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Expansion and Improved Management of the Achara Region's Protected Areas

GEF Project ID 4835, PIMS 4732, Atlas Award 00066852, Atlas Project No:
00082879

Midterm Review, October 2016 Volume I

Georgia

GEF SO-1, SP-3 Strengthening Terrestrial Protected Areas

Georgia

Agency for Protected Areas & Achara Autonomous Republic Government

United National Development Program (UNDP)

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AGENCY OF PROTECTED AREAS

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The evaluation is intended to give a summary of what has been achieved in the project to date as well as glean some of the lessons that can be learned from it in what was a relatively short period. In the report, we have tried to offer constructive criticism where we think it is warranted and we hope that those involved in the project take it as such.

Finally, for one of us (SW), it is a pleasure to be welcomed back to Georgia, to be shown around with such evident pride and to see wonderful places. We saw the results of the dedication and enthusiasm that people had put into the work of conserving important places in the world. We would like to offer them our thanks and wish them every success in their continuing endeavours.

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Acronyms, Abbreviations and Glossary

Achara	Shortened version of the Achara Autonomous Region; it should be noted that the transliterated version of the Georgian name for the region is spelt in many ways; the MTR has simply adopted the spelling that was used in the UNDP-GEF Project Document.
AFA	Administrative and Financial Assistant
CEO	Chief Executive Officer (referring to GEF)
EOP	End of Project (usually in the context of targets for indicators)
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEL	Georgian lari (and the official UNDP rate on 01 September 2016 was USD 1 = 2.286 GEL)
GIS	Geographical Information System(s)
ha	Hectares
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
METT	Monitoring Effectiveness Tracking Tool (for protected areas)
MTR	Midterm Review
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NIM	Nationally Implemented (referring to a project implementation modality)
NPC	National Project Coordinator
NPM	National Project Manager
PA	Protected Area
PEB	Project Executive Board
PIF	Project Identification Form
PIR	Project Implementation Review
PMU	Project Management Unit
PPG	Project Preparation Grant
PRF	Project Results Framework
ProDoc	Project Document (referring to the UNDP operational project document)
TE	Terminal Evaluation
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNDP-CO	UNDP Country Office

UNDP-DRR	UNDP Deputy Resident Representative
UNDP-GEF RTC	UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Centre (based in Istanbul)
USD	United States dollars

Executive Summary

Project Information Table

Project Title	Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of the Achara Region's Protected Areas		
UNDP Project ID	00088000	PIF Approval Date	21 March 2012
GEF Project ID	4732	CEO Endorsement Date	13 November 2013
ATLAS Business Unit Award No.	00076819	ProDoc Signature Date	09 June 2014
Country	Georgia	Date PM hired	01 October 2014
Region:	Eastern Europe and Central Asia	Inception W/shop date	12 December 2014
GEF Focal Area/Strategic Objective	Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems	MTR completion date	October 2016
Trust Fund	GEF	If revised, proposed op. closing date:	-
Executing Agency/Implementing partner	Agency for Protected Areas under the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia		
Other executing partners			
Project Financing	at CEO endorsement (USD)	At MTR (USD)	
[1] GEF Financing	1,283,636	534,138.25	
[2] UNDP Contribution	40,000	-	
[3] Government	10,791,079	918,093.50*	
[4] Other partners	2,567,063	543,466.95	
[5] Total cofinancing	13,358,142	1,461,560.45	
PROJECT TOTAL COSTS	14,998,778	1,995,698.70	

* This is without the USD 41,897,588.80 recorded by the Achara Autonomous Regional Government as co-finance, much of which does not contribute to the goal, objective and outcomes of the project but rather includes “various socio-economic and infrastructure projects in Khelvachauri and Kobuleti municipalities” (see Section 3.3.3 of the main body of the report).

Project Description

The project is focused on the conservation of Colchic forests found in the Achara Region of Georgia with the aim of countering rising threats to this ecosystem. These include: i) the overexploitation of biological resources, ii) the destruction and fragmentation of habitats, coupled with the disruption of hydrological functions, and iii) the threats to biodiversity posed by climate change. Further to these threats and their drivers, the barriers to effective management of the protected areas are identified: i) poor participation in the management of protected areas, ii) the financial sustainability of the protected areas, iii) the application of management plans,

including adaptive management and iv) the biogeographical deficiencies of the protected area system.

One of the overriding rationales for the project was to develop Machakhela NP. The park was gazetted in 2012 but remained a “paper park” until the start of the project. The objective, therefore, is to develop the park into a functional, effectively managed protected area.

The long-term solution to the threats, their root causes and the barriers to effective management of the protected areas of the country – and in Achara in particular – is *“to create a functional, representative and sustainable protected areas estate in the Achara region that effectively protects biodiversity and provides functional connectivity among the individual protected areas”*. Furthermore, the project document asserts that to achieve effectiveness and sustainability, this solution needs *“to be coupled with efforts to reduce illegal and excessive use of biodiversity, limit inappropriate development, and to involve the active participation of local communities in collaboration with strengthened Government institutions (at central and decentralized levels)”*.

The project aims to contribute to this long-term solution through achievement of its goal: *“To establish a regional PA estate that can effectively ensure the conservation and sustainably use of the globally important Colchic Temperate Rain Forests of the Lesser Caucasus Mountain Range in South West Georgia”*. The project objective, in turn, is described as being *“To enhance the management effectiveness, biogeographically coverage, and connectivity of Protected Areas to conserve forest ecosystems in the Achara Region”*.

In order to achieve this objective, the project is seeking, in turn, to achieve two outcomes with their respective outputs: *Outcome 1: Enhancement of PA Management Effectiveness in the Achara Region* – focusing primarily on Kintrishi Protected Areas and Mtirala National Park with three targeted outputs, and *Outcome 2: PA System Expansion to Increase Functional Connectivity of PAs in the West Lesser Caucasus* also with three targeted outputs.

The project was planned as a four-year project – thus, the projected end of project (EOP) date is 09 June 2018. This means that there is 20 months of project implementation remaining.

Progress towards outcomes

There was some delay to the start of the project following the signing of the UNDP project document on 09 June 2014. As such, the project only began in earnest with the recruitment of the NPM on 01 October 2014.

The project is making steady progress towards the achievement of the outcomes, with a few caveats. At the broadest level, while there are some activities that are being carried out within Mtirala National Park and Kintrishi Protected Areas, the project has an overwhelming focus on Machakhela National Park. In part, too, it is because there is much more work to be done in Machakhela NP.

The first outcome is supposed to be developing and improving the management effectiveness of the protected areas of Achara. Over the course of the past two years, a number of activities have been carried out in the Kintrishi PAs and Mtirala NP, including (but not limited to):

- A tourism development plan for the Achara protected areas is currently under development and nearing completion.
- Trainings have been carried out and these have led to increases in the METT scores of the protected areas. The law enforcement training has been innovative in that it has focused largely on case development and presentation in courts (using a judge as the trainer).
- A number of cooperatives ($n = 2$ in Kintrishi PAs and $n = 3$ in Mtirala NP) have been supported by the project with the aim of improving the livelihoods of people living in the vicinity of protected areas. The cooperatives include: honey production and hazelnut production, and the project has been working with the cooperatives to increase productivity and the efficiency of productivity. There are a small number of concerns with respect to the project's work with people living in the vicinity of the protected areas: i) there is a concern about the *scale* that can be achieved by the project – the project simply does not have the resources to affect the well-being of the greater proportion the people in a similarly direct way, ii) there is a concern about the sustainability of both the processes and the impacts that the work has, iii) the project needs to ensure that the linkage between the provided support and the protected areas is maintained, iv) among some of the local administrations (and specifically the municipalities), the understanding of the project was limited despite the fact that the project is involved in rural development, and v) the project should devise means to measure the impact of the project activities on the well-being of the targeted communities.
- The project has assisted with the process of establishing a “Friends Association” for Mtirala and Machakhela National Parks. The Friends Association is recruiting “junior rangers” ($n = 60$) and “community rangers” ($n = 7-9$) with the aim of improving monitoring and to increase awareness.
- Through the establishment of a Technical Coordination Group (TCG), the project has managed to ensure good collaboration and managed to avoid duplication.
- The project is supporting the establishment and continued functionality of the PA Advisory Committees.
- An “Ecosystem Value Assessment” was carried out and covered all three of the focal protected areas. The study focused largely on tourism and included tools such as willingness-to-pay studies.
- An analysis was undertaken of the Mtirala NP and the results are being used to develop a “PA administration capacity development plan” for the Mtirala National Park.

The second outcome focuses on development of the Machakhela National Park:

- During the initial stages of the project, significant steps were taken to overcome resistance among the local communities to the development of the national park.
- Four cooperatives in the vicinity of Machakhela NP have been supported by the project.

- Study tours have been arranged for the beneficiaries (e.g., to the Kakheti region – and specifically to Vashlovani and Lagodekhi PAs) to promote learning.
- Following an extended process, an appropriate administration building was found. There are now plans to develop the site further using finance from both the project and from the APA.
- Training has also been provided for the national park staff (as above).
- The park boundary has been agreed and now awaits final enactment. The final proposal included some addition to the national park (a total of 175ha added) but with significant reduction in the size of the park (a total of 1,549ha removed). The final area is 7,359.44ha.
- There has been a process to develop a proposal for zonation of the Machakhela National Park but no agreement on the final zonation. The management planning process that is now underway will have to seek resolution among the project partners on zonation.
- The establishment of Machakhela National Park has reduced the distance between protected patches of the Colchic forests – thereby increasing the likelihood of maintaining connectivity.
- The project commissioned three studies to determine i) how to reduce the quantities of fuelwood that are used by the people living in the valley, ii) whether there are any feasible alternatives to fuelwood, and iii) improve the management of the forest resources. These studies now lead to i) fuelwood alternatives need to be first tested and then a plan to implement the viable alternatives needs to be developed, resourced and implemented, ii) the forest – and specifically potential fuelwood – resources need to be accurately surveyed and quantified, iii) develop systematic six – ten year plans for the allocation and extraction of fuelwood (using optimal systems for extraction of the fuelwood resources).
- There are various outstanding aspects of the work in and surrounding Machakhela National Park, including: i) the work of the Friends Association will extend from Mtirala NP to Machakhela NP in the coming year, ii) community action plans should be developed in synergy with other initiatives such as the Ministry of Agriculture of the Achara region's Local Action Groups (LAGs), iii) the completion and subsequent implementation of the tourism development plan, iv) the continued training and equipping of the park staff – such that their capacity is sufficient to counter the threats to the park, v) business plans need to be developed for the protected areas and thereafter implemented, vi) the PA Advisory Committee needs to be made functional, vii) the monitoring system needs to be developed and implemented (although this is likely to be incorporated into the management plan), viii) the park needs to be promoted and the successes of the project's work in the area communicated (see Section 4.3.7 for further discussion on communication) and ix) the marking of the boundary.

MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary

Measure		MTR Rating	Achievement Description
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Measure		MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Project Strategy		N/A	The project design and strategy is appropriate to achieve the targeted objective and outcomes. Despite having broadened the scope of the project to include other protected areas in the Achara region (following APA's original request for the project to develop the Machakhela NP), the project has veered towards Machakhela and this has become the dominant focus for the project. The project is ambitious but not overly so and as a result it should be achievable.
Progress towards Results	Objective	S	The project is making good progress towards achieving its objective. It has converted Machakhela NP from a "paper park" to something resembling a functional protected area. There is much still to be done but it is expected that by the end of the project, Machakhela NP should be functional and operational. Progress is also being made with the other protected areas such that their management effectiveness is increasing.
	Outcome 1	S	The project is working with the protected areas across the region and with Kintrishi PAs and Mtirala NP in particular. Because there are other partners in both of these PAs, the project has been careful not to duplicate efforts – but this does mean that not all successes (or otherwise) are attributable to the project alone.
	Outcome 2	S	The development of Machakhela NP is now well underway. Not only is the project engaged in seeking technical solutions, which when implemented, will increase the management effectiveness of the NP, but it is also piloting work with the people living in the vicinity of the park. Efforts are being made to reach out to Camili Biosphere Reserve in Turkey (although, to date, these have proved unsuccessful). Much remains to be done in a relatively limited time.
Project Implementation and Adaptive Management		S	The project is being implemented in an effective and efficient way – despite the fact that the NPM and (current) AFA not having previous experience implementing UNDP-GEF project. The NPM is a good choice as he is well connected in the Achara region. The UNDP-CO is providing excellent support to the project. As and where necessary, the project has adapted – e.g., incorporating local community livelihoods and natural resource management as an integral part of the project.
Sustainability		S	The project has much to do to ensure sustainability of the processes it is putting into place but there are signs that it could be achieved as the protected area system in Georgia is relatively well supported. Nonetheless, the project will have to make all the connections and negotiate systems such that sustainability can be achieved.

Summary of conclusions

The overriding conclusion is that, with a few relatively minor caveats, the project is broadly on track and should make a good contribution to the conservation of globally important biodiversity. Principally, the project has managed to take Machakhela National Park from one that existed only on paper to one that is increasingly becoming operational on the ground.

The fact that the project is on track is a testament to the people involved in the project implementation – most particularly the PMU and the UNDP-CO's E&E Portfolio team – with the support of APA. Part of the project's success to date has to come from the fact that it has painstakingly involved all stakeholders in project processes and implementation.

There is less than half the project's life remaining (20 months) and there is much to complete.

Recommendations

A number of suggestions and recommendations have been made throughout the MTR report; in the Recommendations Table, the most critical recommendations are summarised but the project team should consider all the additional suggestions made in the other sections of the report.

In terms of timing, the MTR recommends that the project partners (principally APA, the PMU and the UNDP-CO) re-assess the progress of project implementation in November 2017. This would allow any recommendation for a (six- or 12-month, as appropriate) no-cost extension to be made to the PEB before the end of 2017 (with accompanying workplan and budgeting). The PEB could then approve (or otherwise) the recommendation.

Recommendation Summary Table

Rec#	Recommendation	Entity Responsible
A	Objective: To enhance the management effectiveness, biogeographically coverage and connectivity of Protected Areas to conserve forest ecosystems in the Achara Region	
A.1	Work to seek mechanisms that will enhance the likelihood of achieving sustainability	APA, UNDP-CO, PMU, project partners
A.2	Where possible, seek to adopt new and emerging technologies for law enforcement and monitoring	APA, PMU
A.3	Keep implementation efficient and effective: there is much to do and only 20 months of project life remaining!	UNDP-CO, PMU
B	Outcome 1: Enhancement of PA Management Effectiveness in the Achara Region	
B.1	Retain a focus in the areas outside of Machakhela NP, adding value where possible and in cooperation, collaboration and synergy with	PMU, project partners

Rec#	Recommendation	Entity Responsible
	other actors	
C	Outcome 2: PA System Expansion to Increase Functional Connectivity of PAs in the West Lesser Caucasus	
C.1	The zonation plan needs to be reviewed and agreed, and incorporated into the management plan	APA, PMU, project partners, consultants
C.2	The project should do what it can to catalyse a dialogue between Turkey and Georgia regarding transboundary cooperation regarding Machakhela NP and Camili Biosphere Reserve; if there is a willingness from both parties, the UNDP-COs can assist with the dialogue process.	UNDP-CO (Georgia & Turkey), UNDP-GEF RTC, PMU, WWF
C.3	Continue to explore possibilities with the Forestry Agency and municipality regarding protection and management of biodiversity outside of the Machakhela NP (e.g., with the possibility of establishing a protected landscape)	PMU, project partners
D	Project Management	
D.1	Recruit a National Technical Coordinator, as allowed within the project document, to assist with project implementation for the remainder of the project	UNDP-CO, PMU
D.2	Keep accurate and up-to-date records of co-finance expenditure	PMU
D.3	If possible and allowed by the UNDP Procurement Rules and Procedures, use Georgian as default language for procurement and reporting	PMU, UNDP-CO
D.4	Include 2018 workplan and budget in Atlas	UNDP-CO
D.5	Ensure that there are sufficient funds for project management until the end of project	UNDP-CO

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the review

1. The Midterm Review (MTR) of the UNDP-GEF project “Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of the Achara Region’s Protected Areas” was carried out according to the UNDP-GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy. Thus, it was carried out with the aim of providing a systematic and comprehensive review and evaluation of the performance of the project to date by assessing its design, processes of implementation, achievement relative to its objectives.

1.2 Scope & Methodology

2. The approach for the MTR was determined by the Terms of Reference (TOR, see Annex I) and by the UNDP-GEF Guidance for conducting Midterm Reviews¹. Thus, it was carried out with the aim of providing a systematic, evidence-based and comprehensive review of the performance of the project to date by assessing its strategy and design, processes of implementation and achievements relative to its objectives. As such, the MTR determined the progress of the project in relation to its stated objectives (through the assessment of results, effectiveness, relevance, sustainability, impact and efficiency – requiring a review of the fund allocations, budgets and projections, and the financial coordination mechanisms), to promote learning, feedback and knowledge sharing on the results and lessons (both positive and negative) that can be learned from the implementation of the project to date. The MTR examined whether the implementation arrangements – including the relationships and interactions among the project’s partners, including the Agency for Protected Areas (within the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection), partners at the Regional level within the Achara Autonomous Region, UNDP, and other partners – are effective and efficient.

3. The MTR included a thorough review of the project documents and other outputs, financial plans and audits, monitoring reports, the PIF, UNDP Project Document, Inception Report, Project Implementation Reviews (PIR), monitoring tools (including, for example, the METT), relevant correspondence and other project related material produced by the project staff or their partners.

4. The MTR also included a mission to Georgia between 06 – 16 September 2016 (see Annex II for the itinerary of the MTR mission). The mission followed a collaborative and participatory approach and included a series of structured and unstructured interviews, both individually and in small

¹ UNDP-GEF (2014) *Project-level Monitoring: Guidance for conducting midterm reviews of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects*.

groups (see also Annex II for a list of the people met over the course of the MTR mission). Site visits were also conducted i) to validate the reports and indicators, ii) to examine, in particular, any infrastructure development and equipment procured, iii) to consult with personnel in the pilot areas, local authorities or government representatives, project partners and local communities, and iv) to assess data that may only be held locally. Particular attention was paid to listening to the stakeholders' views and the confidentiality of all interviews was stressed. Whenever possible, the information was crosschecked among the various sources. In addition, the review examined the achievements of the project within the realistic political, institutional and socio-economic framework of Georgia.

5. The logical framework towards which the project is working formed an important part of the MTR.

6. The review was carried out according to the UNDP/GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and, therefore, ratings were provided for: i) the progress towards results, by outcome and by the objective, ii) project implementation and adaptive management, and iii) sustainability (and the risks thereto) (see Annex III). Overall there was an emphasis on supportive recommendations.

7. The MTR was conducted by one international and one national consultant. The consultants have been independent of the policy-making process, and the delivery and management of the assistance to the project; the consultants have not been involved in the implementation and/or supervision of the project.

8. The preliminary findings of the MTR were presented at a debriefing meeting at the end of the mission on 16 September 2016 at the UNDP-CO offices in Tbilisi.

9. Finally, the MTR was carried out with a number of audiences in mind, including: i) the Agency for Protected Areas (within the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection), ii) partners at the Regional level within the Achara Autonomous Region, iii) UNDP-CO, iv) UNDP-GEF RTC in Istanbul and v) the GEF.

1.3 Structure of the review report

10. The report follows the structure of Project Evaluations recommended in the UNDP Evaluation Guidance for GEF-Financed Projects as given in Annex 5 of the TOR. As such, it first deals with the purpose of the review and the methodology used for the review (Section 2), a description of the project and the development context in Georgia (Section 3), it then deals with the Findings (Section 4) of the evaluation within four sections (Project Strategy, Progress Towards Results, Project Implementation and Adaptive

Management, and Sustainability). The report then draws together the Conclusions and Recommendations from the project (Section 5).

2 Project description and background context

2.1 Development context

11. The project document does to some length to describe the context from various perspectives – the biogeographical context of the Lesser Caucasus and the Colchic forests found in the Achara Region; it describes the degree of endemism in the area; it describes the institutional and legislative framework in which protected areas in the country operate. The history of the protected areas within the country is described.

12. Over the course of the MTR mission, it was evident that there is an increasing emphasis on protected areas within the country – and that, in part, this is being driven by an increase in the nature and adventure tourism throughout the country.

13. It is interesting to consider the history of the area that is the focus of the project in which Machakhela National Park lies. The existence of relatively pristine areas in the upper parts of the valley are thanks to i) the military limiting access to the area throughout the period of the Soviet Union, and ii) the topography of the area: its very steepness limits access by people. The counterpoint to these factors that have preserved the ecological integrity of the area, the proximity of the area to Batumi has led to significant exploitation of resources – especially timber – and that this has led to transformation of forests – including the replacement of beech woodlands with alder.

2.2 Problems that the project sought to address

14. The project document analyses the rising threats across the protected areas of the country – particularly within the context of the economic crisis and geopolitical processes. The overriding threats are identified:

1. The overexploitation of biological resources
2. The destruction and fragmentation of habitats, coupled with the disruption of hydrological functions
3. The threats to biodiversity posed by climate change.

15. Further to these threats and their drivers, the barriers to effective management of the protected areas are identified:

1. Poor participation in the management of protected areas
2. The financial sustainability of the protected areas

3. The application of management plans, including adaptive management.

4. The biogeographical deficiencies of the protected area system.

16. One of the overriding rationales – and indeed requests from APA – was to develop Machakhela NP. The park was gazetted in 2012 but remained a “paper park” until the start of the project. The objective, therefore, is to develop the park into a functional, effectively managed protected area.

2.3 Project description and strategy

17. The long-term solution to the threats, their root causes and the barriers to effective management of the protected areas of the country – and in Achara in particular – is “to create a functional, representative and sustainable protected areas estate in the Achara region that effectively protects biodiversity and provides functional connectivity among the individual protected areas”.

18. Furthermore, the project document asserts that to achieve effectiveness and sustainability, this solution needs “to be coupled with efforts to reduce illegal and excessive use of biodiversity, limit inappropriate development, and to involve the active participation of local communities in collaboration with strengthened Government institutions (at central and decentralized levels)”.

19. The project aims to contribute to this long-term solution through achievement of its goal:

“To establish a regional PA estate that can effectively ensure the conservation and sustainably use of the globally important Colchic Temperate Rain Forests of the Lesser Caucasus Mountain Range in South West Georgia”.

20. The project objective, in turn, is described as being

“To enhance the management effectiveness, biogeographically coverage, and connectivity of Protected Areas to conserve forest ecosystems in the Achara Region”.

21. In order to achieve this objective, the project is seeking, in turn, to achieve two outcomes with their respective outputs²:

22. *Outcome 1: Enhancement of PA Management Effectiveness in the Achara Region* – focusing primarily on Kintrishi Protected Areas and Mtirala National Park. The outcome has three outputs:

1. Output 1.1: Enforcement and surveillance system strengthened in Kintrishi Protected Areas and Mtirala NP

² See Part II: Strategy within the project document.

2. Output 1.2: Reduced threats at source by constructive involvement of local communities in planning and co-management arrangements within the governance framework of 2 newly established community-based organizations
3. Output 1.3: Future financial needs of the Kintrishi and Mtirala PAs addressed by developing mechanisms to generate finances on the scale needed to address emerging long term pressures on biodiversity

23. *Outcome 2: PA System Expansion to Increase Functional Connectivity of PAs in the West Lesser Caucasus:*

1. Output 2.1: Functional establishment of a new IUCN Cat II PA of 8,733 ha in the Machakhela Valley strategically placed between the Kintrishi and Mtirala PAs in Achara Region and the Jamili Biosphere Reserve in Turkey. 10
2. Output 2.2: Public-Civil Society-Community PA Planning and Management Governance Board established and provided with a legal basis to manage the proposed Machakhela National Park
3. Output 2.3: Established operational capacity at Machakhela National Park through:

24. The analysis of the outputs and indicators under each of these outcomes is resented below (see Section 4.1).

2.4 Project Implementation Arrangements

25. The project is being implemented under UNDP's National Implementation Modality (NIM) with the Agency for Protected Areas (APA) – which falls under the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection – as the Implementing Partner.

26. The project has four governing structures (as per UNDP's rules for Results Based Management): i) the Project Executive Board (PEB), ii) the Project Management – comprised of the Project National Director and the Project Management Unit, iii) Project Assurance, and iv) Project Support. As indicated in the Project Document, the PEB is the executive decision making body for the project. In addition to the PEB, a Technical Coordination Group (TCG) has been established; this structure is specifically designed to ensure synergies, collaboration and coordination among the different groups that are active in the sector in the area (see Annex IV for a list of the members of the TCG).

27. Project Management is overseen by a National Project Director (NPD) with the day-to-day project implementation being carried out by a Project Management Unit (PMU). At present, the PMU is comprised of two people:

the National Project Manager (NPM) and the part-time Administration and Finance Assistant³ (AFA) – supported by a Chief Technical Advisor (CTA; see Section 4.3.1 for further discussions on the Management Arrangements and the PMU in particular).

28. Project Assurance is provided by the Project Executive Board – however, it has been delegated to the UNDP Energy and Environment Team Leader. The UNDP-CO is being supported in this role by the UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Centre in Istanbul.

29. Finally, Project Support is being provided by the UNDP-CO. This includes financial and administrative support, including procurement, contracting, travel and payments.

2.5 Project timing and milestones

30. The project was planned as a four-year project – thus, the projected end of project (EOP) date is 09 June 2018. This means that there is 20 months of project implementation remaining.

31. The other project milestones, including the project end date for the project, are indicated in Table 1.

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

Milestone	Date
PIF Approval	21 March 2012
CEO Endorsement	13 November 2013
UNDP Prodoc signed	09 June 2014
National Project Manager appointed	01 October 2014
AFA appointed	10 Nov 2014
Inception Workshop	12 December 2014
MTR mission commences	06 June 2016
Projected EOP	09 June 2018

2.6 Main stakeholders

32. The Project Document exhaustively identified the project's stakeholders⁴. The table in the Project Document not only identifies the stakeholders but it describes their current mandate and their role and responsibility within the project.

³ The AFA is shared with the UNDP-GEF ISTBAR (Green Cities) project.

⁴ See the Stakeholder Analysis presented on pg. 28 of the Project Document.

33. Given the number of stakeholders and the potential for duplication, the TCG was specifically established to ensure synergy, coordination and collaboration among the stakeholders. This is especially important with the Caucasus Nature Fund (CNF) operational in Mtirala National Park and the KfW financed “Support Programme for Protected Areas, Georgia” in and around the Kintrishi PA complex). In addition, developments continue to emerge as the project is implemented. For example, the Ministry of Agriculture has developed the concept of Local Action Groups (LAGs) and these offer opportunities for replication, scaling-up and sustainability of the work that the project has been doing with local community development (see various sections of the report for further discussion).

3 Findings

3.1 Project Strategy

3.1.1 Project Design

34. The project design is appropriate for both the context and to achieve the objectives of the project. Indeed, at the project’s Inception Phase and as reported in the Inception Report, the only comments were that there was a need to “validate and expand ... the baseline data” so as to ensure accurate monitoring and evaluation.

35. However, there are a small number of things to consider regarding the project design and how this is influencing the implementation of the project. When the project was first being proposed, APA requested that the project focus exclusively on the development of Machakhela National Park. Given that the GEF strategic objectives and priorities no longer allow for single protected area projects, the project was designed to include the development of all the protected areas in the Achara Autonomous Region. However, there are other partners (CNF, KfW and WWF) already active in the other two PAs (Kintinshi PAs and Mtirala NP) that have been included for project activities. Such wrangling is not uncommon in the formulation of GEF projects: government agencies make specific requests that are then moulded, sometimes uncomfortably, into the GEF format. In this case, the synergies are adequate and the project, as discussed in the sections below, has worked hard to reduce or avoid duplication and ensure cooperation.

3.1.2 Analysis of Project Results Framework

36. The analysis of the project results framework is carried out directly in Table 2.

3.2 Progress Towards Results

3.2.1 Analysis of progress towards outcomes

37. There was some delay to the start of the project following the signing of the UNDP project document on 09 June 2014. This was driven by i) difficulty recruiting a National Project Manager (NPM), and ii) the coincidence of the beginning of the project with the summer in Georgia. As such, the project only began in earnest with the recruitment of the NPM on 01 October 2014.

38. The project is making steady progress towards the achievement of the outcomes, with a few caveats. At the broadest level, while there are some activities that are being carried out within Mtirala National Park and Kintrishi Protected Areas, the project has an overwhelming focus on Machakhela National Park. In part this is strategic because there are other partners – specifically a KfW project and the Caucasus Nature Fund (CNF) – working in Kintrishi PA and Mtirala NP, and the EU Twinning Project working in Mtirala NP⁵. In part, too, it is because there is much more work to be done in Machakhela NP.

39. In order to explore the progress of the project towards its objective fully, the MTR will examine each of the project's intended outcomes and outputs.

40. The first outcome is supposed to be developing and improving the management effectiveness of the protected areas of Achara. Over the course of the past two years, a number of activities have been carried out in the Kintrishi PAs and Mtirala NP, including (but not limited to)⁶:

1. A tourism development plan for the Achara protected areas is currently under development and, indeed, nearing completion. There will be a meeting held on 27 September 2016 in Mtirala NP to discuss the development plan.
2. A number of trainings have been carried out, including i) law enforcement, ii) communication skills, and iii) GIS training. The training has resulted in increases in the METT scores of the protected areas.

The law enforcement training has been innovative in that it has focused largely on case development and presentation in courts (using a judge as the trainer). In terms of implementation, while

⁵ The EU Twinning project “Strengthening Management of Protected Areas of Georgia” worked in Mtirala NP (and three other PAs in Georgia) and ended in 2015. The Management Plan for Mtirala NP was developed under this project. The project manager of this project also participated in the TCG meetings in 2015

⁶ This does not necessarily represent an exhaustive list of all the activities carried out by the project but it does attempt to capture the most important work and provide some feedback on it

the project was committed to carry out this training in both Kintrishi PAs and Mtirala NP, it funded the training in Mtirala NP alone ($n = 15$ people trained from Mtirala NP; training provided by the Environmental Information Education Centre from Tbilisi) – as the KfW project that covers Kintrishi PAs has covered the costs of the equivalent training there.

The training to date has focused exclusively on the protected area rangers. However, in the future, it might be worth considering other actors in the judicial chain – for example, the police (who have to make the arrests of suspects), and members of the judiciary (including the prosecutors, magistrates and judges) such that they are aware of i) the laws that govern natural resource protection and ii) the rationale behind the enforcement of the law.

In addition, with the increase in illegal wildlife crime across the globe and the response from the international community⁷, there has been a rapid growth in the tools available to law enforcement authorities. The project represents an opportunity (subject to resources) to select and trial tool(s) in the context of Georgia. The Cybertracker – SMART technology using smart phones may be a good place to start⁸.

3. A number of cooperatives ($n = 2$ in Kintrishi PAs and $n = 3$ in Mtirala NP) have been supported by the project. The work is primarily to improve the livelihoods of people living in the vicinity of protected areas. In principle, the rationale for this is twofold: i) it should reduce the dependency of the local communities on natural resources, and ii) the improved well-being of the people should mean that they are better disposed to the protected areas.

The cooperatives include: honey production and hazelnut production, and the project has been working with the cooperatives to increase productivity and the efficiency of productivity – for example, by providing a de-husking machine for hazelnuts, provision of beehives and provision of a vehicle for a honey-producing cooperative.

It is notable that the project has adopted the methodology of the FPA that is being used by the KfW funded projects and, on more than one occasion, the results of an FPA process carried out by a

⁷ See, for example, <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/illegal-wildlife-trade-2014>, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417231/kasan-e-statement-150325.pdf, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/wildlife-and-forest-crime/>

⁸ See <http://www.cybertracker.org>, <http://www.smartconservationsoftware.org> and <http://www.catphones.com/en-gb/phones>, respectively.

KfW funded project. In other words, there are good synergies – albeit dependent on the success of that particular methodology.

There are a small number of concerns with respect to the project's work with people living in the vicinity of the protected areas (and the same concerns are applicable to the work carried out in the vicinity of Machakhela National Park).

First, the project should, in principle, have an impact on the well-being of the people involved in the cooperatives it is supporting. However, the impact will be on a small number of people – thus, a small proportion of the people living in (in the case of Kintrishi PAs) or living in the vicinity of (in the case of all) the protected areas will be impacted by project activities (e.g., only one cooperatives have been targeted to date in “buffer” zone of Kintrishi PAs – out of a total of 300 households). In other words, there is a concern about the *scale* that can be achieved by the project and the potential for *scaling-up* to other members of the communities: the project simply does not have the resources to affect the well-being of the greater proportion the people in a similarly direct way⁹. However, there are emerging opportunities to ensure scale – including, for example, the Local Action Groups (LAGs) that are being established under the Ministry of Agriculture of the Achara government. The project should work to continue to seek out these opportunities to achieve scale and do whatever it can to get them implemented among the target communities.

Second, as is common with much work with local communities, there is a concern about the sustainability of both the processes (both in terms of the maintenance of the materials provided to the people and knowhow) and the impacts that the work has. This will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.4.

Third, the project needs to ensure that the linkage between the provided support and the protected areas is maintained. Similar work elsewhere in the world has demonstrated that people take the support for granted, assuming that it is simply an initiative to reduce poverty in rural areas – with no linkage with the effective management of the protected areas. In the (admittedly relatively small number of) interviews that the MTR team had with people living in the vicinity of the protected areas, a similar attitude and lack of linkage between the support and the protected areas. The

⁹ In principle, improved management of the natural resources within and surrounding the protected areas will improve the well-being of *all* the people living in the vicinity of the protected areas – however, these benefits are not immediately tangible.

project should do whatever it can to build these understandings and linkages (and see Section 4.3.7 on Communication for some suggestions).

Fourth, among some of the local administrations (and specifically the municipalities), the understanding of the project – with consequent support – was limited despite the fact that, in effect, the project is involved in rural development. Where possible and particularly where it would be advantageous, the project should work to build support among municipalities.

Finally, the project is investing a not insignificant amount of resources on working with the people living in the vicinity of the protected areas. Where possible (and even though there is no indicator in the project results framework), the project should devise means to measure the impact of the project activities on the well-being of the targeted communities. This may be done using KfW methodologies, as appropriate (if indeed the KfW funded project is actually doing this).

4. As with the work above, the project is replicating the establishment of “Friends Association” for the protected areas. The concept was originally tested in Tusheti PAs but has been replicated elsewhere within the country. The KfW funded project in Kintrishi PAs has already established a Friends Association. As a result, the project is working with a group of people to establish a Friends Association for Mtirala and Machakhela National Parks. The Friends Association has only recently been legally established (August 2016) and will start its activities in Mtirala NP with the intention to extend to Machakhela NP in 2017. At present, the Friends Association has been established to “support PA management” and ensure cooperation, participation and collaboration in the management of the protected areas.

The Friends Association has started to do this through two mechanisms: the recruitment of “junior rangers” ($n = 60$) and “community rangers” ($n = 7-9$). The objective here is to improve monitoring and to increase awareness. In addition (although it was not mentioned by the head of the Friends Association), the idea might also be to increase a sense of ownership among the stakeholders.

There are a few things to consider here. First, the MTR would encourage the Friends Association to be *ambitious*! There are numerous examples of similar Friends Associations around the world that have become powerful actors and lobbyists for their

protected area. Second, while such community and junior rangers can significantly contribute to long-term monitoring efforts with the additional benefit that there is an increase sense of responsibility and ownership, care should be taken to ensure that overall monitoring efforts are adequate to secure sufficiently robust data. In other words, monitoring by such methods can be useful (and have elsewhere proved to be useful) but these methods do not necessarily supplant all other monitoring – for example, by more professional organisations (e.g., the government, conservation NGOs and/or academic institutions). It is simply a question of robustness and resolution.

5. Because there are a number of actors working within the protected areas in the Achara Autonomous Region, there is a need to ensure cooperation, collaboration and synergy as well as to avoid duplication – including, for example, the Caucasus Nature Fund (CNF), the (now closed) EU Twinning project, WWF’s work in the area, and the already mentioned KfW funded projects. The project established the Technical Coordination Group (TCG) specifically for this reason but, over and above this structure, the project has managed to ensure good collaboration and managed to avoid duplication. This should, of course, be continued.
6. The Monitoring Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) is being used by the project to monitor changes in the effectiveness of the management of the protected areas with which it is engaging. However, it was interesting to note that *knowledge* of the METT among the protected area managers was relatively limited. This suggests two things: i) that the METT is not being used systematically across the protected area system in Georgia – despite the history of GEF protected area projects that have been implemented in the country¹⁰; and ii) the METT is not being used by the managers to its fullest potential¹¹.
7. The project is supporting the establishment and continued functionality of the PA Advisory Committees. A PA Advisory Council has already been established for Kintrishi PAs (under the SPPA project).

¹⁰ Including: i) the UNDP-GEF project Ensuring Sufficiency and Predictability of Revenues for the Protected Areas Systems, ii) the UNDP-GEF project Catalyzing Financial Sustainability of Georgia’s Protected Area System, and iii) the WB-GEF project Protected Areas Development.

¹¹ The METT can be used both as a mechanism to monitor the management effectiveness and as a tool to identify areas in which managers wish to improve the effectiveness of the management. In other words, it can be used both as a monitoring and planning tool.

The PA Advisory Committees represent an admirable demonstration of adaptive management by the conservation community in Georgia. The Committees are an adaption of the PA Scientific Advisory Committees that were all but defunct. These Scientific Committees have been successfully resurrected as an interim mechanism to encourage the participation of key stakeholders in protected area management. In the future, the PA Advisory Committees need to be enshrined in the legislation¹² and, in the long-term, there will be a need to empower the committees such that they have a greater authority over how the protected areas are managed and resourced¹³.

8. An “Ecosystem Value Assessment” was carried out¹⁴ and covered all three of the focal protected areas. Interestingly, the study focused largely on tourism and included tools such as willingness-to-pay studies. The study recommended that an entrance fee (of 5 GEL for nationals and USD 10 for all foreigners¹⁵) be imposed on visitors to Mtirala NP only. The study continued to determine the potential sources of income generation for people living in the vicinity of the protected areas. Significantly, however, the study found two barriers to honey production and marketing: i) the legislation requires laboratory testing of products such as honey and this is beyond the budget of the majority of the small cooperatives that are producing honey and ii) the economies of scale and the quantities of honey that are being produced.

Despite being called an “Ecosystem Value Assessment”, the study barely considered other forms of Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes – despite the potential opportunities to do so. The report from the study does consider the possibility of seeking contributions from water users (including the hydroelectric installations) – although this is not directly linked to a business model for and the economics of watershed protection. Furthermore, the protected area should reduce rates of deforestation and degradation (thus, making it eligible for REDD+)

¹² This is expected to occur in the Spring Session 2017 of the new parliament with the enactment of new legislation.

¹³ This remains beyond the scope of the project although the project and UNDP-CO may contribute to the discussions.

¹⁴ This was a 35-day contract carried out over four months starting in March 2016 – although the contract has been extended. The consultant who carried out the work was described as being the only person with the knowledge and capacity to carry out such a study.

¹⁵ Interestingly, a three-tier structure (nationals, foreign residents and foreign tourists) that is common in other parts of the world was not considered.

and the area stores and annually sequesters a large volume of carbon. However, apparently, there is no legislation enabling PES but in the future such schemes should be explored.

9. An analysis was undertaken of the Mtirala NP including: the appropriateness of the existing institutional structures, the resources and skills needed to operationalize the Management Plan, and an assessment of the cost effectiveness of current management practices. The results are being used to develop a “PA administration capacity development plan” for the Mtirala National Park.

41. The second outcome focuses on development of the Machakhela National Park. The project’s objective here is to take the park from one that existed only on paper (following its gazettelement in 2012) to a functional, effectively managed protected area. Given that this area has been the subject of the majority of the projects activities to date, much has been carried out, including (but not limited to)¹⁶:

1. At the beginning of the project, there were profound concerns and resistance to the national park among the local community. These feelings may have stemmed from the perception of protected areas originating from the Soviet era but they were exacerbated by the stringent enforcement of the boundaries when the rangers were first recruited and posted in the area.

During the initial stages of the project, significant steps were taken to overcome resistance to the development of the national park. A series of community meetings were held to address major misconceptions or misunderstandings and to provide an opportunity for local communities to feel their interests and concerns were being listened to. These meetings helped build awareness and to build trust – although this remains an ongoing process.

2. Four cooperatives in the vicinity of Machakhela NP have been supported by the project. The support has been in the following forms: i) a vehicle for a honey-producing cooperative – to increase access to markets and to facilitate transport of the hives, ii) the provision of hives and beekeeping equipment, and iii) the provision of haymaking equipment. The support of the project to people living in the vicinity of protected areas has been discussed above

¹⁶ As above, this does not necessarily represent an exhaustive list of all the activities carried out by the project but it does attempt to capture the most important work and provide some feedback on it.

and the same issues and concerns apply to those living in the Machakhela and adjacent valleys. However, the notable difference is that there are 3,000 people living in the Machakhela and adjacent valleys and the issue of scale is all the more pertinent.

In addition and because the work in Machakhela is starting from scratch, study tours have been arranged for the beneficiaries (e.g., to the Kakheti region – and specifically to Vashlovani and Lagodekhi PAs) to demonstrate the successes of such an approach.

3. There was an extended issue in the efforts of the partners to find an appropriate location and building that will function as the Administration (or headquarters) for the Machakhela National Park. Initially, a site was found relatively close to the Khelvachauri Municipality; however, there were issues with this site (e.g., a building needed to be constructed¹⁷ and it was far from the national park). Eventually, a building was found in the Machakhela valley in an appropriate location. Following an extensive negotiation, the second floor of the building was secured for the administrative offices of the national park. These have been rehabilitated and the offices are now in use. There are now plans to develop the site further (adding an additional floor) using finance from both the project and from the APA.
4. The project has struggled to make meaningful contact with people involved with Camili Biosphere Reserve on the Turkish side of the Machakhela valley to initiate transboundary cooperation. There are a number of potential avenues of interest – including, for example, transboundary tourism, management of the rivers and water flow systems – and cooperation over watershed management.

While at present, there has been little progress, apparently the UNESCO office (and specifically the MAB monitoring group) in Turkey has agreed to assist with finding the right people with whom a dialogue can be initiated. As and when possible, the project should do what it can to facilitate such discussions as they should be mutually beneficial.

5. As with Mtirala NP, training has also been provided for the national park staff, including GIS training, database management, “taxation” (or qualitative and quantitative assessment for the forests) and law enforcement. Further training was provided on

¹⁷ Because the project is a Technical Assistance (or TA) project, such infrastructure development would have been problematic. Infrastructure construction should fall under Investment (or INV) projects.

basic knowledge of protected areas – thus, transferring an understanding of what a protected area should look like and increased the staff capacity to communicate this information to other stakeholders, particularly to local people.

While this is extremely positive, as with many state agencies supported by international projects, APA has an issue with staff retention and as soon as staff members are trained, they seek other, better paid work (for a fuller discussion see Section 4.4.3 on Institutional Sustainability).

6. From the project's outset in 2014, there have been issues with the park boundary and demarcation; through an inclusive process, this has now been resolved and new boundaries have been agreed and now await final enactment¹⁸.

Thus, while the park was legally gazetted in 2012, it was only in 2014 that the members of the park staff were appointed. On assignment of the park staff to the area, the rangers immediately started to enforce the boundaries as they existed at the time (of the originally gazetted area of 8,733ha). This caused a backlash (including protests) that was allegedly fuelled by forestry staff.

As a result, the project started a process (in April 2015) to re-define the boundaries of the park. Initially, this was based on very high resolution aerial imagery (15-20cm/pixel; 2015 imagery¹⁹). The proposed boundary was then negotiated, readjusted (partly on the basis that there was some privately owned lands that were used for agriculture within the boundaries) and validated at a local level with the involvement of the all stakeholders including forestry and local communities. This led to the submission of a proposal to APA for the new boundaries – with some addition to the national park (a total of 175ha added) but with significant reduction in the size of the park (a total of 1,549ha removed – a sum much greater than the privately owned agricultural land). To the consternation of some stakeholders, APA accepted the proposed boundary (encompassing a net total of 7,359.44ha) with no further discussion or negotiation.

7. A process to develop a proposal for zonation of the Machakhela National Park was completed with the proposed zonation plan

¹⁸ This may take place in the spring session of the new parliament; however, apparently there will be a significant backlog of legislation to enact and, as such, the partners should work to ensure prioritization of the boundary enactment given the issues that have occurred over the past two years and the sooner this is fully resolved, the better.

¹⁹ These data were available as they had been collected under another project carrying out an inventory of all the forests in the Achara region.

being submitted in May 2016 (see Annex V for maps). The work took into account various parameters but was built on the foundation of an analysis of the biodiversity of the area²⁰. In addition, the work was to form the basis for discussion and was participatory in nature – thus, taking into account the interests and opinions of different stakeholders (see Annex VI for details of the process). However, an alternative zonation plan has also been proposed by APA (see Annex V for maps). The APA also informed the MTR team that they were rejecting the zonation plan that was proposed by Ilia State University.

This has a number of implications: i) it is of some concern that APA would reject a piece of work that involved consultation with the stakeholders on the ground and that was founded on biodiversity parameters, ii) the decision has implications for the way that the forestry inventories are undertaken (as the different zones use different inventory methodologies – and the enlarged traditional use zone would require more time if not resources²¹), iii) much of the area that was previously included in the strict protected area is steep and inaccessible²² – and exploitation of the forest resources contradicts the law because the slopes are greater than 30°, and, most importantly, iv) there are direct implications for the management plan for Machkhela NP: the process of developing the management plans has commenced and, indeed, is scheduled to be complete by the end of the year.

While it is evident to the MTR team that there are misunderstandings that remain among the project partners regarding the zonation of the Machakhela NP, the management planning process that is currently underway offers the best opportunity to resolve these misunderstandings – as, indeed, a zonation of some description will have to be included in the management plan. The MTR recommends that key stakeholders meet to reach an agreement on the zonation plan to be included in the management plan. If necessary, the discussion should be mediated to resolve conflicts and the discussion should consider all

²⁰ Indeed, of all the work that has been carried out through the project's life to date, the zonation planning was that which considered biodiversity as the fundamental foundation on which planning should occur.

²¹ That being said, the company with the contract to carry out the forestry inventories, LTD Geographic, has accepted to carry out the work with no additional cost irrespective of the decision.

²² Indeed, one of the principal reasons why the forest persists is because it is so steep and inaccessible.

pertinent parameters, including (but not limited to): i) the biodiversity (as determined by Ilia State University), ii) the topography of the area and the legality of access to and use of resources on slopes of greater than 30°, iii) the interests of the local communities (as also determined, informally, by Ilia State University in the process), and iv) any concerns that the APA may have. The agreed outcome of the process should then be included in the park's management plan that, in itself, requires significant input from local stakeholders. In other words, there are opportunities to resolve the misunderstandings and to move forward in a mutually acceptable way.

MTR Update: It should be noted that since this was written, there have been substantial developments that have signalled a way forward. As part of the management plan process, a meeting was held on 21 October 2016 with APA, Ilia State University and project personnel in attendance²³. A full and detailed presentation of the Ilia State University zonation plan was made to a broad group of APA representatives. The meeting concluded with the following agreement:

- *The approach used by Ilia State University is clear, fully understandable and acceptable for the APA as a starting point.*
 - *The participants in the zonation process will not wait until the forestry inventory (that is currently underway) is complete and the results will be incorporated into an updated proposed zonation*
 - *A public consultation process will be carried out with the aim of ensuring the zonation balances the conservation of biodiversity, the availability of resources, and the social and economic needs of people living in the vicinity of the Machakhela National Park.*
8. The establishment of Machakhela National Park has reduced the distance between protected patches of the Colchic forests – thereby increasing the likelihood of maintaining connectivity.

The indicator – which stipulates that the distance should be no more than 6km (see Table 2) – seems a little arbitrary and does not appear to have any specific biological explanation. It appears as if the 6km target is more pragmatic than biological. However, given the natural and artificial barriers (the Acharistskali River and the road infrastructure, respectively) and hydroelectric dam constructions, it is unlikely that the corridor between Mtirala and Machakhela National Parks will be functional for many species.

²³ The summary of this meeting was made available to the MTR by email on 24 October 2016. The MTR recommends that this summary is converted into a set of minutes of the meeting and circulated to the participants for their agreement.

9. The impact of people on forest resources is of concern to the majority of stakeholders. As mentioned in Section 3.2, there was a historic impact on the accessible forest resources in the Machakhela, with timber and fuelwood being harvested for use in the nearby city of Batumi. There have been biodiversity impacts of this exploitation – for example, with the replacement of some of the beech forests with stands of alder²⁴. Among the people that continue to live in the Machakhela (and adjacent) valleys, there is a dependence on natural resources – especially fuelwood.

In response to this dependence, the project commissioned three studies to determine i) how to reduce the quantities of fuelwood that are used by the people living in the valley, ii) whether there are any feasible alternatives to fuelwood, and iii) improve the management of the forest resources. These studies are complete and a number of recommendations have been made – however, in the coming two years, there is much work to do. This includes: i) the fuelwood alternatives need to be first tested and then a plan to implement the viable alternatives needs to be developed, resourced and implemented, ii) the forest – and specifically potential fuelwood – resources need to be accurately surveyed and quantified, iii) develop systematic six – ten year plans for the allocation and extraction of fuelwood (using optimal systems for extraction of the fuelwood resources. Overall, the results of these processes will be significant for the forest protected areas through the country and the project should make efforts to disseminate the results and facilitate replication.

10. There are various outstanding aspects of the work in and surrounding Machakhela National Park (in addition to the further development of the administration buildings for the national park, the forestry inventory and management planning processes), including (but not limited to): i) the work of the Friends Association will extend from Mtirala NP to Machakhela NP in the coming year, ii) community action plans should be developed in synergy with other initiatives such as the Ministry of Agriculture of the Achara region's Local Action Groups (LAGs), iii) the completion and subsequent implementation of the tourism development plan, iv) the continued training and equipping of the park staff – such that their capacity is sufficient to counter the threats to the park, v) business plans need to be developed for the protected areas and

²⁴ Little was said over the course of the MTR mission about the possibility of rehabilitation of the beech forests: this is something that should be addressed within the management plan.

thereafter implemented, vi) the PA Advisory Committee needs to be made functional, vii) the monitoring system needs to be developed and implemented (although this is likely to be incorporated into the management plan), viii) the park needs to be promoted and the successes of the project's work in the area communicated (see Section 4.3.7 for further discussion on communication) and ix) the marking of the boundary²⁵.

42. In summary, then, a great deal of work has been carried out in the two years (October 2014 – present) in which the project has been active. The project partners are to be commended for this and for the gains that have been made.

43. Despite these gains, there was an indistinct feeling of disappointment at the end of the MTR mission. To be sure, some of the feelings of disappointment stemmed from the institutional situation (to be discussed in Section 4.4.3) and, admittedly, from the *expectations* that the MTR team had about what *could* have been achieved under the project. For example, with some adaptive thinking, the MTR team envisaged that (in a similar way to Kintrishi PAs) the entire area could have been protected – including the valleys (which harbour some of the most important biodiversity of the area in the riparian and floodplain woodlands²⁶). The valleys could have been protected as a protected landscape (thus, falling under the jurisdiction of the municipality) while the area that is currently within the national park remaining as such (and, therefore, remaining under the jurisdiction of APA) but the whole area co- or jointly managed by the municipality and APA possibly under the auspices of a single PA Advisory Committee. This is akin to what was originally envisaged by WWF when the protected area was first proposed – and indeed the MTR recognises that the project team and partners – including the PM, the CTA and the TCG – have spent time and energy pursuing and considering different options but they have been met with ambivalence and, on some occasions, opposition. To take this forward will take some courage and initiative – but this is precisely what GEF projects are for: overcoming fears and demonstrating success! As such, it feels as if an opportunity may have been lost (although 20 months of project life still remain and if the project can, at least, establish the foundation for such a vision this would be a significant success).

²⁵ The MTR agrees with the project team that the boundary should only be marked in those places where it is important to do so – for examples, along paths or roads, or where people may be trying to access resources.

²⁶ The project has recognised that there are areas of significant biodiversity outside of the NP boundaries. Much of this biodiversity is found within areas controlled by the Forestry Agency. In principle, the project plans to coordinate and support the Forestry Management Plans to identify these areas and to ensure appropriate management.

44. In addition *and in full understanding of the difficulties that organisations that work in the environment sector face*, it also feels disappointing that *all* the compromises are being made by APA (e.g., over the boundaries of the park and over the zonation plan) and that those compromises are being made with little negotiation or push back. The MTR team would like to reiterate that this statement is made *in full understanding of the difficulties that organisations that work in the environment sector face*: this is not uncommon in the majority of countries across the globe.

Table 2. The Project Results Framework showing the MTR status and the MTR comments and ratings.

Project Strategy	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Baseline	1 st PIR level	MTR status	EOP Target	Source of verification	MTR comment on indicator and progress
Objective: To enhance the management effectiveness , biogeographical ly coverage and connectivity of Protected Areas to conserve forest ecosystems in the Achara Region	Protected Area Coverage within the Achara Region increased	30,469 ha	39,202ha (target initially achieved but see next column)	37,774 ha (indicator reduced by 1,428 ha from 1 st PIR level and awaiting final enactment of new boundaries for Machakhela NP)	39,202 ha.	First PIR level – Official gazettelement of Machakhela National Park in 2012 (29/05/2012; Reg. code: 360060000.05.001.016742) Subsequent amendments to boundary have been registered with the public registry service and await enactment (possibly in the spring session of the new government in 2017).	Progress is satisfactory – even though APA accepted the realigned boundaries with no further negotiation (see para 41 (point 6) for a full discussion)
	Increased national and Achara PA	National: 10.7% Achara: 15%	Nationally: 11.7% Achara: 20% (but see next column)	National – 11.3 %, Achara 19.3% (indicator	Nationally: 11.7% Achara: 20%	As above.	As above. The indicator is partially redundant

Project Strategy	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Baseline	1 st PIR level	MTR status	EOP Target	Source of verification	MTR comment on indicator and progress
	Coverage of the Colchic Temperate Rain Forest by at least 1% and 5% respectively			reduced from first PIR level)			because it is implicit in the above indicator.
	Capacity development indicator score for protected area system	Systemic: 14% Institutional: 21% Individual: 9%	Not measured during the reporting period.	Not measured before the MTR (it is expected that an analysis will be carried out at the end of 2016	Systemic: 20% Institutional: 29% Individual: 13%	Project's PIR	Unable to comment.
	Management effectiveness for Kintrishi PA Complex, Mtirala NP and Machakhela NP measured by METT scorecard	Mtirala NP: 68% Kintrishi State Reserve: 62% Kintrishi Protected Landscape: 58% Machakhela NP: 11%	Not measured during the reporting period	Mtirala NP: 70% Kintrishi State Reserve: 64% Kintrishi Protected Landscape: 60% Machakhela NP: 36%	Mtirala NP: 73% Kintrishi State Reserve: 67% Kintrishi Protected Landscape: 63% Machakhela NP: 71%	Project's PIR	No issues with the indicator although the targets are unrealistic and may not have been as a result of detailed analysis of what could be gained through the project's life. In addition, the project has no significant influence in Kintrishi PAs (cf. other actors such as the KfW-funded project.

Project Strategy	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Baseline	1 st PIR level	MTR status	EOP Target	Source of verification	MTR comment on indicator and progress
Outcome 1: Enhancement of PA Management Effectiveness in the Achara Region	No net increase in the illegal harvesting of wood and non wood forest products	Mtirala NP: 7.82 m3. Kintrishi PA Complex: 0 m3.	Mtirala NP: 10,78 m3 Kintrishi PA Complex: 0 m3 (2014 data)	Mtirala NP: 0 m3 Kintrishi PA Complex: 0,84 m3 (2015 data)	Mtirala NP: 7.82 m3. Kintrishi PA Complex: 0 m3.	Data from APA	Measuring illegal activities and success in countering them is problematic and something that is faced by all projects with an emphasis on improving law enforcement. Some projects are now using the conviction rates as a measure.
	Reduction or no increase in illegal activity measured by % of patrols resulting in arrests or fines [1] [1] This measures records of illegal activity incidents as a proportion of patrol effort	Mtirala NP: 1.3% (12 incidents, 915 patrols) Kintrishi PA Complex: 0.37% (1 incident, 267 patrols)	Mtirala NP: 0.2 Kintrishi PA Complex: 0, 23% (1 incident, 422 patrols) (2014 data)	Mtirala NP: 0.13 Kintrishi PA Complex: 3% (9 incident, 302 patrols) (2015 data)	Mtirala NP: 1.3% or less Kintrishi PA Complex: 0.37% or less	Data from APA	In this project, levels of illegal offtake are relatively low so changes would be difficult to attribute without a deeper understanding of the drivers of change in the data. Therefore, as long as there are no startling changes (and there do not appear to be to date), this should be satisfactory. Finally, as with the METT scores, the project has no

Project Strategy	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Baseline	1 st PIR level	MTR status	EOP Target	Source of verification	MTR comment on indicator and progress
							significant influence in Kintrishi PAs.
Outcome 2: PA System Expansion to Increase Functional Connectivity of PAs in the West Lesser Caucasus	Extent (ha) of area surveyed, and formally proclaimed and managed as Machakhela National Park (IUCN Cat II)	0 ha	8,733ha	7,359.44ha	Machakhela National Park covering 8,733 ha by yr 2	See first indicator.	See comments on first indicator.
	Distance between the Mtirala/Kintrishi PA Complex and the nearest Forest Habitat PA	13 km to Jamili PA, Turkey	Less than 6km with the establishment of Machakhela NP	Less than 6 km as reported in 2015	Less than 6 km to Machakhela NP	Project PIR	Target achieved. See para 41 (point 8) for discussion on the indicator.
	Necessary infrastructure investment is made by APA and Achara authorities to establish effective management	Zero	Investment of USD 404,000 (Achara government for road rehabilitation.	Investment of USD 270,000 (Achara government on road rehabilitation) and USD 47,000 (APA on three	Approx. 120,000 USD	Project reports (but see Section 4.3.3 on monitoring co-finance).	The indicator specifies infrastructure and it only recently that the Machakhela NP has secured an administration building. Investment in that building has been forthcoming, both from

Project Strategy	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Baseline	1 st PIR level	MTR status	EOP Target	Source of verification	MTR comment on indicator and progress
	of the NP			vehicles)			the project and from APA. The Achara government has made significant investment into the road infrastructure in the vicinity of the protected area.
	Machakhela NP boundaries and zonation decided and participatory management plan in existence	Boundaries only provisionally demarcated and zonation not carried out	Definition of the park boundary underway.	The park boundary defined and accepted by APA and submitted to the public registry service. The revised boundary definition awaits enactment (expected spring 2017)	Clearly defined and consensually agreed boundaries and zones by yr 2 Consensually agreed Management plan exists by yr 3	The enacted redefinition of the Machakhela NP boundaries The acceptance and integration of zonation plan in the park's management plan. (Expected means of verification)	There are no issues with the indicator but both the definition of the park's boundary and the process of zoning the park have had issues <i>although these seem to be almost resolved</i> (as discussed at length in paras 41 (point 7 <i>et seq.</i>)).
	Level of involvement of communities in the management	N/A	The Technical Coordination Group (TCG) was established (with representation from municipality and	PA Advisory Committee under discussion.	Public-Civil Society-Community PA Planning and Management Governance	Machakhela NP management plan; minutes of PA Advisory Committee (once established);	The project is on the right track with regard to involvement of communities – starting tfrom the conflict resolution at the outset

Project Strategy	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Baseline	1 st PIR level	MTR status	EOP Target	Source of verification	MTR comment on indicator and progress
	and governance of the NP		communities)		Board established with proper representation and involvement of local communities in the planning and management of the Machakhela NP (by year 2)	minutes of TCG.	of the project. Ultimately, once the PA Advisory Committee is functional, along with the Friends Association, the involvement will be enhanced.

3.2.3 Remaining barriers to achieving project objectives

45. Broadly, the project is progressing well towards achieving its objectives, as discussed above. However, there are a number of issues that remain as overarching barriers to the protected area system as a whole and, partly, to the project achieving its objective.

46. In the section above, the MTR expresses a feeling of slight disappointment. At its core, this stems from the feeling that the outcome could have been somewhat better but, as stated above, the feeling of disappointment was made *in full understanding of the difficulties that organisations that work in the environment sector face*. Indeed, the environment sector in Georgia, as in many other countries in the world, remains marginalised, and the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection and APA do not have political leverage or resources. This is partly based on the fact that many view environmental considerations and planning as a barrier to development (as opposed to an important factor to consider to integrate sustainability, cost effectiveness and long-term well-being).

47. Aside from this, APA is an interesting institution: on one level it is remarkably progressive. It engages with partners and stakeholders, allows for the establishment of PA Advisory Committees (albeit with a limited mandate), and allows a non-state actor (CNF) to top-up the salaries of its staff in protected areas. And yet, on the other hand, it remains quite fiercely centralised with no authority being transferred either to the regions or to the municipalities (although, of course, this is on the basis of the current legislation – however, currently there is a study underway to determine potential options for decentralization). In addition, it does not appear as if the explicit protection of *biodiversity, ecosystem services* and *ecological processes* forms the fundamental foundation of their outlook at present²⁷. Further to this, there are perceptions that affect the decision making process regarding the category of protected area that is assigned to an area. Machakhela is a good example of this: the original proposal from WWF-Caucasus was to gazette the area as a protected landscape. Instead, APA decided to create a National Park – most probably because i) they retain control of this category of protected area (in contrast to protected landscapes that are managed by the municipalities), and ii) because there is the *perception* that a National Park is somehow a better or more desirable category of protected area. And yet again, there are occasions when APA appears to wish to avoid confrontations: for example, it compromised quite significantly, on the final boundaries of the Machakhela NP allegedly to avoid further “backlash” from the local communities.

²⁷ Such a statement is based, for example, on (but not limited to) the analysis of the reaction of APA to the zonation plan that was developed under auspices of the project.

48. In principle, it is possible that some of these concerns will reduce or be eliminated once the national strategy for protected areas – that is currently under development – is completed.

49. These are rather high-level concerns but one of the most important barriers, from the immediate perspective of the project is the high turnover of staff – within many state institutions that work with the project – but especially in APA. There are a number of drivers of this: i) there is a high turnover of higher level staff (e.g., there have been 13 Ministers in the past ten years) and this ripples down the chain, ii) the members of APA staff at the level of the protected areas are very poorly paid²⁸ and as soon as they can be employed elsewhere, they leave. The training that the project provides can *exacerbate* the staff turn over because they are more attractive to competing organisations. The high turnover of staff and especially the high turnover of the leadership undermine the ability of APA to change. Indeed, change requires stable leadership and in the absence of stable leadership, the tendency is to be conservative and seek known, safer solutions. In short, continuity of leadership is a prerequisite for change to occur. Of course, there are other factors that can contribute to change as well – including, for example, systemic and coordinated support from donors.

50. On another level, the number of professionals working in the sector is very limited; this is not an uncommon issue in many countries – however, there is relatively limited exposure to emerging ideals and technologies (and even when there is exposure, adoption is very slow).

3.3 Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

3.3.1 Management arrangements

51. The implementation arrangements are described in Section 3.4. In this section, the MTR describes the actual management arrangements. Before, doing so, the MTR would like to stress the complexity of the environment in which the project is being implemented. There are administrative levels with which the project must interact – the central government and specifically APA, the Achara Autonomous Regional Government, three different municipalities, the Forestry Agency, the protected area administrations, the people living in the vicinity of the protected areas, other conservation partners including non-state actors and UNDP. This institutional situation is made more complex by the slight unpredictability of some of the actors.

²⁸ For example, in the Achara region, rangers are paid 360 GEL/month; this compares unfavorably with the pay of the agents of the forestry agency (who get paid at least 480 GEL/month for the regional agency with those working for the central forestry agency being paid more than 500 GEL/month). Police in the country apparently now earn over 1,500 GEL/month.

52. Despite these challenging circumstances, the project is being implemented in an effective way and the levels of stakeholder involvement have been satisfactorily high. Indeed, the fact that the project *is* being implemented so effectively is a testament to the people involved in the implementation of the project – both the team based in Batumi as well as the team based in the UNDP-CO, and their partners involved, for example, in the TCG and PEB.

53. The PEB has met four times over the life of the project (16 December 2014, 06 July 2015, 22 December 2015 and 01 July 2016). All meetings have taken place in Batumi and have, on occasion, been followed by field trips. The PEB is proving an effective mechanism for project oversight.

54. The TCG met twice (27 March 2015 and 22 September 2015), both times in Tbilisi. Given that the primary function of the TCG is to bring together technical stakeholders and to ensure synergy, cooperation and collaboration, it was important for it to meet early in the project's life. Once the synergies and cooperation were established, it has not been necessary to reconvene it. Indeed, the MTR sees no need for further meetings of the TCG – although the project team and project partners should retain the right to convene it as and when necessary.

55. The Project Management Unit has established itself in Batumi and consists of the NPM and the AFA. The NPM was recruited on 01 October 2014 with the AFA (who works 50% of her time on this project) following shortly thereafter on 17 November 2014. The first AFA left after eleven months for personal reasons and there was nothing untoward that drove her to depart the project. She was replaced two months later. A part-time Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) has been employed since 01 February 2015 and has been valuable in guiding the technical aspects of the project, including the drafting of TORs for various contractors.

56. The project document also mentions a National Technical Coordinator (NTC). However, this position has not been filled – primarily because a suitable candidate was not found and short-term consultants have been hired instead. Nonetheless, as a result, the NPM has from time to time been stretched very thin. Given the amount of work that remains to be done until the project ends in June 2018, it may still be useful to take on a NTC to assist the NPM and the CTA with the implementation of the project (if, indeed, it is possible to find someone to fill the position).

Table 3. The members of the Project Implementation Unit, including position and period within the position.

Name	Position	Employment dates
Irakli Goradze	Project manager	01 Oct 2014 – present

Guranda Kartvelishvili*	Administrative and Finance Assistant	15 Dec 2015 – present
Shorena Gamsakhurdia**	Administrative and Finance Assistant	17 nov 2014 – 09 Oct 2015
Mark Anstey**	Chief Technical Adviser	01 Feb 2015 – present

* Shared with another project

** Part time

57. Given the NPM's history in the Government of the Achara Autonomous Region, he is well connected and well liked. This has proved a positive asset for the project; however, he has worked extremely hard to maintain good relationships and involve key stakeholders in the project processes and much of the project's progress to date can be attributed to him.

58. In addition, the UNDP-CO's Energy & Environment Portfolio Team provides vital and active support to the project – and much of the project's success to date can also be attributed to their efforts.

3.3.2 Work planning

59. As is usual for UNDP-GEF projects, budgets and workplans are developed on an annual basis and are approved by the PEB.

3.3.3 Project Finance and Co-finance

60. The project has an overall budget of USD 15 million of which USD 1.284 million come in the form of a grant from the GEF Trust Fund with a further USD 40,000 coming from UNDP TRAC funds – thus, making a total budget of USD 1.324 million allocated to UNDP for this project. The remaining finance for the project comes in the form of co-finance.

61. To date, a total of USD 534,138.25 has been spent (representing 40.4% of the total allocated funds) – thus, leaving a total of USD 756,109 (or just under 60% of the total allocated funds) remaining to be spent in the coming 20 months.

Table 4 Total project expenditure to date relative to the budget in the Project Document.

	Budgeted	Actual	% spent
Outcome 1	382,273.00	165,463.39	43.3
Outcome 2	789,997.00	251,773.28	31.9
Proj Mgt	151,366.00	104,123.41	68.8
Undepreciated fixed assets		12,778.17	

Total	1,323,636.00	534,138.25	40.4
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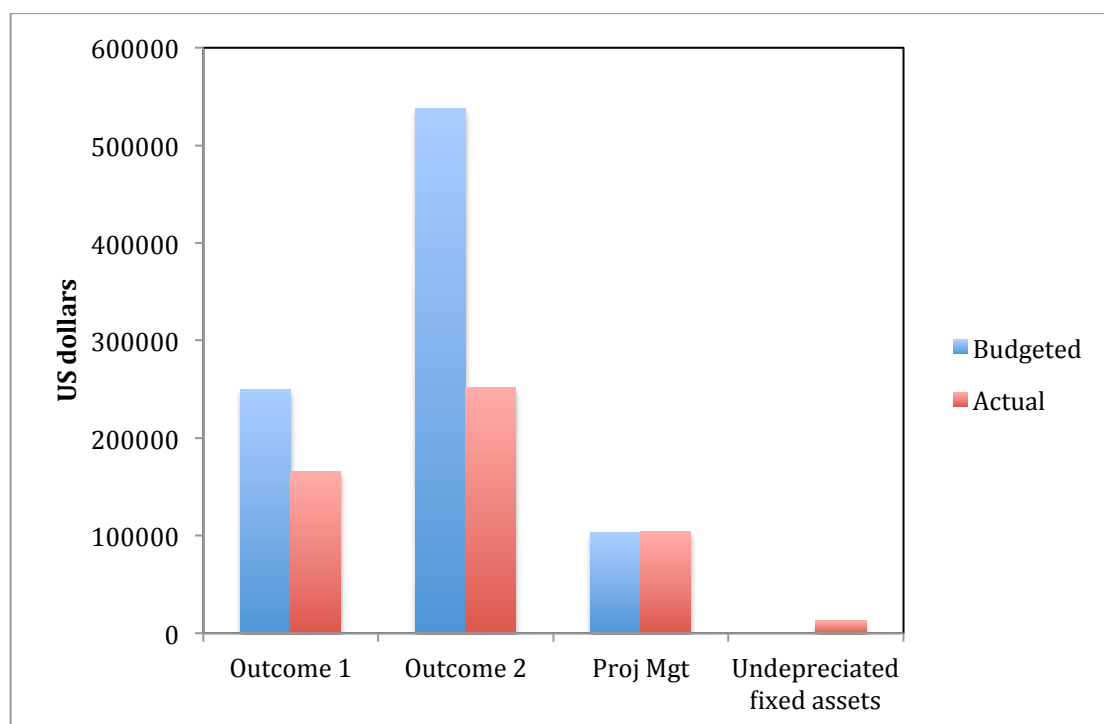


Figure 1. The total expenditure compared to the revised budget by Outcome

62. When the financial data are analysed for delivery against the revised budget, it can be seen that, overall to date, the project is underspending. In part, this can be attributed to the fact that four months remain of 2016. When the data are disaggregated by Outcome (see Figure 1), it can be seen that the underspend lies primarily in Outcome 2 (with only 47% of the budgeted amount spent), although there is underspend also in Outcome 1 (with 66% of the budgeted amount spent). If the data are further disaggregated by year (see Table 5), the effect of 2016 can be seen (as spending is only 12% and 23% of the budgeted amount for Outcomes 1 and 2, respectively), thus, this may be corrected with expenditure towards the end of the year. Across 2014 and 2015, the expenditure against the budgeted amount is a little tighter.

63. When the project management expenditure is examined against the revised budgeted amounts (see Table 5), the first two years (2014 and 2015) were both overspent, and 2014 significantly so (expenditure was 385% of the budgeted amount). With 20 months of the project life remaining, a total of 66% of the overall project management has been spent. As such, it is likely that the UNDP-CO will have to seek additional funding (probably UNDP TRAC funds) to cover any further project management costs once the allocated budget has been spent.

Table 5. The project expenditure, by Outcome, relative to the budgeted amounts where Budgeted (1) is the original budget from the project document and Budgeted (2) is the revised budget from the annual, approved workplan for the project to date. Aspects of concern and/or interest are flagged in **red. All figure in USD.**

	2014					2015				
	Budgeted (1)	Budgeted (2)	Actual	% spent (1)	% spent (2)	Budgeted (1)	Budgeted (2)	Actual	% spent (1)	% spent (2)
Outcome 1	58447	19642.38	13380.18	22.89	68.1	157200	111600	137953.85	87.76	123.6
Outcome 2	143200	17000	9597.65	6.70	56.5	266067	251170	180547.57	67.86	71.9
Proj Mgt	36350	4800	18464.55	50.80	384.7	40310	52110	59403.77	147.37	114.0
Undepreciated fixed assets							6610.81			
Total	237997	41442.38	41442.38	17.4	100	463577	414880	384516	82.9	92.7

	2016					2017
	Budgeted (1)	Budgeted (2)	Actual	% spent (1)	% spent (2)	Budgeted (1)
Outcome 1	98820	118609	14129.36	14.63	11.9	67806
Outcome 2	166400	269362	61628.06	49.29	22.9	214330
Proj Mgt	34750	45974.42	26255.09	62.05	57.1	39956
Undepreciated fixed assets		6167.36				
Total	299970	433945.42	108179.87	41.40418	24.9	322092.00

	Total				
	Budgeted (1)	Budgeted (2)	Actual	% spent (1)	% spent (2)
Outcome 1	382273	249851.38	165463.39	43.37	66.2
Outcome 2	789997	537532	251773.28	34.45	46.8
Proj Mgt	151366	102884.42	104123.41	65.69	101.2
Undepreciated fixed assets		0	6167.36		
Total	1323636	890267.8	534138.25	41.06	60.0

64. In terms of co-finance, a total of USD 5,135,262 was pledged in the PIF. Of this, 44.7% was pledged by the Government of Georgia (at both the central and regional levels, both in-kind and cash), with 45% pledged by KfW-funded projects.

65. With the exception of the co-finance expenditure on infrastructure investments in Machakhela National Park, the project was only keeping ad hoc records of co-finance expenditure and this is one area in which there could be significant improvement²⁹.

66. The project is keeping good records of co-financier expenditure on infrastructure investments in Machakhela NP because it is included in the project's results framework. Thus, during the period July 2015 – June 2016, three vehicles were procured by APA (at a cost USD 47,000). The Government of Achara has rehabilitated roads and a bridge in the Machakhela valley (at an estimated total cost of USD 674,000).

67. The one oddity from the co-finance data that were delivered to the MTR team was the extraordinarily high figures for the Achara Autonomous Region's expenditure. It turns out that the co-finance letter signed with the regional government stated that it would provide figures for the implementation of *"various socio-economic and infrastructure projects in Khelvachauri and Kobuleti municipalities"* – irrespective of whether there was any relationship with the protected areas, local communities within the vicinity of the protected areas or infrastructure development within or immediately surrounding the protected areas. This led the government to provide a total figure of co-finance to date of USD 41,897,588.80. At this stage it is impossible to disaggregate the figures retrospectively and, additionally, they will not be comparable to any pledged amounts. Given this situation, it is probably best for the project, in partnership with the regional government, to record as accurately as possible the proper co-finance (i.e., in principle, it should only include the funds that are directly contributing to the goal, objective and outcomes of the project) for the remainder of the project and for future reporting (including the Terminal Evaluation) to note that this error has occurred.

68. In addition, there are other examples of the government's contribution to the project, including (but not limited to):

- a. The Chairman of APA attends all PEB meetings and remains engaged and interested in the project.

²⁹ The best practice for monitoring co-finance was demonstrated by the UNDP-GEF project "Mainstreaming biodiversity in Uzbekistan's oil-and-gas sector policies and operations." Similar practices should be implemented in all UNDP-GEF projects.

- b. The NPC is the high level official who is chairing the Project Steering Committee, and responsible for providing government oversight and guidance to the project implementation.
- c. Support provided to the project by other officials of the various ministries involved in the project and who are paid by state budget

Table 6. The planned value and actual expenditure, to date, of co-finance (all figures in USD)

Sources of co-finance	Co-financier	Amount pledged	Actual (at MTR)	% of expected amount (at MTR)
National Government	Agency of Protected Areas	1,395,490.00	405,506.89	29.06
Regional Government	Achara AR Government*	7,638,036.00	41,897,588.80	548.54
Regional Government	Khevlachauri Municipality**	1,757,553.00	512,586.61	29.16
UN Agency	UNDP TRAC (in kind)	110,000		
Bilateral Agency	KfW	2,317,063.00	292,196.21	12.61
Bilateral Agency	US DOI	40,000		
NGO	World Wildlife Fund for Nature	100,000.00	135,000.00	135.00
Private Sector	CNF	317,000.00	116,270.74	36.68
Total co-financing		13,675,142	43,359,149.25	

* Includes the budget for Khevlachauri Municipality (see para 67).

** Spent in the period from 2012 – 2016

69. The AFA does much of the day-to-day management of the project finances but the UNDP-CO provides financial and administrative support, including procurement, contracting, travel and payments. The TOR for all work is prepared by the project team (principally the NPM and CTA). The UNDP DRR signs the majority of contracts. There is one important point to make about the procurement processes. Apparently, the majority (if not all) procurements are advertised in English and there is a request for the bids to be made in English. This has led to some good contractors and consultants not submitting bids for certain tenders. Given that the people evaluating the

bids speak both languages, bidders should have the option for which language they wish to submit their bids³⁰.

70. While all projects encourage ownership especially by the relevant government agencies, on occasion, APA's enthusiasm for information and detail in some of the procurement processes has apparently slowed progress. There is already a mechanism in place to allow APA to participate in procurement processes as an observer on procurement processes (although UNDP procurement rules do not allow them to interfere or vote on processes). It is then up to UNDP, as chair of these processes, to ensure that they are streamlined and efficient.

71. One further issue that will require the UNDP-CO's attention is to ensure that there is a listing for 2018 on ATLAS for the project. This should be straightforward at the end of 2017 when the project revision is done, coupled with the preparation of the annual workplan (AWP) for 2018.

72. Finally, the project is implementing standard measures to ensure cost-effectiveness:

- a. The project is sharing an office in Batumi with two other projects³¹
- b. The project is using the usual UNDP procurement rules that are designed to optimise value-for-money.
- c. Where there is no competition, the PMU and UNDP-CO carry out their own analysis of the bids in question to ensure that they fall within the expectations.
- d. There is some degree of cost sharing with other projects – whenever there is complementarity of activities.

3.3.4 Project-level Monitoring & Evaluation Systems

73. The project's M&E framework is similar to the majority of all UNDP-GEF projects with a relatively generous USD 43,000 allocated for project monitoring.

74. The project is being monitored effectively and efficiently. The UNDP-CO E&E team is notably involved in the monitoring of the project. The PEB members travel to Batumi for each of the meetings and have also undertaken field visits. Finally, the MTR is an important part of the M&E processes.

75. In summary, then, the M&E processes are satisfactory.

³⁰ This suggestion is obviously subject to the UNDP rules and procedures but the MTR team notes that in other countries in which English is not the first language, tender announcements are made in the language of the country or both languages and bids can be submitted in either language.

³¹ "Green Cities: Integrated Sustainable Transport for the City of Batumi and the Achara Region" and "Sustainable Agriculture in the Autonomous Republic of Ajara"

3.3.5 Stakeholder engagement

76. Stakeholder analysis is carried out within the Project Document and the main stakeholders are identified, with a broad description of their mandate, as well as their identified role and responsibilities within the project.

77. As described above (see Section 4.3.1), there is a large number of stakeholders and the project is correspondingly complex. However, stakeholder engagement and inclusion is very satisfactory with the needs and concerns of stakeholders taken into account through each of the project steps and processes. This is particularly notable because it reverses the alienation that was created by the park staff on initial establishment of the Machakhela NP administration. Thus, the project team has done an excellent job of including stakeholders.

78. There is a requirement that all contractors and consultants involve key stakeholders in all their work (including the MTR – see Annex II for the people met over the course of the MTR mission!).

79. As also discussed in Section 4.3.1, the project has two formal structures to ensure stakeholder involvement – the PEB and the TCG. Both of these structures have been functioning satisfactorily.

3.3.6 Reporting

80. The project is fulfilling its obligations on reporting, as described in the Project Document (see Part IV of the Project Document).

81. As with most projects, the project is filling the project results framework with a narrative (see project PIRs for 2015 and 2016) – rather than reporting concisely and quantifiably on progress towards achieving the target on each indicator. There are sections in the PIR for a narrative report but the PRF should be filled in as concise a way as possible (see Table 2).

82. There is one other point to mention regarding the reporting. The majority (but not quite *all*) of the project's outputs are in English (although sometimes written in Georgian and then translated into English). This renders them less useful for dissemination in Georgia. As a result, the MTR would encourage that the primary language to be used in reports is Georgian (perhaps with an English summary) and only those reports with a wide, international readership should be written in (or translated into) English. If the UNDP-CO requires that a report is written in English, it should simply specify that this is the case.

3.3.7 Communication

83. Through the project's engagement with stakeholders, there is a relatively good understanding of the aims and objectives of the project³² - however, there has been no targeted communication campaigns.

84. There are a number of things that could be considered in the remaining life of the project:

1. Among local communities, there is a bad perception of protected areas that may, in part, stem from the Soviet era. As a result, there is a need for a targeted campaign among all actors working with protected areas and protected area development to put out some "feel-good" stories demonstrating their value – in every way: i) for the protection of biodiversity, ecosystem services and ecological processes, ii) for tourism, iii) for the long-term well-being of local communities and iv) for the economy of the country.
2. As is often the practice, the project has provided some stickers or signs for some of the project beneficiaries. Somewhat amusingly, some of the beneficiaries have stuck these stickers on the back of the beehives that they received through the project: they do this because "the stickers disturb the bees!"

While the stickers do acknowledge the sources of support (Government of Georgia, UNDP and GEF) and name the project ("Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of the Achara Region's Protected Areas"), the stickers and signs are rather dry and uninformative. The MTR team would much prefer to see signs and stickers that have some form of innovative messaging that reinforces the linkage between the benefits and the protected area (e.g., "bees in protected areas make better honey!").

3.4 Sustainability

85. At the mid point of any project, one only begins to get a sense of where the sustainability issues will lie. These are discussed in the following sections, as appropriate, with the hope that these issues can be pinched off and resolved before the issue grows and is identified as a significant risk at the end of the project.

3.4.1 Financial Risks to Sustainability

86. Within the framework of the protected area system in Georgia, there is a similar risk to sustainability as with many other protected areas in the country. That is they are relatively poorly funded although, as gazetted

³² There was one notable exception to this: the representatives of one of the municipalities that were met over the course of the MTR mission really had very little information on the project!

protected areas – including Machakhela NP – they will all receive some level of funding from the government. Indeed, as a gazetted National Park, Machakhela NP is guaranteed funding – at least to cover the salaries of the staff (albeit that the salaries are very low as previously discussed) and some operational costs. This does not extend to DSA when the rangers are in the field but does cover a performance bonus linked, for example, to arrests that are made as a result of their work.

87. It is, however, important for the financial sustainability of Machakhela NP to fulfil the criteria for support from the CNF. The project should continue to communicate with the CNF to ensure that there is a clear understanding about the criteria that will need to be fulfilled. If the CNF commit to supporting the park, they can match the government's financial commitments by providing top-ups for salaries and covering some of the operational costs of the protected area.

88. The financial sustainability of the inputs that the project has been making among the local communities will be discussed in the following section.

3.4.2 Socio-economic Risks to Sustainability

89. Building sustainability in rural development or work with local communities is challenging for a number of reasons: i) it may be difficult to achieve impact at a meaningful scale, ii) any institutions that are created over the course of a project tend to be unstable in the absence of external guidance and support, and iii) it takes time to build trust and build the capacities of people living in the vicinity of protected areas. A further challenge is that expectations among local communities are often built, and if and when those expectations are unfulfilled, there can be an adverse reaction to perceived injustices of the situation.

90. In the case of the project – with a focus on Machakhela National Park – expectations *have* been built and these will need to be managed with care. Expectations were built as a mechanism to allay the concerns among the local communities. If the expectations are not fulfilled, the concerns will be exacerbated.

91. There are a number of routes that may be taken to ensure socio-economic sustainability among the people living in the vicinity of the protected areas and Machakhela NP in particular. First, the project can either engage with the government and get it involved or, alternatively, seek synergies with existing or emerging government initiatives. The emerging Local Action Groups (LAG) programme that is expected to be implemented through the Ministry of Agriculture of the Achara Government offers such an opportunity and the project should try to persuade the Ministry to carry out all the pilot work in the Machakhela valley. If this succeeds then it will achieve both scale and sustainability. If the work can be linked to the protected area, it will

significantly increase the likelihood of sustainability of both the well-being of the people living in the vicinity of the protected area and the protected area itself.

3.4.3 Institutional Framework and Governance Risks to Sustainability

92. Earlier in this report, the institutional situation was discussed (see Section 4.2.3) with particular reference to APA. At one level, government institutions are robust and resilient: their existence is not challenged although they do have other challenges. For an organisation like APA, as discussed, these include (but are not limited to): a high turnover of personnel, political processes (that can result in a number of different outcomes), governance issues relating to centralisation of responsibility.

93. Staff retention is one particular concern with respect to APA, especially at the level of the protected areas. There are numerous mechanisms that can be adopted to improve staff retention; this is something that the project may be in a position to assist, at least at the level of the protected areas with which it works.

3.4.4 Environmental Risks to Sustainability

94. As a project that is broadly on track and that is focused on environmental protection, it should, in principle, make a significant contribution to reducing environmental risks to sustainability. However, there are a number of risks.

95. First, climate change represents a significant risk, especially in the microclimate that surrounds the Black Sea coast of Georgia. Climate projections suggest that average temperatures will increase, as will the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. Projects suggest that precipitation will initially increase and then decline sharply in the latter half of the 21st century; summer precipitation is expected to decline with winter precipitation expected to increase³³. These changes are expected to have a number of impacts on biodiversity, including: i) altitudinal shift upwards of Colchic forests which, in turn, will reduce the alpine vegetation zone, and an expansion of Mediterranean ecosystems in the lowlands, ii) an expansion of invasive species, and iii) species with specialised habitat requirements will

³³ i) Shatberashvili, N.; Rucevska, I.; Jørstad, H.; Artsivadze, K.; Mehdiyev, B.; Aliyev, M.; Fayvush, G.; Dzeladze, M.; Jurek, M.; Kirkfeldt, T. & Semernya, L. (2015). *Outlook on climate change adaptation in the South Caucasus mountains*. United Nations Environment Programme, GRID-Arendal and Sustainable Caucasus. Nairobi, Arendal and Tbilisi, ii) Climate Change Strategy of Adjara (2013) Report by numerous stakeholders to UNDP, iii) Rukhadze, A., I. Vachiberidze & M. Fandoeva (2014) National Climate Vulnerability Assessment: Georgia. Climate Forum East (CFE) and Georgia National Network on Climate Change, iv) Sylvén, M., R. Reinvang & Z. Andersone-Lilley (2008) Climate Change in Southern Caucasus: Impacts on nature, people and society. WWF Norway & WWF Caucasus Programme. July, 2008

likely decline. In addition to these biodiversity impacts, the likelihood of events such as landslides will increase (thereby emphasizing the need to protect the steeper slopes – i.e., those $>30^\circ$ - from human use and impacts).

96. Second, as has been discussed above (see Section 4.2.3), relatively little of the work builds on the foundation of biodiversity conservation – and the one piece of work that was strongly build on biodiversity information was rejected. Further, some of the key areas for biodiversity – in the bottom of the valleys – have remained outside of the protected areas and thus susceptible to environmental degradation.

97. Finally, the project and all the project partners are operating in a relatively hostile environment. The resources and the political leverage available to these organisations are minimal – particularly in the face of powerful organisations such as the Ministry of Energy. This results (and has, over the course of the project's life, resulted) in unilateral compromises and concessions being made – with potentially significant environmental consequences. This may well be the perceived political reality in which organisations such as APA have to operate but it neither makes it more palatable nor does it reduce the risks to sustainability.

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

98. The overriding conclusion is that, with a few relatively minor caveats, the project is broadly on track and should make a good contribution to the conservation of globally important biodiversity. Principally, the project has managed to take Machakhela National Park from one that existed only on paper to one that is increasingly becoming operational on the ground.

99. The fact that the project is on track is a testament to the people involved in the project implementation – most particularly the PMU and the UNDP-CO's E&E Portfolio team – with the support of APA. Part of the project's success to date has to come from the fact that it has painstakingly involved all stakeholders in project processes and implementation.

100. That being said, there is less than half the project's life remaining (20 months) and there is much to complete. The rate of work, if anything, will have to increase if the project is to develop all the technical materials and plans, and implement them such that, if necessary, they can be amended before the project closes.

101. It should be recognised that the project has diverged a little from its original objectives. It started as a request from APA to develop the Machakhela NP. In order to accommodate the GEF's framework, it expanded

its reach to include other protected areas in the Achara Autonomous Region. In practice, however, the greater emphasis is on Machakhela NP and on natural resource management in the areas within and surrounding the park. This emphasis on natural resource management is symptomatic of the fact that this is the most important issue in the area.

4.2 Recommendations

102. A number of suggestions and recommendations have been made throughout the MTR report. In this section, the most critical recommendations are summarised and highlighted but the project team should consider all the additional suggestions made in the sections above.

103. As mentioned above, the project has a great of work still to do. If there are any delays, for any reason, in implementation, it is likely that there will be repercussions for whether or not the project will achieve its objectives and targeted outcomes. As such, the MTR recommends that the project partners (principally APA, the PMU and the UNDP-CO) re-assess the situation in November 2017. This would allow any recommendation for a (six- or 12-month, as appropriate) no-cost extension to be made to the PEB before the end of 2017 (with accompanying workplan and budgeting). The PEB could then approve (or otherwise) the recommendation.

104. It should be noted that in reality, a “no-cost” extension refers only to the GEF grant. Other project partners – but principally the UNDP-CO – would incur costs for any extension, primarily because the project management costs would need to be covered during the extended period.

Table 7. The summary of MTR recommendations for the project

Rec#	Recommendation	Entity Responsible
A	Objective: To enhance the management effectiveness, biogeographically coverage and connectivity of Protected Areas to conserve forest ecosystems in the Achara Region	
A.1	Work to seek mechanisms that will enhance the likelihood of achieving sustainability	APA, UNDP-CO, PMU, project partners
A.2	Where possible, seek to adopt new and emerging technologies for law enforcement and monitoring	APA, PMU
A.3	Keep implementation efficient and effective: there is much to do and only 20 months of project life remaining!	UNDP-CO, PMU
B	Outcome 1: Enhancement of PA Management Effectiveness in the Achara Region	

Rec#	Recommendation	Entity Responsible
B.1	Retain a focus in the areas outside of Machakhela NP, adding value where possible and in cooperation, collaboration and synergy with other actors	PMU, project partners
C	Outcome 2: PA System Expansion to Increase Functional Connectivity of PAs in the West Lesser Caucasus	
C.1	The zonation plan needs to be reviewed and agreed, and incorporated into the management plan	APA, PMU, project partners, consultants
C.2	The project should do what it can to catalyse a dialogue between Turkey and Georgia regarding transboundary cooperation regarding Machakhela NP and Camili Biosphere Reserve; if there is a willingness from both parties, the UNDP-COs can assist with the dialogue process.	UNDP-CO (Georgia & Turkey), UNDP-GEF RTC, PMU, WWF
C.3	Continue to explore possibilities with the Forestry Agency and municipality regarding protection and management of biodiversity outside of the Machakhela NP (e.g., with the possibility of establishing a protected landscape)	PMU, project partners
D	Project Management	
D.1	Recruit a National Technical Coordinator, as allowed within the project document, to assist with project implementation for the remainder of the project	UNDP-CO, PMU
D.2	Keep accurate and up-to-date records of co-finance expenditure	PMU
D.3	If possible and allowed by the UNDP Procurement Rules and Procedures, use Georgian as default language for procurement and reporting	PMU, UNDP-CO
D.4	Include 2018 workplan and budget in Atlas	UNDP-CO
D.5	Ensure that there are sufficient funds for project management until the end of project	UNDP-CO

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

105. *Zonation and management plans.* While a number of people, including, for example, the NPM, were rather upbeat about the status of the Machakhela National Park zonation plan, the MTR remains concerned i) that the proposed zonation plan submitted by Ilia State University has been rejected, and ii) the counter proposal by APA is so dramatically different. The MTR acknowledges that one of the driving forces is the political reality in which APA operates. Either way, because the zonation plan needs to be included in

the management plan and the decision affects the way in which the forestry inventory is carried out, the issue needs to be resolved as soon as possible.

106. As mentioned in the report, there are relatively few areas of pristine, primary forest across the valley and in some areas exploitation of the beech woodlands has led to alder replacing the beech almost entirely. As such, the management plan should also consider the possibility of rehabilitation of the degraded forests.

107. *Recruit a NTC.* Because there is so much work to complete in the coming 20 months, it would be useful to recruit a NTC (as stipulated in the project document) to assist the NPM and the AFA with the timely implementation and completion of the project.

108. *Transboundary cooperation.* One of the key features of Machakhela National Park is the potential for transboundary cooperation with Camili Biosphere Reserve. The project should seek all assistance possible to reach out to the Turkish authorities (using, for example, the UNDP-CO in Turkey or WWF-Caucasus) to assist wherever possible.

109. *Amendments to the project's result framework.* There are a small number of amendments that need to be made to the project's results framework. In addition, it should be noted that there are aspects of the project's results framework over which the project has little control. A good example is the METT scores for Kintrishi PAs: other partners and principally the KfW-funded project are taking the lead and have significantly more influence over the final METT score in this area. This fact should be taken into account when the project is evaluated.

110. *Co-finance data.* While the project did, eventually, give the MTR some data on co-finance spending, it was evident that this was not being systematically done. The project should setup a system of monitoring co-finance expenditure – including both in-kind and in cash spending (and see Section 4.3.3 for a suggestion of where to seek the best practice when it comes to monitoring co-finance spending).

111. *English vs. Georgian reports.* As mentioned in Section 4.3.6, the primary language to be used in reports is Georgian and only those reports with a wide, international readership should be written in (or translated into) English.

112. In addition, announcements for tenders should be in both English and Georgian, and bidders should be allowed to submit their bids for tenders in either Georgian or English.

113. *Inclusion of the project in Atlas 2018.* The current end of project date stands at 09 June 2018. The project should be included in Atlas until then, as appropriate.

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

114. *A jointly managed Machakhela valley.* Towards the end of section 4.2.1, the MTR makes a suggestion of a joint- or co-managed area that couples the Machakhela NP (managed by APA) to a protected landscape encompassing the valleys (managed by the municipalities and in which participatory natural resource management agreements would be negotiated and implemented). If at all possible, this (or a similar) scenario should be explored, developed and implemented.

115. However, in the absence of such a scheme, the management of the areas in the valleys (i.e., outside of the national park) that fall under the mandate of the Forestry Agency will be critical to the protection of biodiversity and to ecological integrity of the area. The project should, therefore, engage with the Forestry Agency and, if necessary, provide support to the development of forest management plans.

116. *Mechanisms for replication and for lessons to be learned.* As the project progresses, lessons are being learned. In addition, by its end, the project will be an outstanding example of a number of practices. The project should document and communicate these good practices and lessons learned such that they are replicated elsewhere in Georgia and the region.

117. *New law enforcement and monitoring technologies.* Since the project planning took place in 2012, there have been significant developments in law enforcement and monitoring technologies (as discussed in Section 4.2.1). If deemed feasible and if the project has adequate resources to do so, some of these law enforcement and monitoring technologies should be piloted in the protected areas in the Achara region.

118. Further to this, carrying out an analysis of the judicial chain to determine where the bottlenecks lie may be useful. Thereafter, activities such as providing training for the people involved in the judicial process (including, for example, the police – who carry out the arrests and process the cases, the prosecutors, magistrates and judges) could be carried out.

119. *Ensuring sustainability and continuity.* In 20 months the project will be closed³⁴ and the project has much to do, including the development of key outputs such as the management plan for Machakhela NP. It is not enough to simply develop these documents, strategies and plans but they should also be implemented, tested and reviewed on the principle that they can, if need be,

³⁴ Unless, of course, there is a no-cost extension of up to one year.

be amended. Thereafter, the project can only sign off once sustainability of processes can be assured.

120. Some of the remaining tasks are laborious and will take much investment, both in terms of time and resources. A good example of this is the testing of fuelwood alternatives – with the hazelnut shells apparently being the best option³⁵. Indeed, it is the testing of alternatives to fuelwood as well as trying to build up the work with the people living in the vicinity of the protected areas to a meaningful scale that may possibly drive the need for a no-cost extension of the project. It also takes time to change attitudes and behaviour. Within the protected areas, similarly, it takes time for the processes to show results, and the protected area staff will benefit from longer-term mentoring. The financial sustainability of the protected areas will also have to be built and it will take time for a system in which funding from government, inputs from donors and accrued revenues meet the financial needs of any one of the protected areas.

121. In short, in order to ensure sustainability and continuity, the project should seek partners for the different aspects of the work. As discussed at various parts of the report, the Government of Achara has developed a programme (LAGs) which would be ideal for continuity and scaling up the work with local communities. The GEF SGP, if operational, may also offer an opportunity to build to scale the work with local communities. In addition, the KfW promoted and funded FPA schemes may also present opportunities (although a thorough evaluation of the impacts of the FPA schemes may be warranted).

122. Within Machakhela NP, ideally CNF would contribute to financial sustainability – but it would still be useful to have another non-state actor (e.g., WWF or NACRES) continue to work with the park following closure of the project.

123. *Other brief and summarised recommendations and suggestions:*

1. When demarcating the boundary of the park, place markers in strategic and important areas only.
2. Where possible, the project partners should ensure that the upcoming Protected Area Strategy for the country includes all their concerns and desires.

³⁵ The use of coal as an alternative to biomass fuels was originally proposed by the contractor; however, there was a significant amount of dissent to the use of coal because of its carbon footprint. In this, there is a trade-off or compromise, best informed with a detailed cost-benefit analysis in which *perceptions* are an integral part for it was the *perception* of coal as a “dirty” fuel by a number of different stakeholders that prompted the contractor to remove it as an option.

4.2.3 Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives

124. *Engage with actors such as the Ministry of Energy.* In the long-term, it will be mutually beneficial if the Ministry of Energy engages with APA, particularly on the subject of watershed protection. Watershed protection (such as in the protected area of the Achara region – as indeed elsewhere in the country) will result in significantly longer lifetimes for any hydroelectric dams that the Ministry of Energy builds.

125. *Certified forestry.* In those areas in which forestry is taking place, the organisations involved may be guided towards seeking becoming certified (e.g., FSC certification, which comes with adhering to certain standards). This could apply to all areas outside of the protected areas but some interviewees also suggested that it could occur within areas such as Kintrishi PAs as part of the revenue generation scheme.

Expansion and Improved Management of the Achara Region's Protected Areas

PIMS 4732

Midterm Review, October 2016 Volume II (Annexes)

Georgia

GEF SO-1, SP-3 Strengthening Terrestrial Protected Areas

Georgia

Agency for Protected Areas & Achara Autonomous Republic Government

United National Development Program (UNDP)

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Annex 1 Terms of Reference

1. INTRODUCTION

This is the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the UNDP-GEF Midterm Review (MTR) of the full sized project titled “*Expansion and Improved Management of the Achara Region’s Protected Areas*” (PIMS#4732) implemented through the UNDP, which is to be undertaken in 2016. The project started on the June 2014 and is 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). This ToR sets out the expectations for this MTR. The MTR process must follow the guidance outlined in the document *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*.

(http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/guidance/GEF/mid-term/Guidance_Midterm%20Review%20_EN_2014.pdf).

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The project was designed to: enhance the management effectiveness , biogeographical coverage and connectivity of Protected Areas of the Achara Autonomous Region of Georgia in order to better conserve the globally unique Colchic Forests(temperate rainforest). The area is of biodiversity importance because of the humid Pliocene flora refugium, high proportion of narrow-ranged (local endemic) plants, high percentage of endemic, as a well-known bottle-neck for migratory birds.

The project will support the government to bring about the functional operation of the recently gazetted Machakhela National Park which will form the last link in a chain of 4 protected areas established to conserve the Colchic forests of the region (i.e. Kintrishi, Mtskheta and Machakhela in Georgia and Jamili in Turkey). Additionally, the project will help to build management effectiveness and sustainability of all the protected areas in this chain in Achara and help establish transboundary links with the Jamili Biosphere Reserve in Turkey.

It will further support the Georgian Agency for Protected Areas (APA) and the target PA Administrations to improve financial planning, better integrate local communities into protected areas management and build capacity for applying, adaptable and participatory approaches most likely to achieve long term conservation and sustainable local rural livelihoods.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE MTR

The MTR will assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document, and 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. It (MTR) will focus on the effectiveness, efficiency and timeliness of project implementation; will present initial lessons learned about project design, implementation and management. The MTR will also review the project’s strategy, its risks to sustainability. Findings of this MTR will be incorporated as recommendations for enhanced implementation during the final half of the project’s term

4. MTR APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

The MTR must provide evidence based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The MTR team will review all relevant sources of information including documents prepared during the preparation phase (i.e. PIF, UNDP Initiation Plan, UNDP Environmental & Social Safeguard Policy, the Project Document, project reports including Annual Project Review/PIRs, project budget revisions, lesson learned reports, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the team considers

useful for this evidence-based review). The MTR team will review the baseline GEF focal area Tracking Tool submitted to the GEF at CEO endorsement, and the midterm GEF focal area Tracking Tool that must be completed before the MTR field mission begins.

The MTR team is expected to follow a collaborative and participatory approach¹ ensuring close engagement with the Project Team, government counterparts (the GEF Operational Focal Point), the UNDP Country Office(s), UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisers, and other key stakeholders.

Engagement of stakeholders is vital to a successful MTR.² Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders in both Tbilisi and Achara region who have project responsibilities, including but not limited to; executing agency, senior officials, key experts and consultants, Project Board, project stakeholders, Achara region and local government and CSOs, partner donor funded project staff in Achara, etc. Additionally, the MTR team is expected to conduct field missions to Achara region, including the following project sites: Batumi city, Machakhela Valley, Mtirala NP, Kintrishi PAs.

The final MTR report should describe the full MTR approach taken and the rationale for the approach making explicit the underlying assumptions, challenges, strengths and weaknesses about the methods and approach of the review.

5. DETAILED SCOPE OF THE MTR

The MTR team will assess the following four categories of project progress. See the *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for extended descriptions.

i. 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. Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated into the project design?
- Review how the project addresses country priorities. Review country ownership. Was the project concept in line with the national sector development priorities and plans of the country (or of participating countries in the case of multi-country projects)?
- Review decision-making processes: were perspectives of those who would be affected by project decisions, those who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the process, taken into account during project design processes?
- Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were raised in the project design. See Annex 9 of *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for further guidelines.
- If there are major areas of concern, recommend areas for improvement.

¹ For ideas on innovative and participatory Monitoring and Evaluation strategies and techniques, see [UNDP Discussion Paper: Innovations in Monitoring & Evaluating Results](#), 05 Nov 2013.

² For more stakeholder engagement in the M&E process, see the [UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results](#), Chapter 3, pg. 93.

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.
- Are the project's objectives and outcomes or components clear, practical, and feasible within its time frame?
- 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.
- Ensure broader development and gender aspects of the project are being monitored effectively. Develop and recommend SMART 'development' indicators, including sex-disaggregated indicators and indicators that capture development benefits.

ii. Progress Towards Results

Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis:

- Review the logframe indicators against progress made towards the end-of-project targets using the Progress Towards Results Matrix and following 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 each outcome; make recommendations from the areas marked as "Not on target to be achieved" (red).

Table. Progress Towards Results Matrix (Achievement of outcomes against End-of-project Targets)

Project Strategy	Indicator ³	Baseline Level ⁴	Level in 1 st PIR (self-reported)	Midterm Target ⁵	End-of-project Target	Midterm Level & Assessment ⁶	Achievement Rating ⁷	Justification for Rating
Objective:	Indicator (if applicable):							
Outcome 1:	Indicator 1:							
	Indicator 2:							
Outcome 2:	Indicator 3:							
	Indicator 4:							
	Etc.							
Etc.								

Indicator Assessment Key

Green= Achieved	Yellow= On target to be achieved	Red= Not on target to be achieved
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In addition to the progress towards outcomes analysis:

- Compare and analyse the GEF Tracking Tool at the Baseline with the one completed right before the Midterm Review.

³ Populate with data from the Logframe and scorecards

⁴ Populate with data from the Project Document

⁵ If available

⁶ Colour code this column only

⁷ Use the 6 point Progress Towards Results Rating Scale: HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU

- Identify remaining barriers to achieving the project objective in the remainder of the project.
- By reviewing the aspects of the project that have already been successful, identify ways in which the project can further expand these benefits.

iii. Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

Management Arrangements:

- Review overall effectiveness of project management as outlined in the Project Document. Have changes been made and are they effective? Are responsibilities and reporting lines clear? Is decision-making transparent and undertaken in a timely manner? Recommend areas for improvement.
- Review the quality of execution of the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner(s) and recommend areas for improvement.
- Review the quality of support provided by the GEF Partner Agency (UNDP) and recommend areas for improvement.

Work Planning:

- Review any delays in project start-up and implementation, identify the causes and examine if they have been resolved.
- Are work-planning processes results-based? If not, suggest ways to re-orientate work planning to focus on results?
- Examine the use of the project's results framework/ logframe as a management tool and review any changes made to it since project start.

Finance and co-finance:

- Consider the financial management of the project, with specific reference to the cost-effectiveness of interventions.
- Review the changes to fund allocations as a result of budget revisions and assess the appropriateness and relevance of such revisions.
- Does the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allow management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allow for timely flow of funds?
- Informed by the co-financing monitoring table to be filled out, provide commentary on co-financing: is co-financing being used strategically to help the objectives of the project? Is the Project Team meeting with all co-financing partners regularly in order to align financing priorities and annual work plans?

Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:

- Review the monitoring tools currently being used: Do they provide the necessary information? Do they involve key partners? Are they aligned or mainstreamed with national systems? Do they use existing information? Are they efficient? Are they cost-effective? Are additional tools required? How could they be made more participatory and inclusive?
- Examine the financial management of the project monitoring and evaluation budget. Are sufficient resources being allocated to monitoring and evaluation? Are these resources being allocated effectively?

Stakeholder Engagement:

- Project management: Has the project developed and leveraged the necessary and appropriate partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders?
- Participation and country-driven processes: Do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project? Do they continue to have an active role in project decision-making that supports efficient and effective project implementation?
- Participation and public awareness: To what extent has stakeholder involvement and public awareness contributed to the progress towards achievement of project objectives?

Reporting:

- Assess how adaptive management changes have been reported by the project management and shared with the Project Board.
- Assess how well the Project Team and partners undertake and fulfil GEF reporting requirements (i.e. how have they addressed poorly-rated PIRs, if applicable?)
- Assess how lessons derived from the adaptive management process have been documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners.

Communications:

- Review internal project communication with stakeholders: Is communication regular and effective? Are there key stakeholders left out of communication? Are there feedback mechanisms when communication is received? Does this communication with stakeholders contribute to their awareness of project outcomes and activities and investment in the sustainability of project results?
- Review external project communication: Are proper means of communication established or being established to express the project progress and intended impact to the public (is there a web presence, for example? Or did the project implement appropriate outreach and public awareness campaigns?)
- For reporting purposes, write one half-page paragraph that summarizes the project's progress towards results in terms of contribution to sustainable development benefits, as well as global environmental benefits.

iv. Sustainability

- Validate whether the risks identified in the Project Document, Annual Project Review/PIRs and the ATLAS Risk Management Module are the most important and whether the risk ratings applied are appropriate and up to date. If not, explain why.
- In addition, assess the following risks to sustainability:

Financial risks to sustainability:

- What is the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once the GEF assistance ends (consider potential resources can be from multiple sources, such as the public and private sectors, income generating activities, and other funding that will be adequate financial resources for sustaining project's outcomes)?

Socio-economic risks to sustainability:

- Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outcomes? What is the risk that the level of stakeholder ownership (including ownership by governments and other key stakeholders) will be insufficient to allow for the project outcomes/benefits to be sustained? Do the various key stakeholders see that it is in their interest that the project benefits continue to flow? Is there sufficient public / stakeholder awareness in support of the long term objectives of the project? Are lessons learned being

documented by the Project Team on a continual basis and shared/ transferred to appropriate parties who could learn from the project and potentially replicate and/or scale it in the future?

Institutional Framework and Governance risks to sustainability:

- Do the legal frameworks, policies, governance structures and processes pose risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project benefits? While assessing this parameter, also consider if the required systems/ mechanisms for accountability, transparency, and technical knowledge transfer are in place.

Environmental risks to sustainability:

- Are there any environmental risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project outcomes?

Conclusions & Recommendations

The MTR team will include a section of the report setting out the MTR's evidence-based conclusions, in light of the findings.⁸

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. See the *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for guidance on a recommendation table.

The MTR team should make no more than 15 recommendations total.

Ratings

The MTR team will include its ratings of the project's results and brief descriptions of the associated achievements in a *MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table* in the Executive Summary of the MTR report. See Annex E for ratings scales. No rating on Project Strategy and no overall project rating is required.

Table. MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table for (*Expansion and Improved Management of the Achara Region's Protected Areas*)

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Project Strategy	N/A	
Progress Towards Results	Objective Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 1 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 2 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 3 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Etc.	
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	(rate 6 pt. scale)	

⁸ Alternatively, MTR conclusions may be integrated into the body of the report.

Sustainability	(rate 4 pt. scale)	
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6. MIDTERM REVIEW DELIVERABLES

#	Deliverable	Description	Timing	Responsibilities
1	MTR Inception Report	MTR team clarifies objectives and methods of Midterm Review	No later than 2 weeks before the MTR mission	MTR team submits to the Commissioning Unit and project management
2	Presentation	Initial Findings	End of MTR mission	MTR Team presents to project management and the Commissioning Unit
3	Draft Final Report	Full report (using guidelines on content outlined in Annex B) with annexes	Within 3 weeks of the MTR mission	Sent to the Commissioning Unit, reviewed by RTA, Project Coordinating Unit, GEF OFP
4	Final Report*	Revised report with audit trail detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final MTR report	Within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on draft	Sent to the Commissioning Unit

*The final MTR report must be in English. If applicable, the Commissioning Unit may choose to arrange for a translation of the report into a language more widely shared by national stakeholders.

7. MTR ARRANGEMENTS

The principal responsibility for managing this MTR resides with the Commissioning Unit. The Commissioning Unit for this project's MTR is UNDP Georgia.

The commissioning unit will contract the consultants and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country 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.

8. TEAM COMPOSITION

A team of two independent consultants will conduct the MTR - one team leader (with experience and exposure to projects and evaluations in other regions globally) and one team expert, usually from the country of the project. 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.

Annex 2 MTR Itinerary & list of persons interviewed

Date	Event	Person met & position
06 Sept	International Consultant arrival in Georgia and travel to Batumi	
07 Sept	Briefing with UNDP Country Office Management	Ms. Nino Antadze – Energy and Environment Team Leader
	Meeting with Project Team	Mr. Irakli Goradze – Project Manager
	Meeting with Ajara AR Government Administration	Mr. Kakha Shashikadze – Head of the Department for Communication with Administrative Bodies
	Meeting with Ajara AR Tourism Department	Ms. Tinatin Zoidze – Chairman of Tourist Products Development Agency
	Meeting with Ministry of Finances and Economy (Ajara Spatial Planning Team)	Mr. Sulkhan Mamuchadze – Head of the Urban Development Section Gocha Garuchava – Architect at Team Leader of the Ajara Spatial Planning Team
	Meeting with Fuelwood Needs Assessment (was involved in contractors work, as a forestry inventory team in Machakhela)	Mr. Zurab Manvelidze – Botanist/Forestry Expert
	Meeting with Friends Association for Protected Areas of Mtirala and Machakela	Ms. Gulnaz Surmanidze – Director
08 Sept	Meeting with Project Team	Mr. Irakli Goradze – Project Manager
	Meeting with Environment and Natural Resources Directorate of Ajara AR	Mr. Vakhtan Tsuladze – Head of Environmental Directorate
	Meeting with Khelvachauri Municipality	Mr. Mindia Basiladze – Deputy Gamgebeli (Governor) Mr. Mirian Kvirtadze – Head of Economic, Real Estate, Agriculture and Procurement Department at the Municipality Mr. Rezo Varshanidze – Head of Agriculture and Natural Resources Unit

Date	Event	Person met & position
		Mr. Ramaz Jorjadze – Chief Specialist of Rural Development Unit
	Meeting with Kobuleti Municipality	Mr. Sulkhan Evgenidze – Gamgebeli (Governor) at Kobuleti Municipality Mr. Irakli Tsetskhladze – Deputy Gamgebeli (Deputy Governor) at Kobuleti Municipality
	Meeting With Mtirala NP Administration	Mr. David Khomeriki – Director Mr. Leonid Darchia – Chief ranger (Head of the protection Unit) Mr. Tornike Tabatadze – Natural Resources Specialist
09 Sept	Meeting with Cooperative “Akhali Era”	Mr. Temuri Goradze – Head of Cooperative
	Meeting with Cooperative “Putkara”	Mr. Giorgi Salvarirdze – Head of Cooperative
	Meeting with Machakhela NP Administration	Mr. Giorgi Kuridze – Director Mr. Iveri Shashikadze – Natural Resources Specialist
	Meeting with Cooperative “Machakhlis Putkari 2016”	Mr. Jimsher Kavtaradze – Head of Cooperative
10 Sept	Meeting with Ajarian Ministry of Agriculture	Mr. Lasha Komakhidze – Minister
	Meeting with Kintrishi PA Administration	Mr. Amiran Khinikadze – Director Nana Noghaideli – Visitor Service Specialist Mr. Giorgi Nemsadze – Natural Resources Specialist Mr. Merab Gogitidze – Ranger
	Meeting with Cooperative Chakhati	Ms. Nana Takidze – Head of the Cooperative Mr. Nugzar Davitadze – Cooperative Member
11 Sept	Meeting with Project Staff	Mr. Irakli Goradze – Project Manager Ms. Guranda Kartvelishvili –

Date	Event	Person met & position
		Administrative/Finance Assistant
	Travel to Tbilisi	
12 Sept	Meeting with NGO Energy Efficiency Centre (EEC)	Mr. Giorgi Abulashvili – Director of EEC Ms. Liana Garibashvili – Head of Informational-Analytical Department EEC
	GFA Consulting Group GmbH (KfW Project: Support Program for Protected Areas)	Eka Kakabadze – National Coordinator
	Skype with Project Expert	Ms. Tamar Pataridze – PA Management consultant
13 Sept	Transboundary Joint Secretariat	Mr. Servi Nabuurs – Team Leader Ms. Lali Tevzadze – National Coordinator in Georgia
	KfW EcoCorridor Programme in the Caucasus	Ms. Rusudan (Tata) Chochua – National Coordinator
	Caucasus Nature Fund	Mr. George (Geof) Giacomini – Executive Director Ms. Tea Barbakadze – Project Manager –Country Coordinator in Georgia
	Meeting with UNDP	Ms. Natia Natsvlishvili – Assistant Resident Representative
	Meeting with Black Sea Academy and PA Management Consultant	Mr. Kakha Bakhtadze – Expert Mr. Anzor Gogitidze – Project Consultant
14 Sept	Meeting with Protected Areas Agency	Ms. Tamar Kvantaliani – Deputy Head Ms. Nita Tkavadze – Head of the International Relations Ms. Lika Salia – GIS specialist
	Meeting with Hidria	Ms. Lela Khartishvili – Local Expert (Ajara PA sustainable tourism development strategy)
	Meeting with LTD	Mr. Mamuka Khurtsidze – Director

Date	Event	Person met & position
	Geographic(Machakhela NP Boundary Demarcation/Machakhela NP Forestry Inventory)	Ms. Tamar Bakuradze – Forest Inventory Project Lead Mr. Giorgi Lemonjava – Demarcation Project Lead
	Ecosystem Value Assessment Expert	Mr. Malkhaz Adeishvili – Project Expert
15 Sept	Meeting with the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of Georgia	Ms. Nino Tkhilava – GEF focal point
	Meeting with Ilia State University	Mr. David Tarkhnishvili – Mr. Alexander Gavashelishvili –
	Community Involvement Consultant	Ramaz Gokhelashvili – Project Consultant
16 Sept	Meeting with the Environmental Information and Education Centre	Ms. Ia Papashvili – Director Ms. Nato Sultanishvili – Head of the Education Project Department
	Debriefing with UNDP	Mr. Shombi Sharp – Deputy Resident Representative Ms. Natia Natsvlishvili – Assistant Resident Representative Ms. Nino Antadze – Energy and Environment Team Leader Mr. Irakli Goradze – Project Manager
17 Sept	Meeting with Project Chief Technical Advisor	Mr. Mark Anstey – Project Chief Technical Advisor
18 Sept	Departure of International Consultant from Tbilisi	

Annex 3 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.
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.
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 List of members of the Technical Coordination Group

Name	Organisation and position
Ms. Nino Antadze	UNDP E&E team leader
Ms. Tamar Kvantaliani	Deputy Chairman of Agency of Protected Areas, National Project Director
Ms. Ekaterine Kakabadze	KFW SPPA Project Manager, GFA consulting
Ms. Rusudan Chochua	Eco-corridor Programme in the Caucasus, National Coordinator
Mr. Nugzar Zazanashvili	WWF Caucasus Programme Office
Mr. Mike Garforth	EU Twinning Project Manager
Ms. Tea Barbaqadze	Caucasus Nature Fund country coordinator
Mr. Mark Anstey	UNDP-GEF Achara PAs Project - Chief technical advisor
Mr. Ramaz Gokhelashvili	SPPA Project team leader
Mr. Irakli Goradze	UNDP-GEF Achara PAs Project Manager

Annex 5 Zonation maps

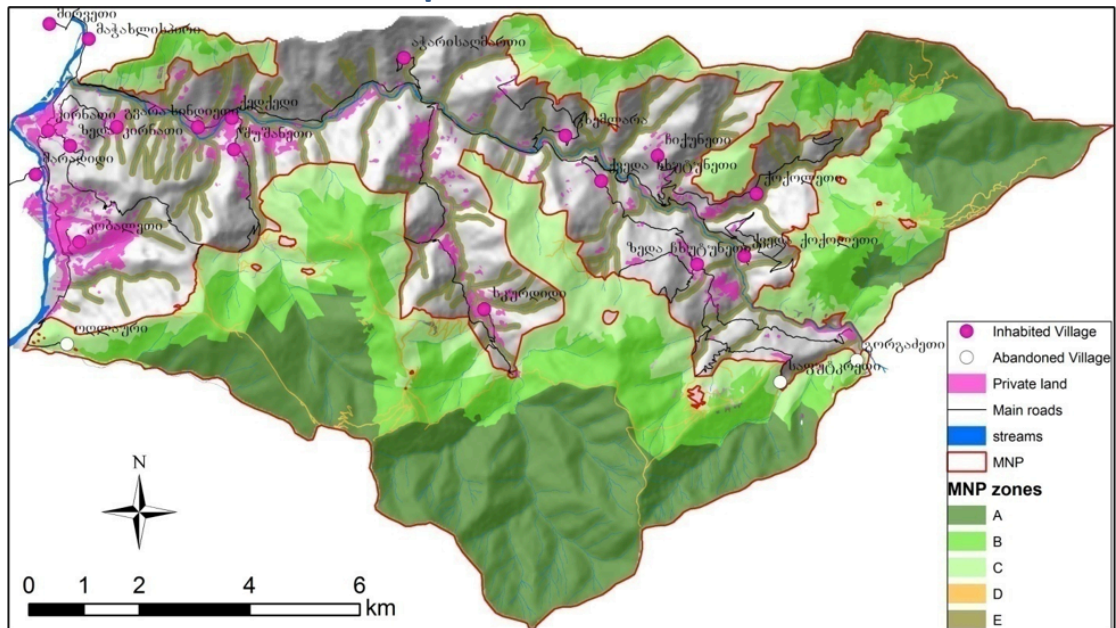


Figure 1. The zonation as proposed by Ilia State University.

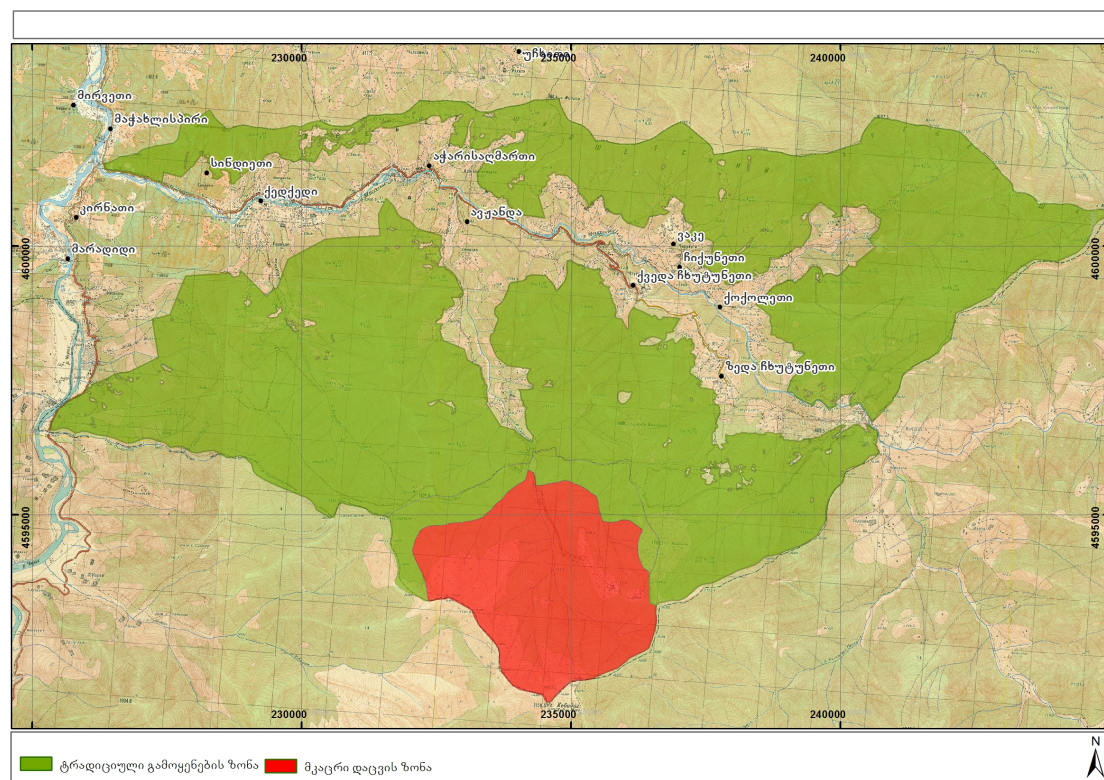


Figure 2. The (counter suggestion) zonation map as proposed by the Agency of Protected Areas.

Annex 6 Description of the process to develop the zonation plan for Machakhela National Park

The process used by Ilia State University to develop the zonation plan for Machakhela National Park was described to the MTR as follows:

- The task of Ilia State University was to develop zonation plan for the Machakhela National Park on the basis on biodiversity, existing legislation and the needs of the people living in the vicinity of the National Park. The aim was for Ilia State University to recommend such a zonation plan on the basis of their analysis. The recommended zonation plan was to be finalized on the basis of further and final discussions that were to take place during the Management Plan Development process.
- Ilia State University developed a zonation proposal, which was discussed and agreed at a project internal workshop that was attended by the extended project team (thus, including relevant current and past contractors). The workshop was held on 23 March 2016 in Tbilisi (details of this workshop are available).
- The project team (including the NPM, the CTA and the UNDP-CO E&E Team Leader) met with the APA management on 25 March 2016 to discuss the project progress, including zonation. A hardcopy of the recommended zonation map was forwarded to the Director of APA following this meeting. The Director of APA responded that the recommended zonation with “such a large strict protection zone” was unacceptable for APA. The project team responded that there was a good rationale and justification for the recommended zonation plan and that the project would provide it for APA.
- In April 2016, the complete dataset of baseline study carried out by Ilia State University (including the report, data and GIS files) was delivered to Machakhela NP administration. The report with its recommended zonation plan was, at this point, translated into Georgian.
- On 09 May 2016, the Georgian version of the report with the recommended zonation plan (together with the original English version) was submitted to APA management (including the Director, and the Deputy Director and National Project Director, and copied to the Administration of the Machakehla NP).
- Thereafter, APA (including the Director of APA, the Head of APA’s Planning and Development Unit and the Director of Machakhela NP) responded verbally regarding their unwillingness to accept the

recommended zonation plan. When APA were asked for more specific comments, none were received.

Overall, this is provided in explanation for the discussion in the main body of the report and the assertion that the management planning process that is currently underway is pivotal to resolving the slight tensions over the zonation planning.

In addition to this, a further meeting has been held on 21 October 2016 (see para 41 (point 7) for details as it now apparent a way forward has been found).

Annex 7 List of documents reviewed

1. PIF
2. UNDP Project Document
3. Project Inception Report
4. All Project Implementation Reports (PIR's)
5. Budgets and annual workplans
6. Project lessons learned logs
7. Project Risk logs
8. Project newsletters
9. Audit reports
10. Finalized GEF focal area Tracking Tools at CEO endorsement ([Tracking tool for Biodiversity \(BD-1\)](#))
11. UNDP country programme document
12. Project site location maps
13. All the technical reports from various studies and consultancies

Annex 8 Example questionnaire used for data collection

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

- Procurement rules and efficiencies
 - UNDP training/support
 - Financial audits
 - Cofinance information
 - Communication strategy?
 - Monitoring awareness/knowledge
 - Backing up data and digital information
 - Team functionality
 - Staff turn over
 - If training is provided, how is training is now being used in job?
 - How including gender and/or indigenous peoples issues?
 - Need to provide all information, including equipment, inputs, infrastructure, tracking tool data.
 - If there was a delay, what was the reason?
24. How is the project aligned to the national development plan, region-level development plans and the UNDAF?
 25. Is the project trying to increase awareness? If so, among which target groups? How is the project monitoring changes in awareness and attitude? How has any changes in attitude and awareness affected project implementation, and how is it being used in the daily, professional lives of the target groups?
 26. Infrastructure has been developed over the course of this project. Was it in alignment with the strategic plan developed at the landscape level? If not, how was the decision made for any given infrastructural input?
 27. New institutions have been created over the course of the project (specifically the landscape management committees). How will these be sustainable? In five years' time, how do you imagine the committees functioning?
 28. Why did the Financial and Administrative Assistant resign?
 29. At a landscape level, what monitoring activities are being undertaken to determine the impact of the project?
 30. How does the project interface with the land reform processes in the country?
 31. The Project Advisory Committee (PAC) appears to be largely unsuccessful: we aim to propose that no further effort be expended to make it active. However, in the long-term, particularly once the GEF project has ended, will there be a role for i) an umbrella coordination body (to continue the work of the PCU – and if so, should it be independent or remain within govt?) and/or ii) a centralised technical body to assist landscapes with technical issues?
 32. It appears as if some key stakeholders are not part of the landscape management committees – e.g., Regional Governments, Roads, Water, etc. Would it be useful to try to include some of these organizations, at least on an ad hoc basis?
 33. How is the project – and landscape management committees in particular - interfacing with regional governments?
 34. To what extent is the project strategy relevant to country priorities, country ownership, and the best route towards expected results?
 35. To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved thus far?
 36. Has the project been implemented efficiently, cost-effectively, and been able to

adapt to any changing conditions thus far?

37. To what extent are project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, reporting, and project communications supporting the project's implementation?
38. To what extent are there financial, institutional, socio-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?
- 39.

Six questions to overcome fear of failure:

1. What would you attempt to do if you knew you could not fail?
2. What if I fail — how will I recover?
3. What if I do nothing?
4. What if I succeed?
5. What's truly worth doing, whether you fail or succeed?
6. In this failure, what went right?

Annex 9 Audit trail of comments on draft MTR

Comment, location	MTR response
Minor edits, typographical errors	All corrected and incorporated into the final version of the report
Factual errors (of which there were a small number)	All corrected and incorporated into the final version of the report
Comment on para 41, section 6: "To make it clearer why protected area coverage has been reduced, it would be better to mention that beforehand, area included some of privately owned lands used for agricultural purpose"	Section edited in response.
Issue regarding the zonation planning (para 41, point 7 of main body of report)	Clarifications provided both in the main body of the report and also in Annexes V and VI (see above). In addition, the management planning process appears to be working to manage the issue and, therefore, satisfactory progress is being made.
Comments made regarding the fuelwood (para 41, point 9 of main body of report)	Clarifications made in the main body of the report.
Comments on para 47 (made by APA)	Paragraph edited for clarity and in response to comments
Comment on para 49 (regarding high turnover of staff): "I think this is really one of the major issues – change requires leadership and in context of unstable leadership the tendency is to not change but rather revert to what are perceived as safer and safer positions. Not sure a new strategy will change much unless leadership continuity can be achieved and donors systematically push the strategy implementation in a coordinated way"	The MTR agrees with the comment.
Comment on para 56 (regarding NTC recruitment): "Will be good to note the reason for not having NTC; we failed in finding suitable candidate; the best candidate rejected moving to Batumi city; at that points, in consultation with the CTA, we agreed to replace full-time NTC with short-term technical consultants for specific tasks/works; and we have done so	Noted and comment added to para.

in many cases"	
Comments on Financial Section of report	Figures were checked and verified.
Comment on methodology of monitoring co-finance (para 65): "Never heard of such a standard, was it approved formally?"	Clarification provided that this was not a "standard" but an example of "best practice".
Comment from APA on para 69: "Not clear. Could you please explain what you exactly mean?"	Clarifications and explanations made in response.
Comments on co-finance – especially the figures for the Achara Autonomous Regional Government	Clarifications provided by the project team incorporated into the report with recommendations.
Regarding reporting and procurement notices in English and Georgian	The MTR agrees that the project needs to work within the UNDP procurement rules; sections and recommendations edited.
Comment on para 94: "So what exactly would be threatening for Pas or biodiversity?"	Section edited and details provided.

Annex 10 UNEG Code of Conduct Form

Evaluators/Consultants:

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

MTR Consultant Agreement Form

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

Name of Consultant: Stuart Williams

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

Signed at Kampala, Uganda (Place) on 24 October 2016 (Date)



Signature: _____

Annex 11 MTR Final Report Clearance Form

Midterm Review Report Reviewed and Cleared By:

Georgia UNDP Country Office

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____