

ETHICS STATEMENT FOR INDEPENDENT EVALUATOR

This Evaluation is guided by, and has applied, the following principles:

Independence The Evaluator is independent and has not been engaged in the Project activities, nor was he responsible in the past for the design, implementation or supervision of the project.

Impartiality The Evaluator endeavoured to provide a comprehensive and balanced presentation of strengths and weaknesses of the project. The evaluation process has been impartial in all stages and taken into account all the views received from stakeholders.

Transparency The Evaluator conveyed in as open a manner as possible the purpose of the evaluation, the criteria applied and the intended use of the findings. This evaluation report aims to provide transparent information on its sources, methodologies and approach.

Disclosure This report serves as a mechanism through which the findings and lessons identified in the evaluation are disseminated to policymakers, operational staff, beneficiaries, the general public and other stakeholders.

Ethical The Evaluator has respected the right of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence and the sources of specific information and opinions in this report are not disclosed except where necessary and then only after confirmation with the consultee.

Competencies and Capacities The credentials of the Evaluator in terms of his expertise, seniority and experience as required by the terms of reference are provided in an annex; and the methodology for the assessment of results and performance is described.

Credibility This evaluation has been based on data and observations which are considered reliable and dependable with reference to the quality of instruments and procedures and analysis used to collect and interpret information.

Utility The Evaluator strived to be as well-informed as possible and this ensuing report is considered as relevant, timely and as concise as possible. In an attempt to be of maximum benefit to stakeholders, the report presents in a complete and balanced way the evidence, findings and issues, conclusions and recommendations.



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List of abbreviations

AMD	Armenian Dram
APR	Annual Project Review
AWP	Annual Work Plan
BMA	Bioresources Management Agency
BSAP	Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan of Armenia
CBD	UN Convention on Biological Diversity
UNDP CO	United Nations Development Program Country Office
EPIU SA	Environmental Projects Implementation Unit State Agency
EU	European Union
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KfW	German Development Bank
LFM	Logical Framework Matrix
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool for Protected Areas
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoNP	Ministry of Nature Protection
MTE	Mid-term evaluation
NAS	National Academy of Science
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NP	National Park
PA	Protected Area
PD	Project Document
PIR	Project Implementation Report
PM	Project Manager
PMU	Project Management Unit
RA	Republic of Armenia
SC	Steering Committee
SDP	Sustainable Development Program
SDSPA NAP	Strategy on Developing Specially Protected Areas and National Action Plan
SNCO	State Non-commercial Organization
SNEAP	Second National Environmental Action Programme
SR	State Reserve
SRF	Strategic Results Framework
TJS-Caucasus	Transboundary Joint Secretariat for Caucasus
ToR	Terms of Reference
USD	United States Dollar
WWF	World Wild Fund for Nature
WB	World Bank

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Availability of a large variety of natural, geographical, and climate zones in Armenia conditions existence of a wide number of high species in the country. Many of them are of global, regional, and local importance. There are a number of endangered and endemic species of really high value in various areas of the country. Important habitat types such as desert, semi-desert, wetlands, steppe, meadow, steppe meadow and high mountainous ecosystems important for most of Armenia’s critically endangered flora/fauna are absent or under-represented within the current protected area system. The Ministry of Nature Protection (MoNP) is principally responsible for environment protection and biodiversity conservation in Armenia.

There are number of threats for Armenia’s biodiversity ultimately resulting in accelerated loss of vulnerable habitats and associated species, the reduction of ecological functionality and the growing insecurity of ecosystem services. Potential and existing threats to Armenia’s biodiversity include overexploitation of biodiversity, unregulated tourism activity, habitat loss, and uncontrolled expansion of existing and emergence of new (poli-metallic) mines, climate change. The long-term solution sought by the RA Government is to alleviating habitat fragmentation in Armenia through a functional ecologically representative protected areas (PAs) network being well managed and sustainably financed.

The project’s **goal** is to conserve globally significant biodiversity in Armenia. The project has the **objective** to catalyze the expansion of the nature reserves to provide better representation of ecosystems within Armenia’s current protected area system and enable active conservation of biodiversity. The objective will be achieved through two components:

1. Rationalization of the protected area system, and
2. Institutional capacity building for protected area management.

The mid-term evaluation (MTE) is intended to identify potential project design problems, assess progress towards the achievement of objectives, identify and document lessons learned and to make recommendations regarding specific actions that might be taken to improve the project. Specifically the mid-term evaluation will address project concept and design, implementation, project outputs, outcomes and impact, and sustainability.

1.2 MAIN CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Overall implementation of the UNDP GEF PIMS 3986 – Developing the Protected Area System of Armenia project (hereinafter referred as “project”) can be considered as *Moderately Satisfactory*. Some aspects of the project have been implemented quite successfully; others need to be revised or intensified. The overall multi-aspect assessment of the project implementation is presented below (see [Table 1](#)):

Table 1 - Overall implementation of the project

N	Indicators	Rating ¹
	Project Relevance	
1.	R1 - Project relevance to national and global priorities and policies	HS
2.	R2 - Current relevance of the project Goal, Objective, and Activities	MS

¹ Definitions of the rating abbreviations are presented in [Table 3](#) and [Table 4](#)

3.	R3 - Project implementation approach	MS
4.	R4 - Stakeholders participation	S
5.	R5 - Cooperation with other projects	S
Project Effectiveness		
6.	I _E 1 - Set of by-laws developed to operationalize the 2006 Protected Area Law	MS
7.	I _E 2 - Inst. links re-configured to clarify roles and responsibilities for governance and management of sanctuaries	MS
8.	I _E 3 - Three new sanctuaries established at underrepresented habitats	S
9.	I _E 4 - Development of new PA management models for sanctuaries and putting into policy	MS
10.	I _E 5 - National and local training programs for sanctuary managers and local communities	MS
11.	I _E 6 - Management and business plans at three sanctuaries developed	MS
Project Cost Efficiency		
12.	I _{CE} - Project cost efficiency	S
Project Management		
13.	I _{PM} 1 - Project general management	S
14.	I _{PM} 2 - Project financial management	MU
Project Results		
15.	I _R 1 - Coverage (ha) of sustainably operating sanctuaries	MU
16.	I _R 2 - Representation levels of habitats in the PA estate	MS
17.	I _R 3 - METT scores for sanctuaries	MU
18.	I _R 4 - METT scorecards for the Project pilot areas	MU
19.	I _R 5 - % of habitat of (a) Caucasian leopard, (b) Armenian mouflon, (c) Bezoar goat included in PA system	S
20.	I _R 6 - Number of bylaws rationalizing operation of sanctuaries	MU
21.	I _R 7 - Number of sanctuaries with Government-endorsed charters and management/business plans	MS
22.	I _R 8 - Number of sanctuaries with formally designated management bodies	MS
23.	I _R 9 - Capacity scores for three demonstration sanctuaries	MS
24.	I _R 10 - Number of sanctuaries with active community engagement	MS
Project Sustainability and replicability		
25.	I _S 1 - Financial sustainability	ML
26.	I _S 2 - Socio-political sustainability	ML
27.	I _S 3 - Institutional framework and governance	ML
28.	I _S 4 - Environmental sustainability	MU
29.	I _S 5 - Project replicability	ML

Major recommendations towards improvement of the project achievements are the following:

- Once again review the requirements of the Project Document (PD) and activities assigned to each component. If the project implementation needs significant amendments it should be thoroughly designed and introduced to the project Steering Committee (SC). This equally refers to amendment of activities, re-allocation of activities and outputs, and their implementation timetable, which should be strictly defined. Having the project SC approval it should also be officially amended and approved by the UNDP GEF. Specific activities that are pending to be implemented in the last year and half of the project should be very clearly and unambiguously designated to each implementing agency.
- Time-bound results tracking tools should be applied to monitor exact and real progress achieved by implementing partners. *Ceteris paribus*, this can be even a simply gantt chart having percentages in the cells showing the extent of the achievement of results. Implementing partners must be aware of all deadlines for outputs they should ensure. In parallel, strict monitoring and enforcement tools should be applied to ensure the expected outputs on time.

- It is recommended to revise the project SRF: it needs to be seriously reviewed. Target indicators should be more realistic and achievable. Indicators that seem to be less realistic and non-achievable at this stage of the project implementation be reviewed and modified a little to become SMARTer. The project must do its best to invite the RA MoNP BMA, or the NAS, or another relevant institution to undertake the responsibility of the preparation of METTs. The current situation includes elements of the conflict of interests. The same relates to implementation of biodiversity monitoring programs.
- The project should seek additional opportunities to accompany the implementation of the “soft” measures (such as drafting Law and regulations, trainings, assessments, etc.) with activities resulting in tangible assets. This is especially important in case of communities that will be involved in co-management of envisaged PAs. First steps towards such an approach are already done: cooperation was established with TJS-Caucasus, KfW funded Open Support Program, smaller projects implemented by WWF-Armenia, etc. Since the project cannot invest in tangible assets itself it should intensify those links and leverage the results in order to keep the local stakeholders motivated.
- Having the MTE results at hand the Project Management Unit (PMU) is recommended to conduct internal revision of weaknesses of the project. The PMU must assess the factors that may create risks for successful completion of the project. The first aspect to be addressed is the solution of uncertainty of the work plans and mis-coordination between implementing partners. The revision should result in a well thought and designed new work plans, including unambiguously defined activities assigned to each implementing agency, timetables (with strictly defined deadlines) of implementation, and exact outcomes expected. The revised documents should be officially adopted by implementing partners and approved by the UNDP. If necessary, respective amendments should be made in contracts concluded between implementing partners and UNDP. *Inter alia*, this will also mean strengthening and intensification of a project management function (e.g. better application of the monitoring function).
- Project financial management is to be improved. It is recommended to introduce the delivery rate monitoring by components and activities. Special templates can be prepared for implementing partners and PMU to ensure the consistency of collected information regarding the amounts spent to ensure outputs and deliverables. Moreover, it was confirmed that such templates (budget breakdown) sheets were prepared and introduced to implementing partners recently. The PM should be strict enough to receive actual expenses in accordance with planned.
- EPIU SA has succeeded with implementation of awareness raising measures in both target areas. Several workshops have been organized and conducted. Proper participation of women in those workshops has been ensured. It is recommended to continue awareness raising and capacity building among local communities and PA management. Training materials should be developed and delivered also for sanctuary managers and personnel. Relations with communities should be intensified and specific aspects of PAs establishment (such as purpose, ways of operation and management, restrictions, utilization of new opportunities, etc.) should be uncovered and better explained on regular bases.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

2.1.1 General description of Armenian conditions

Availability of a large variety of natural, geographical, and climate zones in Armenia conditions existence of a wide number of high species in the country. Many of them are of global, regional, and local importance². There are number of endangered and endemic species of really high value in various areas of the country. The Ministry of Nature Protection is principally responsible for environment protection and biodiversity conservation. The MNP's BMA is charged with managing all State Reserves (SRs), National Parks (NPs), and Natural Monuments via application of State Non Commercial Organizations (SNCOs) to undertake the function of PAs administrations and is responsible for on-the-ground operations.

As of the June 2012 Armenia's system of PAs includes 311,000 ha or approximately 10% of the territory (6% without Lake Sevan NP)³. Important habitat types such as desert-semi desert, wetlands, steppe, meadow, steppe meadow and high mountainous ecosystems represent approximately 80% of Armenia's total landmass. However, these ecosystems important for most of Armenia's critically endangered flora/fauna are absent or under-represented within the current protected area system.

There are number of threats for Armenia's biodiversity ultimately resulting in accelerated loss of vulnerable habitats and associated species, the reduction of ecological functionality and the growing insecurity of ecosystem services. Opportunities for communities to realize the potential social and economic benefits accruing from biodiversity are either lost or very low. PAs are fragmented to the large extent which negatively impacts the migration opportunities for mammals. The list of potential and existing specific threats to Armenia's biodiversity include the following aspects:

- Threat #1 - Overexploitation of biodiversity;
- Threat #2 - Unregulated tourism activity;
- Threat #3 - Habitat loss;
- Threat #4 - Uncontrolled expansion of existing and emergence of new (poli-metallic) mines;
- Threat #5 - Climate Change.

The long-term solution sought by the RA Government is to alleviating habitat fragmentation in Armenia through a functional ecologically representative PA network being well managed and sustainably financed. The PA network should enjoy the full support of local communities and government.

2.1.2 Project Goal and Objective, Components/Outcomes and Outputs/Activities

Goal: The project's goal is to conserve globally significant biodiversity in Armenia.⁴

Objective: The project has the objective to catalyze the expansion of the nature reserves to provide better representation of ecosystems within Armenia's current protected area system and enable active conservation of biodiversity.

The objective will be achieved through two components:

² Chapter 2.1.1 is an edited extract from the PD provided to evaluation expert (EE) by the PMU

³ Source: WWF-Armenia

⁴ Chapter 2.1.2 is an edited extract from the PD provided to EE by the PMU

3. Rationalization of the protected area system, and
4. Institutional capacity building for protected area management.

Component 1: Rationalization of the protected areas system:

- Output 1.1 Set of by-laws developed to operationalize the 2006 PA Law;
- Output 1.2 Institutional links re-configured to clarify roles and responsibilities for governance and management of sanctuaries.
- Output 1.3 Three new sanctuaries of Gnishik (Vayots Dzor Region), Khustup Mountain Area (Syunik Region), and Zangezour (Syunik Region) established at underrepresented habitats.
- Output 1.4 A new PA management model developed for sanctuaries and put into policy.

Component II. Institutional capacity building for PA management

- Output 2.1 National and local training programs for sanctuary managers and local communities;
- Output 2.2 Management and business plans at three sanctuaries developed;
- Output 2.3 Management and business plan implementation supported on the ground;
- Output 2.4 Lessons learned documented and experience set to replication.

Further in the document specific activities and outputs to achieve each output are analyzed and presented in a form of indicators.

2.2 PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION AND ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

Purpose of the current MTE is best defined by the Terms of Reference (ToR) developed and provided by UNDP GEF⁵. The evaluation is initiated and commissioned jointly by UNDP Armenia Country Office (CO) and by the UNDP/GEF regional coordination unit in Bratislava. MTEs are intended to identify potential project design problems, assess progress towards the achievement of objectives, identify and document lessons learned, and to make recommendations regarding specific actions that might be taken to improve the project. It is expected to serve as a means of validating or filling the gaps in the initial assessment of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency obtained from monitoring. The MTE provides the opportunity to assess early signs of project success or failure and prompt necessary adjustments. To this end, the MTE will serve to:

1. Strengthen the adaptive management and monitoring functions of the project;
2. Enhance the likelihood of achievement of the project and GEF objectives ;
3. Enhance organizational and development learning;
4. Enable informed decision-making;
5. Create the basis of replication of successful project outcomes achieved so far.

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

- Project concept and design;
- Implementation;
- Project outputs, outcomes, and impact.

⁵ Chapter 2.2 is a citation from the MTE ToR

2.3 METHODOLOGY OF THE EVALUATION

While getting prepared towards the implementation of the MTE it was assigned to the external evaluator to apply the evaluation methodology adopted by UNDP GEF. These evaluation principles are outlined in *UNDP Evaluation Guidance for GEF-Financed Projects* and in *GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy*⁶, as well as in the ToR of the current assignment. The project progress and achievements were tested and evaluated against following GEF evaluation criteria (see [Table 2](#)):

Table 2 – Evaluation criteria and assessment benchmarks

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

The evaluation criteria presented above have been defined and assessed via the large volume of secondary materials review, discussions with UNDP/GEF PMU and implementing partners of 2 separate components⁷ of the project, i.e. the RA MoNP Environmental Projects Implementation Unit State Agency (EPIU SA) and WWF-Armenia. Additionally, series of semi-structured qualitative interviews with different stakeholders and beneficiaries of the project conducted during the project sites' visit. The collected information after the initial analysis and classification is presented in 3 main sections of 1) **Project formulation**; 2) Project **implementation**, and 3) Project **results** as it is requested by UNDP GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy.

The project has been rated against individual criterion of *relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact/results* based on the following scale (see [Table 3](#)).

Table 3 – Evaluation criteria (except of sustainability) scaling

Scale	Quantification	Scaling bases
Highly Satisfactory	(HS=6)	➤ The project has <i>no shortcomings</i> in the achievement of its objectives.
Satisfactory	(S=5)	➤ The project has <i>minor shortcomings</i> in the achievement of its objectives.
Moderately Satisfactory	(MS=4)	➤ The project has <i>moderate shortcomings</i> in the achievement of its objectives.
Moderately Unsatisfactory	(MU=3)	➤ The project has <i>significant shortcomings</i> in the achievement of its objectives.
Unsatisfactory	(U=2)	➤ The project has <i>major shortcomings</i> in the achievement of its objectives.
Highly Unsatisfactory	(HU=1)	➤ The project has <i>severe shortcomings</i> in the achievement of its objectives.

Scaling presented above has been applied against each indicator taken from the project design documents (or developed as necessary) regarding the above-mentioned criteria. The suggested scaling of the indicators

⁶ http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/documents/Policies_and_Guidelines-M_and_E_Policy-english.pdf

⁷ Although components fulfill each other; moreover, Implementing Agencies share some parts of each component

was quantified in order to make it easy the further calculations of ratings for each and all indicators of each and all criteria.

As for *sustainability criteria* the evaluator should at the minimum evaluate the *likelihood of sustainability of outcomes at project termination* and provide a rating for this. The following four sustainability risks should be addressed: Financial resources, socio-political, institutional framework and governance, and environmental. On each of these dimensions of sustainability of the project outcomes were rated as presented in the table below. Note: *all the risk dimensions of sustainability were taken as **critical***.

Table 4 – Sustainability evaluation scaling

Scale	Quantification	Scaling bases
Likely	(L=4)	➤ There are no or negligible risks that affect this dimension.
Moderately Likely	(ML=3)	➤ There are moderate risks that affect this dimension of sustainability.
Moderately Unlikely	(MU=2)	➤ there are significant risks that affect this dimension of sustainability
Unlikely	(U=1)	➤ There are severe risks that affect this dimension of sustainability.

Various monitoring and evaluation tools have been applied in the course of MTE. In particular they are:

- **Review of project documents** (see the list of relevant documents at [Annexes: Chapter 6.6](#)). Project documents were reviewed with the purpose of uncovering the background and objectives of the project, implementation status, and achievements so far, problems identified, managerial arrangements, etc. Respective comparison of project design vs. implementation/reporting stage papers was conducted.
- **Desk research of strategy documents** (see the list of relevant documents at Annexes: [Chapter 6.6](#)). The purpose of this exercise was the assessment of the appropriateness of the project to national and global priorities and policies.
- **Discussions with UNDP GEF.** Discussion with UNDP Armenia Environmental Governance Program Analyst and Policy Adviser was conducted during which the project design and novelty, implementation approach and major achievements, shortcomings and major challenges have been addressed.
- **Discussions with implementing partners** (the RA MoNP EPIU SA for the Component 1 and WWF-Armenia for the Component 2)⁸. Implementing partners have been asked to provide first-hand information on progress, express their attitude towards project design, content, implementation, adaptive management, and other important issues.
- **Development of semi-structured questionnaires** that were applied for qualitative interviews with different stakeholders defined by the project PMU and/or identified in the course of MTE. Individual approach was applied, i.e. respective stakeholders were interviewed on topics they are at least informed about. Otherwise, non-informed stakeholders responses might create bias and negatively affect on the quality of the current MTE report.
- **Qualitative interviews with project stakeholders.** Initial list of stakeholders was defined in the ToR, which was amended during the MTE. Snowball method of the identification of relevant stakeholders was applied by the external evaluator. Stakeholders were met and interviewed in Yerevan, as well as at target areas of the project.
- **Site visits.** One visit to each of three project target areas in Vayots Dzor and Syunik regions were organized and successfully conducted (see the brief summary of those visits at Annexes: [Chapter 6.5](#)).

⁸ Later the EPIU SA for the Component 1 with exception of mapping works under Output 1.3 plus Output 2.1 and WWF-Armenia for the Component 2 with exception of Output 2.1 plus mapping works under Output 1.3 This is reflected below in Chapter 3.1

3 PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

3.1 PROJECT START AND ITS DURATION

UNDP/GEF Project: *PIMS 3986 – Developing the Protected Area System of Armenia* was launched in the beginning of 2010. The project lifecycle is designed to be 4 years. Total designed budget of the project implementation amounts to \$2,950,000 of which \$950,000 is the UNDP/GEF Contribution. The project started in the beginning of 2010 with the Inception Workshop participated by the project SC, representatives of various RA ministries and other State agencies, officials from Syunik and Vayots Dzor regions Governorates, UNDP-Armenia, and others. Project SC approved the project Inception Report and work plan for the 2010.

Later in the process of the implementation the work plans have been amended and redesigned many times conditioned by the implementation process peculiarities and delays in implementation/completion of certain components/activities. Logically, this means application of adaptive management principles, since otherwise quite serious issues would have not been properly addressed. On the other hand, changes applied too often substantially affect the whole implementation process and sometimes quite negatively. Some elements of those negative influences can be observed here, too. Lack of coordination, mix in responsibilities, delays of certain activities and results conditioned by low effectiveness and efficiency of other activities are not the full list of such shortcomings. The best proof of the necessity of changes applied to the work plans is the ultimate achievement of results and objectives (even with notable delays). To this extent, the MTE stayed quite loyal to those changes that finally resulted in desired outputs.

The project is designed to be implemented in the course of 4 years through 2010-2013. The initial financial implementation of the project is presented below (see [Table 5](#)). Meantime, it should be mentioned that changes applied to the presented financial plan have been substantial.

Table 5 – Project’s initial financial work plan, \$

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total, \$
UNDP GEF	216,750	190,750	226,250	316,250	950,000
<i>Component 1</i>	<i>121,000</i>	<i>77,000</i>	<i>108,500</i>	<i>163,500</i>	<i>470,000</i>
<i>Component 2</i>	<i>72,000</i>	<i>90,000</i>	<i>94,000</i>	<i>129,000</i>	<i>385,000</i>
<i>Project Management</i>	<i>23,750</i>	<i>23,750</i>	<i>23,750</i>	<i>23,750</i>	<i>95,000</i>
RA MoNP	200,000	350,000	400,000	550,000	1,500,000
WWF	150,000	150,000	100,000	100,000	500,000
Total	566,750	690,750	726,250	966,250	2,950,000

As of the moment of the MTE a little less than 2.5 years of implementation is completed. All activities within the frame of the project are implemented by 2 implementing partners – the RA MoNP EPIU SA (Component 1 with exception of mapping works under Output 1.3 plus Output 2.1) and WWF-Armenia (Component 2 with exception of Output 2.1 plus mapping works under Output 1.3). Specific achievements of the project are analyzed further in this report.

Side comment:

Project design addresses significant contributions by the RA MoNP and WWF-Armenia. Meantime, this approach is slightly questionable. The project traces certain results that are to the certain extent in line with general objectives of the RA MoNP and WWF. Both entities are engaged in PA development specific activities that may contribute to the project objectives, but proper implementation of regular activities in

exact terms does not yet mean direct contribution to the project. Inter alia, it is almost impossible to attribute certain activities and funds to the activities of the project; thus it is extremely difficult to trace the amounts of investments by the MoNP and WWF-Armenia within the frame of the project. However, according to GEF approach the associated funding is also considered to be a contribution and this contribution definitely took place in the project. It is suggested to apply strict and clearly operating *tracking tool* that will *monitor* and *attribute* the investments made by the country and implementing partners.

3.2 RESULTS EXPECTED

The first column of the [Table 34](#) defines main expected results of the project implementation. These results largely derive from assigned components of the project and contribute to the achievement of the project goal. Although some minor shortcomings may be observed, in general these results are clearly defined and formulated, structured, and thoroughly explained in the PD. They are building on assumptions made during the project design and come to overcome development barriers of development of the PAs in Armenia that were identified again during the project design stage. These results will be again addressed during the actual evaluation of the effectiveness of the project, i.e. extent of achievement of expected results.

3.3 MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND IMPLEMENTATION STATUS

The MoNP is responsible for environmental policy and management in the country⁹. The MNP serves as the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner. The MoNP is responsible for: (i) directly overseeing project implementation, and (ii) attainment of the planned project Activities/Outputs. The UNDP CO supports project implementation activities in accordance with UNDP rules and procedures. The UNDP Project Manager coordinates project activities and serves as the financial authorizing officer. Management of project funds including budget revisions, disbursements, record keeping, accounting, reporting, and auditing will follow UNDP rules and procedures. A small PMU headed by Project Manager (PM) was established and placed at the RA MoNP.

The project is being implemented by 2 implementing partners. EPIU SA (national executing agency) implements the major part of the Component 1 and training activities from the Component 2. WWF-Armenia is responsible for the majority of the Component 2 and for mapping works from the Component 1. So far, the project is operational for already 2.5 years, although at least one of implementers joined the project with a significant delay of almost a year.

⁹ Sources of the information: PM, responsible officers of the RA MoNP and UNDP-Armenia

4 KEY FINDINGS

4.1 PROJECT FORMULATION

4.1.1 Project relevance

UNDP GEF Monitoring and Evaluation policy defines the project *relevance* as the extent to which the activity (intervention of the project) is suited to local and national development priorities and organizational policies, including changes over time. In order to assess and evaluate the project relevance the appropriateness of the project goal to the national and global priorities and policies, project design and concept, stakeholders' involvement and participation, and other issues have been addressed.

The project's goal is to conserve globally significant biodiversity in Armenia and for this it plans to contribute to the expansion of PAs in the country. This section addresses the issues of the relevance of the project to existing conservation priorities and policies in order to ensure the right vector of the intervention. The relevance of the project was assessed against its appropriateness to 1) *national priorities and policies*, 2) *international conventions*, and 2) *UNDP GEF policies in Armenia* (see [Table 6](#)). This separation was applied in order to better highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the project in global and national context.

Table 6 – Project relevance indicators and rating – relevance to priorities and policies

Indicators	Rating
R 1. Project relevance to national and global priorities and policies	➤ HS
R 1.1. Project relevance to national priorities and policies	➤ HS
R 1.2. Project relevance to international conventions	➤ HS
R 1.3. Project relevance to UNDP GEF policies	➤ HS

The project relevance to global and national priorities and policies is evaluated as *Highly Satisfactory*. Deatalization of the bases for the ratings presented in [Table 6](#) is presented below.

4.1.1.1 *Relevance to national priorities and policies*

Armenian *national conservation priorities and policies* are widely defined by the following strategic documents:

- The Second National Environmental Action Programme (SNEAP) of the Republic of Armenia approved by the Protocol Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia N 33 on August 14, 2008;
- Strategy on Developing Specially Protected Areas and National Action Plan (SDSPA NAP) of Armenia adopted in 2002;
- Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan of Armenia (BSAP) approved in 1999;
- Sustainable Development Program (SDP) of Armenia adopted by the RA Government Decree N1207-N on October 30, 2008;
- National Forest Policy and Program of Armenia adopted by the RA Government Decree N1232-N on 21 July, 2005;

Assessment of the relevance of the Project to SNEAP and justification of the rating provided above is presented below (see [Table 7](#)).

Table 7 – Project relevance to SNEAP aspects

N	Major SNEAP Aspects ¹⁰	DPASA Project planned outputs (POs) ¹¹
1.	Inventory of more valuable areas of Armenia from the biodiversity perspective, determination of biodiversity protection mechanisms for those areas.	PO.1.3.I. Finalizing biodiversity inventories in <u>three new sanctuaries</u> PO.2.2. <u>Management and business plans at three sanctuaries developed</u>
2.	Implementation of state accounting of biodiversity and creation of state cadastre according to the marzes of Armenia, including preparation of the annotated lists of flora and fauna species and basic ecosystems.	PO 2.3.B. Support the implementation of habitat monitoring programs.
3.	Establishment of biodiversity monitoring system and database.	PO 2.3.B. Support the implementation of habitat monitoring programs.
4.	Analysis of the PAs, elaboration of proposals on the system improvement from the prospective of biodiversity and valuable ecosystems representation, creation of new PAs, including protected biosphere areas and ecological corridors.	PO 1.1.I. Development of National operational guidelines and norms to guide the process of establishment, management and business planning of sanctuaries.
5.	Inventory and situation assessment for rare and endangered species of flora and fauna, amendment and publication of the Red Book of Armenia.	PO 2.3.B. Support the implementation of habitat monitoring programs.
6.	Identification of the most used and useful species of plants and species of hunted animals in the regions of the country, assessment of the resources of the most significant flora and fauna species, development of norms/quotas for collection/hunting of the most important plants and animals species.	PO 1.2.A. Implementation of a series of dedicated round-tables and forums, with a participation of diverse government authorities and communities brought together PO 2.3.A. Communities and Sanctuary managers will develop and implement tools for anti-poaching.
7.	Examination and analysis of international experience in the assessment of impact of various sectors and natural factors of the economy on the natural ecosystems, localization and piloting of impact assessment methodologies, development of methodological guide-lines applicable for Armenia.	PO 1.1.G. Application of international best principles and practices in development of legal bases PO 1.1.I. Development of National operational guidelines and norms to guide the process of establishment, management and business planning of sanctuaries. PO 1.4.B. The policy paper on governance models for sanctuaries, resulting from these discussions, will propose two particular models - full community management and co-management.
8.	Development and introduction of mechanisms for fair distribution of the benefits obtained from the use of genetic resources and their availability.	PO 1.2.A. Implementation of a series of dedicated round-tables and forums, with a participation of diverse government authorities and communities brought together
9.	To implement the development and introduction of pilot project on the fight against pests and fire prevention in the most vulnerable forests as a result of climate change.	

Assessment of the relevance of the Project to SDSPA NAP and justification of the rating provided above is presented below (see [Table 8](#)).

Table 8 – Project relevance to SDSPA NAP aspects

N	Major SDSPA NAP Aspects	DPASA Project planned outputs (POs)
1.	Improvement of legal field/legislation	PO 1.1.A. Comprehensive legal review PO 1.1.H. At least one (1) set of by-law s clarifying community participation, institutional responsibilities, financing mechanisms. PO 1.1.I. Development of National operational guidelines and norms to guide the process of establishment, management and business planning of sanctuaries.

¹⁰ Edited extract from the RA 4th CBD Report

¹¹ Edited extract from the MTE ToR

2.	Improvement of management system	<p>PO 1.1.F. Provision of financial support to improve the existing charters of PAs</p> <p>PO 1.1.I. Development of National operational guidelines and norms to guide the process of establishment, management and business planning of sanctuaries.</p> <p>PO 1.4.A. Organization of seminars where professionals and community members will be given the opportunity to learn the benefits and shortcomings of various international models for community participation and management.</p> <p>PO 1.4.B. The policy paper on governance models for sanctuaries, resulting from these discussions, will propose two particular models - full community management and co-management.</p> <p>PO 2.2.A. Design and putting into implementation combined management and business plans for Gnishik Sanctuary</p> <p>PO 2.2.B. The same as above for Khustup</p> <p>PO 2.2.C. The same as above for Zangezur</p>
3.	Enlargement of PAs network	<p>PO 1.3.A. Establishment of Gnishik Sanctuary on the area of about 20,000 ha in Vayots Dzor region.</p> <p>PO 1.3.B. Establishment of Khustup Mountain Area sanctuary on the area of about 12,000 ha in Syunik region.</p> <p>PO 1.3.C. Establishment of Zangezur sanctuary on the area of about 16,000 ha in Syunik region.</p>
4.	Improvement of financial-technical mechanisms	
5.	Improvement of staffing	PO 2.1.A. Support for the national vocational training course

Assessment of the relevance of the Project to BSAP and justification of the rating provided above is presented below (see [Table 9](#)).

Table 9 – Project relevance to BSAP aspects

N	Major BSAP Aspects ¹²	DPASA Project planned outputs (POs) ¹³
1.	To increase internal and external investments in order to conserve and regenerate landscapes and biodiversity.	
2.	To conserve, regenerate and sustainably use forest resources, with a resulting increase in healthy forested areas.	<p>PO 2.3.A. Communities and Sanctuary managers will develop and implement tools for anti-poaching.</p> <p>PO 2.3.C. Community members and protected area managers will be provided with the support necessary to develop a comprehensive livestock-grazing program in at least one of the pilot areas as an important extension of the management planning process.</p>
3.	To support and extend the capacity to use science as a vital tool in guiding conservation management (including both research and monitoring).	PO 1.2.B. Specification of how to coordinate, develop and capitalize upon existing institutional expertise (i.e., Academy of Sciences, academic institutions, Ministries, development agencies, and NGO's) in order to promote efficient, cost-effective and strategic Sanctuary management
4.	To improve management systems relating to biodiversity conservation (including protected areas management) with the result of increased effectiveness.	<p>PO 1.1.F. Provision of financial support to improve the existing charters of PAs</p> <p>PO 1.1.I. Development of National operational guidelines and norms to guide the process of establishment, management and business planning of sanctuaries.</p> <p>PO 1.4.A. Organization of seminars where professionals and community members will be given the opportunity to learn the benefits and shortcomings of various international models for community participation and management.</p> <p>PO 1.4.B. The policy paper on governance models for sanctuaries, resulting from these discussions, will propose two particular models - full</p>

¹² Edited extract from the RA 4th Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Report

¹³ Edited extract from the MTE ToR

		community management and co-management. PO 2.2.A. Design and putting into implementation combined management and business plans for Gnishik Sanctuary PO 2.2.B. The same as above for Khustup PO 2.2.C. The same as above for Zangezur
5.	To improve legislation and economic mechanisms for the conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity.	PO 1.1.A. Comprehensive legal review PO 1.1.H. At least one (1) set of by-laws clarifying community participation, institutional responsibilities, financing mechanisms. PO 1.1.I. Development of National operational guidelines and norms to guide the process of establishment, management and business planning of sanctuaries.
6.	To improve and strengthen the ecological education and training system, along with increasing public awareness of biodiversity	PO 2.1.A. Support for the national vocational training course
7.	To ensure the use of appropriate ecologically-friendly technologies in support of biodiversity conservation.	<u>PO 2.3.3.</u> Develop a comprehensive livestock-grazing program in at least one of the pilot areas <u>PO 2.3.4.</u> Tourism management model appropriately scaled to protect biodiversity integrity
8.	To ensure the participation of NGOs and other relevant stakeholders in all stages of project development and implementation, and improve their opportunities to take a direct role in conservation management.	PO 1.1.D. Participatory discussion of the abovementioned documents at the community level PO 1.1.E. Participatory discussion of the abovementioned documents with NGOs
9.	To preserve and regenerate most threatened landscapes, ecosystems and plant and animal species.	PO 2.2.I. Law enforcement protocols and processes (including anti-poaching measures)
10.	To enlarge the network of specially protected areas and to raise their efficiency.	PO 1.3.A. Establishment of Gnishik Sanctuary on the area of about 20,000 ha in Vayots Dzor region. PO 1.3.B. Establishment of Khustup Mountain Area sanctuary on the area of about 12,000 ha in Syunik region. PO 1.3.C. Establishment of Zangezur sanctuary on the area of about 16,000 ha in Syunik region.
11.	To ensure the sustainable use and further regeneration of biological resources, including agro biodiversity.	PO 2.2.B. Combined sanctuary management-and-business plans as a basis for sustainable resource use
12.	To support and contribute to sustainable development, including the further integration of biological resource management into the development of rural communities, to help to reduce the levels of poverty.	PO 1.2.A. Implementation of a series of dedicated round-tables and forums, with a participation of diverse government authorities and communities brought together PO 1.4.B. The policy paper on governance models for sanctuaries, resulting from these discussions, will propose two particular models - full community management and co-management.

Sustainable Development Program of Armenia was developed back in 2008 and continued the policy identified by previous strategic document titled as Poverty Reduction Strategic Program (PRSP) developed and adopted in 2003. Nature (forests) conservation is one of the key issues addressed by this strategic development plan of the Armenian Government¹⁴. To this end the project significantly contributes to the nature conservation objectives addressed by the strategic document.

The *National Forest Program (NFP)* of Armenia was approved by the Government on July, 2005, considering the legal, institutional, management, environmental, social, economic, science, capacity building and international cooperation aspects. The document covers 10-year-period and divided into short-term (2006-2008), mid-term (2008-2010) and long-term (2010-2015) measures. NFP defines strategic,

¹⁴ See Chapter 12.5 of the SDP of Armenia available at <http://www.gov.am/am/prsp/>

tactical and operational forest planning in Armenia. The policy defines prospective of the forest sector development in Armenia, identifying major gaps and shortcomings and the UNDP GEF project notably contributes to the fulfillment of those gaps.

Relevance of the project to national and global priorities and policies is largely confirmed by various stakeholders of the project including representatives of the UNDP, RA MoNP, RA MoA, NGOs, etc. In fact, the project was designed strictly in line with existing strategic objectives. At the same time, some remarks have been made that reasonable balance should be kept between national priorities and global policies.

4.1.1.2 Relevance to international conventions ratified by Armenia

As of June 2012 (when the project MTE was commenced) Armenia ratified a number of international conventions that somehow relate to the essence of the project. Brief snapshot to those conventions is presented in Annexes (see [Chapter 6.8](#)).

Official texts of the abovementioned conventions are widely available via web and there is no need for detalization of their objectives and activity aspects. Objectives and expected outputs of the project, i.e. improvement of legal framework of PAs establishment, further institutionalization of the PA network system, improved governance and management (including development of combined management and business plans), establishment of new sanctuaries, introduction of more effective management models, provision of better training opportunities, and other activities significantly contribute to the various aspects of the international conventions adopted by Armenia. To this end the MTE concluded the relevance of the project to international conventions as *Highly Satisfactory*. Respective stakeholders' opinions (implementing partners, SC members, RA MoNP representatives) come to confirm this statement.

4.1.1.3 Relevance to UNDP GEF priorities and policies

UNDP operates in Armenia based on the Country Programme Document. UNDP activities in the environment sector contributed to the development of regulatory frameworks for strengthening environmental management to ensure adherence to sustainable development practices.¹⁵ Policy papers, analytical studies, recommendations and pilot activities were developed and conducted to: (a) improve legislative frameworks to increase energy efficiency; (b) introduce new technologies for renewable energy; (c) rehabilitate municipal heat and water supply systems, (d) enhance national capacity to meet global climate change commitments, and (e) elaborate climate change adaptation programs in vulnerable sectors, as well as mainstream adequate climate change response measures into national development activities.

One of the key areas of the UNDP Country Office operation in Armenia is *the Managing energy and environment for sustainable development*. Issues of particular importance for UNDP are the Climate Change and Sustainable Use of Nature Resources.

- Climate Change: UNDP works with the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) to address Climate Change Impacts in Mountain Forest Ecosystems in Armenia, and continues current activities to increase access to sustainable energy services.
- Sustainable Use of Natural Resources: UNDP addresses local environmental issues through the integration of environmental issues into local level participatory planning. In addition, sustainable management of PAs will be incorporated within national and local policy and planning frameworks, to make sure that local communities have the capacity to access, develop and implement them. UNDP also

¹⁵ Information source for the editing of the chapter was www.undp.am

will help to develop institutional and legal capacities of Protected Areas and strengthen an environmental monitoring system.

To this extent, the project contributes to the following strategic objective: *UNDAF Outcome 4 – Armenia is better able to address key environmental challenges including climate change and natural resource management*¹⁶.

The project is completely appropriate to the GEF's Strategic Objective 1 of the Biodiversity focal area, Catalyzing Sustainability of Protected Areas Systems. According to this, the project concentrates its efforts on expansion of protected landscapes, in particular those of administrative property of local communities, on improved spatial management contributing to alleviation of poverty. The project has an aim to support the establishment and expansion (as well as qualitative improvement) of PAs and their management resulting in involvement of currently under-represented ecosystems in the PA network.

Providing the abovementioned arguments the project's relevance to UNDP GEF priorities and policies is evaluated as *Highly Satisfactory*.

4.1.2 Problems addressed

In the following chapter it was assessed the relevance of the project to national and global priorities and policies at the moment of the project design. Meantime, that design has been made for the changing environment, where significant shifts are always possible or even unavoidable. That is why; any project design is a subject for revision and adaptation.

To this end, the revision of the project's Goal, Objective, Activities, and expected outputs revealed the following. Current situation of the PA system in Armenia still seeks serious changes and requires further support for improvement. On the Goal and Objective level nothing substantial has changed in the country. Problems are the same; the biodiversity in Armenia is seriously threatened and the problem is even deepening largely conditioned by anthropogenic influence – expansion of mining industry, uncontrolled recreation and tourism, unsustainable use of nature resources, etc. On the level of Objective the country still traces establishment of PAs widely lobbied by nature conservationists, civic society institutions and the Government. Meantime, the major hindering factor is the lack of State funding required to fulfill the Objective.

Required changes appear mainly on the level of Activities. Here, there is a need for certain revisions, but they mainly refer to the way of the implementation rather than to the definition of activities. Some revisions are required especially for the project management hub and implementation of the Component 1, since they largely condition the effectiveness of the Component 2. The very root of the problem traced by the project is institutional situation and the lack of legal framework which is addressed mainly by the Component 1. Changes in subordinated legal framework turned to be not the best action for the solution of existing problems, and larger intervention is needed. The activity of the PA establishment in Zangezur turned to be belated from the very beginning, since it was legally established even before the launch of the project

Similarly, continuous awareness raising and partnership building activities did not really result in notable changes in perception and attitude on the regional and local levels, which proves the comparatively low

¹⁶ Back in 2011 this outcome was defined to be “Promoting environmentally sound technologies and effective management of natural resources in accordance with MDGs and PRSP”

efficiency of these tools. Compilation of the presented justifications gives bases for the evaluation of the current relevance of the project’s Goal, Objective, and activities as follows (see [Table 10](#)):

Table 10 – Project relevance indicators and rating – relevance of the Goal, Objective, and activities

Indicators	Rating
R 2. Current relevance of the project Goal, Objective, and Activities	➤ MS

4.1.3 Implementation approach

Having started on January 2010 the project concluded its first implementation agreement with the implementing agency of the Component 1: Rationalization of the PA system – the RA MoNP EPIU SA. Thereby, the EPIU SA undertook its responsibilities under the Component 1 after the project inception¹⁷. Prior to conclusion of this cooperation agreement a series of negotiations between UNDP GEF and the RA MoNP (EPIU SA) took place, during which particular aspects of the availability of respective resources (institutional, human, etc.) of the future implementing agency were discussed and assessed. A comprehensive document titled as Letter of Agreement was prepared and concluded in order to formalize the relations between the UNDP CO and EPIU SA. This document defines the responsibilities of the EPIU SA concerning the activities to be implemented, resources needed, reporting requirements (activities completed, financing), etc.

According to the Progress Reports provided by the Project Management Unit involvement of the second implementing agency, i.e. WWF-Armenia took place in 10 months after the commencement of the project. On October 4th, 2010 Project Cooperation Agreement was concluded between UNDP-Armenia and WWF-Armenia formalizing the involvement of the latter into the project as an implementing agency of the Component 2: Improving capacity building and management regime.¹⁸ This document is even more comprehensive and addresses more aspects than the one with EPIU SA.

At the same time, 9 full months are rather lengthy period for an ongoing project for selecting the implementing agency. Although activities of the Component 2 significantly depend on outputs of the Component 1 such a delay must have had hindering influence on the progress of the whole project. Number of activities could have been prepared and completed much earlier if the formalization of the WWF-Armenia’s involvement has been completed more efficiently.

The annual Progress Report of the PMU for the 2011 states about lack of cooperation between two implementing partners. EPIU SA criticizes some aspects of the project design mentioning that already at the design stage their concerns have been uncovered to the UNDP GEF. In particular, EPIU SA highlights the following aspects:

- the project lacks clear explanation of specific measures to be conducted towards achievement of outputs;
- envisaged results presented in the PD SRF were referred as extremely hard to achieve;
- Some baseline data (PA areas) of the same SRF are blamed to be not so accurate, which makes it improper to judge on progress towards project results.

¹⁷ Agreement was signed on January 22nd; official launch (Inception Workshop) was held on February 8; first allocation of funds – in March 2010

¹⁸ In Project Document the title of the Component 2 is different. The reason is that UNDP commissioned this work to WWF-Armenia as a separate project and name it as complementary to the main project

Providing the bases for such a criticism are solid it becomes a little unclear when exactly those problems were uncovered by the EPIU. If it happened from the very beginning (which may be derived from their statements) it is hard to understand why the SA undertook these responsibilities. WWF-Armenia explains existing shortcomings with significant delay of their involvement into the project and respective mis-Coordination. In many aspects two implementing partners are simply not able to coordinate their activities due to differences in working schedules.

In order to overcome the existing shortcomings at rather early stage it is suggested to the PMU to undertake the following measures:

- Once again review the requirements of the PD and activities assigned under each component;
- Significant changes in project work plan (including revision of activities, their re-allocation to components, etc.) that already appeared and still may be revealed should be suggested to the SC extra meeting and approved;
- Specific activities that are pending to be implemented in the last year and half of the project should be very clearly and unambiguously designated to each implementing agency;
- Time-bound results tracing tools should be applied to monitor exact and real progress achieved by implementing partners.

Having in mind the relations between two implementing partners of the project, existing fact of the lack of cooperation somehow conditioned also by shortcomings of general management of the project provided by the PMU the implementation approach of the project is evaluated as follows (see [Table 11](#)):

Table 11 – Project relevance indicators and rating – implementation approach

Indicators	Rating
R 3. Project implementation approach	➤ MS

4.1.4 Country ownership

The country ownership of the project is Satisfactory. The project is in line with the state strategic objectives and development programs. Moreover, this approach addresses not only the 2 targeted areas of Syunik and Vayots Dzor regions but also a number of other PAs throughout the country.

The day-to-day management of project implemented by the PMU is overseen by the assigned focal point who used to be the Deputy Head of the Administration of the RA MoNP. Moreover, the project progress is under the strict interest and control of the Deputy Minister of the RA MoNP. The overall strategy of the project and necessary amendments are applied by the project SC comprising of representatives of various entities and State agencies. Project SC has been held several times and approved necessary changes in the implementation process.

Table 12 - Investments in PAs of Armenia in 2010-2011

Co-financing ¹⁹ (Type/Source)	IA own financing ²⁰ (million USD)	RA Government (million USD) ²¹	Other ²² (million USD) ²³	Total (million USD)

¹⁹ In fact, only direct funding from the State budget and grant financing from international donor/development organizations took place

²⁰ Source: UNDP Combined Delivery Reports for 2010 and 2011 provided by PMU

²¹ Including financing of water PAs such as Sevan Lake NP (≈USD 990,000) and Arpi Lich NP (≈USD 40,000)

	Planned ²⁴	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
Grants / Direct funding	0.4	0.4	2.7	2.7	1.6	1.6	4.7	4.7
Loans / Credits								
Equity investments								
Other								
Total	0.4	0.4	2.7	2.7	1.6	1.6	4.7	4.7

Approximate exchange rates: USD 1 = 360 AMD, Euro 1 = USD 1.25

In addition to financing presented in the table above the Hayantar SNCO (acting under the RA MoA) also allocated substantial funds for the operation of 17 sanctuaries. Unfortunately, Hayantar has no separated accounting for these expenses, and they cannot undertake such a task of separation of funds allocated for protection purposes. Thus, it was impossible to highlight the exact amount of investments.

Providing the information presented above, it can be concluded and justified the strong and satisfactory country ownership towards the Armenian PAs. The Government and other entities confirmed that they will be continuing the regular financing of Armenian PA networks for at least the mid-term horizon.

Table 13 - Websites of Armenian PAs

N	Protected Area	Website link
1.	Reserve Park Complex	www.reservepark.mnp.am
2.	Shikahogh SR SNCO	www.shikahogh.am
3.	Khosrov SR SNCO	www.khosrov.am
4.	Dilijan NP SNCO	www.dilijanpark.am
5.	Sevan Lake NP SNCO	www.sevanpark.am
6.	Arpi Lake NP SNCO	www.lakearpi-nationalpark.com

Use of modern technologies also took part in project implementation although not in a substantial volume. It is limited by application of websites for existing PAs. Links to webpages of main PAs are presented below (see **Table 13**): Although quite informative, all these websites need regular revision, update, and wider communication with various stakeholders, media, and wider public.

Recently, the PMU agreed with the RA MoNP on the issue of representing the project (main features, achievements, reporting, etc.) on the main webpage of the MoNP. The PMU will contribute to the improvement of the existing website, and will find its place there instead, which is the better and mutually beneficial measure for both entities.

4.1.5 Stakeholder participation

Involvement of the stakeholders in the project design/preparation stage has been ensured. Thorough discussions were organized with a number of stakeholders on national, regional and local levels. Stakeholders have been given a stage to express their opinion, concerns and suggestions.

The list of stakeholders consisted of national and regional government agencies, NGO's, donor organizations and, most importantly, local stakeholders. Continuing the positive experience in cooperation

²² Other is referred to contributions mobilized for the project from other multilateral agencies, bilateral development cooperation agencies, NGOs, the private sector and beneficiaries

²³ Consisting of financing provided by BMZ/KfW, CNF, EU, WWF-Armenia, Austrian PAs (co-financing of experience exchange event), etc.

²⁴ From the very beginning (at the Project Design and Inception Stage) it was planned to absorb approximately USD 436,000. Actually, it has been absorbed USD 425,000 which is an achievement

with stakeholders of different level in Armenia the project addressed and involved various stakeholders in implementation of the project. In some aspects the project addressed new stakeholders (such as GIZ Sustainable Management of Biodiversity (SMB) in Caucasus project, advisory organizations involved in biosphere reserve feasibility study, local communities, although the intensiveness of consultations is assessed to be low. Involvement of civic society institutions somehow weakened and it is recommended to intensify the cooperation with national and regional/local NGOs, funds, unions and other entities conducting valuable work towards civic society development. This will allow to ensure higher participation and transparency of activities.

The relevance of the project concerning the involvement of stakeholders is evaluated as in [Table 14](#):

Table 14 – Project relevance indicators and rating – stakeholders’ participation

Indicators	Rating
R 4. Stakeholders participation	➤ S

Notable achievements were recorded in setting-up participatory schemes and involving local communities. Number of events towards training of local inhabitants, workshops regarding the future PAs, and other important topics were conducted and this path is to be continued. During the MTE special attention was paid to meetings with various stakeholders, especially mayors of local communities that are planned to be involved in new models of PA management. In particular, meetings were organized with the mayors of Kajaran town, Lernadzor, Geghi, Chakaten, Tsav rural communities in Syunik, and Areni, Agarakadzor, Gnishik, and Khachik rural communities in Vayots Dzor. **Some conclusions have been made from those meetings that should be forwarded to the project implementing partners:**

- Communities generally welcome the idea of PA establishment;
- Communities are ready to provide lands for the PA establishment unless those lands are not already rented by other entities and individuals and generate inflows for the community;
- Communities will be able to mobilize any resources for the PA establishment and co-management except of financial means;
- Communities will not follow the idea of PA establishment if it is considered to be funded from the allocations from existing community budget without any additional funding by the State budget and/or other sources ;
- Communities stress the importance of the awareness raising and knowledge dissemination activities (trainings, seminars, experience exchange) especially targeting children and youth;
- Communities’ members request strong support for fighting against the poaching conducted by high officials;
- Although appreciating “soft” measures conducted by the project communities tend to criticize the project for the absence of actual tangible investments. They argue that without improvement of socio-economic situation it will be impossible to achieve effective nature conservation. Understanding the mandate of the project they request from the implementers to establish operational and leveraging links and relations with other projects that provide also investments.

4.1.6 Linkages between project and other interventions within the sector

At the design stage the project took into consideration lessons learnt from other projects within the nature conservation sector of Armenia. In particular, experience of the following projects has been leveraged:

- Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA) as a requirement under the UN CBD;
- PIMS 4258 Catalyzing Financial Sustainability of the Armenia’s Protected Area System;
- Natural Resources Management and Poverty Reduction Project funded by World Bank- GEF;

- Implementing Ecoregional Conservation Plan Targets in South Armenia funded by Norwegian Government (MFA) and implemented by WWF;
- Development of an IBA Caretaker Network in the Priority Corridors projects, also both funded by CEPF and coordinated by WWF and implemented by BirdLife International,
- Conservation of Caucasian Leopard in the Caucasus Project implemented by WWF-Armenia,
- Assistance to Establishment of Zangezur PA in the Southern Armenia funded by CEPF and coordinated by WWF and implemented by Khustup NGO,
- Assistance to Establishment of Arevik PA in the Southern Armenia funded by CEPF and coordinated by WWF and implemented by Ecotourism Association NGO.

Later in the implementation stage the project continued its close cooperation with other programs funded by various donor organizations. Inter alia, the following cooperating programs can be mentioned:

- Trans-boundary Joint Secretariat Phase I and Phase II funded by the BMA/KfW Development Bank;
- Sustainable Biodiversity Management project funded by GIZ;
- Assessment and feasibility study of the open support program to Armenia (former Shikahogh program) for the establishment of a biosphere reserve in the South Syunik region;
- Caucasus Nature Fund started its project of supporting the PAs administrations in Armenia providing complementary funding of operational costs. The project coordinates its activities with CNF in order to avoid duplication and dilution of funds;
- The project substantially contributed also to the fulfillment of commitments to the Ramsar Convention. Following the responsibilities undertaken by the RA Government in the frame of this convention special set of documents have been prepared on designation of Khov Virap State Sanctuary as wetland of international importance and submitted to and approved by the Ramsar Secretariat.

The project succeeded to coordinate activities and thus leverage the results with mentioned programs in the sector of nature conservation in Armenia. In fact, the successful cooperation became reality mainly due to involvement of both implementing partners of the project. EPIU SA and WWF-Armenia are among the most active entities in Armenia implementing various programs in the sector and it is obvious that they would coordinate and direct activities in the most proper manner. For example, EPIU SA was the implementation agency for the World Bank funded project, and is the focal point for KfW bank in Armenia. WWF-Armenia is the major founder of the PAs in the country implementing various projects funded by WWF, World Bank, EU, KfW, IUCN, MAVA, Norwegian Government, etc. Being involved in all these projects both agencies expressed wise approach to coordinate and cooperate with all of them for avoiding duplications and staying on the complementary level. Thus, the evaluation of this aspect of the project relevance is the following (see [Table 15](#)):

Table 15 – Project relevance indicators and rating – cooperation with other projects

Indicators	Rating
R 5. Cooperation with other projects	➤ S

4.1.7 Indicators: shortcomings identified

Assignment and attribution of indicators for various aspects²⁵ of the project implementation is among the most important requirements for the project design. Key issue in this regard is that indicators must be SMART²⁶. Only the availability of properly designed (i.e. meeting SMART requirements) set of indicators

²⁵ Meaning *Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, and Sustainability*

²⁶ Abbreviation for *Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound*

from the very beginning (i.e. from the project design stage) allows appropriate implementation of the mid-term or final evaluations. Otherwise, evaluators face the need to introduce new indicators which may not completely coincide with the whole logic put in the basic logic of the project implementation from the very beginning. Another strict requirement to be followed at the design stage is the identification of the verification sources (at least of the primary ones). Evaluators are bound to address those sources primarily to ensure objectiveness and to follow the logic of the project designers.

The current project design relies on set of indicators applied for two levels: indicators of the achievement of the project objective and indicators measuring the implementation of specific components and activities. On the project objective level it is suggested to apply the following indicators (see [Table 16](#)):

Table 16 – Objective-level indicators

Indicators	Sources of verification
Coverage (ha) of sustainably operating sanctuaries	➤ METT scorecards, government reports, project reports, site visits
Representation levels of habitats in the PA estate: (a) low mountain dry steppe (b) mountain meadow steppes (c) high mountain subalpine ecosystems (d) high mountain alpine ecosystems	➤ Biodiversity monitoring reports
METT scores for sanctuaries	➤ Annual METT reviews
% of habitat of (a) Caucasian leopard, (b) Armenian mouflon, and (c) Bezoar goat included in protected area system	➤ On-going species monitoring programs

In general the strategic level indicators are SMART. The project SRF provides quantified baseline situation and defines the expected quantified result as of the end of the project. The major problem appears when the sources of verification are addressed. Among those sources the project mentions METT reviews and on-going species monitoring programs. These two instruments are not widely applied in Armenia due to various reasons having the lack of financial resources as the main conditioning factor. The only entity that currently (as of June 2012) prepares such documents is WWF-Armenia, which is one of the implementing partners of the project and is responsible for the assigned results. To this extent the evaluation faces a serious problem of the conflict of interests.

On the other hand, the UNDP GEF does not define that METTs cannot be prepared by the project implementation team²⁷. This means, facing the lack of alternatives using the METTs prepared by WWF-Armenia is affordable. Besides, the issue has been consulted with other stakeholders of the project including the representatives of the SC, NGOs, etc., and no negative references were received. Thus, it was decided to rely on the reports and scorecards prepared by WWF-Armenia experts as a verification source for certain indicators for measuring the results of the project implementation.

Indicators suggested for measuring the achievements of the Component 1 implementation are presented below (see [Table 17](#)).

Table 17 – Component 1 implementation indicators

Indicators	Sources of verification
------------	-------------------------

²⁷ Source: GEF-5 Tracking Tool for Biodiversity Focal Area. *Staff from the lead project executing agency consultants and project evaluators will likely be the most appropriate individuals to complete the tracking Tool.*

Number of bylaws rationalizing operation of sanctuaries	➤ Project reports, Government gazette
Number of sanctuaries with Government-endorsed charters and management/business plans (<i>later replicated by Component 2</i>)	➤ Project reports
Number of sanctuaries with formally designated management bodies (<i>later replicated by Component 2</i>)	➤ Project reports
<i>Additional - Number of sanctuary managers involved in training courses</i>	➤ Project reports

Indicators suggested for the implementation of Component 2 are SMART. Meantime, attention should be paid to the very essence of those indicators. The first three indicators consider **officiality** of achievements, i.e. expected achievements should be officially approved and announced by relevant State agencies. In other words, for example draft set of law, or drafted charters without the official endorsement is not the target of the project implementation. Availability of the mentioned (i.e. draft) documents may maximum serve as an evidence of the likelihood (i.e. towards the target), but never as proof for the achievement.

Some criticism should be forwarded towards the appearance of some indicators in both components. According to so called Annual Work Program (AWP) budgets approved by UNDP and implementing partners of the project in November-December 2011, the same indicators are applied for the measurement of some achievements of both implementing partners. Here we may face the following types of asymmetric information: 1) they may have some mistakes in AWP, 2) some reallocations of activities were made among implementing partners, but they were not properly reflected in activity plans, 3) activities were mixed and now some activities are conducted by both implementing partners. All 3 reasons are to be urgently addressed and work plans, expected achievements and responsibilities of both implementing partners should be clarified, specified and clearly assigned. Duplications are not affordable since they will cause misunderstandings, ineffective distribution of roles and responsibilities, sourcing notable risks for the whole project implementation and results achievement. Indicators suggested for measuring the achievements of the Component 2 implementation are presented below (see [Table 18](#)).

Table 18 – Component 2 implementation indicators

Indicators	Sources of verification
Capacity scores for three demonstration sanctuaries	➤ Annual capacity review and scorecards
Number of sanctuaries with active community engagement	➤ Project reports, MNP reports, sanctuary reports, site visits
Number of local entrepreneurs involved in businesses supporting sanctuaries	➤ Project reports, MNP reports, sanctuary reports, site visits
<i>Additional – Number of sanctuaries officially gazetted, and boundaries marked</i>	➤ Project reports
<i>Additional - Number of sanctuaries with Government-endorsed charters and management/business plans</i>	➤ Project reports
<i>Additional - Number of sanctuaries with formally designated management bodies</i>	➤ Project reports

Indicators of the achievements of the Component 2 are again SMART, although the comments to Objective and Component 1 indicators are relevant also here. Concerns regarding the scorecards and additional indicators are still valid. The conclusions on applied indicators are unambiguous. Even being applied, these indicators should be treated cautiously. Sources of verification contain certain elements of the conflict of interests, particular attribution of activities and respective indicators to exact components and implementing partners is to be clearly revised and clarified. Before then these indicators should be treated with reservations.

4.2 IMPLEMENTATION

4.2.1 Project effectiveness

UNDP GEF Monitoring and Evaluation policy defines the project implementation *effectiveness* aspect as the extent to which results have been delivered. In order to assess and evaluate the project implementation effectiveness it is necessary to make a comparison of initially envisaged and completed activities. To implement this, set of project documents comprising annual working plans and programs, as well as progress reports (for the assignment of justified ratings) have been reviewed. The suggested methodology for the quantification of the evaluation of the effectiveness of each output is the following. Conditionally, each activity under output is given equal weight, which means that simple average calculation will be applied. Effectiveness of each activity will be quantified in accordance with the scale suggested in Table 3 and their average figure will be assigned to measure the effectiveness of respective output.

Activity 1.1.1. (see [Table 19](#)) assigned by the PD has been conducted properly and timely. Respective report has been prepared, which revealed major problems and designated how the process should go ahead. In particular, the whole legislation starting from the constitution, contributed by 20 Laws (among which the international conventions and agreements, Civic, Land, Water, and Forest Codes, Laws on PAs, Self-Governance, Flora and Fauna, etc.), as well as 8 regulations have been analyzed.

Initially, it was planned to complete the Activity 1.1.2. as of March 2011, then it was extended to May 2011, September 2011, December 2011, May 2012, and most likely will be submitted in July 2012. Implementing agency provides explanations for such delays. The previous activity revealed that simple revision of by-laws is not enough to really improve the PA legislation and substantial amendment of the Law on PAs should be developed followed by changes in a number of other laws. For this purpose even a special committee was established by a decree of the RA MoNP chaired by the Head of EPIU SA. All these conditioned quite a long delay until the moment of the MTE. In the beginning of the MTE it was told that the set of legal amendments will be ready as of the end of June 2012, but later it became obvious that this was another non-realistic designation of the timetable for this activity.

So far, intensive discussions of the legal amendments (see [Table 19](#) Activity 1.1.3.) took place within the various divisions of the MoNP and some ministries, but the intensity of the dialogue is yet to be achieved. As to involvement of other stakeholders, such as communities in targeted areas and NGOs, it was introduced that they will be involved only after finalization of legal amendments, which is again a questionable approach.

Activities 1.1.4. to 1.1.6 are conditioned by the completion of Activity 1.1.2. Implementers mentioned that international best practice and experience has been considered in the envisaged Law on PAs; in particular IUCN PA categories V and VI, community management model basics, etc. Activity 1.1.7. is planned to be started after the finalization of the Law on PAs, although it was mentioned that national guidelines are available in the country. On strategic level such a document has been prepared by the order of the Minister of Nature Protection in-house back in 2009 and on operational level a supplementary Guide was prepared with the funding of the TJS-Armenia. It was even mentioned that this activity was removed in accordance with the UNDP GEF decision. Anyhow, this activity did not contribute to the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Output 1.1. Detailed evaluation of the effectiveness of Output 1.1. Activities are presented below (see [Table 19](#)).

Table 19 – Component 1: Output 1.1. - Project implementation activity plan for 2010-2013²⁸

Years of project implementation →	2010				2011				2012				2013				R ²⁹
	Quarters in respective years →																
Project Component Activities / Outputs↓	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	
Component 1: Rationalization of the protected areas system																	
Output 1.1. Set of by-laws developed to operationalize the 2006 Protected Area Law, of which:	Implementation effectiveness indicator - I_E 1 =																MS
1.1.1. Comprehensive review of the PA management legal framework and participatory discussions (<i>Technical Report</i>)																	S
1.1.2. Drafting of regulations (<i>Draft Law on PAs</i>)																	MU
1.1.3. Participatory discussion of regulations across ministries, on the community level, and with NGOs																	MU
1.1.4. Submission of the draft law to the MoNP																	MU
1.1.5. Provision of financial support to improve the existing charters of PAs																	MU
1.1.6. Application of international best principles and practices																	MS
1.1.7. Development of national operational guidelines and norms																	-

Long delays in achievement of assigned outputs largely conditioned low rating of the Output 1.1. Calculation of the simple average for the effectiveness of activities shows that **Output 1.1. effectiveness indicator I_E 1 equals to MS (Moderately Satisfactory)³⁰**.

Detailed evaluation of the effectiveness of Output 1.2. Activities are presented below (see [Table 20](#)).

Table 20 – Component 1: Output 1.2. - Project implementation activity plan for 2010-2013

Years of project implementation →	2010				2011				2012				2013				R
	Quarters in respective years →																
Project Component Activities / Outputs↓	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	
Output 1.2. Institutional links re-configured to clarify roles and responsibilities for governance and management of sanctuaries, of which:	Implementation effectiveness indicator - I_E 2 =																MS
1.2.1. Revealing the management peculiarities of state sanctuaries managed by different state administrative authorities and discussions with different stakeholders																	MS
1.2.2. Assessment of the communities awareness on state sanctuaries																	S
1.2.3. Design of institutional links of management of state sanctuaries, discussions and recommendations																	MS

²⁸ The workplans schedule has been confirmed by the PM

²⁹ Evaluation ratings are generalized for the whole Activity/Output

³⁰ Actually, the quantification of the rating is 3.5 which is the exact medium between MU and MS

Activity 1.3.1. includes such sub-activities and measures as summarization of existing data on biodiversity, biodiversity inventory fieldwork, presentation of endemic and Red Book listed species locations, etc. Significant portion of the work has been already implemented: respective data was collected and analyzed from the archived materials, initial reports were drafted, and fieldwork has started. There are limited concerns regarding the completion of these activities as of the end of 2012. Similarly, significant achievements have been recorded also for the implementation of the Activity 1.3.2. Draft maps are ready and final elaboration is pending. The most important piece of work will be the finalization of the boundaries of future PAs in cooperation with local communities. Activity 1.3.3. may and will be implemented only after the completion of the preparation of maps of the envisaged PAs; it was not evaluated. Instead, Activity 1.3.4. has been partially addressed already in parallel with other measures conducted by implementers. In particular the topic is addressed in respective report on technical reports. Calculation of the effectiveness of activities under the Output 1.3. shows that **Output 1.3. effectiveness indicator I_E 3 equals to S (Satisfactory)**.

Detailed evaluation of the effectiveness of Output 1.4 Activities is presented below (see [Table 22](#)).

Table 22 – Component 1: Output 1.4. - Project implementation activity plan for 2010-2013

Years of project implementation →	2010				2011				2012				2013				R
	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	
Project Component Activities / Outputs↓																	
Output 1.4 Development of new PA management models for sanctuaries and putting into policy, of which:	Implementation effectiveness indicator - I_E 4 =																MS
1.4.1 Discussions by project team with stakeholders on principles of two new management models for sanctuaries (full community management and co-management)																	MS
1.4.2 Development of new management models for sanctuaries																	S
1.4.3 Discussions of new management models with stakeholders																	MS
1.4.4 Submission of policy paper on new management models to the MoNP																	MS
1.4.5 Development, discussions and submission to stakeholders of the text of MoU or agreement on temporary management of sanctuaries																	MU

Implementation of Activities 1.4.1. through 1.4.3. were implemented by the implementing agency rather satisfactorily. The topic of new management models were addressed in technical reports prepared by EPIU SA, as well as discussed during the awareness raising and training sessions implemented quite successfully in communities. But the issue still lacks clarity and deeper discussion. Almost all stakeholders, especially local communities express their readiness to be involved and to undertake responsibilities, but they really lack knowledge on exact specific measures and mechanisms to be implemented and applied. At the same time, some members of the Project SC are rather cautious towards the community management models. They mention that Armenia faced significant problems (or even fail) in introduction of community based management models (although that time the project targeted forest management and not PA establishment) in the frame of other development project and now certain lessons should be taken into account. Concerned stakeholders do not reject the idea but demand more consciousness in this issue.

Activity 1.4.4. has been conducted properly in general. Internal discussions took place within the RA MoNP and draft documents on new management models have been submitted to the PMU. Meantime, it seems that the process has not been completed, yet. Deeper and analytical approach to the topic has been requested by the PMU and UNDP Armenia program experts. Besides, a number of arguments have been brought by various stakeholders, who wonder whether it is right to address this issue before completion of the task of the amendment of PA Law. There is a room for some additional work here. Activity 1.4.5. has not been addressed, so far. Calculation of the effectiveness of activities under the Output 1.4. shows that **Output 1.4. effectiveness indicator I_E 4 equals to MS (Moderately Satisfactory)**. Overall effectiveness of the implementation of the Component 1 is calculated to be **Moderately Satisfactory**.

Achievement of outputs assigned to the Component 2 of the project and evaluation of the effectiveness of the implementation of respective activities is presented below (see [Table 23](#)).

Table 23 - Component 2: Output 2.1. - Project implementation activity plan for 2010-2013

Years of project implementation →	2010				2011				2012				2013				R
	Quarters in respective years →																
Project Component Activities / Outputs ↓	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	
Component 2: Institutional capacity building for PA management																	
2.1. National and local training programs for sanctuary managers and local communities, of which:	Implementation effectiveness indicator - I_E 5 =																MS
2.1.1. Development of corresponding training materials					■	■	■	■									S
2.1.2. Capacitation of 2 centers to undertake public awareness and outreach programs that will provide communities with knowledge of biodiversity and tools for engaging in sanctuary co-management							■	■									MS
2.1.3. Equipping the training host agency with necessary educational means							■	■									MS
2.1.4. Actual training courses during each year of the project implementation								■		■			■	■			MS
2.1.5. Agreement with the MoNP on sustainable funding of the course beyond the project																■	-
2.1.6. Assessment of lessons learned on trainings											■						MU

Activity 2.1.1. has been implemented properly. Respective training materials have been prepared on various aspects of the PA establishment and management including legal framework, PA management issues, ecotourism, awareness raising, etc. Participants appreciated the knowledge they gained and topics that were selected by implementing agency. Side activities were also conducted - Provision of educational and scientific literature to “Shikahogh” State Forest” SNCO, responsible for management of “Zangezur” State Sanctuary. A wide array of Gnishik information was made available along with tools such as information posters. Certain information services offered by the Visitor Center were developed: (a) on historic and cultural monuments; (b) on landscapes and natural conditions; (c) on flora and fauna thereof.

Meantime, *shortcomings are also obvious*. All activities under PO 2.1 so far targeted *local communities* but not *sanctuary managers* and are presented in form of public awareness seminars, which indeed are very successful. Anyway, these are not the real trainings that are expected by the project to be completed. Training themes are mentioned in PD and aimed on provision of knowledge to PA staff and community members involved in management and co-management of new PAs (and Zangezour). Thus, quite a large portion of training activities is still pending.

Activity 2.1.2. and 2.1.3. have been implemented only partially. A Visitor Center (trailer facility) has been procured for Gnishik and equipped. The bad thing is that the facility is not properly installed anywhere. In 2011 the implementing agency applied to the RA Ministry of Culture³¹ for getting approval to allocate the facility in Noravank Gorge but got no answer, so far. Besides, the facility is rather an information dissemination point than educational center for the provision of trainings. On the other hand, it is recommended to re-think the necessity of regular training facilities. The abovementioned Visitor Centers may quite sufficiently serve for that purpose and additionally deliver services also to visitors and tourist, which is another important task and achievement.

One training session in each region has been delivered by the implementing agency. In total 92 local inhabitants from Syunik and Vayots Dzor regions participated in 4 training sessions. Most importantly, **gender balance was ensured – almost 40% were women**. Some stakeholders requested further implementation of trainings in other regions of Armenia. This will allow the participants to get more involved into the topic, conduct an experience exchange, etc. Sustainability of delivering such trainings is of significant importance for participants. They requested regularity of these events, which is considered to ensure via implementation of Activity 2.1.5. Most of regional stakeholders are somewhat doubtful on this issue, since they are not sure that the State budget would like and will be able to undertake such a financial responsibility.

There are certain unclear situation for the further implementation of trainings and application of lessons learned. In the process of the project implementation the PMU allowed implementing partners to “exchange activities”; e.g. mapping and training activities were exchanged between implementing partners. Currently, the situation lacks certainty especially regarding the activities assigned under the Output 2.1. Uncertain situation and mis-coordination between implementing partners conditioned the lower rating of the effectiveness of the last Activity 2.1.6. Calculation of the effectiveness of activities under the Output 2.1. shows that **Output 2.1. effectiveness indicator I_E 5 equals to MS (Moderately Satisfactory)**.

Detailed evaluation of the effectiveness of Output 2.2 Activities is presented below (see [Table 24](#)).

Table 24 - Component 2: Output 2.2. - Project implementation activity plan for 2010-2013

Years of project implementation →	2010	2011	2012	2013	R

³¹ This Ministry is responsible for the Noravank Reserve

Project Component Activities / Outputs ↓	Quarters in respective years →																R
	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	
Output 2.2 Management and business plans at three sanctuaries developed, of which:	Implementation effectiveness indicator - I_E 6 =																MS
2.2.1. Establishment of working groups comprising site managers, community leaders, and project experts																	MU
2.2.2. Development of draft elements of the management plans by working groups																	S
2.2.3. Series of workshops within and proximate to each pilot site to solicit opinions from stakeholders regarding conservation management challenges and potential responses																	-
2.2.4. Development of the business plans:																	MS
2.2.5. Final consultations, finalizing integrated management and business plans and submitting them for adoption to local authorities																	-
2.2.6. At least 5 local entrepreneurs / community groups will be engaged in sanctuary co-management																	-

Activity 2.2.1. has been considered with the purpose of ensuring the participation of as more stakeholders in the preparation of the Management and Business Plans for 3 envisaged sanctuaries as possible. So far, working groups have not been established and the implementing agency used internal resources for conducting this work. Meantime, the importance of this measure is fully recognized by it and, moreover, there is an experience. The activity will be completed in the second half of 2012.

A decision was made to combine the Management and Business Plans of sanctuaries in a comprehensive document. This can be a reasonable and affordable decision, since it will allow to get an overall picture of the current situation and objectives traced. As of the moment of the MTE the path of implementing Activities 2.2.2. and 2.2.4. is more or less satisfactory. Draft combined management and business plans for Zangezour and Gnishik have been prepared and presented. Currently the work is in process and will be completed within the year of 2012. Activities 2.2.3., 2.2.5. and 2.2.6 are scheduled to be started from the third quarter of the 2012 which is out of the reviewed period. Calculation of the effectiveness of activities under the Output 2.2. shows that **Output 2.2. effectiveness indicator I_E 6 equals to MS (Moderately Satisfactory)**.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of the achievement of Outputs 2.3. and 2.4. was not conducted. Activities assigned to these outputs are planned to be started in 2013 and there are no objective bases for the evaluation as of the moment of the MTE. However, the work plan is presented below (see [Table 25](#)).

Table 25 - Component 2: Output 2.3. and 2.4. - Project implementation activity plan for 2010-2012

Project Component Activities / Outputs ↓	Years of project implementation →																R
	2010				2011				2012				2013				
	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	

4.2.2 Project cost efficiency

The UNDP GEF Monitoring and Evaluation policy defines the *project efficiency* as the extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible. The MTE addressed only cost efficiency issues of the project implementation since no special tracking tools for the use of other resources (such as attribution of time, involved experts’ man/days, etc.) is applied in implementing partners. Even to this extent, certain reservation should be made: direct outputs of the project implementation are largely of non-tangible nature. Costs for the certain activities or measures (let it be workshops on legal issues, community meetings, or development of specific documents) may significantly differ depending on tasks, place, number of involved people, and other terms. Usually, such activities do not have exact precedents to make objective comparisons. The situation is becoming even more difficult with insertion of co-funding issues that were widely applied within the implementation process. That is why; the evaluation of the cost efficiency relied on the review of processes rather than on exact amounts spent on this or that activity. To this end, the MTE addressed the following aspects of the use of allocated funds:

- Remuneration rates of experts involved by two implementing partners;
- Rates applied for the compensation of initially defined expenses (such as travel);
- Procurement procedures for equipment and other (rather minor) inputs.

The abovementioned 3 aspects were reviewed in both implementing partners, as well as in PMU. Comparison of remunerations of involved experts with the average remuneration of employees of similar entities showed competitive ranges varying from \$300 to \$1,000 per month. Logistic expenses such as made for the compensation of travel costs and per diems totally fit the ongoing regulations applied in Armenia. In cases of procurements³² competitive bidding was applied (in accordance with UNDP procurement rules and guidelines), several offers were collected for each case, and best options were selected. Cost efficiency of the project implementation is evaluated as follows (see [Table 26](#)):

Table 26 – Project cost efficiency

Indicators	Rating
I_{CE} - Project cost efficiency	➤ S

The project efficiency indicator **should be assessed in couple with the project financial management indicator**. In fact, these 2 indicators are strongly interrelated and are complementing each other addressing various finance-related aspects of the project implementation.

4.2.3 Project management

4.2.3.1 *General management: coordination and operational issues*

The project SC was assigned to monitor project progress, provide political oversight, and offer general advice for project implementation to make certain the project is consistent with national development processes. The project SC includes representatives of MoNP and UNDP as well as key ministries and agencies. The SC was assigned to meet quarterly to discuss project status and future direction, but so far (2.5 years) met just twice.

The PM is responsible for project operations. The PM reports to UNDP Environmental Governance Portfolio Analyst and act in consultation with the MNP’s Project Responsible Person. He ensures the proper

³² Although EPUI SA, which is not allowed to make procurements and outsourcing to third parties by the LoA

use of funds and that project activities are implemented in accordance with the agreed project document and project work plans. The PM is responsible for the project daily planning, implementation quality, reporting, timeliness and effectiveness of the activities carried out.

Functions of the PMU are widely defined by the PD, Inception Report, project SC decisions, and other respective documents. Meantime, the most thorough description is provided by the ToR for the selection of the PM which gives job description, requested skills and competences. PM functions are mainly of regular nature (except of organization of special events, such as project SC or Board meetings). That is why; the chronological component was cut off from the initial work plan presented in [Table 27](#):

Table 27 – Component 3: Project general management activity plan³³

Project Management Activities / Outputs ↓	Rating →	R
Component 3: Project General Management, of which:	I_{PM} 1	S
3.1. Submission by Implementing Partners of quarterly financial and narrative reports to PM		MS
3.2. Submission by PMU of quarterly financial and narrative report to UNDP		S
3.3. Organization of ordinary working meetings with Implementing Partners (more frequently – on demand)		S
3.4. Organization of the project SC meetings		MS
3.5. Coordination of the work of implementing partners		MS
3.6. Financial management of implementing partners' expenditures		MS
3.7. Revision and approval of technical reports		S
3.8. Preparation of monitoring reports (PIR/APR, LogFrames)		S

Activities 3.1 to 3.3. were conducted properly, although the situation used to be much worse at the inception stage of implementation. Implementing partners were not providing proper reporting due to lack of knowledge and experience. This especially refers to the preparation and submission of financial reports by implementing partners. As of the MTE period the problem is solved. Reports are received and submitted properly and on time. The situation is a little different for the organization of project SC meetings. Project SC meetings are assigned to be organized at least once in each year, but so far it was collected only for the adoption of the Inception Report back in 2010 and once in the 1st quarter of 2012. Organizing project SC meetings is really problematic since a number of representatives from different State Agencies and other institutions are involved who are very busy with their everyday responsibilities; it is problematic to organize meetings convenient to all of them.

Special comment should be made for the coordination of the work of project implementing partners. Adaptive management approach and the operational necessities conditioned a number of changes in the project work plans, as well as responsibilities of various implementing partners. Even adopting the necessity of such modifications in the project design it should be concluded that amendments to the project should have been done in a more consistent and official way. All the changes should have been officially confirmed at least on the UNDP CO level, and implementing partners should have been informed about those changes and even those changes should have been properly reflected in implementation agreements they concluded with UNDP.

Similarly, shifts in time-schedules should have been more controlled and implementing partners should have been more time-bound in conducting certain activities. There is a general impression that implementers are not properly concerned about the delays. This especially refers to completion of the Component 1 Activity 1.1. of the legal framework improvement. **A delay in completion of this task has**

³³ The workplan schedule has been confirmed by the PM

created significant problems and risks for the whole project. PM is recommended to revise its approach to this behavior of implementing partners and develop new work plans with strictly decided time-boundaries, and responsibilities sourcing from braking the assigned time limitations.

4.2.3.2 Financial management

Since its inception the PD and the work plan faced substantial changes four times³⁴. *Inter alia*, underlying factors conditioning those changes were the involvement of the second implementing agency (i.e. WWF-Armenia), which undertook the responsibility for the implementation of the Component 2, organization of the experience exchange with respective entities in Austria and Slovenia, raised need for the procurement of transportation means earlier than it was initially planned, and other operational necessities. The finally revised financial work plan as provided by the PMU (adopted as of the end of November 2011) is presented in the [Table 34](#) (only the GEF grant).

Simple comparison of the project initial and revised financial plans reveals substantial changes. Legitimately, the project was not able to absorb all the allocated funds for the first year due to significant delay, which took place for the involvement of the WWF-Armenia and of the start of Component 2 implementation. Additionally, some smoothing was applied and amounts available for the last three years of the project implementation were allocated more evenly. This is the first application of the adaptive management principles to the financial management of the project.

Secondly, reallocation of activities and respective funding was made. The first activity of the Component 2 was assigned to the agency implementing the Component 1. Zangezur sanctuary has been established even before the start of the project and without any efforts from the side of the project. The role of the PMU was intensified and additional activities were conducted by the Project Management, since the implementing agency of the Component 1 is prohibited to outsource any services and make large procurements by the Letter of Agreement concluded with UNDP. Thus the PMU had to undertake this role and substantial funding flowed to that Sub-component of 1a. The Project Management component also faced significant changes, number of new budget rows were added although the size of allocated funds somehow decreased.

Thirdly, some prioritization of expenditures was applied: specific activities planned for later stage of the project implementation were brought forward and funded earlier than planned. For example, procurement of vehicles for the PMU and EPIU SA everyday use was initiated and implemented mainly by using funds of the year of 2013. Both vehicles will be transferred upon completion of the project to new PAs.

An *attempt* was made to assess the financial effectiveness of the project, i.e. the rate of absorption of the allocated funds. This turned to become an extremely difficult and useless exercise. Financial relations within the project are quite complicated conditioned by exchange of activities among implementing partners, PMU procurements on behalf of the EPIU SA, availability of final financial reports only with the UNDP CO (so called “face forms”), and it is nearly impossible to extract and attribute specific expenses to each component, etc. Additionally, application of adaptive management tools (i.e. revision of financial plans and AWP) steadily fine-tunes the financial effectiveness/absorption ratios. On the one hand, this approach is reasonable and ensures better use of funds. On the other hand, objective picture/assessment of the capacity of implementing partners for the use of funds is being lost. Avoiding criticizing the use of adaptive management; however it is recommended to the PMU to apply a financial effectiveness

³⁴ 1st – 20.10.2010 vehicle and study tour; 2nd – 19.04.2011 splitting between 2 partners; 3rd – 18.11.2011 WWF subproject reallocation of funds; 4th – 05.12.2012 vehicle for EPIU SA

monitoring tool starting from the 2012. AWP operational from the beginning of each year may be considered as baseline, and final comparisons (by components) will uncover the project’s capability towards financial delivery.

However, the general conclusion on financial reallocations of the project implementation is neither positive nor negative. The structure of the project is proved to be a subject for regular and proper adaptive management usually results in higher effectiveness and efficiency of the project implementation. On the other hand, strategic changes in the design of the project should not be applied on an operational level. Implementers told about too many changes in the structure of the components and about the difficulty of cooperation with each other. Having in mind that AWP should have been and were developed at the beginning of each implementation year and these AWP are to direct the activities of implementing partners, just two possible conclusion come - either AWP were not prepared properly, or implementing partners do not consider them really seriously. In both cases there is a proof of project design problem that needs to be addressed immediately.

Ceteris paribus, the indicator introduced in the table may pretend to be MS, but one important issue should be kept in mind. The expected achievements are still pending in their majority but funding of implementing partners stayed almost unchanged, i.e. have been actually provided. **This significantly decreases the efficiency of using the funds and creates substantial risks.** Thus, the overall rating of the project financial management is rated as presented in [Table 28](#)

Table 28 – Project financial management

Indicators	Rating
I_{PM} 2 - Project financial management	➤ MU

4.2.3.3 Monitoring and evaluation

The project monitoring and evaluation has been conducted in accordance with UNDP GEF procedures by the PMU and UNDP CO. Specific tools applied for this purpose were: LogFrames Matrixes, METTs, quarterly progress reports, APRs/PIRs, etc. List of specific monitoring and evaluation measures applied includes the following:

- Project Inception Workshop having mainly introductory and planning purposes;
- 2 project SC meetings conducted for reviewing and approving the achievements, approving AWP, etc.;
- Preparation of 2 APRs/PIRs measuring achievements of the project against the SRF;
- Quarterly and annual progress reports;
- Day-to-day coordination of work and review of submitted technical reports.

The abovementioned activities have been applied and conducted in a satisfactory manner. It is recommended to the PMU to intensify its monitoring function towards the implementing partners, using the regular monitoring as an effective tool for the achievement of the project outputs.³⁵

4.2.3.4 Management by the UNDP country office

The UNDP CO supported PMU activities in accordance with UNDP rules and procedures. It ensured project accountability, transparency, and efficiency. It provided the project implementing partners with supervision, regular monitoring, financial oversight, procurement, services, assisted with public advocacy,

³⁵ Evaluation of the Monitoring aspect was inserted into the Project Management section

communication with national partners and coordination of co-funding activity. The UNDP Project Manager coordinated project activities.

Aside from the abovementioned strategic and tactical involvement UNDP CO representatives (namely Environmental Governance Portfolio Policy Adviser and Program Analyst) express themselves as responsive and motivated stakeholders of the project. Regular involvement in activities (such as discussions of the Law) and advisory support in necessary situations were prompt and largely useful.

4.2.3.5 Identification and management of risks (adaptive management)

Any development project may face significant changes during the course of implementation. Usually, those changes are affordable if they are conditioned by changing external environment or other objective reasons. Otherwise, if changes are conditioned by internal or subjective factors, they evidence about shortcomings in project design. Application of proper monitoring tools and openness for adaptive management approach is assumed to be the best way of identification and mitigation of probable risks for the project management. On the other hand, adaptive management should not result in total change of the project design and objectives; this will again attest about the wrong approaches applied at the design stage.

Implementation of the current project was more or less equipped with monitoring tools and number of necessary amendments has been applied. *Inter alia*, it can be mentioned the following changes:

- Re-allocation of funding for the procurement of transportation means,
- Changes applied in implementation of certain activities, especially related to the improvement of legal framework of PAs management.
- Introduction of a new awareness raising activity: experience exchange tour initially designed for Georgia was replaced by Austria,
- Implementation of mapping activities were taken from one implementer and allocated to another,
- Implementation of training activities were taken from one implementer and allocated to another.

As mentioned above splitting of project in 2 subprojects for NGO contracting of WWF also was followed with substantive budget revision. In general, all these adaptations have been made for good reasons, were targeted for better achievements and resulted in higher efficiency. The MTE revealed 2 major shortcomings regarding the adaptive management issue that are recommended to address immediately:

1. Adaptation measures have been applied somewhat spontaneously and lack strict officiality and consistency. This resulted in uncertainty for Activities 1.1., 2.1., etc.
2. Some risks may have missed by implementing partners. This particularly refers to the introduction of new management models for PAs and involvement of communities into this process.

The major recommendation to this extent will be the strengthening and better use of the monitoring function of the PMU for the remaining period of the project management. Special attention should be paid also to the timetable of the work plan.

4.2.4 Project results: achievement of objectives

The UNDP GEF Monitoring and Evaluation policy defines the project *results/impacts* as (positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen) changes to and effects produced by a development intervention. In GEF terms, results include direct project outputs, short-to medium term outcomes, and longer-term impact including global environmental benefits, replication and other local effects. The PD has provided quite unambiguous indicators for the project results. Although being specific and measurable some of those indicators may lack other SMART requirements such as the possibility to be achieved.

Table 29 – Project’s strategic results framework: achievement of results

Indicators of Implementation results and sources of verification	Baseline	Actual results revealed by the MTE and indicators	End of Project Target	Remarks and explanations
Coverage (ha) of sustainably operating sanctuaries <i>Source of verification: APR/PIR³⁶, government reports, the RA MoNP, site visits, PA administrations</i>	89,506 ha designated on paper, approximately 30,000 ha sustainably operational Criticized: official figure was	47,500 ha <i>(if the target indicator remains unchanged)</i> I_R1=MU	137,000 ha sustainably operational	Although more than 50% increase in operational territories of sanctuaries is registered as of the June 2012, it is quite slow pace towards the achievement of designated 137,000 sustainably operating sanctuaries. All efforts should be concentrated to achieve the envisaged output.
Representation levels of habitats in the PA estate: (a) low mountain dry steppe (b) mountain meadow steppes (c) high mountain subalpine ecosystems (d) high mountain alpine ecosystems <i>Source of verification: APR/PIR</i>	(a) –% (b) –% (c) 7.67% (d) 0.15%	(a) = 0.00% - I _R 2a=MS (b) = 1.76% - I _R 2b=MS (c) = 9.24% - I _R 2c=S (d) = 1.02% - I _R 2d=MS I_R2=MS	At least: (a) 3% (b) 4% (c) 10% (d) 4%	Actually, the MTE expresses substantial loyalty while addressing this indicator. Implementing partners explained that substantial work towards establishment of Gnishik and Khustup sanctuaries that will become operational at the end of the project. The work includes discussions and workshops with local stakeholders, mapping, management and business planning, lobbying on regional and national levels. Thus, although having some conditionality the MS rate was applied. Meantime, it is recommended to express tougher approach to this indicator during the final evaluation.
METT scores for sanctuaries <i>Source of verification: METT reviews as of April 25, 2012</i>	Plane Grove - 17 Ararat Vordan Karmir - 14 Khor Virap - 16 Gilan - 17 Akhnabat Yew Grove - 14 Juniper Woodlands Sevan - 14 Goravan Sands - 17 Sev Lich - 13 Boghakar - 9 Goris - 9 Gyulagarak Pine - 9 Caucasian Rose-Bay - 9 Arzakan and Meghradzor - 9 Bank’s Pine - 9 Margahovit - 9 Ijevan - 9 Arjatkhlani Hazel-Nut - 9	Plane Grove - 32 Ararat Vordan Karmir - 21 Khor Virap - 25 Gilan - 44 Akhnabat Yew Grove - 24 Juniper Woodlands Sevan - 23 Goravan Sands - 27 Sev Lich - 13 Boghakar - 18 Goris - 19 Gyulagarak Pine - 19 Caucasian Rose-Bay - 19 Arzakan and Meghradzor - 19 Bank’s Pine - 19 Margahovit - 19 Ijevan - 19 Arjatkhlani Hazel-Nut - 19	At least +10 points METT score improvement for each of the existing sanctuaries.	Analysis of METT scorecards reveals that just mathematically the envisaged results for the project implementation are met for 20 out of 25 sanctuaries. But further assessment uncovered that this change took place due to asymmetry of information. Different people, based on subjective impressions and information available prepared METT scorecards. In some sanctuaries almost no changes happened but the METT score just grew for 10 points. This especially refers to sanctuaries starting from Goris to Yeghegis under management of MA Hayantar SNCO. If 10 additional points are cut-off to make the baseline and the end-line scores comparable, we may try to make an evaluation. The relevance of the indicator is questioned! Improvement of all sanctuaries is really unachievable

³⁶ Provided by the PMU

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Key findings

Indicators of Implementation results and sources of verification	Baseline	Actual results revealed by the MTE and indicators	End of Project Target	Remarks and explanations
	Gandzakar-Upper Aghdan - 9 Herher Open Woodland - 9 Getik - 9 Jermuk - 9 Yeghegis - 9 Aragats Alpine - 6 Hankavan Hydrological - 6 Jermuk Hydrological - 6	Gandzakar-Upper Aghdan - 19 Herher Open Woodland - 19 Getik - 19 Jermuk - 19 Yeghegis - 19 Aragats Alpine - 6 Hankavan Hydrological - 6 Jermuk Hydrological - 6 I_R3=MU		objective for the project. It is recommended to revise the list of PAs the METT scorecards are prepared for.
METT scorecards for the Project pilot areas: <i>Source of verification: APR/PIR, METT 2012</i>	Gnishik - 12 Khustup - 7 Zangezour - 18	Gnishik - 23 Khustup - 12 Zangezour - 35 I_R4=MU	Gnishik - 40 Khustup - 45 Zangezour - 45	Establishment of Gnishik sanctuary is significantly pending. Communities may have alternatives for using areas envisaged for PA. Private business and State authorities at least discussed alternative programs for development of this area. Villages are not well aware and prepared for undertaking the community-co-management, so far. Most importantly, communities cannot see any financial resources to sustain the operation of the sanctuary. Additional socio-economic intervention is strongly requested. Expansion of mining activities from the side of Tsav community and Mazra location are observed. Meantime, absence of rage populated areas makes it easier to deal with establishment of a PA. Zangezour faces significant pressure from the side of villages and invasively expanding mining industry.
% of habitat of (a) Caucasian leopard, (b) Armenian mouflon, and (c) Bezoar goat included in protected area system <i>Source of verification: APR/PIR (should be checked with WWF-Armenia)</i>	(a) 70,947 ha; (b) 0 ha; (c) 70,000.	(a) 88,316 ha; (b) 17,369 ha; (c) 89,369 ha I_R5=S	(a) 117,000 ha; (b) 30,000 ha; (c) 109,000 ha.	Due to establishment of Zangezour state sanctuary habitats of Caucasian leopard, Armenian mouflon, and Bezoar goat included in protected area system that increased on 17,369 ha.
Number of bylaws rationalizing operation of sanctuaries <i>Source of verification: Project reports, Government gazette</i>	0	0 I_R6=MU	At least one (1) set of by-laws clarifying community participation, institutional responsibilities, financing mechanisms.	Initially it was planned to complete the revision of the legal framework within a few months in the first year of the project implementation. Then, this period was prolonged for almost a year, and the set of documents is not ready as of the moment of the MTE. In the best case, the set of regulations will be submitted to the National Assembly autumn session of 2012. From the viewpoint of duration this result cannot be satisfactory.
Number of sanctuaries with Government-endorsed	8	10	11	At the design stage it was considered that 3 new

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Key findings

Indicators of Implementation results and sources of verification	Baseline	Actual results revealed by the MTE and indicators	End of Project Target	Remarks and explanations
charters and management/business plans <i>Source of verification: Project reports, RA MoNP</i>		I_R7=MS		sanctuaries of Gnishik, Khustup, and Zangezur will be established. The last one has been officially established and its charter was endorsed without project efforts, and the other two are in process. Instead, another sanctuary titled Zikatar was established and its charter was endorsed.
Number of sanctuaries with formally designated management bodies <i>Source of verification: Project reports, MoNP</i>	22	24 I_R8=MS	25	Same as above. Management bodies were designated only for Zangezur and Zikatar.
Capacity scores for three demonstration sanctuaries <i>Source of verification: APR/PIR 2012</i>	Zangezur: Systemic: 10 out of 30 Institutional: 16 out of 45 Individual: 7 out of 21 Gnishik: Systemic: 8 out of 30 Institutional: 10 out of 45 Individual: 4 out of 21 Khustup: Systemic: 10 out of 30 Institutional: 15 out of 45 Individual: 7 out of 21	Zangezur: I_R7a=S Systemic: 13 out of 30 Institutional: 22 out of 45 Individual: 11 out of 21 Gnishik: I_R7b=MS Systemic: 9 out of 30 Institutional: 16 out of 45 Individual: 8 out of 21 Khustup: I_R7c=MU Systemic: 11 out of 30 Institutional: 15 out of 45 Individual: 8 out of 21 I_R9=MS	Zangezur: Systemic: 16 out of 30 Institutional: 25 out of 45 Individual: 13 out of 21 Gnishik: Systemic: 16 out of 30 Institutional: 25 of 45 Individual: 11 of 21 Khustup: Systemic: 17 out of 30 Institutional: 27 out of 45 Individual: 13 out of 21	
Number of sanctuaries with active community engagement <i>Source of verification: Project reports, RA MoNP</i>	0	1 I_R10=MS	3	Although a series of awareness raising and partnership building events have been organized the real establishment is pending
Number of local entrepreneurs involved in businesses supporting sanctuaries <i>Source of verification: Reports, site visits</i>	0	0 I_R11=N/A	5	The topic is not addressed by the project so far

While the effectiveness indicators have been applied to measure implementation of activities and the progress/extent towards achieving certain outputs, result/impact indicators are rather for the assessment of the very fact of existence of the envisaged results and impacts they left. Ratings assigned to result indicators provided in the table indicate substantial problems of the project implementation concerning the results. 6 out of 10 (the last indicator cannot be assessed at the moment of the MTE) are rather modest. This should serve as a real red light for the PMU and implementing partners, as well as for UNDP-Armenia.

4.2.5 **Project Logical Framework Matrix (LFM)**

In fact, the MTE does not suggest major changes in project LFM. Instead the following observations have been made and suggested for consideration of PMU and other stakeholders:

1. Being too critical one can suspend the term “sustainably operational” in strategic results framework (see [Table 29](#)). Anyhow, achieving this objective is quite challenging and implementers should concentrate all efforts. It is recommended to the PMU to strictly monitor the progress and suggest respective measures (even revision of the indicator IR1) in case of observing risk signs for the achievement.
2. Cooperation with Hayantar SNCO should be intensified to apply experience exchange and best practice replication for PAs that operate under the mandate of the RA MoA. This will directly contribute to the better I_R3 indicator.
3. Low levels of the I_R4 and I_R10 indicators are largely conditioned by finalization of the PAs communities co-management models, and lack of their involvement. It is suggested to intensify the work with communities regardless the situation of establishing legal bases for such a management model.
4. Number of documents (management and business plans, maps, zonation, etc.) have been semi-prepared especially within the frame of Component 2 implementation. Although affordable for this stage, these documents should be completed in allocated timeframe. The PMU is suggested to intensify the control on these processes and apply deadlines for the implementing agencies.
5. Some aspects of the strategic results framework have not been addressed at all, yet (see indicator I_R11). It is necessary to ensure proper addressing of the topic on time and in full volume.

4.2.6 **Project sustainability and replicability**

4.2.6.1 *Sustainability issues*

The UNDP GEF Monitoring and Evaluation policy defines the project *sustainability* as the likely ability of an intervention to continue to deliver benefits for an extended period of time after completion. Projects need to be environmentally as well as financially and socially sustainable. On the other hand sustainability usually refers to something already available or achieved. It would be really challenging to judge on the sustainability of not yet achieved results. That is why; MTEs usually address the likelihood of sustainability aspects.

Four indicators of sustainability are suggested to be assessed and rated within the current MTE. Their application is presented below:

Table 30 – Project sustainability assessment

Sustainability dimensions (indicators)	Rating	Sustainability risk and likelihood indicators
Financial resources - I _S 1	ML	Both areas of the project intervention are in the center of attention for the RA government and international donor organizations. In particular, it is planned that KfW funded Open Support Program will address the investment needs of Syunik and Vayots Dzor PAs once they are legally established which the objective of the UNDP GEF project is. It is

		<p>envisaged that Open Support Program will become operational in the 1st quarter of 2012 and will last for another 5 years. Additionally, Caucasus Nature Fund currently launches its support program to PA administrations in Armenia and may undertake the co-funding of operational and some investment costs of them. Thus in the mid-term horizon the likelihood of financial risks is rather low.</p> <p>Meantime, in the long-term horizon donors money can come to the end. If the current projects are successful, solid ground will be created for financial sustainability of established sanctuaries. But preconditions for this are not the best. The situation is worsening even further, when communities envisaged to get involved in sanctuaries' co-management are not ready to contribute financially.</p>
Socio-political (I _S 2)	ML	<p>Both targeted areas for the expansion of PA system in Armenia are largely neighboring to Azerbaijan, and the armed conflict between these 2 countries is in fact not resolved. Zangezur and Gnishik areas are largely bordering to Nakhijevan Sovereign Republic in Azerbaijan. On the other hand, the status-quo of cease-fire is in place since May 1994, and the likelihood of new intensive and wide-scale war operation is rather low.</p> <p>Regional and local authorities clearly understand their benefits from the establishment of PAs, but are also aware of possible impediments. If parallel socio-economic development strategy is not neglected by the RA Government and intervening international donor organizations the stakeholders being currently somehow a hindering factor will become the best promoters and defenders of the PA system expansion. The project has invested notable efforts for awareness raising and partnership building with local stakeholders and soon the time for leveraging the outputs will come.</p>
Institutional framework and governance (I _S 3)	ML	<p>Appropriate legal framework and properly operational governance structures are among the most important and major objectives of the project implementation. Once achieved, the institutional framework will start developing steadily.</p> <p>Meantime, the envisaged involvement of communities in the PA management is threatened with number of requirements brought forward by the same communities. Without socio-economic improvements it will be extremely difficult (say impossible) to gain their motivation and participation.</p>
Environmental (I _S 4)	MU	<p>There are significant environmental risks at least in Syunik Region targeted by the project. Zangezur sanctuary is quite closely bordering to continuously expanding mining areas of Kajaran and Geghi. New exploration licenses are granted by the Government in areas very adjacent to Khustup (Mazra area). Although this creates significant tensions from the civic society institutions side, local inhabitants tend to be interested since they have to face really poor socio-economic conditions for quite a long period of time.</p>

It can be concluded that the likelihood of the project results and impacts sustainability is *Moderately Likely*. Probably, the final evaluation (when the project outcomes will be completely revealed) will uncover higher sustainability tendencies, but for that the implementing partners should pay really serious attention to partnership building with local stakeholders. In turn, the best way for that is to suggest real alternatives for income generation to mining and unsustainable use of natural resources.

4.2.6.2 Replicability issues

From the viewpoint of project design the replicability of the project is quite high. The biodiversity potential in Armenia is too high, there are number of large areas with significant biodiversity that currently lack of proper management and would be wise to transform to PAs. Activities designed under the umbrella of the project (such as development of charters, improvement of management capacities, introduction of new models for the PA management, etc.) are largely appropriate for the replication in such areas. On the other hand, the MTE revealed quite notable shortcomings in the implementation of the project. In fact, the evaluation is still to pass a long way towards the achievement of scheduled results and a number of impeding (such as lack of capacity of implementing partners to deal with legal framework, low cooperation potential, availability of subjective side-factors hindering the establishment of PAs, etc.) factors appeared.

The conclusion is rather clear – the period of MTE is not very relevant to make solid judgments regarding the replication potential of the project. As of now, the processes completed by the implementers of the project did not yet confirm themselves to be the best. Thus, the evaluation of the replicability of the project is presented below:

Table 31 – Project replicability

Indicators	Rating
I,5 - Project replicability	➤ ML

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The MTE addressed various aspects of the project implementation, revealed major strengths and weaknesses, and may suggest applicable solutions for identified problems. As in the body of the report conclusions and recommendations have been classified via the lifecycle of the project implementation: starting from the design, continuing with implementation and ending with suggestions of risk mitigation.

5.1 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE PROJECT DESIGN AND RELEVANCE

The following conclusions have been made on project's design and relevance:

6. Relevance of the project's Goal and Objectives to national and global policies and priorities of nature conservation is really high. In particular, the project contributes to implementation of national strategic programs, meeting the requirements of international conventions ratified by Armenia, as well as to the achievement of the UNDP GEF priorities and policies. Similarly, the selected activities mainly contribute to the project objectives. Meantime, some activities became outdated from the very beginning of the project (such as establishment of Zangezur), others were designed improperly (such as preparation of a set of bylaws instead of a whole reform in PA legislation), or duplicating other similar activities funded by other projects (such as preparation of management and business plans, development of national guidelines and norms). Also, the project designers did not properly analyze the negative experience of introducing new management models (such as full community management and co-management, or development of a bad Law) for PAs faced by Armenia in the frame of the project funded by the World Bank.
7. The project implementation format is a trial one. Implementation is divided between two different organizations and shortcomings in implementation of the one entity influence (largely negatively) the results of the other one. In such situation a really strict and strong (even tough) coordination of activities should be applied which the project somewhat lacks.
8. The project lacks clear explanation of specific measures to be conducted towards achievement of outputs. Logical consistency of the design of components and respective activities is a matter to be improved.
9. The project is lacking involvement of major related ministries as well, mainly those of agriculture and territorial administration. Although both of them are represented in the project SC, it is not enough. The project PMU should be more proactive towards them and invite them to take wider responsibilities.
10. The project established proper cooperation with other similar ongoing projects, which creates opportunities for leveraging the results, avoiding duplications, and coordinating efforts.
11. Wrong or non-existing verification means have been assigned by the PD SRF to measure the change of some indicators. This especially refers to METT scorecards and biodiversity monitoring activities and reports. In some cases we face direct conflict of interests.

In order to overcome the existing shortcomings of the project design and relevance at rather early stage it is suggested to the PMU to undertake the following measures:

- **Key recommendation 1.1.:** Review the requirements of the PD and activities assigned under each component. If the project implementation needs significant amendments it should be thoroughly designed and introduced to the project SC. This equally refers to amendment of activities, re-allocation of activities and outputs, and their implementation timetable, which should be strictly defined. Having the project SC approval it should also be officially amended and approved by the UNDP/GEF. Specific activities that are pending to be implemented in the last year and half of the project should be very clearly and unambiguously designated to each implementing agency.

- **Key recommendation 1.2.:** Time-bound results tracing tools should be applied to monitor exact and real progress achieved by implementing partners. *Ceteris paribus*, this can be even a simply gantt chart having percentages in the cells showing the extent of the achievement of results. Implementing partners must be aware of all deadlines for outputs they should ensure. In parallel, strict monitoring and enforcement tools should be applied to ensure the expected outputs on time.
- **Key recommendation 1.3.:** It is recommended to revise the project SRF: it needs to be reviewed. Target indicators should be more achievable. Indicators that seem to be harder to achieve at this stage of the project implementation are suggested to be reviewed and modified. The project must do its best to invite the RA MoNP BMA, or the NAS, or another relevant institution to undertake the responsibility of the preparation of METTs. The current situation includes elements of the conflict of interests. The same relates to implementation of biodiversity monitoring programs.
- **Recommendation 1.4.** Intensification of links and communication with civic society institutions and local communities should be ensured. The project implementers should serve as a buffer between communities and the Government and international organizations. Similarly, links with other ongoing and planned projects should be continuously developed and enhanced.
- **Recommendation 1.5.** Effective communication rules between the implementing partners and most importantly with third parties, such as communities, should be established. Communities must know which project is addressing them (instead of implementing partners), implementing partners must have common strategy, common objectives, and apply respective instruments. Communities should not get different messages from partners.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION EFFECTIVENESS, EFFICIENCY AND RESULTS

The following conclusions have been made regarding the project implementation:

1. Stakeholder participation in the project implementation is not sufficient. Civic society institutions, even being somehow involved during the project design, are not properly represented in the course of implementation. Communities adjacent to PAs are more involved but still have quite a small understanding of specific targets the project traces for.
2. Communities generally welcome the idea of PA establishment. They are ready to provide lands for the PA establishment unless those lands are not already rented by other entities and individuals and generate inflows for the community. They insist that will be able to mobilize any resources for the PA establishment and co-management except of financial means. Communities will not follow the idea of PA establishment if it is considered to be funded from the existing budget without any compensation by the State budget.
3. Although appreciating “soft” measures conducted by the project communities tend to criticize the project for the absence of actual tangible investments. They argue that without improvement of socio-economic situation it will be impossible to achieve effective nature conservation. Understanding the mandate of the project they request from the implementers to establish operational and leveraging links and relations with other projects that provide also investments.
4. Communities stress the importance of the awareness raising and knowledge dissemination activities (trainings, seminars, experience exchange) especially targeting children and youth. Implemented trainings have had significant positive results and impact; participants require continuation and regularity of the implementation of such activities.
5. Communities request strong support for fighting against the poaching conducted by high officials.
6. Effectiveness of achieving the *Output 1.1. Set of by-laws developed to operationalize the 2006 Protected Area Law* is rather low. It already took almost a year longer than it could have last in the worst case.

- Meantime, implementers inform that the Law on PAs is ready and will be submitted into the RA Government shortly (as of the June 25).
7. Effectiveness of achieving the *Output 1.2. Institutional links re-configured to clarify roles and responsibilities for governance and management of sanctuaries* is quite high, although it misses some measures towards organization of participatory discussions.
 8. Effectiveness of achieving the *Output 1.3. Three new sanctuaries established at underrepresented habitats* is high, but only due to delayed outputs, i.e. the real establishment is postponed to the end of the last year. One of those sanctuaries (i.e. Zangezur) was established but the project has had no influence for this. It happened even before the project became operational.
 9. Effectiveness of achieving the *Output 1.4. Development of new PA management models for sanctuaries and putting into policy* is rather modest. Although new models have been outlined in a separate document but nothing was tested and nobody can judge on the viability, feasibility, and implementing ability of this model.
 10. In general, the effectiveness of achieving the *Output 2.1 National and local training programs for sanctuary managers and local communities* could have been much higher. The only tangible achievement of the project in local communities is the knowledge that local people gained during those trainings. Meantime, the actual evaluation mark for this component has been decreased due to uncertainty that exists.
 11. Effectiveness of achieving the *Output 2.2 Management and business plans at three sanctuaries developed* would be much higher if the implementing agency had followed the requirements of the PD and of the agreement with the UNDP and have started its activities from the establishment of local working groups. Now this is pending yet, and it has become a little challenging to succeed to finish the achievement of this output within the assigned period.
 12. Project cost efficiency aspect is evaluated to be Satisfactory. This is legitimate, since the project does not deal with large procurements and similar activities. Expenses made within the frame of the project implementation were reasonable and appeared in a competitive manner.
 13. Project general management lacks the intensive and fruitful cooperation between PMU and implementing partners. The major reason for this is again the uncertainty of roles and mis-implementation.
 14. Project financial management is to be improved. It is recommended to introduce the delivery rate monitoring by components and activities. Special templates can be prepared for implementing partners and PMU to ensure the consistency of collected information regarding the amounts spent to ensure outputs and deliverables.
 15. EPIU SA has succeeded with implementation of awareness raising measures in both target areas. Several workshops have been organized and conducted. Proper participation of women in those workshops has been ensured.

In order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the project implementation the following recommendations are made to the PMU and implementing partners:

- **Key recommendation 2.1.**: The project should seek additional opportunities to accompany the implementation of the “soft” measures (such as drafting Law and regulations, trainings, assessments, etc.) with activities resulting in tangible assets. This is especially important in case of communities that will be involved in full community management and co-management of envisaged PAs. First steps towards such an approach are already done: cooperation was established with TJS-Caucasus, KfW funded Open Support project, smaller projects implemented by WWF-Armenia, etc. Since the project cannot invest in tangible assets itself it should intensify those links and leverage the results in order to keep the local stakeholders motivated.
- **Key recommendation 2.2.**: Having the MTE results at hand the PMU is recommended to conduct internal revision of weaknesses of the project. The PMU must assess the factors that may create risks for

successful completion of the project. The first aspect to be addressed is the solution of uncertainty of the work plans and mis-coordination between implementing partners. The revision should result in a well thought and designed new work plans, including unambiguously defined activities assigned to each implementing partners, timetables (with strictly defined deadlines) of implementation, and exact outcomes expected. If necessary, respective amendments should be made in contracts concluded between implementing partners and UNDP. *Inter alia*, this will also mean strengthening and intensification of a project management function (e.g. better application of the monitoring tool).

- **Key recommendation 2.3.**:The actual results of the project implementation are quite modest, so far. This may be legitimate since many processes are ongoing and results yet to be expected. By all means, currently the efforts should be concentrated on completion of the Component 1 activities since they widely condition the success of other activities, too. Long delays in achievement of assigned outputs under the Component 1 may bring to a situation when part of project outcomes will not be achieved until the project end.
- **Recommendation 2.4.** Currently the project uses financial monitoring tools that follow Atlas Award system requirements. In order to improve the financial management and monitoring it is recommended to introduce new reporting instrument that will summarize expenses/investments made for each line of activity. This will create good ground for measuring the cost efficiency of the project and determine which exact activities requested the most investments. Moreover, it was confirmed that such templates (budget breakdown) sheets were prepared and introduced to implementing partners recently. The PM should be strict enough to receive actual expenses in accordance with planned.
- **Recommendation 2.5.** It is recommended to continue awareness raising and capacity building among local communities and PA management. Training materials should be developed and delivered also for sanctuary managers and personnel. Relations with communities should be intensified and specific aspects of PAs establishment (such as purpose, ways of operation and management, restrictions, utilization of new opportunities, etc.) should be uncovered and better explained on regular bases.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY, REPLICABILITY, AND RISKS

The following conclusions have been made regarding the sustainability and replicability issues on the basis of the MTE results:

1. The risk of financial sustainability is not high in a mid-term prospective due to the opportunities provided by other projects and programs that will soon become operational. This especially refers to KfW funded Open Support program that already considered some funds to be invested for Zangezur, Khustup, and Gnishik sanctuaries. Meantime, long-term prospective are not very clear so far.
2. The likelihood of the project results and impacts sustainability is just moderate. The final evaluation (when the project outcomes will be completely revealed) will hopefully register higher sustainability tendencies, but for that the implementing partners should pay really serious attention to partnership building with local stakeholders. In turn, the best way for that is to suggest real alternatives for income generation to mining and unsustainable use of natural resources.
3. Socio-political and institutional risks are more likely to happen. The problem again refers to Armenia's relations with neighboring countries, priorities of communities, and weakness of the legal framework on PAs. Meantime, the highest risk the project may face (especially in Syunik) region is the contradiction of the project objectives with the private interests of commercial entities. The best illustration is the expansion of the mining industry, which can simply jeopardize the achievements of the project.
4. The period of MTE is not very relevant to make solid judgments regarding the replication potential of the project. As of now, the processes completed by the project implementers did not yet confirm themselves to be the best.

The following recommendations are suggested to the project implementers for the purpose of improving the likelihood of sustainability and replicability of the project, as well as for the mitigation of potential risks:

- **Key recommendation 3.1:** Major risks tracing model should be prepared, introduced, and followed in order to develop ongoing understanding of the environment the project is implemented in.

5.4 BEST PRACTICES RESULTED IN SUCCESS

Although the project is still in a process some activities implemented within the frame of the project have already proved to be successful and have resulted in notable achievements. Among them awareness raising and experience exchange measures on the international level can be considered as exemplary.

The project assumed experience exchange measure with respective entities in Georgia. Considering various factors it was decided to change the location and select a country with better achievements in the field of nature conservation. Ultimately, Austria was selected to pay a visit and implement an awareness raising and knowledge exchange exercise. Delegation comprising PA managers, representatives of the RA MoNP, regional government, and mayors of targeted communities (12 persons in total) visited PAs in Austria and Slovenia and studied the experience of foreign colleagues in September 2010. Later in the response visit was implemented by Austrian colleagues, who were introduced existing and envisaged PAs in Armenia in May 2011.

Interviewed participants of the experience exchange activity appreciated the knowledge gained and network established with Austrian colleagues. It was stressed that such activities should be regular and also for the professional personnel of PAs.

5.5 WORST PRACTICES IN ADDRESSING ISSUES RELATING TO RELEVANCE AND PERFORMANCE

Unfortunately, the project contains elements of non-relevance and problems of implementation of certain activities. Those problematic issues have been widely addressed in the report and contain the following main aspects:

- The project lacks coordination between implementing partners;
- The project lacks certainty and timeliness in implementation of specific activities and achieving results;
- The project targeted some unachievable outputs that are subject for being revised.

6 APPENDICES

6.1 MTE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Can be accessed via the following link: [MTE TOR - Armenia.doc](#) (control click).

6.2 PROJECT TRACKING TOOLS

Tracking tools have been provided by the project PM. Can be accessed via the following links:

[GEF BD SO1 TT Financial Scorecard](#) (control click);

[PA 2012 GEF BD TT METT 2011](#) (control click);

[Capacity Scorecard - Gnishik - 20120719.doc](#) (control click);

[Capacity Scorecard - Khustup - 20120719.doc](#) (control click);

[Capacity Scorecard - Zangezour - 20120719.doc](#) (control click).

6.3 MTE ITINERARY

Itinerary presents only so called outdoor activities, i.e. meetings, interviews, group discussions with respective stakeholders. It does not address regular and intensive work (at least 5 meetings) conducted at the PMU with the PM and the project assistant, as well as in-door research and reporting periods.

Date	Time	Contact	Topic	Place
June 8, 2012	9.15 - 9.50	Samvel Galstyan, MoA	Overall project implementation	Ministry of Agriculture
June 8, 2012	10.00 - 12.00	Karen Manvelyan, WWF	Overall implementation, Component 2	WWF-Armenia office
	12.00 - 14.00	Anna Matevosyan, WWF	Specific achievements of Component 2	
	14.00 - 16.00	Narine Mirakyan, WWF	Financial aspects of Component 2	
	16.00 - 17.00	Tigran Melkumyan, WWF	Mapping of PA boundaries	
	17.00 - 18.00	Karen Manvelyan, WWF	Wrap-up and summarization	
June 11, 2012	09.30 - 10.30	Viktor Martirosyan, EPIU	Overall implementation, Component 1	EPIU SA office
	10.30 - 13.30	Samvel Baloyan, EPIU	Overall implementation, Component 1	
	13.30 - 14.30	Rubik Shahazizyan, EPIU	Specific activities of Component 1	
	14.30 - 15.30	Alik Matevosyan, EPIU	Legal aspects of Component 1	
	15.30 - 16.30	Hakob Hakobyan, EPIU	Financial Aspects of component 1	
	16.30 - 17.30	Viktor Martirosyan, EPIU	Wrap-up and summarization	
June 12, 2012	11.00 - 17.00		Trip to Syunik region	Yerevan - Kajaran
	17.00 - 20.00	Vardan Gevorgyan	Communities role in the project	Kajaran municipality
	17.00 - 20.00	Garegin Gabrielyan	Environmental aspects of the project	
June 13, 2012	09.00 - 09.30		Trip from Kajaran town to Lernadzor	Kajaran - Lernadzor
	09.30 - 11.00	Stepan Petrosyan	Communities role in the project	Lernadzor municipality
	11.00 - 11.30		Trip from Lernadzor to Geghi	Lernadzor - Geghi
	11.30 - 13.00	Vasil Grigoryan	Communities role in the project	Geghi municipality

	13.00 - 14.00		Trip from Geghi to Tsav	Geghi - Kapan - Tsav
	14.00 - 15.30	Ararat Martirosyan	Communities role in the project	Tsav municipality
	15.30 - 16.00		Trip from Tsav to Chakaten	Tsav - Chakaten
	16.00 - 17.00	Artsrun Harutyunyan	Communities role in the project	Chakaten municipality
	17.00 - 17.30		Trip from Chakaten to Kapan	Chakaten - Kapan
	17.30 - 19.00	Tadevos Ghazaryan	Overall project implementation	Syunik Governorate
June 14, 2012	09.00 - 10.30	Arthur Ghazaryan	Project's role and achievements	NGO office, Kapan
	11.00 - 13.00	Ruben Mkrtychyan	Prospective of PAs development	Zangezur sanctuary office
	13.00 - 18.00		Trip from Kapan to Yeghegnadzor	Kapan - Yeghegnadzor
June 15, 2012	09.00 - 12.00		Visit to Gnishik area	Gnishik community
	13.00 - 17.00	Samvel Adamyan	Regional Government perception	Areni village
		Jirayr Eghyan	Communities role in the project	
		Derenik Martirosyan	Communities role in the project	
		Mesrop Melkonyan	Communities role in the project	
	17.00 - 20.00	Vardan Nersisyan	Communities role in the project	
		Trip to Yerevan	Areni - Yerevan	
June 16, 2012	15.00 - 16.00	Ayser Ghazaryan	Cooperation between projects	Yerevan, GIZ office
June 21, 2012	15.00 - 17.00	Armen Martirosyan	Overall implementation and relevance	UNDP Armenia office
		Georgi Arzumanyan		
June 22, 2012	10.00 - 12.00	Armen Gevorgyan	Cooperation between projects	TJS - Armenia office
June 23, 2012	16.00 - 17.00	Ara Dolunc	Regional Government perception	Ministry of TA

6.4 LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

Table 32 - List of interviewed persons

N	Contact Name	Entity	Dates
1.	Karen Jenderedjian	Project Manager	Regularly
2.	Gayane Navasardyan	Assistant to Project Manager	Regularly
3.	Armen Martirosyan	Programme Analyst: Environmental Governance, UNDP Armenia	June 21, 2012
4.	Georgi Arzumanyan	Programme Policy Adviser, Environmental Governance Portfolio, UNDP Armenia	June 21, 2012
5.	Ashot Avalyan	Deputy Head of Administration, MoNP	June 18, 2012
6.	Samvel Galstyan	Deputy Minister, MoA, SC Member	June 8, 2012
7.	Viktor Martirosyan	Director, EPIU SA	June 11, 2012
8.	Samvel Baloyan	Deputy Director, EPIU SA	June 11, 2012
9.	Hakob Hakobyan	Chief Accountant, EPIU SA	June 11, 2012
10.	Rubik Shahazizyan	Head of Department of Budgetary Projects Implementation, EPIU SA	June 11, 2012
11.	Alik Matevosyan	Lawyer, EPIU SA	June 11, 2012
12.	Karen Manvelyan	Director, WWF-Armenia	June 8, 2012
13.	Anna Matevosyan	Project Coordinator, WWF-Armenia	June 8, 2012
14.	Tigran Melkumyan	Mapping Expert, WWF-Armenia	June 8, 2012
15.	Narine Mirakyan	Chief Accountant, WWF-Armenia	June 8, 2012
16.	Samvel Adamyan	Head, Vayots Dzor State Cadastre (former Deputy Governor of Vayots Dzor)	June15, 2012
17.	Jirayr Eghyan	Mayor, Areni community in Vayots Dzor	June15, 2012
18.	Derenik Martirosyan	Mayor, Agarakadzor community in Vayots Dzor	June15, 2012
19.	Mesrop Melkonyan	Mayor, Gnishik community in Vayots Dzor	June15, 2012

20.	Vardan Nersisyan	Mayor, Khachik community in Vayots Dzor	June15, 2012
21.	Ara Dolunts	Deputy Governor, Syunik Governorate	June23, 2012
22.	Tadevos Ghazaryan	Head, Development Projects Division, Syunik Governorate	June13, 2012
23.	Ararat Martirosyan	Mayor, Tsav community in Syunik	June13, 2012
24.	Artsrun Harutyunyan	Mayor, Chakaten community in Syunik	June13, 2012
25.	Stepan Petrosyan	Mayor, Lernadzor community in Syunik	June13, 2012
26.	Vasil Grigoryan	Mayor, Geghi community in Syunik	June13, 2012
27.	Vardan Gevorgyan	Mayor, Kajaran town in Syunik	June12, 2012
28.	Garegin Gabrielyan	Head of EP division, Kajaran town in Syunik	June12, 2012
29.	Ayser Ghazaryan	Senior Expert, GIZ SMB Program	June16, 2012
30.	Arthur Ghazaryan	Expert, Ecology and Democracy NGO	June14, 2012
31.	Ruben Mkrtchyan	Director, Shikahogh SR SNCO	June14, 2012
32.	Armen Gevorgyan	National Coordinator for Armenia, TJS-Caucasus	June 22, 2012

6.5 SUMMARY OF FIELD VISITS

3-day visit has been organized and conducted by the PM and External Evaluator with the purpose to visit project sites, meet regional and local stakeholders and interview them. The tour was conducted in the period of June 13-15. In order to increase the efficiency several group meetings were organized. Among others, representatives of regional Governorates and mayors of local communities have been addressed and interviewed.

Major topics of discussions were the following:

- Stakeholders involvement in the stages of project design and further implementation; Their satisfaction with the extent of involvement'
- Stakeholders' satisfaction with the support they received and further expectations;
- Stakeholders' readiness and motivation to get involved into the development of PAs;
- Shortcomings of the project, etc.

In general, meetings with stakeholders were very useful. It is recommended to continue the cooperation path with them at least at the same regularity and intensity.

6.6 LIST OF DOCUMENTS REVIEWED AND CONSULTED

1. Project Inception Report;
2. Quarterly and annual progress reports provided by the PM;
3. Technical reports (reviews, assessments, studies, surveys, etc) on implemented activities;
4. Semi-ready documents (management and business plans for PAs, maps, list of species in targeted areas);
5. Financial reports provided by implementing partners and PM Assistant;
6. METT scorecards as of 2009 and April/May 2012;
7. PIR/APR report;
8. Trip reports provided by the PM and implementing partners;
9. Request for Project Preparation Grant document (GEF, 2008)
10. Project Document and annexes (2009, 2010);
11. Agreements between UNDP Armenia and Implementing Partners (EPIU SA and WWF-Armenia);
12. RA National Forest Program (2005);
13. Forest Policy and Institutional Change Analysis in Central Asian and Caucasus Countries, (RA, 2009);

14. The second national environmental action programme (2008);
15. 1st, 3rd, and 4th National Reports to the Convention on Biological Diversity (2009);
16. Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for the RA (1999);
17. RA Sustainable Development Program (2008);
18. RA MoNP Ministerial Report for the period of 2007-2011(2011);
19. Official texts of conventions ratified by Armenia (2009, 2010);
20. UNDP Armenia country program action plan (2010-2015);
21. UNDP Armenia: Country programme document for Armenia (2010-2015);
22. UNNDAF Outcomes, Indicators, and Outputs (2010);
23. UNDP Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results (2002)
24. The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy (2006);
25. GEF 5: Focal Area Strategies;
26. Other relevant documents and papers.

6.7 GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWING THE IMPLEMENTERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

6.7.1 Topics discussed with stakeholders

6.7.1.1 *Project Concept*

1. How and why project outcomes and strategies contribute to the achievement of the expected results?
2. Do the outcomes developed during the inception phase still represent the best project strategy for achieving the project objectives (in light of updated underlying factors)? Consider alternatives.

6.7.1.2 *Preparation and readiness*

3. Are the project's objectives and components clear, practicable and feasible within its timeframe?
4. Were the capacities of executing institution and counterparts properly considered when the project was designed? What changes are observable now?
5. Were the partnership arrangements properly identified and the roles and responsibilities negotiated prior to project approval? Are there any changes to be applied?

6.7.1.3 *Stakeholder participation during project preparation*

6. Did the project involve the relevant stakeholders through information-sharing, consultation and by seeking their participation in the project's design?

6.7.1.4 *Project organization/Management arrangements*

7. Were the project roles properly assigned during the project design? What has changed? Is a revision needed?
8. Can the management arrangement model suggested by the project be considered as an optimum model? If no, please come up with suggestions and recommendations.
9. Are the project roles in line with UNDP and GEF program guides?

6.7.1.5 *Project budget and duration*

10. Is it realistic to achieve the assigned objectives within the allocated budget?
11. Is it realistic to achieve the assigned objectives within allocated timeframe?

6.7.1.6 *Gender perspective*

12. Extent to which the project accounts for gender differences when developing project interventions.

13. How gender considerations are mainstreamed into project interventions?

6.7.1.7 Design of Project Monitoring and Evaluation system

14. What M&E plan is applied to the project implementation?
15. How does the PMU trace the progress towards achieving the project objectives?
16. How does the UNDP GEF monitor the progress of the project implementation towards achieving project objectives?
17. What was the baseline data inserted in project implementation M&E plan? Who prepared the baseline and when?
18. What regular information is provided by implementing partners to the PMU?
19. What regular monitoring reports are provided by the PMU to the UNDP GEF?
20. What is the GEF Tracking Tool and how can it be applied?
21. How the development of the workplans is made? Who does?
22. How many times the workplans have been significantly changes and why?

6.7.1.8 Financial management

23. How the cost efficiency of the project implementation is ensured?
24. Did the promised co-funding take place? How?

6.7.1.9 Time efficiency

25. What significant delays in project implementation happened and why?

6.7.1.10 UNDP GEF contribution

26. How exactly the UNDP GEF contributed?

6.7.1.11 Stakeholders participation

27. Were the relevant country representatives, from government and civil society, involved in the project preparation?
28. Are the relevant country representatives, from government and civil society, involved in the project preparation?
29. How are the local inhabitants involved in project implementation?

6.8 INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS ADOPTED BY ARMENIA

Table 33 – International conventions adopted by Armenia

N	Convention ³⁷
1.	<p><u>UN Convention on Biological Diversity (Rio-de-Janeiro, 5 June 1992), ratified by RA National Assembly on 31.03.1993</u> At the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro agreed on a comprehensive strategy for sustainable development. One of the key agreements adopted was the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD). The CBD is the recognition of international community of importance to follow the principles of sustainable development. The main objective of Convention is biodiversity conservation, sustainable use of its components, joint utilization and free access to genetic resources and technologies, etc.</p>
	<p><u>The Carthagen Protocol on Biosafety (Montreal, 2001), ratified by RA National Assembly on 16.03.2004</u> The Protocol seeks to protect biological diversity from the potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. It ensures that countries are provided with the information necessary to make informed decisions before agreeing to the import of such organisms into their territory.</p>
2.	<p><u>UN Convention to Combat Desertification (Paris, 1994), ratified by RA National Assembly on 23.06.1997</u> The international community has long recognized that desertification is a major economic, social and environmental problem of concern to many countries in all regions of the world. In 1977, the UNCOD adopted a Plan of Action to Combat</p>

³⁷ Brief descriptions of conventions are taken from www.nature-ic.am

	<p>Desertification (POCD). Despite this and other efforts, the UNEP concluded in 1991 that the problem of land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas had intensified, although there were local examples of success.</p> <p><u>UNCCD 4 National Communications</u></p>
3.	<p><u>European Landscape Convention (Florence, 2000), ratified by RA National Assembly on 23.03.2004</u></p> <p>The aims of the convention are to promote European landscape protection, management and planning, and to organize European co-operation on landscape issues. This means ensuring the protection, management and planning of European landscapes through the adoption of national measures and the establishment of European co-operation between the Parties.</p>
4.	<p><u>Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern, 19.09.1979), ratified by RA National Assembly on 26.02.2008</u></p> <p>The Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) is a binding international legal instrument in the field of nature conservation, which covers most of the natural heritage of the European continent and extends to some States of Africa. Its aims are to conserve wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats and to promote European co-operation in that field. The Convention places a particular importance on the need to protect endangered natural habitats and endangered vulnerable species, including migratory species.</p>
5.	<p><u>Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (Paris, 1972), ratified by RA National Assembly in 1993</u></p> <p>The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (the World Heritage Convention) was adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in 1972. To date, more than 170 countries have adhered to the Convention.</p> <p>The Convention aims to encourage the identification, protection, and preservation of earth's cultural and natural heritage. It recognizes that nature and culture are complementary and that cultural identity is strongly related to the natural environment in which it develops. The Convention provides for the protection of those cultural and natural 'properties' deemed to be of greatest value to humanity. It is not intended to protect all properties of great interest, importance or value, but rather a select list of the most outstanding of these from an international viewpoint.</p>
6.	<p><u>Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn, 1979), ratified by RA National Assembly on 27.10.2010</u></p> <p>The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (also known as CMS or Bonn Convention) aims to conserve terrestrial, aquatic and avian migratory species throughout their range. It is an intergovernmental treaty, concluded under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme, concerned with the conservation of wildlife and habitats on a global scale.</p> <p>CMS Parties strive towards strictly protecting enlisted animals, conserving or restoring the places where they live, mitigating obstacles to migration and controlling other factors that might endanger them. Besides establishing obligations for each State joining the Convention, CMS promotes concerted action among the Range States of many of these species.</p>
7.	<p>As a party to the CBD, Armenia is committed to implement the <u>Programme of Work on PAs</u>.³⁸ During the preparation of this proposal the country, with support from NGOs, analyzed where the major gaps or in terms of PoWPA implementation. Several PoWPA Goals stood out as current urgent gaps: Goal 1.1 (Ecological representation of the PA estate), Goal 3.2 (Building capacities for establishing and managing PAs), Goal 2.1 (Diversity of PA Governance Models), and Goal 3.4 (Financial sustainability). Some of these goals are being supported by diverse projects.</p>

³⁸ Edited extract from the PD

6.9 PROJECT'S REVISED FINANCIAL WORK PLAN, USD (AS OF NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2011)

Table 34 – Project's revised financial work plan, USD (as of November-December 2011)

Activities and results	Budget description	2010	2011	2012	2012	Total
Activity 1: Rationalization of PA system (implemented by the RA MoNP EPIU SA)		426,502	669,630	724,140	784,790	2,605,062
1.1. Set of by-laws developed to operationalize the 2006 PA Law; 2 new sanctuaries (i.e. Gnishik and Khustup – 34,000 ha) established at underrepresented habitats; 1.2. Institutional links re-configured to clarify roles and responsibilities for governance and management of sanctuaries; 1.3. National and local training programs for sanctuary managers and local communities; 1.4. New PA management model developed for sanctuaries and put into policy.	71300 – Local consultants	56,700	63,900	68,000	46,950	235,550
	71600 – Travel	2,500	4,453	5,000	6,000	17,953
	72200 – Equipment and furniture	700	0	0	0	700
	72400 – Communication and audio visual equipment	1,500	1,650	4,700	4,700	12,550
	72800 – Information technology equipment	2,802	49	700	700	4,251
	73400 – Rent and maintenance of other equipment	1,300	3,500	3,500	2,500	10,800
	74500 – Miscellaneous	500	1,000	1,000	1,000	3,500
Activity 1a: Rationalization of PA system (implemented by the MoNP/PMU)		180,250	297,539	320,620	361,470	1,159,879
1.1. Set of by-laws developed to operationalize the 2006 PA Law; 2 new sanctuaries (i.e. Gnishik and Khustup – 34,000 ha) established at underrepresented habitats; 1.2. Institutional links re-configured to clarify roles and responsibilities for governance and management of sanctuaries; 1.3. National and local training programs for sanctuary managers and local communities; 1.4. New PA management model developed for sanctuaries and put into policy.	71200 – International consultants	7,500	0	5,000	2,500	15,000
	71400 – Contractual services by individuals	12,490	23,100	29,100	29,100	93,790
	71600 – Travel	36,820	2,775	5,000	5,100	49,695
	72100 – Contractual services by companies	0	300	100	100	500
	72200 – Equipment and furniture	38,000	35,698	0	0	73,698
	72300 – Materials and goods	52	0	0	0	52
	72800 – Information technology equipment	6,020	0	0	10,000	16,020
	73100 – Rent and maintenance of premises	186	0	200	200	586
	73400 – Rent and maintenance of other equipment	900	1,670	2,000	2,400	6,970
	74100 – Professional services	5,182	0	8,000	10,000	23,182
	74200 – Audio visual and printing costs	5,000	0	2,200	4,850	12,050

	74500 – Miscellaneous	3,100	792	2,100	2,100	8,092
Activity 2: Institutional capacity building for PA Management (implemented by WWF-Armenia)		32,500	116,602	133,460	147,560	430,122
2.1. Maps for 3 sanctuaries are prepared and gazette	71400 – Contractual services by individuals	0	62,080	60,460	36,360	158,900
	71600 – Travel	0	1,000	1,500	1,500	4,000
	72100 – Contractual services by companies	0	17,200	37,500	68,200	122,900
2.2. Management and business plans at three sanctuaries are prepared	72200 – Equipment and furniture	0	500	0	0	500
2.3. Management and business plan implementation supported on the ground	72800 – Information technology equipment	0	1,700	0	0	1,700
	73400 – Rent and maintenance of other equipment	0	1,000	1,000	1,000	3,000
2.4. Lessons learned documented and experience set to replication	74100 – Professional services	0	0	0	2,500	2,500
	74200 – Audio visual and printing costs	0	0	0	5,000	5,000
	74500 – Miscellaneous	0	500	500	500	1500
Activity 3: Project Management (implemented by the PMU)		16,250	16,311	16,250	16,250	65,061
1. Conduct day-to-day implementation of the project;	71400 – Contractual services by individuals	11,533	13,100	11,800	11,800	48,233
	71600 – Travel	650	1,870	2,000	2,000	6,520
	72100 – Contractual services by companies	2,287	0	0	0	2,287
2. Prepare the project financial and narrative progress and final reports on time; submit to UNDP and donors;	72300 – Materials and goods	105	0	0	0	105
	72400 – Communication and audio visual equipment	400	175	750	750	2075
3. Coordinate actions with national counterparts and international partners	72500 – Supplies	105	0	250	250	605
	73100 – Rent and maintenance of premises	70	247	250	250	817
	74500 – Miscellaneous	1,000	719	1,000	1,000	3,719
	75705 – Learning costs	100	200	200	200	700
Total		197,502	239,178	253,810	259,510	950,000