



Strengthening the management effectiveness of the protected areas system of Turkmenistan

PIMS 3961, Atlas Award 00057539, Atlas Project No: 00071151

Terminal Evaluation, Volume I June 2014

Turkmenistan

GEF SO1: Catalysing the Sustainability of Protected Area (PA) Systems

SP1: Sustainable Financing of PA Systems at the National Level of the GEF Business Plan

SP3: Strengthened National Terrestrial Protected Area Networks

**Turkmenistan
Ministry of Nature Protection
United National Development Program (UNDP)**

Stuart Williams

Acknowledgements

My mission to Turkmenistan was largely organised by the team of people in the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) within the UNDP-CO; I would like to thank them – Victoria Saygusheva (for all the logistical arrangements), Ayna Allaberdyeva (for sorting my contract and providing all the information on contracted staff over the course of the project) and Bahar Mamedova (for providing information on project finances). I am grateful to the support that Rovshen Nurmuhamedov and Geldi Myradov provided throughout the mission.

Special mentions goes, of course, to Shirin Karriyeva for accompanying me through the mission and, with the assistance of the PIU, setting up the meetings that I managed to have in Turkmenistan. I am very grateful to her.

I am also grateful to Hodjamurad Hodjamuradov – the Biodiversity Expert on the Sumbar Working Group and the Scientific Specialist of Sunt-Hasardag Zapovendik for the time he spent showing me around the proposed Sumbar National Park and, moreover, welcoming us into his home. In the circumstances of Turkmenistan, I appreciate that this is an extraordinarily privilege for me.

My thanks go to everybody who patiently gave me their time to answer all the questions and clarifications I put to them.

Finally, I am grateful to Lyalya Nazarova who was my interpreter during many meetings. I am aware of how exhausting this work is.

The evaluation is intended to give a summary of what was achieved in the project as well as glean some of the lessons that can be learned from it in what was a relatively short period. Because the project did not manage to achieve many of its objectives, the evaluation also explores some of the reasons why. Thus, in the report, I have tried to offer constructive criticism where I think it is warranted and I hope that those involved in the project take it as such.

Finally, it was a real privilege and pleasure to visit Turkmenistan, to be shown around with such evident pride and to see extraordinary places. Irrespective of the final result of the project, I saw witnessed the dedication and enthusiasm that people had put into the trying to conserve important places in the world. I would like to offer them my thanks and wish them every success in their continuing endeavours.

Stuart Williams
Kampala, Uganda

June 2014

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	ii
Executive Summary.....	v
Project Summary Table.....	v
Project Description.....	v
Key findings – Implementation and Management.....	vi
Key findings – Project Results.....	vii
Review Rating Table.....	viii
Summary of conclusions, recommendations and lessons.....	ix
Recommendations.....	x
Should the project be extended until the end of the year?.....	x
Acronyms, Abbreviations and Glossary.....	xii
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Purpose of the review.....	1
1.2 Scope & Methodology.....	1
1.3 Structure of the review report.....	3
2 Project description and development context.....	4
2.1 Project start and duration.....	4
2.2 Problems that the project sought to address.....	5
2.3 Immediate and development objectives of the project.....	5
2.4 Baseline Indicators established.....	6
2.5 Main stakeholders.....	6
2.6 Expected Results.....	6
3 Findings.....	7
3.1 Project Formulation.....	7
3.1.1 Analysis of LFA/Results Framework (Project logic /strategy; Indicators).....	7
3.1.2 Assumptions and risk analysis.....	8
3.1.3 Lessons from other relevant projects.....	9
3.1.4 Planned Stakeholder Participation.....	10
3.1.5 Replication approach.....	10
3.1.6 UNDP Competitive Advantage.....	10
3.1.7 Linkages between the project and other interventions in the sector.....	11
3.1.8 Management arrangements.....	11
3.2 Project Implementation.....	12
3.2.1 Adaptive management.....	12

3.2.2	Partnership arrangements.....	12
3.2.3	Feedback from M&E activities used for adaptive management.....	13
3.2.4	Project Finance.....	14
3.2.5	Monitoring & Evaluation – design and implementation.....	21
3.2.6	UNDP & Implementing Partner implementation, coordination and operational issues.....	21
3.3	Project Results	25
3.3.1	Overall results and Attainment of objectives.....	25
3.3.2	Relevance.....	35
3.3.3	Effectiveness & Efficiency	35
3.3.4	Country ownership.....	40
3.3.5	Replication, mainstreaming and catalytic role.....	42
3.3.6	Sustainability.....	42
3.3.7	Impact	44
4	Conclusions, Recommendations & Lessons	44
4.1	Conclusions.....	44
4.2	Corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project	45
4.3	Actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the project.....	46
4.4	Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives	48
4.5	Best and worst practices in addressing issues relating to relevance, performance and success.....	49

Table of Contents (Annexes)

Annex I: Terms of Reference	Annex-3
Annex II: Itinerary of Mission in Turkmenistan	Annex-7
Annex III: List of persons interviewed	Annex-9
Annex IV: Summary of Field Visits	Annex-10
Annex V: List of documents reviewed	Annex-11
Annex VI: Framework questions used	Annex-13
Annex VII: List of training courses and workshops carried out by project since 2012	Annex-15
Annex VIII: Maps	Annex-20
Annex IX: List of project assets	Annex-23
Annex X: Letter to the UNDP Resident Representative	Annex-24
Annex XI: Contents of the email exchange between TE Evaluator and UNDP-CO re para 35 of report	Annex-27
Annex XII: Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form	Annex-30
Evaluation Report Reviewed and Cleared by	Annex-31

Executive Summary

Project Summary Table

Project Title:	"Strengthening the management effectiveness of the protected areas system of Turkmenistan"			
GEF Project ID:	00057539		<i>at endorsement (Million US\$)</i>	<i>at completion (Million US\$)</i>
UNDP Project ID:	00071151	GEF financing:	0.95	0.95
Country:	Turkmenistan	IA/EA own:	n/a	n/a
Region:	Central Asia	Government:	0.59 in-kind	0.59 in-kind
Focal Area:	Biodiversity	Other:	0.06 (UNDP) 0.21 (Michael Suchow Foundation) 0.23 (RSPB) in-kind	0.06 (UNDP) 0.21 (Michael Suchow Foundation) 0.23 (RSPB) in-kind
FA Objectives, (OP/SP):	(SP) 3 of SO 1, 'Strengthening Terrestrial Protected Area Networks'	Total co-financing:		
Executing Agency:	Ministry of Nature Protection	Total Project Cost:	1.01 (in cash)	1.01 (in cash)
Other Partners involved:	ProDoc Signature (date project began):		October 2009	
	(Operational) Closing Date:	Proposed:	31.12.2012	Actual: 30.06.2014

Project Description

This project was designed with the objective to 'create an enabling environment for the establishment of a functional, effective and ecologically coherent system of protected areas in Turkmenistan'. It was to do this through two components dealing with: i) the expansion of the protected areas across the country to improve representativeness and coverage of the protected area system in the country, and ii) to develop institutional and individual capacity for protected areas and the protected area system.

The project was built on a solid foundation, growing out of the GoT/UNDP Improvement of Protected Areas in Turkmenistan (EcoNet) (Atlas # 15051) and the foundations laid by the Michael Succow Foundation while working on a "National Park Programme." Further, it was built on the foundations of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2002), the National Environmental Action Plan (2002) and, more recently, the Main Trends of Development of the Protected Area System up to 2030 (2008).

The main axis of the project's first component was to develop a Protected Area System Plan and to establish a pilot national park. The concept that this first national park should be Sumbar NP also grew out of a solid foundation, including priorities identified in the same strategies already mentioned but also the Order of the Ministry of Nature Protection of Turkmenistan (No 36 of April 29, 2003), on implementation of the Decree of the President "On National Environmental Action Plan of President of Turkmenistan Saparmurat Turkmenbashi" (No. 6007 of December 2, 2002),

requires that a National Park in the Makhtumkuli etrap must be established within the period 2003-2010.

Key findings – Implementation and Management

The Terminal Evaluation was carried out by one International Consultant with a mission to Turkmenistan between 29 April – 07 May 2014. The Terminal Evaluation took place as the project was drawing to a close (with the closing date expected to be 30 June 2014). During the mission, the evaluator met and interviewed a number of stakeholders, made a field trip to the area of the proposed Sumbar National Park and reviewed project documents.

The project began on signature of the Project Document on 20 August 2009 and was planned as a 40-month project (thus, it was originally planned to close on 31 December 2012). The MTR was only carried out in October 2012 – two months before the project was due to close. The MTR was a turning point for the project – vindicating the need for such independent reviews of project such as this. Since the MTR, project implementation has been much more efficient and effective. With agreement from the UNDP-GEF RTA, the MTR imposed a three-month stop to all technical implementation to allow for a period of re-planning. This was done and approved by both the PB and the RTA, and the project was granted an extension until 31 December 2013. Thereafter, the project has been granted two further extensions – first until April 2014 and then until 30 June 2014 allowing for efficient closure of the project (but see below).

The project’s implementation was far from a smooth and efficient affair:

- As described in the MTR, the first three years of project implementation was hampered by delays and issues stemming primarily from UNDP-CO procurement and recruitment processes. As one interviewee put it, “the project lost two-and-a-half years.”
- The outcome of the Inception Period – an amended logframe – was not used by the project because of a “mistake” in the UNDP-CO. In addition, further amendments (mainly establishing baselines and removing indicators) proposed by the MTR, and endorsed by the UNDP-GEF RTA and ITA were also not adopted.
- The project suffered from a number of key discontinuities associated with people who were closely affiliated with the project. These included: i) the Minister for Nature Protection, ii) the Deputy Minister for Nature Protection (who also the NPC and GEF OFP for Turkmenistan), iii) the UNDP-CO Resident Representative, and iv) the Project Manager. It also took significant time to recruit the ITA.
- A division developed between the UNDP-CO and the main stakeholders of the project – the Ministry of Nature Protection (and specifically the Department of Flora and Fauna Protection – that has the mandate for management of the protected areas in Turkmenistan).
- For a number of reasons best described as being issues intrinsic to circumstances such as those of Turkmenistan, the project faced a state of paralysis in the MNP when related to support for project outcomes and their approval.
- The project significantly overspent its project management budget; indeed, in addition to the project management budget from GEF funds (which were overspent), the project received additional project management funds from UNDP. The result was that project management spending has been 21.5% of the

value of the GEF grant (cf. the project management budget for a project of less than USD 2 million being 10% of the value of the grant).

In contrast to these project implementation issues, the establishment of the PIU within the UNDP-CO has improved efficiency and effectiveness within projects; however, this has to be offset against an increased work burden on Project Managers and an exacerbated divide between the UNDP-CO and their government partners.

Key findings – Project Results

Partly as a result of the implementation and management issues described above, the project did not achieve the majority of its objectives. The successes of the project can be summarised as follows:

- The 2012 Law “On Specially Protected Areas” that was signed by the President of Turkmenistan and published in the official government gazette in March 2012. This law provides for the establishment of national parks (as well as other categories of protected area) in the country. Other associated draft regulations were also produced.
- A number of key outputs were produced, including i) the Protected Area System Plan (PASP), ii) the feasibility study for SNP, iii) the draft management and business plans for SNP, iv) the digitisation and production of maps and GIS layers of all the protected areas in the country – as well as the formal presentation of these outputs to a meeting of stakeholders on 18 March 2014. The project has also produced some publicity (or “PR”) material for SNP.
- It is likely that the outputs of the project (described above) will continue to be used in the sector and thus the project will have a long-term influence in the sector.
- The project did make substantial contributions to develop further capacity in the country both through study tours, workshops and specific trainings. Individual capacity has also significantly grown.
- The project also carried out awareness creation and “sensitisation” among local stakeholders in the vicinity of the protected areas – with an obvious focus on those people living within and surrounding the proposed SNP, including *welayats* and *etraps*, members of staff of the MNP, the teachers and children of local schools, and the local communities themselves. The project adopted a participatory approach and was inclusive in the majority of its processes.
- Finally, while it was not an original objective of the project, it contributed to the development and dissemination of the Third Edition of the Red Book of Turkmenistan.

In contrast to these successes, the project did not meet the majority of its objectives as originally stated and amended. Many of the lack of successes stem from the implementation and management issues described above. Most notably:

- While the project managed to complete the production of outputs, these has not yet been adopted or approved by the government, including the MNP. The outputs include those listed above (see second bullet above). Therefore, the PASP has not been adopted or approved, and Sumbar National Park has not been established.

Review Rating Table

There are challenges coming up with single ratings for many of the aspects of the project because almost every one has a dichotomy underpinning it. The ratings, therefore, represent a balance between these dichotomies.

Item	Rating	Comment
Overall project results	MU	The project has made gains – particularly since the MTR but there have been significant shortcomings in achieving the objectives of the project. Project implementation has also been poor.
IA & EA Execution		
Overall quality of implementation and execution	MU	Implementation during the first 38 months was blighted by delays and inefficiencies (rated as HU by MTR). While the past 15 months have been more efficient and effective, a certain neglect still haunts the project. The project also significantly overspent its project management budget line therefore representing poor value for money.
Implementation Agency Execution	MS	As with the above point, the UNDP-CO was largely responsible for delays and inefficiencies during the first 38 months of the project's lifespan. The MTR was pivotal in prompting improvements but some inefficiency has lingered. In addition, some efforts to improve efficiency and effectiveness have imposed a division between the UNDP-CO and the MNP. Nonetheless, in the past 15 months, in response to extraordinarily challenging circumstances, the UNDP-CO (and particularly the RR and DRR) has taken extraordinary measures to overcome the barriers in front of the project and its outputs.
Executing Agency Execution	U	The MNP has assumed no ownership of the project; discontinuities in staffing have significantly interrupted project progress; the MNP has been reduced to a state of paralysis.
M&E		
M&E design at project start-up	MS	The standard M&E framework for UNDP-GEF projects was used in the project design – however, given the challenges and complexities of working in Turkmenistan, one would have expected a better, more rigorous M&E framework.
Overall quality of M&E	MU	That the MTR was carried out in month 38 of a 40-month project is symptomatic of the inattention to M&E. Since the MTR, M&E has improved but some of the MTR's M&E recommendations (e.g., that the PB meets at least twice a year) have not been implemented. There are a number of other examples symptomatic of poor M&E: i) the overall project management expenditure (including contributions by UNDP) totalled at 21.5% of the value of GEF grant, ii) PB meetings were held only once a year, iii) there was only one field visit by a member of UNDP-CO staff, iv) attendance in meetings by MNP and UNDP-CO staff was poor.
M&E plan implementation		
Outcomes		
Overall quality of project outcomes	MU	Overall quality of project <i>outputs</i> is satisfactory (S) but the project failed to achieve any of its outcomes with the exception of the enactment of the law <i>On Specially Protected Areas</i> (2012). There were numerous reasons why the project failed to meet its objectives not least because of the barriers that exist when working in the challenging circumstances of Turkmenistan
Relevance	S	The project did not divert away from its purpose and stayed relevant to the UNDAF, the development framework in

Item	Rating	Comment
		Turkmenistan and to the GEF strategic objectives and programme that it would have otherwise been contributing.
Effectiveness	MS	While there were profound lapses in effectiveness and the project was ineffective in achieving its objectives, the past 15 months have been relatively efficiently implemented and during this time, the majority of the project's outputs have been generated.
Efficiency	U	The project has represented very poor value for money especially in the light of i) the fact that the project has not achieved the majority of its outcomes and ii) it has significantly overspent on its project management budget line.
Sustainability		
Overall likelihood of risks to sustainability	ML	Because of the problems that the project has encountered in getting the PASP and the SNP approved, their use will be limited to people using them as outputs in an ad hoc way. There will be no systematic use of the outputs. The training provided by the project will be useful and there is a moderate likelihood that the training will be used in the future (this is only moderately likely because of the high rate of transfer and high turnover among government staffers).
Catalytic Role		
Production of a public good, Demonstration, Replication and Scaling up	MU	With so little to show for the project in terms of an approved PASP (which would arguably represent a degree of mainstreaming) and in terms of a gazetted national park (which would have represented demonstration), the project catalytic role is minimal.

Summary of conclusions, recommendations and lessons

In conclusion, then, the project was a victim of a number of different circumstances that has led to the fact that, while it produced the majority of the outputs that it intended to, the project did not manage to achieve the objectives as originally designed.

Despite not achieving the majority of its stated objectives and in stark contrast to the first three years of the project's lifespan, the final fifteen months were implemented effectively and efficiently (notwithstanding the barriers that the project came up against within the MNP). The MTR was essential in catalysing this turnaround and this illustrates the value of such independent evaluations.

Importantly, the project was ambitious but the project designers did not recognise the profound barriers to change and innovation (particularly when the champions of those ideas are lost in the process) and a state of paralysis within the MNP that resulted. This is not uncommon in such states and in such circumstances but they should be recognised from the outset of such projects. One conclusion that can be drawn from this is that these barriers still exist and until they are overcome, ambitious projects will have trouble achieving their objectives.

Finally, the above conclusions beg the question about the direction in which GEF projects in Turkmenistan should take particularly when one is cognisant that GEF projects are precisely about overcoming fears, catalysing processes and demonstrating success. If those fears are so profound that processes cannot be catalysed and, as a

consequence, successes cannot be demonstrated, one wonders if there is a role for GEF in Turkmenistan – at least at present and in the protected areas sector.

Recommendations

The following recommendations arise from the evaluation of this project:

- The PIU needs to be managed with care: i) to ensure that PIU staff are not overworked, ii) some turnover of staff in the PIU should be expected as the staff becomes more experienced and valuable, and iii) the distance that this imposes between the UNDP-CO and the government.
- It is unacceptable to hold a MTR two months before a project is due to close. The UNDP-CO must ensure that project adhere to timelines.
- Independent evaluations – particularly at their mid-term – are extremely valuable for course correction and catalysing improvements.
- It is essential that projects and project designs recognise the challenges of carrying out work in Turkmenistan – and not just the normal conservation challenges (representativeness, coverage, enabling environment, capacity, etc) but the challenges of working on a day-to-day basis with government – and the “state-of-paralysis defined in this report. Normal modus operandi does not apply.

For example, this project has been hampered by a number of changes in high-level staff within the MNP (including the Minister and Deputy Minister). The transfers between these people should include written commitments to such projects from the in-coming person.

In addition, it may be necessary to seek the blessing (in writing) of the Cabinet of Ministers – if not the President – of such innovative projects before they start and continually to remind all people involved in the project, as necessary, that this blessing exists.

- It is also essential that the UNDP-CO expend further energy in being picky about monitoring projects and attention to detail. Too many small things in this project went awry – that were simply not being picked up in the UNDP-CO – and which resulted in poor efficiency and effectiveness.
- The barriers that this project came up against prompts the question of the role of GEF in Turkmenistan – particularly for protected areas projects. Such projects may boost the capacity of a handful of people but biodiversity impacts are limited. It is probable that “safe” project may have more success (e.g., working with existing protected areas) but this may undermine the concepts underpinning the GEF – to “overcome fear, catalyse processes and demonstrate success.” Further, the high turnover of staff in the government organisations means that champions of the projects leave before projects are completed. The conclusion, however hard that it might be, is that until there are significant signs of change, it will be difficult to justify further GEF investment into the protected area system of Turkmenistan.
- It is critical to find a balance between effective project management and implementation, and ensuring that the government feels that it owns the project. In this project, there was an emphasis (at least from 2012) on trying to emphasize the implementation and management leading to disempowerment of the MNP in project processes.

Should the project be extended until the end of the year?

There is one outstanding question: is there any value to extending the project until the end of the year? There are a number of opponents to extending the project, people with little appetite to continue the project – so there should be compelling arguments and a realistic chance of having some tangible impacts. To the end, the government has made it quite clear that, at present, the issue of establishing Sumbar National Park should be shelved. Thus, if there is to be an extension of the project, the subject of Sumbar should not even be mentioned: the focus should be singularly and solely on the PASP. I propose three triggers to consider before the decision to extend the project is taken:

1. *Trigger One:* the UNDP-CO RR personally meet with the Head of NIDFF to propose a mutually satisfactory roadmap for ensuring the approval of the PASP by the MNP (and specifically the Minister of Nature Protection or better still the Deputy Prime Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources) before the end of the year. The Head of NIDFF would have to agree to “champion” this roadmap.
2. *Trigger Two:* develop a mutually agreeable roadmap for the inclusion of the PASP into the NBSAP and ensure that the NBSAP is approved with the PASP included in it.
3. *Trigger Three:* all project management costs for an extension of the project would be covered by the UNDP-CO (as the project has significantly overspent on its project management budget).

In principle, I would recommend that the extension should go ahead if either Triggers One or Two or both are hit; however, an extension cannot go ahead if neither is hit nor if Trigger Three is not hit.

Acronyms, Abbreviations and Glossary

AFA	Administrative and Financial Assistant
APR	Annual Progress Report
CABNET	Central Asian Biodiversity Network
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
EA	Execution Agency (in this case the MNP)
EOP	End of Project (as usually related to targets for indicators)
<i>et seq.</i>	<i>Et sequentia</i> (and the following)
<i>Etrap</i>	An administrative unit in Turkmenistan equivalent to districts
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEF OFP	Operational Focal Point (referring to the person responsible for coordinating GEF affairs and contact within countries).
GOT	Government of Turkmenistan
ha	Hectares
IA	Implementation Agency (in this case UNDP)
IBA	Important Bird Area
ITA	International Technical Advisor
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
METT	Monitoring Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MNP	Ministry of Nature Protection
MOU	Memorandum/Memoranda of Understanding
MSP	Medium-sized Project (referring the size of the grant from the GEF Trust Fund where projects valued < USD 2 million are classed as medium-sized projects)
MTR	Mid-term Review
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NEX	Nationally Executed (referring to the implementation modalities of the project)
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NIDFF	National Institute of Deserts, Flora and Fauna
NP	National Park
NPC	National Project Coordinator
PA	Protected Area
PAS	Protected Area System
PASP	Protected Area System Plan (titled in Turkmenistan as “Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area System of Turkmenistan”)

PDF-B	Project Development Fund (second stage to develop the Project Document)
PB	Project Board
PIF	Project Identification Form
PIR	Project Implementation Review
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PM	Project Manager
PR	Public Relations (referring to awareness creating materials)
RSPB	The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds;
SNP	Sumbar National Park (the national park proposed for establishment under this project)
SRF	Strategic Results Framework
SWOT	An analysis of an institute – Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (analysing internal and external factors affecting the institution)
TE	Terminal Evaluation
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDAF	United National Development and Assistance Framework (in the context of five-year strategies developed for each country in which UNDP has programmes)
UNDP	United National Development Program
UNDP-CO	UNDP-Country Office in Turkmenistan
UNDP-CO RR/DRR	UNDP-CO Resident Representative/Deputy Resident Representative
UNDP-GEF RTA	UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor (based in Bratislava but moving shortly to Istanbul)
UNDP-GEF RTC	UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Centre (based in Bratislava but moving shortly to Istanbul)
<i>Welayat</i>	A sub-national administrative unit in Turkmenistan, equivalent to an <i>oblast</i> elsewhere in the CIS or regions.
<i>Zakaiznik</i>	A Wildlife Reserve (equivalent to an IUCN Category IV protected area)
<i>Zapovednik</i>	A Strict Nature Reserve (equivalent to an IUCN Category Ia protected area)

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the review

1. The Terminal Evaluation (TE) of the UNDP-GEF project “Strengthening the management effectiveness of the protected areas system of Turkmenistan” is being carried out according to the UNDP-GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy. Thus, it is being carried out with the aim of providing a systematic and comprehensive review and evaluation of the performance of the project by assessing its design, processes of implementation, achievement relative to its objectives. Under this overarching aim, its objectives are i) to promote accountability and transparency for the achievement of GEF objectives through the assessment of results, effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, sustainability and impact of the partners involved in the project, and ii) to promote learning, feedback and knowledge sharing on the results and lessons learned from the project and its partners as a basis for decision-making on policies, strategies, programme management and projects, and to improve knowledge and performance.

2. As such, this TE was initiated by the UNDP-CO as the project’s Execution Agency (in partnership with the Ministry of Nature Protection) to determine its success in relation to its stated objectives, to understand the lessons learned through the implementation of the project and to make recommendations for the remaining part of the project.

3. The TE is being conducted by one international consultant. The TE consultant was independent of the policy-making process, and the delivery and management of the assistance to the project. The consultant was not involved in the implementation and/or supervision of the project.

4. The TE is being carried out over a period from 01 April – 15 June 2014 with a mission to Turkmenistan from 29 April – 07 May 2014. Carrying out the TE at this point in the project’s implementation timeline was in line with UNDP/GEF policy for Evaluations.

1.2 Scope & Methodology

5. The approach for the TE is determined by the Terms of Reference (TOR, see Annex I). The TOR will be followed closely and, therefore, the evaluation will focus on assessing i) the concept and design of the project, ii) its implementation in terms of quality and timeliness of inputs, financial planning, and monitoring and evaluation, iii) the efficiency, effectiveness and relevance of the activities that are being carried out, iv) whether the desired (and other undesirable but not intended) outcomes and objectives are being achieved, v) the likelihood of sustainability of the results of the project, and vi) the involvement of stakeholders in the project’s processes and activities.

6. The TE includes a thorough review of the project documents and other outputs, documents, monitoring reports, the Mid-term Review (MTR), Project Implementation Reviews (PIR), relevant correspondence and other project related material produced by the project staff or their partners. The evaluation is assessing whether a number of recommendations that had been made following the MTR, and monitoring and support visits from people from the Biodiversity staff of UNDP’s Regional Technical Centres have been implemented and to ascertain the explanations if they have not been.

7. The TE also includes a mission to Turkmenistan between 29 April – 07 May 2014. The evaluation process during the mission will follow a participatory approach and includes a series of structured and unstructured interviews, both individually and in small groups. Site visits are also scheduled i) to validate the reports and indicators, ii) to examine, in particular, any infrastructure development and equipment procured, iii) to consult with protected area staff, local authorities or government representatives and local communities, and iv) to assess data that may be held only locally. The evaluator will work with the Project Staff and particularly with the Project Manager throughout the evaluation. Particular attention will be paid to listening to the stakeholders' views and the confidentiality of all interviews will be stressed. Whenever possible, the information will be crosschecked among the various sources.

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

9. In addition, the evaluator will take pains to examine the achievements of the project within the realistic political and socio-economic framework of Turkmenistan.

10. The logical framework (with approved amendments in the Inception and following the MTR) with Outcomes, Outputs and indicators towards which the PM and the PIU is working is forming the basis of the TE.

11. According to the GEF policy for TEs, the relevant areas of the project will be evaluated according to performance criteria (Table 2).

Table 2. The ratings that were assigned to the various aspects of the project, in accordance with UNDP/GEF policies.

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

Unsatisfactory (MU)	of its objectives in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency
Unsatisfactory (U)	The aspect had major shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	The aspect had severe shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency

12. Alternatively, there may be aspects of the project that may be deemed Not Applicable (N/A) or Unable to Assess (U/A).

13. In a similar way, the sustainability of the project’s interventions and achievements will be examined using the relevant UNDP/GEF ratings (Table 3).

Table 3. The ratings that were assigned to the different dimensions of sustainability of the interventions and achievements of the project.

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

14. The TE will be carried out with a number of audiences in mind, including: i) Ministry of Mature Protection (MNP), ii) the UNDP-CO and UNDP-GEF RTC in Bratislava, and iv) the GEF.

1.3 Structure of the review report

15. The report follows the structure of Project Evaluations recommended in the UNDP Evaluation Guidance for GEF-Financed Projects as given in Annex 5 of the TOR. As such, it first deals with a description of the project and the development context in Turkmenistan (Section 2), it then deals with the Findings (Section 3) of the evaluation within three sections (Project Design, Project Progress, Adaptive Management, Monitoring systems and Management arrangements, respectively). The report then draws together the Conclusions, Recommendations and Lessons from the project (Section 4).

2 Project description and development context

2.1 Project start and duration

16. The process of formulation and start of the project is well described in the MTR. In summary (and see Figure 4):

- a. The project concept developed in 2006
- b. The concept is re-submitted in 2007
- c. PIF approved in June 2008
- d. Project development under PDF-B takes place in 2008-09
- e. CEO endorsement in July 2009
- f. UNDP Project Document signed 20 August 2009
- g. Inception Workshop takes place on 20 November 2009; Inception Report completed in February 2010
- h. First disbursement in March 2010

17. The project was scheduled as a 40-month project – therefore, it was originally scheduled to close on 31 December 2012. However, the MTR was carried out in October 2012, two months before the project was due to close. Because of the issues with delivery of the project objectives, the MTR called for a halt on all technical aspects of the project for a three month period to re-plan the project (until 31 March 2013); the continuation of the project thereafter was contingent on satisfactory re-planning and agreement from the parties involved. The UNDP-GEF RTC permitted an extension of the project until 31 December 2013, stating:

“The extension for two years will not be granted automatically in March 2013. If all critical conditions are met by March 2013, then an extension through December 31 2013 will be recommended by RTA and hopefully approved by UNDP-GEF. The second extension (January – December 2014) would be possible if project confirms progress in line with approved 2013 detailed work plan. The RTA will judge this at the time of PIR in the summer of 2013 and late in October – November 2013 and will then recommend a further extension or project closure¹.”

18. On the basis of this and the work carried out from 31 March – 31 December 2013, the project closure was extended until the end of April 2014 and then, finally, until 30 June 2014 to accommodate the Terminal Evaluation of the project.

19. However, one of the questions that I use regularly for Terminal Evaluations is: “what would you do if the project was extended by a further one/two years” and often with an additional sum of money. Such a question is designed to probe i) what are the outstanding issues that require more time and effort, and ii) what else might be done to enhance the impact of the project. Thus, in the debriefing with the UNDP-CO RR, the Head of the Energy and Environment Unit for the UNDP-CO and the PM, I was (partially) prepared for the RR’s final question to me: “should the project be

¹ Mission report by RTA of his mission from 17-21 November 2012.

extended until the end of 2014?²” The answer to this question is considered throughout the report, with a final recommendation being given in section 4.3.

2.2 Problems that the project sought to address

20. The project sought to build on a growing swell within Turkmenistan that was demanding a broader range of categories of protected area than the *zapovednik* and *zakaiznik* system inherited across the CIS from the Soviet Union. This movement had started well before the project and grew out of the GoT/UNDP Improvement of Protected Areas in Turkmenistan (EcoNet) (Atlas # 15051) and the foundations laid by the Michael Succow Foundation while working on a “National Park Programme.” Further, it was built on the foundations of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2002), the National Environmental Action Plan (2002) and, more recently, the Main Trends of Development of the Protected Area System up to 2030 (2008).

21. In doing so, according to the project document, it was designed to overcome proximate threats to biodiversity in the country: first, loss/degradation of habitat through over-exploitation of natural resources, agricultural expansion, overgrazing by domestic livestock, drainage of wetlands, alteration of hydrological regimes through irrigation schemes; pollution of water systems; and second, significant declines of a number of species through unregulated exploitation or capture: hunting of mammalian species, overfishing of sturgeon stocks in the Caspian sea; capture of falcons for falconry; trafficking of live animals.

22. The project was also designed to overcome the root causes of these threats and the barriers to achieving effective conservation of the biodiversity and ecological processes within Turkmenistan – as related to the above threats: i) inadequate size, inadequate representation within PAS; bias towards strict nature reserves (*zapovedniks*) – apparently now not considered appropriate in political and socio-economic in Turkmenistan and ii) poor systemic, institutional and individual capacity – planning, financing and management; need alignment with international conventions to which Turkmenistan is now as signatory; re-categorization of protected areas; financial sustainability of PAS and individual PAs; harmonisation of legislation.

2.3 Immediate and development objectives of the project

23. The development objective of the project was to ‘create an enabling environment for the establishment of a functional, effective and ecologically coherent system of protected areas in Turkmenistan’. No objective level indicators to measure the development objectives of the project; rather the objective level indicators in the logframe and the indicators under the project’s two components were more immediate objectives with immediate indicators. The project had two components dealing with i) the expansion of the protected areas across the country to improve representativeness and coverage of the protected area system in the country, and ii) to develop institutional and individual capacity for protected areas and the protected area system.

² Note that this is the latest that the project could be extended is this report is to remain the “Terminal Evaluation;” GEF policy stipulates that Terminal Evaluations take place six months before project closure or up to six months after project closure. Using this policy as a guide and if the report is approved, say, on 30 June 2014, the project can legitimately be extended until 31 December 2014 without the need to carry out a further TE.

2.4 Baseline Indicators established

24. Baseline indicators were established during the project development phase but owing to a mistake in the UNDP-CO, the logframe that was amended during the Inception Phase of the project was not adopted until the MTR! The logframe was further amended during the MTR.

25. The logframe that was amended in the Inception Period and further amended in the MTR (primarily because the logframe of the Inception Period was adopted following the MTR) forms the basis of this evaluation. Questions remain about how some of the baseline figures were derived but they do not affect the outcomes of the project. They will be discussed in more detail in the section on Project Results below (see section 3.3).

2.5 Main stakeholders

26. The stakeholder analysis in the Project Document was exhaustive but the reality was that the project focused on and worked with a much smaller set of stakeholders. A further reality, discussed in a number of places in this report, was that a divide emerge between the UNDP-CO and the principal stakeholders of the project.

27. The main stakeholder for the project was the Ministry of Nature Protection (MNP) and, within that, the Department of Flora and Fauna Protection (which has the mandate for the management of protected areas within the country) and the National Institute of Deserts, Flora and Fauna (NIDFF) within which the project was housed.

28. In addition, at the site level, the project had many stakeholders including the *weyalat* and *etrap* authorities, the members of staff of the Sunt-Hasardag Zapovednik and the local communities.

2.6 Expected Results

29. The project was expected to deliver three main results, each with further benefits.
- a. A Protected Area System Plan (PASP) – which, as it is implemented, would improve the representativeness of different ecosystems within Turkmenistan within the protected area estate. It would also increase the coverage of the protected areas of the country. This would lead to significant global environment benefits.
 - b. Sumbar National Park, gazetted and with a management and business plan that are being implemented. This would also extend the representativeness of the protected area system of the country (to include, most particularly, the flora and fauna associated with the valleys of the Sumbar river and the sub-tropical ecosystems found in this area of Turkmenistan) and, more obviously, increase the coverage of the protected area system.
 - c. Improved capacity within the MNP (both at the central level but also among the protected area managers and staff) and among individuals in the country – to improve planning and management of protected areas as well as management and administration of large, complex such as this one.

3 Findings

3.1 Project Formulation

30. The MTR provided a thorough analysis of project formulation and there is little further to add at this stage. However, given the outcome of the project, further retrospective analysis is warranted of i) the barriers and ii) the risks that were identified in the Project Document.

31. There were two barriers to achieving the solution that were identified in the Project Document. These were:

- a. That there was an inadequate protected area system in terms of size and representativeness, and inadequate categories of protected area. This thus, deals with two aspects – first, the coverage and distribution of the protected areas in the country and, second, the limited definition of protected areas within the country.
- b. That the systemic, institutional and individual capacity for planning, management and financing protected areas was poor.

32. In the section on project implementation (see Section 3.2), I explore in detail some of the obstacles that the project has come up against and I will demonstrate that there are some other profound barriers at play within Turkmenistan that were not identified as barriers in the project document. Similarly, this will also be related to the risk analysis and assumptions in the original project document.

3.1.1 Analysis of LFA/Results Framework (Project logic /strategy; Indicators)

33. Again, the MTR carried out detailed analysis of the logframe and discovered that the project had been busily working towards the logframe as it appeared in the original project document *rather than the adapted logframe – as changed during the Inception Period*. This, apparently, was simply a mistake by the project team and the UNDP-CO.

34. The MTR made specific recommendations for the amendment of the logframe (see Table 6 and paragraph 66 of the MTR): this was to clarify four items in the logframe prior to 31 March 2013 – namely redefinition of indicators 10 and 13 and defining baselines for indicators 5 and 13. In the follow up analysis, the UNDP-GEF RTA defers to the ITA on recommending a way forward for these indicators (following a meeting with the UNDP-CO RR, the UNDP-GEF RTA and the project's ITA held on 27 November 2012 and the ITA's mission report in November 2012³). The indicators will be discussed in turn:

- a. Indicator 5: The MTR was unhappy with the baseline indicating that more detailed information was needed to demonstrate the more accurately the inclusion of ecosystems within the PAS which would lead to information of gaps and needs. While certainly a map of the ecosystems was produced (see Annex VIII) and in the absence of an English version of the PASP, it is difficult to assess whether the quantification was carried out (as part of a gap analysis). Irrespective, the baseline was not updated in the logframe.

³ Appleton, M.R. (2012) International Technical Advisor/ Protected Area Management Mission Report, November 2012

However, the ITA commented that the indicator was achievable through the PASP.

- b. Indicator 10: There was a great deal of ambiguity about the indicator and, in fact, I interpret it differently from the MTR. However, that is precisely the MTR's point: in the planning period from the MTR to 31 March 2013, the indicator should have been clarified. Further, because of the lack of clarity, the ITA recommended **removal of this indicator**. Given that the UNDP-GEF RTA defers to the ITA's recommendations here, it is odd that this indicator still appears in the logframe.
- c. Indicator 13: The MTR recommended clarifying the wording of this indicator and defining a baseline. Again, the ITA recommended **removing this indicator** but it, too, remained in the logframe.
- d. In addition to these, oddly, neither the MTR nor the ITA made conclusive recommendations regarding the final indicator (15) despite both of their reservations about it. It should have been removed.

35. While the management response to the MTR did acknowledge the recommendations made by the MTR and those of the ITA's mission reports as well as the RTA's BTOR, this was not followed up by action – thus, contrary to the recommendations, indicators 10 and 13 remained in the logframe and the baseline for indicator 5 was never established⁴.

3.1.2 Assumptions and risk analysis

36. There were four risks identified in the project document: i) legal reform processes delay the project, ii) the government does not commit financial support to the national park following its establishment, iii) there are conflicts over the land when considering the establishment of SNP and iv) climate change will degrade the environment such that rehabilitation of existing and future protected areas will become more expensive.

37. Of these risks, only three had any potential bearing on the implementation of the project: i) the legal reform processes, ii) the financial risks and iii) the land-use conflicts.

38. Surprisingly, the first proved not to be a risk at all. Indeed, the adoption of the law on protected areas⁵ (that provides the legal basis for the establishment of national parks) was a smooth affair and stands in stark contrast to the hurdles that have been placed in front of the establishment of Sumbar National Park.

39. Both the second and third risks (the risk that the government would not allocate sufficient budget to the national park and the potential for land-use conflicts) were not tested because the national park was not established. However, it did emerge that there was discomfort among the livestock owners within the area identified for SNP. The project suggested that they had worked hard to reassure people in the area; in contrast, the representatives from the MNP suggested that the people remained a barrier. In addition, there was also discomfort among the government regarding the budgeting of the national park, if and when established. However, further analysis

⁴ The text of para 35 of the first draft of the TE report was edited following an email exchange between the evaluator and the UNDP-CO (see Annex XI for details of the email exchange).

⁵ Law "On specially protected nature territories", adopted by the President of Turkmenistan and published in "Neytralnyi Turkmenistan" gazette on 31 March 2012.

suggested that there were other factors that were driving the government to express such anxieties; this is discussed at length below – see section 3.3.3).

40. In the project’s Strategic Results Framework (SRF), a further set of assumptions and risks. While there is some allusion to political quirks of and challenges of working in Turkmenistan (e.g., “*other ministries and public agencies do not cooperate to align strategies, plans and projects,*” “*the Law on State Protected Areas, and other complementary legislation, provides the enabling regulatory framework for the establishment of national parks,*” and “*resistance to the introduction of new financing mechanisms for national parks reduces their financial sustainability*”), there was no explicit or detailed exploration of the factors that present profound challenges to working in Turkmenistan – particularly for protected areas projects.

41. However, given the results of the project, as described below, and the barriers that still exist, the risk analysis in the Project Document was inadequate. This will be discussed in the section on project implementation below.

42. In contrast, the ITA updated the risk analysis, particularly following his fourth mission to Turkmenistan. In it, he identified that the PASP may not be approved and that the SNP may not be declared. However, he did not explore to root causes for why these things may not happen.

3.1.3 Lessons from other relevant projects

43. There has been one previous UNDP-GEF Protected Areas project in Turkmenistan. This was the project “Conservation and sustainable use of globally significant biological diversity in Khazar Nature Reserve on the Caspian Sea Coast” (PIMS 3157). In addition, there have been other efforts. The Michael Succow Foundation and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) have both been engaged in Turkmenistan. For a period neither organisation had an MOU with the Government⁶.

44. The lessons from the Khazar project, as noted in its Terminal Evaluation (TE) – notably that there should be local representation in the Project Board – was only realised following the MTR⁷. However, as noted in the MTR, there are stark parallels between some of the aspects of implementation between the present project and the Khazar project – including the absence of a Project Manager for periods of the project’s lifetime.

45. While there are allusions in the TE of the Khazar project (but nothing explicit) and nothing in the literature surrounding either the RSPB or the Michael Succow Foundation’s programming in Turkmenistan are the lessons and recommendations regarding the peculiar circumstances of carrying out such projects in Turkmenistan – including with the MNP as one’s principal partner. Because of the difficulties that this current project had had in realising its objectives and at the specific request of the UNDP-CO RR, I have carried out a more detailed analysis of the barriers to such projects. This is presented in the section on Project Implementation below (see Section 3.2).

⁶ This has now changed and the RSPB signed an agreement with the MNP in February 2014 and the Michael Succow Foundation signed an agreement with the Institute of Botany within the Academy of Sciences of Turkmenistan in January 2014.

⁷ Notably, the MTR for this project and the TE for the Khazar project were carried out by the same consultant and hence one would have expected this to be noted and recommended by the MTR consultant.

3.1.4 Planned Stakeholder Participation

46. The project document contains a relatively satisfactory stakeholder analysis and the principal stakeholders are listed, including a short description of their respective roles in the project. Similarly, the stakeholder involvement plan was satisfactory – with the inclusion of a project inception workshop, inclusion of stakeholders in the PB, establishment of a project management unit within the NIDFF or within the MNP, the establishment of local working groups, the dissemination of project communications among stakeholders, implementing the project with the involvement of stakeholders, seeking to form cooperative governance structures at the level of the protected areas and capacity development.

3.1.5 Replication approach

47. The replication approach in the Project Document is basically sound but is based wholly on the assumption that the project would have made substantial gains in the achievement of its objectives.

48. Despite this, there are significant lessons to be learned from this project (see section 4.5 on lessons learned).

3.1.6 UNDP Competitive Advantage

49. UNDP has a significant comparative advantage:

- a. As a global organization, it can apply lessons learned from all over the world to a particular problem
- b. It is a trusted partner that is easier to work with than other multi-national organizations; part of this is that it operates through grant assistance rather than other, often more complex mechanisms and it is not pursuing any political or commercial interests.
- c. As a global organization, it has a bigger picture and, consequently, can influence all aspects of a problem
- d. It retains neutrality and independence. This is particularly important when dealing with sensitive governance issues
- e. It always has a presence in the countries in which the projects are implemented. This brings local knowledge and experience to the projects.
- f. UNDP not only has a global role but also a regional one. In the sphere of biodiversity conservation, this is important because of the lessons that can be shared and learned among countries with a similar history

50. As a result, at least in principle, UNDP can implement innovative projects just as they have tried to do in this project.

51. In addition to the implementation of innovative solutions, UNDP has the ability to ensure the application of global standards to wildlife conservation.

52. In principle, UNDP has a further significant advantage within Turkmenistan. Indeed, with the exception of a Biosafety project (that should be underway – its PIF was approved in 2012), it has been the single GEF agency implementing Biodiversity projects within Turkmenistan.

53. This may be changing – the World Bank has, apparently, been invited into the country – but, again, apparently, this is primarily to serve as a ‘consultancy’ type organisation.

54. Irrespective, UNDP has had and is likely to maintain an effective monopoly as Implementation Agency for the majority of GEF Biodiversity projects. Whether or not this monopoly led to some of the issues that plagued the project following its commencement and up to the point of the MTR can only be speculated upon.

3.1.7 Linkages between the project and other interventions in the sector

55. The project grew out of the GoT/UNDP *Improvement of Protected Areas in Turkmenistan* (EcoNet) (Atlas # 15051) project with the strong support from the former Minister of Nature Protection. It was also built on the foundations laid by organisations such as the Michael Succow Foundation: the Foundation had been working on a “National Park Programme” for some period with a specific focus on Archabil and Sumbar as the first potential sites for National Parks – in turn, building on the foundation of the Central Kopetdag and Sunt-Hasardag Zapovedniks, respectively. Further, the Michael Succow Foundation had awarded a scholarship to Jamal Hammedova⁸ to carry out a Master’s degree, the thesis of which was “*Legal and Administrative bases for Establishing National Parks in Turkmenistan.*”

56. However, over the lifespan of the project, there were no other interventions in the protected area sector within the country. The project was due to be cofinanced by the RSPB and the Michael Succow Foundation. This cofinancing never materialised because the Memoranda of Understanding between the GoT and these two organisations were not extended – thus, they were not operational over the course of the project⁹.

57. The sustainability of the outputs of the project – and most specifically the PASP – is somewhat dependent on the degree to which it is used by future projects and the degree to which it is incorporated into the forthcoming NBSAP (second version), the preparation of which is currently underway (and the strategy and action plan is expected to be complete in September/October 2014).

3.1.8 Management arrangements

58. The project was implemented under UNDP Nationally Executed (NEX) modalities with the Ministry of Nature Protection (MNP) as the project’s Executing Agency. However, all contractual payments were made directly by the UNDP-CO. As such, the UNDP-CO managed all project funds, including budgetary planning, monitoring, revisions, disbursements, record keeping, reporting and auditing. In conclusion, the project was implemented under this modified NEX modality with UNDP making direct payments.

59. At the beginning of the project (first quarter 2010), the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) was housed within the National Institute for Deserts, Fauna and Flora (NIDFF) – rather than in the Department of Special Protected Areas within the MNP (for further discussion on this, see section 3.2.2 and 3.2.6). Later in the project, only the Project Manager (PM) remained within the NIDFF with the PIU (for all projects in the Energy and Environment sector) being housed within the UNDP-CO.

⁸ In addition, Jamal Hammedova started as the first Project Manager on the UNDP-GEF PAS Project; her thesis work gave her a significant competitive advantage during the process of her selection as the first Project Manager.

⁹ The MOU with the RSPB expired in 2010 (but in February 2014 it was renewed – but with a different focus); irrespective, the finance from the RSPB was always envisaged as “parallel” funding. The Michael Succow Foundation has also just renewed its cooperation with Turkmenistan but there appears to be a shift in the nature of that cooperation from protected areas to various botanical issues.

60. This impact that this had on the effectiveness and efficiency of project implementation and on country ownership of the project will be explored in the later sections of the report.

3.2 Project Implementation

61. As described in the Project Results section of the report (see section 3.3), the project has largely failed in attaining its objectives as defined in the Project Document. This section of the report – on Project Implementation – explores in detail why this might have been the case and, perhaps more importantly, what lessons might be drawn from the implementation problems that the project had for future projects.

3.2.1 Adaptive management

62. In the words of the MTR consultant, by the stage that the MTR took place (in October – December 2012, which was, in fact, two months before the project was, in theory, due to close by the original timeline), “the implementation of [the] Project has been woeful – quite the worst at the mid-term that [he had] ever seen.” However, as a result of a penetrative and critical MTR, the project was turned around and was relatively effective in its implementation. In order to do this, the MTR recommended a cessation of technical work for the first three months of 2013 (i.e., until 31 March 2013) with the aim of putting in place a plan – to be thereafter implemented for a period of up to two years (i.e., until December 2014) if and only if it was endorsed by the PB and the RTA in Bratislava.

63. In the event, the RTA approved an extension until December 2013. The project has thereafter been extended a number of times, i) to accommodate the presentation of the outputs of the project at a workshop on 18 March 2014, and ii) to accommodate the Terminal Evaluation of the project.

64. The performance of the project in fifteen months following the MTR illustrates the value of periodic independent evaluations of projects and is a good illustration, too, of adaptive management.

65. In contrast, as will be discussed in more depth below, the project represents a clash of two rigid, rather inflexible cultures: that of the GEF and that of the Government of Turkmenistan. This resulted in the project being accused of inflexibility by the GoT as part of a cycle of deepening division and mistrust between UNDP-CO and GoT (and most specifically, the MNP). If GEF wishes to invest further funding in Turkmenistan – and specifically with the MNP – there might need to be a degree of flexibility that is specified in the project’s design to allow for the whimsical nature of the government. As such, GEF itself would demonstrate that it is willing to be adaptive to the peculiar circumstances of countries such as Turkmenistan.

3.2.2 Partnership arrangements

66. There were, in effect, three principal partners in this project: the UNDP-CO, the NIDFF and the Department of Flora and Fauna Protection in the MNP¹⁰. The project was housed within the NIDFF in the centre of Ashgabat. This is a considerable distance from where the MNP – including the Department of Flora and Fauna – is housed within the “Agricultural Complex.” These institutional arrangements require

¹⁰ This is the Department under which the Protected Areas fall.

some further analysis as this sheds light on some of the issues that arose from the project.

67. The MNP falls under the Agricultural Complex; this could be defined as a “super-ministry” under which eight ministries fall and is overseen by a single Deputy Prime Minister – for Agriculture and Water Resources – and who is one of ten Deputy Prime Ministers that sits in the Cabinet of Ministers with the President. Within this “super-ministry”, the MNP is marginalized and disempowered. There are numerous things to support such an assertion, not least that when the building in which all eight ministries are housed was built, all seven other ministries contributed to the construction of the building – and consequently had some choice over the offices in which they are housed. The MNP did not (or could not) make a contribution to the construction of the building and, as a consequence, is now housed in all remaining space. One further consequence of this is that the project could not be housed within the Department of Flora and Fauna Protection but whether that was because there was no space or whether it was disallowed (either by the Department itself or by the other seven ministries) remains unclear.

68. The *result* was that the project was housed within the NIDFF – some considerable distance (both physically and metaphorically) from the Department with whom it was supposed to be partnered most closely.

69. Further division was added between the project and the ministry when the PIU was established within the UNDP-CO. This will be further discussed below.

70. In summary, there was some distance between the project and the principal government department – the Department of Flora and Fauna Protection – that should have otherwise have been the key partner for the project.

71. The relationship between the project and the NIDFF was without issue.

72. No other partnerships materialised during the project – including those with the Michael Succow Foundation and the RSPB primarily because neither of these NGOs had an agreement with the GoT over the course of the project’s implementation.

3.2.3 Feedback from M&E activities used for adaptive management

73. As described above, the MTR was critical to course adjustment and improving the performance of the project during the past fifteen months.

74. In addition, there were various other players involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the project, all of whom appeared to have some level of frustration with the performance of the project and provided feedback that ultimately culminated in an improved project performance in the past fifteen months. These people included the i) International Technical Advisor (ITA) who over the course of the project carried out six missions to Turkmenistan ii) the UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor (RTA)¹¹, iii) the UNDP-CO Resident Representative (RR) and Deputy Resident Representative (DRR) and iv) the Environment and Energy unit within the UNDP-CO. All of these people contributed significantly to whatever successes the project has had; on realisation of the degree to which the project was struggling to meet its objectives, each has tried to find ways to overcome the obstacles to project performance.

¹¹ The RTA was previously based in Bratislava but the UNDP-GEF’s Regional Technical Centre has since moved (or is in the process of moving) to Istanbul.

75. Finally, the recruitment of Shirin Karriyeva – the second and final Project Manager – was a good example of adaptive management. Her promotion from National Expert, through Team Leader and National Technical Adviser to Project Manager significantly contributed to the successes of the project, as they are, in the final eighteen months of the project’s life.

3.2.4 Project Finance

76. As indicated above, the project’s finances (including procurement and contracting) were managed by the UNDP-CO. Initially, the project had a Administrative and Financial Assistant (AFA) but this changed roughly halfway through the project’s lifespan (in August 2011) with the establishment of the PIU within the UNDP-CO – and thus, centralisation of services to all the projects.

77. The annual workplans and budgets were, however, approved by the PB.

78. The project was initially planned with an overall budget of USD 3.548 million of which USD 950,000 was a grant from the GEF Trust Fund. However, two aspects of the co-financing did not materialise: this was the co-finance from the Michael Succow Foundation and from the RSPB. As indicated above, over the course of the project’s lifespan, neither of these organisations was operational.

Table 1. The resulting value of the project.

Type	Donor	Value (USD)
UNDP-managed grants	GEF	950,000.00
	UNDP	60,000.00
In-kind donations	Government of Turkmenistan	1,400,000.00
	UNDP	100,000.00
TOTAL		2,510,000.00

79. In addition, there was no detailed tracking of the co-finance expenditure (either in cash or in-kind) by the GoT. However, a list of the government in-kind contribution includes:

- a. The time allocated to the project by the National Project Coordinator (NPC); for the majority of the project, the NPC was the Deputy Minister of Nature Protection. He was one of the architects of the project and chaired the PB.
- b. Time allocated to the project by other members of staff of the MNP
- c. The housing of the project within the NIDFF and the use of MNP facilities for project events (mostly meetings)
- d. The cost of utilities in the offices used by the project within the NIDFF
- e. On occasion, the project used facilities within the protected areas

80. In the event and given that this was apparently the extent of the government in-kind contribution to the project, it is unlikely that this reached the originally budgeted amount of USD 1.4 million.

81. In addition to the government's in-kind contributions, the UNDP-CO also provided in-kind support to the project; this was indirect through other projects that are being implemented within the Energy and Environment portfolio (e.g., Environmental Governance, National Environmental Action Plan and Strengthening Climate Policy) but which have contributed to the achievement of some results of PAS project.

Table 2. The total budgeted and actual expenditure, by Outcome, for the project

Outcome	Budgeted	Actual	% spent
1	672,934.05	437,552.53	65.02
2	228,416.45	127,713.02	55.91
3 (Project Management)	140,253.66	149,044.10	106.27
Total	1,041,604.16	714,279.65	68.57

82. By this stage of the project's implementation (just under two months before the project was due to close), the project was underspent on both of the Outcomes but was slightly overspent (6.27%) on the Project Management budget line (see Table 2, Figure 1 and Figure 2).

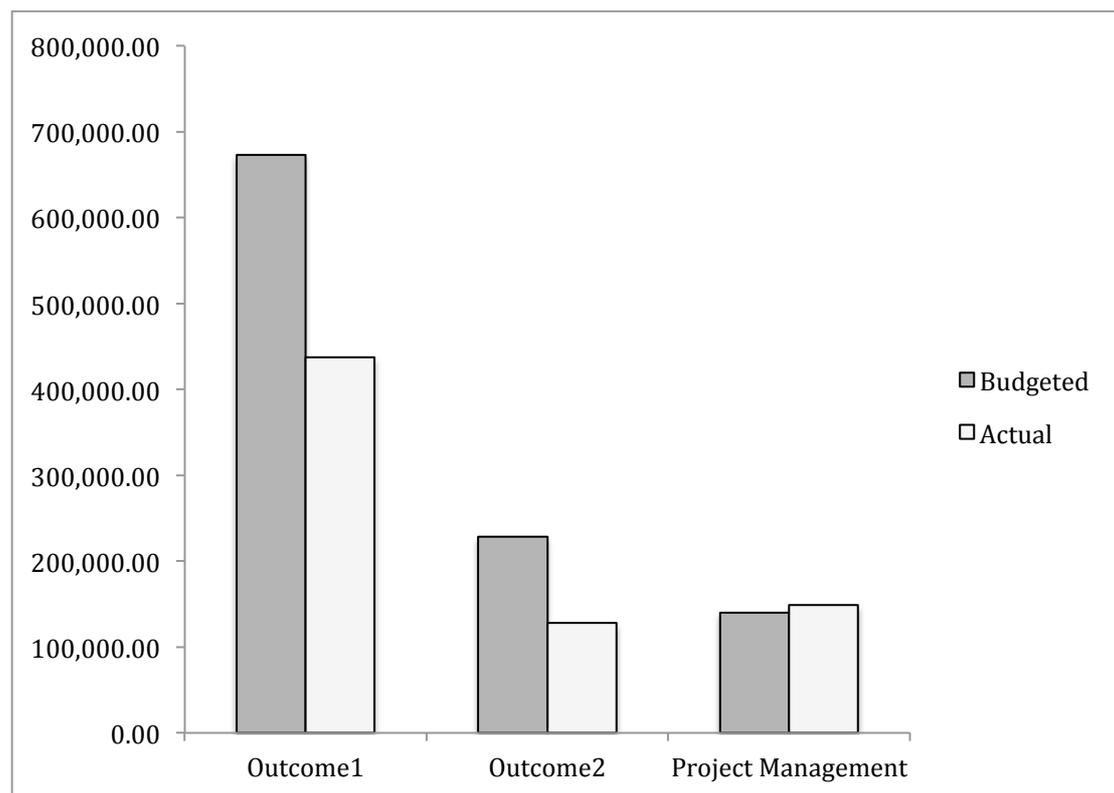


Figure 1. The relationship between the total budgeted amount and total actual expenditure by Outcome for the project.

83. That the project was underspent in both of the Outcomes was somewhat to be expected given the under-delivery of project results (see section 3.3). Even with the significant overspend on the Project Management budget line (see paragraphs below),

the project only spent 68.57% of the grant from GEF. This means that from a grant of USD 950,000, USD 714,279.65 was actually spent (to date) meaning that if there is no further extension of the project, the balance will have to be returned to the GEF.

84. Despite the overall under spending, despite the under spending on the two Outcomes for the project and despite the only slight (6.27%) over-spending on the Project Management budget line – *relative to how it was budgeted each year* – the project was significantly overspent on its Project Management budget line relative to the originally budgeted amount in the Project Document.

85. As a MSP with a budget of USD 950,000, GEF guidance suggests that project management budget should be 10% of the total grant (i.e., USD 95,000) – this was what was indeed budgeted in the project document. It should be noted that an external review of GEF Administrative Costs – including project management costs was carried out in 2011¹². The review noted that “project management budgets [should be] 10 % of the GEF grant for grants up to \$2 million, and 5% of the GEF grant for grants above \$2 million [and] if project proposals request above these benchmarks, then additional details have to be provided regarding the project management budget for scrutiny by the Secretariat.” The conclusion was that the “Secretariat continues to keep close scrutiny of project management budgets.”

86. At the point of the TE mission in Turkmenistan, the project management budgeting went significantly above the originally budgeted amount (from the originally budgeted USD 95,000 to USD 140,253.66 – or 14.8% of the total budget of the project) and the expenditure was a further 6.27% above this (at USD 149,044.10). In addition, the project spent a further USD 55,223.94 on project management using funds from the UNDP-CO. This meant that the project has spent a total of USD 204,268.04 (to date) on project management; this is equivalent of 21.5% of the total grant from the GEF. When this is coupled with the under-delivery on the Project Results (see section 3.3), this represents extremely poor value for money with respect to project management.

¹² Agenda Item 12, GEF Council Meeting Nov 8 – 12 2011, *GEF Administrative Expenses – Fees and Project Management Expenses: External Review*; GEF/C.41/07; see also *Highlights of the Council's Discussions, GEF Council Meeting Nov 8-10 2011* - http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/documents/Highlights_Revised_11-18-11.pdf

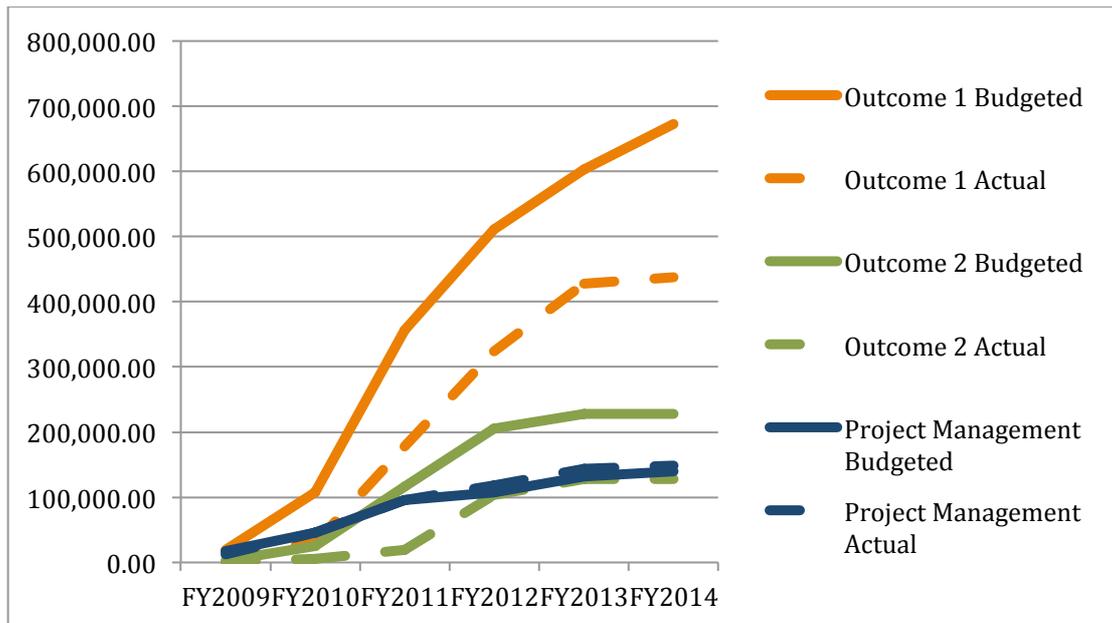


Figure 2. The cumulative expenditure by Outcome relative to the budgeted amounts.

87. Moreover, and at first glance, alarmingly, *this occurred even with the establishment of the PIU within the UNDP-CO – something that was supposed to improve efficiency and reduce costs because the costs were shared by up to eight different projects ...* However, when the figures are examined, they do demonstrate that since the establishment of the PIU, the monthly project management costs have decreased (see Figure 3)¹³. In short, this does demonstrate that the establishment of the PIU does increase efficiency (during the period when the project was most effective; see section 3.3 on project results).

88. Another positive management initiative taken by the UNDP-CO during the course of this project was to establish an “offline” set of accounts from the Atlas system. This allows for *post hoc* scrutiny or reallocation if errors are made; Atlas does not allow for this. As a result, this initiative is to be applauded.

¹³ The average costs per month are used for this analysis to allow for comparison across all years – given that both 2009 and 2014 are less than one full year.

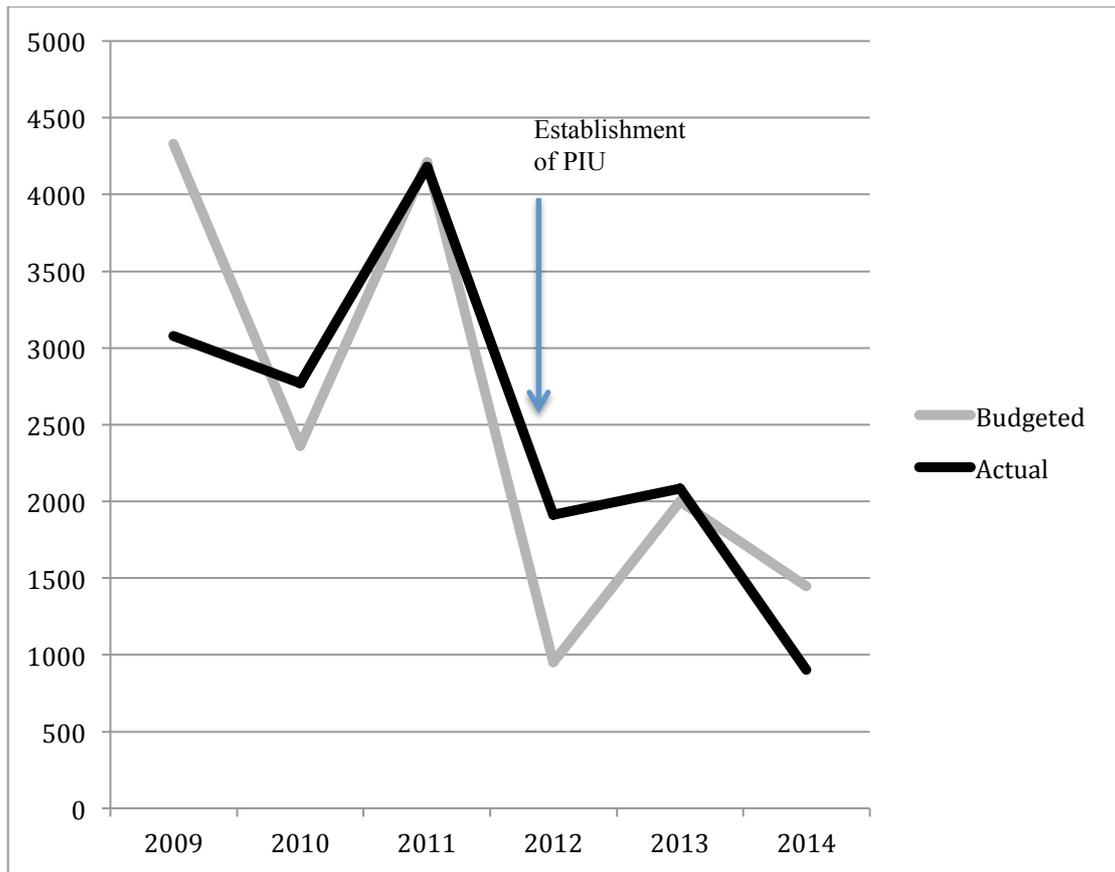


Figure 3. The monthly average of project management expenditure against the budgeted amounts by financial year

Table 3. The project finances comparing budgeted amounts against actual expenditure by Outcome and by financial year

	YR1 2009			YR2 2010			YR3 2011		
Outcome	Budgeted	Actual	% spent	Budgeted	Actual	% spent	Budgeted	Actual	% spent
1	19,296.05	17,287.83	89.59	88,000	11,924.15	13.55	249,300	148,611.65	59.61
2	2,519.45	528.1	20.96	22,315	5,517.22	24.72	91,600	13,244.40	14.46
3 (Proj. Manag.)	17,329.10	12,307.07	71.02	28,324.56	33,238.06	117.35	50,500	50,155.76	99.32
Total	39,144.60	30,123.00	76.95	138,639.56	50,649.43	36.53	391,400	212,011.81	54.17

	YR4 2012			YR5 2013			YR6 2014		
Outcome	Budgeted	Actual	% spent	Budgeted	Actual	% spent	Budgeted	Actual	% spent
1	154,648	146,395.16	94.66	92290	103,367.07	112.00	69,400	9,966.67	14.36
2	88,582	83,911.32	94.73	23400	24,511.98	104.75	0	0	0.00
3 (Proj. Manag.)	11,420	22,948.59	200.95	24,000	24,980.09	104.08	8,680	5,414.53	62.38
Total	254,650	253,255.07	99.45	139,690	152,859.14	109.43	78,080	15,381.20	19.70

Table 4. The project's finances both for GEF and UNDP cash contributions over the total project illustrating the over-expenditure of the project management budget line

	GEF			Co-Finance - UNDP			Total		
	Budgeted	Actual	%	Budgeted	Actual	%	Budgeted	Actual	%
Outcome1	672,934.05	437,552.53	65.02	46,858.00	4,191.50	8.95	719,792.05	441,744.03	61.37
Outcome2	228,416.45	127,713.02	55.91	510.00	13.33	2.61	228,926.45	127,726.35	55.79
Project Mgt	140,253.66	149,044.10*	106.27	53,332.00	55,223.94*	103.55	193,585.66	204,268.04*	105.52
Total	1,041,604.16	714,279.65	68.57	100,700.00	59,428.77	59.02	1,142,304.16	773,708.42	67.73

* It should be noted that the original budget for Project Management in the Project Document was USD 95,000

3.2.5 Monitoring & Evaluation – design and implementation

89. The design of the monitoring and evaluation framework was standard for a UNDP-GEF MSP and is described in detail in the Project Document (pp. 27-32). The MTR review commented extensively on the monitoring that had been carried out until that stage of the project.

90. Despite the comment in the MTR that the PB should meet more regularly than once a year – thus, to meet at least twice a year (in accordance with the Project Document) – the PB did not increase its rate of meeting and met only once (on 23 April 2013) since the MTR was carried out. Crucially, this was in response to the MTR report and to endorse a way forward following the re-planning period in early 2013.

91. Since the MTR – and obviously somewhat alerted by it – the monitoring of the project by the UNDP-CO has been satisfactory. Indeed, it could be said that in the past fifteen months, the UNDP-CO has done everything that they possibly could do to make the project a success. As a consequence of the improved monitoring by the UNDP-CO, the risk log within the PIR in 2013 acknowledged the existence of political risk on the establishment of Sumbar National Park.

92. The progress monitoring continued since the MTR in a similar way with quarterly reports and an Annual Progress Report (APR) from the project to the UNDP-CO culminating in the production of the Project Implementation Report (PIR) to cover the period July-June each year. Thus, since the MTR, one PIR has been produced with the final PIR underway at present.

93. There has been frequent communication between the UNDP-CO and the PM – particularly since the MTR.

94. It is notable, however, that participation by the UNDP-CO in the project processes – including field visits – was less than satisfactory. For example, in the past two years, there was only one field visit carried out by a member of UNDP-CO staff (when the DRR visited the field to witness a training session being led by the ITA). In addition, rarely – if ever – did a member of the UNDP-CO staff attend an entire meeting or workshop.

95. The monitoring of the activities carried out by consultants for the project including the work of the two Working Groups that were established by the project – the Sumbar Working Group and the PASP Working Group – appears to be satisfactory and all consultants expressed satisfaction with the support and management by the PM.

96. Because the project did not manage to achieve its objectives, there has been little done in the way of impact monitoring. However, by all accounts, the project has worked hard to increase awareness and “sensitise” various stakeholder groups particularly about the possibility that a national park was to be established in the Sumbar area. While the consultants that were involved in this worked confessed that they “intended to carry out an assessment of the impact” of this awareness creation work and as a follow up of the initial baseline survey, it was not done.

3.2.6 UNDP & Implementing Partner implementation, coordination and operational issues

97. I have already described some of the issues that led to a division between the UNDP-CO and the MNP (specifically, as a result of the housing of the project in the

NIDFF as opposed to the Department of Flora and Fauna Protection, see section 3.2.2 above). In addition, in the section above, it is evident that the PB was neither meeting as often as indicated in the Project Document nor as often as it should for a project with as many issues as this one had. I have also introduced the idea that the project represents a clash of two rather rigid, inflexible structures – the Government of Turkmenistan and the GEF.

98. There were a number of issues that led to the divide between the UNDP-CO and the MNP.

99. First, there was the physical divide with the project being housed within the NIDFF rather than the Department of Flora and Fauna Protection (which is the government department with the mandate for the management of protected areas. Such a physical divide does not engender trust and communication that is necessary – especially with a project that is attempting to introduce new concepts within a conservative government system.

100. Second, the withdrawal of the additional project staff from the project office on establishment of the PIU within UNDP-CO was, symbolically, a further division between the MNP and the UNDP-CO. It appears to have lessened any feelings of ownership that the MNP may have had over the project.

101. Third, there were expectations from the MNP of greater involvement in project processes – for example, the selection of consultants or the award of contracts. That this did not happen further eroded any feeling of ownership that the government may have originally had.

102. At some point in the project's implementation, the division between the government and the project – seen by the government as indistinguishable from the UNDP-CO – became insurmountable and the government became an obstacle to any progress of the project. This appears to be one of the reasons that contributed to the government's reluctance to move forward with the gazettement of Sumbar National Park.

103. In addition to this divisional issue, a number of the interviewees during the TE mission and on Skype interviews thereafter expressed that the project had been “unlucky” and listed some of the things that they thought to be “bad luck” for the project. These instances of “bad luck” were associated primarily with various discontinuities and temporal hiatuses that blighted the project (see Figure 4), including:

- a. A change of President – the death of the Former President apparently led to some delays in the development of the concept of the project.
- b. A change of Minister of Nature Protection relatively early during the project's lifetime (mid-October 2009). The former Minister of Nature Protection was, by all accounts, a champion for the project, and was instrumental in its development and design.
- c. More recently, the Deputy Minister of Nature Protection (who was also a champion for the project as well as being the project's National Project Coordinator, NPC) was also replaced with the now former Deputy Minister being moved to the position of Chief Scientific Specialist within

one of the Departments with the NIDFF¹⁴. In short, the project lost its champions at the higher levels of the MNP.

- d. A gap between the departure of the previous UNDP-CO RR and the arrival of the current RR (but take note of the positive impact that the current RR has had on project implementation as described below).
- e. The selection of an inexperienced (first) Project Manager and the issues with the transition to the second Project Manager who was fully recruited as the Project Manager a full year after the first PM left the project (as fully described in the MTR).
- f. The discontinuity that the establishment of the PIU in UNDP-CO represented – the transition, therefore, from a fully staffed project team based in the NIDFF (see Table 5).
- g. The delay to the recruitment of the International Technical Advisor (ITA).
- h. The project envisaged co-finance from, and cooperation and collaboration with the Michael Succow Foundation and the RSPB. As has been described above, this was precluded because neither of these organisations had an active MOU with the government over the course of the project’s lifespan (until early 2014 when both organisation have managed to negotiation and agree new Memoranda of Understanding with the government).

104. In contrast to these changes that appear to have negatively affected the success of the project, there were yet others that can only be described as having a positive impact on the project’s implementation. Perhaps most notable among those was the arrival of the new UNDP-CO Resident Representative in July 2012. She has taken a hands-on approach to dealing with the issues that have blighted this project and given unprecedented amounts of time to monitoring its progress. Her arrival and commitment to the project can be seen to be one of the reasons why the project moved forward so much in the past fifteen months – especially when compared with the poor progress within the preceding thirty-six months.

Table 5. The composition of the project team, their positions and their duration of employment to date

Name	Position	Period of employment
Jamal Hanmedov	Project Manager	19 April 2010-31 March 2012
Ayna Allaberdyeva	Project Assistant	19 March 2010-Aug2012 (still financed from PAS project)
Sergey Kurbanov	IT Specialist	01 March 2011-11 July 2011
Azat Shamuradov	IT Specialist	27 July 2011-31 December 2012
Shirin Karryeva	First as a National Expert and then as Team Leader	25 July 2011-14 September 2012
	National Technical Advisor	1 November 2012-31 March 2013
	Project Manager	1 April 2013-30 June 2014

¹⁴ He has subsequently (15 May 2014) been shifted again, this time to Head of the Vertebrate Laboratory within NIDFF.

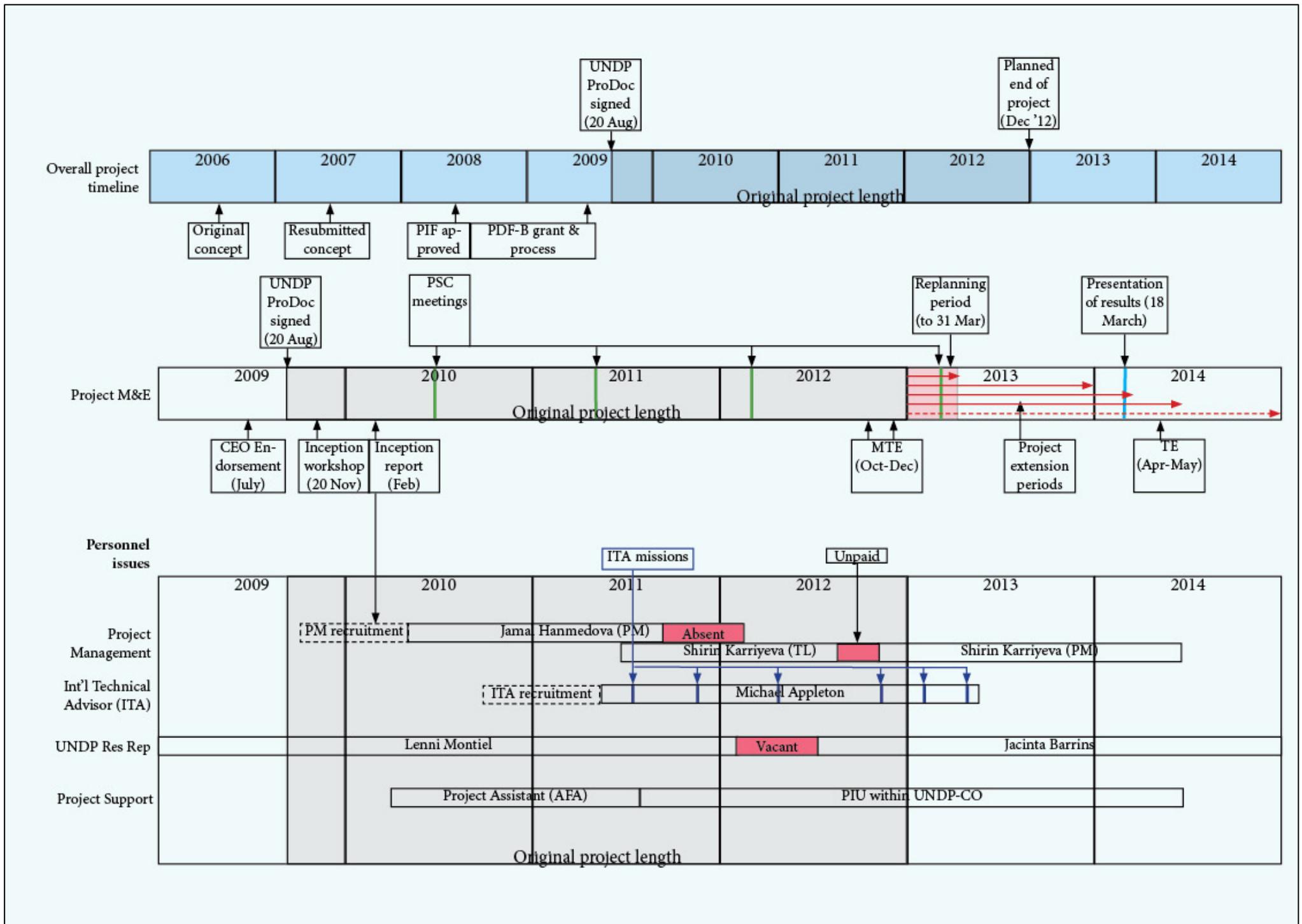


Figure 4. The project's timelines illustrating various discontinuities.

3.3 Project Results

3.3.1 Overall results and Attainment of objectives

105. The project was largely unsuccessful in achieving its originally stated objectives and outcomes. At the Objective level, there were five indicators (see also Table 6):

- a. Coverage of the protected area system. While the coverage of the protected areas *did* increase with the establishment of the *Bereketli Karakum* (or Central Karakum) zapovednik, this was independent of the work of the project. The principal outcome targeted by the project (in terms of protected area coverage) was the establishment of Sumbar National Park; the project did not manage to catalyse this.
- b. Financial sustainability scorecard for protected area system. Based on *estimates* made by the project, the score for financial sustainability of the protected area system has increased from the baseline of 31% to *at least* 47% - just one point lower than the score targeted in the project's logframe. Interestingly, this figure is derived from estimates made by the project consultants working on the Protected Area System Plan (PASP) as the Chief Accountant from the MNP refused to share the budgetary information for the protected areas. Consequently, the figure was derived from a conservative extrapolation from 2005 figures (which are publically available from the capacity self-assessment exercise).
- c. Capacity assessment scorecard for the protected area system. As would be expected with a project that has invested in training, there was an increase in the institutional and individual capacities.
- d. Endorsement of the PASP by the government. It was only just prior to the TE mission in Turkmenistan that the comments on the draft PASP had been received from the MNP. Over the course of the TE mission, the draft was amended to incorporate the comments and, therefore, the final Russian version of the PASP is now complete. This version has been translated into Turkmen and edited. It is now being compared, in detail, with the Russian version. These documents will then be converted into the final pdf formats and, once complete, the PASP can then be formally submitted to the MNP for approval.
- e. Extent of representativeness within the PASP. The representation of the country's ecosystem has been completed and described within the PASP. As such, the final outcome here is dependent not only endorsement of the PASP but also the expansion of the existing protected areas as well as the establishment of new protected areas to include those ecosystem that are currently under- or not-represented within the current protected area system.

106. The project had two components, each with a number of outputs.

107. Component One – Expanded PAS to improve PA representation and coverage had three outputs:

- a. Output 1.1 – A PASP is prepared as a comprehensive foundation for a representative PA system. This has been achieved although the PASP was not yet formally approved or endorsed by the government.
- b. Output 1.2 – Feasibility assessments for four priority areas. The feasibility studies for four areas – Central Kopetdag, Koytendag, Bolshoy Balkan and Central Karakum – were carried out with SWOT analyses for each area. While at the MTR there was the assertion that the project was not following the advice of the ITA^{15 16}, the feasibility studies and SWOT analyses for these areas have largely been incorporated into the PASP. Originally, it was envisaged that this work would be done in cooperation and collaboration with the Michael Succow Foundation; however, given that the Michael Succow Foundation did not have an MOU with the government for the lifespan of the project (until January 2014), this collaboration did not come to fruition.
- c. Output 1.3 – Sumbar National Park is established. The project did not manage to achieve this; some of the reasons why will be explored below (see section 3.3.3). However, it was under this output that the new law on protected areas in Turkmenistan was developed¹⁷. The law not only allows for the establishment of National Parks but it also allows for the establishment of Biosphere Reserves, Botanical Gardens and Zoological Parks. What was most noticeable about the enactment of the law was the time it took: the law was drafted by August 2011; It was submitted to the Cabinet of Minister in November 2011 and was adopted and signed by the President by March 2012. Thereafter, a number of secondary regulations and guidelines were developed.

While Sumbar National Park was not established, many associated outputs were produced to facilitate its establishment, including: i) draft management and business plans, ii) a detailed feasibility study, and iii) a PR package with materials (nine booklets in both Russian and Turkmen) giving detailed information regarding the potential national park.

In addition, under this output, the project assisted with materials and equipment for the area, including furniture for Sunt-Hasardag Zapovednik and bird incubation and breeding equipment (ovoscope/egg-tester, incubator, brooder, generator).

108. Component Two of the project was focused on the institutional and individual capacity and included the following outputs:

- a. Output 2.1 – Skills and capacity development. Following the MTR, a training programme was designed and implemented (and all other training was stopped). This was one of the outputs in which interviewees were generally pleased with the activities of the project. When listed, the project had provided training on (but not limited to): i) protected area

¹⁵ See para 42 on pg. 19 of the MTR.

¹⁶ **Comment on the TE draft:** “*what contradictions the project had and didn’t follow ITA advice*”. **TE response:** Text edited; the MTR lists a number of occasions on which the ITA recommendations were not followed and explains in para 42 (of the MTR report) the assertions.

¹⁷ Law “On specially protected nature territories”, adopted by the President of Turkmenistan and published in the official government gazette “*Neytralnyi Turkmenistan*” on 31 March 2012.

management plan development, ii) GIS maps and systems, iii) financing of protected areas, and iv) monitoring processes for protected areas.

- b. Output 2.2 – Protected Areas Academy. At the point of the MTR, various pieces of furniture had been procured for a “PA Academy” – that was originally established under a previous UNDP-GEF project (the “Khazar” project). These have subsequently been “distributed” within the MNP primarily because the Academy, as proposed, was deemed unsustainable. Some of this furniture and other materials should be also distributed to Sunt-Hasardag Reserve/Zapovednik.

109. In addition to these outputs that were formally part of the project, some further aspects were delivered, including:

- a. The development and publication of the Third Edition of the Red Book of Turkmenistan, and
- b. Various contributions to Environment and Biodiversity Day Events

110. In terms of the logical framework, the gains have been mostly (but not always) related to the above Outputs (see Table 6). As with the above Outputs, in some areas, there have been only limited or no gains.

111. In conclusion, then, the project has made significant advances since the MTR. The principal successes of the project include:

- a. The 2012 Law “On Specially Protected Areas” that was signed by the President of Turkmenistan and published in the official government gazette in March 2012. This law provides for the establishment of national parks (as well as other categories of protected area) in the country. In addition, the project (together with a legal working group) also produced and contributed to the production of “normative acts” (or regulations and guidelines to accompany and operationalize the laws), a draft decree for the establishment of SNP, draft decrees on environmental tourism, and the draft bylaws for the different categories of protected area (which further defines the categories) – which is currently being considered by the Cabinet of Ministers at present.

Much work remains to be done and the legal working regret the closure of the project and the loss of the support given to them because, in their own words, “the work has just started” to harmonise the different laws and to produce further “normative acts” to operationalize the legal framework.

- b. The production of a number of key outputs, including i) the Protected Area System Plan (PASP), ii) the feasibility study for SNP, iii) the draft management and business plans for SNP, iv) the digitisation and production of maps and GIS layers of all the protected areas in the country – as well as the formal presentation of these outputs to a meeting of stakeholders on 18 March 2014. The project has also produced some publicity (or “PR”) material for SNP – however, the usefulness of such materials (except, perhaps, as examples for future projects, and future and other protected areas) in the absence of the formal gazettelement of the National Park is questionable.
- c. The long-term influence that the project outputs will have on the sector. Turkmenistan appears to have a history of producing outputs and

abandoning them for a while before coming back to them when the moment calls. For example, the work on Sumbar National Park that was carried out in this project was built on the foundation of a number of pieces of work: i) the Wildlife Protection Centre Fund (2006), ii) the work carried out by the Michael Succow Foundation (that resulted in a proposed map for a 150,000ha protected area, 2009).

As such, one would reasonably expect that despite the fact that, with the exception of the 2012 Law “On specially protected nature territories,” the outputs of the project will be consulted, referred to and used as the history of the protected area system in Turkmenistan evolves (and for more discussion on this see section 3.3.6 on Sustainability).

- d. The project did make some inputs – mostly furniture but also, on closure of the project, of IT equipment (see Annex IX), both at the central level and for Sunt-Hasardag Zapovednik – and, indeed, the **recommendation** is that more of the furniture that was originally procured for the “Protected Areas Academy” and some of the IT equipment from the project should be transferred and used in Sunt-Hasardag Zapovednik.
- e. The project did make substantial contributions to (further) develop capacity in the country both through study tours, workshops and specific trainings (see Output 2.1 and Annex VII). In addition, the experience of the consultants and project staff has grown as a result of the project. It is universally recognised that these are good people and worthy of the investment that the project made in them. It is only through the continual investment in such people that the capacity within the country will finally grow and “new” ideas such as the creation of national parks will be supported.
- f. The project also carried out awareness creation and “sensitisation” among local stakeholders in the vicinity of the protected areas – with an obvious focus on those people living within and surrounding the proposed SNP, including *welayats* and *etraps*, members of staff of the MNP, the teachers and children of local schools, and the local communities themselves. The project adopted a participatory approach and was inclusive in the majority of its processes.
- g. Finally, while it was not an original objective of the project, it contributed to the development and dissemination of the Third Edition of the Red Book of Turkmenistan.

112. In contrast to these gains and largely as measured by the objective and outcomes that the project set out to achieve, there were many issues with the project. Because these relate to effectiveness of achieving the objectives and outcomes, these are explored below (see section 3.3.3).

Table 6. The project's logframe with the End of Project status.

#	Aim	Indicator	Baseline	EOP target	EOP status	Means of verification	Comments
1	Objective: To create an enabling environment for the establishment of a functional, effective and ecologically coherent system of protected areas in Turkmenistan	Coverage (ha) of the PA system	1,934,200ha	2,050,000ha	The coverage increase by 87,800ha through the establishment of “Bereketli Karakum” zapovednik in Central Karakum Desert in July 2013. EOP status 2,022,000ha The project carried out a feasibility study and SWOT analysis of the area (as well as three other areas – two existing areas - Central Kopetdag and Koytendag and a further area yet to be established - Bolshoy Balkhan In addition, work carried out on proposed Sumbar NP (see below)	Presidential decree on “Bereketli Karakum” zapovednik, July 2013	The project was involved in the establishment of the Central Karakum zapovednik in a limited way and cannot claimed responsibility for the establishment of the area.
2		Financial sustainability scorecard for PA System	31%	>48% by 36th mnth	47% - based on conservative extrapolations.	PASP; financial scorecard	The estimates were conservative extrapolations (using data from 2005) because the Chief Accountant in the MNP refused to share financial data with the project.
3		Capacity assessment scorecard for PA System	Systemic – 52% Institutional – 44% Individual – 33%	Systemic – 76% by 36th mnth Institutional – 72% by 36th mnth Individual – 54% by 36th mnth	Systemic – 66% Institutional – 57% Individual – 57%	Completed PIR (2014)	There were some gains as expected particularly at the individual level (through training carried out by the project). There was less gain at the systemic and institutional levels.

4		Endorsement of the PASP by Government	No PASP	PASP by 18th mnth Endorsement by 24th mnth	Final edition of PASP completed (including translation and editing in Turkmen having incorporated all comments from MNP). <i>Next steps: i) to submit for approval; ii) to ensure incorporation into NBSAP</i>	Published PASP	Requirements for development and adoption of PASP are reflected in the new Law “On specially protected nature territories”, developed by the Project and adopted by the Parliament in 2012.
5		Extent of representativeness (types); ecological basis for boundaries; ecological corridors and other linkages	To be determined by Review and Survey	100% of key types by 36th mnth Ecological coherence by 36th mnth	Under PASP: ecosystems reviewed and mapped; protected areas proposed in PASP to ensure representativeness (new and expanded, including two National Parks, two UNESCO WNH sites designation, new Ramsar sites, creation of nature monuments, ecological corridors, buffer zones, IBAs)	Published PASP	This is interpreted as being a planning indicator only; satisfactorily completed.
6	Outcome 1: Expanded Protected Areas System (PAS) to improve PA representation and coverage	Number of formally proclaimed IUCN Category 2 – National Parks	No National Parks	At least one NP by 18th mnth A further two identified by 36th mnth	Law on protected areas allowing for establishment of national parks enacted in 2012. The PASP identified three potential national parks (Sumbar, Archabil and Koytendag) but the principal thrust was on the establishment of Sumbar National Park (full feasibility study, management plan and business plan and PR material in Russian and Turkmen, printed and submitted to the MNP and Cabinet of Ministers for further consideration and approval); brief feasibility study also carried out for Archabil NP <i>Next steps: continue to lobby and</i>	Law "On specially protected nature territories", adopted by the President of Turkmenistan and published in the official government gazette "Neytralnyi Turkmenistan" on 31 March 2012 Published feasibility study, management and business plan and	Success is dependent on gazette of Sumbar NP (and later gazette of other national parks). Project and the UNDP-CO at loggerheads with MNP over establishment of Sumbar NP (see section 3.3.3 for details)

					<i>advocate for gazettelement of Sumbar NP.</i>	draft decree for establishment of Sumbar NP	
7		Extent (ha) of additional areas of under-represented habitat types formally incorporated into the system of PAs	22,185ha	>24,000ha by 36th mnth	See Indicator 5 above; desert ecosystem formally incorporated into system of protected areas through establishment of <i>Bereketli Karakum zapovednik</i> (87,800ha, in July 2013). Feasibility studies and SWOT analyses undertaken for three other areas - Central Kopetdag/Archabil, Kugitang/Koytendag; and Bolshoy Balkhan (studies incorporated into PASP). Further proposals for expansions, ecological corridors, buffer zones, nature monuments, IBAs, designation of Ramsar and UNESCO WNH sites, National Nature Parks and new under-represented habitats types in PASP	Published PASP	Success only dependent on approval and/or use of PASP as basis for protected area expansion (both establishment of new and expansion of existing protected areas) Some concerns about how baseline figure and targets were established (no information in Project Document).
8		Extent (ha) of lowland deserts, desert plateaus, mountains formally incorporated into the system of PAs	127,815ha	>175,000ha by 36th mnth			
9		Sumbar NP established and functioning according to objectives and Management Plan	Sumbar NP does not exist	Sumbar NP established by 24th mnth	See Indicator 6 above		
10		Pilots carried out, evaluated, refined and adopted; Guidelines/Manual produced and being used for	nil	Guidelines/Manual by 24th mnth	Sumbar NP not established – therefore, no “pilot.” However, SNP feasibility study, management and business plans, and management planning template all available for use;	Project outputs (see Annex IX)	The indicator is unclear and thus open to interpretation (see paragraph 34b for discussion). I interpret this to be the “pilot” of establishing the first NP in Turkmenistan and the production of guidelines and

		training			training on management planning completed.		manuals associated with that process (to enable replication). While the project did not recognise or consciously work towards this indicator, inadvertently, this has partially been done. <i>Irrespective, the indicator should have been removed (see paragraph 34b).</i>
11	Outcome 2: Adequate institutional and individual capacity is in place for the management of the PAS	METT score progress for key PAs targeted by the project	Repetek: 29% Badkhyz: 29% Kopetdag: 30%; Syunt Hasardag: 29%; Kaplankyr: 30% Amudarya: 31% ; Koytendag: 30%	>40%	Repetek: 48%; Badkhyz: 53%; Kopetdag: 50%; Syunt Hasardag: 67%; Kaplankyr: 50%; Amudarya: 44%; ; Koytendag: 66%; Hazar: 61% (included because of previous UNDP-GEF project) Bereketli Karakum: 35% (established in 2013)	PIR (2014)	Satisfactory. Largely because of project activities, the METT scores for protected areas across the country have increased relative to the baseline. The only questions that remain are: i) the degree to which the MNP will adopt the METT for continued monitoring of the management effectiveness of protected areas across the country in the absence of the approval and adoption of the PASP and ii) the degree to which the assessments were done in a participatory way.
12		Number of planning, management and operational national park staff completing specialized training and/or skills development	nil	>20 by 24th mnth >40 by 36th mnth	No national part = no park staff appointed. Instead, all Heads of Scientific Department of PAs (9), and specialists from the MNP and the NIDFF are trained in: PA management; PA management and business planning, GIS mapping, financing of PAs, and	See Annex VII for trainings carried out over project's lifespan.	The indicator specifies "national park staff" so assumes that the park would have been established (and no national park staff can be appointed until the park is established!). This was partly recognised as a risk in the Project Document but the emphasis was on the legal

		programmes			monitoring of PAs		framework (something that was relatively easily completed by the project) and not the question of whether Sumbar National Park would be gazetted; in other words, the enthusiasm for the establishment of Sumbar NP when the project was designed that it did not represent a risk. It is ironic, then, that it worked the other way around.
13		Operational capability in terms of funding, mobility, engagement with communities, resolving identified problems	To be established by Needs Assessment	Improvements over Baseline at annual intervals	No needs assessment undertaken, hence baseline has not been established.		A needs assessment was necessary and a review of the indicator was urged “as a priority” by the MTR: this was not done (see paragraph 34c for discussion). <i>Irrespective, the indicator should have been removed (see paragraph 34c).</i>
14		PA Management Board functioning effectively; monitoring strategies being implemented	nil	Board by 18th mnth Monitoring by 24th mnth	Governance structure for SNP proposed in feasibility study and management plan. Little reference or discussion for system level structures	Documents associated with SNP; published PASP	See comment for indicator 12 for discussion on assumption that a national park was established There is little reference to PA Management Board (or Council) at the system level (except for the production of a draft regulation for the establishment of a ‘Coordination Council’ to administer the protected areas of Turkmenistan)
15		Training Centre (PA Academy)	nil	Centre by 24th	No centre established.	Asset list with	See paragraph 111b on this. <i>This indicator should have</i>

		established and first trainees graduate successfully		mnth Graduates by 30th mnth	Space <i>was</i> allocated within NIDFF; equipment and furniture procured – but process stopped in December 2012 with MTR.	distribution.	<i>been removed.</i>
--	--	--	--	--------------------------------	--	---------------	----------------------

3.3.2 Relevance

113. Within the bounds of what it managed to achieve, the project remained relevant to the GEF Biodiversity Strategic Objective and the two Strategic Programmes to which it was contributing.

114. Under the current UNDAF (2010-2015), the project also remained relevant, particularly to the second strategic focus (environmentally sustainable use of natural resources contributes to the effectiveness of economic processes and increased quality of life) under UNDAF Outcome Three (Improving Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth). More precisely, under this strategic focus, the UNDAF was aiming to achieve the following output: “*Local communities will be supported to contribute to and benefit from environmentally sustainable socioeconomic opportunities through a strengthened protected areas system, establishment of a national park network, and cooperation with international conservation systems*” (Output 3.3 under the Outcome 3).

115. The project also remained relevant to the national development framework. Within the *National Programme of Turkmenistan on Socio-economic Development for the Period 2011-2030* there are the aims to achieve “environmental protection and efficient and rational use of natural and agricultural resources.” Indeed, listed among the “vital priorities” for regional development the recognition of regional differences in “geographical location, existing natural resources and infrastructure, tourism attractions”. However, tourism targets remain modest – the programme targets 5,400 foreign tourist entries by 2030.

116. Of course, the project remained relevant within the bounds of what it managed to achieve.

3.3.3 Effectiveness & Efficiency

117. In this section and as part of assessing the effectiveness of the project, I examine in detail why the project was not successful in achieving many of its objectives and outcomes. The aim is not to point fingers or apportion blame but to determine whether anything can be learned from the issues faced by this project such that any future projects or processes in Turkmenistan do not come up against the same barriers and result in a similar poor performance. In other words, I hope that future projects either build these lessons into their designs or, at the very least, into their risk frameworks.

118. At the outset, it should be stated that there is a great deal of frustration – and this frustration is not just confined to UNDP (whether UNDP-GEF RTC in Bratislava or the UNDP-CO) but frustration is also expressed by the government.

119. There are a number of different narratives for the project each affecting the effectiveness of implementation and, consequently, the attainment of the objectives of the project. These will be examined in turn.

120. *Delays & recruitment processes.* As was exhaustively discussed in the MTR, the project suffered significant delays from the moment when the Project Document was signed (20 August 2009) until the MTR took place towards the end of 2012. These delays were primarily (but not exclusively) associated with profoundly

inefficient recruitment processes within the UNDP-CO¹⁸. It is notable that since the MTR, the processes have become much more efficient and effective. In part, that coincides with the arrival of the new UNDP Resident Representative in July 2012, these processes have become much, much more efficient and effective. There are two main drivers of this: i) the hands-on approach of the Resident Representative, and ii) the establishment of the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) within UNDP-CO. However, as discussed below, there have been costs to the establishment of the PIU.

121. *Divide between UNDP-CO and the government.* This has, to some extent, already been discussed above – particularly the distance that resulted from i) housing the project within the NIDFF, ii) housing the PIU within the UNDP-CO and iii) the frustrations within the MNP at being excluded from some of the project processes (see 3.2.6). The result of the distance was a feeling of decreasing ownership in the MNP – such that the project became synonymous with UNDP-CO.

122. That the government expresses any level of frustration is met with some derision within the UNDP-CO because, particularly in the past fifteen months, the members of staff feel that *they* are the ones who have had to push the project and that the government has been the barrier to progress. All this is a symptom of the distance and distrust that has grown between the government and the UNDP-CO.

123. It is also important to note that this distance and distrust does not pervade *every* project and programme that the UNDP-CO has in Turkmenistan: on the contrary, work in some sectors is proceeding promisingly and this is based on a good relationship and trust.

124. *Issues with the MNP.* This, then, begs the question of why this poor relationship exists between the UNDP-CO and the MNP? Are there particular issues with the MNP?

125. As discussed above (see section 3.2.2), the MNP sits rather uncomfortably in the super-ministry – known colloquially as the “Agricultural Complex” – under the Deputy Prime Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources. This has resulted in it being marginalised and disempowered – something that is not unusual of equivalent government institutes with similar mandates housed in a similar uncomfortable way in many countries around the world.

126. What this means, in practical terms for a project such as this, is that a number of factors feed in to result in a state of paralysis. The factors include:

- a. A situation in which personalities is more important than the policies within an organisation. It is for this reason that the discontinuities associated with the comings and goings of people so hampered the progress of the project. Most notably (as described in section 3.2.6), the change in Minister and removal of Deputy Minister negatively affected the project.

Therefore, while the government agreed to the project from the outset – including all aspects included with it (i.e., the PASP and the establishment of SNP) – realisation of the objectives of the project was undermined by the departure of the people who were its champions within the MNP.

¹⁸ See MTR for detailed description of these issues and the recommended steps of how they should be overcome.

- b. Even if one acknowledges the point above, attempting to influence change by investing in people – particularly at the political levels within the ministries – is challenging because of the high turnover at these levels. Again, this is amply illustrated by the turnover and discontinuities that have affected this project.

In addition, the “bosses” rarely participate in processes that are important for things such as this project: these are the workshops, seminars and PB meetings¹⁹. The “bosses” either attend the opening and closure of such meetings but skip out the substance. This means that they are never exposed to new ideas and do not participate in the discussions surrounding them.

[It should be noted, however, that at a technical level, there is a great deal of continuity and participation, and members of staff remain in their positions for very long periods of time. There is a Catch-22 here in that even if the capacities of these long-term staffers is increased, such is the nature of politics in Turkmenistan that these people cannot – or will not – try to influence change themselves. This is further discussed below.]

- c. In yet another layer of complexity, there is a perverse culture that permeates the government. This manifests itself in a number of different but interlinked ways. First, there is a culture of negativity. Staffers prefer to say “no” to proposals than be permissive. This is linked to i) a lack of courage and ii) to the fact that people feel that they are doing their job only if they are being negative or critical – as opposed to being permissive.

The lack of courage stems from i) an authoritarian history and regime, and ii) people are nervous about the security of their own jobs in a situation where there are not many jobs for people working in this sector. Thus, without the blessings from a higher level, people are reluctant to respond positively to new ideas or proposals. Ultimately, people desire a Presidential blessing²⁰ before becoming positive.

The concept that people are negative or critical is not a uniquely Turkmen phenomenon. Indeed, in many institutions, being critical is equated with being “smart” or doing one’s job. In the distrustful context of Turkmenistan, it is a signal that one is not prepared to be easily fooled and that one is doing one’s job thoroughly. However, this leads to a chain of negativity when proposals or new ideas enter and move up the hierarchical chain. The message is transmitted with a dose of criticism or negativity such that when it reaches the higher levels it is of little wonder that these ideas do not get approved.

- d. Distrust is not uncommon in countries such as Turkmenistan and acts as a barrier to processes especially if there are innovative aspects to them.

127. The conclusion is that for anything to be fully accepted and supported, particularly in a marginalised and disempowered ministry such as the MNP, it should have the blessings of the President; better still, it becomes a Presidential Programme

¹⁹ As noted in section 3.2.5, this criticism can be leveled at the UNDP-CO staff as well.

²⁰ Although as is illustrated by a number of examples, a Presidential blessing is no guarantee to success but it *does* significantly increase the likelihood of success.

(even though, as noted above, that is no absolute guarantee of success). Even if this is not the case, people believe it to be so.

128. Ultimately, these factors lead to a dearth and fear of creativity or innovation; people simply do not have the stomach for it. But when faced with projects such as this (which have come through the system), rather than be permissive and take risks, staffers will find almost any excuse to put a stop to progress. So it was with this project and, in particular, the prevention of the establishment of Sumbar National Park. The range of excuses that were found to halt the process of establishing SNP included: i) that it was too close to the Iranian border, ii) that the country would be losing a zapovednik (Sunt-Hasaredag and the funding associated with it) in the process, iii) that it would not be funded by the Ministry of Economy and Finance, or iv) that it would not be accepted by the livestock keepers particularly those practicing transhumance. They even denied that it existed in the Project Document and that there was no agreement on it. In an attempt to save face, the MNP offered an alternative, saying²¹:

“At present, the Ministry of Nature Protection is embarked onto works to establish new state nature reserve in the Central Karakums on the territory of 87,800 ha within the framework of the implementation of the National Forest Program and realization of new tasks set by the Government of Turkmenistan and aimed at conservation of the unique biodiversity of the country. In this connection the Ministry of Nature Protection of Turkmenistan considers it expedient to revise together with the UNDP, the workplan of the project “Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area System of Turkmenistan” and proposes to redirect the project activities and part of the project funds to the creation and strengthening of technical capacities of the new state reserve²² ... which fully conforms with main objectives of the project on strengthening capacities of the specially protected nature territories. The Ministry of Nature Protection of Turkmenistan is ready to discuss in detail this proposal with UNDP to revise project workplan and prolongation of project activities accordingly. The Ministry is also ready, if needed and with prior consultations with UNDP, to forward a necessary request to the Secretariat of the GEF for approval of new expenditures of the remaining project funds.”

129. The UNDP-CO denied that this was possible²³:

“Unfortunately, we are reluctant to recommend this unusual step to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as we believe this could have negative consequences for the Government of Turkmenistan for any future submission for resources to GEF given the extensive support we have received from GEF to ensure that PAS would be implemented successfully.”

130. This left MNP was doubly frustrated.

131. Such was the fear of something new and innovative, that people ceased to listen, they ceased to understand or even to try to understand the concept, in this case, of a National Park. As such, there were a number of occasions when interviewees

²¹ Letter from the Minister of Nature Protection (ref. 1488/01 dated 03 July 2013) to UNDP-CO Resident Representative (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ref. 06/16487 and dated 04 July 2013)

²² It should be noted that the establishment of the Central Karakum zapovednik was a Presidential Programme.

²³ Letter from UNDP-CO RR to Minister of Nature Protection (dated 15 July 2013, ref. Note/501/666).

displayed little understanding (even at the level of the Head of the Department of Flora and Fauna Protection) of what the concept meant²⁴.

132. Finally, even if this was not actually true, it is what the people believe and, as a consequence, it is how the people behave and react.

133. *Issues with GEF.* From the perspective of the MNP and given the issues described above, GEF may appear inflexible. In the paragraphs above, I have described an attempt by the MNP to close the project and use the money for the development of a newly established protected area – Central Karakum zapovednik. While this displays a lack of understanding of GEF processes and procedures, to the uninitiated, the inability to change the plan to accommodate the request would seem to be unnecessarily obstructive.

134. In summary, then, the start of the project was hampered by delays – mainly as a result of UNDP-CO procurement and recruitment issues – but once it started moving, it had already lost its champions from the MNP and was subjected to the factors described above and, ultimately, to the state of paralysis that is found within the context of Turkmenistan under these circumstances. Two rather inflexible structures clashed. At this point, the UNDP-CO (recalling that by this stage, the current Resident Representative had arrived), recognising the extraordinary circumstances and extraordinary challenges that are faced with programming in Turkmenistan, went to extraordinary lengths in their attempts to make this project work. Indeed, in the past fifteen months, they have done everything possible to facilitate the project's process such that some successes could be realised.

135. However, it is possible that the extra efforts by the UNDP-CO coupled with the intense focus on SNP²⁵ only drove a wedge between the MNP and the UNDP-CO, thereby deepening the divide between the two because they exacerbated the barriers as described in the above few paragraphs and made the people in the MNP increasingly uncomfortable for the reasons described above. That the assertion that UNDP-CO made extraordinary efforts and that the MNP increasingly closed down to these efforts is borne out in the correspondence over the past few months.

136. The result is that only one barrier to the establishment of national parks in Turkmenistan was dismantled: this was the legal barrier that the 2012 Law “On Specially Protected Territories” removed. None of these other barriers were removed; indeed, the majority of them were neither recognised as barriers nor as risks to the project (see discussion above in section 3.1.2).

137. It is essential that future projects in Turkmenistan – particularly those that work with the MNP as their primary partner – recognise these barriers and risks, and find mechanisms to overcome the barriers and mitigate the risks, respectively.

138. The conclusion is that because of these many varied reasons, the project was not effective in meeting its objectives.

²⁴ It was suggested that because tourism was involved, the people were influenced by their only known association with tourism which was a resort on the Caspian coast and obviously inappropriate for a National Park such as Sumbar. However, as suggested in the text, it may have simply been purposeful obfuscation rather than misunderstanding.

²⁵ The intense focus on the establishment of SNP was supported by both the MTR and the ITA. For example, in the report of the ITA's fourth mission to Turkmenistan he states “This is [the] highest priority output. Achievement of declaration of the National Park would be seen as a major project achievement”

139. In terms of efficiency, the establishment of the PIU within the UNDP-CO has resulted in improved efficiency and effectiveness. However, it is not without its costs. First, the workload on the PIU team is high. They are managing seven project at present (rather than simply working for one). Second, it has had the result of increasing the workload on the project managers because they are left with minor administrative tasks that would otherwise have been dealt with by an administrative assistant. Third and inadvertently, it has exacerbated the divide (as discussed above) between the MNP and the UNDP-CO as it is seen as a move by the UNDP-CO to further control projects and the finances associated with them. In summary, the PIU needs to be managed carefully and it needs to be clearly communicated with partners that it is there for cost-efficiency and to improve effectiveness and **not** in an effort by the UNDP-CO to retain control of projects and their funding!

140. In addition to the establishment of the PIU, various other actions were taken to improve efficiency, including:

- a. The use of long-term procurement agreements with pre-qualified vendors
- b. The establishment of various rosters of consultants and experts, most notably with translators and interpreters
- c. The normal procurement practices which are primarily implemented to ensure value-for-money
- d. Finally, the office is in the process of putting in place a paperless, electronic signature system to improve efficiency further as well as reduce the amount of paper used.

141. However, as described in detail above (see section 3.2.4 on Project Finances), the project has not only overspent on its GEF project management budget line, but it has used an additional USD 55,223.94 of funding from UNDP itself for project management. This represents 21.5% of the total expenditure of the project; for a project that has not delivered on the majority of its objectives (notwithstanding the obstacles that have been described in detail above), this represents exceedingly poor value-for-money.

3.3.4 Country ownership

142. It is worth, at this point, to reconsider a statement made in the Project Document that was also quoted in the MTR:

“The selection of the South-west Kopetdagh as the preferred site for testing the efficacy of national park establishment processes corresponds closely with the priorities identified in the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2002), the National Environmental Action Plan (2002), the ECONET project (2005) and, more recently, the Main Trends of Development of the Protected Area System up to 2030 (2008). Further, the Order of the Ministry of Nature Protection of Turkmenistan (No 36 of April 29, 2003), on implementation of the Decree of the President “On National Environmental Action Plan of President of Turkmenistan Saparmurat Turkmenbashi” (No. 6007 of December 2, 2002), requires that a National Park in the Makhtumkuli etrap must be established within the period 2003-2010.”

143. Further to this statement, of course, is the fact that the government signed off the Project Document and the title for Output 1.3 is “Sumbar National Park is established.”

144. Finally, at the urging of the MTR, the MNP provided an additional written commitment to the establishment of Sumbar National Park²⁶:

“The establishment of national parks in Turkmenistan is defined in the adopted National Strategy on Climate Change as a major task for conservation of biological diversity. In this regard, the Ministry of Nature Protection of Turkmenistan reaffirms its commitment to the establishment of the National Park “Sumbar” on the basis of the existing Sunt-Hasardag Nature Reserve. The Ministry endorses the national and international experts’ work undertaken in preparation of the technical proposal for establishment of the “Sumbar” National Park.”

145. In the absence of the detailed explanations given above regarding the state of paralysis that possessed the government – especially with reference to the establishment of SNP and given the above two facts, it is hardly credible that government staffers declared during interviews that “the government had not agreed to establish Sumbar National Park!”

146. How did this happen? Many of the points in the section above allude to country ownership and *perceived* country ownership. The divide between the UNDP-CO and the MNP is central to this especially when coupled with the tensions that have grown over the issue of the establishment of SNP. There is certainly the perception among the MNP that they have *lost* ownership of the project – as examples, i) the establishment of the PIU within the UNDP-CO and ii) there was a stated expectation that the MNP would participate to a greater degree in project processes – most specifically, the selection of consultants.

147. On the contrary, the UNDP-CO has been faced with the state of paralysis and the feeling that it was faced with a Sisyphean task to get any progress with the government. In addition, the government has demonstrated poor knowledge of the complexities of GEF programming. When this is coupled with the low level of capacity within the MNP, the UNDP-CO has felt obliged to assume greater control of the project if it was to achieve anything at all. In the event and in these circumstances, the project took almost all the processes to the interface with the government – to the point at which the outputs needed to be approved by the government – but at that point (especially with the case of the establishment of SNP), the processes stalled.

148. The whole concept of country ownership is somewhat undermined by two factors already discussed in the section above: i) that processes are driven by personalities and not policy and ii) there is a high turnover of senior or political staffing levels. Thus, as witnessed in this project, it was initiated in good faith by one set of people (and of whom it could be justifiably stated that they fully owned the concept) only to have them move on ... and have it left in the hands of a group of people who evidently did not own the project and did not really want to be associated with it.

²⁶ Letter from the Minister of Nature Protection to the UNDP-CO RR (dated 16 November 2012, ref. 2417/01) and as appended to the MTR report.

149. Quite where the astonishingly rapid signature and publication in the official gazette of the 2012 Protected Areas Law sits in this picture is only slightly mystifying when one realises that the principal champions of the project within the government system (the former Minister of Nature Protection and his former Deputy Minister) were both still in place to usher this through. Perhaps that is simply coincidental but appears to be the case.

3.3.5 Replication, mainstreaming and catalytic role

150. With so little to show, in terms of approved outputs, at the end of the project, one cannot really talk of replication, mainstreaming or the project's catalytic role. There are lessons to be learned but without a gazetted national park, there is nothing to replicate.

151. There is an argument that the production of the PASP represents some form of catalysis and, as will be discussed in the section on sustainability below, there is some reason to believe that even in the current unapproved form it will still contribute to the sector. However, this is far from the ideal situation of replication and catalysis.

152. Mainstream, per se, was not the objective of the project but in an ideal world and had SNP been established, perhaps the project could have demonstrated how the existence and management of the park could have been built into the local *weyalats* and *etraps* – but obviously this did not turn out to be the case.

3.3.6 Sustainability

153. This discussion on sustainability could start with a similar sentence to that above – with so little to show, in terms of processes and impacts, at the end of the project, there is little call for sustainability. Arguably, at present, it is more a case of what can be salvaged of the project's outputs and make use of them in the future rather than a discussion about the sustainability of the project's processes and impacts.

154. However, there is some hope that the outputs from the project will be used. As discussed above (see section 2.2), there is a history in Turkmenistan of using products even if they are not approved. This project, for example, built upon two previous feasibility studies carried out for Sumbar National Park. As such, it is likely that the primary outputs from this project – the PASP and the outputs associated with the establishment of SNP (the feasibility study, the management and business plan and PR material) – will be used in some form or other in the future. More specifically:

- a. Following a gap of three years (ironically, over the lifespan of this project), the RSPB has now renewed its MOU with the government and specifically with the MNP. This is to work on a number of things: i) working with the government to develop and submit applications for UNESCO Natural World Heritage nominations with associated site management plans and research for Koytendag (formerly Kugitang) and Badhyz *zapovedniks*, ii) working with the government for additional international designations (for example, the designation of Ramsar sites) within existing protected areas (either *zapovedniks* or *zakizniks*), iii) developing the capacity of protected area staff through provision of training and essential equipment across the country, and iv) working with the government to communicate aspects pertaining to the protected areas system of Turkmenistan on various international stages. The prerequisite

that underpins RSPB's work in Turkmenistan is that they will work only in the Important Bird Areas – IBAs – in the country.

However, RSPB are committed to build on the outputs and experiences of the UNDP-GEF PAS Project. They are already using the protected area management-planning template that was used in this project. But in order to use the full potential of all the outputs of the project, of course, they need to have access to them!

- b. The preparation of the second edition of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) is currently underway. Given that there will be a chapter on the protected areas of Turkmenistan in the NBSAP and the fact that the PASP has just been completed (including incorporating the comments from the MNP), this offers a unique opportunity to simply adopt the PASP for this section of the NBSAP.

As such, I **recommend** that the UNDP-GEF RTA in Bratislava and UNDP-CO do everything possible to ensure that this is the case. Unfortunately, this may not be the simple, logical task that one might otherwise expect and as some of the issues described above may yet haunt this process. Indeed, in the national workshop on the NBSAP (which was held while I was on the mission in Turkmenistan), apparently delegates from the MNP complained that the PASP (or the presentation thereof) did not make a good case on wider ecosystem service and socio-economic benefits. In summary, the PASP may still be a victim of the issues described above.

Indeed, if an extension of the PAS project were to be contemplated, it would be for this reason alone: to work to ensure that the PASP is fully incorporated into the NBSAP and then that the NBSAP is approved.

- c. In addition to the MOU with RSPB, the Government of Turkmenistan has also renewed its agreement with the Michael Succow Foundation. While the agreement is specifically with the Institute of Botany (within the Academy of Sciences) and there is a botanical focus to the MOU. However, because the MOU also seeks to enhance the Central Asian Biodiversity Network (CABNET), there is scope for biodiversity conservation – and hence linkages with this project and use of its outputs.

While I did not get the opportunity to speak to a member of staff of the Michael Succow Foundation, it would not be unreasonable (particularly given the fact that the Foundation was a co-financier of this project) to expect that it is likely that they will use the outputs of the project to every degree possible.

- d. If any of the momentum of the project is to continue, the UNDP-CO and the UNDP-GEF RTA should continue to find champions within the government structures that are willing to engage and take the opportunities that the UNDP-CO and GEF funding presents. This is obviously a two-way process so while the UNDP-CO should continue to engage, the door should be left open for people from the MNP to approach the UNDP-CO of their own volition – for surely without people with whom to engage fully and without champions, the processes will grind to a halt.

155. Two items on the list above are entirely dependent on dissemination of the outputs of the project and most particularly i) the PASP and ii) the products associated with the establishment of SNP. The government has, apparently, limited the publication of these materials to 25 copies only – which will enable them to be disseminated only within the MNP and to the existing protected areas in the country. However, there is no particular reason why the UNDP-GEF RTC in Bratislava (or Istanbul in the near future) or the GEF (on the project’s information page) should not host the principal products of the project. This will ensure that they are available in perpetuity.

156. In the sustainability section of Terminal Evaluation reports, one usually should consider the following aspects of sustainability: social, financial, institutional and environmental sustainability. Because of the nature of the project, for the most part these do not apply. However, there is one exception: social sustainability. The project spent much time and effort working with local people and local authorities to make them aware of the potential to establish the Sumbar National Park and through this process, it has built expectations among these stakeholders. This was done on the reasonable assumption that the government would support the establishment of the national park²⁷. Obviously, given that the national park has not been established and there is no known timeline on when (or even if) it may be established, I **recommend** that the Ministry of Nature Protection assume their responsibility to explain to the people of the area why the national park has not been established contrary to the original commitment of the Ministry.

3.3.7 Impact

157. With very little to show in terms of approved outputs (with the exception of the 2012 Law on Protected Areas), and with very little actual activities on the ground, the project has had no impact.

4 Conclusions, Recommendations & Lessons

4.1 Conclusions

158. In conclusion, then, the project was a victim of a number of different circumstances that has led to the fact that, while it produced the majority of the outputs that it intended to, the project did not manage to achieve the objectives as originally designed. Those circumstances can be summarised as follows:

- a. The first three years (and thus almost the entire period of the project as it was originally planned) were beset with issues that emanated from the UNDP-CO and were primarily associated with procurement and recruitment.
- b. There were a number of discontinuities that hindered the project; these were primarily associated with a turnover of people in key positions. Perhaps most importantly, the project lost its champions within the MNP.
- c. The MNP entered into a state of paralysis; this was underpinned by a number of factors (as described in section 3.3.3) but the consequences were that the project’s outputs were not approved by the MNP.

²⁷ See paragraphs 143 *et seq.* to understand that this was indeed a reasonable assumption.

159. Despite not achieving the majority of its stated objectives and in stark contrast to the first three years of the project's lifespan, the final fifteen months were implemented effectively and efficiently (notwithstanding the barriers that the project came up against within the MNP). The MTR was essential in catalysing this turnaround and this illustrates the value of such independent evaluations.

160. The project was ambitious but the project designers did not recognise the profound barriers to change and innovation (particularly when the champions of those ideas are lost in the process) and a state of paralysis within the MNP resulted. This is not uncommon in such states and in such circumstances but they should be recognised from the outset of such projects. One conclusion that can be drawn from this is that these barriers still exist and until they are overcome, ambitious projects will have trouble achieving their objectives.

161. Finally, the above conclusions beg the question about the direction in which GEF projects in Turkmenistan should take particularly when one is cognisant that GEF projects are precisely about overcoming fears, catalysing processes and demonstrating success. If those fears are so profound that processes cannot be catalysed and, as a consequence, successes cannot be demonstrated, one wonders if there is a role for GEF in Turkmenistan – at least at present and in the protected areas sector.

4.2 Corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project

162. In this section, I explore what might have been done to improve the performance of the project.

- a. The loss of time because of UNDP-CO ineffectiveness would be unforgivable had not significant corrective actions been already taken. However, the establishment of the PIU within the UNDP-CO has largely dealt with these inefficiencies and future projects should benefit from this accordingly. However, the PIU needs to be managed with care for the following reasons: i) there will be times when the staff of the PIU will be inundated with work and they will be burned out, ii) some turnover of staff in the PIU should be expected: the staff will become more experienced and valuable, and consequently opportunities will come their way, and iii) the distance that this imposes between the UNDP-CO and the government. To overcome this final issue, in the design of all projects, the set up should be carefully and clearly explained to the government, it should be written into project documents as well as any MOUs signed between the UNDP-CO and the government. In addition, it would be valuable to have the government participate in whichever processes it can, where feasible and practicable, including, for example, in the selection of experts and consultants. For this, a working group could be established and convened on an ad hoc basis; such a working group would ensure that the government retains some ownership of the processes.
- b. The MTR was undertaken two months before the project was due to close – on the original timeline. The MTR was also instrumental in catalysing improvements in the project's performance. This begs the question of what might the project have achieved if the MTR had been conducted halfway through the project's original timeline (i.e., in approximately

April/May 2011 rather than October 2012). It is essential that projects stick to their timelines.

- c. Working in Turkmenistan is not without its challenges. In response to the extraordinary challenges faced by the project, in the past fifteen months, the UNDP-CO has taken extraordinary measures to try to overcome those challenges. This is to be applauded and recognised.

However, it is essential that the risks and assumptions are properly identified and monitored through the project's life. Thus, it could be argued that the project was *not* over ambitious at its start but *only* if the starting conditions were maintained and if the UNDP-CO had performed optimally in their management of project processes from the outset. The starting conditions were not maintained and had the risk and risk monitoring matrices had been appropriately sensitive, it is possible that the project's course could have been corrected at an earlier stage or, indeed, that the changes were so profound that they should have called a halt to the project earlier.

In other words, in future projects in Turkmenistan, if the designers and champions of the project within the government are moved on, this should be considered a trigger which, then hit, project managers, the UNDP-CO and the UNDP-GEF RTC should consider immediately closing that project.

Projects should also be aware of the other issues described in this report (see section 3.3.3 in particular) for the normal modus operandi does not apply. It may take many years for this to change.

4.3 Actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the project

163. In this section, I examine whether there are further actions to be taken to ensure that the outputs of the project are used. These are primarily described in the section on Sustainability (see section 3.3.6) and centre primarily on finding creative ways to disseminate the outputs of the project with people and organisations that are likely to use them.

164. However, there is one question that needs to be considered in more detail: is there any value to extending the project for another six months – thus, until the end of the year? There are points for and against such an extension (see also Annex X for the detailed written response to this question):

- a. There are a number of opponents to extending the project, people with little appetite to continue the project so it should only be considered if there was a realistic chance of having some tangible impacts. This, then, begs the question of what those might be?
- b. The government has made it quite clear that, at present, the issue of establishing Sumbar National Park should be shelved. Without champions in the government – at the right levels – this simply will not progress further. If there is to be an extension of the project, the subject of Sumbar should not even be mentioned.
- c. If the project is to be extended, then, it should be to facilitate passage of the PASP both in terms of its approval by the MNP (and ultimately by the

Cabinet of Ministers) and for its satisfactory incorporation into the NBSAP.

Because the time frame is so short, it is highly unlikely that the PASP could be approved by the Cabinet of Ministers therefore, at best, it would be approved by the Minister of Nature Protection. However, it is if, and only if, a satisfactory mechanism to usher through the approval of the PASP by the Minister is found should the extension be considered. As it stands, there does not appear to be many avenues to follow particularly given the barriers described above and that there is no apparent champion within the government. The only interviewee to show independently significant enthusiasm for the PASP was the Head of the NIDFF: this begs the question of the extent of his influence within the government, particularly with the Minister for Nature Protection. It also begs the question of whether he is willing to take the PASP and “sell” it to the Minister. There is some logic that he should lead the process for it is within the NIDFF that the project has been housed over its lifespan.

In conclusion, I recommend that the UNDP-CO RR personally meet with the Head of NIDFF and pose these questions to him. If his response was overwhelmingly positive and he can propose a roadmap for approval of the PASP by the Minister, *then this should be considered as the **first trigger** to an extension of the project* until the end of the year.

- d. When the PASP was presented to the National Workshop in the process to prepare the NBSAP, the delegates apparently felt that the PASP was good in terms of conservation value but was weaker in terms of wider benefits to national development – particularly in terms of ecosystem services and socio-economic benefits. Given that the PASP publication, as it stands, has a section dealing with the benefits (both environmental and socio-economic) of the protected area system, this begs the question of whether some of the negativity (as described above) is creeping in or whether these are genuine concerns about these elements in the PASP.

However, given that we are considering here the inclusion of the PASP within the NBSAP and given that one of the strengths of the NBSAP process to date is the economic estimation of ecosystem services – including, to some extent, of those from protected areas, this appears to couple well for the inclusion of the PASP as the section on protected areas in the NBSAP.

In conclusion, then, as *the **second trigger** to an extension of the project until the end of the year*, if a roadmap for the inclusion of the PASP into the NBSAP can be agreed among the UNDP-CO RR, and the Project Managers of the NBSAP and PAS projects as well as any relevant government counterparts.

- e. The project has significantly overspent on its project management budget; therefore, all the administration and management costs associated with a project extension would have to be borne by the UNDP-CO: agreement that the UNDP-CO would fund all administration and management costs for the extension would, therefore, be *the **third and final trigger** to the extension*.

- f. In principle, I would recommend that the extension should go ahead if either Triggers One or Two or both are hit; however, an extension cannot go ahead if neither is hit nor if Trigger Three is not hit.
- g. Under no circumstances should it be considered that any form of re-writing should be done to the PASP: its current form has been translated, edited, commented upon by the Department of Flora and Fauna Protection of the MNP, and duly corrected. On the other hand, inputs from the NBSAP background information (for example, the economic valuation, as discussed above) *may* be included in addition to excerpts from the PASP.

4.4 Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives

165. In this section, in the light of the barriers that this project came up against, I examine the role of GEF in Turkmenistan and particularly for protected areas projects. Is it worth the effort and money?

166. There is no doubt that there is a handful of outstanding people who have significantly benefitted from their participation in the GEF projects that have been implemented in Turkmenistan. In contrast, the biodiversity impacts of the GEF projects have been extremely limited. So the first question is whether building the capacity of a small handful of people sufficient enough a benefit to justify GEF's investment in the country?

167. Given the aversion of people to innovation and the apparent absence of champions, is further investment into the existing protected areas useful and, again, is it sufficient enough a benefit to justify GEF's investment? This is the model that the RSPB is taking: while they are proposing significant expansion of protected areas, they are doing this on the basis of *existing* protected areas. But does such an approach not betray the concepts underpinning the GEF – to “overcome fear, catalyse processes and demonstrate success”?

168. And even when there are champions – as there were at the beginning of this project in the form of the Deputy Minister of the MNP – the question every project must now ask from the outset is what are the guarantees that those champions will be there at the end of the project²⁸?

169. The conclusion, however hard that it might be, is that until there are significant signs of change, it will be difficult to justify further GEF investment into the protected area system of Turkmenistan. This opinion might change, however, if the PASP were to be approved in the coming months and if the Government of Turkmenistan were to make a quick and decisive move to gazette Sumbar National Park and, thereafter, make a request to the UNDP-CO to develop jointly the next GEF proposal to build and implement a roadmap for the implementation of the PASP ...

²⁸ In addition to his role as champion of this project, the Former Deputy Minister also acted as GEF Operational Focal Point. His departure from the position of Deputy Minister (which also means that his position as OFP is now vacant and no replacement has been nominated) may further undermine the MNP's position on GEF projects.

4.5 Best and worst practices in addressing issues relating to relevance, performance and success

170. Finally, in this section, I examine the lessons from this project that can be used in future projects but because of the peculiar nature of the country, it is likely that those lessons will be only relevant for Turkmenistan.

171. *State of paralysis.* Throughout the report (especially in section 3.3.3), I have explored in detail the state of paralysis that afflicts people and institutions. The lack of success witnessed in this project that are a symptom of such paralysis should be built into future work in the country – particularly with the MNP. This should be recognised as a barrier to achieving effective conservation in the country and as a risk to all projects carried out in the country.

172. *Opportunism.* Leading on from the state of paralysis, on occasion, opportunities do arise that could allow for a fruitful cooperation and collaboration between the UNDP-CO and the government. An example of such an opportunity arose over the course of this project – when the government established the Central Karakum *zapovednik*. Unfortunately, GEF does not work like that and it retains relatively little flexibility and thus does not allow for spontaneous decisions on the basis of serendipitous opportunities that may (or may not arise). However, if the UNDP-CO has the ability to respond on those occasions when opportunities arise this should build a relationship of trust and confidence that will then build a foundation on which longer-term GEF projects could be built.

173. *Attention to detail.* In the context of Turkmenistan, projects, the UNDP-CO and the UNDP-GEF RTC need to have excessive attention to detail. This means that monitoring and evaluation has to be especially intense and adequately resourced. This is simply because there are too many challenges, too many hidden barriers and too many unpredictable factors that could end up undermining the progress of a project and/or undermining its achievement of its objectives.

174. *Ownership.* The UNDP-CO needs to strive to confer a feeling of ownership to their government partners – particularly when dealing with the MNP and specifically the Department of Flora and Fauna Protection. This is a marginalised and disempowered department within a marginalised and disempowered Ministry. This means that the all challenges of working in Turkmenistan are only enhanced further and without any feeling of ownership, the members of staff in these organisations simply become obstructive.

Strengthening the management effectiveness of the protected areas system of Turkmenistan

PIMS 3961, Atlas Award 00057539, Atlas Project No: 00071151

Terminal Evaluation, Volume II Annexes, June 2014

Turkmenistan

GEF SO1: Catalysing the Sustainability of Protected Area (PA) Systems

SP1: Sustainable Financing of PA Systems at the National Level of the GEF Business Plan

SP3: Strengthened National Terrestrial Protected Area Networks

Turkmenistan
Ministry of Nature Protection
United National Development Program (UNDP)

Stuart Williams

Table of Contents

Annex I: Terms of Reference.....	3
Annex II: Itinerary of Mission in Turkmenistan.....	7
Annex III: List of persons interviewed.....	9
Annex IV: Summary of Field Visits.....	10
Annex V: List of documents reviewed.....	11
Annex VI: Framework questions used.....	13
Annex VII: List of training courses and workshops carried out by project since 2012	15
Annex VIII: Maps.....	20
Annex IX: List of project assets.....	23
Annex X: Letter to the UNDP Resident Representative.....	24
Annex XI: Contents of the email exchange between TE Evaluator and UNDP-CO re para 35 of report.....	27
Annex XII: Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form.....	30
Evaluation Report Reviewed and Cleared by.....	31

Annex I: Terms of Reference

Background

In accordance with UNDP and GEF M&E policies and procedures, all full and medium-sized UNDP support GEF financed projects are required to undergo a terminal evaluation upon completion of implementation. These terms of reference (TOR) sets out the expectations for a Terminal Evaluation (TE) of the “Strengthening the management effectiveness of the protected areas system of Turkmenistan” Project (PIMS #3961).

The Project on “Strengthening the management effectiveness of the protected area system of Turkmenistan” (PAS project) is funded by Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by UNDP in close partnership with Ministry of Nature Protection, National Institute of Deserts, Flora and Fauna, Syunt-Hasardag Reserve and some other reserves of Turkmenistan, research institutions, local government administrations and communities. The PAS Project started in 2010 and was aimed at creation an enabling environment for the establishment of a functional, effective and ecologically coherent system of protected areas.

The project was designed to complement the governmental efforts in expanding and strengthening the PA system with focus on two components:

- (i) Expanding protected area system to improve the representation and coverage;
- (ii) Supporting development of adequate systemic, institutional and individual capacity for management of the expanded protected area system.

The project focuses on activities at two levels of intervention:

- (i) the national level, through working with public institutions and agencies in order to develop the institutional and individual capacity to consolidate, expand and effectively manage the PAS; and
- (ii) the local level, through working directly with the target groups and local communities in order to establish the first National Park in Turkmenistan in the Sumbar river valley in the southwest Kopetdag mountains.

The Project expected outcomes are as follows: Outcome 1 Expanded Protected Area System (PAS) to improve PA representation and coverage:

Improved coverage of the PA system to include under-represented desert ecosystems and regions notably the Balkhan and Central Karakum priority conservation areas;

Enabling environment for an increased area of individually protected areas and the whole system;

First National Park established as a model for the protected area management category in Turkmenistan (approx. 300,000 ha)

Outcome 2 Adequate institutional and individual capacity is in place for the management of PAS:

Enhanced capacity of the protected area institutions to implement the protected area system plan (measured by the Institutional scorecard and

METT);

Improved inter-institutional cooperation and collaboration over natural resources conservation and management. The total project budget is US\$ 3,548,400. The GEF contribution is US\$ 950,000. The Implementing Agency for the project is the Ministry of Nature Protection of Turkmenistan.

Duties and Responsibilities

The TE will be conducted according to the guidelines, rules and procedures established by UNDP and GEF as reflected in the UNDP Evaluation Guidance for GEF Financed Projects. The objectives of the evaluation are to assess the achievement of project results, and to draw lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project, and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP programming.

Evaluation Approach and Method

An overall approach and method for conducting project terminal evaluations of UNDP supported GEF financed projects has been developed over time. The evaluator is expected to frame the evaluation effort using the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact, as defined and explained in the UNDP Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed Projects. A set of questions covering each of these criteria have been drafted and are included with this TOR (fill in Annex C). The evaluator is expected to amend, complete and submit this matrix as part of an evaluation inception report, and shall include it as an annex to the final report.

The evaluation must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The evaluator is expected to follow a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with government counterparts, in particular the GEF operational focal point, UNDP Country Office, project team, UNDP GEF Technical Adviser based in the region and key stakeholders. The evaluator is expected to conduct a field mission to Magtymguly Etrap, Balkan Velayat, including the following project site Suynt Hasardag Nature.

Interviews will be held with the following organizations and individuals at a minimum:

- Ministry of Nature Protection (Minister, Deputy Minister, Head and Specialists of Flora and Fauna Protection Division, Chief Accountant);
- Staff of Suynt Hasardag Nature Reserve (Director and specialist/national experts of the project
- National Experts of the Project;
- Director of the National Institute of Deserts, Flora and Fauna;
- UNDP-CO

The evaluator will review all relevant sources of information, such as the project document, project reports – including Annual APR/PIR, project budget revisions, midterm review, progress reports, GEF focal area tracking tools, project files, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the evaluator considers useful for this evidence-based assessment. A list of documents that the project team will provide to the evaluator for review is included in Annex B of this Terms of

Reference.

Evaluation Criteria & Ratings

An assessment of project performance will be carried out, based against expectations set out in the Project Logical Framework/Results Framework, which provides performance and impact indicators for project implementation along with their corresponding means of verification. The evaluation will apply the evaluation criteria below by addressing a set of questions. Ratings must be provided on the following performance criteria. The completed table must be included in the evaluation executive summary.

Evaluation Ratings:

Monitoring and Evaluation:

- M&E design at entry;
- M&E Plan Implementation;
- Overall quality of M&E.

IA& EA Execution:

- Quality of UNDP Implementation;
- Quality of Execution - Executing Agency;
- Overall quality of Implementation / Execution.

Assessment of Outcomes:

- Relevance;
- Effectiveness;
- Efficiency;
- Overall Project Outcome Rating.

Sustainability:

- Financial resources;
- Socio-political;
- Institutional framework and governance;
- Environmental;
- Overall likelihood of sustainability.

Project Finance/Cofinance

The evaluation will assess the key financial aspects of the project, including the extent of co-financing planned and realized. Project cost and funding data will be required, including annual expenditures. Variances between planned and actual expenditures will need to be assessed and explained. Results from recent financial audits, as available, should be taken into consideration. The evaluator will receive assistance from the Country Office (CO) and Project Team to obtain financial data in order to complete the co-financing table below, which will be included in the terminal evaluation report.

Mainstreaming

UNDP supported GEF financed projects are key components in UNDP country programming, as well as regional and global programmes. The evaluation will assess the extent to which the project was successfully mainstreamed with other UNDP priorities, including poverty alleviation, improved governance, the prevention and recovery from natural disasters, and gender.

Impact

The evaluator will assess the extent to which the project is achieving impacts or progressing towards the achievement of impacts. Key findings that should be brought out in the evaluations include whether the project has demonstrated: a) verifiable improvements in ecological status, b) verifiable reductions in stress on ecological systems, and/or c) demonstrated progress towards these impact achievements.

Conclusions, Recommendations & Lessons

The evaluation report must include a chapter providing a set of conclusions, recommendations and lessons.

Implementation Arrangements

The principal responsibility for managing this evaluation resides with the UNDP CO in Turkmenistan. The UNDP CO will contract the evaluator and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country. The Project Implementation Unit will be responsible for liaising with the evaluator to set up stakeholder interviews, arrange field visits, coordinate with the Government etc.

Evaluation Timeframe

The total duration of the evaluation will be 20 days according to the following plan:

- Preparation: 3 days, by 12 March 2014;
- Evaluation Mission: 8 days, by 22 March 2014 (to be agreed);
- Draft Evaluation Report: 7 days, tentatively by the end of March 2014;
- Final Report: 2 days, by middle of April 2014.

Evaluation Deliverables

The evaluation team is expected to deliver the following:

Inception Report where the evaluator provides clarifications on timing and method; submits it no to UNDP CO later than 2 weeks before the evaluation mission;

Presentation of initial findings at the end of evaluation mission to project management and UNDP CO;

Draft of Final Report - within 3 weeks of the evaluation mission, shared with CO, reviewed by RTA, PCU, and GEF OFPs;

Final Report* - within 1 week upon receiving of UNDP comments on the draft.

When submitting the final evaluation report, the evaluator is required also to provide an 'audit trail', detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final evaluation report.

Annex II: Itinerary of Mission in Turkmenistan

Date	Item
29 April	<p>International Consultant arrives in Ashgabat</p> <p><i>Briefing meeting with UNDP-CO, those present included:</i></p> <p>UNDP-CO Resident Representative (Jacinta Barrins)</p> <p>UNDP Deputy Resident Representative (Lin Chao)</p> <p>UNDP Environment Programme Specialist (Rovshen Nurmuhamedov)</p> <p>PAS Project Manager (Shirin Karryeva)</p> <p>Meeting with UNDP Environment Programme Specialist (Rovshen Nurmuhamedov)</p>
30 April	<p><i>Meetings with:</i></p> <p>UNDP Environment Programme Assistant (Mr. Geldi Muradov)</p> <p>UNDP Head of Project Implementation Unit (PIU) for Environment Portfolio (Mr. Merdan Hudaykuliev) and Assistants of PIU (Ms. Victoria Saygusheva, Ms. Bahar Mamedova)</p> <p>PAS Project Manager (Ms. Shirin Karryeva)</p> <p>Institutional Development, Nature Protection Expert, PASP Team (Ms. Tatyana Rotaru)</p> <p>Management Planning Expert, PASP Team and Sumbar NNP PR-Expert (Dr. Galina Kamahina)</p> <p>Legal Expert, PASP Team and Sumbar NNP Working Group (Dr. Elbars Kepbanov)</p> <p>Financing Expert, PASP Team and Sumbar NNP Working Group (Mr. Stanislav Aganov)</p>
01 May	<p><i>Meetings with:</i></p> <p>Chief Scientific Specialist, Ex-Deputy Minister of Nature Protection and Project NPC (Dr. Jumamurad Saparmuradov)</p> <p>Sumbar NNP PR-Expert (Ms. Gulshat Veyisova)</p> <p>Designer of the Project (Mr. Agaev Roman)</p> <p>ICT Expert (Mr. Azat Shamuradov)</p> <p>NBSAP Project Manager (Mr. Oleg Guchgeldiev)</p> <p>Team Leader of Sumbar NNP Working Group (Prof. Eldar Rustamov)</p>
02 May	<p><i>Meetings with:</i></p> <p>Head of Department for Coordinating Environmental Programmes of MNP (Mr. Tirkish Annaev)</p> <p>Specialist of Department of Flora and Fauna Protection of MNP (Ms. Aigul Melyaeva)</p> <p>PAS Project Manager (Ms. Shirin Karryeva)</p>

03 May	<p>Travel to proposed Sumbar National Park</p> <p><i>Meetings with:</i></p> <p>Ex-Director of Sunt-Hasardag Zapovednik (Mr. Yomudali Yomudaliev)</p> <p>Islamov Dovran, Acting-Director of Sunt-Hasardag Zapovednik</p> <p>Head of Department of Flora and Fauna Protection of MNP (Mr. Kadyr Annagulyev)</p>
04 May	<p>Visiting various locations in the proposed Sumbar National Park</p>
05 May	<p><i>Meeting with:</i></p> <p>Biodiversity Expert, Sumbar Working Group Expert (Mr. Hodjamurad Hodjamuradov)</p>
06 May	<p><i>Meetings with:</i></p> <p>Director of National Institute of Deserts, Flora and Fauna, ex-Head of Department for Coordinating Environmental Programmes of MNP (Dr. Muhammet Durikov)</p> <p>PAS Project Manager (Ms. Shirin Karryeva)</p> <p>UNDP-CO PIU Contracting and recruitment Specialist (Ayna Allaberdyeva)</p> <p><i>De-briefing Meeting with:</i></p> <p>UNDP Environment Programme Specialist (Mr. Rovshen Nurmuhamedov)</p> <p>UNDP Resident Representative (Ms. Jacinta Barrins)</p> <p>UNDP Deputy Resident Representative (Ms. Lin Chao)</p> <p>PAS Project Manager (Ms. Shirin Karryeva)</p>
07 May	<p>TE Evaluator departs</p>
08 – 26 May	<p><i>Skype conversations with:</i></p> <p>Michael Appleton (International Technical Advisor)</p> <p>Mark Day (RSPB, Head of Partner Development Unit: Europe, Middle East & Central Asia International Country Programmes Department)</p> <p>Maxim Vergeichik, UNDP-GEF RTA, Bratislava</p> <p><i>Email contact with:</i></p> <p>Lucy Emerton (International Expert, Financing PAs)</p> <p><i>Writing:</i></p> <p>Drafting Terminal Evaluation Report, Vol I (submitted 26 May 2014)</p>

Annex III: List of persons interviewed

Person	Position & Institutional Affiliation/Position
Agaev Roman	Designer of the Project
Aigul Melyaeva	Specialist of Department of Flora and Fauna Protection of MNP
Ayna Allaberdyeva	UNDP-CO PIU Contracting and recruitment Specialist
Azat Shamuradov	ICT Expert
Bahar Mamedova	PIU Assistant (Finance)
Elbars Kepbanov	Legal Expert PASP Team & Sumbar NNP Working Group
Eldar Rustamov	Team Leader of Sumbar NNP Working Group
Galina Kamahina	Management Planning Expert & PASP Team and Sumbar NNP PR-Expert
Geldi Muradov	UNDP Environment Programme Assistant
Gulshat Veyisova	Sumbar NNP PR-Expert
Hodjamurad Hodjamuradov	Biodiversity Expert, Sumbar Working Group Expert
Jacinta Barrins	UNDP-CO Resident Representative
Jumamurad Saparmuradov	Chief Scientific Specialist, Ex-Deputy Minister of Nature Protection and Project NPC
Kadyr Annagulyev	Head of Department of Flora and Fauna Protection of MNP
Lin Chao	UNDP Deputy Resident Representative
Mark Anstey	CTA, UNDP-GEF NBSAP Project
Merdan Hudaykuliev	UNDP-CO Head of Project Implementation Unit (PIU) for Environment Portfolio
Muhammet Durikov	Director of National Institute of Deserts, Flora and Fauna, ex-Head of Department for Coordinating Environmental Programmes of MNP
Oleg Guchgeldiev	NBSAP Project Manager
Rovshen Nurmuhamedov	UNDP Environment Programme Specialist
Shirin Karryeva	PAS Project Manager
Stanislav Aganov	Financing Expert, PASP Team and Sumbar NNP Working Group
Tatyana Rotaru	Institutional Development, Nature Protection Expert, PASP Team
Tirkish Annaev	Head of Department for Coordinating Environmental Programmes of MNP
Victoria Saygusheva	PIU Assistant (Logistics)
Islamov Dovran	Acting-Director of Sunt-Hasardag Zapovednik

Person	Position & Institutional Affiliation/Position
Yomudali Yomudaliev	Ex-Director of Sunt-Hasgardag Zapovednik
<i>Skype interviews</i>	
Michael Appleton	International Technical Advisor
Mark Day	RSPB, Head of Partner Development Unit: Europe, Middle East & Central Asia International Country Programmes Department
Maxim Vergeichik	UNDP-GEF RTA, Bratislava
<i>Email contact</i>	
Lucy Emerton	International Expert, Financing PAs

Annex IV: Summary of Field Visits

Date	Item
03 May	<p>Travel to proposed Sumbar National Park</p> <p>Visit to offices of Sunt-Hasardag <i>zapovednik</i> and hold meetings with: i) Ex-Director of Sunt-Hasgardag Zapovednik (Mr. Yomudali Yomudaliev) and ii) Islamov Dovran, Acting-Director of Sunt-Hasgardag Zapovednik</p> <p>Travel along Sumbar river valley to Idere. Hold meeting with Head of Department of Flora and Fauna Protection of MNP (Mr. Kadyr Annagulyev)</p>
04 May	<p>Visiting various locations in the proposed Sumbar National Park, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idere river valley • Top of hills above Idere river • Various locations down Sumbar river valley, including Magtumguli Museum • Visit to various areas in northwest of proposed national park • Visit to inspect holding area for Goitered gazelle (<i>Gazella subgutturosa</i>)
05 May	<p>Return to Ashgabat following a meeting with Biodiversity Expert, Sumbar Working Group Expert (Mr. Hodjamurad Hodjamuradov)</p>

Annex V: List of documents reviewed

The following documents were consulted during the Terminal Evaluation (including the Outputs of the project):

Project Outputs:

- Environmental Projects Implemented by the Ministry of Nature Protection of Turkmenistan (2011)
- Laws of Turkmenistan (2012) "On specially protected nature territories", adopted by the President of Turkmenistan and published in "*Neytralnyi Turkmenistan*" gazette on 31 March 2012
- Plans of PAs of Turkmenistan (information booklets, 2011)
- PR-information material on Sumbar NNP (9 different booklets each in Russian and Turkmen, 2013; glass holders, cans and bags with Sumbar NNP Logo)
- Programme of Development of PAs in Turkmenistan/PASP (in Russian and Turkmen, 2014, about 250 pages, in the process of editing and designing of Turkmen version)
- Protected Areas of Turkmenistan (2011)
- Sumbar NNP Feasibility Study (in Russian and Turkmen, 245 pages, 2014)
- Sumbar NNP Management Plan (in word, in Russian)
- The Red Data Book of Turkmenistan (2011)
- Turkmen Nature (set of color postcards, 2011)
- The project website: <http://www.pas.in.tm>

Project Documents, Reports and Correspondence:

- Appleton, M. (various dates) Six mission reports for missions carried out in August 2011, December 2011, June 2012, November 2012, January/February 2013, May 2013.
- Correspondence between the UNDP-CO and Ministry of Nature Protection.
- Edwards, P. (2012) Report of the Mid-term Evaluation Mission for for UNDP-GEF Project "Strengthening the Turkmenistan Protected Area System"
- Emerton, L. (2012) Mission Report from International Protected Areas Financing Consultant, 02-08 July 2012
- Emerton, L. (2012) Three reports on Financing the Protected Areas in Turkmenistan.
- Financial Data from PIU, UNDP-CO
- GEF Biodiversity Tracking Tool Spreadsheets (METT, Capacity Scorecard and Financial Sustainability Scorecards)
- Minutes of Project Board meetings (various dates)
- PIF (2008) for UNDP-GEF Project "Strengthening the Turkmenistan Protected Area

System”

PIR (2013) for UNDP-GEF Project “Strengthening the Turkmenistan Protected Area System”

Project Document (2009) for UNDP-GEF Project “Strengthening the Turkmenistan Protected Area System”

Vergeichik, M. (2013) Mission report – for mission 17-21 November 2012.

UNDP documents:

United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Turkmenistan 2010-2015, Ashgabat, 15 August 2009

UNDAF Results and Resources Framework 2010-2015

Other documents that were consulted:

Annachariyeva, J (2011) *Methodological Bases Of Species And Habitats Conservation In Turkmenistan*, MSc Thesis, Landscape Ecology and Nature Conservation, Ernst-Moritz-Arndt University of Greifswald

Edwards, P. (2011) *Report of the Final Evaluation Mission - UNDP-GEF project “Conservation and Sustainable Use of Globally Significant Biological Diversity in Khazar Nature Reserve on the Caspian Sea Coast”*

Hanmedova, J. (2009) *Legal and Administrative Bases for Establishing National Parks in Turkmenistan*, MSc Thesis, Landscape Ecology and Nature Conservation, Ernst-Moritz-Arndt University of Greifswald

Lysenko, I. (2008) *Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP/GEF Project “Development of the Econet for Long-term Conservation of Biodiversity in the Central Asia Ecoregions”*

Project Document for UNDP-GEF project “Conservation and sustainable use of globally significant biological diversity in Khazar Nature Reserve on the Caspian Sea Coast”

Project Information (2008) *Implementation of a National Park Programme for Turkmenistan*. Michael Succow Foundation.

Project Information (2009) *Establishment of the first national parks in Turkmenistan*. Michael Succow Foundation.

GEF and UNDP Evaluation Policies and Guidelines:

GEF Evaluation Office. GEF Evaluation Office Ethical Guidelines, 2007

GEF Evaluation Office. Guidelines for GEF Agencies in Conducting Terminal Evaluations, 2008

GEF Evaluation Office. The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy, 2010

UNDP Evaluation Guidelines for GEF-Financed Projects: Version for External Evaluators, March 2011

Annex VI: Framework questions used

1. What is the achievement, so far, of which you are most proud?
2. If you could go back in time, what would you change or do differently?
3. If you could go back in time, which activities would you definitely do again?
4. If the project had an extra USD 500k and an extra two years, what else would you consider doing?
5. What are you doing to ensure take up/replication of the concept and processes in other areas of the country?
6. What are the effects of inflation or changes in the exchange rates to the budgeting and/or expenditure?
7. Please give examples of how you are ensuring cost effectiveness?
8. Please provide all information on cofinance to date, including both cash and in-kind expenditure and a summary of the items on which the co-finance has been spent.
9. What is your role/relationship with the project?
10. What are you doing to ensure sustainability of the project's processes and impacts?
11. This (xxx) success seems very good: what did you do to achieve it?
12. Who are the partners (i.e., people actively working to the same goals) on the project?
13. Who would you say *owns* the project?
14. Who are the stakeholders in the project (i.e., people that are involved in the project, either actively or passively or will be affected by the project in some way)?
15. Who prepares the TOR for all contracting?
16. Who signs the contracts?
17. Imagine this scenario: if the Minister phones you up and says that he needs to make a brief report on the project to the President and he needs 5 bullets on the following subjects:
 - Key successes
 - what would you advise the next door country to do if they were to implement a similar project
 - what works and why
 - what does not work and why
 - key challenges
18. Is the project having any useful (but unplanned) spin-offs?
19. Is the project having any detrimental or negative (but unplanned or unintended) impacts?
20. This is a UNDP project – what advantages or disadvantages does this bring? What if it was a World Bank project instead – what difference would that bring?
21. If you were to re-write the Project Document, what would you change?
22. Who are the project's champions?
23. Standard issues:
 - Project Manager Forum
 - Procurement rules and efficiencies
 - UNDP training/support
 - Financial audits

- Cofinance information
 - Communication strategy?
 - Monitoring awareness/knowledge
 - Backing up data and digital information
 - Team functionality
 - Staff turn over
 - If training is provided, how is training is now being used in job?
 - How including gender and/or indigenous peoples issues?
 - Need to provide all information, including equipment, inputs, infrastructure, tracking tool data.
 - If there was a delay, what was the reason?
24. How is the project aligned to the national development plan, region-level development plans and the UNDAF?
25. Is the project trying to increase awareness? If so, among which target groups? How is the project monitoring changes in awareness and attitude? How has any changes in attitude and awareness affected project implementation, and how is it being used in the daily, professional lives of the target groups?
26. Why did the first Project Manager resign?

Annex VII: List of training courses and workshops carried out by project since 2012

Activities for development and discussion of Sumbar NNP Feasibility Study with relevant stakeholders

Date	Activity	Venue of the meeting	Number of organizations	Number of participants
16 – 17.05.12	Development of PASP, including issues on establishment of the Sumbar NNP (with participation of ITA, M. Appleton and Uzbekistan UNDP/GEF Project Manager and Technical Adviser)	Ashgabat	14	35
19.05.12	Round Table Meeting: background for establishment of the Sumbar NNP in Turkmenistan	Suynt Hasardag Nature Reserve, Parhay set.	4	13
04.07.12	Financing of PAs: International Experience, Business Plan Development (with participation of International Expert Lucy Emerton)	Ashgabat	14	35
9-11.07.12	Meeting for PR-activities	Suynt Hasardag Nature Reserve, Parhay set.	4	30
28.08 – 02.09.12	Round Table Meeting: zoning of Sumbar NNP	Ashgabat	8	17
02.09.12	Round Table Meeting: zoning of Sumbar NNP, expert meeting	Ashgabat	5	12
09.10.12	Discussion of draft PASP and Sumbar NNP Feasibility Study: comments/recommendations from stakeholders	Mary, Mary velayat	8	15
11.10.12	Discussion of draft PASP and Sumbar NNP Feasibility Study: comments/recommendations from stakeholders	Turkmenabat, Lebab velayat	13	25

16.10.12	Discussion of draft PASP and Sumbar NNP Feasibility Study: comments/recommendations from stakeholders	Turkmenbashi, Balkan velayat	10	18
18.10.12	Round Table Meeting: Sumbar NNP Feasibility Study Discussion	Suynt Hasardag Nature Reserve, Parhay set.	8	22
27.11.12	Discussion of draft PASP and Sumbar NNP Feasibility Study: comments/recommendations from stakeholders (with participation of ITA, M. Appleton and Maxim Vergeichik, UNDP Regional Technical Adviser)	Ashgabat	14	29
03-04.12.12	Round Table Meeting: Sumbar NNP Feasibility Study Discussion	Ashgabat	12	5
20.12.12	Discussion of draft PASP and Sumbar NNP Feasibility Study: comments/recommendations from stakeholders	Dashoguz, Dashoguz velayat	9	18
29-30.01.13	Discussion of draft PASP and Sumbar NNP Feasibility Study: comments/recommendations from stakeholders (with participation of ITA, M. Appleton)	Ashgabat	14	27
05.02.13	Round Table Meeting: Sumbar NNP Feasibility Study Discussion	Ashgabat	3	9
22.02.13	Round Table Meeting: Sumbar NNP Feasibility Study Discussion	Ashgabat	4	17
23.04.13	Project Board Meeting: PASP and Sumbar NNP Feasibility Study Discussion	Ashgabat	6	17
14-16.05.13	PAs Management Planning Training Courses (with participation of ITA, M. Appleton)	Suynt Hasardag Nature Reserve, Parhay set.	13	28
14.11.2013	Discussion of final version of	Ashgabat	12	24

	PASP and Sumbar NNP Feasibility Study : comments/recommendations from stakeholders (with participation of ITA, M. Appleton)			
18.03.2014	Presentation of PASP and Sumbar NNP Feasibility Study to stakeholders	Ashgabat	19	33

Activities for development and discussion of PASP with relevant stakeholders

Date	Activity/trainer	Venue of the meeting	Number of organization	Number of participants
16-17.05.2012	Development of PASP (with participation of ITA, M. Appleton and Uzbekistan UNDP/GEF Project Manager and Technical Adviser)	Ashgabat	14	35
04.07.12	Financing of PAs: International Experience (with participation of International Expert Lucy Emerton)	Ashgabat	14	35
15.06.2012	Development of PASP: draft reports consultation process	Ashgabat	15	32
09.10.12	Discussion of draft PASP: comments/recommendations from stakeholders	Mary, Mary velayat	8	15
11.10.12	Discussion of draft PASP: comments/recommendations from stakeholders	Turkmenabat, Lebab velayat	13	25
16.10.12	Discussion of draft PASP: comments/recommendations from stakeholders	Turkmenbashi, Balkan velayat	10	18
27.11.12	Discussion of draft PASP: comments/recommendations from stakeholders (with participation of ITA, M. Appleton and Maxim Vergeichik, UNDP Regional Technical	Ashgabat	14	29

	Adviser)			
29-30.01.2013	Discussion of draft PASP: comments/recommendations from stakeholders (with participation of ITA, M. Appleton)	Ashgabat	14	27
23.04.13	Project Board Meeting: PASP and Sumbar NNP Feasibility Study Discussion	Ashgabat	6	17
14-16.05.2013	PAs Management Planning Training Courses (with participation of ITA, M. Appleton)	Suynt Hasardag Nature Reserve, Parhay set.	13	28
17.09.2013	Discussion of draft PASP: comments/recommendations from stakeholders	Ashgabat	13	14
19.09.2013	Discussion of draft PASP: comments/recommendations from stakeholders	Dashoguz, Dashoguz velayat	7	23
14.11.2013	Discussion of final version of PASP: comments/recommendations from stakeholders (with participation of ITA, M. Appleton)	Ashgabat	12	24
18.03.2014	Presentation of PASP	Ashgabat	19	33

List of Training Courses

Date	Activity	Venue of the meeting	Number of organizations	Number of participants
22-23.10.2010	Training on Management of “Nature Chronicle” (“Letopis Prirody”) of Turkmenistan in State Nature Reserves	Ashgabat	9	24
20-22.07. and 25-26.07. 2011	Training Courses for PAs Staff on Monitoring of PAs, Administration,	Ashgabat	12	27

	Business Planning, Ecotourism Development, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of Ecosystem, Knowledge Management			
25.12.2012	GIS-Maps Preparation and use of GIS Technologies	Ashgabat	9	12
14-16.05.13	PAs Management Planning Training Courses (with participation of ITA, M. Appleton)	Suynt Hasardag Nature Reserve, Parhay set.	13	28

Note:

Further training courses were planned in 2013 but since the MNP was obstructing the establishment of Sumbar National Park, these were cancelled. They were to include:

- Three days of training on planning and management of tourism of PA – with international trainer
- Two day course delivered twice – 1st in Ashgabat, 2nd in Sumbar on development of small enterprises on PA – with two national trainers
- Three days of training on national level on working with local communities and local stakeholders

Annex VIII: Maps

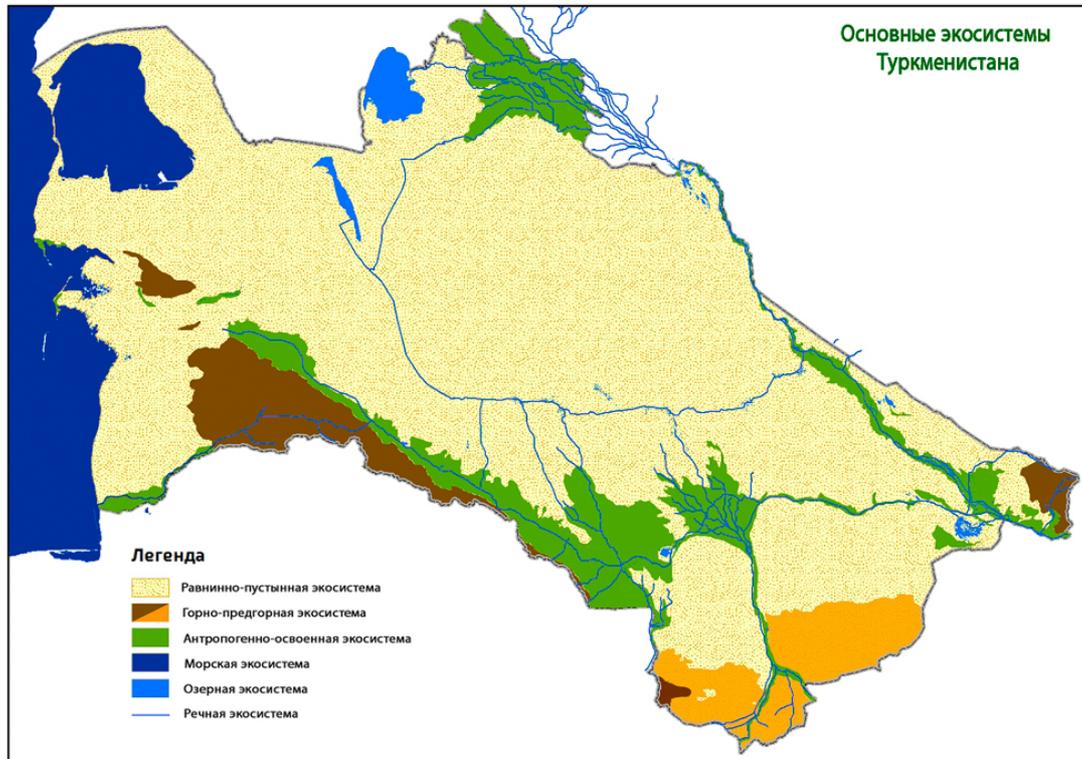


Figure 1. The ecosystems of Turkmenistan as mapped by the project for the PASP

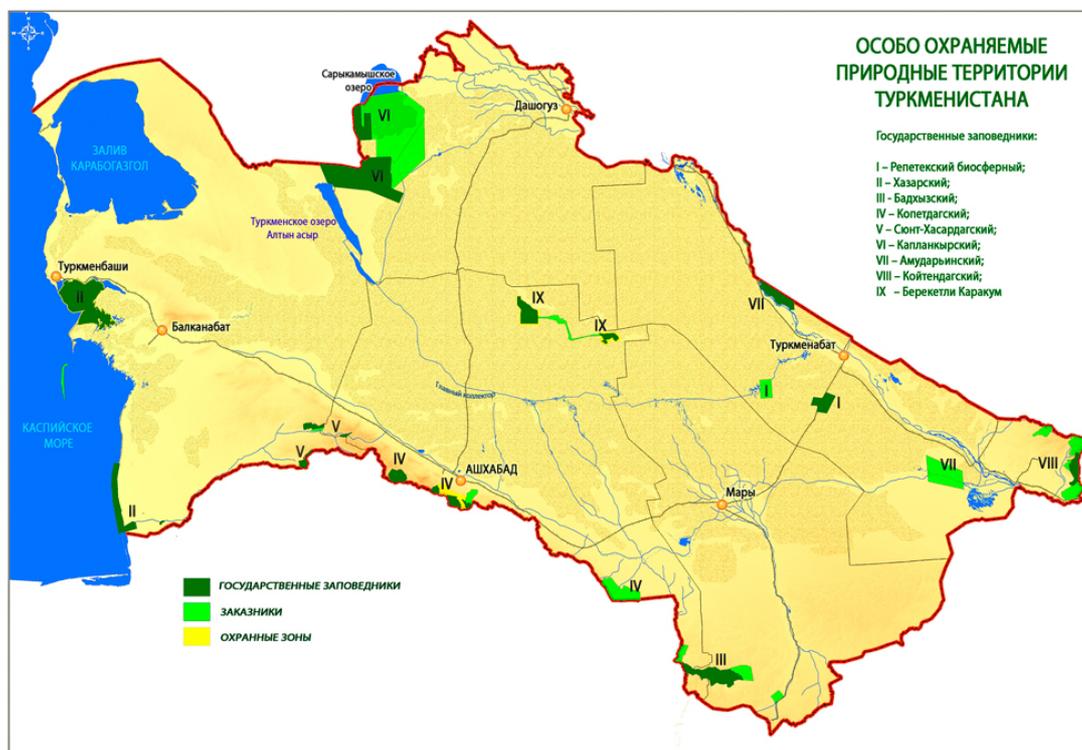


Figure 2. The currently existing protected areas of Turkmenistan

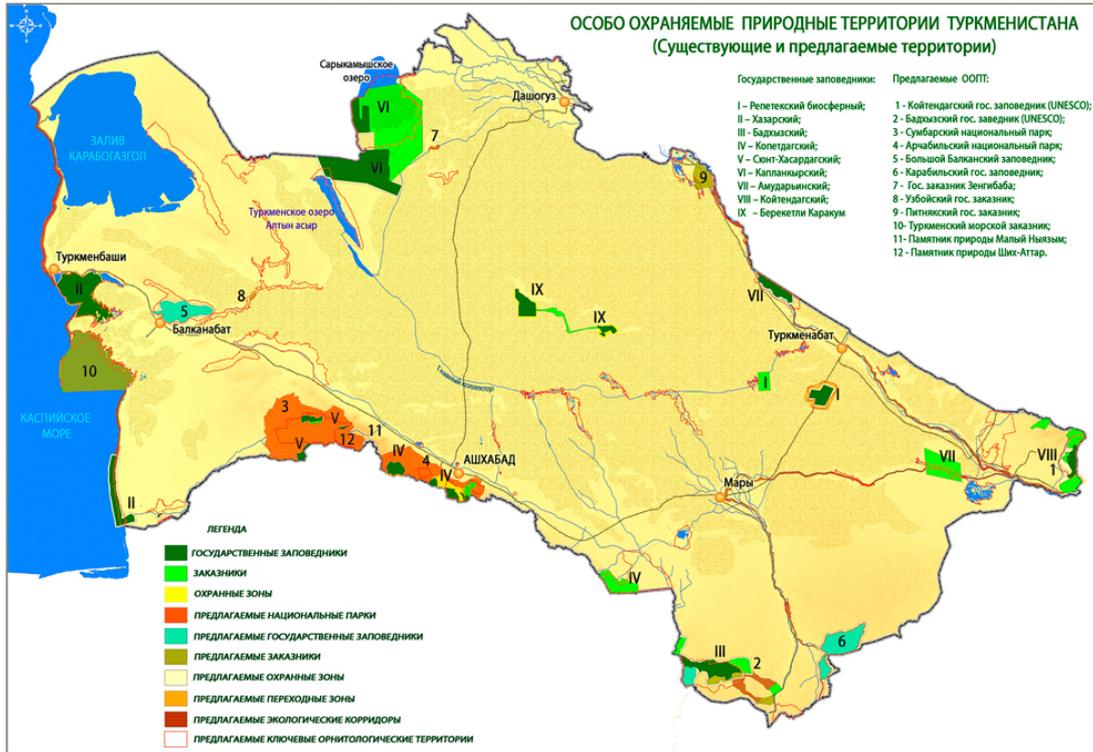


Figure 3. The existing and proposed (both extension of existing and new) protected areas under the PASP.

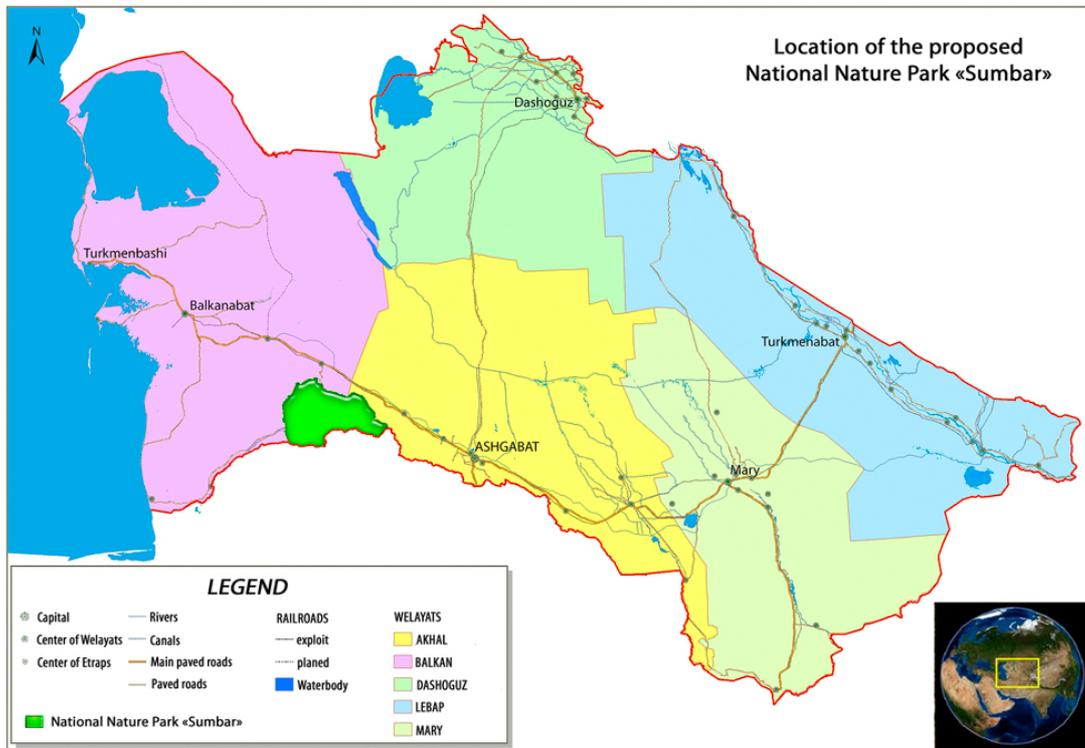


Figure 4. The location of the proposed Sumbar National Park in Turkmenistan



Figure 5. The proposed Sumbar National Park before the current project (as proposed by the Michael Succow Foundation)

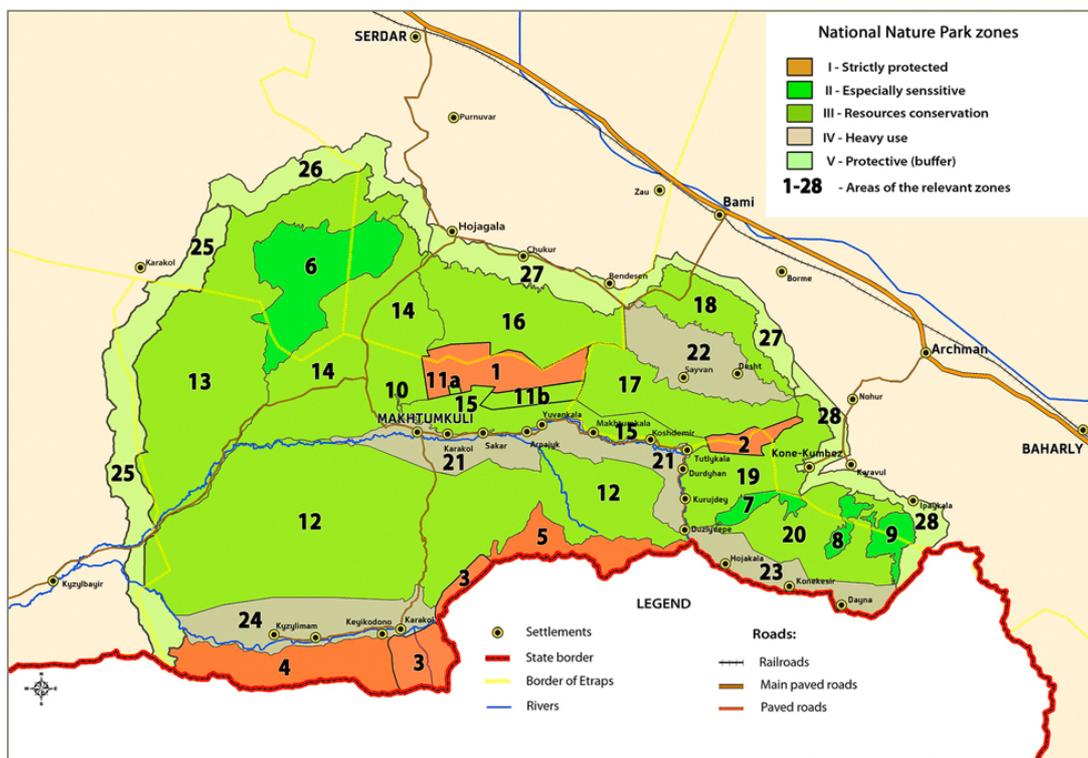


Figure 6. The proposed Sumbar National Park showing all the different zones of the proposed park. It should be noted that this builds on the existing protected areas in the area and, in fact, expands them

Annex IX: List of project assets
(See appended Asset Report)

Annex X: Letter to the UNDP Resident Representative

During the debriefing meeting in Ashgabat with the UNDP-CO RR, the Head of the Environment and Energy Unit and the Project Manager, the following question was posed to the evaluator:

“Is there any value to extending the project for another six months – thus, until the end of the year?”¹

The response to this question was given in an email to the UNDP-CO RR as follows:

28 May 2014

Ms Jacinta Barrins
Resident Representative
UNDP-Turkmenistan
Ashgabat
Turkmenistan

Madam,

Re: The question of whether to extend the PAS Project for a further period

I have given much thought to the final question that you put to me in the debriefing on 06 May 2014. I also held a number of conversations on the subject with the Project Manager, Shirin, before I departed, with the UNDP-GEF RTA in Bratislava, and with the project's International Technical Adviser (ITA).

As indicated in the report (see section 4.3 of Vol I of the report), there are a number of points for and against any such extension.

For:

The only reason to consider an extension is if something can be gained. In my view, that could only be in Output 1.1 – the Protected Area System Plan.

During my mission to Turkmenistan, the PASP had been commented upon (specifically by Specialists within the Department of Flora and Fauna Protection of the MNP) and the project team had incorporated those comments into a final (Russian) version of the document. All that remained, therefore, was to translate this final version into Turkmen and edit the translated version. This was to be done by the end of May 2014. This, then, represents the final PASP.

Thereafter there are two (not mutually exclusive) routes that may be taken:

First, the final PASP needs to be approved through the structures of the Government of Turkmenistan, including i) the Minister of Nature Protection, ii) the Deputy Prime Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources and iii) the Cabinet of Ministers (including the President).

¹ See para 168 in section 4.3 for a further discussion on this.

Second, the PASP needs be incorporated, either completely or in significant part, into the NBSAP and this, down the line, will need to be approved by the same levels listed above. This is obviously the indirect route for PASP approval.

In an ideal world, both of these will be done. However, in terms of moving forward, only one actually needs to be done and it could be either (assuming, that is, that the NBSAP will be approved if that is the only selected route). The crux for an extension, therefore, is whether a suitable and realistic roadmap can be drawn up to achieve either or both of these things.

Over the course of the mission to Turkmenistan and in the many conversations that I had, there were two people who stood out as being the “champions” of the project: Dr Mohammed Durikov (Head of the NIDFF) and Dr Jumamurad Saparmuradov (of various positions but now Head of the Vertebrate Laboratory within NIDFF). As such, I recommend that you, personally, convene a meeting with Drs Durikov and Saparmuradov (with the Project Manager and possibly Oleg Guchgeldiev, Project Manager of the NBSAP project) and see whether they think it is possible to come up with a suitable and realistic roadmap to take the PASP through any of the levels listed above. If a roadmap can be drawn up and agreed, then an extension should be considered with the following caveats:

1. An informal working group (of the people mentioned above) is established to follow this through. If and when possible, the UNDP-GEF RTA would join the working group.
2. The PASP is not edited. The process of editing the PASP would take too long (including the translation and editing time as well as time it would take for the MNP to comment on the edits). Indeed, notwithstanding the comments at the National Forum on the NBSAP, the PASP is a well-considered document.
3. In terms of finances, the project was underspent (at the time of the TE mission to Turkmenistan) by the following amounts: Outcome 1: USD 163,947.47 and Outcome 2: USD 125,786.98. In other words, for the technical work, there should be ample funding, subject to the appropriate approvals.

In contrast, in terms of a project management budget line for any extension, because the project has so significantly overspent its project management budget line (see section 3.2.4 of the TE Report), the UNDP-CO would have to cover the costs of managing the extension.

4. The roadmap should include a number of critical milestones (with associated dates). At each specified date, the working group should meet and review the progress. If progress is unsatisfactory for any reason, the project is immediately stopped.
5. It will require a commitment for Drs Durikov and Saparmuradov (but most importantly Dr Durikov) to take this forward (unless he has a better suggestion) to “sell” the PASP to the higher levels in line with the milestones.
6. The roadmap should identify all risks and assumptions. In roadmap review meetings, if a risk is not being overcome, the project is immediately stopped.
7. It is essential that Sumbar National Park (SNP) is *not* mentioned².

Finally, it should be noted that if this is successful, the project’s rating in the TE will improve significantly (certainly to Moderately Satisfactory or even Satisfactory).

Against:

There are a number of items to discuss with Drs Durikov and Saparmuradov, not least whether an extension to the project may antagonise the MNP further. In the report, I discuss some of the antagonism and apparent distances that exist between the UNDP-CO and the MNP. It is important that these are not exacerbated – both for the long-term strategic

² Because SNP is included within the PASP, when the PASP is implemented, SNP will have its day.

relationship but also because in doing so, the chances of success of a project extension will be significantly reduced (and this is part of the extension's risk matrix).

In addition, there is not much appetite for an extension from certain quarters and the UNDP-GEF RTA will require good evidence that the extension is worthwhile and will be successful.

In conclusion, then, there are two triggers to make the decision whether or not to extend the project:

First, whether a suitable and realistic roadmap can be put together to take the PASP forward (in either or both directions) and that the roadmap can convince the UNDP-GEF RTA to approve the extension.

Second, the UNDP-CO agrees to cover the project management costs throughout its extension.

Both of these triggers need to be hit for a decision to allow the project to be extended. In addition, GEF policy on Terminal Evaluations stipulates that they should be undertaken six months before or after a project closes. In other words, the project will have a maximum of a six-month extension to arrive at the conclusion of the roadmap.

In closing, I hope that this provides you with some clarity about the way forward in making a decision whether or not to extend the project. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information.

Yours faithfully,

[signed]

Stuart Williams, PhD

Annex XI: Contents of the email exchange between TE Evaluator and UNDP-CO re para 35 of report

In the first draft of the TE report, the original content of para 35 was as follows:

One of the criticisms levelled at the project by the MTR was that the UNDP-CO and project team did not respond to the ITA's recommendations and often completely ignored them. In not removing these indicators, the UNDP-CO and project team have simultaneously ignored the MTR, the UNDP-GEF RTA and the ITA! This displays an astonishing lack of attention to detail in circumstances where attentiveness is critical to achieving successes in such projects.

This paragraph led to the following email exchange (in reverse order) as a consequence of which the paragraph was edited in the final version of the report.

From: Stuart Williams	13 June 2014
To: Rovshen Nurmuhamedov	
Cc: Lin Cao, Shirin Karriyeva	
Re: PAS Project TE Vol I Draft_v1	

Dear Rovshen

Thanks for the email; I'm happy to re-word that statement!

All the best
Stuart

++++
Stuart Williams, PhD
Kampala, Uganda
++++

On 13 Jun 2014, at 12:28, Rovshen Nurmuhamedov <> wrote:

Dear Stuart,

Your point is clear. I agree that the CO should have clearly articulated the acceptance of the revised logframe through the use of strikethroughs and other appropriate means.

However, in my view the statement "the UNDP-CO and project team have simultaneously ignored the MTR, the UNDP-GEF RTA and the ITA!" does not fully reflect the situation. There is evidence that work was done by the CO and the project team with regard to the logframe indicators with full engagement of the ITA (during Nov 2012 and Jan 2013 missions) as part of the project team. To this end, it seems somewhat unfair to conclude that the recommendations had been ignored.

I hope I am clear. Please get back to me should you need further inputs from us on this.

Cheers,

Rovshen

From: Stuart Williams []
Sent: Friday, June 13, 2014 11:53 AM
To: Rovshen Nurmuhamedov
Cc: lin cao; Shirin Karriyeva
Subject: Re: PAS Project, TE, Vol II Draft_v1

Dear Rovshen

Thank you for the email. I see that the management response acknowledges the need to 1) Adopt and absorb logframe revised in the Inception Report and 2) Further review and clarify the logframe (under Evaluation Recommendation 4 in the management response and the section 4.2 and 4.3 under this section).

You will note that there are differences in the MTE recommendation and the ITA recommendation (in his report from his fourth mission of November 2012) - the MTE does not recommend that any indicator be removed; in contrast, the ITA recommended the removal of indicators 10 and 13 (actions supported by the RTA) - this is not acknowledged in the management response (which still talks about defining a “baseline for indicator ... 13” - see point 4.3.2).

However, the main point, I think, is not that there was acknowledgement in the management response or elsewhere but the fact that it was not followed up by action. In other words, indicators 10 and 13 should have actually been removed (actually, what I'd really like to see in those circumstances is the indicator with a strikethrough all the text, e.g.,: Indicator 10. Pilots carried out, evaluated, refined and adopted; Guidelines/Manual produced and being used for training, with a further comment in a 'comments' column stating that the indicator was removed as per MTE, RTA and ITA) and a baseline should have been established for indicator 5 (despite the fact that, like the ITA, I interpreted the indicator as a planning indicator which, through the finalisation of the PASP, meant that in my view it was complete).

In conclusion, indicators 10 and 13 remained in the logframe in the PIR and in the separate logframe given to me by Shirin and there was no baseline set for indicator 5. Given that GEF's attention is acutely on the logframe, it would be good to see attention to these details.

I hope that this all makes sense - please get back to me as necessary.

With best wishes
Stuart

++++
Stuart Williams, PhD
Kampala, Uganda
++++

On 12 Jun 2014, at 10:06, Rovshen Nurmuhamedov <> wrote:

Dear Stuart,

Sorry for replying with delay. The recommendations of the MTE, RTA and ITA were incorporated into the management response of UNDP CO. The work on the logframe was undertaken during the RTA and ITA missions in November 2013. Later during the ITA mission in Jan 2013, this work has been further refurbished under direct ITA guidance.

Please see correspondence from Lin to RTA sharing one of the regularly updated management responses with reference to logframe indicators 5 & 13. Please note that AWP 2013 was developed based on the revised logframe.

Please let us know if the management response can serve as confirmation of the logframe acceptance.

Cheers,

Rovshen

From: Stuart Williams []
Sent: Wednesday, June 04, 2014 11:33 AM
To: Rovshen Nurmuhamedov
Cc: lin cao; Shirin Karriyeva
Subject: Re: PAS Project, TE, Vol II Draft_v1

Dear Rovshen

Thanks for the email - Para 35 refers to three documents:

1. The MTE (see para 66 and Annex IV) where the evaluator makes suggestions for the indicators.
2. The back-to-the-office report (BTOR) of the UNDP-GEF RTA from November 2012. In it, the RTA states:

"All technical work on the Project in 2013 should be suspended while detailed planning is undertaken. Detailed planning should include: Adopt and absorb logframe revised in the Inception Report - RTA: Agreed. Log-frame was reviewed and re-shaped during this very mission. It is attached as Annex 2 in the International Advisor report. The country office should confirm its acceptance and the log-frame would then be integrated in the PIR system used by UNDP-GEF. The project would then officially start to report against this logframe from 2013 PIR."

3. The fourth mission report of the ITA (as cited above by the RTA) - specifically Annex 2 - in which the recommendation is to remove indicators 10 and 13.

I hope that this makes sense - if not, please get back to me.

With thanks and best wishes
Stuart

++++
Stuart Williams, PhD
Kampala, Uganda
++++

On 2 Jun 2014, at 15:33, Rovshen Nurmuhamedov <> wrote:

Dear Stuart,

Many thanks for a very well written 1st draft TE. We are still in the process of reviewing the document. However, we would like to clarify with you para 35, which states as follows:

35. One of the criticisms levelled at the project by the MTR was that the UNDP-CO and project team did not respond to the ITA's recommendations and often completely ignored them. In not removing these indicators, the UNDP-CO and project team have simultaneously ignored the MTR, the UNDP-GEF RTA and the ITA! This displays an astonishing lack of attention to detail in circumstances where attentiveness is critical to achieving successes in such projects.

Shirin and I went through the relevant ITA report and report-based management response (both are enclosed) and could not identify which indicators should have been removed as per the MTE, RTA and ITA recommendations. May I kindly ask you to elaborate on this para, so that we could locate the status of this action on our side.

Many thanks in advance,
Rovshen

Annex XII: Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form

Evaluators:

1. Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded
2. Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.
3. Should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They should provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and: respect people's right not to engage. Evaluators must respect people's right to provide information in confidence, and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate individuals, and must balance an evaluation of management functions with this general principle.
4. Sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing while conducting evaluations. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is any doubt about if and how issues should be reported.
5. Should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relations with all stakeholders. In line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality. They should avoid offending the dignity and self-respect of those persons with whom they come in contact in the course of the evaluation. Knowing that evaluation might negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate its purpose and results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.
6. Are responsible for their performance and their product(s). They are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/or oral presentation of study limitations, findings and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form

Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System

Name of Consultant	Stuart Williams
--------------------	-----------------

I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.

Signed at: Kampala, Uganda On: 29 June 2014

Signature



Evaluation Report Reviewed and Cleared by

UNDP Country Office	
Name:	
Signature:	Date:
UNDP-GEF RTA	
Name:	
Signature:	Date: