



**MID-TERM REVIEW**

**Mongolia’s Network of Managed Resource Protected Areas**

PIMS 4393 GEF Project ID: 4562

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**GEF Focal Area:** Biodiversity **Operational Program:** BD-1

**GEF Implementing Agency:** UNDP

**Project Executing Agency:** Ministry of Environment, Green Development & Tourism

***Evaluation Team:*** Ms. Virginia Ravndal, Team Leader & Biodiversity Specialist

Ms. D. Narantuya, National Consultant

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# ACRONYMS

**ALAGaC** Agency for Land Affairs, Geodesy and Cartography

**BZ** Buffer Zone

**CBO** Community Based Organization

**CBNRM** Community Based Natural Resources Management

**CSO** Civil Society Organization

**GIZ** German International Cooperation Agency

**FAO** Food and Agricultural Organization

**KfW** Kreditanstalt fuer Wiederaufbau

**LC** Local Coordinator

**LPA** Local Protected Area

**MCUD** Ministry of Construction and Urban Development

**MDG** Millennium Development Goal

**MIA** Ministry of Industry and Agriculture

**MEGD** Ministry of Environment and Green Development

**MoF** Ministry of Finance

**MoM** Ministry of Mining

**NIM** National Implementation

**NGO** Non-Governmental Organization

NPA National Protected Area

**NPD** National Project Director

**NPC** National Project Coordinator

**NRM** Natural Resources Management

**PAAD** Protected Area Administration Department

**PB** Project Board

**PIU** Project Implementation Unit

**IWRM** Integrated Water Resources Management

**SDC** Swiss Development Cooperation Agency

**SPA** Special Protected Area

**TNC** The Nature Conservancy

**TOR** Terms of Reference

**UNCT** United Nations Country Team

**UNDAF** United Nations Development Assistance Framework

**UNDP** United Nations Development Programme

**WB** World Bank

**WCS** Wildlife Conservation Society

**WWF** World Wildlife Fund

# 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 1.1 Project Information Table

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Project Title:** Mongolia’s Network of Managed Resource Protected Areas | | | | |
| UNDP Project ID (PIMS #): | 4393 | PIF Approval Date: | | 8/05/2011 |
| GEF Project ID (PMIS #): | 4562 | CEO Endorsement Date: | | 6/06/2013 |
| ATLAS Business Unit, Award # Project ID: | 00086907 | Project Document Signature Date (date project began): | | 8/01/2013 |
| Country: | Mongolia | Date project manager hired: | |  |
| Region: | Asia and the Pacific | Inception Workshop date: | | 10/02/2014 |
| Focal Area: | Biodiversity | Mid-Term Review Completion: | | 9/01/16 |
| GEF Focal Area Strategic Objectives: | BD-1 | Planned Project Closing: | | 8/01/18 |
| Trust Fund [indicate GEF TF, LDCF, SCCF, NPIF]: | GEF TF | If revised, proposed op. closing date: | | n/a |
| Executing Agency/ Implementing partner: | Ministry of Environment, Green Development and Tourism (MEGDT) | | | |
| **Project Financing** | *At CEO endorsement (US$)* | | *At Midterm Review (US$)* | |
| [1] GEF financing: | 1,309,091 | | 777,745 | |
| [2] UNDP contribution: | 1,300,000 | | 1,049,914 | |
| [3] Government: | 500,000 | | 309,000 | |
| [4] Other partners: | KFW 2,000,000  WWF 884,000  GIZ 260,000 | | 911,001 | |
| [5] Total co-financing [2+3+4]: | 4,944,000 | | 2,269,915 | |
| PROJECT TOTAL COSTS [1+5]: | 6,253,091 | | 3,047,660 | |

## 1.2 Brief Project Description

The primary objective of this five year UNDP-supported GEF-financed full-size project is “to catalyze the strategic expansion of Mongolia’s protected area (PA) system through establishment of a network of community conservation areas covering under-represented terrestrial ecosystems”.

The biodiversity project aims to achieve this objective through:

* + - “establishing a new protected area category for strategic PA expansion”, and
    - “emplacing institutional capacity and resource base development to ensure sustainability of managed resource PAs”.

There are five outputs associated with the above two expected outcomes. These are:

1. Comprehensive legal framework for community conservation landscapes adopted and operational.
2. Implementation regulatory guidelines and formal management performance standards generated.
3. Existing community protected areas documented and designated as community conservation landscapes.
4. Three community conservation landscapes expanded and demonstrating best practices under improved legal framework.
5. Lessons learned captured and enhancing effectiveness of community conservation landscapes nationally.

This five year full-size project is executed under the National Implementation Modality (NIM), a new implementation modality for Mongolia when this project began. The Project Implementing Partner is the Protected Area Administration Department (PAAD) of the Ministry of Environment, Green Development and Tourism (MEGDT), the government entity responsible for developing policy and laws on biodiversity conservation, wildlife management and tourism. The PAAD manages Mongolia’s protected areas. Day-to-day management of the project is done by the Project Implementing Unit (PIU) led by the National Project Coordinator (NPC) under the leadership of the National Project Director (NPD) and the eleven members of the Project Board. The main funding for the project comes from the GEF (USD 1,309,091) and UNDP ($200,000 from TRAC funds), with in-kind co-financing from the MEGDT (USD 500,000) and co-financing contributions from KfW (USD 2,000,000), WWF (USD 884,000) and GIZ (USD 260,000) through parallel activities related to the project outputs.

## 1.3 Project Progress Summary

As per the signed project document, the project start date is August 1 2013 and the closing date is August 1, 2018. The first release of funds was made 29 March 2014. The project had a slow start due primarily to the less than smooth transition from NEX to NIM modality, and the heavy workload of the PIU due to serving as the PIU for two projects. The UNDP Country Office (CO) also struggled at the outset of the project with the new NIM modality and, according to the UNDP Programme Officer responsible for the project, given her hefty portfolio, this project suffered from less than ideal support from the UNDP CO. One year and 2 months passed between the signing of the project document and the inception workshop.

After sorting out these issues during the first year and a half or so, the Project is now progressing in a satisfactory way but there are concerns that several targets will not be met by project end as shown in the summary tables of Progress towards Results and Progress towards Objectives below. The reasons for this and the recommendations related to problem areas are explained later in this report. It should be noted that, according to the minutes of the last two PB meetings, the PB has discussed closing the project early as, according the proposal made by PIU, the project will have achieved its targets before the scheduled project end. The MTR does not agree with this assessment.

At the time of the MTR (almost 3 years after project document signature), approximately $983,317 or 65% of the total (in cash) project funds have been allocated. Thus, at the time of this MTR, with two years remaining in the project, approximately 35% of the funds remain to be allocated. Of the total amount allocated for Activity 1 (new PA category), 87% ($222,834) has actually been spent as of end of June, 2016. $540,369 of the monies for Activity 2 (Institutional Capacity) have been spent, and 75% of the monies for Project Management have been spent.

Several of the targets related to indicators at the project outcome level cannot realistically be achieved by project end. The second indicator related to the project objective has caused confusion due to its ambiguity. More detail on this is provided later in this report.

**Table 1: *Progress toward Achieving Project Objectives Summary Table***

| **Objective** | **Indicator** | **Target end of project** | **Achievement rating** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| To catalyse the strategic expansion of Mongolia’s PA system through establishment of a network of community conservation areas covering under-represented terrestrial ecosystems | Hectares within the total PA system, including community conservation areas | 19.2 million ha | On Target |
|  | Hectares of seven under-represented ecosystems within total PA system including community conservation areas | 80 million ha | On Target |

Green shading = Achieved; Yellow = On target; Red = Not on target; Grey = Cannot be assessed

**Table 2. Progress towards Project Outcomes Summary Table**

| **Outcome** | **Indicator** | **Target end of project** | **Achievement rating** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Outcome 1: Establishment of new PA category for strategic PA expansion | Specific NPA legislation amended and/or new regulation adopted to establish and guide effective management of CCAs | 1 national law and/or regulation adopted as described | On Target |
| Number of CCAs legally recognized as part of the NPA system according to the amended national legislation and/or regulation | 50 CCAs legally recognizes as part of the NPA system | On Target |
| Outcome 2: Emplacement of institutional capacity and resource base development to ensure sustainability of managed resource PAs | METT scores for at least three LPAs converted and/or established as CCAs | Each baseline METT score increased to:  Gulzat LPA 50  Khavtgar 40  Toson Khulstai 26 | Achieved |
|  | PAAD has a fully functional, staffed and government-funded CCA resource centre providing ongoing monitoring, support and extension training for local conservation decision makers | 1 functional institutional centre within PAAD to support effective CCA | Not on Target |
|  | Decentralized regional PA governance framework involving community and local government established at 3 demonstration sites | 3 project sites applying enforceable management plan to improve conservation of wide-ranging species and mitigate conservation threats  **Khavtgar LPA:**  An effective conservation model is developed and strengthened  Sustainable financial sources are identified  **Gulzat LPA:**  An effective conservation management model is developed and strengthened  At least 50% of income from hunting is spent on conservation  **Toson Khulstain NR Buffer Zone:**  LPA conservation management model and management plan is developed  Sustainable financial sources are identified | Not on Target |
|  | Policing and enforcement of laws and regulations for biodiversity conservation results in reduction of threats and no net loss of key indicators at three pilot sites | **Gulzat LPA:**  Population of Argali sheep (1,400)  Total # of households involved in community groups (50% of remaining non-involved households would be involved in community groups)  **Khavtgar LPA:**  Population of red deer (*Cervus elephus*) increased by 10-30% and its habitat conserved  Population of roe deer (*Capreolus pygargus*) increased by 10%  Marmot (*Marmota sibirica*) habitat is conserved  Grouse habitat is conserved  **Toson Khulstai NR Buffer Zone:**  Size of area taken under LPA  Approved regulation and decrees to coordinate conservation management  # of protected wetlands/lakes as habitat for key migratory bird species (4) | On Target |

## 1.4 MTR Ratings

Based on the above results and other information presented in the main text of this report, the following ratings have been given to the project.

Table 3. MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Measure** | **MTR Rating** | **Achievement Description** |
| **Project Strategy** | **N/A** | The design of the project was overly ambitious given the budget and time frame. The strategy to support strengthening of the legal framework for LPAs while also strengthening CBOs who would manage LPAs was solid. The strategy to develop an LPA which could serve as a model for others was good but attempting to do this within the project time frame and in three locales was overly ambitious. The strategy may have been more successful if it included closer partnering with other projects focused on pasture/livestock management and/or hunting management. |
| **Progress Towards Results** | Project Objective:  **Achievement Rating: S** | The achievement rating is based on the achievement of project objective level indicators as presented in the PROJECT DOCUMENT. According to the Summary Table of Progress towards Objectives, the project has already achieved both of the targets related to the 2 indicators. Normally an “S” achievement rating for the objective would mean at least as satisfactory rating for the various project outcomes since the objective is reached through the achievement of the outcomes. In this case, however, due to lack of consistency between the outcomes and the objective, a lower rating has been assigned to some of the outcomes. Further information is provided in the text of this report. |
| Outcome 1  **Achievement Rating: S** | Of the targets associated with the 2 indicators for this Outcome, neither have yet been achieved but both are on-target to be achieved by project end. |
| Outcome 2  **Achievement Rating: MU** | Of the targets associated with the 4 indicators for this Outcome, 1 has already been achieved, one is technically on target (but see text), and two are not on target to be achieved by project end. |
| **Project Implementation**  **& Adaptive Management** | **Achievement Rating: MS** | According to results described in Section 4.3, management arrangements are satisfactory but certain changes could be made at the mid-term to improve performance henceforth (i.e., changes to the PB and the TC, a streamlined and more field-oriented PIU). The project sites were well chosen but there are too many of them to allow for the necessary project support for each. The finance and co-finance situations are mostly what was anticipated in the project document although less than what is truly required to achieve LPA “models” or “centres of excellence” as suggested in the project document. Communications and knowledge management are satisfactory. Strengths are seen in the project’s efforts regarding CBO communications and knowledge management, whereas weaknesses are seen in some areas in terms of learning from the experiences of others. Stakeholder engagement is good. More realistic self-assessment and adaptive management measures can be strengthened. |
| **Sustainability** | **Rating: MU** | Support provided by the project regarding legislative framework strengthening is sustainable and has served as a good foundation which is likely to be even further built upon. The management effectiveness of the 3 LPAs is still weak. Although the METT figures suggest improvements, there is still much improvement required before these 3 areas can successfully conserve the biodiversity found within. The management capacity of these areas is still too weak to ensure sustainable management. The efforts of the project to enhance awareness regarding regulations pertaining to re-investment of revenues into conservation have contributed to the financial sustainability of these areas but not sufficiently so as to ensure their financial viability. The financial sustainability of the 3 target LPAs is in question and, in the opinion of the MTR, is unlikely to be achieved by project end. The sustainability of the project paying (either partially or fully) for seven staff who are critical to the sustainability of the 3 target LPAs has not been adequately planned for and is in serious doubt. |

Ratings for Project Implementation and Adaptive Management (6 point scale): HS= Highly Satisfactory, S= Satisfactory, MS=Moderately Satisfactory, MU= Moderately Unsatisfactory, U=Unsatisfactory, HU=Highly Unsatisfactory

Sustainability Ratings (4 point scale):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Likely (L) | Negligible risks to sustainability, with key outcomes on track to be achieved by the project’s closure and expected to continue into the foreseeable future |
| Moderately Likely (ML) | Moderate risks, but expectations that at least some outcomes will be sustained due to the progress towards results on outcomes at the Midterm Review |
| Moderately Unlikely (MU) | Significant risk that key outcomes will not carry on after project closure, although some outputs and activities should carry on |
| Unlikely (U) | Severe risks that project outcomes as well as key outputs will not be sustained |

## 1.5 Conclusions

The project has been successful with strengthening the legislative framework regarding protected areas. It appears likely that the new government (which was elected during the MTR) will approve the proposed amended legislation this year. This will significantly help Mongolia to achieve its objective of designating 30% of its land as “protected area”. At present, 17.4% of Mongolia is classified as SPA. Once the new law is approved, another 10% (16.2 million ha by June 2016) of the country which is designated as Local Protected Area (LPA) and Community Managed Area will be included in the SPA, amounting to 27.4% of the country. Many of the 1,197 LPAs[[1]](#footnote-1) are in steppe ecosystems (High Mountain Steppe, Meadow Steppe, Moderate Dry Steppe, Dry Steppe, and Desert Steppe). Thus, inclusion of these LPAs into the SPA network will dramatically increase the representation of these currently under-represented ecosystems within the PA system.

Although the newly added area will be protected against one of the main threats to biodiversity in Mongolia, i.e., mining[[2]](#footnote-2), the newly designated “State Protected Areas” may contribute little to conserving biodiversity of global significance unless certain issues at the core of the present project are sorted out. 40 % of Mongolia’s 100 SPAs are paper parks, i.e., unmanaged areas. Only 330 rangers currently work to patrol and protect this vast area of 27 million ha. This means on average one ranger is responsible for patrolling and monitoring 81,818 ha. Many have no transportation or other equipment. Because, unlike many of the other SPAs, the LPAs are inhabited by people who depend directly on the natural resources in these areas for their existence, the effectiveness of these areas in terms of conserving biodiversity will depend to a large extent on whether local people benefit from conservation and whether financial sustainability of these areas can be achieved – two of the issues this project focuses on. The project has a long way to go in this regard. Thus far, the project has not been successful in transforming the 3 target LPAs into “models” or “centres of excellence” as was anticipated in the project document. The project helped to set up new, or in some cases strengthen existing, LPA management structures in the 3 target LPAs. It helped develop long-term strategies, management plans, and business plans for these areas. It has helped to establish new CBOs within the LPAs. This will enhance the buy-in of local people into conserving these areas. More needs to be done, however, to ensure: a) effective management of the LPAs for biodiversity conservation, b) that local people will benefit enough to make it in their interest to conserve biodiversity, c) financial sustainability that allows for implementation of LPA management plans and the cost of administering them. Financial sustainability is a key concern which is still in question at the mid-term of the project. The project’s efforts in ensuring compliance with revenue re-investment into conservation has definitely contributed not only to the prospects for financial sustainability for the 3 target LPAs, but to all LPAs across the country. Since the project’s awareness raising effort began in 2014 jointly with the MEGDT to make local government entities aware of regulations and orders requiring re-investment of revenues earned from natural resource use back into the conservation of these resources, the rate of compliance has risen from rate of compliance has risen from 41% in 2014 to 48% in 2015.[[3]](#footnote-3) Notwithstanding this positive development, there are serious concerns regarding the financial sustainability of all LPAs. If the project is unable to demonstrate the financial viability of the 3 target LPAs, this does not bode well for the others, most of whom do not receive the amount of support which these three have received. No co-financing was sought from the private sector during project design although at the time of the project development, the private sector was thriving. Support from banks and other private companies should have been pursued during project design stage. It is not too late to secure co-funding and other types of support from the private sector. Even though at present the economy is not strong, with the new government, the economy is expected to begin growing again. Seeking co-funding and other forms of involvement and support from the private sector should be a major part of the exit strategy of this project. It is not advisable to wait until close to project end to begin to implement an exit strategy. This should begin immediately. Promising has been the project’s successful effort to develop tools that will facilitate enhanced oversight by State Government of LPAs and of the local communities who are involved in the management of LPAs through the establishment and vetting of databases on LPAs and CBOs. The next challenge will be for the government to sort out institutional arrangements related to the oversight of the new areas that will now be included in the SPA network. Inclusion of these areas will double the size of the area managed by the PAAD overnight once the new law is approved. The project design calls for the establishment of a resource centre for LPAs within PAAD. To date, the project is the sole financier of the one person in PAAD dedicated to LPAs. The project benefits from a capable PIU but the frequent changes in PIU staff (in particular the M&E and AF Officers) have not been helpful. The capacity of the PIU was over stressed during the first half of this project as a result of the PB’s decision to have one PIU manage two projects (i.e., this project and the ongoing State Protected Area Network or SPAN project). The PB has provided regular guidance to the project but the composition of the PB could be modified to be more in line with best practices demonstrated by GEF projects around the world. The MTR questions the wisdom of some decisions/recommendations of the PB, including the one to close the project early. According to the minutes of the last two PB meetings, the PB’s own assessment was that the project would have achieved all of its outcomes and objective before the normal project end. The conclusions arrived at by the MTR differ from that assessment. The UNDP CO has made two visits to project sites but has not provided as much support to the project as they might have if the Programme Officer’s workload had not been as heavy. The UNDP CO should have provided more guidance in terms of the need to sort out areas of confusion/ambiguity in the project Results Framework during the inception workshop. Greater familiarity on the part of the UNDP CO with the NIM modality at project outset would have saved the project time. Lack of sorting out the ambiguities in the Results Framework at an earlier stage has caused inefficiencies and continued confusion. As of the time of the MTR, the UNDP Programme Officer responsible for the oversight of the project and the PIU still do not have a common understanding regarding one of the project objective indicators related to the issue of connectivity. Together with the Mongolian Academy of Sciences and the MEGDT, the project organized two workshops involving representatives from academia, professional organizations, local stakeholders from the target sites and the neighboring Aimag which includes two SPAs with important Argali sheep populations. The purpose of the workshops was to support improvement of the legal framework in regard to connectivity at the landscape level and to develop some practical ways of pursuing connectivity. Following the second workshop, participants were tasked with identifying gaps in connectivity, boundaries of connectivity areas, and proposing local structures to manage the connectivity areas. Ensuring the three target LPAs contribute effectively to biodiversity conservation requires that a landscape approach be adopted in these three areas especially because connectivity and collaboration between these areas and nearby (sometimes contiguous) SPAs is critical to successful biodiversity conservation efforts in these areas. The initiative to connect these areas and to include key landscape features within the PA is indeed already underway in Gulzat LPA. As long as connectivity issues pursued by the project are limited specifically to the three LPAs and the landscapes of which they form a part, the MTR is fully supportive of this effort.

Main Project Successes

* The policy of the GOM is to move away from central government to local level management decision making. This project has helped Mongolia with that effort as it relates to local level management of natural resources.
* The project has made important contributions to the strengthening of the legal framework for LPAs. Once approved, this will result in immediate protection of these areas against mining (one of the three biggest threats to biodiversity in Mongolia) and will, in the medium and longer-term, result in more effective conservation of biodiversity of these areas.
* The project has supported the GOM to achieve its target to include 30% of its area within its PA system as, once approved, the new law on PA will include LPAs and Community Managed Areas, thereby increasing the area of Mongolia within the State Protected Area system to 28.3%.
* The project’s efforts have resulted in significant enlargement (an increase of approximately70% for both Gulzat and Tumenkhaan-Shalz) of the area of two of the 3 target LPAs which the project has focused on establishing and strengthening as models for other LPAs. This enlargement contributes significantly to enhancing the conservation potential of these areas.
* Management structures have been developed and are functioning (to varying degrees) for each of the 3 LPAs.
* Management plans, business plans, and co-management agreements have been developed for each of the 3 LPAs.
* The project has helped to reinforce the importance of considering connectivity in conservation planning, bringing this concept to the attention of a broad audience in Mongolia.
* This project has helped to forge joint conservation efforts between SPAs and LPAs, something that had not previously been practiced in Mongolia. As many of both the LPAs and the SPAs are in and of themselves too small to secure biodiversity conservation over the long-term, this is a critically important contribution to the conservation of Mongolia’s biodiversity.
* Both local level (within the CBOs, communities, soums and aimags) and national level awareness has been raised about both the existence and importance of LPAs.
* Both local level (within the CBOs, communities, soums and aimags) and national level awareness has been raised about the existence and importance of CBOs.
* The project is responsible for the establishment of a nationwide database on CBOs which currently includes information on 1,629 CBOs.
* A nation-wide up-to-date online database of LPAs which is accessible to the public and to government entities has been established and is now operational. Although at first glance this may not appear to have direct conservation benefits, in fact it does. The database will result in reducing threats to LPAs because information from this database will be shared with the Mining Cadastral Authority to be input into their database. Once inputted into the Mining Cadastral Authority’s database, an LPA is safe from mining (i.e., no mining concessions can be granted).
* A number (15) of new CBOs have been formed in the 3 target LPAs thereby including more households into the management of the LPAs and ensuring they may also benefit from the new protected area status of the area.
* Community revolving funds have been established which are managed by the CBOs for purposes of community development. The Project has successfully mobilized both local herders (30%) and local government (10%[[4]](#footnote-4)) to contribute to the Livestock Risk Fund in one soum of Tumenkhaan-Shalz LPA. Enforced establishment of CBO Revolving Fund, enhancing the sustainability of this fund and thereby also enhancing the ability of the CBOs to participate in the SGP (since a co-financing contribution from the CBO is required to access the SGP). CBO members access small loans from this fund for purposes such as school fees, health or other needs. The formation of groups with funding sources managed by themselves is clearly appreciated by the groups. Loans are repaid with a low interest rate. These revolving funds are operating well (with excellent repayment rates) and are expected to achieve financial sustainability once the soum government begins to pay its co-funding contribution into the fund.
* The community revolving funds contribute at least 30% co-funding for approved small grants projects (described below) and thereby have the potential to contribute to biodiversity conservation especially once small grants projects are more directly linked to biodiversity conservation (one of the recommendations of this MTR). Once this linkage is strengthened, the community funds will be contributing to both community development as well as biodiversity conservation.
* A small grants programme established by the project is operating efficiently and has already provided small grants (of up to $5,000) to 27 CBOs in the 3 LPAs. Although a clear success of this project, the MTR recommends that more direct linkages between community development and biodiversity conservation should be built into the design of the popular SGP hereafter.
* The project worked effectively in Uvs aimag continuing WWF’s efforts to ensure herders benefit as much as possible from the revenue earned from argali hunting as it was noticed that the soum budget was going to salaries and infrastructure development in the soum centre and not benefitting herders as much as it might. 50% of the revenue earned from hunting which previously went to the Soum government now goes directly to the NGO managing the LPA (the Gulzat initiative), who decides on how the funds will be used.
* The project has contributed to enhanced awareness by local people in the three LPAs of the importance of conserving biodiversity and has helped promote a positive attitude towards nature conservation.
* The project has been successful in identifying some bottlenecks which may not have been identified in the project document and has been successful in addressing these (e.g., providing aimag financing units with correct information regarding what the soum environment funds can be used for, gathering data on compliance of Aimag governments with the Standing Committee’s regulation on disbursement of income from use of natural resources). Although this may appear to be a minor detail, in fact it has important implications for biodiversity conservation which are described later in this report.
* The project has resulted in increased transparency regarding revenues earned from natural resource use and how these revenues are being spent. Decision makers are now much more aware of requirements related to percentage of revenues that must be re-invested in conservation as a result of the project’s efforts and there has been a steady increase in compliance in this regard since the project began its awareness raising effort on this issue.

Areas that Could Benefit from Greater Attention

Greater focus on learning lessons from other relevant projects/experiences and incorporating these into project activities. For example, the World Bank livestock project supported establishment of Livestock Risk Revolving Funds in several Aimags. The project’s Technical Committee (TC) might have usefully been tasked to find out the results of these initiatives related to both livestock and biodiversity, i.e., were livestock numbers actually reduced as a result of the existence of these funds, if so by how much (enough to make a difference for wildlife, for water sources, etc.). What environment benefits were accrued if any? Did they monitor the impact of the funds on biodiversity? The MTR asked some of these questions and as a result we do have some recommendations but the point is that *the project* should routinely do this kind of investigation and outreach. The National Consultant on Financial Sustainability is looking into the Livestock Risk Revolving Fund as part of her TOR but this is a bit late as the decision was already taken to go forward with the establishment of the fund and, indeed, the fund was just recently established. The inputs of the National Consultant on the fund will of course still be relevant but the timing is not the best.

Ensure the project is fully aware of, and utilizing, experiences and products produced by other relevant initiatives. For example, the GIZ project in Khavtgar produced an ecotourism plan. Ecotourism is one of the activities in the Khavtgar management plan which was developed with the support of this project. It is also one of the potential sources contributing to the financial sustainability of the LPA that has been identified by this project. It would be helpful to reach out to GIZ, get a copy of that plan and see if this project could support its implementation.

Ensure the project is fully aware of, and understands, the application of all relevant policies/laws/regulations. Although the PIU has a policy officer, the MTR believes that somewhat of a tunnel vision approach focused almost exclusively on the laws which the project is directly working on has been adopted. It is important for the PIU to be fully informed of not just the laws it is working on directly, but all relevant laws, policies and programmes including the Law on Fauna and all of its provisions related to hunting of wildlife species. As hunting is a strong incentive for communities, this law (not just the Law on Hunting) is very relevant. It is important also to be fully familiar with the Law on Pasture. Likewise, familiarity with the recent revisions to the Mining law related to biodiversity offsets is important as this may represent a source of financing for LPAs. The point is the project cannot just focus on the laws it is directly working on, it needs to be fully informed of all relevant laws and their provisions in order to best help communities in the development and implementation of their LPA management plans.

Ensure the project is familiar with initiatives which could have great relevance to this project including, for example, wildlife conservation contracts, and community managed Hunting Management Areas. It would be useful for the project to become much more familiar with these initiatives. Consideration should be given to conducting study tours to areas where these initiatives are underway.

Overall, a more dynamic outreach to learn from other relevant initiatives and to keep abreast of all relevant legislation and policies would be helpful.

## 1.6 Recommendations

Recommendations presented here are meant to be helpful and practical in what is a forward-looking review at the mid-term of this project, i.e., at a juncture where there is still opportunity for adaptive management. The ultimate decision regarding which recommendations to take up, and how to implement them, lies with the PB.

Further detail regarding some of these recommendations can be found in the last section of this report along with some minor (but still important) recommendations.

1. The PB has proposed that the project be closed early as in their opinion all targets will be achieved before the planned project closure date. The MTR believes there is still plenty of work to be done in relation to building capacity of LPA management entities, supporting the implementation of management/business plans of the three LPAs, figuring out and putting into place sustainable financing mechanisms for the three LPAs, pursuing collaboration with the private sector, and supporting the identification, production and marketing of products by CBOs. The MTR recommends that the project continue on to its original closing date and not be closed early.
2. Reduce the size of the PIU soon after the MTR. Consider eliminating the policy advisor and secretary positions. The new M&E and Community Development Officer should spend a good proportion of his time in the 3 LPAs.
3. Modify the composition of the PB to be more in line with best practices related to UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects which suggest that a wider range of stakeholders represented on Project Boards including NGOs and technical experts in relevant fields who may not be working with government, is helpful to project success. A more detailed recommendation regarding the proposed modification of the PB is included in the last section of this report.
4. Greater inclusion of scientific conservation-focused NGOs in project activities and oversight to ensure scientifically sound conservation measures and scientifically rigorous monitoring methods are adopted by the project.
5. Modify the composition of the Technical Committee to include more people with on-the-ground practical experience with relevant initiatives in Mongolia such as, for example, those with experience with species reintroduction efforts, community managed hunting areas, ecotourism, wildlife and habitat monitoring, wildlife conservation contracts, livestock risk revolving funds, pasture offset initiatives.
6. Actively pursue collaboration with the private sector as part of a project exit strategy immediately following the MTR. There are companies, banks and others that should be approached even now as the economy is expected to begin growing again. There is a “window of opportunity” that is open as long as the project is operating. It is important to take advantage of this “window”. Once the project ends, getting private companies involved will be much more difficult. It is clear that the project will not be able to accomplish all it set out regarding the 3 target LPAs. It can help to ensure success by bringing on new partners that can continue to support the work in the 3 LPAs after the project ends.
7. Greater emphasis should be placed on implementing the parts of the management/business plans of the target LPAs that result in community benefit, and this community benefit must be more strongly linked with biodiversity conservation. There has been disproportionate emphasis to date on wildlife monitoring. Although this is essential (and must be done in a way which returns scientifically valid results), it is essential that communities realize benefits from conservation immediately or they will lose interest. Communities need incentives related to use of natural resources if they are to conserve them. Some more detailed recommendations on this are presented in the last section of this report.
8. The MTR concurs with the recommendation of the Department of Monitoring and Internal Audit of the GOM in the need to strengthen monitoring of implementation of the management plans for the three LPAs.
9. Several MTR recommendations relate to monitoring of natural resources: (a) Monitor habitat not just species, (b) Be clear about why you are monitoring and what you are monitoring (e.g., Are you doing a species survey to determine what species exist in an area or are you doing an index of population trend in a given species, or are you doing an actual population census of a given species? Are you monitoring the health of a habitat of a certain species or of the ecosystem? Are you monitoring the impact of a re-introduction effort? Are you monitoring the impact of a pasture or livestock management activity?) (c) Ensure monitoring techniques are scientifically valid and that a standard methodology is being used by all, (d) Monitor populations in the entire area they use (not just part of the area). For example, don’t just monitor wildlife in Havtgar but rather in both Havtgar and the contiguous Khan Khentii SPA, and also in the buffer zone of Havtgar where the communities live[[5]](#footnote-5), (e) Ensure all necessary inputs are provided to rangers to enable them to conduct regular wildlife and habitat monitoring (at present there is no budget for petrol so monitoring is not done on a regular basis).
10. Although production and marketing of berry preserves, honey and other such traditional income generating activities can certainly be pursued by this project, the project should not restrict itself to these traditional products but should also focus on supporting CBOs to identify, design and produce innovative, eco-friendly products with even greater value-added (e.g., sea buckthorn-based cosmetics, educational toy sets for children which could be sold in stores in UB and also marketed to donors supporting programs in Mongolia related to pasture management and community development, etc.). The project should help make connections between private companies producing similar products and CBOs. Private companies may wish to have direct connections with CBOs to enhance marketing of their products (they can say they are helping local communities and also helping the environment), while CBOs will benefit from a much bigger market for the products they produce and a higher and more standard quality of product. Link CBOs with companies for development and marketing of products. Sometimes links with small companies can make a big difference.
11. Several MTR recommendations relate to financial sustainability: (a) Financial sustainability is key to successful management of LPAs. The two identified sources of sustainable financing for Gulzat, i.e., Argali trophy hunting and ecotourism, are promising, but ecotourism at least requires investment beyond the possibility of this project (both in terms of funds and time) to achieve sustainability. For Gulzat, our recommendations are that: the project sort out the issue of the basis on which the number of hunting permits is issued as this is key to financial sustainability and to providing the necessary incentives for local communities to want to protect Argali and its habitat. To ensure that the financial sustainable mechanism is directly linked to biodiversity conservation, the project may wish to recommend that the number of argali permits be linked not only to what the census shows is a sustainable harvest level of argali but also to habitat health and wildlife species diversity in the range of the argali. In the case of Khavtgar, hunting would seem to be a potential future source of sustainable income but given the low populations of some of the key huntable species, this is not realistic during this project. Our recommendation is to review the existing ecotourism plan prepared by the GTZ project and assess the possibility of implementing aspects of that plan and also to pursue the development of high value added products together with the private sector. Regarding, T-K, the MTR recommends the project carefully study past and ongoing examples of where the Livestock Risk Revolving Fund has existed/exists to determine both its likelihood of generating enough income to pay for the costs of the LPA management and its impact (positive/negative/neutral) on biodiversity conservation. (b) Adopt an incremental buy-in approach related to seven positions currently paid for (either partially or fully) by the project. Discuss with both Aimag and Soum governments the possibility that they pay an incrementally increasing percent of the salaries of staff whose salaries are currently paid for by the project from now until project end. A differential incremental increase may be applied for these various positions depending on the capacity of the governments to pay.
12. Several MTR recommendations relate to study tours. Study tours can be very helpful, or, they can be a waste of precious resources. To ensure these are helpful, we recommend: (a) be clear on the objective of a study tour and whether a study tour is the best and most cost/effective way to achieve your objective, (b) be clear on who is the best target audience to undertake the study tour, (c) before undertaking study tours participants should provide a detailed description of what they intend to study during the tour and how they intend to apply this learning, (d) study tour participants should provide a written report and make a presentation (to an audience that both they and the project should agree on in advance) describing what they actually learned and how they plan to apply the learning (this is not a general idea but a detailed plan).
13. Establish connectivity between the 3 LPA areas and the nearby (in some cases, contiguous) SPAs and ensure that key landscape features are included within the protected landscape. Although the project should certainly share information and lessons learned regarding the adoption of this greater landscape approach with other LPAs, it is not the business of this project to ensure connectivity across the country. The project may wish to consider bringing stakeholders together in landscape level for (3 of them) to discuss practical ways to enhance collaboration and sharing of information important for conservation. Consider establishing a mechanism to facilitate information sharing between all landscape level stakeholders (if this is to be pursued it should be a very simple practical mechanism).
14. Ensure greater and more direct linkages between the Small Grants programme and the conservation of biodiversity of global significance.
15. A huge area will be included in the SPA system as a result of new legislation classifying LPAs and CMAs as part of the SPA, and in part as a result of the GOMs efforts to add more area to the SPA to achieve its goal to include 30% of its land area within its SPA system. Last year alone 1 million ha were brought under State Protection. The Cabinet has discussed the issue of how to finance the enlarged and continually growing PA network. The institutional capacity related to overseeing matters pertaining to these newly added SPAs is important to their sustainability. The project has supported the establishment of a new resource center for LPAs within the PAAD. According to the NPD, the GOM does not intend to establish a new agency for LPAs. There are already 33 Protected Area Administrations around the country (part of the PAAD), 24 River Basin Authorities, 1 Cultural Heritage Site Administration, with a total of over 900 people working in these three agencies. According to the NPD, there are overlapping functions and mandates within the three agencies. In the opinion of the MTR, instead of strictly adhering to the indicator which stipulates that “PAAD has a fully functional, staffed and government-funded CCA resource centre providing ongoing monitoring, support and extension training for local conservation decision makers”, the project should now work closely with Government to decide how best to proceed to achieve the objective of providing ongoing monitoring, support and extension training for those involved with LPAs whether that be a resource centre in PAAD or a different institutional mechanism.

# 2.0 INTRODUCTION

## 2.1 Purpose of the MTR

The purpose of this MTR is: 1) To assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document, 2) To assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying the necessary changes to be made in order to set the project on-track to achieve its intended results, and, 3) To review the project’s strategy and its risks to sustainability.

## 2.2 Scope & Methodology

#### Scope

The MTR assessed key areas related to project strategy, the project design, the project results framework, the progress towards objectives and outcomes, the project implementation and adaptive management, management arrangements, work planning, financial management and co-financing, project-level monitoring and evaluation, stakeholder engagement, collaboration with the private sector, pursuit of gender equality, reporting, communications and knowledge management, and sustainability.

#### Methodology

The MTR team (MTRT) was comprised of two independent consultants, one national consultant (an environmental specialist) and one international consultant (a biodiversity specialist with extensive experience evaluating GEF projects). The International Consultant acted as Team Leader. The International Consultant spent 15 work days in Mongolia, visiting two of the three project sites during this time together with the NC and the NPC.

The MTR was conducted in accordance with the “UNDP Guidance for Conducting Mid-Term Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-financed Projects (2014)”, and the “*GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy*”, and in line with GEF principles including independence, impartiality, transparency, and participation. All MTR Team (MTRT) members signed the Consultant Code of Conduct. The scanned copy is included as ***Annex 8***. MTRs seek to provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. In this regard, the MTRT followed a participatory and consultative approach, and used a variety of evaluation instruments including:

* ***Evaluation Matrix***: An evaluation matrix was developed based on the set of questions covering the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact which were included in the TOR for the MTR. The matrix (presented in ***Annex 2***) served as a general guide for interviews conducted.
* ***Documentation Review***: The MTRT reviewed documents including the project document, the Project Information Framework (PIF), the Inception Workshop report, the original and revised project results framework, Annual Progress Reports, project budget and revisions, project files, Project Board meeting minutes, policy and national strategy documents, proposed amendments to legislation, management and business plans for the three LPAs, co-management agreements for the three LPAs, reports of consultants and national experts contracted by the project, and other relevant documents. A complete list of documentation reviewed by the MTRT is included as **Annex 7**.
* ***Interviews***: In-person interviews were conducted with more than 109 stakeholders including with the UNDP Country Office, central government entities including the MEGDT (PAAD), provincial (Aimag) government entities including Aimag Governors, Aimag Environment Units, Aimag Forest Department, Aimag rangers, and with local (Soum) government entities including Soum Governors, Soum rangers, and Soum Environment Inspectors. The MTRT also met with a variety of NGOs including WWF, TNC, the Gulzat Initiative, the National Association of CBOs, and with academic and research institutions including various branches of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, and with representatives of development partners including GIZ. The MTRT visited with 10 CBOs comprised of herder groups and forest groups from all three LPAs. These meetings took place in the LPAs (in herder’s girs, in the field, in government and other offices). The number of participants involved in meetings varied but averaged around 15 for meetings with CBOs. Interviews with focus groups comprised of both paid and volunteer rangers from different soums were held with rangers from all 3 LPAs. A complete list of stakeholders met is in **Annex 6**.
* ***Presentation of Preliminary MTR Findings***: The UNDP CO requested a separate meeting with the MTR team to present its preliminary findings. This was initially the only presentation of preliminary MTR findings that the UNDP CO intended to offer. Upon the request of the MTR Team Leader, the UNDP CO agreed with the IC’s suggestion that the normal practice of inviting all key stakeholders to the presentation of preliminary findings should be followed and the NPC was asked by the UNDP CO to organize this. Despite being the last day before the Nadaam festival (the biggest annual festival in Mongolia), and despite having received only 2 days advance notice, the presentation was well attended including the GEF Focal Point, a representative of the International Relations Department MEGDT, a representative of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Internal Audit Department, the Director of the Khan Khentii SPA, the Director of the National Association of CBOs, most members of the PIU and several consultants who had worked on aspects of the project. The UNDP CO was not represented at this meeting. Prior to this meeting, upon the request of the UNDP CO, a separate meeting with the UNDP CO DRR and the PO took place in which the MTRT shared its preliminary findings.
* ***Project Visits***: Because of the time constraints of the evaluation, and the distances to be covered, the MTRT was not able to visit all three LPAs. Visits were, however, made to two of the three (Gulzat and TK). These LPAs are in diverse ecosystems ranging from forest to Daurian and Manchurian steppe. The project sites visited were chosen by the MTRT in close consultation with the UNDP CO and the NPC.

* ***MTR Mission Itinerary:*** The MTR mission itinerary is presented in **Annex 4**.
* ***Ratings:*** In accordance with GEF guidelines for project evaluations, achievement ratings as well as sustainability and relevance ratings were assigned by the MTRT. The MTRT rated various aspects of the project according to the GEF project review criteria using the obligatory GEF ratings of: Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Moderately Satisfactory (MS), Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), and Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). A full description of these ratings and other GEF rating scales is provided in Annex 3. The MTRT also rated various dimensions of sustainability of project outcomes using the GEF obligatory rating scale of: Likely (L), Moderately Likely (ML), Moderately Unlikely (MU), and, Unlikely (U).

## 2.3 Structure of the evaluation report

The report is structured according to the guidelines provided in the “Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported GEF- Financed Projects” (July, 2014) with a few minor deviations described below.

Instead of presenting conclusions and recommendations in two places in this document, to save space, the conclusions and recommendations are only presented in the Executive Summary and not in Section 5. Section 5 is devoted exclusively to presenting detailed recommendations that expand on recommendations presented in the Executive Summary and on presenting minor recommendations.

# 3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND CONTEXT

## 3.1 Development context

This section is taken from the project document and describes the development context in which the project was formulated. “Mongolia is increasingly becoming the last refuge for many endangered species in the Central and Eastern Asian region. Populations of species once common in the region, such as the Wild Ass, Bactrian Camel, Snow Leopard and Saiga Antelope, have declined rapidly over the past 20 years as a result of habitat loss, uncontrolled hunting and other factors. Mongolia remains a major storehouse of this biodiversity. This is reflected by the large number of officially designated globally important biodiversity areas, including two WWF Global 200 Ecoregions (Altai Sayan and Daurian Steppe) and 70 Important Bird Areas (IBAs). The faunal inventory includes significant global populations of critically endangered species such as the Mongolian Saiga antelope (*Saiga borealis*) (100% of global population), the Bactrian camel (*Camelus bactrianus*) (approximately 37%), and the re-introduced Przewalski's horse (*Equus ferus przewalskii*) (95%); as well as some globally endangered species like the snow leopard ([*Uncia uncia*](http://www.iucnredlist.org/search/details.php/22732/summ)) (approximately 12%) and the White Naped Crane (*Grus vipio*) (+-50%).

The country’s valuable biodiversity faces rapidly growing pressures and the country has experienced severe biodiversity loss in the past 20 years, though this has not resulted in large scale extinctions as has been the case in neighbouring countries. After the fall of Communism in 1990, in the transition from a centrally planned economy to a market oriented governing model, economic sectors like mining and livestock expanded drastically and have caused severe stress on the country’s natural resources. The turbulent time of economic transition characterised by social unrest and confusion, weakened the government’s enforcement mechanisms and government control over illegal activities. New large scale infrastructure projects to create roads, railways and mining sites, have fragmented previously extensive habitat areas. Privatisation of livestock increased livestock numbers to some 33 million[[6]](#footnote-6), which is around 8 million above the environment’s carrying capacity, placing severe pressure on water and pasture resources, as well as on biodiversity.

A number of progressive measures were taken to protect Mongolia’s environment and biodiversity. Many international conventions were signed and ratified, and over 30 environmental laws passed. In 1994 the Law on Special Protected Areas was promulgated. It provides for four categories of PAs which are to be managed for conservation of biodiversity and other values: Strictly Protected Areas; National Parks; Nature Reserves; and National Monuments. To date, 73 PAs have been established. Although the national PA system covers an area of 26.2 million ha or 17% of the land surface, they are not fully representatives of all the ecosystems occurring in the country. The national PAs are mainly managed by the Protected Area Administration (PAA) Department under MNET, through its 24 regional PAA offices, the exception being 13 nature reserves and national monuments that are managed by local governments.

In addition to the National PA system, there is also a Local PA system. Article 28 of the Law on Special Protected Areas empowers Citizens’ Representative at *Aimag* and *Soum* levels to designate Local PAs and their management arrangements. To date, approximately 1,000 Local PAs have been established, covering over 10% of the national territory. Local PAs range in size from less than 1 ha to nearly 1 million ha. Only around 40 Local PAs are greater than 100,000 ha in area but these account for over half of the total area of the Local PA system. Such Local PAs may have been established for reasons other than their biological diversity, such as preventing mining operations from occurring in the area. These areas have few management activities, and few, if any, receive the financial or human resources necessary to achieve conservation objectives. They are also largely inhabited areas. Although some local PAs cover critically under-represented ecosystems and habitats, these Local PAs are not officially considered as a part of the National PA system. Opportunities exist to operationalise these PAs, through up scaling them as a new type of PA, which is co-managed by local authorities, communities and other stakeholders such as the private sector, with the explicit dual objectives of biodiversity conservation and livelihood enhancement.

The Government recognises that CBNRM is essential for sustainable use of limited resources in the post communism era in a large and sparsely populated country like Mongolia, and there have been growing efforts in promoting community based natural resource management (CBNRM). The Forestry Law (2007) and Environment Protection law (1995) provide for the possibility of establishing community managed areas, in order to ensure sustainable management of natural resources. Over 600 such community managed areas were established, covering in excess of 2.5 million ha (1.6% of the territory), with a formalised community management structure and agreements with local authorities. However, the legal framework lacks biodiversity conservation considerations and only grants limited and ambiguous user rights to the communities, such as collection of fruits, dead trees and fallen branches. There is no provision for sharing benefits from natural resources, such as pasture, water, as well as from hunting and mining activities in the community areas. As with the local PAs, there is an unmet potential for the CBNRM to work more effectively for both community livelihoods and biodiversity conservation.

As much as 80% of Mongolia’s landscape is grazed and Mongolia’s biodiversity faces multiple threats. The most important factors affecting biodiversity decline are: (1) overexploitation of natural resources - through overgrazing, illegal hunting, poaching and illegal logging. Uncontrolled sports hunting has decimated populations of several species once very common, like the Siberian marmot, red deer, argali and Saiga antelope, and the existence of wild reindeer is no longer certain in Mongolia. Overgrazing is the main cause for land degradation and around 70% of Mongolia's land is considered degraded, which in turn leads to increasing grazing pressure in PAs and other biodiversity hotspots, and a general decrease of food and water supply for wildlife, as well as decreased plant diversity; (2) habitat loss and fragmentation – Land degradation causes grazing areas to expand into core wildlife habitats. The country is planning an extensive network of paved roads and railways to connect major mining sites to export markets, in particular in the Eastern Steppe. Recent construction of hydropower dams has reduced water levels and acts as a barrier for migrating fish. Urban expansion takes place even in Strictly Protected Areas (especially south of Ulaanbaatar); (3) pollution from large and small scale mining, industries and major settlements, impacts water quality and spills of toxic materials are an increasingly common phenomenon; and (4) climate change – Climate models for Mongolia predict glaciers to melt, deserts to expand and increases in the frequency of *Dzud* disasters. The country’s high poverty prevalence is an important underlying cause for many of these threats. Limited alternative income opportunities and benefit sharing are all major challenges to changing resource use patterns to less harmful ways.”

The project’s efforts regarding establishing model LPAs focusses on three LPAs, Gulzat LPA, an area that was 126,772 ha at the beginning of this project and is located in the North of Uvs Aimag. Gulzat is comprised of high mountain steppe and mixed forest and is home to Argali, ibex, snow leopard, black tailed gazelle and many other species. Khavtgar LPA in north Khentii Aimag is a mixed landscape consisting of steppes, forests and mountains. It is the habitat area of musk deer, moose, and red deer. The third LPA is Toson Khulstai Nature Reserve Buffer Zone, an area which was 218,701 when the project began, located in Khentii and Dornod Aimags. This area is the main breeding and migration area for white tail gazelle and also consists of important wetlands and lakes used by numerous endangered bird species.

## 3.2 Problems that the project sought to address: threats and barriers targeted

#### Threats

According to the project document, the three main threats to biodiversity are overexploitation, habitat loss, and climate change. Regarding the first threat, the project document offers the following explanation, “Mongolia’s biodiversity endured a massive overharvest of wildlife and forests that commenced in the early 1990s. Between 1990 and 2005, Mongolia lost 10.8% of its forest cover. During his initial transition from communism to a free-market economy, commercial hunters combined with local poachers to decimate much of Mongolia’s wildlife. … Some studies estimate that between 1992 and 2005 the populations of key species such as Saiga, Siberian marmot, Red deer, Mongolian gazelle, Saker falcon, and wolves declined by 50-90%. …In recent years, market harvest is presumed to have slowed. The Government has suspended hunting of many species and adopted a much more aggressive regulatory framework. Public awareness has increased. Nevertheless, poaching continues and wildlife harvest outside the borders of a few NPAs likely exceeds sustainable limits. Mongolia’s productive landscape is now largely wildlife impoverished. If this continues, there is little hope of recovery.” Regarding the problem of habitat loss, the project document indicates that, “Herding is an important economic and subsistence sector for the country. The government actively regulated the livestock industry prior to 1991. …Government regulation helped to manage livestock numbers and grazing practices. Approximately 70% of all livestock was owned by the State. In the early 1990’s, herds were privatized and market access/supports disappeared. In recent times, increasingly wealthy Mongolians have turned to livestock as an investment opportunity and source of pride. Enormous herds of domestic stock managed by herding families on behalf of largely absentee owners now roam the countryside. While opportunities and incentives to reduce livestock herd sizes evaporated, the cashmere sector experienced rapid expansion. Government, donor, and private programs that stimulated a growth in Cashmere goat numbers while failing to create and sustain markets for Mongolian free-range livestock, further altered grazing practices and increased conservation challenges. The number of goats rose dramatically and incentives to de-stock further declined. The ultimate result was a massive increase of livestock. This combination of factors resulted in a phenomenal increase in livestock numbers. In the early 1990’s, Mongolia’s total domestic herd was estimated to be 26 million animals. Some estimate that 45 million head of livestock populate Mongolia’s fragile landscape. …as much as 80% of Mongolia’s landscape is grazed beyond capacity. ….The already precarious status of the nation’s remaining biodiversity is put at further risk with the advent of accelerated mining development. …Most estimate that the Government of Mongolia has now allocated nearly 500,000 km2 to mining. This represents more than one third of the entire country. …Some mining concessions cover tens of thousands of hectares or previously pristine landscape. …Most sources agree that over 250,000 km2 of Mongolia is currently experiencing some form of mining exploration and development. Many of these locations have very high biodiversity value…The ecological impacts of mining will not be limited to the borders of mined areas. Mining development and the associated wealth generated are being accompanied by extensive infrastructure development. …The nation is now creating thousands of kilometers of paved roads, rail lines, and power lines. …The rate of development, especially outside the boundaries of “traditional” protected areas, is far outpacing the ability of stakeholders to realistically incorporate the long-term needs of biodiversity.

#### Barriers

The key barriers to achieving the project objective were described in the project document as follows:

**Barrier 1:** Current legislation does not offer adequate tools and guidance to successfully conserve critical ecosystems and species beyond the border of NPAs.

**Barrier 2:** Insufficient national, state, and local level capacity to successfully conserve biodiversity within inhabited landscapes.

## 3.3 Project Description & Strategy

### 3.3.1 Project Description

According to the project document, “The project will support and enhance ability of rural communities and associated LPAs to become more effective tools for biodiversity conservation. These new protected areas will be aligned with IUCN categories IV, V, and VI and designed to cater for the dual objectives of biodiversity conservation and livelihood enhancement. The project will demonstrate that co-management of PAs and a participatory approach that involves local communities in decision making can lead to better biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihood outcomes of protected areas in the Mongolian context”.

### 3.3.2 Project Strategy

The project strategy as outlined in the project document is to address the two primary barriers that currently restrict the conservation effectiveness of Mongolia’s PA system to conserve a host of globally significant resources. The strategy is to facilitate the expansion of conserved landscapes to incorporate the needs of wide ranging species by clearing the regulatory barrier, and to ensure the existence of skills and knowledge required to manage and expand local conservation areas into the future by removing existing capacity barriers. The project strategy includes empowering rural communities with the tools required to maintain and enhance their quality of life while addressing identified biodiversity threats.

The project strategy is to focus its activities related to the three target LPAs on three diverse locations, namely: Gulzat LPA in the north of Uvs Province in the Northwestern part of the country, Toson Hulstai Nature Reserve Buffer Zone in the Eastern provinces of Dornod and Khentii, and Khavtgar LPA in the Northcentral/eastern part of the country. Gulzat LPA includes high mountain steppe and mixed forests and is home to Argali sheep, ibex, snow leopard and black tailed gazelle. Khavtgar includes forest, forest steppe and meadow steppe and is home to Musk deer, Maral deer, moose, and red deer. Toson Hulstai includes dry steppe, upland meadow and wetlands and is home to the Mongolian gazelle. In Gulzat and Khavtgar, existing LPAs will be expanded and transferred into the newly created and formalized community conservation area designation. In Toson Hulstai, communities will be supported as they set in place a new protected area.

Table 4: **Objectives, Outcomes and Indicators**

| **Objective** | **Indicator** | **Baseline** | **Target end of project** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| To catalyse the strategic expansion of Mongolia’s PA system through establishment of a network of community conservation areas covering under-represented terrestrial ecosystems | Hectares within the total PA system, including community conservation areas | Total LPA (without community managed areas) is 16 million ha, but not included in the NPA system | 19.2 million ha |
|  | Hectares of seven under-represented ecosystems within total PA system including community conservation areas | Total area of under-represented ecosystems is 102 million ha | 80 million ha |

Table 5: ***Progress toward Project Outcomes***

| **Outcome** | **Indicator** | **Baseline** | **Target end of** project |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Outcome 1: Establishment of new PA category for strategic PA expansion | Specific NPA legislation amended and/or new regulation adopted to establish and guide effective management of CCAs | 0 No national law and/or regulation adopted as described | 1 national law and/or regulation adopted as described |
|  | Number of CCAs legally recognized as part of the NPA system according to the amended national legislation and/or regulation | 0 community conservation areas legally recognized as part of the NPA system | 50 CCAs legally recognizes as part of the NPA system |
| Outcome 2: Emplacement of institutional capacity and resource base development to ensure sustainability of managed resource Pas | METT scores for at least three LPAs converted and/or established as CCAs | Need METT scores for three pilot sites:  Gulzat LPA 36  Khavtgar 26  Toson Khulstai (Buffer Zone) 22 | Each baseline METT score increased to:  Gulzat LPA 50  Khavtgar 40  Toson Khulstai 26 |
|  | PAAD has a fully functional, staffed and government-funded CCA resource centre providing ongoing monitoring, support and extension training for local conservation decision makers | 0 functional institutional, staffed centre within PAAD to support effective CCAs | 1 functional institutional centre within PAAD to support effective CCA |
|  | Decentralized regional PA governance framework involving community and local government established at 3 demonstration sites | 0 project sites applying legally enforseable management plan to improve conservation of wide-ranging species and mitigate conservation threats  **Khavtgar LPA:**  “Khavtgar Shireet” NGO management structure & organizational capacity are weak & no clear financial source  **Gulzat LPA:**  Current Gulzat NGO runs with 3 employees  O amount has spent on conservation management from income from hunting  **Toson Khulstai NR Buffer Zone:**  No legal body appointed for the conservation management of the LPA and no clear financial source | 3 project sites applying enforceable management plan to improve conservation of wide-ranging species and mitigate conservation threats  **Khavtgar LPA:**  An effective conservation model is developed and strengthened  Sustainable financial sources are identified  **Gulzat LPA:**  An effective conservation management model is developed and strengthened  At least 50% of income from hunting is spent on conservation  **Toson Khulstai NR Buffer Zone:**  LPA conservation management model and management plan is developed  Sustainable financial sources are identified |
|  | Policing and enforcement of laws and regulations for biodiversity conservation results in reduction of threats and no net loss of key indicators at three pilot sites | **Gulzat LPA:**  Population of Argali sheep (Ovis ammon ammon) 1048 as of 2012  Total household number involved in community groups: 60% of total households  **Khavtgar LPA:**  Population of red deer (100 as of 2013)  Population of roe deer (210 in 2013)  Marmot  Grouse  **Toson Khulstai NR Buffer Zone:**  Habitat of gazelle: land/territory under LPA (0 ha)  No conservation status on migratory route  Habitat has divided  No legal responsible body  # of protected wetlands/lakes as habitat for key migratory bird species (0) | **Gulzat LPA:**  Population of Argali sheep (1,400)  Total # of households involved in community groups (50% of remaining non-involved households would be involved in community groups)  **Khavtgar LPA:**  Population of red deer (*Cervus elephus*) increased by 10-30% and its habitat conserved  Population of roe deer (*Capreolus pygargus*) increased by 10%  Marmot (*Marmota sibirica*) habitat is conserved  Grouse habitat is conserved  **Toson Khulstai NR Buffer Zone:**  Size of area taken under LPA  Approved regulation and decrees to coordinate conservation management  # of protected wetlands/lakes as habitat for key migratory bird species (4) |

## 3.4 Project Implementation Arrangements

This project uses the National Implementation Modality (NIM). The PAAD of the MEGDT is the Project Implementing Partner (IP). The PAAD is responsible for managing Mongolia’s State Protected Areas. Once the proposed amendments to the law are approved, LPAs will be categorized as State Protected Areas, and thus will fall under the overall jurisdiction of the PAAD. The Department consists of a Director (who serves as the NPD for this project), and five officers. There are 33 Protected Area Administrations around the country under the direct supervision of the Department. These offices are responsible for overseeing the management of usually one, but in some cases several, protected areas.

UNDP provides overall program oversight and takes responsibility for standard GEF project cycle management services beyond assistance and oversight of project design and negotiation, including project monitoring, periodic independent evaluations, troubleshooting, and reporting to the GEF.

The project is guided by a Project Board comprised of 11 members all of whom are government representatives with the single exception of the UNDP representative (the DRR). The representatives from government include the Director of PAAD (the NPD), the Head of the Division of International Cooperation, the Department of State Funding of the Ministry of Finance, the Director of the Department of Monitoring, Evaluation and Internal Auditing of the MEGDT, the Director of the Department of Environment of each of the three Aimag governments, the Director of the Protected Areas Administration of the Khan-Khentii SPA, and the GEF Focal point in the GOM. The position of Chair of the PB is permanently attached to the office of the State Secretary of the MEGDT. There have been two NPDs since the project began due to frequent changes of government during this time[[7]](#footnote-7). One third of the PB members are women. All PB members serve in a voluntary capacity.

A Project Implementation Unit (PIU) comprised of 6 people is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the project. The PIU consists of the National Project Coordinator (NPC), an Administrative and Finance Officer (AFO), a Policy Officer, a Monitoring and Evaluation and Community Development Officer, a Secretary/Translator, and a Driver. There has been a high turnover of PIU staff since the project began. There have been four M&E officers to date and two different AFOs. The current M&E Officer and AFO both began during the MTR. The PIU is housed within the building of the Freshwater and Nature Conservancy Centre of the MEGDT which is a separate building somewhat removed from the rest of the Ministry offices.

In addition to the six PIU staff, the project pays either partial or full salaries of seven people including: (1) 100% of the salary of the 3 rangers in the Tumenkhaan-Shalz LPA[[8]](#footnote-8) (one from each of the 3 co-managing soums). These rangers also serve as Local Project Coordinators. (2) 50% of the salary of the Director of the new NGO which manages the Khavtgar LPA, (3) 40% of the salary of the Aimag environment officer in Uvs Aimag, (4) 50% of the salary of the new biodiversity officer working with the Gulzat Initiative NGO. This person is responsible for overseeing the rangers working in the LPA, conducting training for the rangers, in charge of strengthening the capacity of the CBOs, compiling data for the PA database, oversee the administrative work of the NGO, and, (5) 100% of the salary of the officer responsible for LPAs in the PAAD--a position established through an MOU between the project and the PAAD. The project is paying full salary for this position. The MOU between UNDP and MEGDT states that the position will be fully covered by the MEGDT budget upon completion of the project. The person hired for this position has, however, been on sick leave since he assumed his position three months ago. Altogether, the costs of these seven people amount to $8,240/annum. These seven people are critical to the successful operations of the three LPAs. At present the sustainability of these positions after project end is not fully secured.

A project Technical Committee (TC) comprised of 11 people (4 of whom are women) consists of experts in grasslands ecology, geocryology (the study of frozen land), meteorology, biology, botany, physical geography, land management, tourism, and economics. These individuals work in government, NGOs and private sector. They come from the Institute of Geography and Geoecology of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Biology of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Botany of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, the School of Arts and Science of the National University of Mongolia, the Mongolian Tourism Association, and the Citizen’s Council on the Environment. The TC met three times in 2015. It has not met thus far this year. The Terms of Reference of the TC are to plan research and training to be undertaken by the project and advice on methodologies to be adopted, monitor the progress of research supported by the project and evaluate the reports produced. To date the TC has reviewed four online training modules for SPA specialists which the project produced, they reviewed a study commissioned by the project on connectivity gaps of the current SPA network related to several wildlife species, they advised on how to strengthen the capacity of CBOs, and advised on the management structure for the 3 target LPAs.

## 3.5 Project timing and milestones

As per the signed project document, the project start date is August 1, 2013 and the planned closing date is August 1, 2018. The first Annual Work Plan (AWP) for the year 2013 was signed in October 2013, and the first release of funds was made in March, 2014. The PIU was already in place as the same PIU is shared by this project and the SPAN project (which just closed). One year and 2 months passed between the signing of the project document and the inception workshop. The MTR took place almost three years after the project officially began.

## 3.6 Main stakeholders

The main stakeholders of the project are the CBOs within the three target LPAs, the NGOs involved in LPA co-management agreements, the Soum and Aimag Governments involved in LPA co-management agreements, the SPAs bordering or close to the LPAs, the PAAD and the MEGDT. Other important stakeholders are the communities living in LPAs around the country who may benefit from this project’s accomplishments.

# 4.0 FINDINGS

## 4.1 Project Strategy

### 4.1.1 Project Design

The project design, although logical, is overly ambitious given the budget and time frame. As a reality check, it would be good to remember that it took Hustai National Park twenty years and lots of donor support to become a model for NGO management of SPAs. Assuming that a five year project with cash financing of approximately USD 1.5 million can build 3 “centres of excellence” for LPA management and that these would be financially sustainable and actively sharing lessons with other LPAs around the country was, in the opinion of the MTR, unrealistic. Because of its overly-ambitious design, some of the project’s activities, such as, for example, project activities related to ecotourism, will have a very negligible impact, as will other activities. Taking the example of ecotourism, as currently planned, the project will only be able to help link two families in Gulzat with tour operators. This is not significant. This type of activity only scatters a project. Ecotourism development could be a project in and of itself. Ambitious designs and ambitious targets may help secure GEF funding but the results on the ground may be less than promised. This is a common problem with GEF projects and a lesson that needs to be learned by designers of GEF projects, many of whom have designed projects but have not implemented them.

### 4.1.2 Analysis of the Results Framework (RF)

The Results Framework has numerous inconsistencies and ambiguities. Following is a description of some of the biggest problems with the RF.

The second objective level indicator is confusing and appears to lack consistency with the rest of the RF. It would have been clearer if the baseline and target had been described in positive instead of negative terms. More directly stated, the target appears to be to add 22 mil ha to the SPA system. A part of the 22 mil ha were to be comprised of 6 different ecosystem types. Although the RF mentions seven “under-represented” ecosystems (and defines “under-represented” as less than 13% coverage within the PA system), these ecosystems were never specified in the RF. Adding to the confusion, the TNC gap analysis seems to suggest that anything less than the 30% target set by the GOM is under-represented. As a result of this confusion and lack of mention of what the seven ecosystems are (and no further mention of these seven ecosystems outside of this one indicator), the project has understandably not pursued inclusion of specific ecosystems but rather has focused on increasing the total area (regardless of ecosystem type) in the SPA system. This matter has caused a significant amount of confusion, with a very different interpretation by the UNDP CO and the PIU. In an attempt to clarify the matter and to do so as practically as possible, the MTR offers its interpretation. Although the project document does not specify what the mysterious 7 under-represented ecosystems are, the PIF (Annex II) cites 7 under-represented ecosystems, six of which are planned for expansion under the project. The same Annex indicates that the project is to establish 4 PAs (Gulzat LPA (126,772 ha), Khukh Serkh-Munkhairkhan-Myangan Ugalzat Corridor (130,000 ha), Tengis River (110,000 ha), and Khavtgar LPA (100,000 ha). According to this, the new PAs would cover a total of 466,772 ha of which 200,000 would be High Mountain Steppe, 131,772 would be Meadow Steppe, 55,000 would be Moderate Dry Steppe, 40,000 would be Dry Steppe, 30,000 would be Sub-Boreal Mixed Forest, and 10,000 would be Desert Steppe. This leaves 21,533,228 ha that would still need to be included in the SPA system in addition to the four PAs covering 466,772 ha which were to be established by the project according to the PIF. Although the MTR believes that the project was overly-ambitious in scope and in target setting, we do not believe that the design could have been so unrealistic as to expect a project of this size and duration to add 22 mil ha to the SPA system by establishing new PAs around the country covering this vast area. The MTR believes the only reasonable interpretation of this indicator and target is that by amending the PA law, the 21.5 million ha which is comprised of some part of the 16.2 million ha of LPA plus 8 million ha of Community Managed Areas will become part of the SPA system, thereby increasing the area under legal protection by this amount. It should never be necessary to interpret an indicator or target. This reflects the poor way in which the indicator and target were described, leaving much to ambiguity and guesswork. This should have been sorted out in the inception workshop. Unfortunately, it was not.

The good news is that the six under-represented ecosystems are in fact included in the LPAs and Community Managed Areas that will be added to the SPA network once the amended law is approved. Thus, the target is expected to be achieved even though the project did not make an effort to specifically focus on these ecosystems.

There are numerous other shortcomings in the RF. A few illustrative examples follow: The baseline for one of the indicators associated with Outcome 2 is “Khavtgar Shireet NGO management structure & organizational capacity are weak & no clear financial source”. The target is “An effective conservation model is developed and strengthened. And, “Sustainable financial sources are identified”. The target is ill defined and lacks consistency with the baseline. In another example, the baseline is simply described as “Marmot”, or “Grouse”. This is not a baseline at all. In another case, the baseline is described as “population of red deer 100 as of 2013” whereas the target not only includes an increase in population (of 10 to 30%) but also “and its habitat conserved”. There is no baseline associated with the habitat, making it impossible to assess progress toward the target.

## 4.2 Progress towards Results

### 4.2.1 Progress towards outcomes analysis

The analysis of progress towards outcomes based on up-to-date information provided by the PIU and on the site visits and consultations undertaken during the MTR demonstrates that the project has progressed well in some areas (strengthening the legislative framework related to PAs, development of LPA management structures, strategies, plans, and agreements, development of LPA and CBO databases, awareness raising regarding the role of CBOs in natural resource management and conservation, awareness raising regarding existing laws and regulations helpful to conservation, expansion of the three target LPA areas) and less so in others (financial sustainability, implementation of LPA management plans, capacity building of LPA co-managing entities, recovery of wildlife populations and wildlife habitat in LPAs, establishing connectivity between the target LPAs and nearby SPAs allowing them to function more effectively as part of a greater landscape).

The following table shows progress by objective and indicators as reported by the PIU at the time of the MTR and as assessed by site visits and consultations undertaken by the MTR.

### 4.2.2 Progress towards Project Objective

### Information in the Table below was provided by the PIU. As much as possible, this information was verified by the MTRT during project visits and through review of records. According to this information, both of the project objective level indicators are on target to be achieved by end of project and likely sooner.

### Table Number and Name?

| **Objective** | **Indicator** | **Baseline** | **Target end of project** | **Midterm Level & Assessment** | **Achievement rating** | **Justification for rating** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| To catalyse the strategic expansion of Mongolia’s PA system through establishment of a network of community conservation areas covering under-represented terrestrial ecosystems | Hectares within the total PA system, including community conservation areas | Total LPA (without community managed areas) is 16 million ha, but not included in the NPA system | 19.2 million ha | As of the time of the MTR no LPAs have yet been included in the NPA system since the proposed amended law has not yet been approved. The proposed amended law on PA was submitted to the (now former) Cabinet on May, 2016 (for the third time). Past submissions were never even discussed by Parliament but, according to the Director of the PAAD and the NPC (who is a member of the Working Group on the law on PAs), with the election of the new Government in June of this year it is likely that the proposed amended law will be approved this year (likely by mid-November). If approved, the result (based on current data) will be an increase of 16.2 million ha of land designated as LPAs, 100% of which will be part of the NPA system.  The baseline data specifying that LPAs covered 16 million ha was based on 2009 data. As a result of the effort made by the project which obtained information on all LPAs in Mongolia and which corrected some mistakes such as overlapping LPA areas or resolutions declaring areas as LPA which had expired, as of the time of the MTR the area covered by LPAs is 16.2 million ha. It should be noted that this figure could easily go up or down depending on errors in the LPAs that are corrected and on new LPAs that may be designated between now and project end. Thus, the baseline regarding LPAs is a “moving” baseline. | On Target | The target is expected to be achieved because Community Managed Areas, which cover 8 million ha (according to 2015 data) will, according to the proposed amended law, be defined as LPAs. Adding 8 million ha of Community Managed Areas to the 16.2 million ha of LPAs which will be included in the NPA system once the proposed amended law is approved totals to 24.2 million ha. In addition, it is likely that new LPAs will be declared from this time until project end, thus the overall total of hectares included in the PA system is likely to increase even further. |
|  | Hectares of seven under-represented ecosystems within total PA system including community conservation areas | Total area of under-represented ecosystems is 102 million ha | 80 million ha | As of the time of the MTR no LPAs have yet been included in the NPA system since the proposed amended law has not yet been approved. The proposed amended law on PA was submitted to the Cabinet on May, 2016. It appears likely that the proposed amended law will be approved this year. If approved, the result (based on current data) will be an increase of 24.2 million ha included in the NPA system, 16.2 million ha of which is designated as LPAs and 8 million ha of which is designated as Community Managed Area. The 466,772 ha of the seven (really only six) “under-represented” ecosystems are included in the LPAs and Community managed areas that will be added to the PA network once the amended law is approved so the target is expected to be achieved even though the project did not make an effort to specifically focus on these ecosystems. | On Target | The target is expected to be exceeded by 2.2 million ha.  The MTR believes the only reasonable interpretation of this confusing indicator and target is that by amending the PA law, the 24.2 million ha which is comprised of the 16.2 million ha of LPA plus the 8 million ha of Community Managed Areas will become part of the SPA system, thereby increasing the area under legal protection by at least 22 million ha. |

### 4.2.3 Progress toward Project Outcome

### As in the above Table, information in the Table below was provided by the PIU. As much as possible, this information was verified by the MTRT during project visits and through review of records. According to this information, one of the six (17%) project outcome level indicators have already been achieved, three (50%) are on target to be achieved by project end, and two (33%) are not on-target to be achieved.

Table Number and Name?

| **Outcome** | **Indicator** | **Baseline** | **Target end of** project | **Achievement level as of MTR** | **Achievement rating** | **Justification for rating** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Outcome 1: Establishment of new PA category for strategic PA expansion | Specific NPA legislation amended and/or new regulation adopted to establish and guide effective management of CCAs | 0 No national law and/or regulation adopted as described | 1 national law and/or regulation adopted as described | A Working Group (WG) has been working on the SPA law for the past nine years. The NPC is part of this WG. The project has supported several meetings of the WG. A draft law on SPA has been prepared by the WG together with lawyers and is submitted to the Cabinet Secretariat in May, and expected to be submitted to the Parliament in coming months. The project also supported the development of a concept paper and draft amendment (2 chapters, 9 articles) to the Law on Environment. | On Target | There have been 3 changes in government since the project began. Every time there is a change in government, resubmission of the proposed amended laws must begin from the start. The previous government was a coalition government in which consensus was not easy. The newly elected government is single party so consensus is not expected to be problematic. The current NPD has expressed his intent to actively support the pursuit of the approval of this law. Given this situation, it is highly likely that the target will be achieved by end of project, and according to the NPD, most likely by mid-November of this year. |
|  | Number of CCAs legally recognized as part of the NPA system according to the amended national legislation and/or regulation | 0 community conservation areas legally recognized as part of the NPA system | 50 CCAs legally recognizes as part of the NPA system | After prolonged discussion with diverse stakeholders, it was decided that the term Community Conservation Area or CCA was not appropriate in the Mongolian context. The proposed amended law therefore refers to LPAs (not CCAs) which according to the proposed law will include the old LPAs as well as the Community Managed Areas (which include forest areas managed by Forest User Groups and pasture areas managed by Pasture User Groups). A total of 1,629 Community Managed Areas covering 8.2 million ha exist in Mongolia as of 2016. The target will therefore be exceeded with the passage of the new law. | On Target | The target will be achieved and exceeded once the new law is approved. It is expected that the new law will be approved by mid-November of this year. |
| Outcome 2: Emplacement of institutional capacity and resource base development to ensure sustainability of managed resource Pas | METT scores for at least three LPAs converted and/or established as CCAs | Need METT scores for three pilot sites:  Gulzat LPA 36  Khavtgar 26  Toson Khulstai (Buffer Zone) 22 | Each baseline METT score increased to:  Gulzat LPA 50  Khavtgar 40  Toson Khulstai 26 | Latest METT scores:  Gulzat LPA 63  Khavtgar 57  Toson Khulstai 43 | Achieved | According to the latest METT scores (tracking tools were applied just prior to the MTR visit), METT scores for all three LPAs have already surpassed the target expected by end of project. Although the MTR does not contest the scores, we believe it would be useful to have the IC and the NC on biodiversity review these together with the NPC. |
|  | PAAD has a fully functional, staffed and government-funded CCA resource centre providing ongoing monitoring, support and extension training for local conservation decision makers | 0 functional institutional, staffed centre within PAAD to support effective CCAs | 1 functional institutional centre within PAAD to support effective CCAs | An MOU was signed between the UNDP RR and the at-the-time Minister of the MEGDT establishing a new position within the PAAD and stipulating that the position will continue on after project end. This position is currently vacant due to prolonged sick leave of the person hired to assume this position. In fact, the position has been vacant since it was established. The position is funded 100% by the project. At project end the GOM should assume 100% of the cost of this position according to the MOU. This person is to oversee the policies and legislation pertaining to LPAs and oversee the LPA database and will be responsible for collaborating with other departments within the Ministry on matters related to LPAs.  According to the Director of the PAAD, the Ministry is contemplating expanding the PAAD not only by one person but by creating a whole new division for LPAs and CMAs. As the new government was just installed during the MTR, it is too soon to know whether this will indeed happen but it is likely according to the Director that the new Minister will be supportive of this idea.  Another position, Officer in charge of CBO relations, was created in the MEGDT (within the Department of State Administration) by the Ministry itself and paid completely by the Ministry. This position was established just prior to the National Forum on CBOs, an initiative for which the project provided significant support. The Minister at the time was very interested in CBOs and the project provided a lot of support to the Ministry including supporting focus group meetings. The subject of CBOs and the need for the Ministry to guide CBOs with clear policies related to LPAs was a focus of the MEGDT weekly meetings. The project helped the Ministry do develop the questionnaires to be completed by CBOs for inclusion in the CBO database.  Although a centre as such as not been established within PAAD, focal points on CBOs have been designated within several departments and entities including a focal point on CBOs within the Forest Policy Department. In addition a National Association of CBOs exists which has been strengthened through the project’s support to the CBO database. Since CBOs are an integral part of LPAs, strengthening institutional structures related to CBOs has a direct effect on strengthening the capacity of these to deal with LPAs. | Not On Target | Although progress has been made mostly in relation to gathering information on LPAs and CBOs, PAAD does not have a functional, staffed and government-funded resource centre providing ongoing monitoring, support and extension training for CBOs and other local conservation decision makers. There is no evidence to suggest that they will have such a centre by project end. |
|  | Decentralized regional PA governance framework involving community and local government established at 3 demonstration sites | 0 project sites applying legally enforseable management plan to improve conservation of wide-ranging species and mitigate conservation threats  **Khavtgar LPA:**  “Khavtgar Shireet” NGO management structure & organizational capacity are weak & no clear financial source  **Gulzat LPA:**  Current Gulzat NGO runs with 3 employees  O amount has spent on conservation management from income from hunting  **Toson Khulstai NR Buffer Zone:**  No legal body appointed for the conservation management of the LPA and no clear financial source | 3 project sites applying enforceable management plan to improve conservation of wide-ranging species and mitigate conservation threats  **Khavtgar LPA:**  An effective conservation model is developed and strengthened  Sustainable financial sources are identified  **Gulzat LPA:**  An effective conservation management model is developed and strengthened  At least 50% of income from hunting is spent on conservation  **Toson Khulstai NR Buffer Zone:**  LPA conservation management model and management plan is developed  Sustainable financial sources are identified | Note inconsistency between baseline and targets and also between baseline/targets and indicator (e.g., in case of Khavtgar target indicates a conservation model should be developed whereas the baseline refers to the management structure)  **Khavtgar LPA:**  The contract between the NGO managing Khavtgar at the time of the baseline description (Khavtgar Shireet) was ended in 2014 as a result of the assessment undertaken by the NGO contracted by the project to assess and strengthen management structure and CBO capacity. The assessment indicated that this NGO was not fulfilling its responsibilities. The decision was taken to end the contract. A new NGO now has the contract to manage the LPA. Based on the MTRT’s meeting with the stakeholders, there appears still to be deep distrust of the NGO (even though it is a different one), and not a very thorough understanding of financial arrangements and various responsibilities, especially in the case of the CBOs involved in this area. The NGO and the CBOs have, however, started cooperating with the Khan-Khentii SPA in several important ways. Whenever the SPA conducts trainings for its own rangers, the volunteer rangers from the CBOs are now invited to participate. The volunteer rangers from the communities received certificates (badges) from the Aimag Environment Unit. This is very useful. Volunteer rangers, Soum rangers and rangers from the SPA conducted joint monitoring exercise of several key species.  **Gulzat LPA:**  Gulzat is the most advanced of the three LPAs. It benefitted from the support of a WWF project before this project began. Its administrative capacity was actually stronger back then. At present, the project is paying for part of of the 1 staff position because otherwise the NGO could not operate. Although a greater percentage of income from hunting is indeed being spent on conservation (37% now compared with none at the beginning of the project), due to the decrease in the number of hunting permits issued last year, the total revenue from hunting decreased dramatically (by 50%). This despite an increase in the number of argali reported in the census. The sustainability of the management structure of this NGO is in question as they must pay a hefty sum to have a professional organization do the argali census in order to be issued hunting permits and they cannot depend on income from hunting even when conservation measures or other factors result in increasing population numbers because the number of permits issued has no direct relation with the population numbers and is beyond the control of the NGO.  Poaching of wildlife, according to the rangers interviewed, is limited to occasional taking of marmot but there is no poaching of argali or other species according to them.  As a direct result of this project’s efforts, the area was expanded, almost doubling in size. In addition, positive strides have recently been made regarding even further expansion of the LPA to allow for connectivity with the two nearby SPAs. This is a very positive step forward.  **Toson Khulstai NR Buffer Zone:**  The LPA was established, a management structure is in place and functioning, a 10 year strategy, 5 year management plan and business plan exist. A Livestock Risk Revolving Fund has been established very recently. The project is paying for 3 local project coordinators who are also rangers (1 for each of the 3 soums who co-manage the area). The rangers have done 2 monitoring exercises to date (of marmot). None of gazelle. At this stage, the management structure of the LPA depends heavily on project support. No conservation measures are taking place related to gazelle and no census has been done of this globally important species. Poaching of both marmot and gazelle are still ongoing according to the rangers interviewed by the MTR. | Not on Target | Although progress has been made in the 3 target LPAs, they are far from becoming effective conservation models. And, although some mechanisms for financing the implementation of LPA management plans and financing the cost of administering these areas are now in place (a Livestock Risk Revolving Fund was created very recently in T-K and a greater percentage of revenues from hunting are being re-invested in hunting management plan in Gulzat), there is little progress in terms of generating enough revenue from hunting or ecotourism or research to guarantee financial sustainability for these LPAs. |
|  | Policing and enforcement of laws and regulations for biodiversity conservation results in reduction of threats and no net loss of key indicators at three pilot sites | **Gulzat LPA:**  Population of Argali sheep (Ovis ammon ammon) 1048 as of 2012  Total household number involved in community groups: 60% of total households  **Khavtgar LPA:**  Population of red deer (100 as of 2013)  Population of roe deer (210 in 2013)  Marmot  Grouse  **Toson Khulstai NR Buffer Zone**:  Habitat of gazelle: land/territory under LPA (0 ha)  No conservation status on migratory route  Habitat has divided  No legal responsible body  # of protected wetlands/lakes as habitat for key migratory bird species (0) | **Gulzat LPA:**  Population of Argali sheep (1,400)  Total # of households involved in community groups (50% of remaining non-involved households would be involved in community groups)  **Khavtgar LPA:**  Population of red deer (*Cervus elephus*) increased by 10-30% and its habitat conserved  Population of roe deer (*Capreolus pygargus*) increased by 10%  Marmot (*Marmota sibirica*) habitat is conserved  Grouse habitat is conserved  **Toson Khulstai NR Buffer Zone:**  Size of area taken under LPA  Approved regulation and decrees to coordinate conservation management  # of protected wetlands/lakes as habitat for key migratory bird species (4) | **Gulzat LPA:**  Argali population is 1,864 (as of Dec 2015)  The project helped to establish 15 new CBOs in the 3 target LPAs. At project beginning there were 99 households involved in CBOs in Gulzat, now there are 187. There are a total number of 212 households altogether in the LPA, thus 88% of the Households in the LPA are now involved in CBOs. This is a very significant increase.  **Khavtgar LPA:**  Population of red deer is now 45 according to the census conducted with support of the project in March 2016, this represents decrease of 55% (a very alarming decrease). No measurements have been taken to determine whether habitat has been conserved or not but it is also not possible to determine this since no measurements were taken during the baseline regarding the habitat itself.  Roe deer population is now 100 according to the same March 2016 census, which represents a decrease of more than 50% over the past 3 years. . This is a very alarming decrease.  No measurements are being made of marmot habitat  No measurements are being made of grouse habitat  **Toson Khulstai:**  374,499 ha of gazelle habitat is now included in the LPA.  The LPA includes 100% of the migratory route of gazelle between the two SPAs.  The remaining habitat is no longer divided since the LPA covers the entire migratory route between the two SPAs.  There is an official co-management agreement between the three soum governments whose area is included within the LPA.  There are 5 lakes (Tsengeleg, Erveekhei, Ovor hooloi, Baynnuurin hooloi, Shuut) now included in the LPA. | On Target | Out of the total of 9 “sub-targets”, 4 have been achieved (in green), 2 are on target (yellow) and 3 are at risk (red). For those 3 sub-targets (number of roe dear, marmot and grouse) which are at risk, there is no baseline.  Although accordingly a rating of “on target” should be assigned, the MTR believes it is important to look at the overall picture. The population numbers of key species (red deer, roe deer) have decreased dramatically over the past 3 years, the population of other key species is not known (snow leopard, ibex). It would appear that marmot populations are rebounding but even this is unclear because of lack of regular and scientifically rigorous monitoring techniques. |

### 4.2.4 Remaining barriers to achieving the project objective

## 4.3 Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

### 4.3.1 Management Arrangements

It took quite some time to figure out how to proceed with the new NIM modality, especially as according to the UNDP CO Programme Officer responsible for the project; the CO could have benefited from greater direction on this modality from UNDP HQ and the IP was not ready to apply the NIM modality at the time. A transition period as was requested by the MEGDT in 2014 may have been more efficient. The modality is now working well although a more thorough review of TOR for consultants and contracts to ensure clarity of what is expected and to ensure overlap is avoided would be helpful.

The PB has met 10 times. The last meeting took place in June 2016, just a week prior to the MTR, and the next one is planned for December, 2016. It might have been more helpful to plan the PB meeting for immediately following the release of the draft MTR report to facilitate discussion of the report in a timely fashion. The Government provides strong leadership on the PB. Indeed all members of the PB come from government except for the UNDP representative. This is not in keeping with norms or best practices for GEF projects. The MTR believes there is an opportunity to achieve a better balance with greater NGO and other representation on the PB and believes that this is an appropriate time to make the change at the mid-term of the project and with the newly elected government in place.

The UNDP CO has made two visits to the project sites, one in 2015 and one in 2016. The UNDP CO appears to be well informed about the project and has provided helpful guidance. There is one point of confusion that should be sorted out without further delay and hopefully will be with the benefit of the MTR report. The UNDP CO Programme Officer responsible for the project and the NPC have two very different understandings about the interpretation of the second project objective indicator. It is admittedly vague and confusing. We have provided our own interpretation of this indicator and target in another section of this report.

### 4.3.2 Work planning

The slow project start (due to reasons already mentioned) has had some impact on work planning. Although some key consultancies have already been completed, others are only now, at the mid-term of the project, starting their work. The NC on Financial Sustainability just began her work. The International Consultant (IC) on Biodiversity has not begun yet, although is expected to soon. The reason for the late start of the BD IC was that the IP (NPD) did not support use of International Consultants in the first years of project implementation (this was also the case related to the IC for legislative improvement), preferring to use national consultants instead. It was not until 2015 that the PB agreed to hire the BD IC.

Although it was clearly important to begin work on the legislative aspects of the project right from the start, and to establish LPA management structures and draft management plans before proceeding to implement them, in the opinion of the MTR, at least in the case of Gulzat LPA and Khavtgar LPA, on-the-ground activities with the communities related to the implementation of their management plans (which are not that different from plans and activities ongoing before this project began) could have started earlier as could the study to identify possible sources of sustainable finance for these areas.

### Financial Management & Co-Financing

Total committed co-financing at project signing amounted to $6,253,091. Of the $1,300,000 in-kind contribution committed by UNDP as co-financing, $200,000 was in cash from TRAC funds and the remainder in parallel funding. As of the time of the MTR, more than 100% (103%) of the in-cash co-financing from UNDP which was originally anticipated to be $200,000 has been disbursed. 62% ($309,000) of the co-financing commitment from Government has been provided and 74% ($651,001) of the co-financing commitment from NGOs (WWF) has been actually accounted at the time of the MTR. 100% of the parallel co-funding from GIZ has been spent by the **Biodiversity and Adaptation of Key Forest Ecosystems to Climate Change** project which was closed in 2015. None of the $2,000,000 in parallel funding from KFW has yet been spent due to a late start in that project. The KfW Biodiversity and Adaption to Climate Change project began in mid-2015 but on the ground activities have not yet started. According to KfW, they still anticipate spending the $2,000,000 to support communities in buffer zones so this amount of parallel funding should be spent by end of project. No co-financing was sought from the private sector although at the time of the project development, the private sector was thriving.

The co-financing situation at the time of the MTR is summarized in the following tables.

Table 6: ***Summary of co-financing situation at time of MTR (July 2016)***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sources of Co-financing** | **Pledged Amount (in US$)** | **Actually Accounted at MTR (US$)** | **Actually Accounted at MTR (%)** |
| Government | 500,000 | 309,000 | 61.8% |
| GEF Agency (UNDP) | 1,309,091 | 777,745.43 | 59.41% |
| Others | 4,444,000 | 1,960,915 | 44.12% |
| **Total** | **6,253,091** | **3,047,660.43** | **48.73%** |

Table 7: ***Co-financing disaggregated by entity and whether in kind or in cash***

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sources of Co-financing** | **Name of Co-financier** | **Type of Co-financing** | **Pledged Amount (in US$)** | **Actually Accounted at MTR (in US$)** |
| Government | MEGDT | In Kind | 500,000 | 309,000 |
| GEF Agency/UNDP | UNDP Country Office | In Kind | 1,100,000 | 1,049,914 |
|  | UNDP Country Office | Cash | 200,000 | 205,571 |
| Others | KfW | In Kind | 2,000,000 | 0 |
| GIZ | In Kind | 260,000 | 260,000 |
| WWF | In Kind | 884,000 | 651,001 |
| **Total (US$)** | | | **6,253,091.00** | **3,047,660.43** |

Co-financing is disaggregated according to cash or in-kind in the Table below.

Table 8: ***Co-financing disaggregated by in-kind and in cash***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sources of Co-Funding** | **GRANT (Cash)** | | | **IN KIND** | | |
| **Amount at design** | **Disbursed until May 2016** | **Difference** | **Amount at design** | **Disbursed until Nov 2015** | **Difference** |
| GEF Agency (UNDP) | 200,000 | 205,571 |  |  |  |  |
| Government |  |  |  | 500,000 | 309,000 | 191,000 |
| Other |  |  |  | 3,144,000 | 911,001 | 2,232,999 |
| **TOTAL** | **200,000** | **205,571** | **14,284** | **3,644,000** | **1,220,001** | **2,423,999** |

Financial management

Financial management of the project has been satisfactory. Nevertheless, two issues are worth mentioning. Due to the shift from NEX to NIM modality at the beginning of the project (beginning in 2013), there was an exceptionally heavy work load for the AFO who had to learn and comply with all the new financial reporting requirements. This caused some delays in financial reporting. This issue has been resolved through training and familiarity with NIM and streamlining of reporting formats. In addition, the fact that there have been two different individuals as AFO up until the mid-term has also caused some financial reporting inefficiencies.

*External Audit*

An external audit was conducted in April 2016 which identified three issues, all three of which were categorized as “medium” risk. The MTR is satisfied that all three issues have been adequately addressed. The first observation was resolved when the SPAN project ended. The second observation has been addressed by installation and use of the financial software (ACOLOUS) which is used by all government organizations. This will ensure that all project financial reports will be in line with the recommendation. The third observation is also being satisfactorily addressed in that the new AFO is scheduled to participate in the next training on bidding and contracting procedures and will receive the A3 certificate by end of this month (July 2016).

### 4.3.4 Project-level monitoring and evaluation

There have been four M&E officers since the project began. The first was dismissed, the second left due to retirement requirements, the third for personal reasons. The fourth, and current, M&E officer just assumed the position a few days before the end of the MTR mission.

The current M&E officer is only partly for M&E. His official title is M&E and Community Development Officer. He will spend 50% of his time on M&E and 50% on community development. He is a wildlife ecologist by training. His responsibilities include leadership training for communities, monitoring of the small grants awarded by the project, review/vetting and decision making regarding small grants proposals.

Field Visits

Members of the PIU have made 13 visits to the three LPAs since the project began. The NPC travels to each site on average two to three times a year, visiting the CBOs, NGOs, soum and Aimag government representatives and rangers, and participating in meetings. As evidenced by the MTR during their visits to Gulzat and Toson-Hulstai, a good relationship exists between the PIU and the LPA stakeholders with ease of communication. The new M&E and Community Development Officer will soon be visiting the communities in all of the LPAs to conduct training on organizational/leadership and to monitor all SG projects. It would be helpful for him to spend a significant amount of his time in the field during this second half of the project.

Independent Evaluations

The MTR was conducted in June/July 2016, almost 3 years after project document signature and with two years remaining in the project. The timing of the MTR was thus appropriate, giving adequate time for adjustments to be made in the project if advisable. The MTR was adequately budgeted for with an assigned amount of $25,196.

The MTR would have benefitted from greater preparation for the mission by the UNDP CO. Key documentation essential to understanding the project and the context in which the project operates had not been translated from Mongolian into English. Key products produced by the project (LPA management and business plans, co-management plans) were not available in English, not even as abstracts. Included in the National Consultant’s TOR was acting as a translator and interpreter. There was less than one week between the contracting of the MTRT and the onset of the in-country mission. Clearly there was no time for the National Consultant to do this while the MTR was ongoing. Because of the lack of time between the contracting of the IC and the onset of the in-country mission, no inception report was prepared prior to the mission. Rather, the inception report was submitted by the MTR Team Leader a few days after (did you not submitted your inception report at the time of your arrival?) arrival in country. This is far from ideal.

We recommend that in future itineraries be carefully thought out, including realistic travel times to project sites, and taking into account the time required to undertake meaningful consultations, especially when translation is required.

The timing of the MTR and the actual meeting itinerary was less than ideal due to unique circumstances (Nadaam festival, summer holidays, parliamentary elections). In the opinion of the MTR, if necessary arrangements could not have been made to undertake the in-country mission with plenty of time prior to these events, it would have been best to wait until after their conclusion.

It is fairly common practice to use National Consultants as translators and interpreters in evaluations of GEF projects. This may significant constrain their ability to participate in their capacity as technical experts in evaluations. In future, it may be more cost-effective to hire an interpreter/translator and allow the NC to focus on the essence of the evaluation.

Application of the METT

The METT has been done 2 to 3 times for each of the LPAs (2 times for Gulzat & Toson Khulstai and 3 times for Khvatgar). Although it is only required to do the METT at CEO endorsement and again just prior to MTR, it was done 3 times already for Khvatgar for reasons unknown to the MTR. The NPC was not able to offer an explanation on this.

METTs should be done on site together with the PA managers. In the case of Toson-Khulstai, the METT was done by the NPC while in Ulaanbaatar. The MTR recommends that the Biodiversity IC carefully review the METT scores and provide his own assessment after visiting the three target LPAs. If discrepancies exist in assessments, it would be helpful to discuss how to improve the use of the tracking tool to gain more reliable information from it in future.

Monitoring by the MEGDT Department of Monitoring & Internal Audit

The Department of Monitoring and Internal Audit of the MEGDT undertook visits to two of the three LPAs (they did not visit Gulzat) in May 2015. Their report was very useful and highlighted the need for improved monitoring of the implementation of the LPA management plans. The MTR concurs with that assessment/recommendation.

### 4.3.5 Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement has been very good. The project has effectively reached out and collaborated in meaningful ways with a wide variety of stakeholders including Aimag and Soum Governments, CBOs, NGOs and research institutions such as the Mongolian Academy of Sciences.

The MTR would like to see more engagement with scientific institutions and NGOs focused on biodiversity conservation and community development related to this.

* **Collaboration with private sector**

There has been very little collaboration with the private sector. This must change if project impact is to be maximized and sustained. The project did approach one company that makes skincare products to see if raw materials found in the LPAs could be used in those products. This is an excellent start. Follow up is required. Now that the economy is expected to begin growing again, this is an important time to make contact with private companies, banks and others. There are so many ways the private sector could be involved. The project could contact tour operators to have them offer products communities produce to their clients. The project could help set up paid research/work trips (where volunteers actually pay to help rangers do wildlife censuses and other work related to biodiversity conservation. Earthwatch is hugely popular. Why not Mongoliawatch? The later would of course be by local people instead of by a big international organization. Imagine tourists and rangers together conducting an aquatic survey tubing along the river gathering important data on fish, birds and aquatic life then camping by the riverbank in mobile mini-girs produced by local communities and studying the stars with local herders during the evening time. People will pay for these opportunities. Wildlife sightseeing and trekking with community rangers. Production by communities of educational games and puzzles for children. Think of a game where children can learn about livestock/wildlife interactions while having fun moving board pieces produced by local communities around the board that depicts an LPA with mountains, streams, seasonal camps, wildlife, sheep, goats, etc.. It is time to think outside the box. We need to think beyond beekeeping, berry preserves and basket making. All of those can be good and helpful, but there is much more. Opportunities abound. They just need to be pursued. It is the right time to begin pursuing them. Instead of hiring a consultant to think about these things, make contact with someone who is very well connected in the private sector, someone who can pick up the phone and talk with CEOs of companies they know personally. Get the right people on board for this– movers and shakers, innovators, high-energy, creative thinkers. Not people who write strategies and action plans.

* **Engaging Women Stakeholders & Pursuit of Gender Equality**

UNDP, the GEF Agency for this project, has gender equality as one of its core mainstreaming issues.  The policy of UNDP on gender mainstreaming/equality is to ensure that gender equality and the empowerment of women are integrated into every aspect of its work. This is done by adapting the Gender Equality Strategy plan.

There is still work to be done to achieve gender equality in the bodies which govern and manage the Project. Only 4 of the 11 PB members (36%) are women. The governing bodies of the CBOs are also skewed in terms of gender with only 4 Heads of CBOs being women, although 80% of the treasurers/accountants of the CBOs are women.   Fifty percent of the SG projects supported to date are proposals submitted by women. There are no women rangers.

The TOR for the PB do not include any provisions related to gender equality. Whatever the actual number of women on the PB may be, this should not be left to chance and gender equality should be institutionalized in this body through its TOR. Gender equality means that the TOR should specify that “at least half of the members are women”.

Although in many cases project-level information has been disaggregated by gender, this is not always the case. Again, this should be the rule. This is not difficult and is easily managed by CBO and NGO partners.

### 4.3.6 Reporting

Financial reporting was somewhat delayed earlier on due to reasons explained elsewhere in this report. This situation has since been resolved. Otherwise there have been no particular concerns regarding reporting.

### 4.3.7 Communications & Knowledge Management

Six publications have been produced by the project to date including: (1) Infographic on enabling Government Regulation #43 (Regulation on collecting the income and disbursing it towards environmental conservation). Awareness raising for decision makers on appropriate utilization of the income received from use of natural resources. (2) Guideline on pasture use & establishing pasture use contracts. Describes the objective, barriers & solutions for good pasture management, encourages herders' self-interest in proper pasture management, describes the basis & procedures for establishing pasture use contracts, provides the template of the pasture use contract. (3) Guidelines on establishing CBOs & bylaw templates. Describes the concept of CBNRM through CBOs; definition of CBO, documentations for CBO establishment and function, management planning & reporting of CBOs; -Guidance on organizing meetings, bylaws of CBO revolving funds, Bylaws for CBOs. (4) Template for registration of CBO. (5) Guidelines for monitoring marmot, gazelle and birds. Methodology on reintroduction & observation of marmot; methodology on observation of gazelle & birds. (6) Training module for Rangers. Online training module including 10 chapters, each chapter has knowledge test with answers. Topics include state policy on SPAs; value, mission & vision of SPAs; Management plans; biodiversity monitoring & research methodologies; Biodiversity conservation; sustainable use of natural resources; tourism in protected areas; sustainable financing issues; ethics of the Ranger, etc. The MTR was not able to assess the quality of these publications given language and time constraints. They do appear to be relevant and according to the National Association of CBOs, the publications on CBOs have been very helpful. Any future publications should be in keeping with the government’s intent to standardize all materials for rangers. This is being done with the assistance of the KfW project.

More innovative knowledge management techniques might be envisaged for the next half of the project. A “biodiversity train” which tours around the country in India sharing information on biodiversity is hugely popular. The train was supported by the UNDP-implemented GEF Small Grants Programme in that country. Perhaps a highly mobile ger that moves from camp to camp with fun and educational programs and games and videos for children about wildlife and also about pasture and livestock management related to ecosystem health might be worth considering.

The MTR believes that the use of “information boards” in the Soum offices is helpful but these might be used to even greater effect. For example, illustrative goals regarding wildlife populations (e.g., a marmot that once fully colored in means the target population has been achieved and hunting of marmots can now happen) along with the ranger reports including monitoring reports. The Board could also be interactive, allowing for people to post comments.

## 4.4 Sustainability

### 4.4.1 Financial risks to sustainability

There are serious financial risks to sustainability. At present, the project pays either partial or full salaries of seven people including: (1) 100% of the salary of the 3 rangers in the Tumenkhaan-Shalz LPA[[9]](#footnote-9) (one from each of the 3 co-managing soums). (2) 50% of the salary of the Director of the new NGO which manages the Khavtgar LPA, (3) 40% of the salary of the Aimag environment officer in Uvs Aimag, in Uvs Aimag acting as local coordinator, (4) 50% of the salary of the new biodiversity officer working with the Gulzat Initiative NGO. This person is responsible for overseeing the rangers working in the LPA, conducting training for the rangers, in charge of strengthening the capacity of the CBOs, compiling data for the PA database, oversee the administrative work of the NGO, and, (5) 100% of the salary of the officer responsible for LPAs in the PAAD--a position established through an MOU between the project and the PAAD. The project is paying full salary for this position. The person hired for this position has, however, been on sick leave since has, however, been on sick leave for last three months since he assumed his position 6 months ago. Altogether, the costs of these seven people amount to $8,240/annum. These seven people are critical to the successful operations of the three LPAs. At present the sustainability of these positions after project end is not fully secured.

A bigger issue is how will all LPAs, not just the three target LPAs, financially sustain themselves? This is part of what this project is supposed to demonstrate. Whether it will be able to do so in the short time remaining in the project is questionable although if good advances are made with making stronger linkages between the Livestock Risk Revolving Fund and biodiversity conservation, that may be one promising mechanism for some LPAs. Hunting is certainly a viable source of income if wildlife populations can recover enough to allow for sustainable harvest and if permit giving is directly related to population numbers. There are certainly good prospects for community-based ecotourism in many LPAs but this takes significant investment and time.

Given the above, the MTR rates financial sustainability as “Moderately Unlikely”, i.e., there is a significant risk that key outcomes will not carry on after project closure, although some outputs and activities should carry on.

### 4.4.2 Socio-economic risks to sustainability

Socio-economic risks to sustainability are not considered significant. There appears to be strong buy-in from the CBOs, NGOs, Soum and Aimag governments. The project has placed importance on building the capacity of the CBOs and NGOs and other partners, thereby contributing to sustainability of efforts. Notwithstanding this strong buy in and continued commitment from direct beneficiaries, continued capacity building will be necessary in many cases to bring the beneficiaries to a level of complete socio-economic sustainability.

Given the above, the MTR rates socio-economic sustainability as “likely”.

### 4.4.3 Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability

Promising has been the project’s successful effort to develop tools that will facilitate enhanced oversight by State Government of LPAs and of the local communities who are involved in the management of LPAs through the establishment and vetting of databases on LPAs and CBOs. The next challenge will be for the government to sort out institutional arrangements related to the oversight of the new areas that will now be included in the SPA network. Inclusion of these areas will double the size of the area managed by the PAAD overnight once the new law is approved. The project design calls for the establishment of a resource centre for LPAs within PAAD. To date, the project is the sole financier of the one person in PAAD dedicated to LPAs. Yet, according to the NPD, the MEGDT is very committed to providing the necessary institutional backstopping for the newly designated SPAs and is considering not only fully funding the post that was established in the PAAD but creating a whole unit to look after the LPAs.

Based on the above, the rating given by the MTR to institutional and governance sustainability is “moderately likely”.

### 4.4.4 Environmental risks to sustainability

According to the project document, climate models for Mongolia predict glaciers to melt, deserts to expand and increases in the frequency of Dzud disasters.

Based on the above-described risks, which are beyond the control of any single project, the MTR rating assigned to environmental risk to sustainability is “moderately likely”.

# 5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To avoid repetition, the reader is kindly requested to refer to the section on conclusions and recommendations in the Executive Summary.

Please note that the only recommendations presented in this Section relate to the further specification of recommendations presented in the Executive Summary, and to some minor recommendations.

1. Conclusion: The GOM’s policy is to standardize quality of rangers through standard training, equipping and adherence to a new Brand Book which was developed with KfW support.

Recommendation: Ensure project trainings, including training on monitoring of wildlife and habitat, is consistent with new standards adopted by the MEGDT (PIU)

1. Conclusion: All members of the PB come from government except for the UNDP representative. This is not in keeping with norms or best practices for GEF projects. The MTR believes there is an opportunity to achieve a better balance with greater NGO and other representation on the PB and believes that this is an appropriate time to make the change at the mid-term of the project and with the newly elected government in place.

Recommendation: Modify the composition of the PB to be more in line with best practices related to UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects which suggest that a wider range of stakeholders represented on Project Boards including NGOs and technical experts in relevant fields who may not be working with government, is helpful to project success. We recommend that the Project Board be comprised of at least two NGOs (one international and one national) as stipulated in the project document. These should be from NGOs focused on the science of biodiversity conservation. We believe it would also be helpful to include the following on the PB: involve more people with hands on experience in areas relevant to the MRPA project, such as people with expertise on linking pasture and livestock management with biodiversity conservation, wildlife ecologist with field experience in wildlife censusing, species reintroduction, habitat monitoring; a representative from the Monitoring, Evaluation and Internal Audit Department of the MEGDT; Director of a SPA which has connectivity with one of the 3 model LPAs (e.g., Director of Khan Khentii); It would be more appropriate for the representative of the Ministry of Finance to come from the Development Funding and Debt Management Department rather than from the State Fund Department (as is the case at present); the 3 Aimag Governors should be invited back on the Board; at least one (preferably more) representative from the private sector who is well connected with a broad audience in the private sector and who is willing to help with outreach to the private sector. We believe this is a good time (at MTR and with new government in place) to modify the composition of the PB to be more representative of what was indicated in the project document and to be more in keeping with the norm for GEF supported projects.

1. Conclusion: The Technical Committee (TC) is comprised of highly qualified and very capable individuals, but greater inclusion of individuals with practical experience with relevant initiatives would be helpful.

Recommendation: The MTR believes it is important to have experts on the TC as individuals with on-the-ground practical experience with relevant initiatives in Mongolia such as, for example, those with experience with livestock risk revolving funds, pasture offset initiatives, species reintroduction efforts, community managed hunting areas, ecotourism, wildlife and habitat monitoring.

1. Conclusion: At the mid-term of this project there is still no consensus on the interpretation of the project document related to the connectivity issue. There is not enough time or resources in the project to continue on with uncertainty regarding what the project intended to be done.

Recommendation: UNDP and the PIU should strive to come to a common understanding regarding the connectivity issue before the next PB meeting. We urge the two parties to understand the theme of connectivity as limited to the three LPAs and the landscapes in which these three exist.

1. Conclusion: The TOR for the financial sustainability consultant is somewhat confusing and if not clarified may lead to a less than optimal output from this consultancy. Based on the MTR’s brief conversation with the consultant (who due to poor planning had just left for the field making it impossible for the MTR to meet with this key consultant), she herself is somewhat unclear about aspects of her TOR. It is not too late to correct this shortcoming as the consultant just began her work during the MTR.

Recommendation: Clarify the TOR for the financial sustainability consultant.

1. Conclusion: The Biodiversity IC has been identified and will begin work within the next month. His TOR is confusing and, it would seem, not well thought out. As one example, the TOR state that the consultant should “conduct a review of best practices nationally and from elsewhere in the region pertaining to land use planning tools and approaches to identify, assess the biodiversity and other values of environmentally sensitive areas, and optimally manage or implement measures to conserve biodiversity in such areas including designating areas as no-go areas for development.”

Recommendation: Clarify the TOR for the International Biodiversity Consultant. Ask the IC to provide his own comments on the TOR as the first step in this process of clarification. Ask the NC on BD to help with the revision of the TOR.

1. Conclusion: The project has not done enough to date to inform itself of several important and relevant initiatives. There must be intimate familiarity with these as they may be beneficial in terms of ensuring the project success. Some of these initiatives include hunting management areas managed by CBOs, and areas where Livestock Risk Revolving Fund is or has been operational.

Recommendation: The IC and the NC (on Biodiversity) should visit a few of the hunting management areas managed by CBOs around the country, visit at least one area where the Livestock Risk Revolving Fund has been operating to see how successful that has been, discuss these funds in detail with the WB, CPR and others.

1. Conclusion: Due to lack of translation of documents into English, it was not possible for the MTR to review the management and business plans for the 3 LPAs in much detail. A brief synopsis of these was provided to the IC but it would be helpful to review these in greater detail.

Recommendation: Include in the TOR of the IC on BD a review and critical analysis of the management and business plans of the 3 LPAs.

1. Conclusion: It is essential to the success of the IC on BD assignment, that he work together with a NC who has not only good theoretical knowledge but also a great deal of practical on-the-ground conservation experience in Mongolia.

Recommendation: Ensure the National Biodiversity Consultant has extensive on-the-ground experience and can fully brief the IC on relevant policies, laws (not just the SPA law and Environment Protection law but also the new Pasture law, the new revisions to the Mining Law, etc..), programmes, ongoing and past relevant initiatives related to pasture/livestock management, hunting, wildlife trade, various funds (Livestock Risk Reduction Fund, Soum Development Fund, Environment Protection Fund, NGO funds). It is essential that the NC be the right person for the job and that he/she be fully familiar with all of the afore-mentioned and be able to brief the IC fully in order for the IC to be able to effectively do his job. It is important that the NC have hands-on experience and be fully familiar with the many relevant initiatives both in the past and ongoing today in Mongolia. This should not be theoretical knowledge, it should be practical knowledge based on personal involvement.

1. Conclusion: Unless certain modifications are made to the Livestock Risk Revolving Fund, the MTR does not view it as an appropriate and viable financing mechanism for this project to promote as it may have unintended detrimental environmental effects and is not significantly supporting conservation of globally significant biodiversity as it currently stands. Nevertheless, there are some criteria for participation in the fund that make it a promising tool for both livestock/pasture management as well as biodiversity conservation and with certain modifications it may turn out to be a helpful tool for conservation.

Recommendation: The NC on Sustainable Financing should work together with the IC on Biodiversity to scrutinize the Livestock Risk Revolving fund and to make specific recommendations regarding how the fund could be modified to achieve the desired biodiversity results. (It is important that this documentation be translated into English. The MTR did not have the benefit of seeing the full documentation on the fund in English.)

1. Conclusion: Study tours must be carefully planned to yield the intended result.

Recommendation: This recommendation serves to provide further detail to the recommendation found in the Executive Summary. If a study tour is not needed or is not the most cost-effective way of achieving your objective, don’t do it simply because it is included in the project document. The project is considering a study tour to the United States, in particular to Yellowstone National Park and Grand Teton National Park. Although Yellowstone may be similar in terms of ecosystem, there is not much to learn there in terms of CBNRM. The MTR suggests that it may be more useful to visit Hustai National Park in Mongolia to see what is possible in the long term if lots of support is possible and if the natural resource is well protected. It may also be useful to visit Community Managed hunting areas in Mongolia, and to visit with communities and other stakeholders in areas where Livestock Risk Revolving funds have or continue to operate in Mongolia. Finally, Skype conversations with Peru, Kenya, India, and Bhutan may be useful for this project to learn from those experiences. The MTRT has provided the NPC with contact information in some of those countries. The UNDP CO should also assist the PIU with contacts in these countries.

1. Conclusion: A Working Group has been established to revise the Law on Hunting. The NPC is a member of the WG.

Recommendation: It may be helpful for the WG to consider the following: (1) specific penalties regarding non-compliance be introduced in the revised regulations, e.g., no issuance of new hunting permits for the next year if non-compliance with revenue re-investment during previous year, (2) modify regulations so that not just research professional research institutions can do wildlife census but CBOs and others can as well as long as they are able to pass quality control standards to ensure scientifically rigorous monitoring (technical capacity, equipment capacity, etc.), (3) stipulate that once a sustainable population level (which will be defined) is reached for a given species within its full contiguous range, that hunting – either subsistence or trophy or both—will be allowed.

1. Conclusion: There is an opportunity to further improve the Law on SPAs.

Recommendation: When drafting regulations to the SPA law, consider including a stipulation on the minimum time period for which an LPA can be established. (e.g., not less than 10 years).

1. Conclusion: It is not enough for a good database on LPAs to exist, these must be linked to ensure maximum effectiveness of project effort regarding databases.

Recommendation: Prepare a draft order for consideration by Government regarding inter-ministerial cooperation between the MEGDT, the Mining Cadastral Authority, and the Land Management Agency in which the three would agree that anything entered into the database of one is automatically shared with the others (e.g. through a simple email alert). Include in the proposed revisions to the old Regulation for taking land under LPA the stipulation that once entered in the LPA database, an LPA is automatically considered to be entered in the Mining database and therefore protected from mining exploration. Ensure data transfer between both databases is easy.

1. Conclusion: At present, livestock components of LPA management plans may result in improved livestock management but may not necessarily be directly linked to environmental conservation. This would be fine if this were not a project to conserve biodiversity, but it is such a project and the biodiversity to be conserved is biodiversity of not only local or national importance, but global importance.

Recommendation: There are numerous ways of linking improved livestock management with conservation of biodiversity. Following are only a few ideas to consider. Increase profit of herders by reducing or eliminating middlemen. Consider providing herders with sheering equipment that will increase amount of wool produced per animal. Suggest CBO members agree to certain terms that will result in environmental benefit (e.g., agree to reduce livestock numbers by equivalent as what is gained from benefit provided by cutting out middleman or providing sheers, agree to monitor grassland with agreed upon methodology for doing vegetative transects and base their livestock numbers are results of vegetative transects, etc).

1. Conclusion: The project is investing funds into conducting censuses of various key species (e.g., marmot and gazelle) but these may not yield scientifically rigorous information or the type of information needed to make determinations of when a population level has been achieved that will allow for sustainable harvest. There are several problems. First, at least 2 different methodologies are being used (even within 2 bordering soums) so this information is not comparable. Second, censuses are not being conducted regularly because of lack of funds to buy petrol. This problem deals with financial sustainability which is addressed elsewhere in this report. Third, there is no sharing of information between the 3 soums (in T-K) so it is not possible to have an overall picture. Fourth, there is no clear target (i.e., land area and density of active burrows in the case of marmot) that once reached will permit hunting of either marmot or gazelle.

Recommendation: A single standard methodology should be used. The KfW project is working on standardization. The project should contact the KfW project about this. A simple form and agreement to share information monthly would solve the third problem described above. Regarding the fourth problem, setting a clear target and letting people know where you are in terms of reaching that target is essential. Specific targets regarding target species population numbers/density that must be achieved before hunting of these species can be resumed should be decided upon (obviously, in compliance with the law) and posted along with updated population status information on the information boards which exist in Soum Centers.

1. Conclusion: At present, the Small Grants provided by the project are benefiting individuals and communities in the LPAs but the benefits to the environment are less clear.

Recommendation: Small grants projects should clearly demonstrate two things: benefit to local people and benefit to the environment.

1. Conclusion: At present, individuals are limited to accessing the SGP one time, yet those individuals who successfully use their grant may or may not be able to continue at the level they achieved with the small grant.

Recommendation: Allow successful SGP recipients to access fund more than once but after first time it becomes a low-interest loan (offered through the SGP) instead of a grant. Loan is repaid into SGP trust fund.

**Annex 1. Terms of Reference for International & National Consultants**

## UNDP-GEF Midterm Review

## Terms of Reference

**BASIC CONTRACT INFORMATION**

**Location: Homebased, with one mission to Mongolia**

**Application Deadline:** April 30, 2016

**Category:** Energy and Environment

**Type of Contract:** Individual Contract

**Assignment Type:** International consultant

**Languages Required:** English

**Starting Date: June 15**, 2016

**Duration of Initial Contract:** 4 months between June 15, 2016 – October 5, 2016

**Expected Duration of Assignment: 29** working days

**BACKGROUND**

**A. Project Title**

“Mongolia’s Network of Managed Resource Protected Areas” MON/13/303 project

##### **B. Project Description**

This is the Terms of Reference for the UNDP-GEF Midterm Review (MTR) of the full-sized project titled “Mongolia’s Network of Managed Resource Protected Areas” (PIMS #4554) implemented through UNDP and the Ministry of Environment, Green Development and Tourism of Mongolia, (MEGDT ) which is to be undertaken in 2016. The project document signed in June 30, 2013 however the actual activities started in 2014 and is considered in its third year of implementation.

In line with the UNDP-GEF Guidance on MTRs, this MTR process was initiated before the submission of the second Project Implementation Report (PIR). The MTR process must follow the guidance outlined in the document *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*. (*see Annex 1)*

The project goal is to ensure the integrity of Mongolia’s diverse ecosystems to secure the viability of the nation’s globally significant biodiversity.

This project will help ensure the integrity and survival of a host of globally significant species

and related habitats. This includes helping to secure one of the world’s last intact grasslands, remnants

of Asia’s remaining high-alpine systems, and wide-ranging umbrella and indicator species such as

Snow leopards, Argali sheep, Asiatic wild ass, Siberian crane, Saker falcons, and critical habitat for

millions of gazelle. By establishing the frameworks and capacity required to promote large landscape conservation, the project will result in substantial stabilization and reversal of current land and forest degradation.

This represents an excellent opportunity to not only conserve habitat for globally significant species,

but will have the additional result of improving CO2 storage thereby contributing to global climate

change mitigation efforts.

The project objective is to catalyze the strategic expansion of Mongolia’s PA system through establishment of a network of community conservation areas covering under-represented terrestrial ecosystems.

The project will aim at establishing a new protected area category for strategic PA expansion, and will emplace an institutional capacity and resource base to ensure sustainability of managed resource PAs. The community conservation areas in the project concept cover all Local protected areas, PA Buffer Zones (BZ), community managed areas, special need areas, that are supposed to consist with IUCN categories IV, V and VI requirements/characters and the legislation will promote conservation of large landscapes and globally important species. Local conservation initiatives are highly popular in various regions of Mongolia. Yet, the current legislations do not offer adequate tools and guidance to successfully conserve critical ecosystems and species beyond the borders of NPAs. Therefore, there is an urgent need of enabling legal framework of these types of local endeavors.

The project will support and enhance ability of rural communities and associated LPAs to become more effective tools for biodiversity conservation.

The project will demonstrate that co-management of PAs and a participatory approach that involves local communities in decision-making can lead to better biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihood outcomes of protected areas. By bringing in new thinking to landscape management in Mongolia, the project aims to substantially increase the amount of territory where biodiversity is conserved, cultivate broader support for large-scale biodiversity conservation.

The following 3 diverse locations were identified as project pilot sites:

1. Gulzat LPA  in Sagil, Bukhmurunsoums, Uvs aimag (216000 hectare);
2. Tumenkhaan-Shalz LPA in Norovlin soum, Khentii aimag and Tsagaan-Ovoo and Bayan-Uul soums, Dornod aimag- adjacent area to Toson Khulstai Nature Reserve (374499 hectare);
3. Khavtgar LPA in Batshireet soum, Khentii aimag (104936 hectare).

The project targets two critically under-represented eco-regions: the Altai-Sayan Eco-region and the Daurian Steppe Eco-region, recognized by WWF as part of the Global 200, containing globally important biodiversity. A collection of the Erath’s most outstanding and diverse terrestrial and freshwater, habitats are found here where its loss will be most severely felt, and where we must fight the hardest for conservation. Important species include the Snow Leopard, Argali Wild Sheep, Ibex Goat, Altai Snowcock, Mongolian Gazelle and Mongolian Marmot.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **The project financing** | **Budget amount US$** | |
|  | Global Environment Fund | **1,309,091 US$** |  |
|  | Co-financing UNDP | 1,300,000 US$ |  |
|  | Co-financing the Government of Mongolia (in kind) | 500,000 US$ |  |
|  | Co-financing of GIZ | 200,000 Euro |  |
|  | Co-financing of WWF | 680,000 Euro |  |
|  | Co-financing of KfW | 2,000,000 US$ |  |
|  | **Total financing including co-financing** | **6, 253, 091 US$** |  |

**DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

##### **C. Scope of Work and Key Tasks**

The MTR team will consist of two independent consultants that will conduct the MTR - one team leader with at least 10 year experience in relevant technical areas and exposure to projects and evaluations and one national team expert.

The MTR team will first conduct a document review of project documents (i.e. PIF, Project Document, ESSP, Project Inception Report, PIRs, Finalized GEF focal area Tracking Tools, Project Appraisal Committee meeting minutes, project operational guidelines, manuals and systems, oversight mission reports, minutes of project board meetings etc.) provided by the Project Team and Commissioning Unit (UNDP CO). Then they will consult if needed with the project team and the UNDP CO to clarify their understanding of the objectives and methods of the MTR, producing the MTR inception report thereafter. The MTR mission will then consist of interviews in Ulaanbaatar and site visits to target areas in the Dornod, Khentii and Uvs aimags.

The MTR team will assess the following four categories of project progress and produce a draft and final MTR report. See the annex *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* (Annex 1) for requirements on ratings. No overall rating is required.

1. **Project Strategy**

*Project Design:*

* Review the problem addressed by the project and the underlying assumptions. Review the effect of any incorrect assumptions or changes to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document.
* Review the relevance of the project strategy and assess whether it provides the most effective route towards expected/intended results.
* Review how the project addresses country priorities
* Review decision-making processes

*Results Framework/Logframe:*

* Undertake a critical analysis of the project’s logframe indicators and targets, assess how “SMART” the midterm and end-of-project targets are (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound), and suggest specific amendments/revisions to the targets and indicators as necessary.
* Examine if progress so far has led to, or could in the future catalyse beneficial development effects (i.e. income generation, gender equality and women’s empowerment, improved governance etc...) that should be included in the project results framework and monitored on an annual basis.

1. **Progress Towards Results**

* Review the logframe indicators against progress made towards the end-of-project targets; populate the Progress Towards Results Matrix, as described in the *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*; colour code progress in a “traffic light system” based on the level of progress achieved; assign a rating on progress for the project objective and each outcome; make recommendations from the areas marked as “not on target to be achieved” (red).
* Compare and analyse the GEF Tracking Tool at the Baseline with the one completed right before the Midterm Review.
* Identify remaining barriers to achieving the project objective.
* By reviewing the aspects of the project that have already been successful, identify ways in which the project can further expand these benefits.

1. **Project Implementation and Adaptive Management**

Using the *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*; assess the following categories of project progress:

* Management Arrangements
* Work Planning
* Finance and co-finance
* Project-level monitoring and evaluation systems
* Stakeholder Engagement
* Reporting
* Communications

1. **Sustainability**

Assess overall risks to sustainability factors of the project in terms of the following four categories:

* Financial risks to sustainability
* Socio-economic risks to sustainability
* Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability
* Environmental risks to sustainability

The MTR consultant/team will include a section in the MTR report setting out the MTR’s evidence-based **conclusions**, in light of the findings.

Additionally, the MTR consultant/team is expected to make **recommendations** to the Project Team. Recommendations should be succinct suggestions for critical intervention that are specific, measurable, achievable, and relevant. A recommendation table should be put in the report’s executive summary. The MTR consultant/team should make no more than 15 recommendations total.

##### **D. Expected Outputs and Deliverables**

The MTR consultant/team shall prepare and submit:

* MTR Inception Report: MTR team clarifies objectives and methods of the Midterm Review no later than 2 weeks before the MTR mission. To be sent to the Commissioning Unit/UNDP CO and project management. Approximate due date: June 23, 2016
* Presentation: Initial Findings presented to project management and the Commissioning Unit at the end of the MTR mission. Approximate due date: July 6, 2016
* Draft Final Report: Full report with annexes within 3 weeks of the MTR mission. Approximate due date: July 25, 2016
* Final Report\*: Revised report with annexed audit trail detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final MTR report. To be sent to the Commissioning Unit within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on draft. Approximate due date: September 20, 2016

\*The final MTR report must be in English and Mongolian.

**E. Institutional Arrangement**

The principal responsibility for managing this MTR resides with the Commissioning Unit. The Commissioning Unit for this project’s MTR is UNDP Country office.

The Commissioning Unit will contract the consultants and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within Mongolia for the MTR team. The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the MTR team to provide all relevant documents, set up stakeholder interviews, and arrange field visits.

**F. Duration of the Work**

The total duration of the MTR will be 29 working days within approximately 4 months starting June 15, 2016 and ending no later than October5, 2016. The tentative MTR timeframe is as follows:

* May 26, 2016*:* Application closes
* *June 13, 2016:* Selection of MTR Team
* *June 15, 2016:* Prep the MTR Team (handover of project documents)
* *June 19 (3 days):* Document review and preparing MTR Inception Report
* *June 23 (2 days):* Finalization and Validation of MTR Inception Report- latest start of MTR mission
* *June 24 (13 days):* MTR mission: stakeholder meetings, interviews, field visits
* *July 6:* Mission wrap-up meeting & presentation of initial findings- earliest end of MTR mission
* *July 25 (7 days):* Preparing and submitting draft report
* *September 20 (4 days):* Incorporating audit trail on draft report/Finalization of MTR report
* *October 5:* Preparation & Issue of Management Response
* *October 15, 2016:* Expected date of full MTR completion

The date start of contract is June 15, 2016

**G. Duty Station**

The MTR team will work home based with one field mission to Mongolia, including the project target sites; Dornod, Khentii and Uvs aimags, at minimum. During the mission in Ulaanbaatar the MTR team will be based at the Project Implementation Unit. For the field visit to project target sites the MTR team will travel to Uvs aimag in the west to Gulzat LPA, Dornod and Khentii aimags in the east to Tumenkhaan-Shalz and Khavtgar LPAs.

**Travel:**

* International travel will be required to Mongolia during the MTR mission;
* The Basic Security in the Field II and Advanced Security in the Field courses must be successfully completed prior to commencement of travel;
* Individual Consultants are responsible for ensuring they have vaccinations/inoculations when travelling to certain countries, as designated by the UN Medical Director.
* Consultants are required to comply with the UN security directives set forth under <https://dss.un.org/dssweb/>

All related travel expenses will be covered and will be reimbursed as per UNDP rules and regulations upon submission of an F-10 claim form and supporting documents.

**REQUIRED SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE**

**H. Qualifications of the Successful Applicants**

A team of two independent consultants will conduct the MTR - one team leader with experience and exposure to projects and evaluations in other regions and one national team expert. The Team Leader and will be responsible for the overall final deliverable of the TE inception report, draft report, and final report.

**Team Leader / International Consultant Required Experience:**

Education:

* A post-secondary/advanced degree (Masters level or higher) in nature & environment, management, evaluation, or other related subject

Experience:

* Minimum *10* years of relevant professional experience in biodiversity, conservation, land and water management, or a closely related field;
* Minimum of 5 years experience evaluations (with GEF-financed projects is an advantage);
* Previous experience with results‐based monitoring and evaluation methodologies;
* Experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios;
* Competence in adaptive management, as applied to biodiversity, land and water management, protected areas designation and management, related legal frameworks;
* Experience working in Asia region;
* Demonstrated understanding of issues related to gender and biodiversity conservation, capacity development; experience in gender sensitive evaluation and analysis;
* Project evaluation/review experiences within United Nations system will be considered an asset.

**National Team Expert Required Experience:**

Education:

* A higher education degree (Bachelors level or higher) in nature & environment, land and water management, or other related subject

Experience:

* Minimum 7 years of relevant professional experience in biodiversity, conservation, management, or a closely related field;
* Technical knowledge in the targeted focal areas: biodiversity, land and water management, protected areas designation and management, related legal frameworks;
* Previous experience with results‐based monitoring and evaluation methodologies;
* Experience working in Mongolia;
* Experience working with UNDP-supported and/or GEF-financed projects is an advantage.

***Consultant Independence:***

The consultants cannot have participated in the project preparation, formulation, and/or implementation (including the writing of the Project Document) and should not have a conflict of interest with project’s related activities.

**APPLICATION and SELECTION PROCESS**

For selection of the consultant, the existing Roster of the Bureau in the Asia-Pacific region will be applied that is valid from February 2016 until December 31, 2020.

**Those approached by the Roster Manager will be invited to present Proposal for the assignment.**

**Recommended Presentation of Proposal:**

1. Completed **Letter of Confirmation of Interest and Availability** using the [template](https://intranet.undp.org/unit/bom/pso/Support%20documents%20on%20IC%20Guidelines/Template%20for%20Confirmation%20of%20Interest%20and%20Submission%20of%20Financial%20Proposal.docx) provided by UNDP;
2. **Personal CV or a**[P11 Personal History form](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/Careers/P11_Personal_history_form.doc), indicating all past experience from similar projects, as well as the contact details (email and telephone number) of the Candidate and at least three (3) professional references;
3. **Brief description of approach to work/technical proposal** of why the individual considers him/herself as the most suitable for the assignment, and a proposed methodology on how they will approach and complete the assignment; (max 1 page)
4. **Financial Proposal** proposals must be “all inclusive” and expressed in a lump-sum for the total duration of the contract supported by a breakdown of costs. The term “all inclusive” implies all cost (professional fees, travel costs, living allowances etc.); If an applicant is employed by an organization/company/institution, and he/she expects his/her employer to charge a management fee in the process of releasing him/her to UNDP under Reimbursable Loan Agreement (RLA), the applicant must indicate at this point, and ensure that all such costs are duly incorporated in the financial proposal submitted to UNDP. See Letter of Confirmation of Interest template for financial proposal template. For duty travels, the UN’s Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA) rates are USD 213 for Ulaanbaatar and USD 92 for the country side in the project target sites, which should provide indication of the cost of living in a duty station/destination *(Note: Individuals on this contract are not UN staff and are therefore not entitled to DSAs. All living allowances required to perform the demands of the ToR must be incorporated in the financial proposal, whether the fees are expressed as daily fees or lump sum amount.)*

The lump sum is fixed regardless of changes in the cost components.

Incomplete applications will be excluded from further consideration.

Upon selection of the candidate in line with UNDP IC Policy, the UNDP CO will enter into specific Individual Contract with the expert. The award of the contract will be made to the Individual Consultant who has obtained the highest Combined Score and has accepted UNDP’s General Terms and Conditions. Only those applications which are responsive and compliant will be evaluated. The offers will be evaluated using the “Combined Scoring method” where:

1. The educational background and experience on similar assignments will be weighted a max. of 70%;
2. The price proposal will weigh as 30% of the total scoring.

**I. Schedule of Payments**

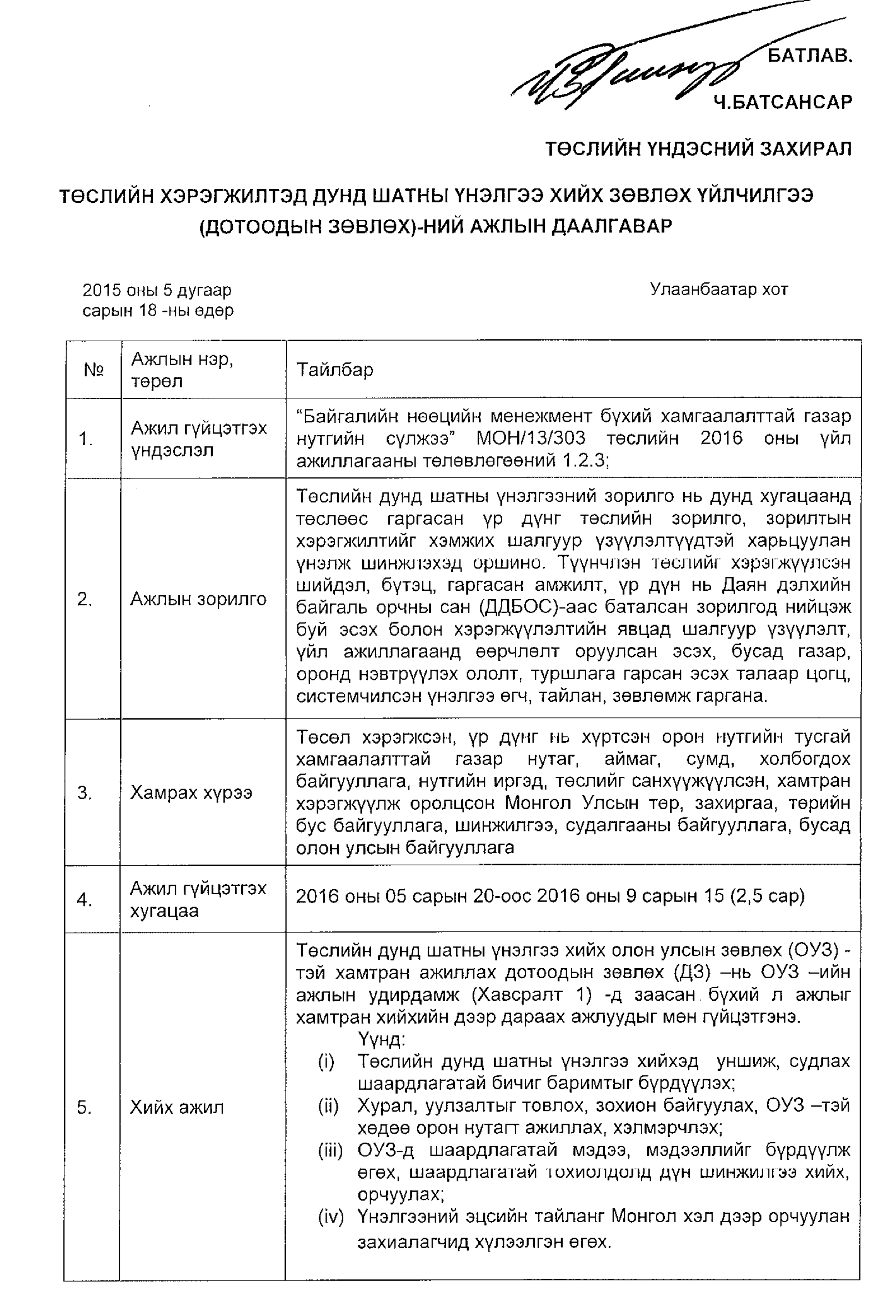
10% of payment upon approval of the MTR Inception Report by June 24, 2016

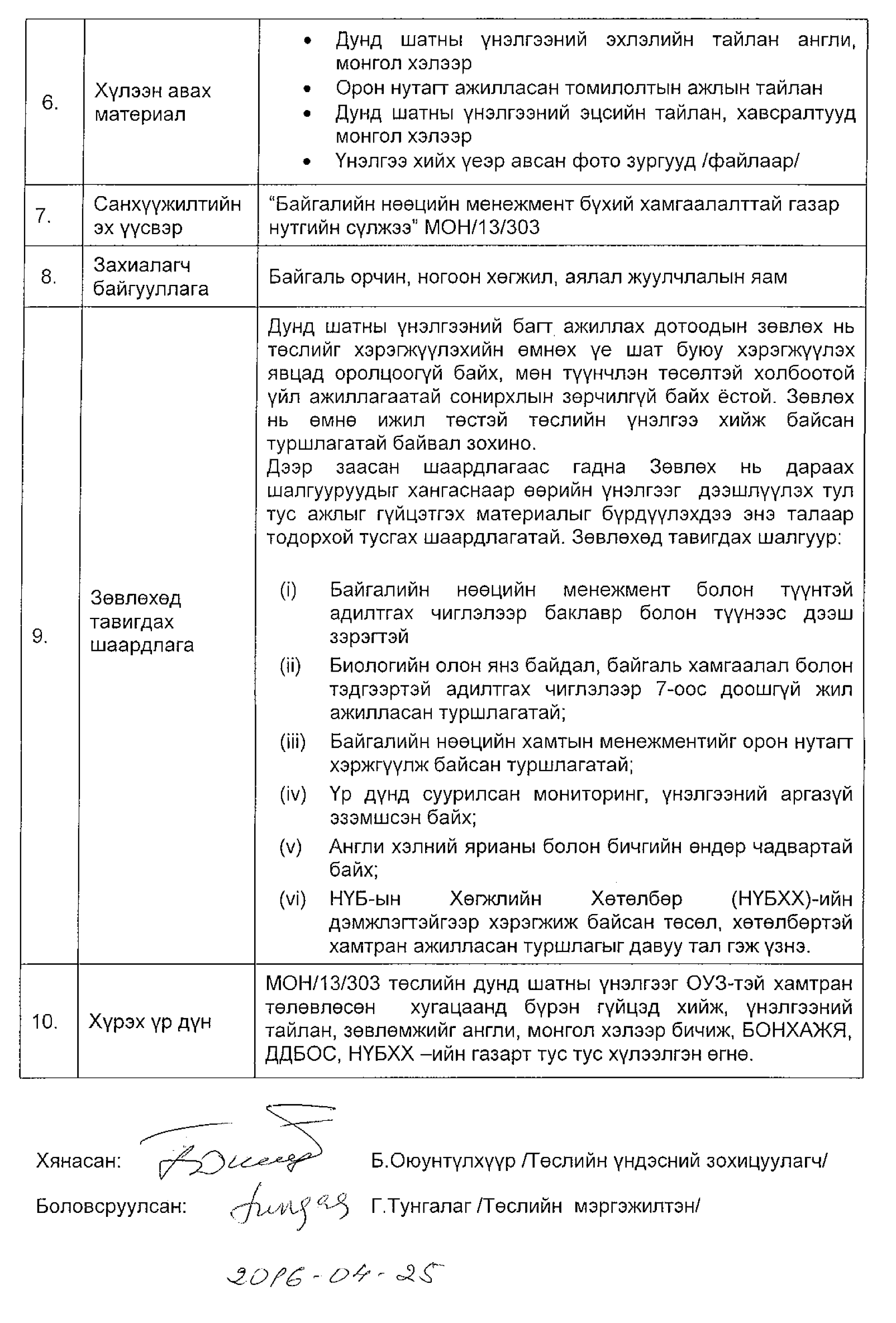
30% upon submission and acceptance of the draft MTR Report by August 15, 2016

60% upon finalization and acceptance of the MTR Report by October 5, 2016

**L. Annexes to the MTR ToR**

* Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects (referenced as ‘UNDP-GEF MTR Guidance’)
* Project document, including Project logical frame
* List of documents to be reviewed by the MTR Team
* Guidelines on Contents for the Midterm Review Report (included in the UNDP-GEF MTR Guidance)
* UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluators/Midterm Review Consultants
* MTR Evaluative Matrix (see the UNDP-GEF MTR Guidance)
* MTR Required Ratings Table and Ratings Scales (see the UNDP-GEF MTR Guidance)
* MTR Report Clearance Form (see the UNDP-GEF MTR Guidance)
* Progress towards results matrix and achievement summary table (as per Annex 8 of the UNDP-GEF MTR Guidance)





**Annex 2. Evaluation Matrix**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Evaluation question** | | **Indicators** | **Sources** | **Methodology**  **\*** |
|  | **PROJECT STRATEGY: How appropriate is the strategy and project design?** | | | |
|  | * How appropriate was the design of the project? | * Correspondence between the problems addressed by the project and underlying assumptions | * Project Documents * SGP Staff | * DR + I |
|  |  | * Correspondence between project strategy and most effective route to achieving goal | * Project Documents * SGP Staff | * DR + I |
|  |  | * Evidence of incorporating lessons from other projects in the design | * Project Documents * SGP Staff | * DR + I |
|  |  | * Evidence of project alignment with national goals and priorities | * UNDP Documents * National Planning Documents * Project Documents | * DR + I |
|  | * Evidence of ownership of the project by national organizations | * Governmental staff | * I |
|  |  | * Evidence of incorporation of perspectives of local, partners and other stakeholders in the project design | * Local stakeholders * Governmental staff * Representatives of organizations | * I |
|  | * • How appropriate is the Project results framework / logframe? | * Adequacy of the Project Goals and Indicators (SMART) to its strategy | * PRODOC & Reports * SGP Staff | * DR + I * Evaluator’s criteria |
|  | * Degree of clarity, practicality and feasibility of the Project objectives and results to the situation and time available | * PRODOC & Reports | * DR * Evaluator’s criteria |
|  | * Evidence of effects not considered to be included in the results framework and monitored regularly | * PRODOC & Reports * Local stakeholders * Governmental staff * Representatives of organizations | * DR + I + DO * Evaluator’s criteria |
| * Extent to which aspects of gender equity and other of similar amplitude in terms of development are effectively monitored. | * PRODOC & Reports * SGP Staff | * DR + I * Evaluator’s criteria |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **PROJECT RESULTS: What is the degree of project progress towards expected results?** | | | |
|  | * ¿What are the achievements of the project until MTR? | * Proposed Objectives and Results | * PRODOC | * DR + I |
|  | * Achieved Objectives and Results | * PRODOC & Reports * Partners and participants * Field Visits | * DR + I + DO |
|  | * Degree of correspondence between progress and proposed in the GEF Tracking Tools for the Project Thematic area | * PRODOC & Reports * GEF Tracking Tools * SGP Staff | * DR + I + DO * Evaluator’ s criteria |
|  | * List of topics and areas in which the project can expand the benefits in terms of achievements | * PRODOC & Reports * Local stakeholders * Governmental staff * Representatives of organizations | * DR + I + DO * Evaluator’ s criteria |
| **PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT: How appropriate was the implementation of the project so far and to what extent was necessary to implement adaptive management?** | | | | |
|  | * How appropriate is operational planning? | * List of startup and project implementation delays and measures to address them | * SGP Project Information | * DR + I |
|  | * Extent to which operational planning is guided by results | * SGP Project Information | * DR + I |
|  | * Degree of use of the results matrix and adjustments made to it since the beginning of the Project | * SGP Project Information | * DR + I |
|  | * How adequate has been finance and co-finance management? | * Efficiency in the management of project financial resources | * SGP Project Information | * DR + I |
|  | * Changes in the allocation of project funds and relevance and degree of ownership | * SGP Project Information | * DR + I |
|  | * Degree of ownership of the financial controls of the project (including planning and reporting) and its flow of funds (to and from the project) | * SGP Project Information | * DR + I |
|  | * Degree to which the co- financing is provided and its level of strategic use | * SGP Project Information * Co-financing information | * DR + I |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | * How adequate is the monitoring of the project? | * Monitoring system in place | * SGP Project Information | * DR + I |
|  | * Participation and inclusion of partners in monitoring | * SGP Project Information * Partners information | * DR + I |
|  | * Alignment with other (national GEF) systems | * SGP Project Information * Other systems information | * DR + I |
|  | * Degree of adequacy of funding for monitoring | * SGP Project Information | * DR + I |
|  | * How suitable are the reports of the project? | * Level of Reporting of Project adjustments to the Project Committee | * SGP Project Information | * DR + I |
|  | * Level of documentation and dissemination of project settings to the partners. | * SGP Project Information * Partners information | * DR + I |
|  | * How suitable are project communications? | * Degree of regularity, effectiveness and inclusiveness of Project communication efforts | * SGP Project Information * Partners information | * DR + I |
|  | * Adequacy of public communications of Project activities and achievements | * SGP Project Information * Partners information | * DR + I + DO |
|  | * How suitable are the management arrangements of the project? | * Overall effectiveness of the project management (responsibilities, lines of supervision, decision making) | * SGP Project Information | * DR + I |
|  | * Quality of project implementation | * SGP Project Information | * DR + I |
|  | * Quality of support provided by UNDP | * SGP Project Information * UNDP information | * DR + I |

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| **LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY: To what extent there are financial, institutional, socio-economic and / or environmental risks to the project results long term sustainability?** | | | | |
|  | * How suitable are the project's strategies to address the different types of risks to the sustainability of project results? | * Degree of relevance of the risks identified in the PRODOC, APR / PIR and ATLAS. | * SGP Project Information * Partners and participants perceptions * Field Visits | * DR + I + DO |
|  | * General Degree of risk factors of sustainability in terms of motivation, capacity and resources. | * SGP Project Information * Partners and participants perceptions * Field Visits | * DR + I + DO |
|  | * List, relevance and existence and implementation of prevention and mitigation of financial sustainability. | * SGP Project Information * Partners and participants perceptions * Field Visits | * DR + I + DO |
|  | * List, relevance and existence and implementation of prevention and mitigation of socio-political sustainability. | * SGP Project Information * Partners and participants perceptions * Field Visits | * DR + I + DO |
|  | * List, relevance and existence and implementation of prevention and mitigation of institutional and / or governance sustainability. | * SGP Project Information * Partners and participants perceptions * Field Visits | * DR + I + DO |
|  | * List, relevance and existence and implementation of prevention and mitigation of environmental sustainability. | * SGP Project Information * Partners and participants perceptions * Field Visits | * DR + I + DO |

**Annex 3. MTR Rating Scales**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Ratings for Progress Towards Results:** (one rating for each outcome and for the objective) | | |
| 6 | Highly Satisfactory (HS) | The objective/outcome is expected to achieve or exceed all its end-of-project targets, without major shortcomings. The progress towards the objective/outcome can be presented as “good practice”. |
| 5 | Satisfactory (S) | The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets, with only minor shortcomings. |
| 4 | Moderately Satisfactory (MS) | The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings. |
| 3 | Moderately Unsatisfactory (HU) | The objective/outcome is expected to achieve its end-of-project targets with major shortcomings. |
| 2 | Unsatisfactory (U) | The objective/outcome is expected not to achieve most of its end-of-project targets. |
| 1 | Highly Unsatisfactory (HU) | The objective/outcome has failed to achieve its midterm targets, and is not expected to achieve any of its end-of-project targets. |

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| **Ratings for Project Implementation & Adaptive Management:** (one overall rating) | | |
| 6 | Highly Satisfactory (HS) | Implementation of all seven components – management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, stakeholder engagement, reporting, and communications – is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management. The project can be presented as “good practice”. |
| 5 | Satisfactory (S) | Implementation of most of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management except for only few that are subject to remedial action. |
| 4 | Moderately Satisfactory (MS) | Implementation of some of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management, with some components requiring remedial action. |
| 3 | Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU) | Implementation of some of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive, with most components requiring remedial action. |
| 2 | Unsatisfactory (U) | Implementation of most of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management. |
| 1 | Highly Unsatisfactory (HU) | Implementation of none of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management. |

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| **Ratings for Sustainability:** (one overall rating) | | |
| 4 | Likely (L) | Negligible risks to sustainability, with key outcomes on track to be achieved by the project’s closure and expected to continue into the foreseeable future |
| 3 | Moderately Likely (ML) | Moderate risks, but expectations that at least some outcomes will be sustained due to the progress towards results on outcomes at the Midterm Review |
| 2 | Moderately Unlikely (MU) | Significant risk that key outcomes will not carry on after project closure, although some outputs and activities should carry on |
| 1 | Unlikely (U) | Severe risks that project outcomes as well as key outputs will not be sustained |

**Annex 4. MTR Itinerary**

| **Date** | **Meeting Start Time** | **Meeting**  **End Time** | **Meeting Place** | **Mode of Travel & Travel Time to Meeting** | **Name of Organization or**  **Institution** | **Name & Title /Position of Person/s met** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| June 23, 2016  Thursday | 12:30 | 12:50 |  | From hotel to UNDP CO |  |  |
| 13:00 | 14:25 | UNDP CO meeting room |  | UNDP | Junai Chimeg, Program officer UNDP |
| 14:25 | 15:05 | UNDP CO meeting room |  | UNDP | Daniela Gasparikova., DRR & B.Bunchingiv, ETL |
| !5:15 | 16:10 | MEGDT State secretary office |  | MEGDT | Ts.Tsengel, State Secretary MEGDT |
| 16:10 | 18:00 | MEGDT PAAD office |  | MRPA project | Bandi Oyuntulkhuur, NPC MRPA project |
| 18:00 | 18:30 |  | Back to the hotel |  |  |
| June 24, Friday | 9:00 | 9:30 |  | From the hotel to WWF office |  |  |
| 9:30 | 10:50 | WWF Ulaanbaatar |  | WWF | D.Batbold, Director WWF, and Munkhchuluun, officer |
| 11:00 | 11:30 | MEGDT meeting room |  | MEGDT | Amgalan Bayasgalan, senior BD officer S.Bayarkhuu, Biosecurity officer |
| 12:00 | 12:40 | UNDP |  | UNDP CO | I.Enkhmandakh, Procurement officer |
| 13:00 | 15:10 | Lunch meeting |  | UNDP | J.Chimeg, PO |
| 15:25 | 19:30 | MRPA project office |  | MRPA project | Project team |
| 19:30 | 20:20 |  | Arrival to the hotel |  |  |
| June 26, 2016  Sunday | 10:30 | 17:20 (local) |  | Travel from UB to Uvs Plane, 8 hours |  |  |
| 18:00 | 19:10 | Hotel Sarnai |  | Uvs aimag Environmental unit | M.Tuguldur EPD officer Uvs aimag |
| 19:30 | 20:30 | Uvs Administration Office |  | Uvs aimag administration office | Ch.Chimed, Chairman CRKh of Uvs aimag |
| June 27, 2016 Monday | 9:00 | 10:00 | Gulzat Initiative NGO office |  | Gulzat Initiative NGO | Batkhishig, BD officer |
| 10:00 | 10:30 | PAA office |  | Uvs aimag PAA Office | Lkhamsuren, senior officer for biodatabase and research |
| 10:40 | 11:40 | EPA Uvs aimag |  | Uvs aimag EPA office in Ulaangom city | Murdorj, Specialist in charge for water issues |
| 17:10 | 19:00 | Buhmurun soum admin office | Car, 4 hours | Uvs aimag, Buhmurun soum administration office | P.Gansukh- soum governor;  Mandakh-ranger;  Bumjargal- environmental inspector; Bolor- local coordinator of EBA project |
| 21:50 | 23:20 | at the intermid camp site to the summer camp, on the bank of the river | Car, 2 hours 20 min | CBOs of Buhmurun soum | Bayanmunkh –CBO leader;  Gansukh- leader of Tsagaan ovoo community;  total 9 members (5 male and 4 female) of 2 CBOs |
| June 28, 2016 Tuesday | 13:45 | 15:10 | Uvs aimag, Sagil soum CBO camp | Car, Approx. 4,5 hours | CBOs of Sagil soum at the sheep sheering site | Sagil soum CBO members: 11 male and 8 female of 3CBOs |
| 16:00 | 16:50 | Fenced Water source area by SGP | Car, 20 min | Sagil soum CBO | Gavaan- CBO leader |
| 16:50 | 17:20 | By fenced water source area |  | Sagil soum CBO | Nyamdavaa- a ranger of Sagil soum |
| June 29, Wednesday | 10:00 | 11:30 | Uvs aimag EPA Office | Car, 1,5 hours | Uvs aimag EPA | Ganbold- Director EPA, Uvs aimag |
| 13:30 | 21:00 |  | Depart from Uvs to UB by plane, 8:30 hours |  |  |
| June 30, Thursday | 12:30 | 13:00 |  | From hotel to FWC |  |  |
| 13:20 | 14:50 | Fresh Water Center, library |  | Center for policy research | S.Volodya- Community development and pasture mngt expert, MRPA project trainer |
| 15:00 | 15:50 | Fresh Water Center, library |  | Individual pasture consultant | Altanzul- Member of the project technical committee |
| 15:50 | 16:20 | Fresh Water Center, library |  | Environmental education and environmental awareness increase, NGO on eco-school | Shinetsetseg- head of the NGO |
| 16:30 | 20:00 | PIU |  | MRPA project | B.Oyuntulkhuur- NPC of the project |
|  | 20:00 | 20:40 |  | Arrival to the hotel |  |  |
| July 1, Friday | 8:30 | 9:00 |  | From the hotel to MEGDT |  |  |
| 9:00 | 9:20 | MEGDT |  | MEGDT | The meeting did not happen, NPD was not in the office |
| 17:15 | 19:00 | Khentii Admin Office | From UB to Khentiin aimag by Car, 5 hours 40 mins | Khentii admin office, meeting room | M.Munkhtemuulen –head Khavtgar NGO and LC;  Ayurzana- ranger of Khan Khentii SPA; Jargalsaikhan, Volunteer ranger;  Badrakh- VR;  Erdemetsogt-head of CBO;  Urjinkhand- member of CBO (3CBOs) |
| 19:00 | 20:45 | Khentii Admin Office |  | Khentii Admin Office, Director’s office | G.Enkhbayar- Director of Environmental unit of Khentii aimag;  Batsaikhan, specialist in charge for forest and communities |
| July 2, Saturday | 9:00 | 13:00 |  | From Khentii aimag center to Norovlin soum |  |  |
| 13:10 | 15:00 | Norovlin soum Administration | Car, 4 hours | Norovlin soum administration | Bayarbat – CRKh chairman;  Erdenebaatar-vice governor of Norovlin soum;  Uuganbat, ranger of Norovlin soum and local coordinator |
| 16:00 | 18:00 | Narstai CBO | Car, 1 hour | Narstai CBO | Enkhbat- Narstai CBO leader,  9 members: 2 VR; and 4 female and 5 male |
|  | 18:10 | 20:30 |  | To Bayan-Uul soum, 2.20 hours |  |  |
| July 3, Sunday | 9:00 | 10:30 | Bayan-Uul soum Governor’ office | Car, 3.5 hours | Bayan-Uul Administration | Dorj- Governor;  Uuganbat- Norovlin soum ranger; Mukhbat- Bayan-uul soum ranger;  M.Aldar- Tsgaan Ovoo soum Ranger; Erdenebileg- VR of CBO |
| 10:40 | 12:00 | Env unit office at the Bayan-uul soum Administration |  | Bayan-Uul Administration | Uuganbat- Norovlin soum ranger; Mukhbat- Bayan-uul soum ranger;  M.Aldar- Tsgaan Ovoo soum Ranger; Erdenebileg- VR of Dunkhaan CBO |
| 14:00 | 16:30 | Bag center meeting room | Car, 1 hour | CBOs | 13 members of 2 CBOs: 7 male and 6 female |
| 16:30 | 21:15 |  | To Khentii- Chingiis city, 4.45 hours |  |  |
| July 4, Monday | 9:00 | 14:10 |  | Depart from Khentii to UB by car, 5.10 hours |  |  |
| July 5, Tuesday | 8:30 | 9:00 |  | From the hotel to EIC |  |  |
| 9:00 | 9:40 | EIC room |  | Environmental information center by MEGDT | G.Batkhishig- interface developer; G.Gandoljin- GIS specialist |
| 9:45 | 10:45 | GIZ office |  | GIZ project | Suvd Purevjav - GIZ officer, and ex-GTZ Community hunting project coordinator |
| 11:00 | 12:20 | TNC meeting room |  | TNC Mongolia | D.Galbadrakh, coordinator of TNC |
| 12:30 | 13:00 | Telephone call |  | MRPA project consultant | Erdenebileg, Sustainable finance consultant |
| 13:00 | 14:00 | CPR Director’s office |  | Center for policy research, NGO | Enkh-Amgalan- Director |
| 16:00 | 20:45 | PIU office |  | MRPA project | B.Oyuntulhuur, NPC |
|  | 20:45 | 21:15 |  | Arrival to the hotel |  |  |
| July 6, Wednesday | 8:30 | 9:00 |  | From the hotel |  |  |
| 9:15 | 10:25 | KhKhSPA Director’ office |  | Khan Khentii SPA administration | B.Khashmargad- Director |
| 10:35 | 11:00 | MEGDT |  | MEGDT Forest Policy Department | N.Enkhtaivan, senior officer Forest policy coordination department |
| 11:45 | 13:00 | MEGDT, PAAD Director’ office |  | MEGDT, PAAD | Ch.Batsansar, NPD, Director PAAD |
| 14:10 | 15:40 | Library, Fresh Water center |  | MRPA project consultant | G.Erdenetsolmon, CBO and NGO management strengthening consultant |
| 15:45 | 16:50 | Library, Fresh Water center |  | MRPA project consultant | D.Enkhbileg- BD consultant |
| 17:00 | 17:20 | PIU |  | PIU | G.Tungalag, Policy advisor |
| 19:15 | 19:30 |  | Drive back to the hotel |  |  |
| July 7, Thursday | 8:30 | 9:00 |  | From the hotel |  |  |
| 9:00 | 19:30 | Library, Fresh Water center and PIU office | MTR team work | PIU | O.Mendsaikhan, M&E  D.Bayarmaa, AFO  M.Nomin, Secretary and Translator  Ya.Dagvadorj, Driver |
| 14:50 | 15:00 | Telephone call |  | Biodiversity officer at MEGDT | A.Bayasgalan, tel call |
| 19:30 | 20:10 |  | Arrival to the hotel |  |  |
| July 8, Friday | 9:00 | 11:45 | Hotel room |  | MTE team work |  |
| 12:00 | 13:25 | Meeting lunch |  |  | J.Chimeg, PO UNDP |
| 13:30 | 15:15 | UNDP meeting room |  | UNDP CO | Daniela Gasparikova, DRR,  J.Chimeg, PO |
| 15:20 | 18:00 | MEGDT meeting hall |  | MEGDT | B.Khashmargad, Director KhKhSPAA  B.Undarmaa, GEF focal point  Enkhsaikhan, Director Int relations department  V.Javzan, Officer at the Monitoring and Internal audit department, MEGDT  B.Oyuntulkhuur, NPC  O.Mendbaatar, M&E  M.Nomin, Secretary and Translator |
|  | 18:00 | 19:30 |  | Arrival to the hotel |  |  |

**Annex 5. List of Project Sites Visited by the MTR Team (LPA name and location)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Name of Local Protected Area** | **Location** |
| 1 | Gulzat LPA | Uvs aimag, Buhmurun and Sagil soums |
| 2 | Toson Khulstai Shalz LPA | Khentii aimag Norovlin soums, and Dornod aimag Bayan-uul soum |

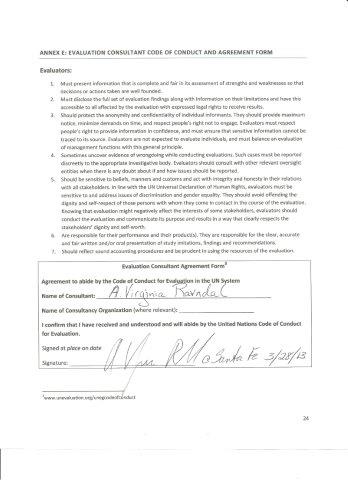
**Annex 6. Stakeholders Met by the MTR Team**

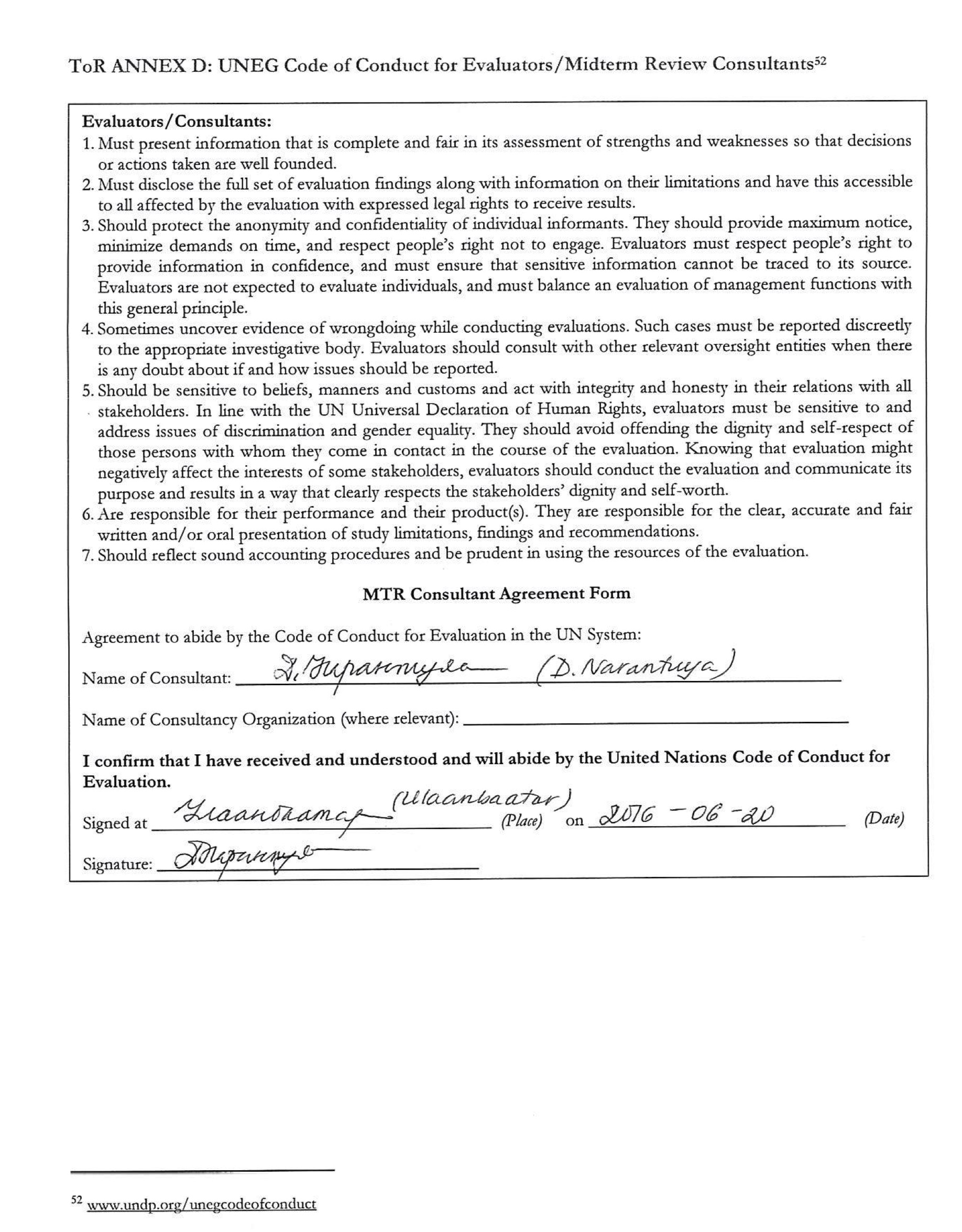
|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Name / Designation** | | **Organization/Institution** |
| ***Implementing Partner (MEGDT)*** | | | |
| 1. | S.Bayarkhuu, Biosecurity officer | | MEGDT |
| 2. | G.Batkhishig, Interface developer | | Environmental Information Center |
| 3. | G.Gandoljin, GIS specialist | | Environmental Information Center |
| 4. | A.Bayasgalan, Senior biodiversity officer | | MEGDT |
| 5. | N.Enkhtaivan, Senior officer at Forest policy coordination department | | MEGDT |
| 6. | Ts.Enkhsaihan, Director International Relations department | | MEGDT |
| 7. | B.Undarmaa, GEF Focal Point | | MEGDT |
| 8. | V.Javzan,Officer, Internal Audit department | | MEGDT |
| ***Central Government*** | | | |
| 1. | Ts.Tsengel, State Secretary and Chairman of the Project board | |  |
| ***Provincial (Aimag) Government*** | | | |
| 1. | Ch.Chimed, Chairman of Citizen’s Representation of Uvs aimag | | Uvs province administration office |
| 2. | M.Tuguldur, BD and social specialist at Environmental unit Uvs aimag | | Uvs aimag Env Office |
| 3. | Lkhamsuren, senior officer for biodatabase and research | | Uvs aimag Env Office |
| 4. | Murdorj, Specialist in charge for water issues | | Uvs aimag Env Office |
| 5. | Batsaikhan, specialist in charge for forest and communities | | Khentii aimag Environmental unit |
| ***Local (Soum) Government*** | | | |
| 1. | P.Gansukh, Governor of Buhmurun soum of Uvs aimag | | Buhmurun soum of Uvs aimag |
| 2. | Mandakh, Ranger of Buhmurun soum of Uvs aimag | | Buhmurun soum, Uvs aimag |
| 3. | Bumjargal, Environmental inspector of Buhmurun soum of Uvs aimag | | Buhmurun soum administration, Uvs aimag |
| 4. | Bolor, Local coordinator of EBA project | | EBA project at Buhmurun soum, Uvs aimag |
| 5. | Nyamdavaa, Ranger of Sagil soum | | Sagil soum administration, Uvs aimag |
| 6. | Ayurzana, Ranger of Khan Khentii SPA | | Khan Khentii SPA |
| 7. | Bayarbat, Chairman of CRKh of Norovlin soum of Khentii aimag | | Norovlin soum Administration of Khentii aimag |
| 8. | Erdenebaatar, Vice governor of Norovlin soum | | Norovlin soum administration |
| 9. | O.Uuganbat, Ranger/Local coordinator of the project in Norovlin soum | | Norovlin soum of Khentii aimag |
| 10. | Dorj- Governor of Bayan-uul soum of Dornod aimag | | Bayan-uul soum of Dornod aimag |
| 11. | B.Mukhbat, Ranger of Bayan-uul soum | | Bayan-uul soum of Dornod aimag |
| 12. | M.Aldar, Ranger of Tsgaan Ovoo soum of Dornod aimag | | Tsgaan Ovoo soum of Dornod aimag |
| ***UNDP*** | | | |
| 1. | Daniela Gasparikova, DRR | | UNDP CO |
| 2. | B.Bunchingiv, Environmental Team Leader | | UNDP CO |
| 3. | J.Chimeg, Program Officer | | UNDP CO |
| 4. | I.Enkhmandakh, Procurement officer | | UNDP CO |
| ***Donor funded projects*** | | | |
| 1. | P.Suvd, project officer | | GIZ |
| ***CBOs*** | | | |
| 1. | Bayanmunkh, CBO leader | | Buhmurun soum CBO, Uvs aimag |
| 2. | Gansukh, Leader of Tsagaan ovoo community | | Buhmurun soum CBO, Uvs aimag |
| 3. | Gavaan, Sagil soum CBO leader | | Sagil soum CBO, Khentii aimag |
| 4. | Jargalsaikhan, Volunteer ranger | | Khavtgar LPA of Khentii aimag |
| 5. | Urjinkhand, Member of CBO | | Khavtgar LPA of Khentii aimag |
| 6. | Erdemetsogt, Head of CBO | | Khavtgar LPA of Khentii aimag |
| 7. | Badrakh, Volunteer ranger | | Khavtgar LPA of Khentii aimag |
| 8. | Erdenebileg, Volunteer ranger of Dunkhaan CBO | | CBO of Bayan-uul soum of Dornod aimag |
| 9. | Enkhbat, Leader of Narstai CBO in Norovlin soum of Khentii aimag | | CBO of Norovlin soum of Khentii aimag |
| ***NGOs*** | | | |
|  | D.Batbold, Director | WWF Mongolia | |
|  | B.Munkhchuluun, Officer | WWF Mongolia | |
|  | D.Galbadrakh, Coordinator | TNC Mongolia | |
|  | M.Munkhtemuulen, Head | Khavtgar NGO | |
|  | D.Yadamjav, Head | Gulzat initiative | |
|  | Batkhishig, Officer | Gulzat Initiative | |
|  | Shinetsetseg, Head of NGO | Environmental education and environmental awareness increase | |
|  | Ts.Volodya, livestock expert | Center for Policy Research | |
|  | Enkh-Amgalan, Director | Center for Policy Research | |
|  | D.Enkhbileg, BD consultant | Mammal Society | |
|  | D.Ganselem, Head | National CBO Association | |
|  | ***Project Board Members*** |  | |
|  | Ts.Tsengel, State Secretary | MEGDT | |
|  | Ch.Batsansar, Director of Protected Areas Administration Department | MEGDT | |
|  | G.Enkhbayar, Director of Environmental unit of Khentii aimag | Khentii aimag Environmental unit | |
|  | B.Ganbold, Director of Environmental unit of Uvs aimag | Uvs aimag Environmental unit | |
|  | Khashmargad, Director | Khan Khentii SPA administration, MEGDT | |
|  | ***Technical Committee Members*** |  | |
|  | Altanzul, pasture expert | Independent consultant | |
|  | ***MRPA Project Implementation Unit*** |  | |
|  | B.Oyuntulkhuur, National Project Coordinator | MRPA project | |
|  | G.Tungalag, Policy advisor | MRPA project | |
|  | O.Mendsaikhan, M&E Officer | MRPA project | |
|  | D.Bayarmaa, Admin and Finance officer | MRPA project | |
|  | M.Nomin, Secretary/Translator | MRPA project | |
|  | Ya.Dagvadorj, Driver | MRPA project | |
|  | ***MRPA consultants*** |  | |
|  | Erdenebileg, Sustainable finance consultant | Independent consultant | |
|  | G.Erdenetsolmon, CBO and NGO management strengthening consultant | Independent consultant | |

**Annex 7. List of Documents Reviewed**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Documents** | |
| **MRPA Project Plans** | |
| Project Document | EN/MN |
| Revised project log-frame (2014) | EN |
| Annual Work Plan (2013, 2014, 2015, 2016) | EN |
| **MRPA Project Reports** | |
| Project Inception Report (2014) | EN |
| Project Board Meeting minutes (2013, 2014, 2015, 2016) | EN |
| Decree by the Minister of MEGDT on the appointment of joint SPAN&MRPA Board members (2014, 2015) | EN |
| Project Implementation Report (PIR) (2014, 2015) | EN |
| QOR (2014, 2015, 2016) | EN |
| Annual/semi-annual reports (2014, 2015, 2016) | EN |
| Semi-annual reports to MEGDT (2014, 2015, 2016) | MN |
| Audit reports (2015) | EN |
| Report on the Monitoring visits to  NIM implemented projects of Environment cluster (2015, 2016) | EN |
| Report of Monitoring, evaluation and internal auditing department of MEGDT (2016) | MN |
| GEF&UNDP Financial Expenditure Report (2013, 2014, 2015) | EN |
| Co-financing expenditure report (2015) | EN |
| Financial reports to MEGDT, MoF (2015, 2016) | MN |
| **MRPA Scorecards** | |
| METT for Tosonkhulstai NP and BZ, Tumenkhaan-Shalz LPA (March 2013, May 2016) | EN |
| METT for Khavtgar LPA (August 2015, May 2016) | EN |
| METT for Gulzat LPA (July 2015, May 2016) | EN |
| Financial sustainability scorecard (in BD Tracking tool) (May 2016) | EN |
| Capacity scorecard (May 2016) | EN |
| **MRPA Project technical documents (studies, guidelines, etc)** | |
| Feasibility assessment of existing laws and regulations on community conservation areas in Mongolia and international experience (2014) | MN |
| Training module on increasing the participation of the local government and community in the policy regulations and implementation /designed for short courses of local decision makers at the Management & Administration Institute) (2014) | MN |
| Online training module to strengthen capacity of rangers at SPA | MN |
| Report and spatial data for creating the National Database on LPAs (2015) | MN |
| Report on establishment and strengthening the management structure for Tumenkhaan-Shalz LPA /Abstract report (2015) | MN/EN |
| Report on establishment and strengthening the management structure for Gulzat LPA /Abstract report (2015) | MN/EN |
| Report on establishment and strengthening the management structure for Khavtgar LPA /Abstract report (2015) | MN/EN |
| Main amendments proposed to the Law on Environment (2016) | MN |
| Main amendments proposed to the Regulation on taking land under local protection (2015) | MN |
| Report on consultancy service “Determine a distribution and movement areas for Mongolian gazelle, Argali sheep, Demoiselle crane and forest ungulates as under-represented terrestrial ecosystems through establishing link between current PAs” (2015) | EN |
| TOR on Biodiversity conservation | MN |
| TOR of Sustainable finance consultant | MN |
| TOR of policy expert | MN |
| TOR on training on diary products making for Batshireet and Bayan-Uul soums CBO members | MN |
| TOR on training on Livestock risk revolving fund in TumenkhaanShalz LPA | MN |
| TOR on consultancy on connectivity | MN |
| TOR on training on felt products making for Norovlin soum CBO members | MN |
| TOR on capacity strengthening of management personnel and teachers of bufferzone schools within the international eco-school program | MN |
| TOR of a consultant to strengthen capacity of parties responsible for LPAs management | MN |
| TOR to fence water source area in Sagil soum, Uvs aimag | MN |
| TOR to conduct mammal census in Khavtgar LPA and its surrounding, Buffer zone of Khan Khentii SPA | MN |
| TOR on MTE Consultant National | MN |
| Tripartite Co-management agreement between Khentii aimag Batshireet soum Governor, Khan Khentii SPA and Khavtgar NGO | MN |
| **MRPA Project communications and awareness materials, and other additional documents** | |
| Project Fact Sheet / brochure (2014, 2016) | MN/EN |
| Gulzat LPA leaflet (2015) | MN |
| Handbook on community-based natural resource management ( 2015) | MN |
| Guideline for herder communities on establishing pasture use contracts (2015) | MN |
| Simple methods for monitoring of marmot and Demoiselle crane (2015) | MN |
| Maps for Gulzat, Khavtgar and Tumenkhaan-Shalz LPAs (2014-2015) | MN |
| Filling the gaps to protect the biodiversity of Mongolia by WWF | EN |
| Geographic Atlas of Bayan-Uul soum | MN |
| Biodiversity gap analysis of the grasslands and forest steppe of central and eastern Mongolia, TNC, 2011 | EN |
| Identifying conservation priorities in the face of future development: applying development by design in the grasslands of Mongolia, 2011 TNC | EN |
| Identifying conservation priorities in the face of future development: Applying development by design in the Mongolian Gobi, 2013 | EN |
| Project information table | EN |
| List of publications | EN |
| List of SGPs | EN |
| List of equipment | EN |
| Management structure, rights of parties as per Management plan of LPAs, selective translation | EN |
| Co-finance letter from GIZ | EN |
| Co-finance letter from WWF | EN |
| SG Biodiversity offset | MN |
| PA by ecosystem, xls table | EN |
| Progress Report on LPA database creation | MN |
| Budget monitoring report to June 2016 | EN |
| Content of the sustainable livestock development program of Bayan-Uul soum, related activities and significance, presentation | MN |
| Business plan for Gulzat Initiative NGO 2015-2018 | MN |
| Management plan of Gulzat LPA 2015-2019 | MN |
| Strategic plan of Gulzat LPA 2015-2025 | MN |
| Hunting management plan of game area of Gulzat LPA, Uvs aimag 2015- 2016 | MN |
| Management plan of Khavtgar LPA | MN |
| Management plan of Toson Khulstai LPA 2015-2018 | MN |
| Management plan of Dunkhaan Shalz LPA 2015-2018 | MN |
| Management plan of Tumenkhaan-Mogoin shil LPA 2015-2018 | MN |
| Business plan of Tosonkhulstai LPA 2015-2018 | MN |
| Business plan of Dunkhaanshalz LPA 2015-2018 | MN |
| Business plan of Tumenkhaan Mogoin shil LPA 2015-2018 | MN |
| Business plan of Khavtgar LPA | MN |
| Strategic plan of Tumenkhaan Shalz LPA 2015-2025 | MN |
| Strategic plan of Khavtgar LPA 2015-2020 | MN |
| Order#11 on establishment of community group in Byanauul soum by CRKh, and its attachments | MN |
| Order #6 on protection of specific natural resources by Tsagaan Ovoo soum CRKh | MN |
| Order #2 on protection of flora and fauna by CRKh of 5th bagh of Tsagaan Ovoo soum | MN |
| Co-management contract signed between soum governor and community group Tsagaan ovoo soum | MN |
| Order #4 on approval and enforcement of the program (on nature protection and herder’s llivelihood improvement through sustainable management of pastureland) by CRKh Tsagaan ovoo soum | MN |
| Order #20 Regulation on pasture offset and use of pasture by long term contract by Norovlin soum, CRKh | MN |
| Order 7/07 on Designating land under local protection and game zone, Uvs aimag CRKh | MN |
| Attachment 19 of order 7/07: Rules for Gulzat initiative NGO | MN |
| Attachment 21: Regulation for Monitoring committee | MN |
| Attachment 25: Regulation on loan rotation fund of Gulzat initiative NGO | MN |
| Attachment 24: Regulation on community fund |  |
| Order A/24 of Norovlin soum’ Governor on Protection of specific nature resources by herders | MN |
| Project achievements (July 2013- June 2016), ppt | EN |
| Proposal: Revision to the law on Special protected area | MN |
| Summary on revised law on SPA | MN |
| Concept paper of revised version of the law on SPA | MN |
| Gulzat LPA Leaflet | MN |
| CB Gulzat Initiative NGO | MN |
| International Eco school program | MN |
| Manual for herders: opportunity to use the pasture under land lease | MN |
| Manual for Herders: Co management CBNRM | MN |
| Manual: Monitoring of marmot, birds and gazelle | MN |
| Wonders of high mountain, WWF | MN |
| Wonder of Mountain steppe | MN |
| Nature protection in Buhmurun soum 2012-2015 | MN |

**Annex 8. Signed Consultant Code of Conduct**





**Annex 9. Checklist for Gender Sensitive Mid-Term Review**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Question** | **Yes** | **No** | **Partially** |
| **Project Design And Preparation** | (a) Does the project document reflect attainable and clear gender-responsive objectives and results? |  | **√** |  |
| (b) Do the intervention objectives address needs of both men and women? |  |  | **√** |
| **Result Framework** | (a) Does the results framework include gender responsive indicators and a baseline to monitor gender equality results? |  | **√** |  |
| (b) Does the project make it clear how women will be involved as active participants in the project implementation? |  | **√** |  |
| (c) Are targets set to guarantee a sufficient level of gender balance in activities? |  | **√** |  |
| **Monitoring And Evaluation** | Has the monitoring and evaluation of the project cover gender issues and monitor behavioral changes towards greater gender equality? |  |  | **√** |
| **Implementation** | (a) Does executive agency has capacity to deliver benefits to or involve women? | **√** |  |  |
| (b) Does the project ensure gender balance in their board or staff? |  |  | **√** |
|  | (c) Does the project ensure gender balance in their technical committee? |  |  | **√** |
| **Project impact** | (a) Has the projects disaggregated the beneficiaries by sex? |  |  | **√** |
| (b) Has the interventions been considered to make potential positive impact (e.g., empower women, sustainable income generating businesses by women)? | **√** |  |  |

This is not a gender specific project, nonetheless the gender equality is being adequately addressed at all levels. All interventions are relevant for women, who play a major role in livestock husbandry, livestock product manufacture, as well as tourism activities.

There is a Gender Action Plans (GAP) of 2015 and 2016 that focus on trainings dedicated for women, and specifies target for female participants be at least 30%. Women participation in trainings and workshops is exceeding the target, and women enrolment into the activities of CBOs as well as their representation at higher level of management level approximates the number of men in the board and monitoring committee of CBOs.

The project gives equal opportunity to women and men to be enrolled into the training. From the summary info on the trainings, the average percentage of women participants in the workshop/seminar and training excluding dedicated trainings for women and for rangers was 46%, 54% percent of male participants.

The training conducted in Uvs aimag on the strengthening of the women’s leadership skill has received positive feedback from participants, it was helpful for women to develop themselves, and learn on their potential ability, and willingness to be a leader in the future endeavours. Skills development trainings e.g., writing small grant project proposal, making felt products, and dairy products conducted among women in Eastern pilot area were acknowledged by the beneficiaries. Importance and value of these activities were emphasized during the field visit meetings to the CBOs.

However, there are still some improvements to be made to achieve gender equality in the project implementation. There is visible imbalance in the staffing at the project implementation unit, 2 (33%) of 6 staff members are male and 4 (66%) are female. However, if included the local coordinators of the project the PIU staff is 11, of which 5 (45%) are female staff and 55% are male. In the Project Board (PB), of the 11 members, 4 (36%) are women and 7 (64%) are men, and the same ratio implies for the Technical Committee composition. Of the 33 CBOs leaders, 4 (or 12%) are women leaders. According to the NPC, approximately 80% of the monitoring committee of CBOs are women, and around 30-40% of the CBOs board are female, but that information is not well documented. Thus, it is recommended to disaggregate any gender related information at all levels of the project from now on.

There was gender balanced grant distribution among applicants for the SGP; 13 (50%) SGPs of 26 total submitted proposals were related to women led project activities.

Although in many cases project-level information has been disaggregated by gender, this was not always the case. This should be a rule for the project, including the CBOs. This can easily managed by local coordinators, as well as CBOs. In addition, GAP monitoring and gender disaggregated info is suggested to be included into the tasks of the project Monitoring and evaluation officer.

According to women, the project enhanced gender equality as the women were trained in dairy products production, and making felt made products to support their additional income generation. In addition, they have taken part in the trainings held at each CBO by the project consultants on importance of biodiversity conservation, on project proposal writing skills development, also participated in the dedicated training to strengthen women’s leadership.

Women want the project to ensure they benefit even more to further enhance the income by expanding their berry tree plantation, and learning the means of preparing long lasting preserved jams, and equivalent products from berries. Also, they expressed willingness to take part in the seminars and workshops to become more knowledgeable to contribute in decision-making.

Prior preparation of the Gender Action Plan it is recommended to conduct gender needs assessment, as it may assist in adequate addressing the gender issues in pilot area.

Capacity strengthening programs to empowering women, and support them in creating their business, which will continue beyond the life of the project to sustain their livelihood, are recommended for consideration in the GAP. In addition, it is recommended to consider interventions to empower girls in nature protection studies and activities.

**Annex 10. MTR Report Clearance Form**

**Midterm Review Report Reviewed and Cleared By: Commissioning Unit**

Name:

Signature: Date:

**UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor**

Name:

Signature: Date:

## Annex 11. Audit Trail for the comments on the Mid-Term Review Report related to ‘Mongolia’s Network of Managed Resource Protected Areas’ Project (PIMS 4393*)*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Author** | **#** | **Para No./ comment location** | **Comment/Feedback on the draft TE report** | **MTR team**  **response** |
| M. Arguelles (MA)  Results & Knowledge Specialist, UNDP-GEF;  Buyandelger U. (BU)  M&E Officer, UNDP Mongolia CO | Annexes | Annexes | Be sure to include the following in the Annexes of the final MTR:  Completed Audit Trail  Relevant mid-term Tracking Tools  Annexes:  Focus group discussion questions (structured or semi-structured)  In-person interview guide or questions (questionnaire if applicable) | The completed audit trail is now included in the MTR report as Annex 11. The METTs done for the three LPAs prior to the MTR are included in a separate document. Due to the size of the METT documents, it is not feasible to include them in the annexes to the MTR. The MTR used the evaluation matrix presented in Annex 2 (which is provided in the UNDP Guidelines for evaluations) as a general guide. Due to the very short time frame in between the contracting of the MTR Team and the onset of the mission, and the lack of time between arriving in country and beginning consultations, it was not possible to develop written questionnaires. Nevertheless, given the long-term experience of the MTR Team Leader with UNDP/GEF project evaluations related to biodiversity conservation, the lack of written questionnaires was not considered to be a constraint. |
| MA | 5 | Project Information Table | The ‘UNDP Project ID (PIMS #)” should show 4554 and not 00086907, which is the Atlas Project ID | Changed. Thank you. |
| MA | 5 | 1.2 Brief Project Description | Change “UNDP/GEF-supported full-size project” to “UNDP-supported GEF-financed full-size project” | Changed. Thank you. |
| MA | 5 | 1.2 Brief Project Description | Remove “GEF” from the sentence “The GEF biodiversity project…” | Done. Thank you. |
| BU | 6 | 1.3 Brief Progress Summary | *Closing of the project proposed by the PIU*: I wonder what are the analysis/justifications presented in the proposal? How the targets assessment is formulated/presented in the proposal? | According to minutes of the Project Board meetings reviewed by the MTRT, both the PIU and the UNDP CO agreed that the project should be closed early. Upon conferring with the UNDP CO DRR, she clarified that this preliminary decision was dependent upon the MTR. During the MTR mission, both the PIU and Government agreed that it was in fact not a good idea to close the project early as the MTR results indicated that there was still a lot to be done regarding strengthening the three LPA models in particular. There is now general agreement on this point. |
| BU | 7 | 1.3 | Instead of “several”, is it two of the targets? (not realistically be achieved by project end) | The word “several” is retained as we believe it to be more accurate than “two”. This is due to the fact that several targets are listed under a single indicator. For example, there are really six distinct targets that have been grouped together for the indicator “Decentralized regional PA governance framework involving community and local government established at 3 demonstration sites”. |
| BU | 8 | Table 2. | As per the main Project Successes (p12), the management structures and plans (and business plans) are developed and functioning. Considering this developments, is there any prospect being “on target” if the project closes as planned at the time indicated in the project document? | The bulk of the report addresses this type of question. It is not possible for the MTRT to predict what will happen during the remaining project period. Certainly everything is possible. Given the detailed analysis presented in this report which is based on consultations with all key stakeholders, it does not, however, appear likely that the three LPAs will become true models or centers of excellence although it is likely that the experiences they undergo will be applicable to other LPAs and that in this way they will serve to inform and provide valuable information which helps to reduce the learning curve for other LPAs. |
| BU | 9 | Table 3. MTR rating  Outcome 2 rating | Would the review of the rating one of these two (that is related to LPAs) considering below?  As the progress is rated against the indicators in the project document, it seems the issue is rather in terms of the project design – a need for revision of the indicator etc.. | It is not clear to the MTRT what this comment means. Clarification would be helpful. If the comment is suggesting a change in rating, we do not believe this is warranted. Justification for the rating has been provided within the context of the report. |
| Chimeg Junai, Programme officer, UNDP CO (CJ) | 9 | Table 3. MTR rating  Project strategy | You found: “The strategy to develop an LPA which could serve as a model for others was good but attempting to do this within the project time frame and in three locales was overly ambitious.´  Please provide recommendation how the project shall deal with this in the second half of the implementation period. | The MTR discussed this question at some length together with the NPC during the field visits. Several options could be considered including the following:  1) Focus on only one LPA from now until project end (i.e., choose one of the three and cease to support the other two). In this case, it would make most sense to choose the strongest of the three LPAs and focus on that one.  2) Focus exclusively on organizational strengthening of the management structures of the 3 LPAs and cease to support implementation of management plans.  3) Continue on as before, attempting to support all three LPAs with all the activities originally envisaged in the project document.  The MTRT found that all thee LPAs have strengths and weaknesses. None of them are strong in regards to management structures. We believe it is strategic to continue to support all three in terms of enhancing management structure and functioning. The project has already provided a significant amount of capacity building support yet the results are not always obvious. In the case of Khavtgar LPA, a change in the composition of the members involved from the communities would be helpful as discussed with the NPC. The two main community representatives appear to be stuck in the past history of what went wrong. They do not appear able to move beyond that. Including youth in that management structure could be strategic. Setting up the structure in such a way so that its bylaws require member rotation and a certain proportion of youth representation would be one way to achieve this. The connections made to date with the SPA are helpful and the focus should be on further strengthening that connection. In the case of T-K LPA, the management structure is very new. This will require continued project support. |
| MA | 10 | MTR Rating Table | Since the “MU” rating for Sustainability stands for ‘Moderately Unlikely’ (and not ‘Moderately Unsatisfactory’); the 4-pt scale for the Sustainability rating should also be included at the end of the table (where the 6-pt scale appears) | Done. Thank you. |
| BU | 10 | MTR rating  Sustainability | #5. “Moderately Unlikely”.  Would you review this considering only 1 out of 4 sustainability aspects were assessed MU:  Financial risk (MU)  Socio-economic risk (L)  Institutional framework (ML)  Environment (ML)  (under 4.4 on page 65)  One of the major continued benefits after the project ends is the strengthened legislative framework and stakeholder engagement in the issues in concern.  + “project’s efforts” on “revenue re-investment has definitely contributed not only to the prospects for financial sustainability for the 3 target LPAs, but to all LPAs across the country” (page 11). | The GEF guidelines indicate that the overall rating for sustainability cannot be higher than the lowest rating. Therefore, even though only one of the 4 sustainability aspects is assessed as MU, the overall rating for sustainability cannot be higher than MU.  Agree.  Agree |
| BU | 10 | MTR rating on Sustainability | METT figures indicate “target achieved”. Would you indicate it here as well?  The findings suggest a justification for project continuity and review in the logframe for increased results than what is now in the prodoc (and current METT target score).  It seems that it needs to be identified which METT score can effectively measure the successful level of biodiversity conservation.  On “unlikely” financial sustainability, I understand that the current METT score was agreed as sufficient when the project got approved.  I understand that one item is unlikely out of three main aspects discussed here:  Legislative framework (sustainable)  METT score (achieved)  Financial sustainability of 3 LPAs (unlikely).  Given this, we request a review in the MU rating for sustainability. | If we understand the comment correctly, the overall request is to change the sustainability rating. As indicated in our response to point 9 (above), the GEF guidelines for the usage of sustainability rating scales do not permit a higher overall rating than the lowest of the individual sustainability ratings therefore we retain the rating of MU although we do agree with the comments provided. |
| BU | 12 | 1.5 Conclusion | I wonder how much is captured in the field visit reports. Individual opinion may differ from the actuals. Does the triangulation on the statements confirm it?  It contradicts somewhat with the statement “The UNDP CO has made two visits to the project sites, one in 2015 and one in 2016. The UNDP CO appears to be well informed about the project and has provided helpful guidance” page 59 under 4.3.1. | This comment appears next to the sentence in the conclusion, “According to the minutes of the last two PB meetings, the PB’s own assessment was that the project would have achieved all of its outcomes and objective before the normal project end. The conclusions arrived at by the MTR differ from that assessment.”  The MTRT does not find a contradiction between our assessment that UNDP has provided helpful guidance to the project overall and our lack of concurrence with the preliminary decision of the PB to close the project early. The UNDP CO DRR indicated to the MTRT during the mission that, although this is not reflected in the PB meeting minutes, she specified during the meeting that such a preliminary decision of the PB would need to be contingent on the results of the MTR. As the MTR report indicates, and as we believe the PIU and the government now agree, closing the project early would not be advisable given the amount of work still to be done especially in regards to the three LPAs. |
| CJ | 12 | 1.5 Conclusion | Would you please reformulate the statement: “The project supported two workshops on connectivity. Although this is helpful in bringing greater awareness of the need to conserve larger landscapes and to connect protected areas with each other, this project should not engage further in nationwide exercises regarding connectivity.”  The organized workshops were not only for awareness raising and not engaging nationwide exercises. Named two workshops were organized together with the Academy of Sciences and the MEGDT: 1) involving representatives from academia, university teachers and professional organizations and 2) with local stakeholders from the target sites along with the neighboring Khovd aimag (covering two major Argali state protected araes) in support of the legal framework improvement in regard to connectivity areas at landscape level and in preparation of the on-the-ground establishment of those areas. From the second workshop the local stakeholders left with homework to specify the important step stones and patches between the PAs, identify the borders of connectivity areas, propose local structure to manage these connectivity areas, and so on. Please refer to the Workshop reports, agenda and list of participants. | Statement has been reformulated as follows:  Together with the Mongolian Academy of Sciences and the MEGDT, the project organized two workshops involving representatives from academia, professional organizations, local stakeholders from the target sites and the neighboring Aimag which includes two SPAs with important Argali sheep populations. The purpose of the workshops was to support improvement of the legal framework in regard to connectivity at the landscape level and to develop some practical ways of pursuing connectivity. Following the second workshop, participants were tasked with identifying gaps in connectivity, boundaries of connectivity areas, and proposing local structures to manage the connectivity areas. Ensuring the three target LPAs contribute effectively to biodiversity conservation requires that a landscape approach be adopted in these three areas especially because connectivity and collaboration between these areas and nearby (sometimes contiguous) SPAs is critical to successful biodiversity conservation efforts in these areas. The initiative to connect these areas and to include key landscape features within the PA is indeed already underway in Gulzat LPA. As long as connectivity issues pursued by the project are limited specifically to the three LPAs and the landscapes of which they form a part, the MTR is fully supportive of this effort. |
| CJ | 12 | 1.5 Conclusion | MTRs recommendation on the changes of the Results Framework will be greatly helpful for the further implementation. | These are included. |
| CJ | 13 | Main project success | Prior to the start of the MRPA project, WWF supported the Gulzat LPA and facilitated part of the hunting revenue remained with the communities. Thus please mention WWF’s efforts in the sentence that will then read as follow:  “The project worked effectively in Uvs aimag continuing WWF’s efforts to ensure that herders benefit as much as possible from the revenue earned from argali hunting…” | Done. Thank you. |
| BU | 15 | Areas benefit from attention | Normally knowing relevant laws is expected. Is this observation (on the tunnel vision approach) based on the interviews?  It somewhat contradicts with the report statement on NPC being a member of the WG to revise the Law on Hunting (p. 69, Recommendation #11).  There might have been a translation/communication misunderstanding rather than the approach? | The MTR did not find full familiarity with important relevant laws that were not the direct focus of the project. In particular, the Law on Hunting and the Pasture Law. We therefore retain the statement as written in the report. |
| MA | 16-19 | Recommendations | Each recommendation should specify who the responsible party is | Done. Thank you. |
| BU | 16 | Recommendations | Ensure the justification/reason is provided for posts elimination. | Justification is provided in the text of the report. It is not appropriate to go into detail in this section which outlines the recommendations. |
| BU | 17 | Rec10 | I wonder what was the CBOs’ feedback/opinion on their potential engagement with private companies.  Information distilled from the field from the beneficiary’s perspective? (Was there any opportunity to gauge relevant information from the FGDs or interviews?) | The MTR did not specifically assess this although in the case of Gulzat the CBOs did express interest in further developing ecotourism and hunting and in the case of Khavtgar the CBO representatives with whom we met expressed interest in timber harvest which they acknowledged they did not have the necessary expertise to undertake without a partnership with private companies. The MTR believes that the recommendation to engage with the private sector is critical to sustainability and that it is now the work of the project to pursue this, including doing the necessary groundwork involving consultations with CBOs about collaborating with private companies. |
| BU | 20 | Methodology | It is a standard business practice in the CO to have an exit briefing with the evaluation team.  Presentations to the stakeholders on the findings are normally agreed in the inception report ahead of time depending on the availability of the eval. team and timing.  I understand that the separate meeting (briefing) on the findings was organized with DRR and PO, UNDP. Would you indicate it here? | We have included the information that a separate briefing on the findings was held with the DRR and the PO at the request of the UNDP CO. We do feel it is important that the UNDP CO participate in the presentation of preliminary findings made by an MTRT to a broader audience of key stakeholders. UNDP CO did not participate in that meeting and thus did not have the opportunity to listen to the comments of those key stakeholders that did attend the meeting. |
| CJ | 21 | 2.3 Structure of the evaluation report | Pease mention the organized meeting with representatives from the 3d target site, Khavtgar LPA. | This section refers exclusively to actual project site visits. No site visit was made to Khavtgar LPA. |
| MA | 21 | 2.3 Structure of the evaluation report | Remove “GEF-UNDP” | Done. Thank you. |
| CJ | 28 | 3.4 Project implementation arrangement | The MOU between UNDP and MEGDT states that the position in PAAD will be fully covered by the MEGDT budget upon completion of the project.  Thus, the following might be corrected:  At present the sustainability of these positions after project end is not fully secured. | Thank you. We have now included this in the section of the report. The statement that the sustainability of these positions after project end is not fully secured refers to all of the positions described. We believe it remains an accurate statement. |
| PIU, CJ |  | 4.1.2 Analysis of the Results Framework | Would you please make concrete recommendations in regard to targets, indicators under question to remove the inconsistencies and ambiguities detected? | These are included. |
| BU | 36 | 4.2.3 Progress toward Project Outcome | There are still something going on towards achieving the target. The texts highlighted in yellow support the efforts. Do you see any prospect for being “on target” given there are still two years for project completion?  The “center of excellence” target might be revised as per the recommendation and to reflect the reality. So that the project aims for more realistic target that can be achievable.  In reference to my comment #3, mechanisms in place is an important progress and stepping stone for having an effective model. With this and two years to go, would the target be achieved if an adaptive management is applied? | As indicated in the report, we believe it was overly ambitious to expect that the three LPAs could become models or centers of excellence for other LPAs within the short time frame of the project and given the amount of resources. Had a more realistic assessment been done of how long it took to develop models in other areas, such as those mentioned in the MTR report, a more realistic target may have been set. We agree that having mechanisms in place is a critical stepping stone to developing an effective model, but far from being the entire model. Revising targets is tricky. Funding is provided by the GEF and others based on the promises made in a project document. One cannot promise to deliver 100 and really only deliver 20 and still receive the same amount of funding requested. Adaptive management is important but it should normally refer to adapting an approach (which may not be working successfully) to achieve the promised rather than significantly modifying what was promised. |
| CJ | 41 | 4.3.1 Management arrangements | “especially as according to the UNDP CO Programme Officer responsible for the project, the CO received little direction on this modality from UNDP HQ. “  This is not very correct. As said, the IP has been not ready to apply the NIM modality for implementation of projects. It would have been better to undergo a “transition period” as was requested by the MEGDT in 2014. | Both members of the MTRT believe that this is the information that was given to us. Nevertheless, we have modified the section in the report to indicate that greater direction from UNDP HQ would have been helpful and to include the additional information provided. |
| CJ | 41 | 4.3.1 Management arrangements |  |  |
| BU | 41 | 4.3.1 Management Arrangements | There were WWF and TNC representatives in the board. I wondering why they are not on the board now. | Our understanding is that given that both WWF and TNC were contracted by the project, it was felt at the time (and we believe correctly) that their participation on the PB could be perceived as a potential conflict of interest. Their contracts with the project have since been completed. Furthermore, there are numerous other NGOs whose participation on the PB might also be considered. |
| MA | 61-62 | 4.3.4 Project-level monitoring and evaluation | Were the PIRs also reviewed? If so, include the findings of the PIRs in this section. | PIRs were reviewed along with other project-level monitoring and evaluation reports. The findings of the PIRs are in the PIRs themselves. Unless there are particular findings in the PIRs that require mention in this section, they are not normally included. The MTRT does not believe there were any specific findings in the PIRs that merit inclusion in this report. |
| BU | 62 |  | Delaying the mission was related to the problem with the process related to the Regional roster system. An official complaint on the long delay was submitted to the RB. | Acknowledged with appreciation. |
| CJ | 68 | 5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations | To 6: IC BD TOR  The purpose of the task taken as example is to get guidance and hands on, simplified tools reflecting the best national and international principle and practices for large conservation areas – such as guiding questionnaire or check list or simplified step by step guidelines for the local stakeholders like local government – land officer, LPA staff, communities to help them how to conduct the land use planning at the soum level considering the importance of the spots / patches for the WL conservation. This is very much within connectivity area management.  “review of best practices” is fully in line with your next recommendation. | The MTRT believes our conclusion and recommendation related to the TOR for the IC on BD are valid and that no revision to the statements in the MTR report are required. We urge the project to review and clarity the TOR. They are too comprehensive, too vague, and the wording is quite confusing.  Agree. |
| MA | 68 | 5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations | Conclusions and recommendations should be listed separately. Each recommendation should specify who the responsible party is. | Done. |
| MA | 68 | 5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations & Executive Summary | In another section of the MTR, there are recommendations for more innovative knowledge management products. Include this in the ‘Recommendations’ sections. | The guidelines for evaluation reports indicate that we should limit the number of recommendations to fifteen. We have therefore presented those specific recommendations in the relevant section of the report so as not to lose the opportunity to share them. |
| MA | 68 | 5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations & Executive Summary | Are there any specific gender recommendations to include? Include them as part of the list of recommendations. | Same as above. Please see gender sensitive checklist. Extracted from the checklist, “However, there are still some improvements to be made to achieve gender equality in the project implementation. There is visible imbalance in the staffing at the project implementation unit, 2 (33%) of 6 staff members are male and 4 (66%) are female. However, if included the local coordinators of the project the PIU staff is 11, of which 5 (45%) are female staff and 55% are male. In the Project Board (PB), of the 11 members, 4 (36%) are women and 7 (64%) are men, and the same ratio implies for the Technical Committee composition. Of the 33 CBOs leaders, 4 (or 12%) are women leaders. According to the NPC, approximately 80% of the monitoring committee of CBOs are women, and around 30-40% of the CBOs board are female, but that information is not well documented.  “It is recommended to disaggregate any gender related information at all levels of the project from now on.” |
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1. The number of legally recognized LPAs has decreased since the project began. According to 2014 data, there were 2,187 LPAs covering a total of 64.6 million ha or almost 30% of Mongolia. This number decreased due to errors in borders of these LPAs and expired decrees declaring them as LPAs and other inconsistencies found during the project-supported activity to establish an LPA database. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Indeed these areas are already protected against mining as designation as an LPA has this effect. Designation as an SPA is not necessary to protect an area against mining. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. According to data collected by the project. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The project currently contributes the 10% of the fund which the soum government is supposed to contribute but at least according to the agreement, the soum government will assume this co-funding at project end. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The last monitoring that was conducted was done only in Havtgar but the managing entity of the Havtgar LPA and the SPA have decided to include both areas in their next monitoring activity. They jointly conducted the last monitoring. This is a good approach which should be continued in all future monitoring activities. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Before the Dzud (extremely harsh and long winter) disaster in 2010, the livestock number in Mongolia stood 44 million. The disaster killed over 10 million head of livestock, leaving thousands of herders with no livestock. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. There have been three changes of government since the project began. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. An MOU between the project and the three Soum Governments stipulates that these 3 positions will be integrated into the 3 soum governments by project end. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. An MOU between the project and the three Soum Governments stipulates that these 3 positions will be integrated into the 3 soum governments by project end. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)