threats is not technically feasible. The increase in Saiga population since the start of project implementation clearly cannot be attributed to project activities.
2. In fact it is extremely difficult for GEF projects to demonstrate significant impact level results by the end of the project, as ecosystems and species populations can take a significant amount of time to measurably respond to conservation measures. In addition, environmental monitoring data is often inadequate to make these assessments, though in the case of the Kazakhstan Steppe project, the Saiga population can be considered an ecosystem indicator. By the end of the project some impact level results may be documented, but ultimately the Kazakhstan Steppe project’s impact will need to be assessed years in the future to appropriately consider how the improved management and expanded PA coverage of steppe ecosystems has influenced conservation of the associated globally significant biodiversity. It is likely that the project will contribute to impact results and Global Environmental Benefits (particularly considering the massive scale of the project’s targeted areas), but as in most GEF projects, multiple stakeholders will need to continue carrying forward the results after project completion.

# Main Lessons Learned and Recommendations

## Lessons from the Experience of the Kazakhstan Steppe Project

1. The mid-term of a project is early to produce a comprehensive set of lessons, but some initial lessons from the experience of the Kazakhstan Steppe project can be extracted.
2. ***Lesson:*** Significant changes in environmental management institutional and legislative frameworks take time. The project has made progress on some key issues supporting more effective PA management in Kazakhstan, but government institutions take time to adjust to and accept dramatic changes. Only a small percentage of the recommendations proposed by the project for legislative amendments have so far been accepted, but progress is being made over time.
3. ***Lesson:*** Civil society organizations that have strong technical and management capacity can make effective partners in GEF supported projects executed under the auspices of government partners. The institutional working relationship in the Kazakhstan Steppe project truly is unique in many ways – the official project executing partner is the CFH, a government institution; but the PIU operates somewhat independently of the CFH, while at the same time working effectively with a civil-society organization (ACBK) that is fully and directly responsible for one-third of the project (in terms of outcomes and budget). This example demonstrates that innovative implementation partnerships can be effective, when there are good working relationships and strong technical and institutional capacities among all involved parties.
4. ***Lesson:*** Applying modern technologies, it is possible to develop cost-effective environmental monitoring systems for large-scale landscapes. Monitoring millions of hectares of steppe ecosystem in Kazakhstan presents numerous challenges, but the project team and partners are gathering meaningful environmental monitoring data that is helping shape the formation of Kazakhstan’s PA system, and contributing to improved environmental management.
5. ***Lesson:*** There is a continued need to develop and refine project monitoring and evaluation frameworks for GEF biodiversity projects, particularly logframe indicators, to effectively capture meaningful results of project activities. Capacity development and impact assessment remain challenging areas in which to design appropriate indicators. The indicators and targets for the Kazakhstan Steppe project need further revision, and do not fully capture the results of project activities.

## Recommendations for the Remaining Implementation Period

1. The recommendations from this mid-term evaluation are provided below, with the targeted primary audience for the recommendation in brackets immediately following.
2. ***Recommendation 1:*** As previously highlighted, perhaps the most significant risk for the Kazakhstan Steppe project is whether the targeted steppe PAs will be fully included before project end in the government’s plan of establishing protected areas. Since only a certain number of PAs can be established each year, if this project is successful, PAs for steppe ecosystems will be established ahead of other PAs covering non-steppe ecosystems. What is clearly needed in Kazakhstan is a national strategy for strengthening the PA system that appropriately rationalizes, justifies and prioritizes a representative system of PAs in Kazakhstan covering all ecosystems. This evaluation recommends that as part of the upcoming revision of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, national stakeholders also develop and agree on a strategic approach to further development of the national PA system. *[UNDP and National Executing Partners]*
3. ***Recommendation 2:*** The project’s objective is to expand the coverage of steppe ecosystems in the national PA system, and good progress is being made in this direction. At the same time, once established, there must also be the necessary resources to manage the PAs effectively. The new PAs cover a huge amount of area, and effective management requires at least a base-level of resources. The steppe project has taken some initial steps to developing a comprehensive financial resource base for Kazakhstan PAs. As Kazakhstan continues to expand its PA system, it would be highly beneficial to have a corresponding national-level effort for strengthening the system of financing PAs. This evaluation recommends that UNDP and relevant national stakeholder organizations initiate a national process specifically focused on enhancing the financial sustainability of Kazakhstan’s PAs for future effective management. *[UNDP and National Executing Partners]*
4. ***Recommendation 3:*** A key element of the project’s focus is to work toward effective management in the PAs supported by the project. PA management resources (staff, equipment, etc.) are allocated based on standards and norms set for PA management in relevant government legislation. Based on current PA management needs, these metrics appear to be outdated and need to be revised to reflect appropriate metrics to meet current needs. The project should work with the relevant stakeholders to analyze the metrics applied in allocation PA staff and resources, and propose amendments to improve standards to meet international PA management norms and achieve a rational and strategic allocation of resources. *[Project team and relevant national stakeholders]*
5. ***Recommendation 4:*** This evaluation recommends the project increase attention for understanding potential impacts to steppe ecosystems of climate change, in the targeted areas where the project is working. This could involve, for example, conducting a desk review of available relevant research to develop greater understanding of how the project areas may be influenced in future climate change scenarios. Other options could be funding a small-scale baseline study in the project area to track climate influences over time (or leveraging resources of other partners), and developing linkages with relevant national and regional climate change initiatives addressing climate impacts on steppe ecosystems. To ensure the long-term sustainability of project results it will be important to understand how climate change may influence the steppe ecosystems in the PAs established under the project. *[Project team and UNDP]*
6. ***Recommendation 5:*** The project team should work to implement a standardized approach to completion of the METT scorecard, one of the important indicators for tracking project results. One approach was applied before project start as the baseline (using independent experts), and a second approach (working with local partners) was applied after project initiation. Basing the METT calculation on a single source but using different approaches is not conducive to the METT serving as a useful measure of progress because of potential inconsistency in scoring. Having the METT completed by independent experts using a consistent methodology would be the preferred approach and should be applied for completing the METT in the future. *[Project team and UNDP]*
7. ***Recommendation 6:*** This evaluation recommends that the project seek opportunities to involve students, particularly of high school age, in PA management activities to increase environmental education and strengthen capacity. An excellent example of such an approach is being implemented in Naurzum, and could be replicated in other PAs. *[Project team and PA management authorities]*
8. ***Recommendation 7:*** This evaluation recommends the project make some small-scale efforts to catalyze a process to address the water shortage problems in Irgiz-Turgai SNR. Fully addressing this problem is far beyond the scope and capacity of the project, but multiple stakeholders noted it as an important factor that will influence project results in the future, and the project should work to catalyze other stakeholders to begin addressing this problem. *[Project team]*
9. ***Recommendation 8:*** This evaluation recommends a revision to some of the project logframe indicators, as further highlighted under individual indicators in Annex 3. Once revisions have been confirmed by the project team, they should be approved by the Project Steering Committee. *[Project team]*
10. ***Recommendation 9:*** The project objective statement could be revised to more accurately reflect the breadth of project activities and expected results. This would not be a change in the actual objective of the project, but simply an improved description to appropriately convey the scope of project results. An improved revised objective statement could read “to expand the protected areas system of Kazakhstan to improve coverage of steppe ecosystems, while enhancing PA management capacity through new mechanisms and better information for decision-making.” *[Project team and Project Board]*
11. ***Recommendation 10:*** As steppe PAs are established and expanded, they subsequently require appropriate management plans to guide management actions meetings the objectives of the PA. Work on the Irgiz-Turgai SNR management plan has commenced, but remains to be completed to international standards. It is recommended that the project team facilitate provision of the necessary resources to the Irgiz-Turgai SNR management staff to ensure the management plan for this PA is completed and can serve as a good practice model for subsequent PAs. *[Project team and UNDP]*

## Kazakhstan Steppe Project Mid-term Evaluation Ratings

| **Project Component or Objective** | **Rating** | **Notes/Justification** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Project Formulation** |  |  |
| **Relevance** | S | The project is relevant at local and national levels, and supports implementation of relevant multilateral environmental agreements, and conforms with GEF strategic priorities. |
| Conceptualization / design | S | The project’s overall approach and strategy fits appropriately in the national context, and effectively targets the identified barriers to achieving the overall objective. |
| Country drivenness | S | The project concept and approach is strongly supported by national and local stakeholders. |
| Stakeholder involvement in design | S | Based on all available information, the project design phase was appropriately conducted with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders. |
| **Project Implementation** |  |  |
| **Implementation Approach (Efficiency)** | HS | Overall project implementation is cost-effective and appropriately implemented, based on UNDP and Kazakhstan national norms and standards. The project team is effectively engaging key stakeholders, and the implementation structure is well-suited to the relevant institutional framework. |
| Management implementation | HS | The project benefits from a strong management team, and efficient and transparent procedures. The direct involvement of a civil society organization in implementation of one project component is also a strong element of the approach. |
| Use of the logical framework | S | The project team is appropriately using the logframe and indicators to guide project implementation and assess project results. |
| Financial planning and management | S | Financial planning and management is carried out appropriately in line with UNDP and international norms and standards. |
| Adaptive management | S | The project is implemented in an adaptive, results-based manner, with enough flexibility in the workplan to take advantage of opportunistic activities to further the project’s objective. |
| Stakeholder participation and partnerships | HS | The project team is working to proactively involve all relevant stakeholders, and has established excellent working relationships with stakeholders from the local to national levels. |
| Use and establishment of information technologies | HS | Geo-spatial technology (i.e. GIS, GPS) is widely applied under the project and is used successfully carry out the relevant project activities. In addition, the monitoring system developed with ACBK is an excellent example of application of information technologies for biodiversity conservation. |
| UNDP supervision and support | S | UNDP is appropriately supporting the project and overseeing implementation, while conducting the project’s financial management in an efficient manner. |
| Operational relationships between the institutions involved | S | There are good working relationships and open communication channels between the relevant institutions involved in project implementation, while working within the constraints of the institutional framework. |
| Technical capacities | S | While there are technical capacity limitations within the PA system and the country as a whole, the project is applying appropriate technical capacities to successfully achieve the project objectives. |
| **Monitoring and Evaluation** |  |  |
| M&E design | MS | The logframe indicators and targets are not comprehensively well-designed to facilitate adequate assessment of project results. |
| M&E plan implementation | S | The project’s M&E plan and various activities is being implemented as envisioned. |
| M&E budgeting | S | The M&E budget is appropriate for a project of this size |
| **Stakeholder Participation** |  |  |
| Production and dissemination of information | S | Multiple approaches and means of information dissemination are applied under the project, and transparency is a core element of the project approach. |
| Local resource users and civil society participation | HS | The example of partnering with local hunting cooperatives for management and data collection is admirable, as well as the deep involvement of a national civil society organization in project implementation. |
| Establishment of partnerships | HS | The project has established strong partnerships with key national and local stakeholders, including the PA management staff, local hunting cooperatives, and key national government institutions such as Okhotzooprom. |
| Involvement and support of governmental institutions | S | The relevant government institutions are involved and supportive of the project. |
| **Project Results** |  |  |
| **Progress Toward Overall Achievement of Objective and Outcomes (Effectiveness)** | S | Overall, the project is well on track, and has already achieved a number of impressive results. While some risks to full achievement of the expected results are present (e.g. with respect to establishment of all anticipated steppe PAs), no significant adjustments to the project’s efforts is required. |
| **Objective**: Expansion of steppe PA coverage | S | Results under the three project outcomes are contributing to the overall project objective, and continued strong progress is anticipated. |
| **Outcome 1:** PA System | S | The project is making good progress toward the overall target of 2.2% coverage of steppe ecosystems. This is completed within the framework of the government program of PA expansion under the national green development strategy Zhassyl Damu. |
| **Outcome 2:** Environmental monitoring | HS | The monitoring system being developed by the project uses innovative approaches in challenging logistical circumstances. The demonstration of the wildlife corridors approach is also an excellent result from the project. |
| **Outcome 3:** Capacity Development | S | This outcome covers a range of activities (training, public awareness, capacity development), with greater progress on some items than others. On the whole, results thus far are satisfactory, and ongoing efforts should continue moving the project toward the overall objective. The project logframe lacks adequate indicators to fully asses results under this outcome. |
| **Sustainability** |  |  |
| **Overall Sustainability** | ML | Based on the four below criteria, the overall sustainability rating cannot be higher than the lowest of any of the individual ratings. |
| Financial | ML | There are limited immediate risks to financial sustainability of results, though particular attention needs to be paid to the exit strategy for the project’s partnership with ACBK. There are also a number of open questions related to the government’s willingness to finance at an adequate level the newly created PAs, which cover a huge amount of territory. |
| Socio-political | L | There is strong support for the project objectives from stakeholders from the local to national levels. |
| Institutional framework and governance | ML | There are a number of institutional and legislative issues remaining to be addressed, the most significant of which is the institutional position of the CFH within the Ministry of Agriculture. |
| Environmental | ML | There are not necessarily new environmental risks to the project’s results, but a number of the risks the project is working to address are expected to remain important after project completion. These include poaching, fire, water shortages, and impacts from climate change in Kazakhstan’s steppe ecosystems. |
| **Progress Toward Overall Achievement and Impact** | S | The project is on track and is likely to achieve the expected outcomes, although much work remains to be completed and many results remain to be achieved. |

# Annexes

Annex 1: Evaluation Terms of Reference

Annex 2: GEF Operational Principles

Annex 3: Logframe With Assessed Level of Target Delivery

Annex 3.1: METT Scorecards

Annex 4: Draft Proposed Theory of Change for Kazakhstan Steppe Project

Annex 5: List of Persons Interviewed

Annex 6: Field Visit Schedule

Annex 7: Evaluation Documentation

Annex 8: Detailed Co-financing Tables

Annex 9: Management Response

**Annex 1: Mid-term Evaluation Terms of Reference**

*Note: For space considerations the annexes of the TORs have not been included.*

**Terms of Reference**

for the Mid-term evaluation of the UNDP/GEF Project

**“Steppe conservation and management”**

**PIMS Project number:** 3835

**Short project title:** Steppe project

**Project Atlas number:** 00062761

**Functional title:** InternationalConsultant

**Duration:** estimated 28 working days during the period: January-April 2012

**Duty Station:** home based with the visits to the project territory

**Terms of payment:** Lump sum payable upon satisfactory completion and approval by UNDP of all deliverables, including the Evaluation Report

This Mid Term Evaluation is initiated by the UNDP Kazakhstan as the Implementation Agency for this project and it aims to provide managers, executors (at the Project Implementation Unit, UNDP Kazakhstan Country Office and UNDP/GEF levels) with strategy and policy options for more effectively and efficiently achieving the project’s expected results. It also provides the basis for learning and accountability for managers and stakeholders.

This evaluation is to be undertaken taking into consideration the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation policy:<http://thegef.org/MonitoringandEvaluation/MEPoliciesProcedures/mepoliciesprocedures.html> and the UNDP/GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy: <http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html>

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) policy at the project level in UNDP/GEF has four objectives:

1. to monitor and evaluate results and impacts;
2. to provide a basis for decision making on necessary amendments and improvements;
3. to promote accountability for resource use; and
4. to document, provide feedback on, and disseminate lessons learned.

To ensure effective project Monitoring and Evaluation a combination of tools should be used. These might be applied continuously throughout the lifetime of the project, for example periodic monitoring of indicators, PIRs, or as specific time-bound exercises such as mid-term review, audit reports and independent evaluations.

In accordance with the UNDP/GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and Procedures the mid-term evaluation is recommended for all the projects with a long term of implementation (e.g. exceeding 5-6 years). In addition to the fact that said evaluation enables to gain an independent deep view of the progress attained, such assessment meets GEF Council decisions in respect of transparency and improvement of access to information at the stage of implementation. Mid-term evaluations are intended to identify potential project design problems, assess progress towards the achievement of objective, identify and document lessons learned (including lessons that might improve design and implementation of other UNDP/GEF projects), and to make recommendations regarding specific actions that might be taken to improve the project.

The mid-term evaluation enables to assess the primary signs of the project success or failure and identify the necessary changes to be made. The evaluation shall be performed by an independent expert unrelated to the project development or implementation.

The evaluation will play a critical role in the future implementation of the project by providing advice on: (i) how to strengthen the adaptive management and monitoring function of the project; (ii) how to ensure accountability for the achievement of the GEF objective; (iii) how to enhance organizational and development learning; (iv) how to enable informed decision – making.

The evaluation will have to provide to the GEF Secretariat complete and convincing evidence to support its findings/ratings. The consultant should prepare specific ratings on seven aspects of the project, as described in the 'Reporting' section of this Terms of Reference. Particular emphasis should be put on the current project results and the possibility of achieving the objective and outcomes in the established timeframe, taking into consideration the speed, at which the project is proceeding.

**I. Project objective**

A significant portion of the world’s remaining natural Pontian steppe habitat is found within the Central Asian nation of Kazakhstan. This enormous nation shelters five largely contiguous steppe ecological zones, i.e., forest steppe, meadow steppe, dry steppe, desertified steppe and steppe semi-desert, stretching some 160 million ha. all across the northern and central sections of the country and including some 123 million ha. of remaining ‘natural habitat.’ Kazakhstan’s steppe ecosystems support approximately 2,000 species of flora, including about 30 endemic species, along with unique floristic compositions. They also provide habitat for globally endangered species of steppe fauna, including nine of the 24 globally endangered mammal species occurring in the country. The major threat facing Kazakhstan’s steppe ecological zones involves habitat degradation associated with changes in ungulate populations and distributions and associated hunting pressures which have nearly wiped out the Saiga Antelope. Protected areas have a potentially significant, yet largely unrealized, role to play in eliminating these threats to steppe area biodiversity in Kazakhstan. For the four main steppe types (excluding forest steppe), only 1.7% of remaining natural steppe habitat is protected. The Government’s strategy for PA expansion until 2030 calls for reversing the current under-representation of steppe ecosystems in the PA system. The proposed long-term solution for biodiversity conservation in Kazakhstan’s steppe areas involves the development of a highly strategic, landscape-based approach to protected area expansion and management within the steppe zone. The solution relies on three key elements. The first of these is a system of various types of financially sustainable protected areas, ranging from permanent and fully staffed national parks to seasonally protected areas; from fully Government-administered areas to areas where local communities play a central role in management. Secondly, the solution depends on a high degree of integration of these protected areas with buffer zones, wildlife corridors and other areas of the broader landscape. This integration, which is based in practice on management tools such as information and knowledge management and wildlife corridors, is required to define and achieve landscape-level conservation goals. Finally, the solution depends on adequate capacities among a broad range of stakeholders to manage both the protected areas and key landscape areas, and in particular to utilize the management tools in question, i.e., protected areas, wildlife corridors, knowledge management systems, etc. The key barriers to the long-term solution are: (i) An emphasis on a traditional and overly complicated approach to PA expansion, which will not be sufficient to achieve steppe ecosystem conservation; (ii) Inadequate tools, practices and processes for landscape-level conservation management; (iii) Limited systemic, institutional and individual capacities for steppe conservation and management. Working with national and international partners, the project will achieve the following three outcomes to remove the barriers and make progress towards the long-term solution: (i) PA system of Kazakhstan contains representative samples of steppe ecosystem under various conservation management regimes and provides effective coverage of ecosystems and ecological processes; (ii) Tools for landscape-level steppe conservation planning and management are developed and implemented by key stakeholders; (iii) The systemic, institutional and individual capacity for steppe conservation in a wide productive landscape is strengthened.

The project goal is to conserve the globally significant steppe biodiversity of Kazakhstan. The objective is to expand the protected areas system of Kazakhstan to ensure an improved coverage of steppe ecosystems. The project will demonstrate an ecologically representative landscape level conservation management system for Kazakhstan’s steppe which will include a network of different categories of protected areas; the system will ensure the best possible connectivity within a functional landscape and will take into account both patterns and processes. The protected areas will be designated as nodes within a network of continental corridors where a range of conservation compatible land-uses are employed, will serve as stepping stones for moving populations and will provide areas for temporary recovery of species. This will require a significant shift in spatial planning with a focus on facilitating species movement and ecosystem processes across the landscape. Mechanisms and instruments will be developed to improve conservation management in steppe protected areas, buffer zones and in corridors between PAs and to better link protected areas with the wider productive landscape. The corridors will have special management objectives following seasonal migration, ranging from strict protection to sustainable use.

The project document was signed in December 2008. Implementation of the Project started in February 2009. The total project budget is US$23 623 300 with GEF financing of US$ 2 215 000. The executing agency for the project is the Forestry and Hunting Committee of the Ministry of Agriculture of the RK.

Project Beneficiaries:

* Forestry and Hunting Committee of the Ministry of Agriculture;
* Ministry of Environment Protection (MEP): Department of Sustainable Development and Security
* protected area staff and management
* Local Government (Oblast and Rayon Akimats)
* Agency for Land Resources Management
* Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan ;

**II. Objective of the Mid-Term Evaluation**

The mid-term evaluation is consisted in a comprehensive project assessment and enables to make an evaluation of administrative and technical activities and strategies, problems and restrictions associated with the large-scale international and multilateral initiatives. The evaluation shall also provide the recommendations in relation to the strategies, approaches and/or activities in order to enhance the project capacities of achieving the expected outcomes. The evaluation results will be incorporated in the recommendations to improve the implementation of the project activities in the forthcoming period.

**III. Aim:**

1. To evaluate the overall project activities for project implementation in relation to the objectives and expected outcomes and indicators as stated in the project document and the other related documents;
2. To evaluate the project effectiveness and cost-efficiency;
3. To analyze the arrangements of project management and implementation;
4. To evaluate the progress attained so far in relation to the project outcomes;
5. To investigate the strategies and plans intended for the timely achievement of the overall project goal;
6. To document and analyze the first lessons learned in respect of the project design, its implementation and management; and especially related to the implementation of landscape level conservation planning;
7. To assess the sustainability of project interventions;
8. To assess the relevance in relation to the national priorities;
9. To provide the recommendations for the future project activities.

In particular, the mid-term evaluation exercise will assess the progress of the basic project objective, alleviation of threats and will identify any constraints to the project implementation and their causes. Evaluation intends also to provide the recommendations for corrective measures to be undertaken. The effective measures to correct the problem areas identified should be provided by the evaluation. These effective measures will be required before the decision to be made in relation to the project continuation.

The project effectiveness will be measured based on the indicators of the project’s logical framework (see Annex 1). Indicators relate to the implementation will be applied in the assessment. The success and failure will partially be determined through the monitoring of the relative changes within the baseline conditions developed within one year of the project implementation. Where possible, the indicator species, sensitive to the changes of habitat and pressure increase, will need to be identified and monitored. In case of an identified shrinkage of the population of rare and endangered species the measures will be undertaken to identify the causes of such shrinkage and the alternative strategies will be developed to ensure the long-term welfare of the populations that will further be incorporated in the overall project site management.

The mid-term evaluation report shall be a separate document which will contain the recommendations, conclusions and lessons learnt.

The report will be intended to meet the needs of all the related parties (GEF, UNDP, the national executing agency, the project’s National Steering Committee, local communities and other related parties in Kazakhstan and foreign countries).

The evaluation exercise will embrace the project elements as follows:

Project concept and design: The expert will assess the project concept and design. The evaluator should review the problem addressed by the project and the project strategy, identify the measures purposefulness, encompassing an assessment of the appropriateness of the objectives, planned outputs and outcomes, activities and inputs as compared to cost-effective alternatives. The executing modality and managerial arrangements should also be judged. The evaluator will assess the achievement of indicators and review the work plan, planned duration and budget of the project.

Implementation: The evaluation will assess: (i) the implementation of the project in terms of quality and timeliness of inputs and efficiency and effectiveness of activities carried out; (ii) the effectiveness of management; (iii) the quality and timeliness of monitoring and backstopping by all parties to the project; (iv) the project team’s use of adaptive management in project implementation. Overall, the evaluation will measure the level of achievement of the project’s objective and it will identify which interim results have been achieved and how they have contributed to meeting the ultimate project outcomes. This section will be focused on the priority areas as follows:

1. Project outputs, outcomes and impact: assess the outputs, outcomes and impact achieved by the project as well as the likely sustainability of project results. The evaluation should encompass an assessment of the achievement of the outcomes and the contribution to attaining the overall objective of the project. It should also assess the extent to which the implementation of the project has been inclusive of relevant stakeholders and to which it has been able to create collaboration between different partners. Within the evaluation will be also examined if the project has had significant unexpected effects, whether of beneficial or detrimental character
2. Project Management and Administration: The evaluation should collect, document and assess the relevant elements and processes including: (i) Administrative procedures related to the project; (ii) Key decisions and interim results; and (iii) The main project implementation documents specifying how useful have the documents and reports been.
3. Project Execution: The evaluation should assess the quality of services provided by FHC of MoA acting as the Implementing Agency and UNDP Environment and Energy unit (project management cost-efficiency including the achievement of interim results in terms of quality, quantity and timeliness; and the monitoring system), as GEF Implementing Agency

**Structure and aspects of mid-term evaluation**

**3.1 Achieved Progress towards Results**

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

1. Have the steppe ecosystems of Kazakhstan been properly and adequately protected within the protected areas and the larger landscape targeted by the project?
2. Have there been changes in local stakeholder behaviour that have contributed to improved conservation and reduction of threats? If not, why not?
3. Is there distinct improvement in steppe ecosystems information turnover and use in decision making among stakeholders?
4. Has awareness on steppe ecosystems conservation and participation in biodiversity monitoring and ecosystems management increased as a result of the project implementation?
5. Is there adequate landscape planning in place, or in progress, ensuring long-term conservation of steppe ecosystems?

Measurement of change: Progress towards results should be based on a comparison of indicators before and after (so far) the project intervention.

Project strategy: how and why outcomes and strategies contribute to the achievement of the expected results. Examine their relevance and whether they provide the most effective route towards results.

Sustainability: to which extent the benefits of the project will continue, within or outside the project domain, after it has come to an end.

**3.2 Adaptive management framework of the project**

Monitoring Systems

1. Assess the monitoring tools currently being used:

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

1. Reconstruct baseline data if necessary[[13]](#footnote-13). Reconstruction should follow participatory processes and could be achieved in conjunction with a learning exercise[[14]](#footnote-14);
2. Ensure that the monitoring system, including performance indicators, at least meets GEF minimum requirements[[15]](#footnote-15). Apply SMART indicators as necessary;
3. Apply the GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool and provide a description of comparison with the baseline values.

Risk Management

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

* Is the UNDP/GEF Risk Management System[[16]](#footnote-16) appropriately applied?
* How can the UNDP/GEF Risk Management System be used to strengthen project management?

Work Planning

1. Assess the use of the logical framework as a management tool during implementation and any changes made to it:

* Ensure the logical framework meets UNDP/GEF requirements in terms of format and content;
* What impact did the retro-fitting of impact indicators have on project management?

1. Assess the use of routinely updated work plans;
2. Assess the use of electronic information technologies to support implementation, participation and monitoring, as well as other project activities;
3. Are work planning processes result-based[[17]](#footnote-17)? If not, suggest ways to re-orientate work planning;
4. Consider the financial management of the project, with specific reference to the cost-effectiveness of interventions.

Reporting

1. Assess how adaptive management changes have been reported;
2. Assess how lessons derived from the adaptive management process have been documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners.

**3.3 Underlying Factors**

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

**UNDP Contribution**

1. Assess the role of UNDP against the requirements set out in the UNDP Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results. Consider: field visits, Steering Committee/TOR follow-up and analysis, PIR preparation and follow-up, GEF guidance;
2. Consider the new UNDP requirements outlined in the UNDP User Guide[[18]](#footnote-18), especially the Project Assurance role, and ensure they are incorporated into the project’s adaptive management framework;
3. Assess the contribution to the project from UNDP “soft” assistance (i.e. policy advice & dialogue, advocacy, and coordination). Suggest measures to strengthen UNDP’s soft assistance to the project management.

**3.5. Partnership Strategy**

1. Assess how partners are involved in the project

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

1. Identify opportunities for stronger substantive partnerships;
2. Assess how local stakeholders participate in project management and decision-making. Include an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the approach adopted by the project and suggestions for improvement if necessary;
3. Consider the dissemination of project information to partners and stakeholders and if necessary suggest more appropriate mechanisms;
4. Assess collaboration between governmental and non-governmental organizations;
5. Assess collaboration between implementation units of other related projects;
6. Assess local partnerships;
7. Assess transfer of capacity to the national institutions.

**3.6. Project Finance**

1. Review the changes to fund allocations as a result of budget revisions and provide an opinion on the appropriateness and relevance of such revisions, taking into account the project activity timeframe;
2. Review the effectiveness of financial coordinating mechanisms.

**Results expected from the evaluation**

The key result expected from this mid-term evaluation is:

**The Mid-term Evaluation Report**

The mid-term evaluation report will include:

1. The facts and conclusions
2. Evaluation of project impact on:

* The institution assisted and its staff;
* The final beneficiaries including specific groups;

1. Project sustainability on the basis of:

* The commitments of the governmental agencies in relation to the project objectives
* Involvement of local organizations (participatory process)
* Management and organizational factors
* Financing
* Staff development

1. Recommendations for the future implementation of the project activities
2. Lessons learned – detailed analysis and justification.

The draft and final report will be prepared in the format as provided in Annex 2 hereto.

The draft report will be presented to UNDP/GEF not later than 10 October 2011year. The final report will be prepared on the basis of the comments to be obtained from the parties related. The deadline for the final report is 20 November 2011.

The report will be presented electronically and in hard copy, in English.

**Evaluation Approach**

The Mid-Term Evaluation will be done through a combination of processes including a desk study, site visits, questionnaires and interviews, with involvement of all the parties related but not limited by: FHC of MoA, UNDP, representatives of the governmental agencies of various levels, local authorities, local NGO’s, communities etc.

The evaluator will be governed by the materials that available at: [www.undp.org/gef](http://www.undp.org/gef) as follows:

1. UNDP Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluation for Results;
2. UNDP/GEF M&E Resource Kit;
3. Measuring Results of the GEF Biodiversity Program.

The evaluation methodology is assumed to cover the aspects as follows:

1. Desk study of all project documentation;
2. Consultations with FHC of MoA, UNDP, National Steering Committee;
3. Field visits (Astana, Irgiz-Torgay Reserve, other pilot PAs, Project area Irgiz-Torgay-Zhylanshyk);
4. Interviewing

* FHC of MoA, its territorial departments and SPA’s;
* National Steering Committee;
* Local authorities
* Local Communities
* NGO’s

**Evaluator**

The Mid-term Evaluation will be carried out by two external consultants (international and national consultants):

1. International consultant - expert in areas of international projects’ monitoring and evaluation with the focus on biodiversity conservation, agriculture, forestry and hunting economies;
2. National consultant is an expert who works in projects focused on biodiversity conservation, forestry and hunting. National consultant will assist the international consultant in conducting mid-term evaluation, writing a report, explaningthe situation on the national level.

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

Consultant Qualities:

1. Recent experience of evaluation methodologies;
2. Experience applying participatory monitoring approaches;
3. Experience applying SMART indicators;
4. Recent knowledge of the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy;
5. Recent knowledge of UNDP’s results-based evaluation policies and procedures;
6. Competence in Adaptive Management, as applied to conservation or natural resource management projects;
7. Recognized expertise in the management and sustainable use of biodiversity in different ecosystems/ steppe ecosystems;
8. Familiarity with protected area policies and management structures in Kazakhstan;
9. Demonstrable analytical skills;
10. Work experience in relevant areas for at least 10 years;
11. Experience with multilateral or bilateral supported conservation projects;
12. Project evaluation experiences within United Nations system will be considered an asset;
13. Excellent English communication skills, Russian is desirable,

Specifically, the international expert will perform the following tasks:

1. Undertake evaluation mission;
2. Design the detailed evaluation scope and methodology (including the methods for data collection and analysis);
3. Conduct an analysis of the outcome, outputs and partnership strategy, concerning the evaluation described above);
4. Draft related parts of the evaluation report;
5. Finalize the whole evaluation report.

Specifically, National expert will perform the following tasks:

1. Conduct an analysis of the outcome, outputs and partnership strategy, concerning the evaluation described above;
2. Prepare draft report on mid-term evaluation;
3. Follow evaluation methodology designed by the international expert;
4. Assist the international expert in explaining the situation on the national level;
5. Assist international expert in report preparation.

Individual consultants are invited to submit applications together with their CV for a position.

Proposals from two independent evaluators are welcome. The evaluation will be undertaken in-line with GEF principles:

1. Independence
2. Impartiality
3. Transparency
4. Disclosure
5. Ethical
6. Partnership
7. Competencies and Capacities
8. Credibility
9. Utility

The evaluators must be independent from both the policy-making process and the delivery and management of assistance. Therefore applications will not be considered from evaluators who have had any direct involvement with the design or implementation of the project. This may apply equally to evaluators who are associated with organizations, universities or entities that are, or have been, involved in the project policy-making process and projects, connected with FHC MoA Kazakhstan, Kazakhstan Ministry of environment protection, UNDP in Kazakhstan, or other partners/stakeholders must be disclosed in the application. If selected, failure to make the above disclosures will be considered just grounds for immediate contract termination, without recompense. In such circumstances, all notes, reports and other documentation produced by the evaluator will be retained by UNDP.

**Implementation Arrangements**

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

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

The timeframe for submission of the first draft of the report: See table below. The report will be submitted both electronically and in printed version, in English.

The report should be submitted to UNDP Country Office in Kazakhstan (to the attention of Ms. Victoria Baigazina, Program Coordinator, mailing address: 26 Bokeykhan St., Astana; Tel.: +7(7172) 59-25-50).

Prior to approval of the final report, a draft version shall be circulated for comments to government counterparts, UNDP, National Project Coordinator, National Steering Project members, members representing various organizations and project team.

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

**Visit program:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | TIME | ACTIVITY |
| First day - Astana | Specifying | Arrival to Astana c.,  Work with project team |
| Second day - Astana | 09.00 -14.00 | Work with project team |
| 14.00 -15.00 | Lunch |
| 15.00 -16.00 | Meetings with stakeholders |
| 17.15 | Visit the project site  By train Astana c.-Arkalyk c. |
| Third day, Kostanay oblast, car route | Whole day | Arrival to Arkalyk c.  By car through the project site Arkalyk c. – Amangeldy v. – Torgai v. – Irgiz v. |
| Fifth day,  Aktubinsk oblast | Whole day | Irgiz-TurgaiState Nature Reservat, Irgiz v. |
| Seventh day ,  Flight day | Whole day, time is specifying | Travel Irgiz v.-Aktobe c. (450 km)  Departure fromAktobeto Astana  arrival to Astana c. |
| Eighth day  Karaganda oblast | Whole day | Visiting BuyratauNational Park |
| Ninth day | Whole day, time is specifying | Work with project team |
| Tenth day | Specifying | Departure from Astana c. for place of residence |

The activities and timeframe are broken down as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Activities** | **Timeframes and responsibilities** | **Duration of implementation** |
| Desk review | 4 days – international and national consultants | 15 January 2012 |
| Field visits, interviews, questionnaire, Briefing of evaluation consultants | 10 days – international and national consultants | 25 January 2012  03 February 2012 |
| Preparation and presentation of draft report on mid-term monitoring. | 9 days – international and national consultants | 04 January 2012 15 February 2012 |
| Validation of preliminary findings with stakeholders through circulation of initial reports for comments, meetings, and other types of feedback mechanisms | 15 days Project team | 16 February 2012-  01 March 2012 |
| Preparation of final evaluation report (including comments) | 5 days – international and national consultants | 02 March 2012- 15 March 2012 |

**Work plan:**

**Annex 2. GEF Operational Principles**

**http://www.gefweb.org/public/opstrat/ch1.htm**

**TEN OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPMENT**

**AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GEF'S WORK PROGRAM**

1. For purposes of the financial mechanisms for the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the GEF will **function under the guidance of, and be accountable to, the Conference of the Parties** (COPs). For purposes of financing activities in the focal area of ozone layer depletion, GEF operational policies will be consistent with those of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and its amendments.

2. The GEF will provide new, and additional, grant and concessional funding to meet the agreed **incremental costs** of measures to achieve agreed global environmental benefits.

3. The GEF will ensure the **cost-effectiveness** of its activities to maximize global environmental benefits.

4. The GEF will fund projects that are **country-driven** and based on national priorities designed to support sustainable development, as identified within the context of national programs.

5. The GEF will maintain sufficient **flexibility** to respond to changing circumstances, including evolving guidance of the Conference of the Parties and experience gained from monitoring and evaluation activities.

6. GEF projects will provide for **full disclosure** of all non-confidential information.

7. GEF projects will provide for consultation with, and **participation** as appropriate of, the beneficiaries and affected groups of people.

8. GEF projects will conform to the **eligibility** requirements set forth in paragraph 9 of the GEF Instrument.

9. In seeking to maximize global environmental benefits, the GEF will emphasize its **catalytic role** and leverage additional financing from other sources.

10. The GEF will ensure that its programs and projects are **monitored and evaluated** on a regular basis.

**Annex 3: Kazakhstan Steppe Project Status of Objective and Outcome Indicators Target Delivery (from the 2011 PIR)**

| **Objective/outcome** | **Indicator** | **Baseline** | **Target** | **2011** | **MTE Assessment and Suggested Revisions** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Objective: To expand the protected area system of Kazakhstan to ensure an improved coverage of steppe ecosystems | Coverage of steppe ecosystems in the Protected Area System of Kazakhstan: (see (a) through (d) below) | (see data below; units of: PA (ha) / PA as % of ecological zone) | 2013: 3,429,960 ha or 2.2% of the ecological zone. (establishment of additional 553,966 ha of steppe ecosystem)  2010: 2,875,994 ha (1.8% of the ecological zone) (831,998 ha of new steppe PAs) – of which 578,742 are pure steppe ecosystems  - Establishment of two new PAs covering 578,742 ha of which only 482,542 is pure addition (as 96,200 ha are already protected as small PAs ).  - expansion of two existing PAs by 349,456 ha of steppe ecosystems | 2011: 2,431,997 ha (1.57% of the ecological zone) (74,337 ha of new steppe PAs)  - State National Nature Park "Buiratau" established (Government Regulation # 247 of March 11, 2011) with total area of 89,968 ha, of which 5,200 ha (from the existing PA) and 10,431 ha (of new sites) include forest steppe | Concur with self-assessment. The project progress toward the overall target is further discussed under the Outcome 1 results section of this evaluation report. So far the project is making good progress toward the overall target, although slightly more slowly than originally anticipated. The project helped establish the Buiritau PA, and has significantly contributed to the progress for establishment of Altyn Dala PA and expansion of Irgiz-Turgai PA, both of which are expected to receive official recognition in 2012. The “competition” among PAs for formal establishment by the government, combined with negative national budget trends due to the global economic crisis, creates some risk for reaching the final overall target by the end of the project. Reaching the final target will require establishment of the Bokieorda Zhaiyk PA, for which the TEO technical documentation still needs to be completed and approved, which can take 1-2 years. The project target is an important benchmark and should remain as a long-term goal, even if it is not reached before the end of the project. At the same time, the project has already contributed to an impressive increase in hectares of PAs in Kazakhstan. |
| (a) Forest steppe | 620,068 ha / 8.1% | 620,068 ha / 8.1% | 676,923 ha / 8.8% | The project is not working on PAs targeting these ecosystems (as can be seen by the fact that there is no increase planned from baseline to target value). It is not clear why this information is included in the project logframe other than to provide context for the steppe PA ecosystem indicator. The increase in forest steppe and mountain PA coverage from baseline to 2011 status indicated here was not a result of project activities, but simply represents the current national status resulting from other efforts expanding the national PA system. As per logframe good practice, indicators and information not related to project activities should not be included in the logframe, which is designed to guide a results-based project approach, and help assess results from project activities only. |
| (b) Rivers, lakes, forests | 2,336,645 ha / 14.8% | 2,336,645 ha / 14.8% | 2,336,645 ha / 14.8% |
| (c) Mountains | 6,553,771 ha / 16.2% | 6,553,771 ha / 16.2% | 7,181,196 ha / 17.75% |
| (d) Steppe | 2,069,960 ha / 1.35% | 2,875,994 ha/ 1.8% | 2,431,997 ha / 1.57% | This is simply repeating the top line information on overall PA coverage of steppe ecosystems addressed by the project. |
| Size of Saiga populations with major proportion of habitat in steppe | Size of Betpakdala Saiga population: 22,760 animals (Source; CFH census, 2007) | Betpakdala Saiga population shows an average annual population growth of at least 10%. | Size of Betpakdala Saiga population: 78,000 animals (Source; CFH census, 2011).   47.6% | Concur with self-reported results. There are indications that the size of the Betpakdala Saiga population has indeed increased since the beginning of the project, but as discussed in previous sections of this evaluation report, the population increase is not a result of project activities, but most reflects the government’s efforts through the hunting ban, and the investment in Okhotzooprom, the agency under the CFH tasked with Saiga protection. The project’s efforts are certainly contributing positively to the overall effort, but the size of the Saiga population is not a useful impact indicator for results in the project implementation period. In the long run, the project’s efforts at expending the steppe zone PA coverage (with Irgiz-Turgai and Altyn Dala PAs) and improvement PA management effectiveness (as well as the work on wildlife corridors) should contribute significantly to biodiversity conservation, and specifically the Saiga population. |
| Outcome 1: PA system of Kazakhstan contains representative samples of steppe ecosystem under various conservation management regimes and provides effective coverage of ecosystems and ecological processes | Legally established protected areas, as % of area of overall ecological zone  (see (a) through (d) below) | Total steppe zone coverage: 1.35 % | By 2010: Total steppe zone coverage: 1.8% (578,742 ha added)  By 2013: Minimum for combined steppe areas: 2.2 % | Total steppe zone coverage: 1.57 % (74,337 ha added), Technical documentation for creation of the Nature Rezervat "Altyn Dala" of 484,000 ha developed; the Reservat is to be established at the end of 2011 , which will increase the coverage of desertified steppe. | Concur with self-reported results. This is again a repeat of the top level objective indicator covering outcome level results.  Some steppe ecosystem sub-types are covered under project PA expansion.  As highlighted in the evaluation report, an appropriate results-based indicator however would focus not just on absolute hectares of coverage, but on coverage of identified high biodiversity value steppe ecosystems, and particularly those most vulnerable to threats. The project is working to expand PA coverage, but has to negotiate with local government and land users to reach agreement on the defined boundaries of proposed PAs; in this case some targeted high biodiversity value areas may not be included in the PAs. An improved indicator would consider quality of PA coverage, not just quantity, but this requires additional detailed data on the biodiversity values of wide expanses of the Kazakh steppe landscape. |
| (a) Meadow steppe: | Meadow steppe: 2.5% | Meadow steppe: 3.0 % | Meadow steppe: 3.07% |
| (b) Dry steppe: | Dry steppe: 1.0% | Dry steppe: 1.3 % | Dry steppe: 1.52% |
| (c) Steppe semi-desert: | Steppe semi-desert: 2.1% | Steppe semi-desert: 2.4 % | Steppe semi-desert: 2.14% |
| (d) Desertified steppe: | Desertified steppe: 0.4% | Desertified steppe: 1.4% | Desertified steppe: 0.43% |
| Management Effectiveness of PAs at project sites   (see (a) and (b) below) | (see data below) | (see data below) | (see data below) | Concur with self-reported results. See Annex 3.1 following for METT scorecards. However, the METT scorecards have been completed under different methodologies, and therefore the scores may not be directly comparable. It is also not clear why only these two PAs are included in the logframe, when the project is contributing relatively little at Naurzum, and contributing significantly to other PAs, although the rationale may be that it was not possible to establish baseline METT scores for PAs that were not yet created. However a project development phase METT assessment was conducted for five PAs (the inception report includes METT scorecards for Bayanaulskiy SNNP, Irgiz-Turgai SNR, Karkaralinsky SNNP, Naurzum SNR, and Korghalzhyn SNR. This evaluation suggests that the project conduct METT assessments for all PAs involved in the project, under a standardized methodology that can be consistently applied over time by the PA administrations with external support. The target values for the METT scores for the two PAs indicated here are not clearly rationalized, and the project team does not know on what basis the target value was proposed. It appears that the Naurzum target value was under-ambitious while the Irgiz-Turgai target value may be overambitious, although good progress toward the target has been made. |
| (a) Naurzum | Naurzum – 59% | 0.74 | 0.86 |
| (b) Irgiz Turgai | Irgiz Turgai – 34% | 0.6 | 0.53 |
| Outcome 2: Tools for landscape-level steppe conservation planning and management are developed and implemented by key stakeholders | Landscape level steppe conservation planning complements and improves the effectiveness and ecological sustainability of, the PAs | No landscape-level conservation planning and management model in Kazakhstan;  No wildlife corridors  Protected Areas managed in isolation | Landscape level steppe conservation planning involving a combination of wildlife corridors, buffer zones and community-based conservation areas designed to complement, and improve the effectiveness and sustainability of, the PAs within the 6.2 million ha of Irgiz-Turgay-Zhylanshyk pilot | To establish a Program for conservation and management of the steppe landscape, the project conducted an ecological monitoring and produced baseline landscape data for flora, fauna, abiotic factors, land resources, anthropogenic disturbances. The Program meant to be established for the pilot site "Irgiz Turgay Zhylanshyk". The project is establishing ecological corridors, therefore the documentation adopted by the Forestry and Hunting Committee has been submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture of Kazakhstan for further approval. | Concur with self-assessed results. This is a qualitative indicator that attempts to capture multiple elements of the project activities under Outcome 2. This would be an acceptable approach, except the indicator and target do not meet SMART criteria with respect to clearly and specifically defining what metrics landscape level steppe conservation planning should meet. This is simply a “supply-driven” project implementation indicator for Outcome 2, rather than a results-focused indicator with a clearly rationalized target based on the normative status for landscape level conservation in Kazakhstan. Therefore by the sheer fact of the planned project activities being carried out the indicator target is met. |
| Steppe ecosystem knowledge and monitoring relevant to land use planning of the steppe being undertaken and utilized | No monitoring and knowledge management system existing. | 2 annual reports with GIS data sheets on steppe ecosystem knowledge and monitoring relevant for land use planning delivered to the Land Use Planning Agency through the Information Center of the MEP | The project finalized the report with GIS data sheets on steppe ecosystem ecological monitoring and delivered it to the Land Use Planning Agency through the Information Center of the MEP. This report will help in the use of monitoring and knowledge management systems for steppe ecosystem, and in design of the land use programme. | Concur with self-assessed results. This indicator suffers from the same limitations as the above indicator, combined with the fact that the target is output-based, which may not have high relevance for meeting the project objective unless there is clearly defined logical pathway from outputs to outcomes, and on to impacts for the activity addressed (in this case, production of monitoring reports). A stronger outcome-level indicator for assessing project results under this activity would be one that captures the influence of the knowledge products on environmental management decision-making, i.e. not just delivering reports, but demonstrating that the information in the reports is utilized in decision-making processes. |
| Annual reports on Saiga sightings by corridor management committees in ITZ | No corridor committees existing in ITZ | At least 1 annual report on Saiga sightings within ITZ delivered to the CFH | The task on establishment of the corridors management committee has been moved to 2012, because the ecological corridors will be officially established in the beginning of 2012; potential members of the corridors management committee are being identified. The project prepared 3 reports on status of Betpakdala Saiga population and sent it to CFH. | Concur with self-reported results. See comments on previous indicator. |
| Outcome 3: The systemic, institutional and individual capacity for steppe conservation in a wide productive landscape is strengthened | Annual reports on Saiga sightings and defined examined biological parameters (like e.g. sex and age ratios) of PA managers | No annual reporting on data relevant to Saiga ecology by PA managers | At least 1 annual report on Saiga sightings and defined examined biological parameters (like e.g. sex and age ratios) of PA managers of PAs within ITZ delivered to the CFH | The project assisted the Irgiz-Torgay Rezervat and Korgalzhyn reserve staff with preparation of 2 reports on Saiga sightings and defined examined biological parameters (like e.g. sex and age ratios) of PA | Concur with self-assessed results. The use of the production of Saiga monitoring reports as an indicator for PA management capacity is a useful and interesting approach. At the same time, it is not clear why the METT score would not adequately capture capacity development for PA management. This indicator appears to give additional emphasis for the capacity of PA staff with respect to environmental (esp. Saiga) monitoring, which may be a valid approach in the context of the PAs the project is working on. As with the indicators under Outcome 2 however, it would be helpful to know how this information is being used in management decision-making. |
| Capacity Scorecard  (see (a) through (e) below) | (see data below) | (see data below) | (see data below): as of July 11, 2011 | The capacity development scorecard is a tool commonly used in UNDP-GEF projects that include capacity development elements. It is useful in the sense that it provides a rough method for translating qualitative results into a quantitative assessment for easier tracking of results; but the capacity scorecard has some significant shortcomings as well. One particular issue relevant for the Kazakhstan Steppe project is that the capacity development scorecard looks at the whole national system, whereas the project is only addressing steppe PAs, and not the whole PA or environmental management system in Kazakhstan. The Capacity Assessment scorecard can still be useful in such circumstances, but reasonable boundaries have to be put on the expected scope of project results. In the case of the Kazakhstan Steppe project, the application of this scorecard is a relatively “blunt tool” because the project objective focuses on steppe PAs. Comments and suggested revisions on specific elements of the capacity assessment scorecard indicator are provided below. |
| (a) Policy formulation  Systemic  Institutional | Policy Formulation 4/out of 6 2/out of 3 | Policy Formulation 6/out of 6 3/out of 3 | Policy Formulation 5/out of 6 2/out of 3 | Reaching a score of 6 at the systemic level requires achieving a maximum score on the indicator that “The protected area agenda is being effectively championed / driven forward”, and because Kazakhstan is such a centralized country politically, achieving a maximum score would require actions at very high levels of government in terms of lobbying ministers, the prime minister and the president, which is somewhat beyond the project’s scope. Similarly, the institutional component of this part of the scorecard relates to the existence of a national PAs institution – again, something beyond the scope of the project. This mid-term evaluation recommends that the target value of the systemic level be revised to a target of 5, which the project has met. |
| (b) Implementation  Systemic  Institutional   Individual | Implementation 5/out of 9 17/out of 27 6/out of 12 | Implementation 8/out of 9 33/out of 36 10/out of 12 | Implementation 7/out of 9 19/out of 27 6/out of 12 | There is a discrepancy between the total possible institutional score at the baseline and target levels (max score of 27 vs max score of 36). This is repeated in multiple project documents, and appears to indicate an adjustment of three additional questions to this section of the scorecard, but the specific details of this issue could not be resolved under the MTE. The MTE recommends that the project take an approximately proportional target value of 25/27. Alternatively, the project team could qualitatively analyze this section of the scorecard, and assess the maximum possible value within the scope of the project, and use this as the target value (following approval of this proposal by the Project Board). |
| (c) Engagement and consensus  Systemic  Institutional   Individual | Eng. and consensus 4/out of 6 3/out of 6 2/out of 3 | Eng. and consensus 6/out of 6 5/out of 6 3/out of 3 | Eng. and consensus 3/out of 6 4/out of 6 2/out of 3 | Concur with self-assessed results, no significant issues. |
| (d) Mobilize info and knowledge  Systemic  Institutional   Individual | Info and knowledge 2/out of 3 2/out of 3 1/out of 3 | Info and knowledge 3/out of 3 3/out of 3 2/out of 3 | Info and knowledge 2/out of 3 3/out of 3 2/out of 3 | Concur with self-assessed results, no significant issues. |
| (e) Monitoring  Systemic  Institutional   Individual | Monitoring 3/out of 6 2/out of 6 0/out of 3 | Monitoring 5/out of 6 4/out of 6 2/out of 3 | Monitoring 4/out of 6 4/out of 6 2/out of 3 | Concur with self-assessed results, no significant issues. |
| Financial Sustainability Scorecard: (see (a) through (c) below) | (see data below) | (see data below) | (see data below): as of June 26, 2011 | The financial sustainability scorecard also faces some of the contextual macro issues faced in the use of the capacity assessment scorecard, as discussed above. The scores below were assessed with the support of the international expert supporting the project on PA financing issues, and with a roundtable of national experts. |
| (a) Legal and regulatory framework | 55% - 49/out of 89 | 82% - 73/89 | 47% - 41/out of 90 | Concur with self-assessed results, no significant issues. |
| (b) Business planning | 33% - 19/out of 57 | 58% - 33/57 | 42% - 25/out of 59 | Concur with self-assessed results, no significant issues. Financing of PAs is planned on three-year cycles, and currently there is not a clear rationalization of funding in relation to the management plans and needs for specific PAs. The project is working to introduce the business planning concept in PA management planning. |
| (c) Tools for revenue generation | 22% - 10/out of 46 | 54% - 25/46 | 38% - 24/out of 63 | Concur with self-assessed results, no significant issues. This relates to Payments for Ecosystem Services and legal mechanisms for tools such as concessions. The project is supporting the development of these tools through the financing component, and an analysis of the applicability of various tools in Kazakhstan was included in the products under this output. However, fully establishing the legislative basis for such tools is beyond the scope of the project. |

**Annex 3.1: METT Scorecards**

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| **Objective 1: Catalyzing Sustainability of Protected Area Systems** | | |
| **SECTION I** | | |
|  | | |
| **Objective:** To measure progress in achieving the impacts and outcomes established at the portfolio level under the biodiversity focal area.  **Rationale:** Project data from the GEF-3, GEF-4, and GEF-5 project cohort will be aggregated for analysis of directional trends and patterns at a portfolio-wide level to inform the development of future GEF strategies and to report to GEF Council on portfolio-level performance in the biodiversity focal area.  **Structure of Tracking Tool:** Each tracking tool requests background and coverage information on the project and specific information required to track portfolio level indicators in the GEF-3, GEF-4, and GEF-5 strategy.  **Guidance in Applying GEF Tracking Tools:** GEF tracking tools are applied three times: at CEO endorsement, at project mid-term, and at project completion.  **Submission:** The finalized tracking tool will be cleared by the GEF Agencies as being correctly completed. | | |
| ***Important: Please read the Guidelines posted on the GEF website before entering your data*** | | |
|  |  |  |
| **I. General Data** | **Please indicate your answer here** | **Notes** |
| Project Title | Steppe Conservation and Management |  |
| GEF Project ID | 3293 |  |
| Agency Project ID | 3835 |  |
| Implementing Agency | UNDP |  |
| Project Type | FSP | FSP or MSP |
| Country | Kazakhstan |  |
| Region | ECA |  |
| Date of submission of the tracking tool | June 17, 2011; July 09, 2011 | Month DD, YYYY (e.g., May 12, 2010) |
| Name of reviewers completing tracking tool and completion date | Completion Date : Assylkhan Assylbekov,Project manager, Aiman Omarbekova, Expert, July 2011. |  |
| Planned project duration | 5 | years |
| Actual project duration |  | years |
| Lead Project Executing Agency (ies) | Forest and Hunting Committee of Ministry of Agriculture of Republic of Kazakhstan |  |
|  |  |  |
| Date of Council/CEO Approval | 28 October, 2008 | Month DD, YYYY (e.g., May 12, 2010) |
| GEF Grant (US$) | 2,215,000 |  |
| Cofinancing expected (US$) | 21,543,300 |  |
|  |  |  |
| **II. Total Extent in hectares of protected areas targeted by the project by biome type** | **Please indicate your answer here** |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Please use the following biomes provided below and place the coverage data within these biomes** |  |  |
| **Terrestrial (insert total hectares for terrestrial coverage and then provide coverage for each of the terrestrial biomes below)** | | |
| Total hectares | 954930 | ha |
| Tropical and subtropical moist broadleaf forests (tropical and subtropical, humid) |  | ha |
| Tropical and subtropical dry broadleaf forests (tropical and subtropical, semi-humid) |  | ha |
| Tropical and subtropical coniferous forests (tropical and subtropical, semi-humid) |  | ha |
| Temperate broadleaf and mixed forests (temperate, humid) |  | ha |
| Temperate coniferous forests (temperate, humid to semi-humid) |  | ha |
| Boreal forests/taiga (subarctic, humid) |  | ha |
| Tropical and subtropical grasslands, savannas, and shrublands (tropical and subtropical, semi-arid) |  | ha |
| Temperate grasslands, savannas, and shrublands (temperate, semi-arid) | 954930 | ha (Steppe, Desert, Semi-desert) |
| Flooded grasslands and savannas (temperate to tropical, fresh or brackish water inundated) |  | ha |
| Mangroves |  | ha |
| Montane grasslands and shrublands (alpine or montane climate) |  | ha |
| Tundra (Arctic) |  | ha |
| Mediterranean forests, woodlands, and scrub or Sclerophyll forests (temperate warm, semi-humid to semi-arid with winter rainfall) |  | ha |
| Deserts and xeric shrublands (temperate to tropical, arid) |  | ha |
| Mangrove (subtropical and tropical, salt water inundated) |  | ha |
| **Freshwater (insert total hectares for freshwater coverage and then provide coverage for each of the freshwater biomes below)** | | |
| Total hectares |  | ha |
| Large lakes |  | ha |
| Large river deltas |  | ha |
| Polar freshwaters |  | ha |
| Montane freshwaters |  | ha |
| Temperate coastal rivers |  | ha |
| Temperate floodplain rivers and wetlands |  | ha |
| Temperate upland rivers |  | ha |
| Tropical and subtropical coastal rivers |  | ha |
| Tropical and subtropical floodplain rivers and wetlands |  | ha |
| Tropical and subtropical upland rivers |  | ha |
| Xeric freshwaters and endorheic basins |  | ha |
| Oceanic islands |  | ha |
| **Marine (insert total hectares for marine and then distinguish coverage between each of the following zones)** | | |
| Total hectares |  | ha |
| Coral reefs |  | ha |
| Estuaries |  | ha |
| Ocean (beyond EEZ) |  | ha |
|  |  |  |
| **III. Please complete the table below for the protected areas that are the target of the GEF intervention and add new sections for each protected area if the project extends beyond four Pas. Use NA for not applicable.** | **Please indicate your answer here** |  |
| **1. Protected Area** |  |  |
| Name of Protected Area | Naurzum State Nature Reserve |  |
| Is this a new protected area? | 0 | Yes = 1, No = 0 |
| Area in Hectares | 191381 | ha, (Steppe, Forest steppe, Wetlands) |
| Global designation or priority lists | Yes | Naurzum State Nature Reserve: "Sary-Arka: Steppes and Lakes of North Kazakhstan" in the UNESCO World Heritage object list; Ramsar site. |
| Local Designation of Protected Area | State Nature Reserve | (E.g, indigenous reserve, private reserve, etc.) |
| IUCN Category | 1 | **1:** Strict Nature Reserve/Wilderness Area: managed mainly for science or wilderness protection **2:** National Park: managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation **3:** Natural Monument: managed mainly for conservation of specific natural features **4:** Habitat/Species Management Area: managed mainly for conservation through management intervention **5:** Protected Landscape/Seascape: managed mainly for landscape/seascape protection and recreation **6:** Managed Resource Protected Area: managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural ecosystems |
|  |  |  |
| **2. Protected Area** |  |  |
| Name of Protected Area | Irgiz-Turgay State Natural Reservat |  |
| Is this a new protected area? | 1 | Yes = 1, No = 0 Was created in the first years of project operations. |
| Area in Hectares | 763549 | ha, (Steppe, Wetlands) |
| Global designation or priority lists | Yes | Ramsar site |
| Local Designation of Protected Area | State Natural Reservat | (E.g, indigenous reserve, private reserve, etc.) |
| IUCN Category | 2 | **1:** Strict Nature Reserve/Wilderness Area: managed mainly for science or wilderness protection **2:** National Park: managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation **3:** Natural Monument: managed mainly for conservation of specific natural features **4:** Habitat/Species Management Area: managed mainly for conservation through management intervention **5:** Protected Landscape/Seascape: managed mainly for landscape/seascape protection and recreation **6:** Managed Resource Protected Area: managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural ecosystems |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Objective 1: Catalyzing Sustainability of Protected Area Systems** | | |
| **SECTION II: Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool for Protected Areas** | | |
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| **Note:** Please complete the management effectiveness tracking tool for **EACH** protected area that is the target of the GEF intervention and create a new worksheet for each. **Structure and content of the Tracking Tool - Objective 1. Section II:** The Tracking Tool has two main sections: datasheets and assessment form. Both sections should be completed. **1. Datasheets:** the data sheet comprises of two separate sections: ü Data sheet 1: records details of the assessment and some basic information about the site, such as name, size and location etc.  ü Data sheet 2: provides a generic list of threats which protected areas can face. On this data sheet the assessors are asked to identify threats and rank their impact on the protected area. **2. Assessment Form:** the assessment is structured around 30 questions presented in table format which includes three columns for recording details of the assessment, all of which should be completed. | | |
| ***Important: Please read the Guidelines posted on the GEF website before entering your data*** | | |
|  |  |  |
| **Data Sheet 1: Reporting Progress at Protected Area Sites** | **Please indicate your answer here** | **Notes** |
|  |  |  |
| Name, affiliation and contact details for person responsible for completing the METT (email etc.) | Zhanel Bessembaeva Head, Science and ecological projects department , LP "EcoService-C" branch, Astana tel.,8 (7172) 41-78-86, zhanel\_@mail.ru |  |
| Date assessment carried out | June 17,2011 | Month DD, YYYY (e.g., May 12, 2010) |
| Name of protected area | Irgiz-Turgay State Nature Reservat |  |
| WDPA site code (these codes can be found on www.unep-wcmc.org/wdpa/) | No |  |
| Designations(please choose 1-3) | **1** | 1: National 2: IUCN Category 3: International (please complete lines 35-69 as necessary ) |
| Country | Kazakhstan |  |
| Location of protected area (province and if possible map reference) | Kazakhstan, Aktubinsk oblast, Irgiz district |  |
| Date of establishment | February 14, 2007 |  |
| Ownership details (please choose 1-4) | **1** | 1: State 2: Private 3: Community 4: Other |
| Management Authority | Forestry and Hunting Committee Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan |  |
| Size of protected area (ha) | 763 549 ha |  |
| Number of Permanent staff | 99 |  |
| Number of Temporary staff | 7 |  |
| Annual budget (US$) for recurrent (operational) funds – excluding staff salary costs | 281,858 |  |
| Annual budget (US$) for project or other supplementary funds – excluding staff salary costs |  |  |
| What are the main values for which the area is designated | Protection of habitats (hibernation,aestivation, lambing), Betpakdala saiga population migratory paths. Conservation of South Irgiz-Turgay depression water bodies, as wetlands, spawning area. |  |
| List the two primary protected area management objectives in below: |  |  |
| Management objective 1 | Conservation and restoration of nature complexes and objects, historical and culture monuments |  |
| Management objective 2 | Scientific researches, monitoring,ecological education, ecological tourism, recreation |  |
| No. of people involved in completing assessment | 10 people |  |
| Including: (please choose 1-8) | **2** | 1: PA manager  2: PA staff 3: Other PA agency staff  4: Donors 5: NGOs 6: External experts 7: Local community 8: Other |
|  |  |  |
| **Information on International Designations** | **Please indicate your answer here** |  |
|  |  |  |
| **UNESCO World Heritage site (see: http://whc.unesco.org/en/list)** |  |  |
| Date Listed |  |  |
| Site name |  |  |
| Site area |  |  |
| Geographical co-ordinates |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Criteria for designation |  | (i.e. criteria i to x) |
| Statement of Outstanding Universal Value |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Ramsar site (see: http://ramsar.wetlands.org)** | yes |  |
| Date Listed | 11/10/76 |  |
| Site name | Lakes of the lower Turgay and Irgiz |  |
| Site area | 348,000 |  |
| Geographical number | 48°42' N, 62°11' E |  |
| Reason for Designation (see Ramsar Information Sheet) | Staging area, breeding and moulting area for migratory waterbird species. Area provides a critical link in a major food chain |  |
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| **UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserves (see: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/ecological-sciences/man-and-biosphere-programme/** |  |  |
| Date Listed |  |  |
| Site name |  |  |
| Site area |  | Total, Core, Buffe, and Transition |
| Geographical co-ordinates |  |  |
| Criteria for designation |  |  |
| Fulfilment of three functions of MAB |  | conservation, development and logistic support |
|  |  |  |
| **Please list other designations (i.e. ASEAN Heritage, Natura 2000) and any supporting information below** |  |  |
|  |  | Name |
|  |  | Detail |
|  |  |  |
|  |  | Name |
|  |  | Detail |
|  |  |  |
|  |  | Name |
|  |  | Detail |
|  |  |  |
| **Data Sheet 2: Protected Areas Threats (please complete a Data Sheet of threats and assessment for each protected area of the project). Технические спецификации 2: Угрозы ООПТ (пожалуйста, закончите Технические спецификации угроз и оценки для каждой защищенной области проекта).** | | |
| Please choose all relevant existing threats as either of high, medium or low significance. Threats ranked as of high significance are those which are seriously degrading values; medium are those threats having some negative impact and those characterised as low are threats which are present but not seriously impacting values or N/A where the threat is not present or not applicable in the protected area. Пожалуйста, выберите все соответствующие существующие угрозы или в качестве высокого, среднего или в качестве низкого значения. Угрозы, оцениваемые с высокого значения, являются теми, которые являются серьезно унизительными ценностями; среда - те угрозы, имеющие некоторое негативное воздействие, и характеризуемые как низкие являются угрозами, которые присутствуют, но не серьезно воздействующие ценности или N/A, где угроза не присутствует или не применимая в защищенной области. | | |
| **1. Residential and commercial development within a protected area** | | |
| Threats from human settlements or other non-agricultural land uses with a substantial footprint | | |
| 1.1 Housing and settlement | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 1.2 Commercial and industrial areas | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 1.3 Tourism and recreation infrastructure | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| **2. Agriculture and aquaculture within a protected area** | | |
| Threats from farming and grazing as a result of agricultural expansion and intensification, including silviculture, mariculture and aquaculture | | |
| 2.1 Annual and perennial non-timber crop cultivation | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 2.1a Drug cultivation | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 2.2 Wood and pulp plantations | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 2.3 Livestock farming and grazing | 2 | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 2.4 Marine and freshwater aquaculture | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| **3. Energy production and mining within a protected area** | | |
| Threats from production of non-biological resources | | |
| 3.1 Oil and gas drilling | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 3.2 Mining and quarrying | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 3.3 Energy generation, including from hydropower dams | 1 | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| **4. Transportation and service corridors within a protected area** | | |
| Threats from long narrow transport corridors and the vehicles that use them including associated wildlife mortality | | |
| 4.1 Roads and railroads (include road-killed animals) | 1 | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 4.2 Utility and service lines (e.g. electricity cables, telephone lines,) | 1 | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 4.3 Shipping lanes and canals | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 4.4 Flight paths | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| **5. Biological resource use and harm within a protected area** | | |
| Threats from consumptive use of "wild" biological resources including both deliberate and unintentional harvesting effects; also persecution or control of specific species (note this includes hunting and killing of animals) | | |
| 5.1 Hunting, killing and collecting terrestrial animals (including killing of animals as a result of human/wildlife conflict) | 2 | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 5.2 Gathering terrestrial plants or plant products (non-timber) | 1 | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 5.3 Logging and wood harvesting | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 5.4 Fishing, killing and harvesting aquatic resources | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| **6. Human intrusions and disturbance within a protected area** | | |
| Threats from human activities that alter, destroy or disturb habitats and species associated with non-consumptive uses of biological resources | | |
| 6.1 Recreational activities and tourism | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 6.2 War, civil unrest and military exercises | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 6.3 Research, education and other work-related activities in protected areas | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 6.4 Activities of protected area managers (e.g. construction or vehicle use, artificial watering points and dams) | 1 | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 6.5 Deliberate vandalism, destructive activities or threats to protected area staff and visitors | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| **7. Natural system modifications** | | |
| Threats from other actions that convert or degrade habitat or change the way the ecosystem functions | | |
| 7.1 Fire and fire suppression (including arson) | 2 | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 7.2 Dams, hydrological modification and water management/use | 1 | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 7.3a Increased fragmentation within protected area | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 7.3b Isolation from other natural habitat (e.g. deforestation, dams without effective aquatic wildlife passages) | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 7.3c Other ‘edge effects’ on park values | 1 | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 7.3d Loss of keystone species (e.g. top predators, pollinators etc) | 1 | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| **8. Invasive and other problematic species and genes** | | |
| Threats from terrestrial and aquatic non-native and native plants, animals, pathogens/microbes or genetic materials that have or are predicted to have harmful effects on biodiversity following introduction, spread and/or increase | | |
| 8.1 Invasive non-native/alien plants (weeds) | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 8.1a Invasive non-native/alien animals | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 8.1b Pathogens (non-native or native but creating new/increased problems) | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 8.2 Introduced genetic material (e.g. genetically modified organisms) | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| **9. Pollution entering or generated within protected area** | | |
| Threats from introduction of exotic and/or excess materials or energy from point and non-point sources | | |
| 9.1 Household sewage and urban waste water | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 9.1a Sewage and waste water from protected area facilities (e.g. toilets, hotels etc) | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 9.2 Industrial, mining and military effluents and discharges (e.g. poor water quality discharge from dams, e.g. unnatural temperatures, de-oxygenated, other pollution) | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 9.3 Agricultural and forestry effluents (e.g. excess fertilizers or pesticides) | 1 | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 9.4 Garbage and solid waste | 1 | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 9.5 Air-borne pollutants | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 9.6 Excess energy (e.g. heat pollution, lights etc) | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| **10. Geological events** | | |
| Geological events may be part of natural disturbance regimes in many ecosystems. But they can be a threat if a species or habitat is damaged and has lost its resilience and is vulnerable to disturbance. Management capacity to respond to some of these changes may be limited. | | |
| 10.1 Volcanoes | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 10.2 Earthquakes/Tsunamis | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 10.3 Avalanches/ Landslides | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 10.4 Erosion and siltation/ deposition (e.g. shoreline or riverbed changes) | 1 | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| **11. Climate change and severe weather** | | |
| Threats from long-term climatic changes which may be linked to global warming and other severe climatic/weather events outside of the natural range of variation | | |
| 11.1 Habitat shifting and alteration | 1 | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 11.2 Droughts | 1 | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 11.3 Temperature extremes | 1 | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 11.4 Storms and flooding | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| **12. Specific cultural and social threats** | | |
| 12.1 Loss of cultural links, traditional knowledge and/or management practices | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 12.2 Natural deterioration of important cultural site values | 1 | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
| 12.3 Destruction of cultural heritage buildings, gardens, sites etc | - | 0: N/A 1: Low 2: Medium 3: High |
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| **Assessment Form** | | |
|
| 1. Legal status: Does the protected area have legal status (or in the case of private reserves is covered by a covenant or similar)? | 3 | 0: The protected area is not gazetted/covenanted 1: There is agreement that the protected area should be gazetted/covenanted but the process has not yet begun 2: The protected area is in the process of being gazetted/covenanted but the process is still incomplete (includes sites designated under international conventions, such as Ramsar, or local/traditional law such as community conserved areas, which do not yet have national legal status or covenant) 3: The protected area has been formally gazetted/covenanted |
| Comments and Next Steps | The Steppe Project's activities will include activities for expanding the PA to include additional steppe ecosystems. | |
| 2. Protected area regulations: Are appropriate regulations in place to control land use and activities (e.g. hunting)? | 3 | 0: There are no regulations for controlling land use and activities in the protected area  1: Some regulations for controlling land use and activities in the protected area exist but these are major weaknesses 2: Regulations for controlling land use and activities in the protected area exist but there are some weaknesses or gaps 3: Regulations for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the protected area exist and provide an excellent basis for management |
| Comments and Next Steps |  | |
| 3. Law  Enforcement: Can staff (i.e. those with responsibility for managing the site) enforce protected area rules well enough? | 1 | 0: The staff have no effective capacity/resources to enforce protected area legislation and regulations  1: There are major deficiencies in staff capacity/resources to enforce protected area legislation and regulations (e.g. lack of skills, no patrol budget, lack of institutional support) 2: The staff have acceptable capacity/resources to enforce protected area legislation and regulations but some deficiencies remain 3: The staff have excellent capacity/resources to enforce protected area legislation and regulations |
| Comments and Next Steps | The Steppe Project assessed staff capacity and identified some issues. Training activities are delivered by the Project to address various dimensions of PA management. Further reservat staff capacity building is required. | |
| 4. Protected area objectives: Is management undertaken according to agreed objectives? | 3 | 0: No firm objectives have been agreed for the protected area  1: The protected area has agreed objectives, but is not managed according to these objectives 2: The protected area has agreed objectives, but is only partially managed according to these objectives 3: The protected area has agreed objectives and is managed to meet these objectives |
| Comments and Next Steps | The Reservat is managed in accordance with approved objectives. The UNDP Project supported involvement of international PA experts to provide guidance and practical assistance to Irgiz Turgay Reservat. | |
| 5. Protected area design: Is the protected area the right size and shape to protect species, habitats, ecological processes and water catchments of key conservation concern? | 2 | 0: Inadequacies in protected area design mean achieving the major objectives of the protected area is very difficult 1: Inadequacies in protected area design mean that achievement of major objectives is difficult but some mitigating actions are being taken (e.g. agreements with adjacent land owners for wildlife corridors or introduction of appropriate catchment management) 2: Protected area design is not significantly constraining achievement of objectives, but could be improved (e.g. with respect to larger scale ecological processes) 3: Protected area design helps achievement of objectives; it is appropriate for species and habitat conservation; and maintains ecological processes such as surface and groundwater flows at a catchment scale, natural disturbance patterns etc |
| Comments and Next Steps | At present, many key saiga migration and pilot sites are outside of the PA. Steppe Project has completed preparatory activities for expanding the PA with additional 400,000 ha, scientific justification and feasibility studies have been prepared and land plots have been earmarked. | |
| 6. Protected area boundary demarcation:  Is the boundary known and demarcated? | 3 | 0: The boundary of the protected area is not known by the management authority or local residents/neighbouring land users 1: The boundary of the protected area is known by the management authority but is not known by local residents/neighbouring land users  2: The boundary of the protected area is known by both the management authority and local residents/neighbouring land users but is not appropriately demarcated 3: The boundary of the protected area is known by the management authority and local residents/neighbouring land users and is appropriately demarcated |
| Comments and Next Steps | Over the time of the Reservat's existence all issues of the Reservat borders have been settled. Local population and authorities know the PA border and protection regime. | |
| 7. Management plan: Is there a management plan and is it being implemented? | 2 | 0: There is no management plan for the protected area 1: A management plan is being prepared or has been prepared but is not being implemented 2: A management plan exists but it is only being partially implemented because of funding constraints or other problems 3: A management plan exists and is being implemented |
| Comments and Next Steps | The first Management Plan was prepared under tight schedule and was quite formalistic covering the period until the end of 2011. Steppe Project is preparing Management Plan for 2012-2016 involving an international expert. | |
| 7.a Planning process: The planning process allows adequate opportunity for key stakeholders to influence the management plan | 1 | 0: No 1: Yes |
| Comments and Next Steps | The preparation of the new Management Plan involves all stakeholders | |
| 7.b Planning process: There is an established schedule and process for periodic review and updating of the management plan | - | 0: No 1: Yes |
| Comments and Next Steps | While preparing the new 2012-2016 Management Plan a schedule and frequency of reviews of the Management Plan were identified. | |
| 7.c Planning process: The results of monitoring, research and evaluation are routinely incorporated into planning | - | 0: No 1: Yes |
| Comments and Next Steps | The 2012-2016 Management Plan will incorporate results of monitoring, research and evaluation. | |
| 8. Regular work plan: Is there a regular work plan and is it being implemented | 2 | 0: No regular work plan exists  1: A regular work plan exists but few of the activities are implemented 2: A regular work plan exists and many activities are implemented 3: A regular work plan exists and all activities are implemented |
| Comments and Next Steps |  | |
| 9. Resource inventory: Do you have enough information to manage the area? | 1 | 0: There is little or no information available on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area  1: Information on the critical habitats, species, ecological processes and cultural values of the protected area is not sufficient to support planning and decision making 2: Information on the critical habitats, species, ecological processes and cultural values of the protected area is sufficient for most key areas of planning and decision making  3: Information on the critical habitats, species, ecological processes and cultural values of the protected area is sufficient to support all areas of planning and decision making |
| Comments and Next Steps | The PA area is vast and poorly studied, no special research was performed in the PA in the past. The PA has insufficient resources, both human and financial, to conduct comprehensive studies. Ecological monitoring is performed as supported by the Steppe Project. The reservat staff take an active part in ecological monitoring exercise, activities for flora and fauna inventory need to be continued. Capacity building of the PA staff is also required. | |
| 10. Protection systems:  Are systems in place to control access/resource use in the protected area? | 2 | 0: Protection systems (patrols, permits etc) do not exist or are not effective in controlling access/resource use 1: Protection systems are only partially effective in controlling access/resource use 2: Protection systems are moderately effective in controlling access/resource use  3: Protection systems are largely or wholly effective in controlling access/ resource use |
| Comments and Next Steps | Over the 5 years of the reservat existence its protection systems have been well-established. However, there is insufficient funding from the state budget for conservation activities. The Steppe Project has procured and handed over some equipment and machinery. But efficient protection requires replacement of the old equipment and procurement of better quality and higher capacity equipment. | |
| 11. Research: Is there a programme of management-orientated survey and research work? | 1 | 0: There is no survey or research work taking place in the protected area 1: There is a small amount of survey and research work but it is not directed towards the needs of protected area management 2: There is considerable survey and research work but it is not directed towards the needs of protected area management  3:There is a comprehensive, integrated programme of survey and research work, which is relevant to management needs |
| Comments and Next Steps | The PA has insufficient resources, both human and financial, to conduct comprehensive studies. Ecological monitoring is performed as supported by the Steppe Project. The reservat staff take an active part in ecological monitoring exercise, activities for flora and fauna inventory need to be continued. Capacity building of the PA staff is also required. | |
| 12. Resource management: Is active resource management being undertaken? | 1 | 0: Active resource management is not being undertaken  1: Very few of the requirements for active management of critical habitats, species, ecological processes and cultural values are being implemented 2: Many of the requirements for active management of critical habitats, species, ecological processes and, cultural values are being implemented but some key issues are not being addressed 3: Requirements for active management of critical habitats, species, ecological processes and, cultural values are being substantially or fully implemented |
| Comments and Next Steps | The Project prepared a map of Irgiz Turgay Reservat ecosystems, which should considerably facilitate the management of key habitats. | |
| 13. Staff numbers: Are there enough people employed to manage the protected area? | 1 | 0: There are no staff  1: Staff numbers are inadequate for critical management activities 2: Staff numbers are below optimum level for critical management activities 3: Staff numbers are adequate for the management needs of the protected area |
| Comments and Next Steps | In 2008, the Irgiz Turgai Reservat was made responsible for the protection of the adjacent area (over 300,000 ha) but no additional staff was secured. The protection of the PA is enforced by the PA staff. Therefore the number of rangers needs to be increased in order to protect the adjacent areas. | |
| 14. Staff training: Are staff adequately trained to fulfill management objectives? | 2 | 0: Staff lack the skills needed for protected area management 1: Staff training and skills are low relative to the needs of the protected area 2: Staff training and skills are adequate, but could be further improved to fully achieve the objectives of management 3: Staff training and skills are aligned with the management needs of the protected area |
| Comments and Next Steps | The Committee of Forestry and Hunting, MoA, provides, in a centralized manner, training courses for PAs staff. However, training events are required to build capacity in line with new trends, ecosystem-based approach, etc. Steppe Project works for capacity building of the PA staff with the involvement of international consultants. | |
| 15. Current budget: Is the current budget sufficient? | 2 | 0: There is no budget for management of the protected area 1: The available budget is inadequate for basic management needs and presents a serious constraint to the capacity to manage 2: The available budget is acceptable but could be further improved to fully achieve effective management 3: The available budget is sufficient and meets the full management needs of the protected area |
| Comments and Next Steps | The available budget covers only current needs of the PA. Physical infrastructure needs to be improved. | |
| 16. Security of budget: Is the budget secure? | 2 | 0: There is no secure budget for the protected area and management is wholly reliant on outside or highly variable funding  1: There is very little secure budget and the protected area could not function adequately without outside funding  2: There is a reasonably secure core budget for regular operation of the protected area but many innovations and initiatives are reliant on outside funding 3: There is a secure budget for the protected area and its management needs |
| Comments and Next Steps | The PA is financed by the government, additional funding is required | |
| 17. Management of budget: Is the budget managed to meet critical management needs? | 2 | 0: Budget management is very poor and significantly undermines effectiveness (e.g. late release of budget in financial year) 1: Budget management is poor and constrains effectiveness 2: Budget management is adequate but could be improved 3: Budget management is excellent and meets management needs |
| Comments and Next Steps | Budget issues are regulated by the budget legislation. Budget planning involves all PA units. Budget is utilized in due time. | |
| 18. Equipment: Is equipment sufficient for management needs? | 2 | 0: There are little or no equipment and facilities for management needs 1: There are some equipment and facilities but these are inadequate for most management needs 2: There are equipment and facilities, but still some gaps that constrain management 3: There are adequate equipment and facilities |
| Comments and Next Steps | Equipment and machinery was procured when the reservat was established. Efficient protection requires procurement of higher capacity and more advanced machinery. | |
| 19. Maintenance of equipment: Is equipment adequately maintained? | 2 | 0: There is little or no maintenance of equipment and facilities 1: There is some ad hoc maintenance of equipment and facilities  2: There is basic maintenance of equipment and facilities  3: Equipment and facilities are well maintained |
| Comments and Next Steps | The Reservat has material and technical support which is responsible for equipment maintenance. The funding allocated for maintenance is insufficient. | |
| 20. Education and awareness: Is there a planned education programme linked to the objectives and needs? | 2 | 0: There is no education and awareness programme 1: There is a limited and ad hoc education and awareness programme  2: There is an education and awareness programme but it only partly meets needs and could be improved 3: There is an appropriate and fully implemented education and awareness programme |
| Comments and Next Steps | There is an ongoing ecological education and awareness programme. Steppe Project is facilitating establishing an Information Center for conservation advocacy. To address all programme objectives the funding needs to be increased. Training for reservat staff is provided by the Committee of Forestry and Hunting and Steppe Project. | |
| 21. Planning for land and water use: Does land and water use planning recognise the protected area and aid the achievement of objectives? | 1 | 0: Adjacent land and water use planning does not take into account the needs of the protected area and activities/policies are detrimental to the survival of the area  1: Adjacent land and water use planning does not takes into account the long term needs of the protected area, but activities are not detrimental the area  2: Adjacent land and water use planning partially takes into account the long term needs of the protected area 3: Adjacent land and water use planning fully takes into account the long term needs of the protected area |
| Comments and Next Steps | The existing water use fails to take into account the threats related to constantly changing hydrological regime which prevents maintenance of the required water supply. | |
| 21a. Land and water planning for habitat conservation: Planning and management in the catchment or landscape containing the protected area incorporates provision for adequate environmental conditions (e.g. volume, quality and timing of water flow, air pollution levels etc) to sustain relevant habitats. | - | 0: No 1: Yes |
| Comments and Next Steps | The reservat needs to work together with administration of the neighbouring regions for the reconstruction of dams. | |
| 21b. Land and water planning for habitat conservation: Management of corridors linking the protected area provides for wildlife passage to key habitats outside the protected area (e.g. to allow migratory fish to travel between freshwater spawning sites and the sea, or to allow animal migration). | - | 0: No 1: Yes |
| Comments and Next Steps |  | |
| 21c. Land and water planning for habitat conservation: "Planning adresses ecosystem-specific needs and/or the needs of particular species of concern at an ecosystem scale (e.g. volume, quality and timing of freshwater flow to sustain particular species, fire management to maintain savannah habitats etc.)" | - | 0: No 1: Yes |
| Comments and Next Steps |  | |
| 22. State and commercial neighbours:Is there co-operation with adjacent land and water users? | 2 | 0: There is no contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land and water users 1: There is contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land and water users but little or no cooperation 2: There is contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land and water users, but only some co-operation  3: There is regular contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land and water users, and substantial co-operation on management |
| Comments and Next Steps | The reservat has established contacts with the neighbouring farms for the enforcement of the PA protection regime and the conservation legislation. Cooperation has been established with land users for fire prevention. Joint inspections are performed with law enforcement bodies to address poaching. The cooperation needs to be further improved. | |
| 23. Indigenous people: Do indigenous and traditional peoples resident or regularly using the protected area have input to management decisions? |  | 0: Indigenous and traditional peoples have no input into decisions relating to the management of the protected area 1: Indigenous and traditional peoples have some input into discussions relating to management but no direct role in management 2: Indigenous and traditional peoples directly contribute to some relevant decisions relating to management but their involvement could be improved 3: Indigenous and traditional peoples directly participate in all relevant decisions relating to management, e.g. co-management |
| Comments and Next Steps | N/A | |
| 24. Local communities: Do local communities resident or near the protected area have input to management decisions? | 1 | 0: Local communities have no input into decisions relating to the management of the protected area 1: Local communities have some input into discussions relating to management but no direct role in management 2: Local communities directly contribute to some relevant decisions relating to management but their involvement could be improved 3: Local communities directly participate in all relevant decisions relating to management, e.g. co-management |
| Comments and Next Steps | Considering that the region is scarcely populated there are no conflicts with local communities. Local communities understand the PA's role and participate in the conservation activities. | |
| 24 a. Impact on communities: There is open communication and trust between local and/or indigenous people, stakeholders and protected area managers | 1 | 0: No 1: Yes |
| Comments and Next Steps | Local communities second the existence of the reservat and understand its role in the biodiversity conservation. | |
| 24 b. Impact on communities: Programmes to enhance community welfare, while conserving protected area resources, are being implemented | - | 0: No 1: Yes |
| Comments and Next Steps |  | |
| 24 c. Impact on communities: Local and/or indigenous people actively support the protected area | - | 0: No 1: Yes |
| Comments and Next Steps |  | |
| 25. Economic benefit: Is the protected area providing economic benefits to local communities, e.g. income, employment, payment for environmental services? | 2 | 0: The protected area does not deliver any economic benefits to local communities 1: Potential economic benefits are recognised and plans to realise these are being developed 2: There is some flow of economic benefits to local communities  3: There is a major flow of economic benefits to local communities from activities associated with the protected area |
| Comments and Next Steps | Irgiz district is a subsidised region with no large industrial facilities. The reservat is a large employer in the district providing jobs to over 100 staff from local population. | |
| 26. Monitoring and evaluation: Are management activities monitored against performance? | 1 | 0: There is no monitoring and evaluation in the protected area 1: There is some ad hoc monitoring and evaluation, but no overall strategy and/or no regular collection of results 2: There is an agreed and implemented monitoring and evaluation system but results do not feed back into management 3: A good monitoring and evaluation system exists, is well implemented and used in adaptive management |
| Comments and Next Steps | The Committee for Forestry and Hunting annually evaluates PAs in a centralized manner. No separate internal evaluation is performed. | |
| 27. Visitor facilities: Are visitor facilities adequate? | - | 0: There are no visitor facilities and services despite an identified need 1: Visitor facilities and services are inappropriate for current levels of visitation  2: Visitor facilities and services are adequate for current levels of visitation but could be improved 3: Visitor facilities and services are excellent for current levels of visitation |
| Comments and Next Steps | The reservat is very remote from any settlements which considerably reduces opportunities for ecotourism development. There are no visitor facilities in the region. | |
| 28. Commercial tourism operators: Do commercial tour operators contribute to protected area management? | - | 0: There is little or no contact between managers and tourism operators using the protected area 1: There is contact between managers and tourism operators but this is largely confined to administrative or regulatory matters 2: There is limited co-operation between managers and tourism operators to enhance visitor experiences and maintain protected area values 3: There is good co-operation between managers and tourism operators to enhance visitor experiences, and maintain protected area values |
| Comments and Next Steps | The reservat is negotiating with tour operators. Activities have been started to arrange information tours with a view to involve commercial tour operators. | |
| 29. Fees: If fees (i.e. entry fees or fines) are applied, do they help protected area management? | 1 | 0: Although fees are theoretically applied, they are not collected 1: Fees are collected, but make no contribution to the protected area or its environs 2: Fees are collected, and make some contribution to the protected area and its environs 3: Fees are collected and make a substantial contribution to the protected area and its environs |
| Comments and Next Steps | Fees for visiting the PA as well as any other fees are collected. According to the legislation the collected fees go to the state budget. | |
| 30. Condition of values: What is the condition of the important values of the protected area as compared to when it was first designated? | 2 | 0: Many important biodiversity, ecological or cultural values are being severely degraded  1: Some biodiversity, ecological or cultural values are being severely degraded  2: Some biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are being partially degraded but the most important values have not been significantly impacted 3: Biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are predominantly intact |
| Comments and Next Steps | Key habitats are secured with adequate protection. | |
| 30a: Condition of values: The assessment of the condition of values is based on research and/or monitoring | 1 | 0: No 1: Yes |
| Comments and Next Steps |  | |
| 30b: Condition of values Specific management programmes are being implemented to address threats to biodiversity, ecological and cultural values | 1 | 0: No 1: Yes |
| Comments and Next Steps |  | |
| 30c: Condition of values: Activities to maintain key biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are a routine part of park management | 1 | 0: No 1: Yes |
| Comments and Next Steps |  | |
|  |  |  |
| **TOTAL SCORE** | 54 | **Pls add up numbers from assessment form (questions 1 to 30)** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Question 23 is not relevant for Kazakhstan |  |  |
| 1. Maxumim points in METT | 102 |  |
| 2. Maximum points assessed | 99 |  |
| 3. Score obtained (полученный балл) | 54 |  |
| 4. Corrected score (исправленный балл) | 56 |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Objective 1: Catalyzing Sustainability of Protected Area Systems** | | | | | |
| **SECTION III: Financial Sustainability Scorecard** | | | | | |
|  | | |  |  |  |
| **Note:** Please complete the financial sustainability scorecard for each project that is focusing on improving the financial sustainability of a PA system or an individual PA, per outcome 1.2 in the GEF biodiversity strategy. As we did in GEF-4, we will use the scorecard that was developed by Andrew Bovarnick of UNDP as it addresses our needs in a comprehensive fashion.  **The scorecard has three sections:** Part I – Overall financial status of the protected areas system. This includes basic protected area information and a financial analysis of the national protected area system. Part II – Assessing elements of the financing system. Part III – Scoring. | | | | | |
| ***Important: Please read the Guidelines posted on the GEF website before entering your data*** | | | | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Part I: Protected Areas System, sub-systems and networks** | | | | | |
| **Part I** requires financial data to determine the costs, revenues and financing gaps of the PA system both in the current year and as forecast for the future. It provides a quantitative analysis of the PA system and shows the financial data needed by PA planners needed to determine financial targets and hence the quantity of additional funds required to finance effective management of their PA system. As different countries have different accounting systems certain data requirements may vary in their relevance for each country. However, where financial data is absent, the first activity the PA authority should be to generate and collect the data. | | | | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Part 1.1 – Basic Information on Country’s National Protected Area System, Sub-systems and Networks. Detail in the Table every sub-system and network within the national system of protected areas in the country.** | | | | | |
| Protected Areas System, sub-systems and networks | Number of sites | Terrestrial hectares covered | [Marine hectares covered[1]](#RANGE!#REF!) | Total hectares covered | Institution responsible for PA management |
| **National System of PAs** | 110 | 23100757 |  | 23100757 | *This section shows the number and area of national level Pas* |
| **Sub-system** |  |  |  |  |  |
| PA sub-system 1 – PAs under jurisdiction of Forest and Hunting Committee of Ministry of Agriculture of Republic of Kazakhstan (nature reserves,national nature parks, nature rezervats), IUCN Categories I and II - INCLUDED IN THE FINANCIAL SCORECARD | 25 | 5675270 |  | 5675270 | Committee for Forestry and Hunting of the RoK Ministry of Agriculture |
| PA sub-system 2 - zakazniks,reserve areas, botanic gardens, nature monuments, NOT INCLUDED IN THE FINANCIAL SCORECARD | 85 | 17295552 |  | 17295552 | Committee for Forestry and Hunting of the RoK Ministry of Agriculture, RoK Ministry of Education and  Science |
| Others – PAs under jurisdiction of the Administration of the President of Republic of Kazakhstan (1 national nature park "Burabay") - NOT INCLUDED IN THE FINANCIAL SCORECARD | 1 | 129,935 |  | 129935 | RoK Presidential Administration |
| **Network** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Network 1 - insert name |  |  |  |  |  |
| Network 2 – insert name |  |  |  |  |  |
| Additional networks |  |  |  |  |  |
| [1] MPAs should be detailed separately to terrestrial PAs as they tend to be much larger in size and have different cost structures | | |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Part 1.2 – Financial Analysis of the National Protected Area System** | | | | | |
|
| **Financial Analysis of the Sub-System or Network –[insert name of Sub-System or Network]** | **Baseline year (US$) 2006 US$1 = 120.5 KZT** | **Year X(US$) 2011 US$1 = 146.13 KZT June 2011** | **Comments Add the source of data and state confidence in data (low, medium, high)** | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |
| **Available Finances[5]** |  |  |  | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |
| (1) Total annual central government budget allocated to PA management (excluding donor funds and revenues generated for the PA system) | *17,034,000* | *34,212,550* | *The national currency is Tenge (KZT). The 2011 average weighted rate was USD 1 = KZT 146.13. In Kazakhstan the state budget remains to be the only guaranteed funding source, its contribution is over 80%. As compared to the baseline 2006, budget financing has almost doubled. This is mainly due to the active development of the national PA system and support of UNDP/GEF projects. Thus, in the past six years 5 new PAs were established: 3 national parks and 2 nature reservats, the area of 4 nature reserves and 4 national parks were expanded. But even though the national PA system is rapidly growing, the allocated public budget financing is still insufficient.  The most significant indicator for making a judgement on financing levels is an indicator of financial investments per a unit of area. In Kazakhstan this indicator in 2011 is about USD 6 per ha of PA, whereas other middle income countries have this indicator at the levels of USD 60-40 per ha.* | | |
| operational budget (salaries, maintenance, fuel etc) |  | *30,752,385* | *This item represents budget allocations covering PA operating costs, including staff salaries, building maintenance, fuels, maintenance supplies, etc.* | | |
| infrastructure investment budget (roads, visitor centres etc) |  | *3,460,165* | *This item represents budget investments into the construction and reconstruction of PAs' infrastructure (cordons, Visit Centers).  The allocations from the state budget secured with the Steppe Project's assistance were $351,000 for the reconstruction of the Nature Museum and $240,000 for the Visit Center in Naurzum Nature Reserve.* | | |
| (2) Extra budgetary funding for PA management |  | 0 | *There are no additional sources of budgetary financing apart from direct State Budget in Kazakhstan* | | |
| - Total of A + B - |  |  |  | | |
| A. Funds channelled through government - total |  |  |  | | |
| - PA dedicated taxes |  |  |  | | |
| - Trust Funds |  |  |  | | |
| - Donor funds |  |  |  | | |
| - Loans |  |  |  | | |
| - Debt for nature swaps |  |  |  | | |
| - Others |  |  |  | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |
| B. Funds channelled through third party/independent institutional arrangements – total |  |  |  | | |
| - Trust Funds |  |  |  | | |
| - Donor funds |  |  |  | | |
| - Loans |  |  |  | | |
| - Others |  |  |  | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |
| (3) Total annual site based revenue generation across all PAs broken down by source[6] | *1,734,000* | *7,002,664* | *In addition to state budget financing PAs have extrabudgetary income which according to the Kazakh legislation may come from:  - limited economic activities; - tourism and recreation; - fees for usage of PA symbols; - production of printed outputs, souvenirs and other replicated products. At present, all PAs' extrabudgetary income comes from paid services in two areas only: 1. tourism and recreation, 2. limited economic activities.* | | |
| - Total | *1,734,000* | *7,002,664* |  | | |
| A. Tourism entrance fees | *656,000* | *986,570* | *In 2011, the PAs were visited by 769,927 individuals. According to the Kazakh legislation, entrance fees are considered to be state tax revenues and are not retained by PAs.* | | |
| B. Other tourism and recreational related fees (camping, fishing permits etc): | *1,078,000* | *1,166,426* | *This item represents the 2011 income of PAs as gained from delivery of paid tourism and recreational services, including guide services, catering services, homestays' and hotel rental, lease of vehicles, horses, ecological paths and routes, etc. In 2006 the FSC had a different format which did not request reporting on this item. Therefore in the original 2006 FSC (baseline, at the time of submission) it was impossible to report, now that this became possible, we inserted the data for 2006 in the respective column.* | | |
|
| C. Income from concessions |  |  |  | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |
| D. Payments for ecosystem services (PES) |  |  |  | | |
| - water |  |  |  | | |
| - carbon |  |  |  | | |
| - biodiversity |  |  |  | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |
| E. Other non-tourism related fees and charges (specify each type of revenue generation mechanism) |  | *4,849,668* | *This item represents the PAs' income from limited economic activities: sale of planting stock, sale of forest sanitation produce, sale of by-products (mushrooms, berries), etc.* | | |
| - scientific research fees |  |  |  | | |
| - genetic patents |  |  |  | | |
| - pollution charges |  |  |  | | |
| - limited economic activities |  | *4,849,668* | *Almost 80% of the PAs' extrabudgetary income is income from limited economic activities; such activities are mainly performed by forest reservats and national parks with forests. They sell forest sanitation produce, planting stock, forest products (mushrooms, berries), etc.* | | |
| (4) Percentage of PA generated revenues retained in the PA system for re-investment[8] | 1 | 0.86 |  | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |
| (5) Total finances available to the PA system [line item 1+2.A+2.B]+ [line item 3 \* line item 4] | 18,768,000 | 40,234,841 |  | | |
| Available for operations |  |  |  | | |
| Available for infrastructure investment |  |  |  | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |
| **Costs and Financing Needs** |  |  |  | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |
| (1) Total annual expenditure for PAs (all PA operating and investment costs and system level expenses)[9] | 17,131,000 | 40,228,644 |  | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |
| - by government | 17,131,000 | 34,212,550 | *This item represents only direct state budget financing, there are no other budget sources (public trust funds, swaps, fiscal sources, etc.)* | | |
| - by independent/other channels |  | 6,016,094 | *This amount does not include PA entrance fees as such fees are not retained by PAs.* | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |
| (2) Estimation of PA system financing needs |  |  |  | | |
| A. Estimated financing needs for *basic* management costs (operational and investments) to be covered | 26,831,000 | ***46,292,795*** | *The basis for estimated financing needs for basic PA management costs are the estimates of 2011 budget* ***requests*** *for PA development and maintenance. Requests from PA is a the best guage of real basic needs of PAs.* | | |
| - PA central system level operational costs (salaries, office maintenance etc) |  | *16,013,000* | *Requested budget for salaries* | | |
| - PA site management operational costs |  | *29,035,791* | *Requested budget for operational costs, including for equipment* | | |
| - PA site infrastructure investment costs |  | *1,206,364* | *Requested budget for construction of new infrastructure facilities* | | |
| - PA system capacity building costs for central and site levels (training, strategy, policy reform etc) |  | *37,640* | *Requested budget for training of PA staff* | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |
| B. Estimated financing needs for *optimal* management costs (operational and investments) to be covered |  | ***64,809,913*** | *Estimated financing needs for optimal management costs is based on verbal questioning managers of some pilot PAs. They propose to increase the current levels of financing with additional 30% to 50 %. No country-wide assessment of financing needs for optimal management costs has been made in Kazakhstan as such assessment would require PA economic appraisal, analysis and assessment of needs for all 25 PAs, etc.* | | |
|
|
| - PA central system level operational costs (salaries, office maintenance etc) |  | *22,418,200* | *Almost 60 of the overall available financing has to be spent for salaries. At the same time, salaries of PA staff remain to be some of the lowest in Kazakhstan. In addition, the load on PA staff is very strong because 7 PAs which areas have been expended were not provided with additional staff for protecting the additional areas. Therefore to achieve optimal management the available staff levels need to increased to the required levels and salaries need to be increased as well.* | | |
| - PA site management operational costs |  | *40,650,107* |  | | |
| - PA site infrastructure investment costs |  | *1,688,910* |  | | |
| - PA system capacity building costs for central and site levels (training, strategy, policy reform etc) |  | *52,696* | These system capacity building needs are additional to attaining basic management capacities and may entail additional scientific research, public communications, scholarships etc) | | |
| C. Estimated financial needs to expand the PA systems to be fully ecologically representative |  |  | *There is no long-term national strategy for developing PAs, the Government is guided by three-year mid-term plans for establishing new and expanding existing PAs and such plans have no figures for costs.  It is not possible to provide estimated financial needs for new PAs as such estimates are made separately for each PA in a Feasibility Study.  However, a National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for Kazakhstan will be prepared with UNDP support and such strategy will probably include tentative costs for establishing new PAs.* | | |
| - basic management costs for new PAs |  |  |  | | |
| - optimal management costs for new PAs |  |  |  | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |
| **Annual financing gap (financial needs – available finances)[10]** |  |  | Where possible breakdown by terrestrial and marine sub-systems | | |
| 1. Net actual annual surplus/deficit[11] |  |  |  | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |
| 2. Annual financing gap for basic management scenarios | 9,700,000 | ***6,064,151*** |  | | |
| Operations |  |  |  | | |
| Infrastructure investment |  |  |  | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |
| 3. Annual financing gap for optimal management scenarios |  | ***24,581,269*** |  | | |
| Operations |  |  |  | | |
| Infrastructure investment |  |  |  | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |
| 4. Annual financing gap for basic management of an expanded PA system (current network costs plus annual costs of adding more PAs) |  |  |  | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |
| 5. Projected annual financing gap for basic expenditure scenario in year X+5[12],[13] |  |  |  | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |
| **Financial data collection needs** |  |  |  | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |
| Specify main data gaps identified from this analysis: |  |  |  | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |
| Specify actions to be taken to fill data gaps[14]: |  |  |  | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |
| [1] The baseline year refers to the year the Scorecard was completed for the first time and remains fixed. Insert year eg 2007. | | |  |  |  |
| [2] Insert in footnote the local currency and exchange rate to US$ and date of rate (eg US$1=1000 colones, August 2007) | | |  |  |  |
| [3] X refers to the year the Scorecard is completed and should be inserted (eg 2008). For the first time the Scorecard is completed X will be the same as the baseline year. For subsequent years insert an additional column to present the data for each year the Scorecard is completed. | | | | | |
| [4] Insert in footnote the local currency and exchange rate to US$ and date of rate | |  |  |  |  |
| [5] This section unravels sources of funds available to PAs, categorized by (i) government core budget (line item 1), (ii) additional government funds (line item 2), and (iii) PA generated revenues (line item 3). | | | | | |
| [6] This data should be the total for all the PA systems to indicate total revenues. If data is only available for a specific PA system specify which system | | | |  |  |
| [7] Note this will include non monetary values and hence will differ (be greater) than revenues | |  |  |  |  |
| [8] This includes funds to be shared by PAs with local stakeholders |  |  |  |  |  |
| [9] In some countries actual expenditure differs from planned expenditure due to disbursement difficulties. In this case actual expenditure should be presented and a note on disbursement rates and planned expenditures can be made in the Comments column. | | | | | |
| [10] Financing needs as calculated in (8) minus available financing total in (6) | |  |  |  |  |
| [11] This will likely be zero but some PAs may have undisbursed funds and some with autonomous budgets may have deficits | | |  |  |  |
| [12] This data is useful to show the direction and pace of the PA system towards closing the finance gap. This line can only be completed if a long term financial analysis of the PA system has been undertaken for the country | | | | | |
| [13] As future costs are projected, initial consideration should be given to upcoming needs of PA systems to adapt to climate change which may include incorporating new areas into the PA system to facilitate habitat changes and migration | | | | | |
| [14] Actions may include (i) cost data based on site based management plans and extrapolation of site costs across a PA system and (ii) revenue and budget accounts and projections | | | | |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Part II** of the scorecard is compartmentalized into three fundamental components for a fully functioning financial system at the site and system level – (i) legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks, (ii) business planning and tools for cost-effective management (eg accounting practices) and (iii) tools for revenue generation.   COMPONENT 1: LEGAL, REGULATORY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS THAT ENABLE SUSTAINABLE PA FINANCING Legal, policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks affecting PA financing systems need to be clearly defined and supportive of effective financial planning, revenue generation, revenue retention and management. Institutional responsibilities must be clearly delineated and agreed, and an enabling policy and legal environment in place. Institutional governance structures must enable and require the use of effective, transparent mechanisms for allocation, management and accounting of revenues and expenditures. COMPONENT 2: BUSINESS PLANNING AND TOOLS FOR COST-EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT  Financial planning, accounting and business planning are important tools for cost-effective management when undertaken on a regular and systematic basis. Effective financial planning requires accurate knowledge not only of revenues, but also of expenditure levels, patterns and investment requirements. Options for balancing the costs/revenues equation should include equal consideration of revenue increases and cost control. Good financial planning enables PA managers to make strategic financial decisions such as allocating spending to match management priorities, and identifying appropriate cost reductions and potential cash flow problems. Improved planning can also help raise more funds as donors and governments feel more assured that their funds will be more effectively invested in the protected area system.  COMPONENT 3: TOOLS FOR REVENUE GENERATION AND MOBILIZATION PA systems must be able to attract and take advantage of all existing and potential revenue mechanisms within the context of their overall management priorities. Diversification of revenue sources is a powerful strategy to reduce vulnerability to external shocks and dependency on limited government budgets. Sources of revenue for protected area systems can include traditional funding sources – tourism entrance fees – along with innovative ones such as debt swaps, tourism concession arrangements, payments for water and carbon services and in some cases, carefully controlled levels of resource extraction. | | | | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **PART II: FINANCIAL SCORECARD – ASSESSING ELEMENTS OF THE FINANCING SYSTEM** | | | |  |  |
| **Component 1 – Legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks** | | | |  |  |
| **Element 1 – Legal, policy and regulatory support for revenue generation by PAs** | | | |  |  |
| (i) Laws or policies are in place that facilitate PA revenue mechanisms | 2 | 0: None 1: A few 2: Several 3: Fully | Specify the revenue generation mechanisms that are not permitted under the current legal framework: The following non-budgetary revenue sources determine by the legal framework: - services using PA for tourism and recreation  - payment for PA logo use  - limited economic activity - production of souvenirs, printed and replicated products |  |  |
| (ii) Fiscal instruments such as taxes on tourism and water or tax breaks exist to promote PA financing | 2 | 0: None 1: A few 2: Several 3: Fully |  |  |  |
| **Element 2 - Legal, policy and regulatory support for revenue retention and sharing within the PA system** | | | |  |  |
| (i) Laws or policies are in place for PA revenues to be retained by the PA system | 2 | 0: No 1: Under development 2: Yes, but needs improvement 3: Yes, satisfactory | Specify % to be retained: not less than 80% |  |  |
| (ii) Laws or policies are in place for PA revenues to be retained at the PA site level | 2 | 0: No 1: Under development 2: Yes, but needs improvement 3: Yes, satisfactory | Specify % to be retained: 100% |  |  |
| (iii) Laws or policies are in place for revenue sharing at the PA site level with local stakeholders | 0 | 0: No 1: Under development 2: Yes, but needs improvement 3: Yes, satisfactory | Specify % to be shared: |  |  |
| **Element 3 - Legal and regulatory conditions for establishing Funds (endowment, sinking or revolving)[1]** | | | |  |  |
| (i) A Fund has been established and capitalized to finance the PA system | 1 | 0: No 1: Established 2: Established with limited capital 3: Established with adequate capital | The Biodiversity Conservation Fund established in Kazakhstan, which got capitalization |  |  |
| (ii) Funds have been created to finance specific PAs | 0 | 0: No 1: Partially 2: Quite well 3: Fully |  |  |  |
| (iii) Fund expenditures are integrated with national PA financial planning and accounting | 0 | 0: No 1: Partially 2: Quite well 3: Fully |  |  |  |
| **Element 4 - Legal, policy and regulatory support for alternative institutional arrangements for PA management to reduce cost burden to government** | | | |  |  |
| (i) There are laws or policies which allow and regulate concessions for PA services | 2 | 0: None 1: Under development 2: Yes, but needs improvement 3: Yes, Satisfactory | There is a legal base, which provide the PA ground areas for leasing to physical bodies and legal entities to develop tourism This legal norm allows attracting private contributions to PA infrastucture development |  |  |
| (ii) There are laws or policies which allow and regulate co-management of PAs | 0 | 0: None 1: Under development 2: Yes, but needs improvement 3: Yes, Satisfactory |  |  |  |
| (iii) There are laws or policies which allow and regulate local government management of PAs | 0 | 0: None 1: Under development 2: Yes, but needs improvement 3: Yes, Satisfactory |  |  |  |
| (iv) There are laws which allow, promote and regulate private reserves | 0 | 0: None 1: Under development 2: Yes, but needs improvement 3: Yes, Satisfactory |  |  |  |
| **Element 5 –National PA Financing Strategies** | | | |  |  |
| (i) There are policies and/or regulations that exist for the following which should be part of a National PA Finance Strategy: |  |  |  |  |  |
| -    Comprehensive financial data and plans for a standardized and coordinated cost accounting systems (both input and activity based accounting) | 2 | 0: None 1: Under development 2: Yes, but needs improvement 3: Yes, Satisfactory |  |  |  |
| - Revenue generation and fee levels across PAs | 1 | 0: None 1: Under development 2: Yes, but needs improvement 3: Yes, Satisfactory | Specify the tariff levels for the Pas: from 1 up to 150 c.u. |  |  |
| - Allocation of PA budgets to PA sites (criteria based on size, threats, business plans, performance etc) | 1 | 0: None 1: Under development 2: Yes, but needs improvement 3: Yes, Satisfactory | List the budget allocation criteria: according to the size,load etc.(concerning the norms) |  |  |
| - Safeguards to ensure that revenue generation does not adversely affect conservation objectives of PAs | 2 | 0: None 1: Under development 2: Yes, but needs improvement 3: Yes, Satisfactory |  |  |  |
| - PA management plans to include financial data or associated business plans | 1 | 0: None 1: Under development 2: Yes, but needs improvement 3: Yes, Satisfactory |  |  |  |
| [(ii) Degree of formulation, adoption and implementation of a national financing strategy[2]](#RANGE!B129) | 1 | 0: Not begun 1: In progress 2: Completed and adopted 3: Under implementation | There isn't any target PA financing strategy in Kazakhstan, it is partially realized through the line programs (PA development, Zhasyl Damu etc.). Currently, the National Strategy on Biodiversity Conservation is being developed. |  |  |
| **Element 6 - Economic valuation of protected area systems (ecosystem services, tourism based employment etc)** | | | |  |  |
| (i) Economic valuation studies on the contribution of protected areas to local and national development are available | 0 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Satisfactory 3: Full | Provide summary data from studies: |  |  |
| (ii) PA economic valuation influences government decision makers | 1 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Satisfactory 3: Full | Specify ministries that have been influenced: Ministry of Finance, Ministry of economic affairs and budget planning |  |  |
| **Element 7 - Improved government budgeting for PA systems** | | | |  |  |
| (i) Government policy promotes budgeting for PAs based on financial need as determined by PA management plans | 1 | 0: No 1: Partially 2: Yes |  |  |  |
| (ii) PA budgets includes funds to finance threat reduction strategies in buffer zones (eg livelihoods of communities living around the PA)[3] | 1 | 0: No 1: Partially 2: Yes |  |  |  |
| (iii) Administrative (eg procurement) procedures facilitate budget to be spent, reducing risk of future budget cuts due to low disbursement rates |  | 0: No 1: Partially 2: Yes |  |  |  |
| (iii) Administrative (eg procurement) procedures facilitate budget to be spent, reducing risk of future budget cuts due to low disbursement rates | 0 | 0: No 1: Partially 2: Yes |  |  |  |
| (iv) Government plans to increase budget, over the long term, to reduce the PA financing gap | 2 | 0: No 1: Partially 2: Yes |  |  |  |
| **Element 8 - Clearly defined institutional responsibilities for financial management of PAs** | | | |  |  |
| (i) Mandates of public institutions regarding PA finances are clear and agreed | 3 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Improving 3: Full |  |  |  |
| **Element 9 - Well-defined staffing requirements, profiles and incentives at site and system level** | | | |  |  |
| (i) Central level has sufficient economists and economic planners to improve financial sustainability of the system | 2 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Almost there 3: Full | State positions and describe roles: |  |  |
| (ii) There is an organizational structure (eg a dedicated unit) with sufficient authority and coordination to properly manage the finances of the PA system | 2 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Almost there 3: Full | There is a subdivision - Finance and organising work Agency (4 people) in FHC, which is responsible for budget planning and implementation- it sets the budget in terms of PA requests, allocates budget funds between PAs according to the cost item, regulates budget implementation |  |  |
| (iii) At the regional and PA site level there is sufficient professional capacity to promote financial sustainability at site level | 1 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Almost there 3: Full | State positions and describe roles: |  |  |
| (iv) PA site manager responsibilities include, financial management, cost-effectiveness and revenue generation [4] | 2 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Almost there 3: Full |  |  |  |
| (v) Budgetary incentives motivate PA managers to promote site level financial sustainability (eg sites generating revenues do not necessarily experience budget cuts) | 2 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Almost there 3: Full |  |  |  |
| (vi) Performance assessment of PA site managers includes assessment of sound financial planning, revenue generation, fee collection and cost-effective management | 2 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Almost there 3: Full |  |  |  |
| (vii) There is capacity within the system for auditing PA finances | 2 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Almost there 3: Full |  |  |  |
| (viii) PA managers have the possibility to budget and plan for the long-term (eg over 5 years) | 1 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Almost there 3: Full |  |  |  |
| **Total Score for Component 1** | 41 | **Actual score:** | |  |  |
| 90 | **Total Possible:** | |  |  |
| **46** | **% achieved** | |  |  |
| **Component 2 – Business planning and tools for cost-effective management** | | | |  |  |
| **Element 1 – PA site-level management and business planning** | | | |  |  |
| (i) Quality of PA management plans used, (based on conservation objectives, management needs and costs based on cost-effective analysis) | 1 | 0: Does not exist 1: Poor 2: Decent 3: High quality |  |  |  |
| (ii) PA management plans are used at PA sites across the PA system | 3 | 0: Not begun 1: Early stages Below 25% of sites within the system 2: Near complete Above 70% of sites  3: Completed or 100% coverage | Specify if management plans are current or out-dated: All national PAs operated over two years, have adopted management plans for 5 years. |  |  |
| (iii) Business plans, based on standard formats and linked to PA management plans and conservation objectives, are developed across the PA system[5] | 1 | 0: Not begun 1: Early stages Below 25% of sites within the system 2: Near complete Above 70% of sites  3: Completed or 100% coverage | Within the frameworks of the UNDP Steppe Project, the business planning methods in terms of international finance expert are being adopted at one of the pilot steppe Pas |  |  |
| (iv) Business plans are implemented across the PA system (degree of implementation measured by achievement of objectives) | 0 | 0: Not begun 1: Early stages Below 25% of sites within the system 2: Near complete Above 70% of sites  3: Completed or 100% coverage |  |  |  |
| (v) Business plans for PAs contribute to system level planning and budgeting | 0 | 0: Not begun 1: Early stages Below 25% of sites within the system 2: Near complete Above 70% of sites  3: Completed or 100% coverage |  |  |  |
| (vi) Costs of implementing management and business plans are monitored and contributes to cost-effective guidance and financial performance reporting | 0 | 0: Not begun 1: Early stages Below 25% of sites within the system 2: Near complete Above 70% of sites  3: Completed or 100% coverage |  |  |  |
| **Element 2 - Operational, transparent and useful accounting and auditing systems** | | | |  |  |
| (i) There is a transparent and coordinated cost (operational and investment) accounting system functioning for the PA system | 2 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Near complete 3: Fully completed |  |  |  |
| (ii) Revenue tracking systems for each PA in place and operational | 2 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Near complete 3: Fully completed |  |  |  |
| (iii) There is a system so that the accounting data contributes to system level planning and budgeting | 1 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Near complete 3: Fully completed |  |  |  |
| **Element 3 - Systems for monitoring and reporting on financial management performance** | | | |  |  |
| (i) All PA revenues and expenditures are fully and accurately reported by PA authorities to stakeholders | 3 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Near complete 3: Complete and operational |  |  |  |
| (ii) Financial returns on tourism related investments are measured and reported, where possible (eg track increase in visitor revenues before and after establishment of a visitor centre) | 1 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Near complete 3: Complete and operational |  |  |  |
| (iii) A monitoring and reporting system in place to show how and why funds are allocated across PA sites and the central PA authority | 1 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Near complete 3: Complete and operational |  |  |  |
| (iv) A reporting and evaluation system is in place to show how effectively PAs use their available finances (ie disbursement rate and cost-effectiveness) to achieve management objectives | 1 | 0: None 1: Partial 2: Near complete 3: Complete and operational |  |  |  |
| **Element 4 - Methods for allocating funds across individual PA sites** | | | |  |  |
| (i) National PA budget is allocated to sites based on agreed and appropriate criteria (eg size, threats, needs, performance) | 1 | 0: No 1: Yes |  |  |  |
| (ii) Funds raised by co-managed PAs do not reduce government budget allocations where funding gaps still exist | 0 | 0: No 1: Yes | There is not PA joint management institution in Kazakhstan |  |  |
| **Element 5 - Training and support networks to enable PA managers to operate more cost-effectively[6]** | | | |  |  |
| (i) Guidance on cost-effective management developed and being used by PA managers | 1 | 0: Absent 1: Partially done 2: Almost done 3: Fully |  |  |  |
| (ii) Inter-PA site level network exist for PA managers to share information with each other on their costs, practices and impacts | 2 | 0: Absent 1: Partially done 2: Almost done 3: Fully |  |  |  |
| (iii) Operational and investment cost comparisons between PA sites complete, available and being used to track PA manager performance | 1 | 0: Absent 1: Partially done 2: Almost done 3: Fully |  |  |  |
| (iv) Monitoring and learning systems of cost-effectiveness are in place and feed into system management policy and planning | 1 | 0: Absent 1: Partially done 2: Almost done 3: Fully |  |  |  |
| (v) PA site managers are trained in financial management and cost-effective management | 1 | 0: Absent 1: Partially done 2: Almost done 3: Fully |  |  |  |
| [(vi) PA financing system facilitates PAs to share costs of common practices with each other and with PA headquarters[7]](#RANGE!B134) | 2 | 0: Absent 1: Partially done 2: Almost done 3: Fully |  |  |  |
| **Total Score for Component 2** | 25 | **Actual score:** | |  |  |
| 59 | **Total Possible: 59** | |  |  |
| **42** | **% achieved** | |  |  |
| **Component 3 – Tools for revenue generation by PAs** | | | |  |  |
| **Element 1 - Number and variety of revenue sources used across the PA system** | | | |  |  |
| (i) An up-to-date analysis of revenue options for the country complete and available including feasibility studies; | 2 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: A fair amount 3: Optimal |  |  |  |
| (ii) There is a diverse set of sources and mechanisms, generating funds for the PA system | 2 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: A fair amount 3: Optimal | Suggested benchmarks for a diversified portfolio of financial mechanisms for the PA system: Partial – 1-2 Fair amount – 3-4 Optimal – 5 or more List the mechanisms: |  |  |
| (iii) PAs are operating revenue mechanisms that generate positive net revenues (greater than annual operating costs and over long-term payback initial investment cost) | 1 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: A fair amount 3: Optimal |  |  |  |
| (iv) PAs enable local communities to generate revenues, resulting in reduced threats to the PAs | 1 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: A fair amount 3: Optimal |  |  |  |
| **Element 2 - Setting and establishment of user fees across the PA system** | | | |  |  |
| (i) A system wide strategy and action plan for user fees is complete and adopted by government | 1 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Satisfactory 3: Fully | If PA sites have tariffs but there is no system strategy score as partial: |  |  |
| (ii) The national tourism industry and Ministry are supportive and are partners in the PA user fee system and programmes | 1 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Satisfactory 3: Fully |  |  |  |
| (iii) Tourism related infrastructure investment is proposed and developed for PA sites across the network based on analysis of revenue potential and return on investment [8] | 1 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Satisfactory 3: Fully |  |  |  |
| (iv) Where tourism is promoted PA managers can demonstrate maximum revenue whilst not threatening PA conservation objectives | 2 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Satisfactory 3: Fully |  |  |  |
| (v) Non tourism user fees are applied and generate additional revenue | 2 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Satisfactory 3: Fully | There are payments for the conduction of limited economic activities: haying, grazing, collection of non-timber forest products etc. |  |  |
| **Element 3 - Effective fee collection systems** | | | |  |  |
| (i) System wide guidelines for fee collection are complete and approved by PA authorities | 3 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Completely 3: Operational |  |  |  |
| (ii)  Fee collection systems are being implemented at PA sites in a cost-effective manner | 2 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Completely 3: Operational |  |  |  |
| (iii) Fee collection systems are monitored, evaluated and acted upon | 2 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Completely 3: Operational |  |  |  |
| (iv) PA visitors are satisfied with the professionalism of fee collection and the services provided | 1 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Completely | This can be done through visitor surveys |  |  |
| **Element 4 - Communication strategies to increase public awareness about the rationale for revenue generation mechanisms** | | | |  |  |
| (i) Communication campaigns for the public about tourism fees, conservation taxes etc are widespread and high profile at national level | 1 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Satisfactory 3: Fully |  |  |  |
| (i) Communication campaigns for the public about PA fees are in place at PA site level | 1 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Satisfactory 3: Fully |  |  |  |
| **Element 5 - Operational PES schemes for PAs[9]** | | | |  |  |
| (i) A system wide strategy and action plan for PES is complete and adopted by government | 0 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Progressing  3: Fully |  |  |  |
| (ii) Pilot PES schemes at select PA sites developed | 0 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Progressing  3: Fully |  |  |  |
| (iii) Operational performance of pilots is monitored, evaluated and reported | 0 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Progressing  3: Fully |  |  |  |
| (iv) Scale up of PES across the PA system is underway | 0 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Progressing  3: Fully |  |  |  |
| **Element 6 - Concessions operating within PAs[10]** | | | |  |  |
| (i) A system wide strategy and implementation action plan is complete and adopted by government for concessions | 1 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Progressing  3: Fully | The Institution of government and private partnership is partially realized through plan of PA infrastructure development (leasing of PA ground areas for tourist facilities building) |  |  |
| (ii) Concession opportunities are operational at pilot PA sites | 0 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Progressing  3: Fully |  |  |  |
| (iii) Operational performance (environmental and financial) of pilots is monitored, evaluated, reported and acted upon | 0 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Progressing  3: Fully |  |  |  |
| (iv) Scale up of concessions across the PA system is underway | 0 | 0: None 1: Partially 2: Progressing  3: Fully |  |  |  |
| **Element 7 - PA training programmes on revenue generation mechanisms** | | | |  |  |
| (1) Training courses run by the government and other competent organizations for PA managers on revenue mechanisms and financial administration | 1 | 0: None 1: Limited 2: Satisfactory  3: Extensive |  |  |  |
| **Total Score for Component 2** | 25 | **Actual score:** | |  |  |
| 63 | **Total Possible:** | |  |  |
| **38** | **% achieved** | |  |  |
| [[1] This element can be omitted in countries where a PA system does not require a Trust Fund due to robust financing within government](#RANGE!#REF!) | | |  |  |  |
| [[2] A national PA Financing Strategy will include targets, policies, tools and approaches](#RANGE!#REF!) | |  |  |  |  |
| [[3] This could include budgets for development agencies and local governments for local livelihoods](#RANGE!D31) | |  |  |  |  |
| [[4] These responsibilities should be found in the Terms of Reference for the posts](#RANGE!#REF!) | |  |  |  |  |
| [[5] A PA Business Plan is a plan that analyzes and identifies the financial gap in a PA’s operations, and presents opportunities to mitigate that gap through operational cost efficiencies or revenue generation schemes. It does not refer to business plans for specific concession services within a PA. Each country may have its own definition and methodology for business plans or may only carry out financial analysis and hence may need to adapt the questions accordingly.](#RANGE!B33) |  |  |  |  |  |
| [[6] Cost-effectiveness is broadly defined as maximizing impact from amount invested and achieving a target impact in the least cost manner. It is not about lowering costs and resulting impacts.](#RANGE!B54) | | | | |  |
| [[7] This might include aerial surveys, marine pollution monitoring, economic valuations etc.](#RANGE!E54) | |  |  |  |  |
| [8] As tourism infrastructure increases within PAs and in turn increases visitor numbers and PA revenues the score for this item should be increased in proportion to its importance to funding the PA system. | | | | | |
| [9] Where PES is not appropriate or feasible for a PA system take 12 points off total possible score for the PA system | | |  |  |  |
| [10] Concessions will be mainly for tourism related services such as visitor centres, giftshops, restaurants, transportation etc | | |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Part III** summarizes the total scores and percentages scored by the country in any given year when the exercise is completed. It shows the total possible score and the total actual score for the PA system and presents the results as a percentage. Over time changes to the scores can show progress in strengthening the PA financing system. | | | | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **PART III- FINANCIAL SCORECARD – SCORING AND MEASURING PROGRESS** | |  |  |  |  |
| **Total Score for PA System** | 90 |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Total Possible Score** | **220** |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Actual score as a percentage of the total possible score** | 43% |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Percentage scored in previous year or previous time the scorecard was applied [1]** | 41% |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| [1] Insert NA if this is first year of completing scorecard. |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Annex I – Revenue Projection Estimates** | | | | | |
| This table should be filled out to supplement data presented on revenue generation in both Part I and II. | | |  |  |  |
| **Fees and other revenue generation mechanisms** | **Current fee levels** | **Current revenues** | **Proposed fee level** | **Estimated revenue** | **Comments** |
| *from tourist services* | *varying* | *1,166,426* | *varying* | *3,500,000* | *There are no standard rates for tourism services. Such rates vary in different PAs. The cell shows estimated tourism related revenues. The revenues from tourism related services need to be diversified and increased.* |
| *from limited economic activities on resource use* | *varying* | *4,849,668* | *varying* | *5,500,000* |  |
| *PA entrance fee* | *$1 per person* | *986,570* | *$ 3.5 per person* | *2,450,000* | *PA entrance fees are tax revenues and are not retained by PAs.  The 2011 PA entrance fee was $ 1 per person per day. If fees for visiting PAs were retained by PAs it would make PAs more interested in attracting more tourists and improve service quality. PA entrance fee could be increased about 1.5-2 fold. Each PA should have its own entrance fee.* |
| ***Total*** |  | ***7002664*** |  | **11450000** |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Annex II – Policy Reform and Strengthening\*** | | | |  |  |
| This Table should be filled out to complement information provided in Part II, Component I on the policy and legislative frameworks. This table presents the list all policies to be reformed, established or strengthened to improve the PA financing system | | | |  |  |
|  |  |
| **Policy/Law** | **Justification for change or new policy/law** | **Recommended changes** | **Proposed Timeframe** |  |  |
| *Legislative incorporation of economic and financial dimensions into the process of establishing new and expanding existing PAs.* | *Budget and environmental legislation* | *Inclusion of PA economic appraisal into the package of documents for creating new and expanding existing PAs will be convincing grounds for budget investments.* | *next 3-4 years* |  |  |
| *Legislative incorporation of business plans into PA Management Plans.* | *Budget and environmental legislation* | *Incorporation of Business Plan into a PA Management Plan will help to assess, at planning stage, PA's financial opportunities and risks, to provide detailed cost estimates for optimal management, to identify financing gaps and to search for alternative financing mechanisms.* | *next 3-4 years* |  |  |
| *Fees for ecosystem services and compensatory payments for biodiversity* | *Ecological Code, PA Law, etc.* | *Legislative incorporation of new PA financing mechanisms: fees for ecosystem services, compensatory payments for biodiversity* | *next 5 years* |  |  |
| *Improvement of existing standards of PA area protection and for provision Pas with equipment and machinery in line with the ecosystem-based approach and technological progress trends* | *Budget and environmental legislation* | *Planning of public expenditures is based on a system of norms and standards which need to improved considering the scientific and technological progress in ecosystem protection. The revision of existing standards will help to improve efficiency of state budget allocations.* | *next 3-4 years* |  |  |
| *Introduction of basic financing indicators for different Pas in line with the ecosystem-based approach, e.g. per unit of area* | *Budget and environmental legislation* | *The introduction of such indicators will help to improve efficiency of state budget allocations.* | *next 5 years* |  |  |
| *Biodiversity Conservation Fund - a financial operator for implementation of investment projects/programmes for biodiversity conservation in PAs* | *Budget, fiscal and environmental legislation* | *To change the designation of PA entrance fees from tax revenue to extrabudgetary revenue. In other words, the money will go to an 'accumulation' fund (particularly, the Biodiversity Conservation Fund) and will be spent for implementation of investment projects/programmes for biodiversity conservation in PAs rather than go to the state budget.* | *next 5 years* |  |  |
| *\* Recommendations are based on joint work of an international and national experts of the UNDP Projects (L.Emerton, M.Sarsembayeva, N.Yermekova)* | | | |  |  |

**Annex 4: Kazakhstan Steppe Project Draft Proposed Theory of Change**

As discussed in Section IV.A, the ROtI approach to impact analysis can be useful for GEF projects in instances where impacts may take time to be generated by the outcomes achieved under the project. The key elements of this analysis are the assumptions, impact drivers, and intermediate states (defined in Table 8 below) required to move from outcomes to impacts.

Table Theory of Change Definitions

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Theory of Change Terms** | **Definition** |
| Assumptions (A) | The significant factors that, if present, are expected to contribute to the ultimate realization of project impacts, *but that are largely beyond the power of the project to influence or address* |
| Impact Drivers (ID) | The significant factors that, if present, are expected to contribute to the ultimate realization of project impacts, *and that are within the ability of the project to influence* |
| Intermediate States | The transitional conditions and processes between the project’s outcomes and impacts that must be achieved in order to deliver the intended impacts |

To apply the ROtI analysis, it is necessary to understand a project’s theory of change. A proposed draft Kazakhstan steppe project theory of change is summarized in Table 9 below. For the Kazakhstan Steppe project it is expected that during the project lifetime there will be progress primarily at the outcome level, and not necessarily to the extent of intermediate states. The project is focused on supporting the establishment of PAs, and contributing to the development of PA management capacity, but it is not expected that by the end of the project management of the newly established PAs would be at a level to be considered “effective” in terms of fully supporting the PAs’ biodiversity conservation objectives. The project is also making a significant contribution to generating environmental monitoring data and analyses to support effective decision-making, though the continuation of this level of data provision and analysis over an extended period of time (into the intermediate states phase) is uncertain.

The Kazakhstan Steppe project is making good progress toward achieving the outcomes that will eventually lead to impacts, but a more detailed ROtI analysis at the end of the project (or ex-post) would be required to make a more concrete assessment of the project’s contribution to impacts.

Table Kazakhstan Steppe Project Theory of Change

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **OUTCOMES TO IMPACTS OVER TIME** | | | | |
| **Strategy** | **Outcomes** | **Assumptions and Impact Drivers** | **Intermediate States** | **Impact** |
| Expansion and improved management of steppe PAs in Kazakhstan | The area of steppe ecosystems covered by PAs is increased | ID: Preparatory work for establishment of steppe PAs is completed  ID: Government resources for PA establishment are targeted for steppe PAs  A: Kazakhstan’s PA strategies and plans (and corresponding relevant national institutions) are supportive of and facilitate the expansion of steppe PAs  A: Local resource users are supportive of steppe PA establishment | PAs covering steppe ecosystems are effectively managed over an extended period of time | Kazakhstan’s globally significant steppe ecosystem biodiversity is conserved |
| Improved management of steppe PAs | ID: Human resources are available in steppe PA areas for individual capacity development at levels required for effective steppe PA management  ID: PA management institutional framework is adequate to support effective on-the-ground steppe PA management  ID: Appropriate local stakeholder involvement in PA management  A: Financial resources are available at the level necessary to support effective management of steppe PAs  A: Effective steppe PA management does not require human and financial resources beyond the capacity of the Government of Kazakhstan to provide (i.e. to adequately limit poaching) |
| Improved PA and biodiversity conservation management decisions based on analyses from increased quantity and improved quality of environmental and other data for decision-making | ID: Efficient biodiversity monitoring and data management  ID: Data-driven analyses generated to support management decision-making  A: Adequate methodologies and resources are available to collect data at the landscape-scale of Kazakhstan’s steppe ecosystems to support correct decision-making for the goal of biodiversity conservation |
| Local level stakeholders see financial and/or social benefits from steppe PA establishment and effective management | ID: Local community members are employed in PA management  ID: Key biodiversity resources (e.g. Saiga) are maintained at a level adequate for sustainable use  A: The local cost-benefit catalyzed by PA establishment and management overall generates more benefits than costs |
| Creation and strengthening of mechanisms for biodiversity conservation outside PA boundaries | Formal ecosystem management mechanisms to enable landscape-scale biodiversity conservation outside PAs (e.g. wildlife corridors, community-based partnerships, organizational / institutional partnerships) are established and successfully operationalized | ID: Formal (legislative, institutional) establishment of mechanisms to support landscape level conservation  ID: Establishment of operational mechanisms necessary to implement landscape level conservation  ID: Environmental data is available to support effective management decision-making for landscape-level conservation mechanisms  ID: Efficient biodiversity monitoring and data management  A: The mechanisms necessary for adequate biodiversity conservation are socially, economically, institutionally, and legally acceptable to local and national level stakeholders  A: Local and national stakeholders are supportive of formal establishment of non-PA based biodiversity conservation mechanisms | Key biodiversity resources are effectively managed over an extended period of time at the landscape scale, outside PAs | Kazakhstan’s globally significant steppe ecosystem biodiversity is conserved |

**Annex 5. List of Persons Met and Interviewed During Mid-term Evaluation Mission**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **#** | **Date** | **Meetings with stakeholders** |
| 1 | * January 24, 2012 | Meeting with project team of GEF/UNDP, Government of Kazakhstan project “Steppe conservation and management”  Representatives of NGO ACBK |
| 2 | * January 25,2012 | * Meeting with stakeholders of CFH, Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan: Kh. Mussabayev – Deputy chairman of Committee * B. Dussekeyev – Head of fauna unit |
| 3 | * January 26, 2012 | * Meeting with governor (Akim) of Zhangeldy district – N. Tulepov |
| 4 | * January 26, 2012 | * Meeting with head of land relations department of Zhangeldy district - T. Ganimat |
| 5 | January 26, 2012 | * Meeting with hunting concessions: “Altybai”, “Saga” K. Ordabayev and huntsman N. Kuanyshbayev |
| 6 | January 26, 2012 | * Meeting with senior huntsman of hunting concession “Imanovskoje”- L. Abdikov and huntsman K. Segizbayev. |
| 7 | * January 27, 2012 | Meeting with Akim of Amangeldy district S. Akhmetov |
|  | * January 27, 2012 | Visiting of Naurzum SNR. |
| 8 | * January 28, 2012 | Meeting with deputy director of reserve – M. Zeinelova  Meeting with representative of NGO Tulip |
| 9 | * January 30, 2012 | Visiting Irgiz-Turgai SNR.  Meeting with Irgiz-Turgai SNR administration and staff members  Director- N. Sarsenbaiuly  Deputy Directors: A. Orynbassarov, B. Aimanov. |
| 10 | * January 31, 2012 | Meeting with the head of oblast territorial Inspection RSE “Okhotzooprom” (Aktobe), Head - K. Ayazov |
| 11 | * February 1, 2012 | Visiting of Korgalzhyn SNR  Meeting with Director of reserve - M. Aitzhanov  Deputy Director – A. Koshkin.  Excursion across Visitor Center and territory of reserve to observe Saiga |
| 12 | * February 2, 2012 | Meeting with main expert of strategic planning department of environmental policy and sustainable development unit of MEP (by agreement with R. Tuleubayeva) |
| 13 | * February 2,2012. | Head of UNDP office in Kazakhstan - S. Tull.  Meeting with UNDP, Environment and Energy Unit, UNDP - S. Kim. |

**By Phone/Skype**

Michael Appleton, International Protected Area Management Expert

**Annex 6. Evaluation Field Visit Schedule**

*Note: The actual mid-term evaluation itinerary undertaken varied slightly from the below official version prepared beforehand by the project team.*

| **TIME** | **ACTIVITY** | **LOCATION** | **RESPONSIBLE PERSON** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **January 24th, Tuesday** | | | |
| 00.20 | Arrive to Astana | Meeting at Astana airport,  Hotel, Astana | D. Omarova V.Kondratenko (driver) |
| 11.:00 – 18:00 | Work with the Project Team on Project’s outcomes, with break for lunch | UNDP meeting room | A.Assylbekov  D.Omarova |
| **January 25th, Wednesday** | | | |
| 09.00 -13.00 | Work with the Project Team on Project’s outcomes | Project Office, Astana | A.Assylbekov  D.Omarova |
| 13.00 -14.00 | Lunch |  |  |
| 14.30 -16.00 | Meeting with stakeholders: CFH of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan | House of the Ministries Astana | A.Assylbekov |
| 17.50 | Visit to Project site | Railway station Astana, Train Astana-Arkalyk | D. Omarova |
| **January 26th, Thursday** | | | |
| 06:32 | Arrive to Arkalyk,  Change for cars | Railway station of Arkalyk | A.Assylbekov |
| 07:00 – 08:20 | Breakfast | Hotel, Arkalyk | A.Omarbekova |
| 08:20 – 13:00 | Travel to Torgai town | Road of Kostanaiskaya oblast | A.Assylbekov |
| 13:00 – 14:30 | Lunch | Torgai town | A.Omarbekova |
| 14:30 – 18:00 | Work in project area of Turgai town: meeting in governance (Akimat) of Zhangeldy district of Kostanaiskaya oblast,  Meeting with Hunting concessions – Saga - Altybai | Torgai town | A.Assylbekov,  A.Telkarayeva,  A.Omarbekova |
| 18:00 – 21:00 | Travel from Torgai town to Amangeldy town | Dinner, overnight stop in Amangeldy town | A.Assylbekov |
| **January 27th, Friday** | | | |
| 09:00 – 13:00 | Work in project area of Amangeldy town: meeting in governance (Akimat) of Amangeldy district of Kostanaiskaya oblast | Amangeldy town | A.Assylbekov |
| 13:00 – 14:00 | Lunch | Amangeldy town | A.Assylbekov |
| 14:00 – 16:00 | Meeting with Hunting concessions | Amangeldy town | A.Telkarayeva |
| 16:00 – 21:00 | Travel from Amangeldy town to Naurzum SNR (Karamendy town) | Road of Kostanaiskaya oblast | A.Assylbekov |
| **January 28th, Saturday** | | | |
| 09:00 – 18:00 | Work in Naurzum SNR | Karamendy town, Kostanaiskaya oblast | A.Assylbekov  B.Muttakov |
| **January 29th, Sunday** | | | |
| 05:00 – 07:00 | Travel from Karamendy town to Amankaragai | Road of Kostanaiskaya oblast | A.Assylbekov  B.Muttakov |
| 07:28 | Board the train Astana-Atyrau | Amankaragai town, Kostanaiskaya obl | D.Omarova |
| 14:18 | Arrive to Aitikebi station | Aitkebi station, Aktubinskaya obl. | D.Omarova |
| 14:30 -15:30 | Lunch | Aitkebi station, Aktubinskaya obl. | A.Assylbekov |
| 15:30 – 21:00 | Travel Aitikebi town – Irgiz town | Road of Aktubinskaya oblast | A.Assylbekov  N. Sarsenbaiuly (Director of Irgiz-Turgai Rezervat) |
| **January 30th, Monday** | | | |
| 09.00 – 18:00 | Work in pilot PA,  Irgiz-Turgai SNR | Irgiz town, Aktubinskaya oblast | A.Assylbekov  N.Sarsenbaiuly (Director of Irgiz-Turgai Rezervat ) |
| **January 31st, Tuesday** | | | |
| 08:00 – 14:00 | Depart from Irgiz town to Aktobe | Road of Aktubinskaya oblast | A.Assylbekov |
| 14:00 – 15:00 | Lunch | Aktobe | A.Assylbekov |
| 15:30 – 16:30 | Meeting with Territorial Inspection of Aktubinskaya oblast | Aktobe | A.Assylbekov |
| 18:25 | Flight from Aktobe | Aktobe | D.Omarova |
| 21:00 | Arrive to Astana | Airport, Astana  Hotel | D.Omarova |
| **February 1st, Wednesday** | | | |
| 08.:00 – 11:00 | Travel to Korgalzhyn SNR or Buiratau SNNP (at the choice of J.Brann) | Korgalzhyn town//  Molodezhnyi town | D.Omarova,  V.Kondratenko |
| 11:00 – 13:00 | Work in PA | Korgalzhyn town//  Molodezhnyi town | A.Assylbekov  G.Kabanbayeva |
| 13:00 – 14:00 | Lunch | Korgalzhyn town//  Molodezhnyi town | G.Kabanbayeva |
| 14:00 -17:00 | Return to Astana | Korgalzhyn town//  Molodezhnyi town | D.Omarova  V.Kondratenko |
| **February 2nd, Thursday** | | | |
| 09.:00 – 11:00 | Meeting with stakeholders: Agency for Land Resources Management, MEP of the Republic of Kazakhstan | House of the Ministries Astana | A.Assylbekov |
| 11:30 – 13:00 | Meeting with Environment and Energy Unit of UNDP | UNDP Office, Astana | A.Assylbekov |
| 13:00-14:00 | Lunch | | |
| 14:00 – 19:00 | Work with the Project Team on Project’s outcomes | Project Office, Astana | A.Assylbekov |
| **February 3rd, Friday** | | | |
| 06.00 | Flight | Airport, Astana | V.Kondratenko |

**Annex 7. Evaluation Documentation**

Photo 1 From Left to Right: Irgiz-Turgai PA staff member, Irgiz-Turgai PA staff member, Kazakh Steppe project manager, international consultant on Payments for Ecosystem Services, Irgiz-Turgai PA Director, mid-term evaluation interpreter, mid-term evaluation team member, mid-term evaluation team member.



**Annex 8. Detailed Co-financing Figures (non-rounded)** *(USD)*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2009** | **2010** | **2011** | **Total** |
| **CFH** | $5,927,815 | $3,819,481 | $4,067,898 | $13,815,194 |
| **UNDP Cash** | $4,804 | $4,935 | $2,012 | $11,751 |
| **UNDP in-kind** | $9,000 | $12,000 | $15,000 | $36,000 |
| **UNDP Total** | $13,804 | $16,935 | $17,012 | $47,751 |
| **ACBK** | $514,000 | (combined with 2011) | $440,000 | $954,000 |
| **Total** | 6,455,619 | $3,836,416 | $4,524,910 | **$14,816,945** |

*Source: Data provided by project team.*

**Planned Co-financing**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Name of co-financier (source)*** | ***Classification*** | ***Type*** | ***Amount ($)*** | ***%*** |
| Project Government Contribution |  | and in-kind | 20,623,300 | 95.8% |
| GEF Agency(ies) |  | and in-kind | 50,000 | 0.2% |
| Local and International NGOs (ACBK, RSPB) |  | and in-kind | 870,000 | 4% |
| **Total Co-financing** | | | **21,543,300** | 100% |

*Source: CEO Endorsement Document*

**Annex 9. Management Response**

**PIMS 3835: Steppe Conservation and Management**

UNDP Management Response Template

Mid-term Evaluation Date: **January 2012 (field mission); April 2012 (main findings and recommendations); June 2012 (draft and final report)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Prepared by: **Kazakhstan Steppe** **Project Team** | Position: | Unit/Bureau: |
| Cleared by: | Position: | Unit/Bureau: |
| Input into and update in ERC: | Position: | Unit/Bureau: |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 1.** | | | | |
| ***Recommendation 1:*** As previously highlighted, perhaps the most significant risk for the Kazakhstan steppe project is whether the targeted steppe PAs will be fully included before project end in the government’s plan of establishing protected areas. Since only a certain number of protected areas can be established each year, if this project is successful, protected areas for steppe ecosystems will be established ahead of other PAs covering non-steppe ecosystems. What is clearly needed in Kazakhstan is a national strategy for strengthening the PA system that appropriately rationalizes, justifies and prioritizes a representative system of protected areas in Kazakhstan covering all ecosystems. This evaluation recommends that as part of the upcoming revision of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, national stakeholders also develop and agree on a strategic approach to further development of the national PA system. [UNDP and National Executing Partners] | | | | |
| **Management Response:** Commentary 1: Thank you for your proposal to prepare National Biodiversity Strategy. Indeed, such situation, when there is a competition in establishment of PAs with different ecosystems, results in competition between GEF Projects. It happens because the budget resources of the Government allocated to establishment of new PAs are still limited. We think in order to decide this issue we need to: firstly, to prepare a long-term concept of steppe PA expansion according to the Output 1.4 of Project document. Secondly, this concept should become an integrate part of new GEF, CFH, UNDP Full-sized Project Planning biodiversity conservation at the national level to facilitate implementation of CBD Strategy plan in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020. Your recommendations will be passed to new launch project. | | | | |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking\*** | |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| Development of a long-term steppe PA expansion Concept, including detailed strategy and guideline on PA expansion within semi-desert steppe region through 2030 | 3rd quarter of 2013 | Project Manager, expert on PA, experts on steppe biodiversity | Prepared recommendations on new steppe PAs establishment through 2030 | High |
| **Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 2.** | | | | |
| ***Recommendation 2:*** The project’s objective is to expand the coverage of steppe ecosystems in the national protected area system, and good progress is being made in this direction. At the same time, once established, there must also be the necessary resources to manage the protected areas effectively. The new PAs cover a huge amount of area, and effective management requires at least a base-level of resources. The steppe project has taken some initial steps to developing a comprehensive financial resource base for Kazakhstan PAs. As Kazakhstan continues to expand its protected area system, it would be highly beneficial to have a corresponding national-level effort for strengthening the system of financing protected areas. This evaluation recommends that UNDP and relevant national stakeholder organizations initiate a national process specifically focused on enhancing the financial sustainability of Kazakhstan’s protected areas for future effective management. [UNDP and National Executing Partners] | | | | |
| **Management Response:** Commentary 2: Indeed, your proposal to strengthen the system of sustainable financing Kazakhstan’s protected areas is rather urgent. The Project thanks you for provided recommendations and thinks that one of the ways to decide the issue is to make legal amendments to enhance the financial sustainability of Kazakhstan’s protected areas at the stage of establishment (revision of TEO, ENO) as well as the stage of strengthening (preparation of Management Plan). The result of work will be the revision of sub-legislative acts. Besides, other approaches to strengthen system of PA financing will be considered and tested on steppe PA system. | | | | |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking\*** | |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| Development and forwarding of legal amendments to legal and regulatory acts (ENO/TEO, MP development regulations etc.), providing inclusion of economical assessment within ENO/TEO, business plan into PA management plan | 4th quarter 2013 | Project Manager,  Expert on PA,  Expert on financial issues | It is planning to prepare and forward the draft legal and regulatory acts on improvement of PA financing | middle |
| **Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 3.** | | | | |
| ***Recommendation 3:*** A key element of the project’s focus is to work toward effective management in the PAs supported by the project. PA management resources (staff, equipment, etc.) are allocated based on standards and norms set for PA management in relevant government legislation. Based on current PA management needs, these metrics appear to be outdated and need to be revised to reflect appropriate metrics to meet current needs. The project should work with the relevant stakeholders to analyze the metrics applied in allocation PA staff and resources, and propose amendments to improve standards to meet international PA management norms and achieve a rational and strategic allocation of resources. [Project team and relevant national stakeholders] | | | | |
| **Management Response:** Commentary 3: It is really very important recommendation that would, significantly, improve the PA management situation. Current norms of staff completing and equipping don’t meet PA needs and require to be updated. The Project will try to analyze and propose amendments to the current norms of staff completing and equipping. However, it should be borne in mind that the improvement of current norms, for example, to the side of staff number increasing will result in increase in PA system financing. Wherefore, there is a high risk not to implement proposed recommendations because of the lack of financial resources allocated from state budget. | | | | |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking\*** | |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| The project is undertaking following action: proposing Executing agency (CFH, Ministry of Agriculture) to prepare memo on improvement of current norms on staff recruiting and PA equipping in order to perform this work within the government order | 4th quarter 2013 | Project Manager, Expert on capacity building | At the present, the project is carrying out the work on updating of job descriptions for steppe PA staff | middle |
| **Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 4.** | | | | |
| ***Recommendation 4:*** This evaluation recommends the project increase attention for understanding potential impacts to steppe ecosystems of climate change, in the targeted areas where the project is working. This could involve, for example, conducting a desk review of available relevant research to develop greater understanding of how the project areas may be influenced in future climate change scenarios. Other options could be funding a small-scale baseline study in the project area to track climate influences over time (or leveraging resources of other partners), and developing linkages with relevant national and regional climate change initiatives addressing climate impacts on steppe ecosystems. To ensure the long-term sustainability of project results it will be important to understand how climate change may influence the steppe ecosystems in the protected areas established under the project. [Project team and UNDP] | | | | |
| **Management Response:** Commentary 4: Thank you for proposed recommendation. The Project will conduct the work on collaboration with national and regional climate change initiatives. It should be noted that within the ecological monitoring the Project has already prepared general material on climate change for fifty year period at Irgiz-Turgay-Zhilanshik project area. Perhaps this brief description will lay the foundation of climate change monitoring including its impacts to steppe ecosystems in pilot PAs and project area. | | | | |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking\*** | |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| Environmental researches conducted within Irgiz-Turgay-Zhylanshik project area will include research on territory damping, vegetation index | 4th quarter 2012 | Expert on landscape planning |  | middle |
| **Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 5.** | | | | |
| ***Recommendation 5:*** The project team should work to implement a standardized approach to completion of the METT scorecard, one of the important indicators for tracking project results. One approach was applied before project start as the baseline (using independent experts), and a second approach (working with local partners) was applied after project initiation. Basing the METT calculation on a single source but using different approaches is not conducive to the METT serving as a useful measure of progress because of potential inconsistency in scoring. Having the METT completed by independent experts using a consistent methodology would be the preferred approach and should be applied for completing the METT in the future. [Project team and UNDP] | | | | |
| **Management Response:** Commentary 5:Thank you for this recommendation. This recommendation will be taken into account when completing METT scorecard at the stage of final evaluation. | | | | |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking\*** | |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| See management response |  |  |  | middle |
| **Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 6.** | | | | |
| ***Recommendation 6:*** This evaluation recommends that the project seek opportunities to involve students, particularly of high school age, in PA management activities to increase environmental education and strengthen capacity. An excellent example of such an approach is being implemented in Naurzum, and could be replicated in other protected areas. [Project team and PA management authorities] | | | | |
| **Management Response:** Commentary 6: Due to Project’s efforts the students of biology and geography faculties of Arkalyk Pedagogic Institute will be involved in field research within the ecological monitoring of Irgiz-Turgay-Zhilanshik area. The conduction of this activity will allow to increase knowledge of potential employees of new natural rezervat “Altyn Dala”. | | | | |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking\*** | |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| In Current year the students from Arkalyk Pedagogical Institute have been involved to conduct environmental monitoring within Irgiz-Turgay Zhylanshik project area | 2-3rd quarters 2012 | Expert on landscape planning |  | middle |
| **Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 7.** | | | | |
| ***Recommendation 7:*** This evaluation recommends the project make some small-scale efforts to catalyze a process to address the water shortage problems in Irgiz-Turgai protected area. Fully addressing this problem is far beyond the scope and capacity of the project, but multiple stakeholders noted it as an important factor that will influence project results in the future, and the project should work to catalyze other stakeholders to begin addressing this problem. [Project team] | | | | |
| **Management Response:** Commentary 7: Thank you for proposed recommendation. The project will make efforts to decide this issue. Currently, we’ve made effort to decide this issue through discussing this question at the level of Akimat of Aktubinskaja Oblast, as well as CFH level. | | | | |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking\*** | |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| 1. Arrangement of dialogue ground with participation of all relevant stakeholders (CFH, CBR, akimats of two regions, PAs, akims of districts, fish users, NGOs, etc.) on solving issue on Turgay River flow supplying to prevent drying of Irgiz-Turgay rezervat lake system;  2. Ways out searching for adjusting issue on river flow increase of ITZ project area | 4th quarter 2012 – 3rd quarter 2013 | Project, ITR, CFH, CBR, Akimats of Aktubinskaya and Kostanayskaya Oblasts |  | high |
| **Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 8.** | | | | |
| ***Recommendation 8:*** This evaluation recommends a revision to some of the project logframe indicators, as further highlighted under individual indicators in Annex 3. Once revisions have been confirmed by the project team, they should be approved by the Project Steering Committee. [Project team] | | | | |
| **Management Response:** Commentary: Thank you for this recommendation. Review of Project Logframe is one of the main issues in Project management.  As you know, there is one of the main aspects in project Logframe to achieve target indicators. Commentary: Thank you for this recommendation. Review of Project Logframe is one of the main issues in Project management.  • A) The Project is to get 6 out 6 scores in Capacity building for the development of concepts and drafts of political, legislative and strategic documents  Commentary As we see it, it may happen if the country’s leadership considers PA goals and objectives as key and high-priority government issues. Is it in the Project’s competence?  • B) In Capacity building for involvement into activities and building consensus among stakeholders, the Project is to achieve 6 out 6 scores. In other words, when there is a very high level of a political will to support protected areas and a tremendous public support in the country for protected areas.  • Commentary: The Project, hardly, can decide the issue of interaction of stakeholders for all PAs in Kazakhstan  • C) There is a question, if the target for Capacity building for implementation of political, legislative, strategic and programme documents at the institutional level is achievable, where the Project is to get 33 out of 36 scores.  • Commentary: However, according to the evaluation form it is possible to achieve only 27 scores.   * D) According to logframes concerning financial targets assessment the project has to achieve target of 68%, Including Legal and regulatory framework- 82 %, business planning – 58 %, Tools for revenue generation) – 54 %. * Commentary: Financial scorecard, first of all, is aimed to assess whole national PA system and considering its improvement at legal, institutional and system levels that certainly doesn’t reflect Project activity results within Outcome 3.4. With all project’s efforts, there is a question of achieving stated target.   You are kindly requested within your competence to facilitate the Project to update these indicators through clear amendments. The Project for its part will make every effort to update indicators according to GEF Regulations and Procedures. | | | | |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking\*** | |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| Revision and approval of revised indicators on capacity building and financial scorecard at the 6th Steering committee meeting | 4th quarter 2013 | Project |  | high |
| **Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 9.** | | | | |
| ***Recommendation 9:*** The project objective statement could be revised to more accurately reflect the breadth of project activities and expected results. This would not be a change in the actual objective of the project, but simply an improved description to appropriately convey the scope of project results. An improved revised objective statement could read “to expand the protected areas system of Kazakhstan to improve coverage of steppe ecosystems, while enhancing PA management capacity through new mechanisms and better information for decision-making.” [Project team and Project Board] | | | | |
| **Management Response:** Commentary 9: Thank you for proposed objective statement. At the Steering Committee meeting this issue will be submitted for discussion and approval, if it is in agreement with GEF regulations. | | | | |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking\*** | |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| See management response |  |  |  | middle |
| **Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 10.** | | | | |
| ***Recommendation 10:*** As steppe PAs are established and expanded, they subsequently require appropriate management plans to guide management actions meetings the objectives of the PA. Work on the Irgiz-Turgai management plan has commenced, but remains to be completed to international standards. It is recommended that the project team facilitate provision of the necessary resources to the Irgiz-Turgai management staff to ensure the management plan for this protected area is completed and can serve as a good practice model for subsequent PAs. [Project team and UNDP] | | | | |
| **Management Response:** Commentary 10: This recommendation will be taken into account for sure when implementing the Project. Currently, the Project is facilitating Irgiz-Turgay natural rezervat to prepare 2012-2016 Management Plan. Work on facilitate provision of Management Plan development for newly established SNNP “Buiratau has commenced. It is in the planning stage that used by the Project international methodology of Management Plan development will be applied to preparation of Management plans for new steppe PAs. | | | | |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking\*** | |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| Facilitate to prepare Management Plan for Irgiz-Turgay Rezervat and SNNP “Buiratau” | 4th quarter 2012,  4th quarter 2013 | Expert on capacity building | The final Management Plan of Irgiz-Turgay SNR for 2013-2017 will be prepared | high |

1. Due to the timing of the evaluation report, project financial data through March 31, 2012 has been included. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Portions of the information presented in this section are drawn directly from the relevant descriptions in the project document. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kazakhstan>, as accessed on June 6th, 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Convention on Migratory Species. 2012. “Almost 5,000 Saiga Antelope Horns Confiscated in Kazakhstan,” March 30, 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Sources: 1.A. N/A; 1.B. GEF PMIS; 2.A. N/S 2.B. GEF PMIS; 3.A. N/S; 3.B. GEF PMIS; 4.A. N/S; 4.B. GEF PMIS; 5.A. N.S.; 5.B. GEF online database; 6.A. N/S; 6.B. GEF PMIS; 7.A. N/S; 7.B. GEF PMIS; 8.A. N/S; 8.B. GEF PMIS; 9.A. N/S; 9.B. 2010 PIR; 10.A. N/S; 10.B. 2010 PIR; 11.A. 2010 PIR; 11.B. Date of mid-term evaluation field visit; 12.A. 2010 PIR “Original planned closing date”; 12.B. 2010 PIR “Revised planned closing date”; 13.A. Estimated based on UNDP standard operating procedures; 13.B. N/A.; 14.A. 2010 PIR; 14.B. N/A. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Source: Kazakhstan Steppe Project Document [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Source: GEF Evaluation Review of Outcomes to Impacts Handbook. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. This body is labeled “Project Board” in the project document, but is often referred to by project participants as the Project “Steering Committee.” The basic function of project oversight is the same in either case. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. CBD COP decision VII/28 on protected areas (Articles 8 (a) to (e)), <http://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/?id=7765>. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. For the focal area strategic approach for GEF-4, see GEF Council document GEF/C.31/1, “Focal Area Strategic and Strategic Programming for GEF-4,” July 16, 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. For the focal area strategic priorities for GEF-5, see GEF Council document GEF/R.5/31, “GEF-5 Programming Document,” May 3, 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The GEF Evaluation Office defines SMART indicators as those that are: Specific, Measureable, Achievable and Attributable, Relevant and Realistic, Timebound, Timely, Trackable and Targeted. See <http://www.gefcountrysupport.org/report_detail.cfm?projectId=232> for additional information. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. See p.67 of UNDP’s “Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluation for Results”, available at http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See Annex C of “Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation: approaches to sustainability”, available at http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. See section 3.2 of the GEF’s “Monitoring and Evaluation Policies and Procedures”, available at http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. UNDP-GEF’s system is based on the Atlas Risk Module. See the UNDP-GEF Risk Management Strategy resource kit, available as Annex XI at http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. RBM Support documents are available at http://www.undp.org/eo/methodologies.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. The UNDP User Guide is currently only available on UNDP’s intranet. However UNDP can provide the necessary section on roles and responsibility from http://content.undp.org/go/userguide/results/rmoverview/progprojorg/?src=print [↑](#footnote-ref-18)