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**Improving the coverage and management effectiveness of PAs in the Central Tian Shan Mountains**

PIMS 4934

**Midterm Review, December 2015**

**Volume I**

Kyrgyz Republic

GEF Focal Area: Biodiversity Objective 1: Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems (BD1)

**Kyrgyz Republic**

**State Agency for Environmental Protection and Forestry**

**United National Development Program (UNDP)**

Stuart Williams

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The project team gave me their time during the mission in Kyrygyzstan and patiently answered all of my questions and requests for clarification, and organized the entire mission including all the meetings that I had with a broad range of stakeholders. I am indebted to them as the mission’s success and efficiency was a result of their efforts. I am especially grateful to Jamal Akmatova for the extra efforts to which she went in order to make the mission a success. I am also grateful to all the people that I met during the mission, many of whom I met out of working hours. Wherever I went, I was warmly and hospitably received. Kalipa Djaparova provided both much information on Kyrgyzstan and excellent interpretation during many of the meetings that I had with stakeholders.

The evaluation is intended to give a summary of what has been achieved in the project to date as well a glean some of the lessons that can be learned from it in what was a relatively short period. 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 is a pleasure to be welcomed to Kyrgyzstan, to be shown around with such evident pride and to see wonderful places. I saw the results of the dedication and enthusiasm that people had put into the work of conserving important places in the world. I would like to offer everyone involved my thanks and wish them every success in their continuing endeavours.

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|  |  | Stuart Williams  Kampala, Uganda |

December 2015

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# Acronyms, Abbreviations and Glossary

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Aiyl okmotu* | Local self-governing bodies (sub-rayon level) |
| APR | Annual Project Review |
| asl | Above sea level |
| CEO | Chief Executive Officer (referring to GEF) |
| CSO | Civil Society Organisation |
| CTA | Chief Technical Advisor |
| DIM | Direct Implementation Modalities |
| DSA | Daily Subsistence Allowance |
| EOP | End of Project (usually in the context of targets for indicators) |
| EN | Endangered (referring to an IUCN Category of Threat for species) |
| GEF | Global Environment Facility |
| ha | Hectares |
| IBA | Important Bird Area, a classification used be BirdLife International |
| Inspectors | State law enforcement agents that are equivalent to rangers or scouts elsewhere in the world |
| IUCN | World Conservation Union |
| KTNP | Khan Tengri National Park – the national park that is proposed to be established under this project |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| METT | Monitoring Effectiveness Tracking Tool (for protected areas) |
| MTR | Midterm Review |
| NAS | National Academy of Science |
| NBSAP | National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan |
| NGO | Non-governmental Organisation (or in Belarus “public organisation”) |
| NRM | Natural Resource Management |
| NT | Near Threatened (referring to an IUCN Category of Threat for species) |
| PA | Protected Area |
| PB | Project Board |
| PC | Project Coordinator |
| PIF | Project Identification Form |
| PIR | Project Implementation Review |
| PIU | Project Implementation Unit |
| PPG | Project Preparation Grant |
| PM | Project Manager |
| PR | Public Relations |
| PRF | Project Results Framework |
| ProDoc | Project Document (referring to the UNDP operational project document) |
| Oblast | Kyrgyz administrative unit equivalent to region |
| Rayon | Kyrgyz administrative unit equivalent to district |
| SAEPF | State Agency on Environmental Protection and Forestry |
| SAZ | Sarychat Ertash *zapovednik* |
| TE | Terminal Evaluation |
| TOR | Terms of Reference |
| UNDP | United National Development Program |
| UNDP-CO | UNDP Country Office |
| UNDP-DRR | UNDP Deputy Resident Representative |
| UNDP-GEF RTA | UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor (based in Istanbul) |
| UNDP-GEF RTC | UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Centre (based in Istanbul) |
| USD | United States dollars |
| VU | Vulnerable to Extinction (referring to an IUCN Category of Threat for species) |
| WWF | World Wide Fund for Nature (formerly World Wildlife Fund) |
| *Zapovednik* | A central protected area or strict nature reserve (equivalent to IUNC PA Category I) |

# Executive Summary

## Project Information Table

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Project Title | Improving coverage and management effectiveness of PAs in the Central Tian Shan Mountains | | | |
| UNDP Project ID | 00085844 | PIF Approval Date | | March 27, 2012 |
| GEF Project ID | 4844 | CEO Endorsement Date | | May 12, 2011. |
| ATLAS Business Unit Award No. | 00072819 | ProDoc Signature Date | | May 27, 2015 |
| Country | Kyrgyzstan | Date PM hired | | October 16, 2013 |
| Region: | Central Asia | Inception W/shop date | | October 24, 2015 |
| GEF Focal Area/Strategic Objective | Biodiversity | MTR completion date | | November 27, 2015 |
| Trust Fund | GEF Trust Fund | If revised, proposed op. closing date: | | June 17, 2017 |
| Executing Agency/Implementing partner | State Agency on Environment Protection and Forestry of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic/UNDP | | | |
| Other executing partners | Local governments and communities, scientific committees, private sector and civil society | | | |
| Project Financing | at CEO endorsement (USD) | | At MTR (USD) | |
| [1] GEF Financing | $950,000 | | $ 337,379.9 | |
| [2] UNDP Contribution | $1,600,000 | | $ 600,000 | |
| [3] Government | $ 2,866,666 | | $ 925,000 | |
| [4] Other partners | $ 500,000 | | $ 10,000 | |
| [5] Total cofinancing | $ 4,966,666 | | $ 1,535,000 | |
| **PROJECT TOTAL COSTS** | **$ 5,916,666** | | **$ 1,872,379.9** | |

## Project Description

The long-term solution is described as being the need to take a more strategic and landscape-based approach to protected area expansion and management in the Tian Shan Mountains, with a higher proportion of the areas critical to globally threatened species are brought under effective protection through strict conservation areas, buffer areas and corridors. Building capacity within key institutions and communities is also identified as being important.

The project aims to contribute to this long-term goal through achievement of its objective: “To improve the coverage and effectiveness of protected areas in the Central Tian Shan Mountains so as to expand threatened species representation in the national system.” In functional terms, this objective is to be achieved through the achievement, in turn, of the following outcomes: Outcome 1: Threatened species representation is improved by increasing coverage and management effectiveness of PAs in the Central Tian Shan and Outcome 2: Habitat connectivity, sustainability, and effectiveness of PAs in the Central Tian Shan are enhanced by regulating land use in buffer zones, wildlife corridors and other intervening landscapes. These outcomes have a total of ten outputs.

The project, then, is ambitious in a number of ways: i) it proposes to amend laws and establish a new protected area at the national level – both of which will require high level governmental approvals, ii) work with local authorities at the provincial and district levels to mainstream biodiversity conservation into the land use plans – especially within the identified protected area buffer zones and within the corridors between the protected areas – and implement measure to enforce regulations, and iii) develop and implement an alternative livelihood program among local communities. Finally, the project proposes to do all this in a four-year period and with a budget of less than USD one million!

## Progress towards Results

The project keeping a sharp focus on its principal output; this will be the establishment of Khan Tengri National Park (KTNP; *Output 1.1*). The project is following the proscribed steps to establish the park in a thorough way.

Building on the WWF Econet analysis (which proposed a new protected area of 187,785ha), desk based analysis, and field surveys and analysis were carried out to determine the optimal boundaries and size of the park. The resulting proposal was an area of some 325,000ha. The work was combined into a feasibility study (carried out by the staff of the SAEPF) for the proposed national park (of 325,000 ha), the surrounding areas (of approximately 180,000ha) and the park’s linkages – specifically to the Sarychat Ertash *zapovednik* – by corridors (of approximately 71,000ha)[[1]](#footnote-1). Next, the project determined whether there were any conflicting land claims by consulting various key ministries. A number of concessions were made and the finally proposed park was 300,000ha. Support and agreement for the park was built, including from: the deputies at the local level, the local self-governing bodies (*aiyl okmotu*), the rayon authorities, the oblast level authorities, the Issyl Kul Biosphere Territory and the SAEPF. As a result of this work, six of the seven *aiyl okmotu* have signed their endorsement to the establishment of the park and all the other bodies are supportive.

One *aiyl okmotu* has yet to endorse the establishment of the park. This promoted the project to carry out a sample survey (*n* = 1,383 households) to determine the attitudes to the establishment of the park and the results demonstrated that 75% of the people support the establishment of the park, 17% of the people are against the establishment of the park and 8% of the people surveyed abstained. While this demonstrates that the majority of people support the establishment of the park, it does little to change the situation – that a minority of people within Otradnoe *aiyl okmotu* have the ability to stall the process.

Other mistakes were also made during the process – for example: i) the calculation of the area of the pastures belonging to the seven communities affected by the establishment of the park has, on more than one occasion, proved to be flawed; ii) the language that was being used was often alienating and threatening (e.g., “own” vs. “include” – when referring to the pastures of each of the communities that are proposed to be included into the park). These have deepened distrust – specifically of the government – among the local communities and contribute to the intransigence.

Finally, the project has not yet carried out any study tour(s) (as included in the Prodoc) even though study tours are supposed to be learning processes during which participants are exposed to good practices and examples in an attempt to expose people to new ideas and practices either to persuade them to adopt those ideas or to teach them the techniques involved. Conducting a study tour with selected members of the Otradnoe *aiyl okmotu* (as well as members from other communities) may have persuaded them from the outset that the park (with its associated benefits) would be worth supporting.

The project has initiated the process of collecting ideas and recommendations for a management plan for the proposed Khan Tengri National Park but obviously it has not yet launched the full process of management plan development. This should happen only once the park has actually been legally established. However the project did hold a national workshop on the process to develop management plans for protected areas and published a manual on the basis of this workshop that was subsequently approved by the SAEPF.

To start the process of building capacity (*Output 1.2*), nine “freelance inspectors” have been recruited and the project has provided training for them and other inspectors. The freelance inspectors are not salaried; instead, they earn 30% of fines imposed on people who are caught poaching. In addition, a training needs assessment for the SAEPF was carried out.

A training of the use of METT as a tool for monitoring the management effectiveness of protected areas was carried out and the METT was applied to both the Sarychat Ertash *zapovednik* and the proposed Khan Tengri National Park (as well 17 other protected areas within the country; *Output 1.4*).

The conclusion of this section (*Outcome 1*) on the establishment of the park is this: the project has 20 months remaining and there is a huge amount of work to be done i) if the park is to be established and ii) if the foundations that the project lays are sufficiently strong to ensure its sustainability.

Under Outcome 2, there has also been progress. The project has worked on a number of pieces of legislation (under *Output 2.1*), some of which have already been approved (see Annex V), although this appeared to have been a top-down process – rather than something that was being defined from the needs of the protected areas – thus, as a bottom up process. A number of examples were encountered to substantiate this observation.

The identification of the ecologically important areas surrounding the Khan Tengri National Park and ecological corridors between the KTNP and other important areas in the vicinity – including the Sarychat Ertash *zapovednik* – (*Output 2.2*) was carried out simultaneously with the survey work for the proposed park (see above in description of *Output 1.1*).

The next result targeted by the project was mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into the “territorial land use plans” of the two rayons that are adjacent to the proposed national park (*Output 2.3*). Here, the project developed a Programme and an Action Plan of Transition to Sustainable Development of the Ecological and Economic System of Issyk-Kul for 2015-2017 that contain elements of mainstreaming biodiversity conservation issues into economic development. The Programme and Action Plan were, thereafter, integrated in the Sustainable Development Strategy of the Issyk-Kul oblast for the period 2015-2017 and the Strategy and Action Plan were approved.

With respect to the development of natural resource use agreements (*Output 2.4*) and alternative livelihoods for local communities (*Output 2.5*), the project carried out socio-economic surveys of a sample from the local communities. The MTR was unable to evaluate the methodology of the survey or the results and, in particular, their usefulness for developing a number of indicators and targets for the livelihood work that is proposed under the project. It is important that the project considers the direction in which the livelihoods work will go and the outcomes that should be achieved through this work; the outcomes should not be perverse and inadvertently result is further pressure on natural resources or destruction of the environment – as is so often the case with “alternative livelihood” programmes.

As would be expected, a number of the activities have not yet started (e.g., vocational training for PA staff in cooperation with WWF – *Output 1.3*; procurement of equipment for the Khan Tengri National Park – under *Output 1.2*, securing natural resource use agreements with local communities – *Output 2.4*, implementing alternative livelihood programmes for local communities – *Output 2.5*, replicating the mainstreaming practices of *Output 2.3* elsewhere in the Tian Shan Mountains) as these largely await the establishment of the Khan Tengri National Park – but some, such as the work with the communities, could have been already initiated.

In addition to these targeted gains, there were some unplanned, inadvertent outcomes. As examples, first, despite the mistrust of the government (and most specifically the SAEPF), the project has acted as a bridge between the local communities structures (the *aiyl okmotu* and deputies) and the formal government structures (the rayon and oblast), engendering communication and building trust. Second, the recruitment of the freelance inspectors was primarily to improve law enforcement. However, they were recruited directly from the local communities and, as such, are trusted by those communities. As a result, they have been approached by the community for clarifications and, as a result, have become the primary advocates for the establishment of the park.

In the paragraphs above, some of the mistakes, miscommunication and other misgivings have been described, as appropriate. One further aspect should be discussed: the management of trophy hunting. Trophy hunting is briefly mentioned in the Prodoc (under *Output 2.4*) but it is included as an indicator in the project’s results framework (“Better management of hunting in buffers and corridors as reflected in percent of trophy hunting that is controlled and monitored”). With the overwhelming focus that the project has adopted towards the establishment of Khan Tengri National Park, improved management of the trophy hunting industry has been somewhat side-lined. Indeed, from the outset, the Prodoc wholly underestimates the work that is required to improve management within the trophy hunting industry. Globally, this industry is wracked with corruption, abuse and mismanagement. From the accounts of interviewees, it is unlikely that Kyrgyzstan is any different. Dealing with these issues and improving the management of the trophy hunting industry is an enormous task and one that been profoundly underestimated in the few references in the Prodoc. It is an issue that warrants a project in and of itself; dealing with it in a complete and satisfactory way is quite beyond the scope of this project.

## MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table for UNDP-GEF Project “Improving the Coverage and Management Effectiveness of Protected Areas in the Central Tian Shan Mountains”

| **Measure** |  | **MTR Rating** | **Achievement Description** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Project Strategy** |  | N/A | The project’s design is appropriate to overcome the majority of root causes of the threats to the biodiversity of the Central Tian Shan Mountains in Kyrgyzstan. It is, however, a complex, challenging and ambitious project with limited time and financial resources. As such, the project can be defined as being high risk, high impact in that if it achieves what it set out to achieve with the resources it has, it will be a great success. Some fundamental barriers remain (as discussed in Section 4.2.2) |
| **Progress towards Results** | **Objective** | **MS** | While good, overall progress has been made, the project still has far to go before it achieves the project’s objective: the coverage of protected areas has yet to be increased; until the Khan Tengri National Park is established, management effectiveness cannot be significantly increased and the project has done little to improve the management of Sarychat Ertash zapovednik; the management of the corridors and buffers has not changed since the inception of the project with the exception of the integration of biodiversity in Issyl Kul’s development framework and the recruitment of nine “freelance” inspectors. The livelihoods work has not yet started. Impact is negligible. |
|  | **Outcome 1** | **S** | Outcome 1 is largely reflective of the project’s objective and the project has focused the greater part of its attention on the establishment of the KTNP. In this, it has followed all due process albeit in a rather measured and painstaking way. The progress was halted by the obstruction by the Otradnoe *aiyl okmotu*, and the project and government’s efforts to persuade this community has been rather heavy handed. A change of approach (as proposed in Section 5.2.1) is necessary. However, everything is otherwise prepared for the establishment of the park. |
|  | **Outcome 2** | **MS** | There has been good progress in various aspects of Outcome 2 but other parts are seriously lagging behind where the project should be with only 20 months of implementation time remaining. A number of amendments to legislation have been proposed and two pieces of legislation have been approved. The ecologically important areas surrounding the park and ecological corridors have been identified (but little action to protect them or change the behaviour of the people using them). Mainstreaming biodiversity in land use plans has occurred at the oblast but not at the rayon level, as was originally envisaged.  Most critically, the work on livelihoods – micro-credit schemes, natural resource use (and pasture use) agreements and community-based tourism – has not been started.  At the landscape level – which is the objective underlying Outcome 2 – little *impact* has been achieved to date. |
| **Project Implementation and Adaptive Management** |  | **MS** | As indicated in the section on Outcome 1, the project has made steady but slow progress towards achieving this Outcome. The government (specifically the SAEPF) has influenced the process (partly because the relatively inexperienced PC had relied on their support for some of the processes). A series of mistakes and miscommunications led to misunderstanding, alienation and mistrust of the government by the communities.  The project is being implemented (a little too) strictly according to the project document with little adaptive management – except when it is pragmatic. There is room for improvement in implementation – with an emphasis on effectiveness of achieving outcomes – but the project should be in line to make this happen in the remainder of its life as the PC continues to gain confidence and if the PC is supported through the recruitment of a good CTA (who should lead the implementation of the livelihoods programme). |
| **Sustainability** |  | **MU** | With only 20 months of implementation time remaining and with a great deal of work to be completed, real questions emerge about the sustainability of: i) the KTNP (if and when legally established), ii) the ecological functionality of the buffers and corridors, and iii) any livelihoods work that the project may carry out in its remaining lifetime. The project *may* deliver on all of its outputs, expenditure and achieve the majority of the indicator targets - but that does not necessarily guarantee sustainability. The project has a great deal of work to do to build foundations that will make the work that it has carried out and the impacts that it may achieve sustainable. |

## Summary of conclusions

In conclusion, then, the project is complex, challenging and ambitious in a number of ways: i) it proposes to amend laws and establish a new protected area at the national level – both of which will require high level governmental approvals, ii) work with local authorities at the provincial and district levels to mainstream biodiversity conservation into the land use plans – especially within the identified ecologically important areas surrounding the protected areas and within the corridors between the protected areas – and implement measure to enforce regulations, and iii) develop and implement an alternative livelihood program among local communities. The project proposes to do all this in a four-year period and with a budget of less than USD one million!

As such, it fits into the category of a high risk, high impact project: if it manages what it set out to achieve, it will be a great success. Indeed, to date, the project has made some good progress but there are a number of shortcomings. And while there has been significant progress, there is a huge amount yet to be done in a relatively short (20 months) period of time particularly if the project is to provide secure foundations on which the Khan Tengri National Park can be built and on which the livelihoods of the local communities can remain secure without an over-dependence on natural resources. It is ensuring the likelihood of the *sustainability* of the projects outputs and outcomes that will be the biggest challenge that the project faces in the coming 20 months.

## Recommendation Summary Table

| **Rec#** | **Recommendation** | **Entity Responsible** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| A | Objective: |  |
| A.1 | Amendments to project results framework (see Table 9) | PB, UNDP-GEF RTA |
| A.2 | The project requests a no-cost extension of up to one year. | PB, UNDP-CO, UNDP-GEF RTA |
| A.3 | If the project does not hit a series of four triggers by 30 September 2016, the project should be closed immediately | PB, UNDP-CO, UNDP-GEF RTA |
| B | Outcome 1: |  |
| B.1 | Do not establish the KTNP without first exhausting *all possible options* with the Otradnoe *aiyl okmotu* (see Recommendation C.1); the 25,000ha area of pasture is of biodiversity importance and its exclusion from the KTNP would lead to fragmentation and a loss of integrity. Other options do exist for further negotiations. | SAEPF, PIU |
| B.2 | Seek a long-term, non-governmental partner for the KTNP; secure a long-term agreement between SAEPF and the partner for financial and technical support. | PIU, SAEPF, NGOs |
| B.3 | Establish the KTNP according to best current knowledge and practices from around the globe (see Annex VII) | PIU, SAEPF, UNDP-GEF RTA |
| B.4 | Determine possibilities for further support and assistance in Sarychat Ertash zapovednik to ensure that the targeted METT score is achieved | PIU, SAZ partners, SAEPF |
| B.5 | Catalyse the process of establishing a Snow Leopard Conservation Forum (for ensuring cooperation, collaboration and coordination among snow leopard conservation actors in Kyrgyzstan) | SAEPF, PIU |
| C | Outcome 2: |  |
| C.1 | Immediately hire a CTA – Livelihoods  CTA to review and assess feasibility and sustainability of livelihoods programme, lead negotiation with Otradnoe *aiyl okmotu*; lead study tour for local community representatives; support PC; select non-governmental partner for livelihoods work; implement livelihoods programme (including three components – community-based tourism, use and management of pastures/NRM, and micro-credit schemes); negotiate and sign natural resource use and management agreements with seven *aiyl okmotu*s (and their pasture committees) with pastures included in KTNP | PIU |
| C.2 | With the exception of quick wins (e.g., training inspectors), accept that improving the trophy hunting industry is beyond the scope of this project | SAEPF, UNDP-CO, UNDP-GEF RTA |
| C.3 | Include courts in capacity building activities and formally request prosecution data | SAEPF, PIU, Issyl Kul Biosphere Territory; Issyl Kul oblast |
| D | Outcome 3: Project Management |  |
| D.1 | No amendment to implementation modality – continue DIM | PB, PIU |
| D.2 | Project implementation should be more flexible, incorporating adaptive management – so long as it serves and contributes to the objective and outcomes of the project | PIU |
| D.3 | Enhance the effectiveness, efficiency and urgency of implementation | PIU |

# Introduction

## Purpose of the review

1. The Midterm Review (MTR) of the UNDP-GEF project “Improving the coverage and management effectiveness of PAs in the Central Tian Shan Mountains” was carried out according to the UNDP-GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy. Thus, it was carried out with the aim of providing a systematic and comprehensive review and evaluation of the performance of the project to date by assessing its design, processes of implementation, achievement relative to its objectives.

## Scope & Methodology

1. The approach for the MTR was determined by the Terms of Reference (TOR, see Annex I) and by the UNDP-GEF Guidance for conducting Midterm Reviews[[2]](#footnote-2). Thus, it was carried out with the aim of providing a systematic, evidence-based and comprehensive review of the performance of the project to date by assessing its strategy and design, processes of implementation and achievements relative to its objectives. As such, the MTR determined the progress of the project in relation to its stated objectives (through the assessment of results, effectiveness, relevance, sustainability, impact and efficiency - requiring a review of the fund allocations, budgets and projections, and the financial coordination mechanisms), to promote learning, feedback and knowledge sharing on the results and lessons (both positive and negative) that can be learned from the implementation of the project to date. The MTR examined whether the implementation arrangements – including the relationships and interactions among the project’s partners, including the State Agency for Environmental Protection and Forestry (SAEPF), UNDP, and other partners – are effective and efficient.
2. The MTR included a thorough review of the project documents and other outputs, financial plans and audits, monitoring reports, the PIF, UNDP Initiation Plan, Inception Report, Annual Project Reviews (APR), Project Implementation Reviews (PIR), monitoring tools (including, for example, the METT), relevant correspondence and other project related material produced by the project staff or their partners.
3. The MTR also included a mission to Kyrgyzstan between 01 – 10 November 2015. The mission followed a collaborative and participatory approach and included a series of structured and unstructured interviews, both individually and in small groups. Stakeholders in both Bishkek, and Karakol (and surrounding villages) were interviewed. Particular attention was paid to listening to the stakeholders’ views and the confidentiality of all interviews was stressed. Whenever possible, the information was crosschecked among the various sources. In addition, the review examined the achievements of the project within the realistic political, institutional and socio-economic framework of Kyrgyzstan.
4. The logical framework towards which the project is working formed an important part of the MTR.
5. The review was carried out according to the UNDP/GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and, therefore, ratings (see Annex I) were provided for: i) the progress towards results, by outcome and by the objective, ii) project implementation and adaptive management, and iii) sustainability (and the risks thereto). Overall there was an emphasis on supportive recommendations.
6. The MTR was conducted by one international consultant. The consultant was independent of the policy-making process, and the delivery and management of the assistance to the project; the consultant has not been involved in the implementation and/or supervision of the project.
7. The preliminary findings of the MTR were presented at a debriefing meeting at the end of the mission on 09 November 2015 at the UNDP-CO offices.
8. Finally, the MTR was carried out with a number of audiences in mind, including: i) the various entities of the Government of Kyrgyzstan that are involved with the project – primarily the State Agency for Environmental Protection and Forestry (SAEPF), ii) the UNDP-CO and UNDP-GEF RTC in Istanbul, and iv) the GEF.

## Structure of the review report

1. 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 the purpose of the review and the methodology used for the review (Section 2), a description of the project and the development context in Kyrgyzstan (Section 3), it then deals with the Findings (Section 4) of the evaluation within four sections (Project Strategy, Progress Towards Results, Project Implementation and Adaptive Management, and Sustainability). The report then draws together the Conclusions and Recommendations from the project (Section 5).

# Project description and background context

## Development context (environmental, socio-economic, institutional, policy factors relevant to project objectives and scope)

1. Kyrgyzstan is a landlocked country of 199,900km2 with a human population of 5.9 million. Although the altitudinal range in the country spans from 132 – 7,439m asl, the country is dominated by the Tian Shan Mountains. The highest parts of the Tian Shan Mountains – the Central Tian Shan – are found in the eastern areas of Kyrygzstan along the border shared with China. Administratively, the Central Tian Shan falls within the Issyk Kul oblast.
2. Biogeographically, the Tian Shan forms a bridge between the mountainous biodiversity of the Himalayas and Hindu Kush, through the Pamir range to the Altai mountains of Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Russia and China. The mountains also form a biogeographic barrier between the lowland biodiversity of adjacent parts of China, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The result is a rich diversity of species, ecosystems and topography, and the area is important for a number of ecosystem services and ecological processes.
3. In terms of global biodiversity, the Central Tian Shan harbours the relic forests of the endemic Shrenk’s spruce *Picea shrenkiana*[[3]](#footnote-3). The area provides habitat for the snow leopard *Uncia uncia* EN and a number of ungulate species that provide prey for the snow leopard, including the argali *Ovis ammon* NT, the ibex *Capra ibex* and the maral *Cervus elaphus*[[4]](#footnote-4). A number of the bird species of the area are globally threatened, including the saker falcon *Falco cherrug* VU, cinereous vulture *Aegypius monachus* NT, and the imperial eagle *Aquila nipalensis* NT. Among invertebrate species, 31 species are identified as being endemic. Eleven species of vascular plant are listed as endemic. The altitudinal range of the mountains also significantly increases the diversity of ecosystems.
4. In addition, the Central Tian Shan is also an important water catchment area, providing water resources for a third of the country and, as is common with highland-lowland systems in which the lowlands are arid or semi-arid, for all adjacent low lying land – the majority of which is in neighbouring countries.
5. The global conservation value of the Central Tian Shan has been recognised: it is listed within WWF’s Global 200 – included under the Montane grasslands and shrublands ecoregion as the Middle Asian montane steppe and woodlands. Curiously, there are no IBAs listed for the Central Tian Shan for Kyrgyzstan – although the adjacent and ecologically contiguous area in China is listed as an IBA (Mount Tuomuer Nature Reserve[[5]](#footnote-5)).
6. The Tian Shan mountains form the central area of the Mountains of Central Asia – which was recognised as a biodiversity hotspot by Conservation International (CI) – although it should be acknowledged that such recognition works two ways: biodiversity hotspots are recognised for their biodiversity (and specifically the diversity of endemic vascular plants) but also because of the degree to which they are threatened.
7. The Central Tian Shan, an area of 1,400,000ha[[6]](#footnote-6), contains only one protected area: Sarychat Ertash zapovednik (covering 149,117.9ha). This represents only 10.7% of the area. The land use of the remainder of the area includes i) pastures used for seasonal grazing of livestock by local communities, ii) areas given as concession areas for trophy hunting enterprises, and iii) areas given as concession areas for mining operations. A large proportion of the area remains unused and unprotected.

## Problems that the project sought to address

1. The Shrenk’s spruce forests of the Tian Shan Mountains has, apparently, shrunk by 50% over the past 50 years. This is largely attributed to “weak protection” and over-harvesting of mature trees, which, in turn, leads to further degradation to access the trees and extract the felled trees and timber.
2. Other anthropogenic activities that threaten biodiversity and ecological processes include:
   1. Overgrazing by livestock herds
   2. Trophy hunting, particularly for ungulate species
   3. Illegal killing of wildlife
3. In addition, in the project document, mining is mentioned as an emerging threat – with mining companies lobbying for the de-gazettement of protected areas.
4. While the project document does not explicitly mention the root causes of these threats, it is apparent that they are underpinned by the following:
   1. Unregulated and unsustainable (commercial) use of natural resources
   2. Unsustainable use of natural resources (for subsistence)
5. One of the mechanisms used by the country to counter these threats is to establish and maintain a system of protected areas or Specially Protected Nature Areas (SPNA). At the point of the development of the project, the PA network covered 6.03% of the country and consisted of 86 PAs. There are three categories of protected area – strict reserves, national parks and regulated reserves. The management of the protected areas mainly falls under the mandate of the State Agency for Environmental Protection and Forestry[[7]](#footnote-7). The strict reserves and national parks are the most important – and, apparently, functional – of the protected areas as they often have administrative offices within or close to the protected area and patrols are carried out regularly by “inspectors”.
6. There are, however, weaknesses of the protected area system: it does not provide adequate coverage for the spatial range of threatened species – including the snow leopard and the argali. As indicated above, coverage in the Central Tian Shan Mountains is relatively low (when compared to the Northern and Western Tian Shan) and the Sarychat-Ertash zapovednik covers only 20% of the snow leopard range within the Central Tian Shan. In addition, only 8.3% of the Skrenk’s spruce forests are protected.
7. In significantly expanding the protected area coverage within the Central Tian Shan Mountains, the Project is expected to make a significant contribution to i) the National Strategy of Sustainable Development ii) the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Programme, and iii) the NBSAP; these strategies were approved by both the President and the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic. In addition, issues of biodiversity conservation were integrated into the “Programme and the Action Plan of the Government for Transition to Sustainable Development” which was approved by the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic.

## Project description and strategy (objectives, outcomes and expected results and description of field sites

1. The long-term solution is described as being the need to take a more strategic and landscape-based approach to protected area expansion and management in the Tian Shan Mountains, with a higher proportion of the areas critical to globally threatened species (including snow leopards, argali, corncrake and *Chalepoxenus leonomyrma*) are brought under effective protection through strict conservation areas, buffer areas and corridors. Building capacity within key institutions and communities is also identified as being important.
2. The project aims to contribute to this long-term goal through achievement of its objective:

“To enhance the sustainability of protected areas in globally important ecosystems of the Central Tian Shan by expanding their coverage and management effectiveness, better integrating them with land use in the wider landscape through an emphasis on well-managed buffer zones and wildlife corridors, and supporting biodiversity-compatible livelihoods.”

1. If one is to break down this objective into its functional aspects, it includes i) expanding protected areas, ii) improving the management effectiveness of protected areas, iii) establishing buffer areas around the protected areas and corridors between the protected areas, and iv) working with people in the vicinity of protected areas and their livelihood options.
2. In functional terms, this objective is to be achieved through the achievement, in turn, of the following outcomes:
   1. *Outcome 1: Threatened species representation is improved by increasing coverage and management effectiveness of PAs in the Central Tian Shan*. This first outcome focuses specifically on snow leopards and Shrenk’s spruce forests. There are four outputs associated with this outcome: i) establishment of a new Natural Park in the Khan Tengri region, ii) patrolling, enforcement and surveillance systems strengthened in PAs, iii) building the capacity of PA staff, and iv) using the METT to measure and monitor the effectiveness of management of PAs.
   2. *Outcome 2: Habitat connectivity, sustainability, and effectiveness of PAs in the Central Tian Shan are enhanced by regulating land use in buffer zones, wildlife corridors and other intervening landscapes*. This outcome, in turn, has six outputs associated with it: i) amend the law on protected areas that define the establishment, operation and enforcement of buffer zones and wildlife corridors, ii) identification and designation of buffer areas for the proposed Khan Tengri Natural Park, and the wildlife corridors between the proposed Khan Tenri Natural Park and the Sarychat-Ertash Nature Reserve, iii) aligning the conservation management objectives of the protected areas, buffer zones and wildlife corridors with the land used plans of the adjacent five districts, iv) develop agreements with local communities regarding natural resource use and putting in place a system for enforcing regulations, v) designing and implementing an alternative livelihoods program for local communities and vi) build capacity among local district authorities to allow for mainstreaming biodiversity conservation in land use planning and regulation enforcement.
3. The analysis of the outputs and indicators under each of these outcomes is presented below (see Section 4.1).
4. The project, then, is ambitious in a number of ways: i) it proposes to amend laws and establish a new protected area at the national level – both of which will require high level governmental approvals, ii) work with local authorities at the provincial and district levels to mainstream biodiversity conservation into the land use plans – especially within the identified protected area buffer zones and within the corridors between the protected areas – and implement measure to enforce regulations, and iii) develop and implement an alternative livelihood program among local communities.
5. The project proposes to do all this in a four-year period and with a budget of less than USD one million!

## Project Implementation Arrangements

1. The project is being implemented using Direct Implementation Modalities (DIM) with UNDP as the implementing and executing agency. The project’s implementation is being governed by a Project Board; project assurance is the responsibility of the UNDP-CO, and the day-to-day operations of the project is being carried out by a Project Implementation Unit (PIU).
2. The PB has the ultimate legal responsibility over the project. Its role includes: i) overseeing M&E processes, ii) supporting the Project Coordinator, iii) ensuring that the required resources are committed to the project, iv) arbitrate on any conflicts that may arise, and v) approve annual and quarterly plans, including any deviation from original plans.
3. Project Assurance – thus, carrying out objective and independent project monitoring and oversight – was proposed, in the project document, to be carried out by the Programme and Policy Analyst within the UNDP-CO.
4. The PIU is comprised of a Project Coordinator (PC) and a Project Assistant[[8]](#footnote-8). The PC’s responsibilities include: i) day-to-day implementation of the project’s activities, ii) consolidation of workplans and reports, and iii) developing TOR for experts, supervising their work and assuring the quality of their work. In short, the PC has the responsibility to ensure overall that the project produces the intended results.

## Project timing and milestones

1. The project was developed along standard UNDP-GEF lines. The project was planned as a four-year project – thus, to be closed in June 2017. The other project milestones, including the projected end date for the project, are indicated in Table 1.
2. Somewhat fortuitously and coincidentally, during the project’s inception period (and just before the Inception Workshop), the Kyrgyz Republic hosted the Global Snow Leopard Conservation Forum (22-23 October 2013 – with financial support from the project with a tour of the Issyl Kul oblast just prior to the meeting – also with financial support from the project). This proved to be a minor marketing coup for the project as one of the primary outcomes of the Forum was the agreement that increasing the coverage and management effectiveness of protected areas in the Central Tian Shan Mountains was an important strategy for snow leopard conservation. Other outcomes – as stipulated in the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program and the Bishkek Declaration on the Conservation of Snow Leopard, both of which were adopted at the meeting – included: the establishment of a Secretariat on Snow Leopard Conservation in Bishkek.

Table 1. The project milestones including the projected end date for the project.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Milestone** | **Date** |
| PIF Approval | 27 March 2012 |
| PPG Approval | 30 April 2012 |
| UNDP Prodoc signed\* | 27 May 2013 |
| Project starting date\* | 17 June 2013 |
| Project Coordinator appointed | 16 October 2013 |
| Inception Workshop | 24 October 2013 |
| MTR mission commences | 02 November 2015 |
| Projected EOP | 17 June 2017 |

\* Project starting dates are usually the date that UNDP Prodoc is signed; quite why the quoted project starting date is three weeks after the signing of the Prodoc remains unclear.

## Main stakeholders

1. The Project Document and the Inception Report exhaustively identified the project’s stakeholders[[9]](#footnote-9). The tables presented in these documents not only identify the stakeholders but they also describe their current mandate and their role within the project.
2. There are additional stakeholders (specifically non-governmental organisations, NGOs, some of which have affiliations to international NGOs) to those presented in the stakeholder analyses in these two documents, some of which were met over the course of the MTR mission (although not all the stakeholders listed in the tables in the Prodoc and Inception Report were met over the course of the MTR mission – see Annex III for the list of people met over the course of the mission).

# Findings

## Project Strategy

### Project Design

1. The project’s targeted long-term solution, objective and outcomes are described above (see Section 3.3). That section also suggests that the project is ambitious, particularly given the allocated time (four years) and resources (a grant of USD 950,000 from the GEF Trust Fund).
2. Even aside from the allocated time and resources, the project is complex and challenging. In the context of Kyrgyzstan, today, it is inconceivable to establish a new protected area without significant stakeholder consultation and, ideally, agreement. In addition, the project proposes to develop livelihood strategies among local communities in an attempt to nudge them away from those activities that threaten the biodiversity of the Central Tian Shan (overgrazing, trophy hunting and illegal killing, as described in Section 3.2). The livelihood strategies proposed by the project should not only reduce the threats but also, in principle, present some alternative to the potential opportunities lost through the creation of the national park.
3. Some understanding of the conception of the project is also necessary to understand why limited resources were allocated to the project. In the process of developing the project concept, other, competing projects were also being developed. The result was that the available resources were spilt between these two projects with USD 950,000 being allocated to this project. In other words, as a result of an inelegant and less than ideal process, this project is being attempted.
4. In terms of design, some questions remain unanswered – most specifically why the project did not consider establishing a larger national park that could encompass the existing Sarychat-Ertash *zapovednik* (and simply include that area into zone one – i.e., strictly protected) with the proposed corridors being included as zone three (i.e., limited economic zone)[[10]](#footnote-10).
5. This question is partially answered when one further understands from where the project emerged. The project primarily grew out of WWF’s Econet programme[[11]](#footnote-11). In the resulting analysis, the Central Tian Shan emerges as an area of important ecological connectivity – most specifically as habitat for snow leopards. As a result of the analysis, a new protected area of 187,000ha – the Khan Tengri National Park – is proposed.
6. As indicated in Section 3.5, the PIF was approved on 27 March 2012 with the PPG process beginning on 30 April 2012. The UNDP Prodoc was signed just over a year later, on 27 May 2013. The Inception Workshop was held on 24 October 2013. The Inception Workshop was mostly an awareness creation exercise for the many attendees.

| **Measure** | **MTR Rating** | **Achievement Description** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Project Strategy** | N/A | The project’s design is appropriate to overcome the majority of root causes of the threats to the biodiversity of the Central Tian Shan Mountains in Kyrgyzstan. It is, however, a complex, challenging and ambitious project with limited time and financial resources. As such, the project can be defined as being high risk, high impact in that if it achieves what it set out to achieve with the resources it has, it will be a great success. Some fundamental barriers remain (as discussed in Section 4.2.2) |

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

1. As a result of the unusual process of the Inception Workshop (as reported in the resulting Inception Report), there were no amendments to the project’s results framework at that stage. Therefore, the MTR offered an opportunity to reflect on the project’s indicators, as originally drafted. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 2 and as will be seen, a number of proposals are made to amend indicators and, in one instance, to delete an indicator.

Table 2. The Project Result Framework including MTR comments on its design.

| **Project Strategy** | **Indicators** | **Baseline levels** | **EOP target** | **Proposed Means of verification** | **MTR comments** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Objective: To improve the coverage and effectiveness of protected areas in the Central Tian Shan Mountains so as to expand threatened species representation in the national system | Territorial coverage of SPNAs in Central Tian Shan Mountains which provide habitat for the endangered snow leopard | 149,119.9 ha (Existing Sarychat Ertash reserve area) | Up to 336,119.9ha by EOP | Land records of the State Registration Service of the Kyrgyz Republic | This indicator simply reflects the establishment of the proposed Khan Tengri National Park (KTNP) based on WWF’s Econet analysis: this proposed a PA of 187,000ha.  The means of verification should also include the publication of the legal establishment of Khan Tengri National Park in the national gazette |
| Population size of snow leopard (*Uncia uncia*) in Central Tian Shan shows an increasing trend | Low numbers of snow leopard (unable to quantify) | By EOP, target area offers permanent habitat for five females with cubs | Monitoring records and data analyses of snow leopard populations and their prey | There are a number of issues here: i) the EOP target is flawed (as the target area *already* offers permanent habitat for >five females and cubs), ii) a four-five year project would have little impact on snow leopard populations (and/or the their prey species), and iii) the indicator (snow leopard population size) does not equate with the target (available habitat). What the project *can* deliver is an increase in the snow leopard habitat that is effectively protected. The MTR, therefore, proposes that this indicator is amended to: “Area of snow leopard habitat that is effectively protected in the Central Tian Shan Mountains” and the EOP targets include the two functional aspects of this indicator: i) the area of snow leopard habitat that this protected and ii) the METT scores for the PAs. |
| Outcome 1: Threatened species representation is improved by increasing coverage and management effectiveness of PAs in Central Tian Shan | Enhanced management effectiveness of target PAs (as measured by METT) | Sarychat Ertash: 54%  Khan Tengri: 3% | Sarychat Ertash: 75%  Khan Tengri: 28% | METT scorecard | For the purposes of the project, the assessments of Sarychat Ertash zapovednik and the KTNP should be carried out using that METT; however, in the future beyond the life of the project, the management effectiveness SEZ may be measured using the adapted METT[[12]](#footnote-12). |
| Reduction in poaching and illegal logging at target PAs (annual) per unit of patrolling effort, compared with year of initial patrolling | Illegal logging violations: 50  Poaching violations: 70  Total violations: 120 | Reduction by 30%  Illegal logging violations: 33  Poaching violations: 47  Total violations: 80 | Report of the PA administrative units and SAEPF | This indicator is confusing and the PIU does not understand how the baseline figures (and by extension the targets) were calculated.  Rudimentary patrolling data are being collected by the freelance and PA inspectors. If these data are to be used to measure the achievement (or otherwise) of this indicator, the number of violations recorded needs to be calculated *per unit effort* – where unit effort can be, for example, the number of man-days of patrolling. The PIU is currently not doing this.  By EOP, the system should be upgraded to use SMART[[13]](#footnote-13) (see Recommendations) and to include both a monitoring and offender database. |
| Outcome 2: Habitat connectivity, sustainability and effectiveness of PAs in Central Tian Shan are enhanced by regulating land use in buffer zones, wildlife corridors and other intervening landscapes | Law on SPNAs provides clear guidance on establishment, management, and responsible party for PA buffer zones and wildlife corridors | Current law is unclear | Legislation is improved through amendments by EOP | Project Board meeting minutes, formally adopted and government-adopted documents | There are no issues with this indicator that simply aims to include provisions for buffer areas and ecological corridors within the legislation. |
| Area over which territorial land use planning is fully aligned with requirements for regulated resource use stipulated in the management plans of PA buffer zones and corridors | 0 ha | 200,000ha | Land use planning records of Typ and Ak Suu rayon administrations | There are problems and confusions with this indicator. It has three functional components: i) that management plans are developed for the buffer zones and ecological corridors, ii) there is alignment of land use plans with the management plans of the buffer zones and corridors (i.e., mainstreaming components), and iii) the areas of the buffer areas and corridors within which this is occurring is being measured. Despite these three functional components of the indicator, the target appears only to be measuring the area of the buffer zones and corridors.  The MTR proposes that the indicator is amended as such: “The area of buffer zones and corridors within which natural resource management agreements (with stakeholders) are developed and implemented”. This would then use the same proposed target (the area of the buffer zones and corridors) and the number of natural resource management agreements that are developed and implemented in those buffer zones and corridors. |
| Better management of hunting in buffers and corridors as reflected in percent of trophy hunting that is controlled and monitored | Only 30% of trophy hunting is legal because hunters are uncontrolled and unmonitored | 90% of trophy hunting is legally licensed | Database of licenses. Reports of Hunting Inspection. Independent assessment. | Again, there is confusion regarding this indicator because it is unclear how to measure how much of the trophy hunting is legally licensed. While inspectors do work in the hunting concession areas, there is no monitoring of trophies to date (and, therefore, it is unclear how the baseline figure was derived).  In addition, the nature of the trophy hunting industry is such that it is rife with corruption and mismanagement, and addressing this is quite beyond the means of the project (both in terms of time and financial resources – see Section 4.2.1 and 5.2.4 for further discussion). Therefore, the MTR recommends that this indicator is deleted[[14]](#footnote-14). |
| Prosecution of illegal hunting in buffers and corridors | Only 10% of incidents of illegal hunting successfully prosecuted | At least 50% of incidents of illegal hunting successfully prosecuted from YR4 | Records of prosecutions | In principle, there are no issues with this indicator. However, i) why it is constrained to the buffer zones and corridors – and does not include the protected areas as well remains unclear (the MTR recommends that the indicator cover illegal hunting in the entire area covering the SEZ, the buffers, corridors and, once established, the KTNP; ii) as indicated in the Prodoc, it assumes “support from the legislative arm and courts” – although the project is doing nothing to build capacity or cooperation from courts (including magistrates or prosecutors). Finally, it assumes that the project is able to secure prosecution data from the courts; to date, this appears not to be the case (and see Section 5.2.4 for recommendations on how this might be mitigated). |
| Increase in share of incomes of local communities from biodiversity-compatible alternative livelihood activities | More than 60% of income comes from hunting | By EOP, at least 60% of income comes from sustainable livelihoods promoted by the project | Independent survey, local records of businesses and employment | This is a vastly unrealistic proposition. First, it is unlikely that the baseline is correct: even from a cursory examination afforded by the MTR to surrounds of Ak Suu rayon suggested that the majority of rural people make their living from agriculture (barley, wheat, potatoes) and livestock husbandry. It *is* possible that a small proportion of the population do gain greater than 60% of their livelihoods from hunting. It is, however, unlikely that the project will be able to detect who these people are. In addition, it is unlikely that in its efforts to be equitable and to target vulnerable people within the communities, the project would be able to selective target the hunters in order to achieve this indicator.  Second, it is vastly unrealistic that the project will directly influence the livelihoods of the area (which includes >9,000 households) such that 60% of household income will come from ‘sustainable livelihoods promoted by project’.  See Section 4.2.1 for further discussions on alternative livelihoods. |
| Reduced hunting effort directly attributable to changes in livelihoods among hunters | 500 persons hunting in the area | 150 (reduction by 1/3) persons hunting by EOP | SPNA management statistics, reports from rangers | While this is a result that the project would like to achieve, collecting accurate and meaningful data will be challenging.  The MTR is proposing amendment to this indicator to “reduced hunting among people using grazing pastures within the KTNP once it has been established”; this will make it very relevant to the threat of continued access of people to the KTNP through the continued access to pasture areas. Such an indicator should not only be achievable, but it is very relevant. |

## Progress Towards Results

### Analysis of progress towards outcomes

1. The project is generally progressing at a satisfactory rate and is mostly retaining a focus on the outcomes and the EOP targets for the indicators that it is attempting to achieve. The progress – as well as shortcomings – will be analysed and described in the coming sections of the report.
2. The principal output for the project will be the establishment of Khan Tengri National Park (KTNP; *Output 1.1* under Outcome 1). The project is following the proscribed steps to establish the park in a thorough way.
3. The original proposal of an area of 187,785ha (from WWF’s Econet Programme) was taken as the foundation of the work.
4. Building on the WWF Econet analysis, academics at the National Academy of Science (NAS) carried out desk based and field surveys and analysis to determine the optimal boundaries and size of the park. The resulting proposal was an area of some 325,000ha.
5. The survey work was analysed and combined into a feasibility study (carried out by the staff of the SAEPF) for the proposed national park. This included proposal of the zones within the proposed park, the ecologically important areas surrounding the park and the linkages – specifically to the Sarychat Ertash *zapovednik* – by corridors.
6. On the basis of the proposal that emerged out of the NAS and the SAEPF, a series of steps were initiated. These included working to ensure that there were no land use conflicts. The project, therefore, consulted the Ministry of Geology and Mineral Resources, the Ministry of Agriculture and Melioration, and Ministry of Energy and Industry.
7. It is notable that on every occasion that the project consulted with these stakeholders, it was the project (in partnership with the SAEPF) that made concessions on the demands of the stakeholders and on no occasion did the other stakeholders make compromises on the biological basis as purported by the academics of the NAS.
8. The project also consulted with the people and institutions in the *chain* that will, eventually, have to endorse the establishment of the national park – including the deputies at the local level, the local self-governing bodies (*aiyl okmotu*), the rayon authorities, the oblast level authorities, the Issyl Kul Biosphere Territory and the SAEPF. As a result of this work, six of the seven *aiyl okmotu* have signed their endorsement to the establishment of the park and all the other bodies are supportive.
9. This does mean that one *aiyl okmotu* has yet to endorse the establishment of the park. This is the Otradnoe *aiyl okmotu*. Over the past three – four months, the project partners (including the PIU, the UNDP-CO, various members of staff of the SAEPF – including the Director, and the rayon and oblast authorities) have engaged with the members of this *aiyl okmotu* in an attempt to convince, coerce, cajole and coax them into agreeing with the establishment of the park (see Annex IV for list of meetings and participants with Otradnoe *aiyl okmotu* to date). Despite these efforts, the community remains resolved to oppose the establishment of the park.
10. As part of its efforts to establish the park and in the face of the barriers presented by this one community (as well as a minority of people within the other communities), the project carried out a survey to determine the attitudes to the establishment of the park. The results of the survey demonstrated that of the 1,383 households surveyed, 75% of the people support the establishment of the park, 17% of the people are against the establishment of the park and 8% of the people surveyed abstained.
11. While this demonstrates that the majority of people support the establishment of the park, it does little to change the situation – that a minority of people within Otradnoe *aiyl okmotu* have the ability to stall the process[[15]](#footnote-15).
12. Other mistakes were also made during the process: i) the calculation of the area of the pastures belonging to the seven communities affected by the establishment of the park has, on more than one occasion, proved to be flawed; and ii) the language that was being used was often alienating and threatening (e.g., “own” vs. “include” – when referring to the pastures of each of the communities that are proposed to be included into the park). These deepen distrust – specifically of the government – among the local communities and contribute to the intransigence.
13. In addition, the project paid UNDP DSA rates to the government (and other) representatives to attend meetings with communities – as opposed to government per diem rates[[16]](#footnote-16).
14. Finally, there was no reason not to conduct at least one (if not both) study tour(s) that was (were) included in the Prodoc. Indeed, study tours are supposed to be learning processes during which participants are exposed to good practices and examples in an attempt to expose people to new ideas and practices either to persuade them to adopt those ideas or to teach them the techniques involved. Conducting a study tour with selected members of the Otradnoe *aiyl okmotu* (as well as members from other communities) may have persuaded them from the outset that the park (with its associated benefits) would be worth supporting.
15. The project obviously has not yet worked with the relevant people to develop a management plan for the proposed Khan Tengri National Park. This should happen only once the park has actually been legally established. However the project did hold a national workshop on the process to develop management plans for protected areas and published a manual on the basis of this workshop that was subsequently approved by the SAEPF[[17]](#footnote-17).
16. To start the process of building capacity (*Output 1.2*), not only for the park (in the future once it has been established) but also for the area in general (as the entire area falls within Issyl Kul Biosphere Territory), nine “freelance inspectors” have been recruited and the project has provided training for them and other inspectors[[18]](#footnote-18). The freelance inspectors are not salaried; instead, they earn 30% of fines imposed on people who are caught poaching. In addition, a training needs assessment for the SAEPF was carried out.
17. A training of the use of METT as a tool for monitoring the management effectiveness of protected areas was carried out[[19]](#footnote-19) and the METT was applied to both the Sarychat Ertash zapovednik and the proposed Khan Tengri National Park (as well 17 other protected areas within the country; *Output 1.4*).
18. There is, however, some discussion about the use of the METT – specifically for the Sarychat Ertash zapovednik. Because of the peculiarities of zapovedniks, as strict nature reserves, the “normal” METT that is usually applied to protected areas has its limitations (because of the assumptions it makes of protected areas) and, as a result, an adapted METT has been developed by WWR-RU. While this adapted METT make be more suitable for zapovedniks, for the purposes of the project, the (normal) METT should be applied to both the Sarychat Ertash zapovednik and the Khan Tengri National Park. In the future, the adapted METT may well be applied to all zapovedniks, both within Kyrgyzstan but also elsewhere in the former Soviet Union.
19. The conclusion of this section on the establishment of the park is this: the project has 20 months remaining and there is a huge amount of work to be done i) if the park is to be established and ii) if the foundations that the project lays are sufficiently strong to ensure its sustainability. This means that there should be a real sense of urgency; that does not mean, however, that shortcuts should be taken – for these will only erode the sustainability and lead to issues in the years to come.
20. Under Outcome 2, there has also been progress.
21. The project has worked on a number of pieces of legislation (under *Output 2.1*), some of which have already been approved (see Annex V for a list of the legislation on which the project has been working and their status at the time of the MTR).
22. One issue that the MTR encountered during the mission was the fact that the formulation appeared to be a top-down process – rather than something that was being defined from the needs of the protected areas – thus, as a bottom up process. Two examples were encountered to substantiate this observation: i) the inclusion (or otherwise) of buffer zones within the PA legislation and ii) the possibility for pasture committees to retain ownership and control of pasture use in pastures that are included – but not owned by – protected areas. This has the potential to undermine the effectiveness of the protected areas.
23. The identification of ecologically important areas surrounding the Khan Tengri National Park and ecological corridors between the KTNP and other important areas in the vicinity – inclusing the Sarychat Ertash zapovednik – (*Output 2.2*) was carried out simultaneously with the survey work for the proposed park (see above in description of *Output 1.1*). The challenge now is to ensure that the surrounding areas and ecological corridors achieve their defined functional roles through protection and changing human behaviours.
24. The next result targeted by the project was mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into the “territorial land use plans” of the two rayons that are adjacent to the proposed national park (*Output 2.3*). Here, the project developed a Programme and an Action Plan of Transition to Sustainable Development of the Ecological and Economic System of Issyk-Kul for 2015-2017 that contain elements of mainstreaming biodiversity conservation issues into economic development. The Programme and Action Plan were, thereafter, integrated in the Sustainable Development Strategy of the Issyk-Kul oblast for the period 2015-2017 and the Strategy and Action Plan were approved[[20]](#footnote-20).
25. With respect to the development of natural resource use agreements (*Output 2.4*) and alternative livelihoods for local communities (*Output 2.5*), the project has carried out socio-economic surveys of a sample from the local communities (*n*=1,383 households, a 14.6% sample of the total of 9,493 households). The MTR was unable to evaluate the methodology of the survey or the results and, in particular, their usefulness for developing a number of indicators and targets for the livelihood work that is proposed under the project. It is important that the project considers the direction in which the livelihoods work will go and the outcomes that should be achieved through this work; the outcomes should not be perverse and inadvertently result is further pressure on natural resources or destruction of the environment – as is so often the case with “alternative livelihood” programmes.
26. As would be expected, a number of the activities have not yet started (e.g., vocational training for PA staff in cooperation with WWF – Output 1.3; procurement of equipment for the Khan Tengri National Park – under Output 1.2, securing natural resource use agreements with local communities – Output 2.4, implementing alternative livelihood programmes for local communities – Output 2.5, replicating the mainstreaming practices of Output 2.3 elsewhere in the Tian Shan Mountains) as these largely await the establishment of the Khan Tengri National Park – but some, such as the work with the communities, need not wait for the establishment of the park.
27. In addition to these targeted gains, there were some unplanned, inadvertent outcomes. As examples, first, despite the mistrust of the government (and most specifically the SAEPF) described above, the project has acted as a bridge between the local communities structures (the *aiyl okmotu* and deputies) and the formal government structures (the rayon and oblast), engendering communication and building trust. Second, the recruitment of the freelance inspectors was primarily to improve law enforcement. However, they were recruited directly from the local communities and, as such, are trusted by those communities. As a result, they have been approached by the community for clarifications and, as a result, have become the primary advocates for the establishment of the park.
28. There was one issue that was brought up on a number of occasions during the MTR mission in Kyrgyzstan: this was of an electronic database. The rationale for this database was not fully explained and, as a consequence, not fully understood but it sounded rather confused and uncoordinated, and that some form of forum bringing together the actors to ensure cooperation and coordination was necessary.
29. In the paragraphs above, some of the mistakes, miscommunication and other misgivings have been described, as appropriate. One further aspect should be discussed: the management of trophy hunting. Trophy hunting is briefly mentioned in the Prodoc (under *Output 2.4*) but it is included as an indicator in the project’s results framework (“Better management of hunting in buffers and corridors as reflected in percent of trophy hunting that is controlled and monitored”). With the overwhelming focus that the project has adopted towards the establishment of Khan Tengri National Park, improved management of the trophy hunting industry has been somewhat side-lined. Indeed, from the outset, the Prodoc wholly underestimates the work that is required to improve management within the trophy hunting industry. Globally, this industry is wracked with corruption, abuse and mismanagement. From the accounts of interviewees, it is unlikely that Kyrgyzstan is any different. Dealing with these issues and improving the management of the trophy hunting industry is an enormous task and one that been profoundly underestimated in the few references in the Prodoc. It is an issue that warrants a project in and of itself; dealing with it in a complete and satisfactory way is quite beyond this project.

| **Measure** |  | **MTR Rating** | **Achievement Description** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Progress towards Results** | **Objective** | **MS** | While good, overall progress has been made, the project still has far to go before it achieves the project’s objective: the coverage of protected areas has yet to be increased; until the Khan Tengri National Park is established, management effectiveness cannot be significantly increased and the project has done little to improve the management of Sarychat Ertash zapovednik; the management of the corridors and buffers has not changed since the inception of the project with the exception of the integration of biodiversity in Issyl Kul’s development framework and the recruitment of nine “freelance” inspectors. The livelihoods work has not yet started. Impact is negligible. |
|  | **Outcome 1** | **S** | Outcome 1 is largely reflective of the project’s objective and the project has focused the greater part of its attention on the establishment of the KTNP. In this, it has followed all due process albeit in a rather measured and painstaking way. The progress was halted by the obstruction by the Otradnoe *aiyl okmotu*, and the project and government’s efforts to persuade this community has been rather heavy handed. A change of approach (as proposed in Section 5.2.1) is necessary. However, everything is otherwise prepared for the establishment of the park. |
|  | **Outcome 2** | **MS** | There has been good progress in various aspects of Outcome 2 but other parts are seriously lagging behind where the project should be with only 20 months of implementation time remaining. A number of amendments to legislation have been proposed and two pieces of legislation have been approved. The ecologically important surrounding areas and ecological corridors have been identified (but little action to protect them or change the behaviour of the people using them). Mainstreaming biodiversity in land use plans has occurred at the oblast but not at the rayon level, as was originally envisaged.  Most critically, the work on livelihoods – micro-credit schemes, natural resource use (and pasture use) agreements and community-based tourism – has not been started.  At the landscape level – which is the objective underlying Outcome 2 – little *impact* has been achieved to date. |

Table 3. The Project Results Framework showing the MTR status and the MTR comments and ratings.

| **Project Strategy** | **Indicators** | **Baseline levels** | **EOP target** | **1st PIR level** | **MTR level** | **Proposed Means of verification** | **MTR rating and comments** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Objective: To improve the coverage and effectiveness of protected areas in the Central Tian Shan Mountains so as to expand threatened species representation in the national system | Territorial coverage of SPNAs in Central Tian Shan Mountains which provide habitat for the endangered snow leopard | 149,119.9 ha (Existing Sarychat Ertash reserve area) | Up to 336,119.9ha by EOP | No additional coverage | No additional coverage | Land records of the State Registration Service of the Kyrgyz Republic | See comments in Table 2.  The means of verification should simply be the publication of the legal establishment of Khan Tengri National Park in the national gazette |
|  | Population size of snow leopard (*Uncia uncia*) in Central Tian Shan shows an increasing trend | Low numbers of snow leopard (unable to quantify) | By EOP, target area offers permanent habitat for five females with cubs |  |  |  | See comments in Table 2. |
| Outcome 1  Threatened species representation is improved by increasing coverage and management effectiveness of PAs in Central Tian Shan | Enhanced management effectiveness of target PAs (as measured by METT) | Sarychat Ertash: 54%  Khan Tengri: 3% | Sarychat Ertash: 75%  Khan Tengri: 28% | No further assessments beyond the initial assessment | No further assessments beyond the initial assessment | METT scorecard | The project needs to analyse the METT scorecards and identify precisely where the gains will be made for both Sarychat Ertash zapovednik and for KTNP and work towards those. |
|  | Reduction in poaching and illegal logging at target PAs (annual) per unit of patrolling effort, compared with year of initial patrolling | Illegal logging violations: 50  Poaching violations: 70  Total  violations: 120 | Reduction by 30%  Illegal logging violations: 33  Poaching violations: 47  Total  violations: 80 | No data | Data collected but further analysis needs to be carried out per unit effort. | Data on illegal poaching and logging of the Issyk-Kul Biosphere Territory for 2014, 2015 | See comment in Table 2  The data needs to be analysed per unit effort. |
| Outcome 2  Habitat connectivity, sustainability and effectiveness of PAs in Central Tian Shan are enhanced by regulating land use in buffer zones, wildlife corridors and other intervening landscapes | Law on SPNAs provides clear guidance on establishment, management, and responsible party for PA buffer zones and wildlife corridors | Current law is unclear | Legislation is improved through amendments by EOP | Analysis of legislation. | Two pieces of legislation approved by the government.  Other pieces of legislation (e.g., the Law on Protected Areas including sections on ecological corridors and the “surrounding areas” to national parks) are under consideration by the Kyrgyz Parliament | Regulation on PAs establishment (The Kyrgyz Republic Government Decree 30.07.2015 #541)  Regulations on land use in the state Nature Park (The Kyrgyz Republic Government Decree 5.10.2015 # 677) | Satisfactory progress with the approval of two pieces of legislation.  The project (and partners including SAEPF and UNDP-CO) should continue to press for the approval of the Law on PAs).  See Annex V. |
|  | Area over which territorial land use planning is fully aligned with requirements for regulated resource use stipulated in the management plans of PA buffer zones and corridors | 0 ha | 200,000ha |  |  | Order of the Plenipotentiary Representative of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic in Issyk-Kul oblast, 09 February 2015 No. 21 | See comments in Table 2. |
|  | Better management of hunting in buffers and corridors as reflected in percent of trophy hunting that is controlled and monitored | Only 30% of trophy hunting is legal because hunters are uncontrolled and unmonitored | 90% of trophy hunting is legally licensed |  |  |  | The PIU made comments in the PIR (2015) regarding the publication of guidelines and handbooks. These alone cannot result in better management of hunting. This indicator wholly underestimates the work required to achieve better management of trophy hunting. See Table 2 for comments and recommendations. |
|  | Prosecution of illegal hunting in buffers and corridors | Only 10% of incidents of illegal hunting successfully prosecuted | At least 50% of incidents of illegal hunting successfully prosecuted from YR4 | No data | No data | Court records | See Table 2 for discussion on this indicator. |
|  | Increase in share of incomes of local communities from biodiversity-compatible alternative livelihood activities | More than 60% of income comes from hunting | By EOP, at least 60% of income comes from sustainable livelihoods promoted by the project | Socio-economic surveys carried out (but see Section 4.2.1 above for further discussion on this) | No livelihoods activities carried out |  | See Table 2 and Section 4.2.1 for discussion. |
|  | Reduced hunting effort directly attributable to changes in livelihoods among hunters | 500 persons hunting in the area | 150 (reduction by 1/3) persons hunting by EOP | No data |  |  | See comments in Table 2. |

### Remaining barriers to achieving project objectives

1. A number of issues have already been discussed in Sections 4.1.2 and 4.2.1 (including the project’s results framework, analysed therein), including:
   1. The one *aiyl okmotu* which remains an obstacle to the establishment of the park
   2. The unattainable results with the trophy hunting industry
   3. The ambition to have significant impacts on the livelihoods of local communities such that their dependence on natural resources is diminished.
2. These issues present challenges (but not necessarily barriers) to the project achieving its objectives. However, when coupled with the project’s limiting factors of time (19 months remain of the project’s original timeframe) and resources, the scale of the challenges become significantly greater.
3. In addition to these challenges, there are a number of barriers – that the project is not addressing – which hamper the project’s attempts to achieve its objectives and which undermine the protected area system (and, indeed, other parts of the environment sector in Kyrgyzstan). These include: i) corruption – which undermines governance systems[[21]](#footnote-21), ii) the profound distrust of the government (specifically the republican government organs such as the SAEPF), iii) a high turnover in staff in the government structures – including the SAEPF, iv) the (mis)interetation of democracy – with the belief that agreements should be secured through consensus or referenda, v) (linked to the previous point) political wrangling undermines “more difficult” issues within communities who are easily influenced and vi) the marginalisation of the environment sector (which, in itself, is not uncommon around the globe).
4. There is one final issue to consider under this section. It is unclear as to the additive value of the Issyl Kul Biosphere Territory – as an institution and as an additional layer of bureaucracy – in the establishment and future management of the Khan Tengri National Park. If anything, this additional layer of bureaucracy will reduce the efficiency of the national park once it has been established.

## Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

1. The PIU is sticking closely to the Prodoc as a guiding document for the implementation of the project. Indeed, it is arguable that the PIU is sticking a little *too* closely to the Prodoc and that there has been little room for adaptive management of the project.
2. That is not to say that the project is completely rigid and without adaptive management. Where necessary, the project has demonstrated flexibility: this is best demonstrated by the fact that meetings with local communities were held in the evenings, “once the milking of the cows was complete”!
3. In the above sections, some of the issues with implementation have been discussed – there have been mistakes, miscommunications and misunderstandings – all of which lead to mistrust and alienation. The issues can be summarised as follows:
   1. The project lost a valuable three-four months while negotiating with the Otradnoe *aiyl okmotu*.
   2. The project (with the SAEPF) choose to try to *overwhelm* the community into acquiescence – thus, large groups of powerful people were repeatedly brought before the community in an attempt to secure their agreement for the establishment of the park. Even when this approach did not appear to be working, the project continued to use this method rather than try a different method (e.g., try a softer, one-on-one approach with an unthreatening person). This way confidence and trust may have been built.
   3. The use of UNDP DSA rates for meetings in rural areas, in those situations when the project could not provide accommodation or meals for participants
   4. There have been errors in the calculations of the pastures used by two of the *aiyl okmotu[[22]](#footnote-22)* that will be included in the park. Again, this leads to mistrust.
   5. The study tours should have been carried out early on in the project’s life such that they could have fulfilled their role as a tool to promote learning and expose key people to new (and hopefully convincing) ideas.
   6. Perhaps most alarmingly, the project has built expectations among the various communities. Thus, people are expecting significant inputs for their livelihoods.
4. The PIU is not wholly to blame for these issues and a significant proportion of the responsibility lies with the SAEPF. Indeed, the PIU has acted as a bridge between the government and communities on a number of occasions. Nonetheless, the PIU is relatively close to the government (and specifically the SAEPF) and when large delegations appear to confront communities, it can appear as synonymous with the government. In part, too, the relative inexperience of the Project Coordinator has played a part in creating these misunderstandings (but further discussion and a counterpoint, see the section below).

| **Measure** | **MTR Rating** | **Achievement Description** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Project Implementation and Adaptive Management** | **MS** | As indicated in the section on Outcome 1, the project has made steady but slow progress towards achieving this Outcome. The government (specifically the SAEPF) has influenced the process (partly because the relatively inexperienced PC had relied on their support for some of the processes). A series of mistakes and miscommunications led to misunderstanding, alienation and mistrust of the government by the communities.  The project is being implemented (a little too) strictly according to the project document with little adaptive management – except when it is pragmatic. There is room for improvement in implementation – with an emphasis on effectiveness of achieving outcomes – but the project should be in line to make this happen in the remainder of its life as the PC continues to gain confidence and if the PC is supported through the recruitment of a good CTA (who should lead the implementation of the livelihoods programme). |

### Management arrangements

1. As described above (see Section 3.4), the project is being implemented using DIM modalities. A Project Board has been established (see Annex VI for composition), the Project Assurance responsibilities have been transferred to the Programme and Policy Analyst within the UNDP-CO and a PIU has been established.
2. However, the de facto situation is that the project is being implemented in a slightly unconventional way. The government has two structures, one internal within the SAEPF (see Annex VI for composition) and the other an interagency committee (see Annex VI for composition[[23]](#footnote-23)), both of which have some supervisory function over the project. Both of these committees scrutinise the reports, workplans and budgets for the project. This gives them some semblance of ownership of the project even though they have no formal authority to endorse or sign off on any of these. Indeed, only the PB has the authority to sign off on workplans and budgets. The PB has only met once (12 November 2014) – but is due to meet again in the coming weeks (to respond to the MTR and approve – or otherwise – the workplan and budget for 2016).
3. The PIU is comprised of a Project Coordinator (PC) and a Project Assistant. There has been some turnover in the Project Assistants (see Table 4) although this was, apparently only for personal reasons.
4. The project document mentions a fourth position (beyond the PC, Project Assistant and driver): this is for a Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) for the project. Apparently, the Terms of Reference (TOR) for this position were developed but there was a great deal of procrastination and prevarication for four to five months and the issue was quietly dropped. As will be discussed below, there is an urgent need for such a person now for a number of reasons, not least being to support the PC.

Table 4. The composition of the PIU

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Position** | **Employment dates** |
| Kumar Kylychev | UNDP-CO, Sustainable Development Dimension Chief & Project Manager | Through project’s life |
| Nazgul Turdumatova | Project Coordinator | 16 October 2015 - Ongoing |
| Alieva Almira | Project Assistant | 23 Aug 2013 - 16 Dec 2013 |
| Asanbaeva Zhyldyz | Project Assistant | 24 Apr 14 - 28 Jan 2015 |
| Zhamal Akmatova | Project Assistant | 13 May 2015 – Ongoing |
| Sansyzbai Aliev | Project Driver | 10 April 2014 - Ongoing |

1. Within this section on management arrangements, the degree of *ownership* by the Kyrgyz Republic should be briefly considered. As a DIM project, the project is being implemented by the UNDP-CO – thus, this represents a valid question.
2. There are several indicators pointing to a strong sense of ownership by the Government of Kyrgyzstan:
   1. The establishment of the Khan Tengri National Park appears in a number of different strategies and programmes (e.g., the National Programme for Sustainable Development); these commit the government to its establishment (or, in other words) the establishment is considered as “obligatory”).
   2. Despite the slightly unconventional implementation arrangements, it appears to function satisfactorily and the government appears to feel satisfied with their level of ownership through the two government structures through which project documents are scrutinised.
   3. The government – and SAEPF – has worked closely with the project in an attempt to try to persuade the remaining *aiyl okmotu* to give its go-ahead to the establishment of the park. This has included high-level representation at the meetings with deputies and members of the *aiyl okmotu* – including three visits by the Director of the SAEPF[[24]](#footnote-24).
3. In contrast to these points that would otherwise be convincing that the government is committed to the project and to the establishment of the park, there is at least one example that *undermines* confidence in this area. In 2014, the SAEPF developed new hunting concessions in the vicinity of the proposed park and, as stated above, this was done irrespective of the ecological value of the areas and, on a number of occasions, the boundaries of the park were shifted to accommodate the hunting concession areas. This appears to be a typical case of lack of coordination and cooperation within one organisation[[25]](#footnote-25).

### Work planning

1. Because of the slightly unusual management arrangements of the project, the work planning has been described in the section above. In brief, annual work plans and budgets are scrutinised (and “approved”) by two structures within the Government of Kyrgyzstan although formal sign-off and approval falls to the Project Board.

### Project Finance and Co-finance

1. The project’s work planning has been described above. The responsibility for financial oversight of the project falls on the PB; there is further financial control within the UNDP-CO.

Table 5. The planned value and actual expenditure, to date, of co-finance (all figures in USD)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sources of Co-finance** | **Name of Co-financer** | **Type of Co-financing** | **Amount Pledged** | **Actual (at MTR)** | **% of Expected Amount** |
| GEF Partner Agency | UNDP | In kind | 1,600,000 | 600,000 | 37.5 |
| National Government | SAEPF | In kind | 800,000 | 300,000 | 37.5 |
| National Government | SAEPF | Cash | 800,000 | 0 | 0 |
| National Government | General Directorate of the Issyk-Kul Biosphere Reserve | In kind | 350,000 | 175,000 | 50 |
| National Government | Republican Nature Protection and Forestry Development Fund | In kind | 916,666 | 450,000 | 49 |
| National Government | National center for Mountain Regions Development | In kind | 0 | 50,000 | - |
| Local government | Issyk-Kul oblast administration | In kind | 0 | 30,000 | - |
| Local government | Ak-Suu rayon administration | In kind | 0 | 80,000 | - |
| CSO | WWF | Training | 250,000 | 10,000 | 0.4 |
| Donor | USAID | Training | 250,000 | \* | - |
| CSO | Fauna & Flora International (FFI) | In kind and cash | \* | \* | - |
| CSO | The Snow Leopard Trust (SLT) | In kind and cash | 0 | 25,000 | - |
| CSO | NABU | In kind and cash | 0 | 10,000 | - |
| **Total** |  |  | **4,966,666** | **1,730,000** | **35** |

\* Amounts not quantified

1. The project is keeping relatively good records of expenditure of the co-finance and has been keeping records of all occasions when there is in-kind support for the project and its objectives (see Table 5). For example, government in kind support has included:
2. The time that the government staff have put into project activities including, for example, efforts to persuade the Otradnoe *aiyl okmotu* to agree to the establishment of the park.
3. The project uses office space within the offices of the Karakol Nature Park within the town of Karakol (although, in the quid pro quo, the project spent considerable funds in rehabilitating two storage spaces for their offices).
4. The utilities (including parking, water and security – but with the exception of electricity, communication and internet connectivity) are covered by the government
5. The project has used various pieces of equipment owned by the government
6. The government has provided meeting spaces for a number of the larger meetings
7. In terms of expenditure versus the planned budgets, the project is broadly underspent, both overall (only USD 337,379.90 of a total budget of USD 950.000 – or 35.5% has been spent to date) and by component (see Table 6 and Figure 1). In part, the underspend can be explained by the front-loading of the budget that was expected when the project was designed with the expectation that some of the larger expenditures would be made early on in the project’s life.
8. As it is, there are three significant costs that the project has still to make (partly related to the delay in establishing the Khan Tengri National Park): i) the cost of the study tour(s), ii) the capital costs associated with the establishment of the park – including the outposts for the inspectors, the refurbishment and furnishings for the park office, uniforms and other equipment[[26]](#footnote-26), and iii) the costs associated with the alternative livelihoods programme that is part of the project’s plan. Indeed, questions remain about whether the project has sufficient funding to do these tasks adequately – more particularly the alternative livelihoods work: a total budget of only USD 150,000 has been set aside for the micro-finance schemes that the project has planned (and see Section 4.4.2 for a fuller discussion on this).

Table 6. The total budget and actual expenditure by Outcome

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Total** | **Budgeted (Prodoc)** | **Budgeted** | **Actual** | **%** |
| 1 | 315,000 | 326,104 | 192,898.03 | 59 |
| 2 | 408,050 | 393,974 | 93,309.44 | 24 |
| ProjMgt | 72,520 | 66,043.06 | 51,172.43 | 77 |
| **Total** | **795,570** | **786,121.06** | **337,379.90** | **43** |

Table 7. The total budget (as it appears in the annual, approved workplan) and actual expenditure, by Outcome and funding source, for the project to date.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2013** | | | | **2014** | | | | **2015** | | | |
| **Outcome** | **Budgeted (Prodoc)** | **Budgeted** | **Actual** | **% spent** | **Budgeted (Prodoc)** | **Budgeted** | **Actual** | **% spent** | **Budgeted (Prodoc)** | **Budgeted** | **Actual** | **% spent** |
| 1 | 91700 | 37210 | 37295.39 | 100 | 129000.00 | 163500 | 125922.31 | 77 | 94300.00 | 125394 | 29680.33 | 24 |
| 2 | 124490 | 6621 | 5953.52 | 90 | 159190.00 | 139028 | 61574.41 | 44 | 124370.00 | 248325 | 25781.51 | 10 |
| ProjMgt | 23560 | 8889.41 | 9475.92 | 107 | 22480.00 | 31456 | 31308.62 | 100 | 26480.00 | 25697.65 | 10387.89 | 40 |
| **Total** | **239750** | **52720.41** | **52724.83** | **100.01** | **310670** | **333984** | **218805.34** | **65.51** | **245150** | **399416.65** | **65849.73** | **16.5** |

Figure 1 The total budgeted amounts and actual expenditure by outcome.

Figure 2 The cumulative budgeting and actual expenditure by outcome for the project

1. The point about the underspend and the project’s still-to-be-expended budget is best illustrated by the expenditure of Outcome 2 (see Figure 2). Indeed, only 18.5% (USD 93,309.44) of the total budget of USD 505,000 for Outcome 2 has been spent to date – despite the fact that over half the project’s active life is over (from the first disbursement in November 2013 – October 2015 – thus, 24 months with only 20 months remaining).
2. Aside from the pressure to deliver (in terms of expenditure of the available budgets and the funding that will be available for the alternative livelihoods work, there are other minor concerns. Of the total of USD 95,000 that has been budgeted for Project Management, a total of USD 51,172.43 (or 54%) has been expended to date. In principle, this should be fine: the project’s active life to date has been 24 months and there are now 20 months remaining. Thus, while it may be tight, there should be sufficient funds for the remaining life of the project. [However, if a no-cost extension is to be considered (for discussion on this point, see various sections below), there will be no funding for project management and, therefore, any additional costs would have to be sought – probably from the UNDP-CO.]
3. The project is also taking steps to ensure cost-effectiveness, for example:
4. The project is using the usual UNDP procurement rules that are designed to optimise value-for-money.
5. The project has been awarding contracts to individuals in some circumstances (when an institutional contract is not necessary or politically desirable); because institutional overhead costs are not included in these contracts, they are much cheaper than institutional contracts.
6. The project has secured the support of government partners in the use of facilities – including, for example, conference facilities.
7. The Project Management Unit (PMU) within the UNDP-CO is proving an effective mechanism for reducing costs with cost sharing among different projects.
8. Finally, the project has not been audited – despite the fact that USD 4,000 per year is allocated to carry out an audit.

### Project-level Monitoring & Evaluation Systems

1. The project’s M&E framework is similar to the majority of all UNDP-GEF projects with a relative generous budget of USD 74,000 allocated for project monitoring.
2. The two government structures (mentioned above in Section 4.3.1) are also involved in monitoring the project. They receive reports from the project and scrutinise the annual workplans and budgets – thereby contributing to project monitoring.
3. As the project moves into some technically tricky areas (specifically i) the design and implementation of alternative livelihood programmes, which are made all the more challenging because of the hostile attitude of the local communities at present and ii) the establishment of the park including building management and planning systems), it is possible that the project could benefit from some international expertise. Some of the additional budget to do this could come from surplus M&E budgets; this could easily be justified if the international expert(s) made “monitoring” missions to track the progress of implementation of these aspects of the project.

### Stakeholder engagement

1. Stakeholder analysis is carried out within the Project Document and Inception Report, and the main stakeholders are identified, with a broad description of their mandate, as well as their identified role and responsibilities within the project.
2. The project is mostly engaging with most of the stakeholders in a satisfactory way. This was the case right from the outset, with over 100 representatives from 56 stakeholder groups attending the Inception Workshop[[27]](#footnote-27). Further project presentation workshops took place in the two rayons adjacent to the park (Typ and Ak Suu rayons) with good representation immediately following the Inception Workshop.
3. The formal structures employed within the setup of the project are also satisfactorily inclusive (see Annex VI for representation). In addition, of their own volition and as described above, the government has established two other structures for scrutinising the project. One of these is comprised of members of the SAEPF only, but the other is an interagency committee comprised of stakeholders from other government organisations (see Annex VI). As a result, stakeholder engagement at the republican level is good and, as described above, ownership by the SAEPF is also good.
4. At a local level and primarily as a result of the (government stipulated) process to establish a protected area, engagement with the stakeholders has, in terms of actually meeting people, been exhaustive. However, in terms of *manner and methodology*, the stakeholder engagement has been heavy-handed (as described in the introductory part of this section – see Section 4.3). As suggested in that section, a softer approach could have been taken – and may yet be taken (see Recommendations).
5. The deadlock between the project (with the SAEPF) and the Otrednoe *aiyl okmotu* requires a little more analysis because it threatens to undermine the process of establishing the park. Among the interviewees (that included the Head of the *aiyl okmotu*), there was much speculation about their intractable position. These included: political alignment, holding out for potential gold (or other mineral) finds, other potential “interests” and the fear of losing access to pastures for grazing their livestock. Irrespective of the cause(s), the stalemate is underpinned by a profound mistrust of the government by the members of the *aiyl okmotu*. Several recommendations are made later in the report (see Section 5.2.4) about potential ways to overcome this deadlock.
6. In addition to what has been already written, there is one other point to make (that leads to other points in Section 4.4 on Sustainability). This is that no steps have been taken to start the process of developing alternative livelihoods among the communities – even with those communities that have, for some time now, agreed to the establishment of the park. As such, the project seems to be proceeding from step to step, with no deep sense of urgency. In addition, the steps appear to be somewhat dictated by the SAEPF (although it is refreshing to have such a sense of ownership); the urgency that should possess a four-year project with the ambitions that this one does is not present.
7. As also mentioned above, the project (or, more precisely, one of the project partners) made errors when calculating the area of each *aiyl okmotu*’s pasture that was to be included in the park. When this was revealed to at least one of the *aiyl okmotu*, they immediately threatened to withdraw their support for the park. The project (and, more accurately, the SAEPF) is now considering rushing through the legal steps to establish the park (in contrast with the point made above about a lack of urgency!): i) leaving out the pastures of the Otradnoe *aiyl okmotu* and ii) before the *aiyl okmotu* withdraws its support – or any of the others finding out that errors were made!! This is obviously a far from ideal situation but *taking steps such as these will only serve to alienate the communities and deepen distrust further, and could lead to the unravelling of all the work carried out to date. The MTR recommends in the strongest terms possible to explore all other options before such profound steps are taken.*
8. The engagement with other development partners and civil-society organisations is also broadly satisfactory. However, this is not without its shortcomings. There has been a profound and absolute breakdown of relations with WWF and despite the apparent pleadings of the UNDP-CO, it appears at present as if this cannot be mended. This is more than simply misfortunate for a number of reasons: i) WWF (in conjunction with USAID) are supposed to be key co-financiers to the project, and ii) the two key people involved with WWF in Kyrgyzstan led the design and development of the project – which was, after all, based on the foundation of WWF’s Econet analyses.
9. In terms of the project’s engagement and contribution to gender equality a number of points can be made:
   1. The project’s development was led by a woman and the project development process was designed to capture the inputs of stakeholders, irrespective of gender.
   2. Similarly, the recruitment of people engaged with the project was done irrespective of gender although, as with all UNDP projects, women and minorities were encouraged to apply.
   3. Project implementation is being led by two women (the Project Coordinator and Project Assistant).
   4. The project is making efforts not to perpetuate gender stereotypes.
   5. Employment opportunities that arise from the project outcomes (especially the establishment of the Khan Tengri National Park) may *not* be equal as there is an existing gender stereotype that park inspectors should be male. The project should make efforts to ensure that in the documents the provide the foundation for the establishment of the park, there are pledges and principles included to ensure gender equality.
   6. The outcomes of the project, especially the establishment of the national park, will be gender neutral and should impact men and women in similar ways.

### Reporting

1. The project is following standard reporting processes and schedules for UNDP-GEF projects. In addition to these usual practices, the project reports to the SAEPF and to the interagency committee that has been established by the SAEPF.
2. There is room for improvement in the reporting: within the PIRs, there is some muddling of the project’s results framework and information inserted into the columns each year, and the narrative in the section on “Progress in Implementation”. While the PRF can contain updates towards the achievement of the targets for the indicators, it should be concise and brief; the section on “Progress in Implementation” is where the narrative should be placed. At present, a lengthy narrative is placed within the PRF and only brief bullet points is placed in the “Progress in Implementation”. The analysis of the progress towards outcomes in the MTR report (see Section 4.2.1) is an example of what the narrative in the PIR’s “Progress in Implementation” section should look like!

### Communication

1. The project has a proactive communication plan which is developed and implemented on an annual basis. As an example, the communication processes for this year (2015) have included:
   1. A March for parks that involved 25 schools (with over 500 students from schools and universities participating). The event also involved geography and biology teachers, and there was a “master class” on environmental education. Competitions were held for children and youth. The event rolled from Earth Day (22 April) until Biodiversity Day (22 May).
   2. On 05 June, a Poetry Day for university students was held and involved students from three faculties (ecology, sports and linguistics)
   3. College students were taken to Karakol State Nature Park in an organised “clean-up” and tree-planting exercise.
   4. All events were covered by the media, including print, electronic and TV
   5. The project has also made other press releases from time to time, as appropriate.
2. This was similar in previous years – one example from 2014 was the public awareness campaign “Importance of Biodiversity” (carried out from 09-15 June 2014 in Djety-Oguz and Ak-Suu rayons of Issyk-Kyl oblast). The objective of this campaign was to increase local communities’ knowledge and awareness on biodiversity conservation, environmental legislation, types of environmental violations, penalties and sustainable use of wildlife.
3. In these ways, the project has been working to improve awareness and bring the establishment of the park to the attention of the public. Whether or not this is having impact remains unknown because no surveys have been undertaken (and it is now too late to establish any sort of baseline). The best way to ascertain whether there is any impact of such awareness creation activities is to carry out a modified Knowledge-Attitude-Practice (KAP survey[[28]](#footnote-28).

## Sustainability

1. While it is still early to have a full grasp of the degree to which sustainability may – or may not – be achieved, the amount of work that remains to be done in a relatively limited amount of time means that there are significant concerns about sustainability even at this stage. These will be discussed in this section, with recommendations of what be done to enhance the likelihood of sustainability.
2. Indeed, the journey has barely begun. And even once the park is legally established and once the project has done its part to procure equipment and provide training for the members of staff of the park, this is still far from a park with strong foundations. The same is precisely true of the livelihoods work.
3. In order to contribute to ensuring sustainability, the project should consider developing – and adhering to – a brief, concise sustainability plan. In it, each of the project’s processes, outputs, outcomes and objectives should be listed, and against each, the actions that need to be taken to ensure sustainability.
4. In the remaining time of the project and while these aspects are developed and implemented, where necessary, the project should draw off the technical resources and support that is available to them. This not only includes the UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Centre in Istanbul but also elsewhere within the UNDP-GEF network. In addition and as already discussed, the project urgently needs to recruit a Chief Technical Advisor to assist with the livelihoods aspect of the project. In addition and funding-dependent, the project (and the park, once established) would have much to gain from recruitment of a Protected Areas Advisor (ideally, an international[[29]](#footnote-29)).
5. There is an alternative to the employment of either (or both) of these advisors. This is to engage partner organisation(s) to assist with these components of the project. The funding that is available for these positions could be used as grants to establish the partner organisation(s). The engagement of partner organisation(s) will contribute significantly to ensuring sustainability because they could be present and active in the area long after the project has closed (and see section on Recommendations for further discussion).
6. Finally, it will fall to the project’s Terminal Evaluation to assess the degree to which the project has truly build the foundations for sustainability within the park and for the livelihoods of the local communities.

| **Measure** | **MTR Rating** | **Achievement Description** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Sustainability** | **MU** | With only 20 months of implementation time remaining and with a great deal of work to be completed, real questions emerge about the sustainability of: i) the KTNP (if and when legally established), ii) the ecological functionality of the buffers and corridors, and iii) any livelihoods work that the project may carry out in its remaining lifetime. The project *may* deliver on all of its outputs, expenditure and achieve the majority of the indicator targets - but that does not necessarily guarantee sustainability. The project has a great deal of work to do to build foundations that will make the work that it has carried out and the impacts that it may achieve sustainable. |

### Financial Risks to Sustainability

1. There are numerous concerns regarding the likelihood of financial sustainability. As with the other aspects of sustainability, these are from both the perspective of the national park and that of the livelihoods of the local communities. These will be dealt with in turn in each of the following sections.
2. From the perspective of the park, it was instructive over the MTR mission in Kyrgyzstan to understand the financial system that is in place for the Karakol State Nature Park – which also falls within the Issyl Kul oblast and the Ak Suu rayon. [Not unlike many protected areas around the world], the park receives funding from the government to cover its basic recurrent costs – thus, its salaries and other recurrent costs. However, any development or capital costs are not covered by the state and these must be raised by the protected area. Fortuitously for the Karakol SNP, it has a number of opportunities to accrue revenues, including: tourism (through the ski resort), the sale of seedlings, the sale of timber, and the rent of pastures. In other words, their revenues streams are currently diverse and sufficient to fulfil their needs. However, there are concerns that the Khan Tengri National Park will have fewer options to generate revenues.
3. It is important, therefore, that a financial sustainability plan for the KTNP is developed before the project closes; this may be coupled with the development of the park’s management plan. The financial sustainability should also be developed in conjunction with a tourism development plan (which, similarly, could be coupled with the development of the park’s management plan).
4. In addition to the financial sustainability of the park, the project has also “recruited” and trained a group of “freelance inspectors”. When asked why they were motivated to carry out their tasks with no formal salary, the response was, partly, their patriotism! While this is surely not in question, at present, the freelance inspectors do get some remuneration if they manage to catch poachers (as indicated in Section 4.2.1). However, if they are very successful, the number of poaching incidents will diminish and they will no longer be remunerated for their work. In short, this is not a sustainable source of financing for the freelance inspectors and the potential for abuse is high as a result.
5. As with the park, there are concerns about the sustainability of the alternative livelihood work that the project is due to carry out. The majority of these concerns will be discussed in the following section (on socio-economic sustainability, see Section 4.4.2). However, given that the livelihood programme plans include the implementation of a micro-credit scheme, it is worth starting the discussion here. The project has allocated USD 150,000 to initiate a micro-credit scheme among the local communities. Fortunately, there are existing structures through which these can be implemented (the *aiyl okmotu*) but, nonetheless, this is almost a trivial sum of money given that there are seven *aiyl okmotu* in the area. In addition, that sum of money will not last very long: thus, without mechanisms to replenish or re-capitalise the micro-credit fund. There are numerous ways in which this could be done. The project should, however, work with the communities themselves to develop the scheme of how the re-capitalisation should function.

### Socio-economic Risks to Sustainability

1. The potential to cause more harm than good when trying to implement a livelihood programme from scratch with only 20 months in which to do it is high. Alternative livelihood programmes are complex to implement. They rely some social organisation or structures through which the programmes can work being in place. The capacity of the communities needs to be built – for example, in proposal development, transparency and accountability, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting as well as in the skills that may be necessary for whatever project is being implemented.
2. There are three pillars to the socio-economic development work: i) the introduction of micro-credit schemes, ii) the management of pastures – not only but primarily the pastures that have been included in the KTNP, and iii) the development of tourism. Each of these needs to be developed with a strong linkage to environmental sustainability (see section below).
3. Fortuitously, the UNDP-CO and other organisations within Kyrgyzstan have experience implementing micro-credit schemes. The project will have to draw off these to ensure that the schemes are implemented in the project area in as efficient a way as possible.
4. Realistically, the project will get into the first round of funding for a limited number of micro-credit schemes/projects. It is very unlikely that these will come to fruition by the end of the project and the *impact* on livelihoods will be negligible. The project needs to prepare itself for this and to ensure that there is a mechanism to allow the work to continue once the project has closed. Various options for how this may be done are discussed in the Recommendations section below.
5. There is also good experience in development of schemes for improved management of pastures throughout Kyrgyzstan and good experiences in natural resource management from around the world[[30]](#footnote-30). In addition, there are numerous lessons from poor practices from around the world (and the MTR is convinced that there will also be examples from Kyrgyzstan as well) on how *not* to implement pasture management[[31]](#footnote-31). Thus, the foundations are there on which to build and lessons on what to avoid!
6. When developing and implementing pasture management schemes, there are a number of principles and lessons learned which are essential for success and sustainability: i) the *responsibility* for pasture access and use should remain with the pasture committees – including those pastures that have been included within the National Park; ii) pasture use (and other use of natural resources) should be negotiated and agreed with the communities with the agreements being formalised in a way that is culturally appropriate and binding; iii) the agreements include conflict resolution mechanisms, allocated responsibilities for monitoring, iv) language such as pastures are “owned” or “transferred” to the park should be avoided; the pastures are “included into the area” of the park is more appropriate.
7. Finally, tourism represents a real opportunity for generating revenue in the area – not only within the Khan Tengri National Park but also in the surrounding areas. The tourism development and management plan should consider how best this should be done but, again, there are numerous lessons from around the world – including Kyrgyzstan – on which to build. Community-based tourism should be part of the strategy; the Kyrgyz Community Based Tourism Association (KCBTA) is already functioning and has both lessons and an institutional structure to assist the process. Similarly, there are some excellent examples from around the world[[32]](#footnote-32).
8. A diversified tourism strategy would be best and the tourism operators should become partners of the park – and included, for example, in the park’s management committee (as well as representatives from the local communities).

### Institutional Framework and Governance Risks to Sustainability

1. The majority of the institutions involved with the proposed KTNP are robust and resilient – primarily because many are governmental.
2. There are some sustainability risks associated with some of the non-governmental structures associated with the project. These include: i) the community structures – including the pasture committees, *aiyl okmotu* and deputies at the community level, and ii) any NGO(s) that come in as partners to the community development programme and to support the continued development and management of the KTNP. These are all subject to political processes (that are beyond the scope of the project) but the risks should be considered both from the outset but also as part of the ongoing implementation.
3. In addition, if/when the KTNP is established in the coming months, by the end of the project, it will still be very young and immature. At best, the project will facilitate its legal establishment and provide some foundations on which it will grow and, hopefully, flourish. Its long-term sustainability (and that of the community institutions, structures and programmes) will be dependent on finding good partners.
4. Finally, the complexity that the Issyl Kul Biosphere Territory adds to the institutional arrangements for the KTNP (and other protected areas in the territory, adds inefficiency and (probably) reduces effectiveness. Inefficiency and ineffectiveness, in the long-term, contribute to decreasing the likelihood of sustainability and, therefore, ideally, these institutional arrangements should be reviewed and adjusted during the project’s lifetime.

### Environmental Risks to Sustainability

1. The primary goal and objective of this project is to ensure environmental sustainability – with a specific focus on biodiversity. Therefore, so long as the project achieves its goal, objective and outcomes, environmental sustainability should, in principle, be assured.
2. However, there are a number of risks to environmental sustainability – primarily through inadvertent impacts. One example of this is that when the alternative livelihoods programme begins and communities start to accrue benefits, these benefits could be used in ways that further threaten the biodiversity, ecosystem services and ecological processes in the area – such as if they use the benefits to purchase larger numbers of livestock.
3. There is a more immediate risk to environmental sustainability. There is mention that the pastures used by the Otradnoe *aiyl okmotu* will be excluded from the area of the national park. However, exclusion of this area will have consequences for the biodiversity of the area; indeed, it was included by the scientists from the National Academy of Sciences on the basis of its biodiversity value. It should, as a consequence, not be excluded (and for more discussion on this, see the section on Recommendations, below).
4. Finally, as with the inadvertent impacts that the livelihood programme may have, so too may any tourism development. Tourism impacts can be significant, particularly in mountain ecosystems. As a result, all tourism development should be done such that all impacts should be avoided, minimised or mitigated[[33]](#footnote-33)

# Conclusions and Recommendations

## Conclusions

1. In conclusion, then, the project is complex, challenging and ambitious in a number of ways: i) it proposes to amend laws and establish a new protected area at the national level – both of which will require high level governmental approvals, ii) work with local authorities at the provincial and district levels to mainstream biodiversity conservation into the land use plans – especially within the identified ecologically important areas surrounding protected areas and within the corridors between the protected areas – and implement measure to enforce regulations, and iii) develop and implement an alternative livelihood program among local communities. The project proposes to do all this in a four-year period and with a budget of less than USD one million!
2. As such, it fits into the category of a high risk, high impact project: if it manages what it set out to achieve, it will be a great success. Indeed, to date, the project has made some good progress but there are a number of shortcomings. And while there has been significant progress, there is a huge amount yet to be done in a relatively short (20 months) period of time particularly if the project is to provide secure foundations on which the Khan Tengri National Park can be built and on which the livelihoods of the local communities can remain secure without an over-dependence on natural resources. It is ensuring the likelihood of the *sustainability* of the projects outputs and outcomes that will be the biggest challenge that the project faces in the coming 20 months.

## Recommendations

1. One mechanism to ensure the sustainability of the project’s processes and impacts will be to attract non-governmental partners to come into the area to continue to work on i) the development and management of the national park and ii) the alternative livelihood programmes with local communities.
2. In addition, as mentioned above, there is 20 months of implementation time remaining. The project *could* quite easily check the boxes and spend the remaining funds (thus, in theory, deliver the project) … but this would be done at the expense of doing things properly and without the ability to build sufficiently deep foundations to ensure sustainability. Therefore, in order to complete the task diligently, with due process and satisfactorily such that sustainability is assured, further time may be necessary. As such, the MTR proposes that the project immediately seek a no-cost extension of up to a maximum of one year. The UNDP-CO would have to underwrite any additional costs, including those of maintaining the PIU staff for the duration of the project’s extension. It should be noted, however, that the GEF is increasingly reluctant to grant such extensions; indeed, projects should be designed to accommodate the context in which they are due to be implemented.
3. In addition, the MTR proposes that an internal review of project progress take place on or before 30 September 2016. At this point, the project will have nine months of “normal” time to go. If *all* of the following four triggers have not been hit by this date, the MTR proposes that the project be closed immediately:
   1. The park in its entirety has not yet been legally established[[34]](#footnote-34)
   2. The first disbursement for micro-finance projects among the local communities has not happened
   3. The first agreement regarding pasture use, based on best international practices of natural resource management[[35]](#footnote-35), in the community pastures that have been included in the park has not been signed
   4. An agreement to develop a community-based tourism operation, based on best international practices[[36]](#footnote-36),
4. The remaining recommendations are presented in the sections below (with the summary in Table 8). Because the majority of the recommendations are based on discussions and arguments that have already been made in the body of the report above, they are presented in summary form.

Table 8. The summary of MTR recommendations for the project

| **Rec#** | **Recommendation** | **Entity Responsible** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| A | Objective: |  |
| A.1 | Amendments to project results framework (see Table 9) | PB, UNDP-GEF RTA |
| A.2 | The project requests a no-cost extension of up to one year. | PB, UNDP-CO, UNDP-GEF RTA |
| A.3 | If the project does not hit a series of four triggers by 30 September 2016, the project should be closed immediately | PB, UNDP-CO, UNDP-GEF RTA |
| B | Outcome 1: |  |
| B.1 | Do not establish the KTNP without first exhausting *all possible options* with the Otradnoe *aiyl okmotu* (see Recommendation C.1); the 25,000ha area of pasture is of biodiversity importance and its exclusion from the KTNP would lead to fragmentation and a loss of integrity. Other options do exist for further negotiations. | SAEPF, PIU |
| B.2 | Seek a long-term, non-governmental partner for the KTNP; secure a long-term agreement between SAEPF and the partner for financial and technical support. | PIU, SAEPF, NGOs |
| B.3 | Establish the KTNP according to best current knowledge and practices from around the globe | PIU, SAEPF, UNDP-GEF RTA |
| B.4 | Determine possibilities for support an assistance in Sarychat Ertash zapovednik | PIU, SAZ partners, SAEPF |
| B.5 | Catalyse the process of establishing a Snow Leopard Conservation Forum (for ensuring cooperation, collaboration and coordination among snow leopard conservation actors in Kyrgyzstan) | SAEPF, PIU |
| C | Outcome 2: |  |
| C.1 | Immediately hire a CTA – Livelihoods  CTA to review and assess feasibility and sustainability of livelihoods programme, lead negotiation with Otradnoe aiyl okmotu; lead study tour for local community representatives; support PC; select non-governmental partner for livelihoods work; implement livelihoods programme (including three components – community-based tourism, use and management of pastures/NRM, and micro-credit schemes); negotiate and sign natural resource use and management agreements with seven *aiyl okmotu*s (and their pasture committees) with pastures included in KTNP | PIU |
| C.2 | With the exception of quick wins (e.g., training inspectors), accept that improving the trophy hunting industry is beyond the scope of this project | SAEPF, UNDP-CO, UNDP-GEF RTA |
| C.3 | Include courts in capacity building activities and formally request prosecution data | SAEPF, PIU, Issyl Kul Biosphere Territory; Issyl Kul oblast |
| D | Outcome 3: Project Management |  |
| D.1 | No amendment to implementation modality – continue DIM | PB, PIU |
| D.2 | Project implementation should be more flexible, incorporating adaptive management – so long as it serves and contributes to the objective and outcomes of the project | PIU |
| D.3 | Enhance the effectiveness, efficiency and urgency of implementation | PIU |

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

1. *Project’s Results Framework*. A number of proposals have been made for amendments to the project’s results framework (see Table 2 and Table 9).

Table 9. The proposed amendments to the project’s results framework.

| **Project strategy** | **Original indicator** | **Original target** | **Recommended amendments** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Objective: To improve the coverage and effectiveness of protected areas in the Central Tian Shan Mountains so as to expand threatened species representation in the national system | Population size of snow leopard (*Uncia uncia*) in Central Tian Shan shows an increasing trend | By EOP, target area offers permanent habitat for five females with cubs | **Indicator**: Area of snow leopard habitat that is effectively protected in the Central Tian Shan Mountains  **Target**: A minimum of 336,119.9ha by EOP; METT scores (as for indicator No. 3) |
| Outcome 2: Habitat connectivity, sustainability and effectiveness of PAs in Central Tian Shan are enhanced by regulating land use in buffer zones, wildlife corridors and other intervening landscapes | Area over which territorial land use planning is fully aligned with requirements for regulated resource use stipulated in the management plans of PA buffer zones and corridors | 200,000ha | **Indicator**: The area of buffer zones and corridors within which natural resource management agreements (with stakeholders) are developed and implemented  **Target**: 200,000ha; six NRM/pasture use agreements |
| Better management of hunting in buffers and corridors as reflected in percent of trophy hunting that is controlled and monitored | 90% of trophy hunting is legally licensed | **Indicator**: The MTR recommends that this indicator is deleted |
| Prosecution of illegal hunting in buffers and corridors | At least 50% of incidents of illegal hunting successfully prosecuted from YR4 | **Indicator**: Prosecution of illegal hunting in Central Tian Shan ecosystem (including corridors, buffers and protected areas)  **Target**: Of the cases presented in court, prosecution rates increase to 50% |
| Increase in share of incomes of local communities from biodiversity-compatible alternative livelihood activities | By EOP, at least 60% of income comes from sustainable livelihoods promoted by the project | **Indicator**: Increase in share of incomes of local communities from biodiversity-compatible alternative livelihood activities  **Targets**: At least two micro-credit schemes funded by EOP[[37]](#footnote-37); at least 60% of targeted beneficiaries report on increased incomes from livelihood opportunities proposed by the project; community tourism venture generating revenue for the community |
| Reduced hunting effort directly attributable to changes in livelihoods among hunters | 150 (reduction by 1/3) persons hunting by EOP | **Indicator**: Reduced hunting among people using grazing pastures within the KTNP once it has been established  **Target**: No reported cases of hunting by communities using pastures for grazing |

1. *Continue DIM implementation*. Other projects that start off being implemented under DIM can transition to NIM. In the case of the current project, this is *not* recommended; there is too little time and too much urgency to change the implementation modalities at this point. In addition, there is a good sense of ownership among the government partners.
2. It is also too late to make changes to the DSA rates (those of UNDP) that the project has been using and the precedent has been established. However, future projects should consider only using the government’s DSA rates.
3. *Adaptive management*. The PIU has been strictly adhering to the Prodoc with relatively little adaptive management. So long as the adaptive management serves the purpose of project delivery – thus, enabling the project to achieve its objective and outcomes while also enhancing effectiveness and efficiency, adaptive management is to be encouraged.
4. *Adhere to the original proposed boundaries for the park*. The project has already made many concessions and compromises for the boundaries of the KTNP involving a reduction from just over 325,000ha to just over 300,000ha. The resulting area is significantly bigger than the originally proposed area of 187,000ha (derived from WWF’s Econet analysis) but to consider a further reduction (from 300,000ha to 286,000ha) – thereby excluding the pastures used by the Otradnoe *aiyl okmotu* with its resulting reduction in the biological integrity of the park – should not be considered until *all options* with the Otradnoe *aiyl okmotu* have been exhausted (and the MTR believes that there are still options which have not been tested – see recommendations below).
5. In conclusion, rushing into the establishment of the park (and excluding the Otradnoe *aiyl okmotu* pastures while not admitting the errors in calculations of pasture area with the other *aiyl okmotu*s) at this point may well have inadvertent, detrimental impacts on the park; it will certainly deepen mistrust. As such, the MTR recommends that if the gazettement notice and legislation surrounding the establishment of the Khan Tengri National Park is produced before all options for persuading the Otradnoe *aiyl okmotu*, then an *opt in* (that allows the Otradnoe *aiyl okmotu* to agree for the inclusion of their pasture areas if they are convinced by the benefits provided to the adjacent communities) or, alternatively, an *opt out* (if the Otradnoe *aiyl okmotu* pastures are included from the outset and they opt not to keep their pastures within the national park) clause is included into the legislation – with these opt in or opt out clauses being valid for, say, three years.
6. *Enhance effectiveness, efficiency and urgency of implementation*. The project has made good, steady progress but with only 20 months remaining and much to achieve, a sense of urgency needs to permeate the project for the rest of its life. As has been discussed, various mistakes, miscommunications and misunderstandings have occurred in the past 24 months; at times, this has led to delays. There are a number of reasons that underpin these issues – all of which can lead to lessons learned – but, more pragmatically, the project can afford no further mistakes or lost time.
7. *Seek and engage a long-term partner for KTNP*. Even if the KTNP is established in the coming weeks, the sustainability of the park will be significantly more likely with the assistance of a non-governmental partner that will bring in external funding and expertise. There are precedents for this throughout the world – including within Kyrgyzstan and even within the project’s focus area (numerous partner organisations with the Sarychat Ertash zapovednik) – for such partnerships.
8. Indeed, as soon as the park is established, it is likely that a number of NGOs with a conservation link to snow leopards will express an interest in working with the park. It might be the case of seeking cooperation and coordination among the partners than actually seeking to find any interested parties.
9. *Various initiatives for the KTNP*. In Annex VII, the MTR proposes a broad flowchart for the development of Khan Tengri National Park. However, it is useful to list (and in some cases reiterate) a few of the initiatives should be included in the establishment, planning and management of the KTNP. These include:
   1. The establishment of a management committee (with appropriate powers) for the park and that includes appropriate stakeholders (oblast, rayons, local community structures, tourism operators, non-governmental partners and the governmental manager of the park)
   2. The development of a management plan that is action and results orientated – towards conservation targets and reducing threats; the management plan should include a) a financial sustainability plan (linked to business-planning), and b) tourism development and management plan
   3. The introduction and implementation of SMART[[38]](#footnote-38) (and have the potential to demonstrate its use in Kyrgyzstan for replication elsewhere in the protected area system). There is no use to wait for a future UNDP-GEF project to introduce SMART.
10. *Immediately hire a Chief Technical Advisor, Livelihoods and engage a third-party partner; start livelihoods work*. The livelihoods work has been delayed – despite the fact that a number of the *aiyl okmotu*s agreed, with signatures, to the inclusion of pastures into the park some months ago. Initiating the livelihoods work with these communities would have demonstrated good faith. It would have also contributed to persuading the other communities to agree as well.
11. With 20 months remaining there is a huge amount of work to do, even to make a start on this work. This should start immediately.
12. First, a CTA should be urgently sought and hired. This should be a highly committed and qualified individual with experience implementing livelihood schemes with a linkage to biodiversity conservation and, preferably, to protected areas (so as to avoid inadvertent negative impacts that are commonly associated with badly designed and implemented livelihood programmes). A CTA with previous work that has linkages with protected areas will also be able to contribute in a meaningful way to the establishment and development of the park.
13. The CTA should lead the implementation of the livelihood work, including continuing the negotiation with the Otradnoe *aiyl okmotu* and deputies with the aim of persuading them to include their pasture in the national park; the approach should be different from the heavy-handed approach already used by the project up to date. In addition, the CTA will organise and lead the study tour, ensuring correct participation and that the lessons learned from the study tour are adequately understood by the participants. The CTA will also facilitate forums to all the participants to share their new-found knowledge and experience on their return.
14. In addition, the CTA can provide support for the Project Coordinator: the Project Coordinator is relatively inexperienced – certainly with implementing GEF projects. To date, she has been relying on support from the SAEPF (her former employers with whom she has a good relationship) but that is not always the best option – as seen from the alienation and distrust with the Otradnoe *aiyl okmotu*.
15. Third, as with the national park, the livelihoods work would benefit from a long-term partner. Again, there are precedents and examples of best practice from around the globe and within Kyrgyzstan (including other UNDP projects on micro-credit schemes and natural resource management and pasture use schemes), and the project should draw off these. The CTA can assist with the process of attracting a long-term livelihoods partner.
16. It will fall to the Terminal Evaluation to determine the success and sustainability of the livelihoods work that the project implements.
17. *Feasibility and sustainability of alternative livelihood plans*. The alternative livelihood plans that will be implemented among the local communities may include: i) micro-credit schemes, ii) community-based tourism schemes, and iii) improved use and management of natural resources, including pastures. These should be built on experiences and lessons learned both from within Kyrgyzstan but also best practices from around the globe. Once the CTA is in place, the plans should be reviewed and the feasibility of achieving any results and whether the results and processes will be sustainable on closure of the project should be assessed.
18. The livelihood programme should be build on a number of other principles: i) manage the expectations of the communities such that they remain realistic relative to what the project can actually deliver, ii) the programme should be equitable (targeting vulnerable and marginalised people), iii) it should be transparent (with the majority of the decisions being made by the community themselves); and iv) it will have capacity development at it core.
19. *Pasture committees*. Past experiences with natural resource management has demonstrated repeatedly that transferring responsibility and control, following well mediated negotiations resulting in agreements over natural resource use, results, in turn, in better managed natural resources than any other form of natural resource. From the outset, the communities from the seven *aiyl okmotu* should have been reassured that their pasture committees would retain full control and responsibility for the use of pastures for grazing. When the livelihood programme is rolled out, the project should ensure that this become the case.
20. *Repair relationship with WWF*. WWF were central to the design and development of the project. They are engaged in the Sarychat Ertash zapovednik carrying out work similar to that which will be needed in the KTNP once it has been established. As mentioned in Section 4.3.5, there has been a profound breakdown in relations between the project and WWF – based on misunderstanding and mistrust. If possible, this should be repaired – either through mediation or through third-party actors (but probably not the government) who believe that the project has taken the correct pathway – then there should be mutual benefits – particularly as the project will need to learn lessons from the work that WWF has carried out in the Sarychat Ertash zapovednik.
21. *Take great care with language*. Language is a difficult thing for a MTR to comment on with too much confidence particularly when a proportion of the interviews carried out over the MTR mission were held using an interpreter. That being said, it did appear as if language was being used in a less than ideal way, and sometimes quite thoughtlessly and loosely. For example, people referred consistently to transferring the “ownership” of the communities’ pastures rather than the less threatening or alienating “inclusion” of the pastures within the park (with the added caveat that the pasture committees would retain full control and responsibility for pasture management. In short, some of the language has been confrontational and alienating – and it becomes less surprising to understand that some of the communities have been less than enthusiastic about the establishment of the park.
22. *Remove all focus on trophy hunting except for quick wins*. As previously discussed in the report, to assume the responsibility for dealing with the issues associated with trophy hunting is far too ambitious for this already thin-stretched project. The trophy hunting industry is notoriously difficult and corrupt and might well require a project of its own! Therefore, the project should not even attempt to do anything but those things that are easiest and that can be integrated into the work that it is already tackling. Thus, for example, the inspectors should be trained and equipped.
23. *Process following submission of the MTR draft report*. To assist the Project Coordinator, the process following submission of the first draft of the MTR report should be as follows:
    1. Read and make comments on the first draft of the MTR report
    2. Develop the draft management response to Draft MTR
    3. Return the comments on the MTR draft report to the MTR consultant
    4. The MTR consultant will finalise the MTR report on the basis of the comments and the final version will be submitted
    5. The management response can be finalised and aligned with the workplan and budget for 2016. These can then be submitted for approval.
    6. Final MTR report approval.

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

1. *Engage with Sarychat-Ertash zapovednik*. Up to the time of the MTR, there has been a focus on the establishment of the KTNP. While this is justified, i) the goal of the project is to pursue landscape approaches – thus, including the Sarychat-Ertash zapovednik, and ii) the project’s results framework includes an increase in the Sarychat-Ertash zapovednik’s METT score (from 54% to 75%). The project should engage with the Sarychat Ertash zapovendik and its partners in a meaningful to determine in which areas it might usefully contribute in the project’s remaining time to ensure that the target is achieved and that the management effectiveness of the zapovednik is improved.
2. In addition, for the purposes of the project, the METT should continue to be used (as specified by the GEF). However, in the future, the METT that has been modified for use in zapovedniks should be rolled out to all zapovedniks across the protected area system in Kyrgyzstan.

### Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives

1. *Build capacity of the courts*. There is an assumption in conservation communities that dealing with law enforcement begins – and ends – with equipping and training inspectors (or rangers or scouts). However, the entire judicial chain should be considered – from the patrolling systems, to analysis of crime data, to arrest and case processing systems, to the capacity and knowledge of the prosecutors and magistrates, and to the penal code and sentencing procedures. If there are bottlenecks or weaknesses at any stage along this chain, the entire system can fail. Therefore, in the future, judicial chain analysis should be carried out, bottlenecks identified and a plan developed and implemented to overcome those bottlenecks. Such practices are becoming much more widespread since the crisis in illegal wildlife trade and crimes over the past few years.
2. While this is something that should be considered in the longer term, in the shorter term, as the project builds the systems within the new park (including patrolling and law enforcement, arrest procedures, crime database and analysis), the relationship with the courts should be nurtured such that some agreement about crime data can be developed. In the meantime, the project should establish a database of all patrol, crime and prosecution data such that it can be used for the project’s results framework (and specifically the indicator: “Prosecution of illegal hunting in buffers and corridors”).
3. *Start dialogue regarding transboundary protected areas*. The proposed Khan Tengri National Park will be established along Kyrgyzstan’s border with China and Kazakhstan. On the other side of the border, in Kazakhstan, are a number of trophy hunting concession areas; in contrast, on the other sider of the border in China, there is a protected area – the Mount Tuomuer Nature Reserve. In the future and when the opportunity arises, a dialogue about a transboundary initiative could be started. One starting point could be the engaging with the BirdLife International partner in Kyrgyzstan (the non-governmental organisation, NABU) to demand why it is that the area of the proposed KTNP is not an IBA – as opposed to the ecologically contiguous area in China? Presumably, the same criteria for the Mount Tuomuer Nature Reserve listing apply to the KTNP? If so, listing KTNP would encourage a transboundary dialogue which could then grow from there.
4. *Snow Leopard Conservation Forum*. As a result of the Global Snow Leopard Conservation Forum (22-23 October 2013) at the beginning of the project, a Secretariat on Snow Leopard Conservation was established in Bishkek. While this has some responsibility to coordinate activities globally, within Kyrgyzstan, there is no coordinating body to ensure cooperation, collaboration and coordination among all the actors. The number of actors engaging in partnership with the Sarychat Ertash *zapovednik* is symptomatic of the interest in snow leopards and, once KTNP has been established, further actors will immediately express their interest in working with the park. However, it may be worthwhile to establish a national level Snow Leopard Conservation Forum to foster cooperation, collaboration and coordination among all the actors. There are various very successful models from around the globe for such an action (see Annex VIII).

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1. MTR edit: It should be understood that these areas are the sizes that were first proposed by the NAS; the final, resulting proposed park is much smaller. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. UNDP-GEF (2014) *Project-level Monitoring: Guidance for conducting midterm reviews of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects*. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. There is, however, some dispute about the taxonomy of the species of spruce found in the area; Georgi Lazkov, National Academy of Science, personal communication. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. It may be that the Central Tian Shan is the “edge of the range” for the maral; Dmitry Milko, National Academy of Science, personal communication. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. This area is listed as a “breeding and staging site for [migratory] birds”. See http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/sitefactsheet.php?id=15448 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Gvozdetskiy in Spravochnik of Central Asia (Handbook of Central Asia), 1960 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. **Commend and clarification on draft MTR**: “*Out of 21 reserves and parks 1 park under President of the Kyrgyz Republic management, others under SAEPF, regulated reserves: hunting and forest under the SAEPF, geological and botanical are under self-governance bodies, Ministry of Education etc*” [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Somewhat oddly, part way through the project document mentions without warning that there would be a Technical Advisor without first describing such a person as a member of the PIU. The PIU currently does not include such a person. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See the Stakeholder Analysis presented on pg. 18 of the Project Document and on pg. 8 of the Inception Report. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The legislation in Kyrgyzstan allows for four zones within national parks: i) strictly protected – equivalent to zapovedniks or IUCN PA Category IA, ii) ecological stabilization – areas requiring restoration and rehabilitation, iii) ecotourism – thus, areas that can be used for tourism, and iv) areas that allow limited economic activities. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. This is an analysis of the ecological connections that was carried out across Central Asia, see http://www.wwf.ru/about/where\_we\_work/asia/closed/econet/eng [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The METT has been adapted for measuring the management effectiveness of zapovedniks (or strict nature reserves). The policy to use this adapted METT for all zapovenidks within Kyrgyzstan (and perhaps elsewhere in the CIS) may be adopted by governments but the (original) METT should continue to be used for all other categories of protected area, including national parks such as the KTNP. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. <http://www.smartconservationsoftware.org> [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. If this recommendation is approved by the Project Board, for the purposes of clarity and transparency, the indicator should not be physically removed from the project’s result framework but it should be struck through with the comment in the “Levels” columns of the PIRs should simply indicate “indicator deleted as per MTR recommendations.” [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. This also illustrates two additional points: i) that “democratic” processes can effectively undermine well thought out environmental processes, and ii) that trying to implement environmental policies through consensus is problematic. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. There are two factors that should be considered here: i) numerous analyses have demonstrated that the greater the financial incentive to attend meetings, the lower the motivation and ii) the DSA rates are considerable relative to the monthly salaries of government staffers and, therefore, there might be simple financial motivations to attend rather than drive or ownership. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Some of the interviewees over the course of the MTR mission questioned the value of this work, suggesting that it represented duplication of existing knowledge. They suggested that it was wholly unnecessary. The MTR was unable to verify the accuracy of these suggestions but the principle holds that the project must ensure that it does not duplicate existing work. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Trainings held on 12-13 September 2014 in Karakol, and 17-18 June, 2014 in Karakol, for list of participants, see Annex IX [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Training held on 2-4 June 2014 in Cholpon-Ata; for list of participants, see Annex IX. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Approved by Order of the Plenipotentiary Representative of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic in Issyk-Kul oblast, 09 February 2015 No. 21 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. All work in the environment sector is inextricably linked to governance: environmental work is the development and application of regulations and it will be undermined by any factor that undermines governance. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. **Comment on draft MTR**: “*The Land management service in Karakol, Ak-Suu region made mistakes in calculation of two* aiyl okmoty *(Keregetash and Teplokluchenko)*” [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. The project should ensure that there is adequate representation from the Issyl Kul oblast and some representation from the local communities (including rayon administration and aiyl okmotu representation) on the interagency committee). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. However, for a counterpoint to this, see Section 4.2.1 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. **Clarification provided on draft MTR**: “*Starting from end of 2013 and early 2014 the PIU met several times with scientists from National academy of science (NAS) Taken into account the NAS recommendations on biodiversity hotspots for establishing protected areas starting from 1970s left site of the Sary-Djaz river was kept for establishing new PA free of hunting enterprises. Almost the same recommendation was given Econet. 187000ha the territory according to the Prodoc has very little meaning for biodiversity, almost 99% of the territory covered by Engilchek glaciers and stones, no vegetation.* *According to local legislation on PAs nature parks are research and nature conservation institutions. PIU in cooperation with SAEPF included additional to the Prodoc 187000ha +188000 ha left site of the Sary-Djaz river. Out of 188000 ha 14 licenses for mineral resources exploration in 75000 ha (land belongs to 15 aiyl okmoty from two rayon s: Ak-Suu and Tup) were given by the State Agency on mineral resources. Therefore PIU have been working with 7 aiyl okmoty in left site of the Sary-Djaz river to transfer their high land agriculture land to the PAs category which has valuable for biodiversity in order to ensure long-term better legal biodiversity protection and effective management.* *The regulation on allocation of areas for hunting in the Kyrgyz Republic was developed and approved by Government Decree (16. 12.2013, # 673). The one of the main targets of the regulation was consolidate the territories to be allocated for the hunting argali, ibex. According the regulation all former agreements with private hunting companies were cancelled. This gave chance for future establishing park enlarge its territory and occupy initially 375000 ha in the Sary-Djaz river basin, kept free of hunting companies out of 188000 ha are important for biodiversity. This was reached in close cooperation 3 Departments in SAEPF (Department on regulation of the natural resources, Department on Forest ecosystem and PA, Department on Forest and Hunting Resources inventory).*” [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. The Terminal Evaluation of the project will expect to visit the field sites to inspect these installations. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. The Inception Workshop took advantage of the fact that it followed directly on from the Global Snow Leopard Conservation Forum (22-23 October 2013) – therefore, many stakeholders were already present in Bishkek for this meeting. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. KAP (Knowledge, Attitude, Practice surveys are usually used in medical practices to assess compliance among medical patients, both for preventative and curative medicine. See, for example, http://www.birds.cornell.edu/citscitoolkit/toolkit/steps/effects/resource-folder/Guideline%20for%20Conducting%20a%20KAP%20Study%20(PDF).pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Although an international advisor would be more expensive, the MTR believes that i) because time is short and efficiency is imperative and ii) the support would be invaluable for the project, SAEPF and protected area system as a whole, an international advisor would be worthwhile. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. For an outstanding example of best practices, see http://www.farmafrica.org/downloads/resources/Key%20Steps%20in%20Establishing%20Participatory%20Forest%20Management.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Examples of poor pasture and rangeland management abound from across the world; pasture management with indigenous people has been tried since the early twentieth century (e.g., see the Kenya Land Commission reports, 1933) and in the majority of cases it has spectacularly failed and often led to catastrophic social, humanitarian and environmental consequences. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. See, for example, <http://www.tesfatours.com> - as a model of how community tourism should be done; for another good – but different – model, see <http://www.nrt-kenya.org/enterprises/> [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. In such a mitigation hierarchy, there is no room for offsetting the impacts of tourism: it simply should not be causing damage such that it cannot be minimized and/or mitigated. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. **Comment on draft MTR report**: “*The establishment of wildlife corridors will require local government and then central government approvals, thus, it is probable that this aspect will not be complete by 30 September 2016*.” **MTR response**: If all that remains is the legal process around the corridors but all the other triggers are hit then the project should indeed continue until the proposed EOP. However, the idea of the triggers and the proposed closing of the project is to instill a sense of urgency to accomplish these things such that by the EOP they are well established and some level of sustainability is implemented. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. For example, For an outstanding example of best practices, see http://www.farmafrica.org/downloads/resources/Key%20Steps%20in%20Establishing%20Participatory%20Forest%20Management.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. For example, <http://www.nrt-kenya.org/enterprises/> and http://www.tesfatours.com [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. **Comment provided by PIU on draft MTR**: “*It is difficult to establish micro-credit schemes in each aiyl okmotu. There was discussion how to use the funding with local decision makers (deputies) aiyl okmotu and rayon level in 2014. Decision makers in both levels expressed that the establishing micro credit schemes is difficult to collect loans back. In one hand in rural areas poverty rate is higher. They expressed this kind of scheme for example for the project fund buy high quality crops seeds after harvesting the communities give back the same amount, other communities will use seeds for another season. On other hand, 150 000 USD not much funding to established micro-credit schemes funding to give salaries for staff and other things to maintain the schemes. There is Bai Tushum bank (*[*http://www.baitushum.kg/en/*](http://www.baitushum.kg/en/)*) in the Ak-Suu, I discussed with local bank manager the establishing micro-credit schemes in this bank, they suggested different options they can give the Project money as a grant to local communities but they will received 10% project funding for their service. They also can add their funding but interest rate very high 33% in local currency and 24% USD in year. For beginners are very risky especially with agriculture crop marketing. And another things is after the project accomplishing the funding is to be left in the bank for its consideration not given back to communities. Local decision makers suggested distribute funding as a micro-capital grant with co-funding from grant receivers but again not much around 10-15%. According to Prodoc there is one local Development Fund in Toguz Bulak village Tup raion, director of this Fund expressed his willing to cooperate with the project, but later I did not discuss more detail about there conditions of cooperation I was waiting the official establishing of the Park*.” **MTR response**: these are indeed challenges of micro-credit schemes, but the to-be-recruited CTA for livelihoods should deal with these things; this should be in his/her TOR. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. See <http://www.smartconservationsoftware.org> [↑](#footnote-ref-38)