

## Terminal Evaluation Validation form, GEF Independent Evaluation Office

### 1. Project Data

Summary project data			
GEF project ID		4761	
GEF Agency project ID		61596	
GEF Replenishment Phase		GEF-5	
Lead GEF Agency (include all for joint projects)		FAO	
Project name		Sustainable Management of Mountainous Forest and Land Resources under Climate Change Conditions	
Country/Countries		Kyrgyz Republic	
Region		Europe & Central Asia	
Focal area		Climate Change	
Operational Program or Strategic Priorities/Objectives		Climate Change Mitigation-5; Land Degradation -1 and Land Degradation-2	
Stand alone or under a programmatic framework		Standalone	
If applicable, parent program name and GEF ID			
Executing agencies involved		Kyrgyz Republic State Agency on Environment Protection and Forestry and Kyrgyz Republic Ministry of Agriculture	
NGOs/CBOs involvement		Camp-Alatoo : secondary executing agency involved in collecting samples for one of the studies.	
Private sector involvement (including micro, small and medium enterprises) <sup>1</sup>		None	
CEO Endorsement (FSP) /Approval (MSP) date		2/25/2014	
Effectiveness date / project start date		09/01/2014	
Expected date of project completion (at start)		1/31/2018	
Actual date of project completion		04/31/2021	
Project Financing			
		At Endorsement (US \$M)	At Completion (US \$M)
Project Preparation Grant	GEF funding	0.9	0.9
	Co-financing		
GEF Project Grant		5.4	5.4
Co-financing	IA own	2.4	0.95
	Government	11.5	11.33
	Other multi- /bi-laterals	2.2	2.8
	Private sector		
	NGOs/CBOs	1.18	0.99
	Other	1.7	0.31
Total GEF funding		6.3	6.3
Total Co-financing		19	16.38
Total project funding (GEF grant(s) + co-financing)		25.3	22.68
Terminal evaluation validation information			
TE completion date		2/1/2022	

<sup>1</sup> Defined as all micro, small, and medium-scale profit-oriented entities, including individuals and informal entities, that earn income through the sale of goods and services rather than a salary. ([GEF IEO 2022](#))

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<b>TER completion date</b>	1/1/2023
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Access the form to summarize key project features here: <https://www.research.net/r/APR2023>.

## 2. Summary of Project Ratings

Criteria	Final PIR	IA Terminal Evaluation	IA Evaluation Office Review <sup>2</sup>	GEF IEO Review
Project Outcomes	S	S	S	MS
Sustainability of Outcomes		ML	ML	ML
M&E Design		S	S	S
M&E Implementation		S	S	MS
Quality of Implementation		MS	MS	MS
Quality of Execution		S	S	S
Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report			—	MS

## 3. Project Objectives and theory of change

### 3.1 Global Environmental Objectives of the project:

As per the Project Document, the overall goal of the project was to enhance the enabling environment in the forestry and agricultural sectors and sustain the flow of ecosystem services, including enhancement of carbon stocks in forests and agro-ecosystems ecosystems.

### 3.2 Development Objectives of the project:

According to the Project Document, the development objective of the project was to contribute to the sustainable management and enhanced productivity of mountainous silvo-agro-pastoral ecosystems and to improve productivity and mountain livelihoods in the Kyrgyz republic.

### 3.3 Were there any **changes** in the Global Environmental Objectives, Development Objectives, or project activities during implementation? What are the reasons given for the change(s)?

None.

### 3.4 Briefly summarize project's theory of change – describe the inputs and causal relationships through which the project will achieve its long-term impacts, key links, and key assumptions.

The project document did not include an explicit theory of change but it was reconstructed by the TE. The project was designed to address inadequate legal framework, inadequate land tenure reforms, limited capacity of local institutions, and outdated approaches, that are key barriers to sustainable forest and land management. Overall, the project outputs were linked to changes at the national (enabling environment) and local level where the project invested in the capacity of local stakeholders (pilot Leskhozoes and communities). This would lead to an increase in the afforested areas and improve agricultural and pasture management practices which would contribute towards enhancement of carbon stocks in forest and agro-ecosystems thus supporting sustained flow of their ecosystem services.

The project was organized along three main components:

<sup>2</sup> The terminal evaluation was commissioned by the Office of Evaluation of FAO. Therefore, the ratings given in the terminal evaluation are repeated.

Component 1: Strengthening of the enabling environment for sustainable forest and land management

Component 2: Enhancing carbon stocks in dryland forest through innovative management and rehabilitation practices

Component 3: Promoting and demonstrating climate -friendly agriculture, including pastures as part of sustainable land and water management in drylands

#### **4. GEF IEO assessment of Outcomes and Sustainability**

Please refer to the GEF Terminal Evaluation Review Guidelines for detail on the criteria for ratings.

The outcome ratings (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and overall outcome rating) are on a six-point scale: Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory. The sustainability rating is on a four-point scale: Likely to Unlikely.

Please justify the ratings in the space below each box.

<b>4.1 Relevance and Coherence</b>	<b>S</b>
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The TER assessed the relevance and coherence of the project as ‘highly satisfactory’, which has been assessed by this TER as ‘satisfactory’. The project was designed to address severe degradation of Kyrgyz forests over the years due to overharvesting for use of fuel wood and housing construction. The project aligned with the priority of the government of Kyrgyzstan, which had set a target to increase the forest cover from 5.6 to 6 percent by 2025-2030 as already set in the National Forest Program 2011. The project goal was also to contribute towards improved rural livelihoods given that over 60 percent of rural population in Kyrgyzstan are poor and vulnerable to poverty. The Kyrgyz economy was, and still remains, primarily agricultural, with more than 50% of the population engaged in agriculture and herding. In recognition of the dependence of the local communities on natural resources, sustainable management of forest, land and water resources in Kyrgyzstan’s mountains through introducing improved practices and technologies was the main tenet of the project. This aligned well with ongoing government programs and policies such as Mid-term Development Program of the Kyrgyz Republic 2012–2014, the Forestry Sector Development Concept of the Kyrgyz Republic 2004– 2025, National Forest Program 2005–2015, the draft National Agricultural Development Strategy 2012–2020 and the draft Program for Soil Conservation and Increase in Soil Fertility in the Kyrgyz Republic 2012–2015 amongst others.

The project also aligned well with the GEF -5 strategic objectives under Climate Change Mitigation -5 (Promote conservation enhancement of carbon stocks through sustainable management of land use, land use change and forestry); Land Degradation -1 (Maintain or improve a sustainable flow of agro-ecosystem services to sustaining the livelihoods of local communities) and Land Degradation-2 (Generate sustainable flows of forest ecosystem services in arid, semi-arid and subhumid zones, including sustaining livelihoods of forest-dependent people) and Sustainable Forest Management

/REDD-1( Reduce pressures on forest resources and generate sustainable flows of forest ecosystem services).

4.2 Effectiveness	MS
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The TE rated the ‘progress to impact’ and assigns it a rating of ‘satisfactory’. This review assesses project’s effectiveness in achieving its outcome as ‘moderately satisfactory’. The project contributed to the long-term capacity of stakeholders, especially Leskhoz<sup>3</sup> and local communities, by enhancing their knowledge, providing information on land conditions necessary to make informed land management decisions, and through investments in equipment. The project was also largely successful in introduction of innovative technologies for forestry, agriculture and pasture management and rehabilitation at the pilot sites. This should all contribute towards enhancement of carbon stocks in forest and agro-ecosystems thus supporting flow of their ecosystem services. But the project could not come up with a clear strategy to track carbon content, sequestration and GHG reductions.

At the national level, project had limited impact on strengthening the policy and regulatory frameworks for integrating Sustainable Forest Management/Sustainable Land Management principles into national policies and plans. The proposed amendments to land codes and pasture laws to promote sustainable land management on abandoned agricultural lands was enacted but proposed amendments to Forest Code were still pending approval from the government. Moreover, the cross sectoral strategies proposed to facilitate agreements between sectoral authorities were also pending approval at the time of the TE, limiting the project’s impact on strengthening the enabling environment for sustainable forest and land management. Similarly, the national program on regulation of GHG emissions (2030) establishing Land use, Land use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) and REDD<sup>4</sup> plus strategy was drafted but not yet adopted by the government due to change in the political leadership and shift in government’s focus due to COVID-19, both of which were beyond the control of the project.

#### **Component 1: Strengthening the enabling environment for sustainable forest and land management**

The project facilitated assessments of forest and agricultural policy that informed the development of several amendments to the national forest and agriculture policy and legislation. The TE notes that several amendments and recommendations made through the project were enacted. For instance, the 2017 amendments to the Law on Moratorium on Transfer of Arable Lands under Other Land Use Categories were adopted by Law No 174 which allowed for agroforestry on arable Lands (Output 1.1.1). However, the proposals for amendments to the Forest Code are yet to be adopted by the government. The project also contributed to the development of amendments to a number of laws governing land and pasture use. However, some of the proposals made through the project were pending government’s

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<sup>3</sup> State Forest Management Enterprises

<sup>4</sup> Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation and Conservation and Sustainable Management of Forests and the Enhancement of Forest Carbon Stocks

approval. According to the TE, 'given the scarcity of productive land resources in Kyrgyzstan and dependence of livelihoods of the majority of the population on agriculture, making amendments to land legislation is a sensitive matter' (TE, pg35). The project developed several recommendations for cross sectoral integration between state agencies but except for two cases at the provincial and district levels, these recommendations were yet to be adopted by the government (Output 1.1.2). The project made several critical contributions towards establishment of the Forest Management Information System (Output 1.1.3). The project supported the operationalization of electronic information system for enhanced communication between national and local levels.

The project facilitated various activities for integration of SFM/SLM principles into local level land use plans in all pilot Leskhozoes; introduced the concept of Joint Forest Management and supported establishment of Joint Forestry Councils (JFCs) at six pilot Leskhozoes. However, the TE notes that while the concept of JFM was included in the concept of Forest Development 2040 and adopted at the national level, piloting of JFCs had limited success because of low buy-in from local communities (Output 1.2.1). The evaluation team did not find any evidence that a toolkit on roles of Sustainable Forest Management/Sustainable Land Management and LULUCF in carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas balance was prepared and disseminated (Output 1.2.2).

### **Component 2: Enhancing carbon stocks in dryland forest through innovative management and rehabilitation practices**

The project conducted various studies and assessments that contributed for preparation of national estimated of carbon emissions and sinks in LULUCF sector. The draft program for carbon monitoring system for the LULUCF sector was ready in 2019 but its approval was still pending at the time of the evaluation. According to the TE, the draft was 'not adopted because in 2020 all government attention was focused on COVID-19 related matters and then changes in the government structures at the end of 2020 and early 2021' (TE, pg 25) (Output 2.1.1 and 2.1.3). Under Output 2.1.2 early in the implementation process the project supported field work in all eight pilot Leskhozoes that informed the development of recommendations for reforestation and forest regeneration, including selection of appropriate locations and species, which were converted into operational plans. The project has successfully introduced and demonstrated several technologies that were new for Kyrgyzstan: fencing, agroforestry (including the silvopastoral model) and fast-growing forest species, as well as supported trials of several new approaches developed by the Forest Service.

The project largely met the 8 000-ha target for afforestation and rehabilitation (Output 2.2.1). However, it seems that the target of 2,650 ha of tree plantation established with indigenous fast-growing species in order to reduce the wood demand from natural forests was not met since the local communities were more interested in fruit trees that could be a source of income for them (Output 2.2.2). Moreover, the improved cookstoves, home based solar heating and insulation was provided to select few staff of the Leskhozoes (Output 2.2.3)

### **Component 3: Promoting and demonstrating climate -friendly agriculture, including pastures as part of sustainable land and water management in drylands**

The project introduced a complex of new agriculture techniques through farmer field school and demonstration plots and established 176 Farmer Field Schools and 220 demonstration plots (target of 200 under Output 3.1.1). Activities under Output 3.1.2 were also completed satisfactorily through various activities which led to improvement of pasture management and productivity in six pilot rural municipalities (extent of land covered not provided in the TE), with plantation of wild grass and improvement in other relevant pasture infrastructure over 240 ha of degraded pastures.

<b>4.3 Efficiency</b>	MS
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This TER concurs with the terminal evaluation's 'moderately satisfactory' rating for outcome efficiency. According to the TE, the project had a delayed start and due to several extensions, the project was completed in almost 7 years as compared to original duration of 4 years. The TE notes delay in preparation of annual work plans as one of the main reasons for delay in start of project implementation besides COVID lockdowns. However, as per the TE, majority of the project activities were achieved by the end of 2019. The TE does not discuss impact of delays due to COVID 19 on the progress of the project. As per the TE, around 86 percent of co-financing had also materialized by mid 2020 with the rest of the co-financing expected to materialize by end of the project.

The TE notes that due to support from rural municipalities, the cost of training activities organized by the project was much lower than planned and savings used to complete the fencing works. The TE further notes the reallocation of savings from training budget towards expendable and non-expendable equipment. However, there is not enough evidence in the TE to support reallocation of budget especially since training, improvement in human capacity and awareness generation was one of the critical aspects of the project.

<b>4.4 Outcome</b>	MS
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The project achieved most of the key outcomes but had a limited impact in enhancing the enabling environment in the forestry sector due to pending government approvals on the proposed regulatory changes. However, the project had relatively more success in the agriculture sector and contributed to the sustainable management and enhanced productivity of silvo-agro-pastoral ecosystems, enhancing and improving the livelihoods of the local communities. However, the evaluation report does not include the environmental impact of project in terms of carbon sequestration and GHG reductions, as the project did not develop a clear strategy to track these changes.

Summarize key outcomes related to environment, human well-being, and enabling conditions (Policy, Legal & Institutional Development; Individual & Institutional Capacity-Building; Knowledge Exchange & Learning; Multistakeholder Interactions), as applicable. Include any unintended outcomes (not originally targeted by the project), whether positive or negative, affecting either ecological or social aspects.

Where applicable, note how both intended and unintended outcomes have positively and/or negatively affected marginalized populations (e.g., women, indigenous groups, youth, persons with disabilities), and where some stakeholder groups have benefited more/ less than others.

1. Materials on technologies introduced by the project were integrated in the curriculum of the Agrarian University.
2. Project supported planting 1000 ha of saxaul to create a silvopastoral landscape in Batken province, which was additional and not initially targeted under the project.
3. The project contributed to the potential for long-term capacity of local institutions, especially leskhozoes, by building their knowledge, providing information on land conditions necessary to make informed management decisions.
4. Application of new agricultural techniques led to increased productivity and income for farmers. Reported additional income due to application of various techniques was KGS<sup>5</sup> 59 881 per ha.

4.5 Sustainability	ML
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Note any progress made to sustain or expand environmental benefits beyond project closure, using stakeholder (rather than project) resources, e.g., through replication, mainstreaming or scaling-up of GEF-supported initiatives. Examples would be farmers adopting practices using own funds, follow-on replication projects, development of plans for scaling, inclusion in local or national legislation, and allocation of government budgets or private sector investments for institutional adoption.

This TER concurs with the terminal evaluation's assessment that the sustainability of project results is 'moderately likely'. The TE notes the political changes in the country can undermine the project contributions to enabling environment and limit the state funding required for implementation of policies developed and recommended under the project, especially in the face of declining state revenues and budget deficit. But, follow up on the policy recommendations and technologies supported through the project is likely to be supported through other forthcoming donor funded projects listed in the TE.

Moreover, the project improved capacity of the farmers and local institutions on application agro-forestry and climate smart agriculture techniques, which would continue to be used in the long term due to economic benefits. Maps developed by the project would also continue to remain important for the community for forest, land and pasture development.

#### Financial risk

As per the TE, most of the results at the local level are likely to be sustained without any additional investment. However, the current political changes in the country can limit the state funding required for implementation of policies developed and recommended under the project, especially also due to reportedly declining state revenues and a growing budget deficit. But the TE reports new development projects such as recently approved Green Climate Fund (GCF)/FAO project *Carbon Sequestration through Climate Investment in Forests and Rangelands in Kyrgyz Republic* (CS-FOR), which plans to continue working towards an enhanced enabling environment that supports investment for carbon sequestration through forest and rangeland management while providing economic and social incentives to the users of natural resources.

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<sup>5</sup> KGS is a national currency with exchange rate of about KGS 84 per USD at the time of the evaluation



### **Socio-political risks**

As per the TE, changes in the current political scenario and new leadership required review of full body of laws and regulations, including the ones developed under the project, 'creates a significant level of uncertainty about the sustainability of the changes in the enabling environment created with the project support' (TE, pg 41). However, the TE also notes the provision of another Presidential executive order necessitating measures and 'call for more effective use of agricultural land, support for introduction of innovative technologies,....., look conducive for sustaining and even further disseminating the technologies introduced by the project' (TE, pg 41). Hence, while political changes could undermine the project contributions to enabling environment, they are unlikely to impact the other results such as rehabilitation of degraded lands and development of agroforestry through innovation technologies.

### **Institutional and governance risks**

The TE recognizes a number of government decisions made in 2019 that undermine the financial capacity of the Forest Services and Leskhozoes to implement afforestation and rehabilitation activities. Hence, there is a significant risk that application of innovations introduced by the project into the forestry sector won't be sustained without external support. However, various maps developed through the project for forest, land and pasture management would remain an important resource for the community. As per the TE, farmers were going to continue the use and spread of agro-forestry and climate smart agriculture techniques introduced by the project. The TE reports that association of Forest and Land Users disseminated these techniques among its members and beyond. For example, agroforestry approaches were disseminated within the framework of the European Union-funded project Expansion of Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek local smallholder organic agriculture and forest-based food products to EU Markets implemented in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The project contributed to the long-term capacity of local institutes such as of pilot Leskhozoes on aspects such as nursery management, prevention and control of forest fires, measures to combat forest diseases and pests.

### **Environmental risk**

The TE notes that climate change was not likely to have serious impact on the sustainability of tree plantation and other afforestation work carried out with the project support. Moreover, species selected for agroforestry and afforestation was such as it could adapt to local conditions and 'create a favorable microclimate that should to some extent mitigate the overall effects of future temperature rise' (TE, pg 43). The project also used climate – smart agriculture to adapt and counter the impact of climate change in future.

## **5. Processes and factors affecting attainment of project outcomes**

Before describing the factors, you may choose to summarize reported outcomes and sustainability here: <https://www.research.net/r/APR2023>.

5.1 Co-financing. To what extent was the reported co-financing essential to the achievement of GEF objectives? If there was a difference in the level of expected co-financing and actual co-financing, what were the reasons for it? Did the extent of materialization of co-financing affect project's outcomes and/or sustainability? If so, in what ways and through what causal linkages?

According to the TE, the data on materialized co-financing at completion was unavailable at the time of the evaluation. However, the TE consolidated information from the PIR, 2020, according to which 86% of expected co-financing had materialized by mid 2020, with rest of the co-financing to be met by the end of the project. As per the TE, all the co-financing were in-kind contributions. However, as per the project document, part of the government contribution (USD 8.5 m out of total of USD 11.5 m) was supposed to be cash contribution. The TE reports government contributions met up to 99% - all in-kind through provision of office space, staff cost of Leskhoz, Forest Service and State Agency for Environment Protection and Forestry (SAEPF). Since, the project duration was extended by three years, it is likely that the entire government contribution was spent towards meeting the staff and other administrative cost. TE notes that the government failed to meet its original obligation of providing poles for fencing for which additional funds had to be allocated from the project budget.

As per details in the TE, FAO met only 40% of its co-financing contribution but this TER could not ascertain the reason and its impact on the project due to lack of relevant evidence in the available reports. Since the partnership with Mountain Partnership could not go beyond 2016, its co-financing commitment also did not materialize. At the same time, as per the information in the TE, World Food Program exceeded its commitment by 70% and German Development Cooperation (GIZ) by 16%, largely due to collaboration with other ongoing projects of these funding organizations, which proved to be beneficial for the project.

As per the TE, co-financing from local user groups was met to the extent of 84%, which as per the project document would have been used to support conservation agriculture and restoration of degraded lands.

5.2 Project extensions and/or delays. If there were delays in project implementation and completion, then what were the reasons for it? Did the delay affect the project's outcomes and/or sustainability? If so, in what ways and through what causal linkages?

The project had a delayed start and granted two extensions due to which the actual implementation period of the project was close to 7 years (from 2014 to 2021), as against the original time frame of 4 years. The TE notes the late preparation of the annual work plans as one of the reasons for delayed start of the project. In addition, project applied for extension in 2020 due to COVID -19 outbreak and the resulting lockdowns in the country for one year. The next extension to 2021 was granted to allow time for completing afforestation/rehabilitation activities. The TE does not discuss impact of these delays on project outcomes and sustainability.

5.3 Stakeholder ownership. Assess the extent to which stakeholder ownership has affected project outcomes and sustainability. Describe the ways in which it affected outcomes and sustainability, highlighting the causal links.

The project engaged key stakeholders through the project Steering Committee (PSC) and the donor coordination groups. PSC was chaired by The State Agency on Environment Protection and Forestry (SAEPF) and included representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, authorities of five provinces, representatives of co-financing partners such as GIZ and WFP. Representatives from NGOs and academia were included as observers. The project had limited impact in enhancing the policy and regulatory framework in forestry and land management as some of the amendments and proposals for reform made through the project were still pending approval from the government. While the policy recommendations of project did not receive the anticipated level of support from the national government, they received good support from the municipalities responsible for implementation of activities.

The TE mentions that collaboration with Mountain Partnership did not go beyond 2016 due to which corresponding co-financing commitment from the organization was also not met. The TE does not discuss its impact on the project. As per the Project Document, Mountain partnership was supposed to co-fund activities related to capacity building at local level, knowledge sharing and payment for ecosystem services.

The project received good support from other donors such as GIZ and WFP. Their participation in the Project Steering Committee enabled collaboration as envisaged during project preparation. The field offices of the project worked in close collaboration and had good participation of local communities and resource user groups such as leskhozoes, Water User Associations as well as Pasture Committees at pilot sites, who all benefitted from investments and trainings imparted through the project and are likely to contribute to sustainability of project outputs at local level. As the TE notes, 'Association of Forest and Pasture Users is disseminating information about agroforestry and climate-smart agricultural techniques to its members based outside of pilot rural municipalities' (TE, pg 40). Moreover, the TE reports that local users group met with almost of 80% of original co-financing contribution, is indicative of ownership of the project by the local communities.

5.4 Other factors: In case the terminal evaluation discusses other key factors that affected project outcomes, discuss those factors and outline how they affected outcomes, whether positively or negatively. Include factors that may have led to unintended outcomes.

N/A

## **6. Assessment of project's Monitoring and Evaluation system**

Ratings are assessed on a six point scale: Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

<b>6.1 M&amp;E Design at entry</b>	S
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This TER concurs with the rating assigned to the M&E design at entry as 'satisfactory'. The project document included results matrix with SMART indicators, well defined targets, baseline and corresponding source of verification as well as parties responsible for data collection. The project had a separate component and budget for monitoring and evaluation and recommended setting up a project progress monitoring system with coordinated subsystems in each of the Oblasts following the participatory mechanism for data collection and recording. The reporting schedule with different types of reports and time frame was also clearly specified in the monitoring plan defined in the project document.

<b>6.2 M&amp;E Implementation</b>	MS
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The TE assesses the M&E implementation as 'satisfactory'. Based on the evidence in the available documents, this TER assigned in a rating of 'moderately satisfactory'. As per the TE, the monitoring M&E activities were largely implemented as planned. The day-to-day monitoring of the project was conducted by National Project Implementation Unit and field office, which formed the basis for oversight and corrective action. The project also involved co-funding and executing partners in joint monitoring sessions helped keeping a track of the progress of the project. All the project reports as defined in the project documents were completed as planned along with the timely completion of midterm review and evaluation.

The TE notes that the M&E activities were mainly used to track performance, timeliness and foster learning from the application of innovative approaches used during the project. However, it also acknowledges that the project lacked a clear strategy for monitoring the carbon benefits, sequestration and emissions avoided.

## 7. Assessment of project implementation and execution

Quality of Implementation rating is based on the assessment of the performance of GEF Agency(s). Quality of Execution rating is based on performance of the executing agency(s). In both instances, the focus is upon factors that are largely within the control of the respective implementing and executing agency(s). A six-point rating scale is used (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory), or Unable to Assess.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

<b>7.1 Quality of Project Implementation</b>	MS
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This TER concurs with the TE's assessment that the quality of project implementation was 'moderately satisfactory'. According to the TE, FAO provided close technical assistance, backstopping and supervision for project implementation through the involvement of two technical officers responsible for supporting National Project Implementation Unit. However, the TE also notes drawbacks in coordination with technical

officers due to their high workloads and involvement in multiple other projects. As a result, executing partners noted delays in approval of letter of agreement and developed knowledge products from FAO side taking four to nine months. But, overall, the project had a good support from the funding liaison officer assigned by FAO, who according to the TE, ‘was instrumental in accelerating the project progress’ (TE, pg 46) and technical officers also facilitated linking the project with expertise outside the country for learning and knowledge exchange.

<b>7.2 Quality of Project Execution</b>	<b>S</b>
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The TE does not highlight any issue related to project execution and assigns it a ‘satisfactory’ rating. As per the TE, project had an efficient institutional arrangement with National Project Implementation Unit based in Bishkek and hosted by State Agency of Environment and Forest Protection (SAEFP) and field offices in various provinces that allowed for close coordination between the national authorities, expert community as well as local communities. Project Steering Committee (PSC) meetings held regularly every six month was key to ensure continuous engagement and ownership of key national stakeholders.

The TE, however, does not mention the formation of National Stakeholder Committee (NSC), which was supposed to have active participation of representatives from local farming and herding community as well as members from municipal government and other user groups such as Pasture Committee and Water Users Association. As per the project document, this committee was key to the promotion of communication between government agencies, local communities and private sector (PD, pg 42)

## 8. Lessons and recommendations

8.1 Briefly describe the key lessons, good practices, or approaches mentioned in the terminal evaluation report, including how they could have application for other GEF projects. Lessons must be based on project experience.

Key lessons listed in the TE are as follows:

1. Ability of farmers to start and sustain application of a particular agricultural technique with minimum initial investment facilitates continuation of their use and further dissemination. Decisions on provision of equipment should include consideration of the maintenance costs and access to spare parts.
2. Hosting the Project Steering Committee meetings in project site areas contributed to high level of awareness and ownership of national stakeholders.
3. A mixed approach whereby technical assistance (training and consultations) was combined with provision of materials necessary for implementation worked very well in this project and can be replicated within the framework of similar interventions.

## 8.2 Briefly describe the recommendations given in the terminal evaluation.

Key recommendations are as follows:

### FAO and Forest Service

1. Develop knowledge products that capture lessons learned through the application of new approaches to tree planting.
2. Re-visit the project sites in five to ten years to check certain success factors, such as the tree survival rates. Note factors which affected the survival rates, and the geographic area variability.

### FAO

1. Consider supporting multi-focal projects through a team of Lead Technical Officers with a complementary set of expertise to ensure that each focus area of the project has sufficient thematic expertise.

### Ministry of Agriculture, including the former SAEPF Department of Forest Ecosystem.

1. Follow-up on regulatory recommendations developed with the project support, including results and recommendations of forest and agricultural policies, proposed amendments to Forest and Land codes, draft programs and strategies.

### Forest Services

1. Complete the development of the national Forest Information System and ensure its full use by Leskhozos.
2. Lobby for the budget provisions of funds to continue afforestation/forest rehabilitation efforts using approaches piloted within the framework of this project. (Ongoing)

## 9. Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report

Before rating the quality of the terminal evaluation, click here to summarize your observations on the sub-criteria: <https://www.research.net/r/APR2023>.

A six-point rating scale is used for each sub-criteria and overall rating of the terminal evaluation report (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory)

Criteria/indicators of terminal evaluation quality	GEF IEO COMMENTS	Rating
1. Timeliness: terminal evaluation report was carried out and submitted on time?	The project end date was June 2021 and the evaluation report was finalized by February 2022	S
2. General information: Provides general information on the project and evaluation as per the requirement?	Overall, the TE provides general information on the project and evaluation as per the requirement	S
3. Stakeholder involvement: the report was prepared in consultation with – and with feedback from - key stakeholders?	Project was extended by three years and most of the members of the project team were no longer employed with FAO at the time of the TE. Interviews and discussions were held with rest of the stakeholders. However, not clear if the report was prepared in consultation with key stakeholders.	UA
4. Theory of change: provides solid account of the project's theory of change?	The TE reconstructed the theory of change which was not included in the project document.	S
5. Methodology: Provides an informative and transparent account of the methodology?	<b>Yes</b>	S
6. Outcome: Provides a clear and candid account of the achievement of project outcomes?	The TE provides a lot of information which was also often repetitive with little analysis, especially for the outputs which were partially achieved or not achieved.	MU
7. Sustainability: Presents realistic assessment of sustainability?	<b>Yes</b>	S
8. M&E: Presents sound assessment of the quality of the M&E system?	<b><i>Yes. But it does not provide an assessment of the quality of monitoring system in tracking the progress in terms of increase in income, hectares covered under the project. The TE also does not comment If the project used participatory approach to monitoring as recommended in the PD.</i></b>	MS

9. Finance: Reports on utilization of GEF funding and materialization of co-financing?	<b><i>There is no information on realization of GEF funds and was constrained by lack of clear and consistent information on co-financing from the project reports</i></b>	MS
10. Implementation: Presents a candid account of project implementation and Agency performance?	The TE does not provide much analysis on the performance of implementing agency. This topic is covered briefly probably because the project was extended by three years and at the time of the TE, most of the staff were transferred.	MS
11. Safeguards: Provides information on application of environmental and social safeguards, and conduct and use of gender analysis?	<b>Yes</b>	S
12. Lessons and recommendations are supported by the project experience and are relevant to future programming?	<b>Lessons and recommendations are more or less supported by the project experience and except a few, most of the recommendation are relevant to future programming</b>	MS
13. Ratings: Ratings are well-substantiated by evidence, realistic and convincing?	<b><i>Not all ratings are supported by substantive and convincing evidence</i></b>	MS
14. Report presentation: The report was well-written, logically organized, and consistent?	Although well written but it had lot of information which was difficult to link with the indicators and achievement of targets in the results framework given in the project document. The 'progress to impact' section was also very brief without adequate evidence to support the rating.	MU
<b>Overall quality of the report</b>		MS

**10. Note any additional sources of information used in the preparation of the terminal evaluation report (excluding PIRs, TEs, and PADs).**



## ANNEX 1. GEF IEO THEORY OF CHANGE FRAMEWORK

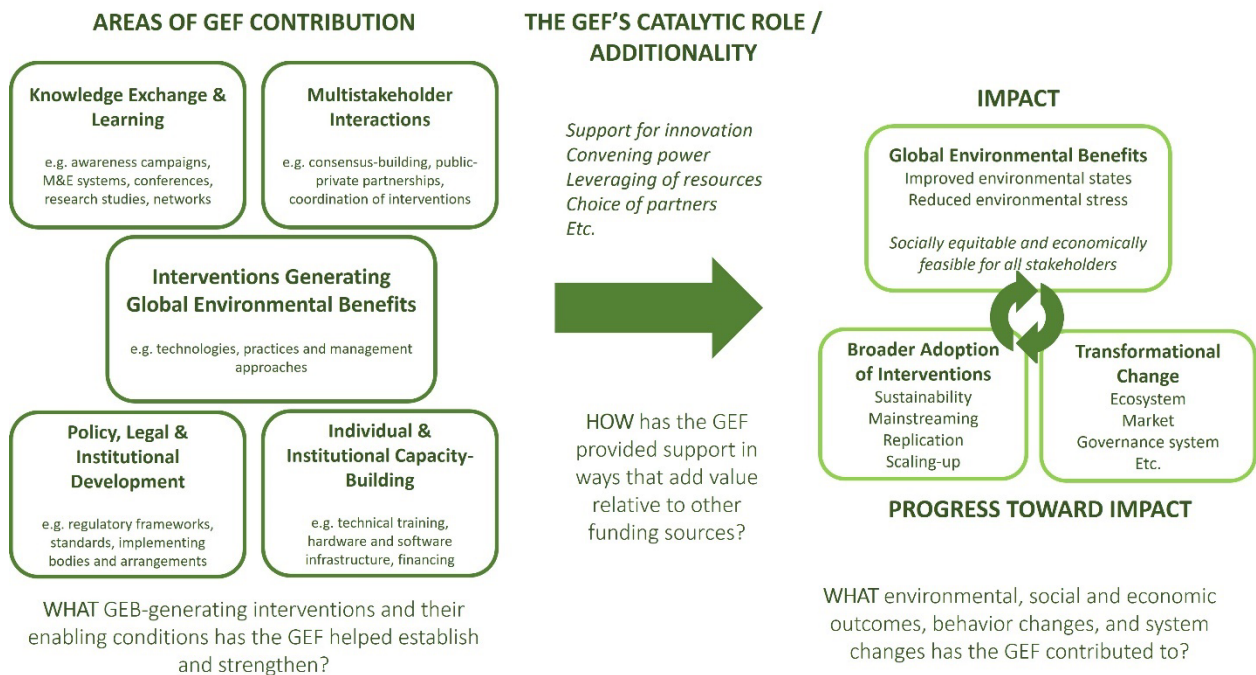


Figure 1. The GEF IEO's updated Theory of Change Framework on how the GEF achieves impact

The general framework for the GEF's theory of change (figure 1) draws on the large amount of evaluative evidence on outcomes and impact gathered over the years by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office. The framework diagram has been updated to reflect the IEO's learning since OPSS5 (GEF IEO 2014, p. 47-50) about how the GEF achieves impact, as well as the evolution of the GEF's programming toward more integrated systems-focused and scaled-up initiatives.

The framework outlines the three main areas that the IEO assesses in its evaluations: a) the GEF's contributions in establishing and strengthening both the interventions that directly generate global environmental benefits, and the enabling conditions that allow these interventions to be implemented and adopted by stakeholders, b) the GEF's catalytic role or additionality in the way that the GEF provides support within the context of other funding sources and partners, and c) the environmental, social and economic outcomes that the GEF has contributed to, and the behavior and system changes that generate these outcomes during and beyond the period of GEF support.

The circular arrow between impact and progress toward impact, as before, indicates how bringing about positive environmental change is an iterative process that involves behavior change (in the form of a broader group of stakeholders adopting interventions) and/or systems change (which is a key characteristic of transformational change). These three areas of change can take place in any sequence or simultaneously in a positively reinforcing cycle, and are therefore assessed by the GEF IEO as indicators of impact.

Assessing the GEF's progress toward achieving impact allows the IEO to determine the extent to which GEF support contributes to a trajectory of large-scale, systemic change, especially in areas where changes in the environment can only be measured over longer time horizons. The updated diagram in particular expands the assessment of progress towards impact to include transformational change, which specifically takes place at the system level, and not necessarily over a long time period.

The updated diagram also more explicitly identifies the link between the GEF's mandate of generating global environmental benefits, and the GEF's safeguards to ensure that positive environmental outcomes also enhance or at the very least do not take away from the social and economic well-being of the people who depend on the environment. Thus the IEO assesses impact not only in terms of environmental outcomes, but also in terms of the synergies and trade-offs with the social and economic contexts in which these outcomes are achieved.

## ANNEX 2. DEFINITION OF TERMS

<b>Intervention</b>	Any programmatic approach, full-sized project, medium-sized project, or enabling activity financed from any GEF-managed trust fund, as well as regional and national outreach activities. In the context of post-completion evaluation, an intervention may consist of a single project, or multiple projects (i.e. phased or parallel) with explicitly linked objectives contributing to the same specific impacts within the same specific geographical area and sector. <a href="https://www.gefio.org/evaluations/gef-evaluation-policy-2019">https://www.gefio.org/evaluations/gef-evaluation-policy-2019</a>
<b>Activity (of an intervention)</b>	An action undertaken over the duration of an intervention that contributes to the achievement of the intervention's objectives, i.e. an intervention is implemented through a set of activities. E.g. training, (support to) policy development, (implementation of) management approach.
<b>Outcome</b>	An intended or achieved short- or medium-term effect of a project or program's outputs. <a href="https://www.gefio.org/evaluations/gef-evaluation-policy-2019">https://www.gefio.org/evaluations/gef-evaluation-policy-2019</a>
<b>Impact</b>	The positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a project or program, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. <a href="https://www.gefio.org/evaluations/gef-evaluation-policy-2019">https://www.gefio.org/evaluations/gef-evaluation-policy-2019</a>
<b>Environmental outcomes</b>	Changes in environmental indicators that could take the following forms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stress reduction: reduction or prevention of threats to the environment, especially those caused by human behavior (local communities, societies, economies)</li> <li>• Environmental state: biological, physical changes in the state of the environment</li> </ul> <a href="http://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/ops5-final-report-eng.pdf">http://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/ops5-final-report-eng.pdf</a>
<b>Social and economic outcomes</b>	Changes in indicators affecting human well-being at the individual or higher scales, e.g. income or access to capital, food security, health, safety, education, cooperation/ conflict resolution, and equity in distribution/ access to benefits, especially among marginalized groups.
<b>Synergies</b>	Multiple benefits achieved in more than one focal area as a result of a <i>single intervention</i> , or benefits achieved from the interaction of outcomes from at least two separate interventions in addition to those achieved, had the interventions been done independently.

	<a href="http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/evaluation-multiple-benefits-gef-support-through-its-multifocal-area-portfolio-map-2016">http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/evaluation-multiple-benefits-gef-support-through-its-multifocal-area-portfolio-map-2016</a>
<b>Trade-offs</b>	A reduction in one benefit in the process of maximizing or increasing another benefit. <a href="http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/evaluation-multiple-benefits-gef-support-through-its-multifocal-area-portfolio-map-2016">http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/evaluation-multiple-benefits-gef-support-through-its-multifocal-area-portfolio-map-2016</a>
<b>Broader adoption</b>	The adoption of GEF-supported interventions by governments and other stakeholders beyond the original scope and funding of a GEF-supported intervention. This may take place through sustaining, replication, mainstreaming, and scaling-up of an intervention and/or its enabling conditions (see definitions below). <a href="http://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/ops5-final-report-eng.pdf">http://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/ops5-final-report-eng.pdf</a>
<b>Sustainability</b>	The continuation/ likely continuation of positive effects from the intervention after it has come to an end, and its potential for scale-up and/or replication; interventions need to be environmentally as well as institutionally, financially, politically, culturally and socially sustainable. <a href="https://www.gefio.org/evaluations/gef-evaluation-policy-2019">https://www.gefio.org/evaluations/gef-evaluation-policy-2019</a>
<b>Replication</b>	When a GEF intervention is reproduced at a comparable administrative or ecological scale, often in different geographical areas or regions. <a href="http://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/ops5-final-report-eng.pdf">http://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/ops5-final-report-eng.pdf</a>
<b>Mainstreaming</b>	When information, lessons, or specific aspects of a GEF initiative are incorporated into a broader stakeholder initiative. This may occur not only through governments but also in development organizations and other sectors. <a href="http://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/ops5-final-report-eng.pdf">http://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/ops5-final-report-eng.pdf</a>
<b>Scaling-up</b>	Increasing the magnitude of global environment benefits (GEBs), and/or expanding the geographical and sectoral areas where they are generated to cover a defined ecological, economic, or governance unit. May occur through replication, mainstreaming, and linking. <a href="http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/evaluation-gef-support-scaling-impact-2019">http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/evaluation-gef-support-scaling-impact-2019</a>
<b>Transformational change</b>	Deep, systemic, and sustainable change with large-scale impact in an area of major environmental concern. Defined by four criteria: relevance, depth of change, scale of change, and sustainability. <a href="http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/evaluation-gef-support-transformational-change-2017">http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/evaluation-gef-support-transformational-change-2017</a>
<b>Additionality</b>	a) Changes in the attainment of direct project outcomes at project completion that can be attributed to GEF's interventions; these can be reflected in an acceleration of the adoption of reforms, the enhancement of outcomes, or the reduction of risks and greater viability of project interventions. b) Spill-over effects beyond project outcomes that may result from systemic reforms, capacity development, and socio-economic changes. c) Clearly articulated pathways to achieve broadening of the impact beyond project completion that can be associated with GEF interventions. <a href="https://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/council-documents/files/c-55-me-inf-01.pdf">https://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/council-documents/files/c-55-me-inf-01.pdf</a>