

1. Project Data

Summary project data			
GEF project ID		4835	
GEF Agency project ID		0008800	
GEF Replenishment Phase		GEF-5	
Lead GEF Agency (include all for joint projects)		UNDP – United Nations Development Programme	
Project name		Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of the Achara Region's Protected Areas	
Country/Countries		Georgia	
Region		ECA – Europe and Central Asia	
Focal area		Biodiversity	
Operational Program or Strategic Priorities/Objectives		SO-1, SP-3 Strengthening Terrestrial Protected Areas	
Executing agencies involved		Agency for Protected Areas (Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture)	
NGOs/CBOs involvement		NGOs and CBOs important stakeholders of the project, at local level empowered to participate in the decision making and agenda setting of the project.	
Private sector involvement		Engagement and participation of private sector in conservation efforts of project.	
CEO Endorsement (FSP) /Approval date (MSP)		13 November 2013	
Effectiveness date / project start		9 June 2014	
Expected date of project completion (at start)		9 June 2018	
Actual date of project completion		31 December 2018	
Project Financing			
		At Endorsement (US \$M)	At Completion (US \$M)
Project Preparation Grant	GEF funding	-	-
	Co-financing	-	-
GEF Project Grant		1.283	1.270
Co-financing	IA own	0.04	0.04258
	Government	10.791	46.167
	Other multi-/bi-laterals	2.567	2.454
	Private sector		
	NGOs/CSOs		
Total GEF funding		1.283	1.270
Total Co-financing		13.358	48.622
Total project funding (GEF grant(s) + co-financing)		14.998	49.933
Terminal evaluation/review information			
TE completion date		February 2019	
Author of TE		Michael J.B. Green & Giorgi Shubitidze	
TER completion date		20 May 2020	
TER prepared by		Mourad Shalaby	
TER peer review by (if GEF IEO review)		Molly Watts Sohn	

2. Summary of Project Ratings

Criteria	Final PIR	IA Terminal Evaluation	IA Evaluation Office Review	GEF IEO Review
Project Outcomes	S (overall DO rating)	S		S
Sustainability of Outcomes		ML		ML
M&E Design		MS		MS
M&E Implementation		S		S
Quality of Implementation		HS		HS
Quality of Execution		S		MS
Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report		-		S

3. Project Objectives

3.1 Global Environmental Objectives of the project:

The environmental objectives of the project are to expand the Achara (Georgia) protected area and improve its management and sustainability. This includes the long-term sustainable conservation of the globally unique Colchic temperate rainforest. As such, the project is meant to deliver global benefits through facilitating the expansion of the protected area (PA) network (added biogeographic representation and functional connectivity) and improving the effectiveness of PA management.

This project will lead to ecological sustainability in the Achara Region, which will result in benefits (goods and services) that will be produced ecosystem-wide. Ecosystem goods and services will include soil protection, water provision (quality and quantity), flood control, carbon sequestration, carbon storage, tourism attractions and increased resilience and self-repair of ecosystems from other stresses e.g. increase surface temperature (CEO Endorsement document p7).

3.2 Development Objectives of the project:

The stated project objective is “to enhance the management, effectiveness, biogeographically coverage and connectivity of Protected Areas to conserve forest ecosystems in the Achara Region” (CEO Endorsement document p1).

To achieve this, the project has set forth two outcomes:

1. Outcome 1: Enhancement of PA (Protected Area) Management Effectiveness in the Achara Region.
2. Outcome 2: PA System Expanded to Increase Functional Connectivity of PAs in West Lesser Caucasus.

3.3 Were there any **changes** in the Global Environmental Objectives, Development Objectives, or other activities during implementation?

The TE notes that the objective and outcomes mentioned above are different to those presented in the Project Identification Form (PIF), which focus on the long-term financial sustainability and effective management of a subset of Georgia’s protected areas (PAs) network rather than specifically on Achara’s

Colchic forests. Thus, while the concept remained largely intact, there were significant changes to the project's structure and selection of demonstration sites during its subsequent development, none of which is mentioned in the Project Document (ProDoc) (TE p7).

4. GEF IEO assessment of Outcomes and Sustainability

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

Relevance can receive either a Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory rating. For Effectiveness and Cost efficiency, a six point rating scale is used (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory), or Unable to Assess. Sustainability ratings are assessed on a four-point scale: Likely=no or negligible risk; Moderately Likely=low risk; Moderately Unlikely=substantial risks; Unlikely=high risk. In assessing a Sustainability rating please note if, and to what degree, sustainability of project outcomes is threatened by financial, sociopolitical, institutional/governance, or environmental factors.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

4.1 Relevance	Rating: Satisfactory
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The project is rated "Relevant" by the TE, and this TER agrees that this project's relevance was satisfactory, as it intended to conserve a globally important forest, and is aligned with Georgian environmental plans, GEF biodiversity objectives and UNDP country outcomes and objectives for Georgia.

The project is globally important with respect to conserving the Colchic Forest, a feature of the Caucasus Eco-region that is among the world's 34 biologically richest and most endangered terrestrial ecosystems and currently proposed for inscription on the World Heritage List. Nationally, it is aligned with Georgia's National Environment Action Plan (2012-2016), National Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan (NBSAP) 2005 – since replaced by the 2014 NBSAP, and the 2012 Ecoregion Plan for Caucasus.

The project is aligned with GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Objective 1 to: improve sustainability of PAs (protected areas), thereby contributing to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) 2011-2020 Strategic Plan, its Programme of Work on PAs (PoWPA) and its Aichi Targets.

The project contributed to achieving the 2011-2015 UNDP Georgia Country Programme Outcome 3.2.1: Sustainable practices and instruments for the management of chemicals and natural resources; and it continues to be relevant to the 2016-2020 UNDP Country Program for Georgia. This is important, not only because the project spans two Country Programmes but also in the wake of its six-month extension to December 2018 (TE p29).

4.2 Effectiveness	Rating: Moderately satisfactory
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Effectiveness is rated as “Satisfactory” by the TE and moderately satisfactory by this TER, given that the project achieved its main objectives, but the sustainability of its measures under Outcome 1 remains questionable.

The main project objective has been achieved in terms of enhancing the “biogeographical coverage of protected areas to conserve Colchic Forest in the Achara Region” and the distance between fragments of such forests (‘stepping stones’) has been reduced from 13 km to 6 km, enhancing connectivity. The two desired outcomes of the project are assessed below.

1. Outcome 1: Enhancement of PA (Protected Area) Management Effectiveness in the Achara Region.

Achievement of Outcome 1 is rated as Satisfactory by the TE. Management effectiveness has been enhanced, with METT (Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool) targets realized and, in most cases, exceeded. This was done for the Machakhela National Park, enabling it to begin to function effectively as a protected area through drawing up its boundaries and planning its management, all of which was undertaken in a participatory manner with local communities and other stakeholders.

The national PAs network continues to be highly centralized with respect to planning and delivery of management within individual PAs. As highlighted in the ProDoc: “an important prerequisite for PA Administrations to successfully implement management planning is the ability to apply adaptive management. Failure to adapt management in response to implementation realities will compromise both the effectiveness to achieve planned objectives and the cost efficiency of PA actions.[...] Currently PA administrations face two barriers to being able to apply adaptive management a) they lack the capacity, experience and confidence to adapt management in response to changing conditions b) they lack the opportunity due to the current highly centralization nature of management planning and operations in Georgia”.

The TE explains that the project has been able to address barrier (a) to some extent through training and other forms of capacity building, but barrier (b) persists and PA administrations continue to have little to no autonomy, with no delegated powers or decision-making board for their own PA and no direct access and control over their respective budgets.

As such, Outcome 1 has been achieved in an effective way, in the sense that PA management has effectively been enhanced, but the sustainability of this management approach is questionable.

Outcome 2: PA System Expanded to Increase Functional Connectivity of PAs in West Lesser Caucasus.

Achievement of Outcome 2 is rated as Highly Satisfactory by the TE. The main project objective has been achieved in terms of enhancing the “biogeographical coverage of protected areas to conserve Colchic Forest in the Achara Region” and the distance between fragments of such forests

(‘steppingstones’) has been reduced from 13 km to 6 km, enhancing connectivity. The project secured the support of Machakhela’s communities in realizing its value as a potential asset for their long-term benefit in terms of ecosystems services provisioning (NTFPs-Non-Timber Forest Products, clean water, ecotourism, production of organic foods etc).

4.3 Efficiency	Rating: Highly satisfactory
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The TE rates the project’s efficiency as “Highly Satisfactory”, and this TER agrees with this rating, given the project’s impressive cost-efficiency and leveraging of considerable co-financing.

Overall, project results have been delivered in a highly cost-effective manner, particularly given the relatively small GEF grant of US\$ 1.3 million in relation to the wide range of outputs delivered across three Colchic Forests target areas. Good coordination between donors contributed significantly to cost effective implementation, facilitated by the Technical Coordination Group (TCG) established by the project.

The total co-financing contribution leveraged by the GEF grant was over tenfold (nearly US\$ 15 million) in the ProDoc. This increased from US\$ 7.6 million to almost US\$ 50 million during implementation on account of large investments in infrastructure by ARA (the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia in Georgia).

In collaboration with several other donors, the tenfold plus co-financing leverage supported the establishment and management of PAs, including improved access to them for potentially sustainable tourism benefits. A six-month extension, critical to delivering consensus on the proposed protected landscape that emerged as the solution to the future management of the inhabited lower valleys of Machakhela Gorge, was granted and resulted in no extra cost for the project (TE p31-32).

4.4 Sustainability	Rating: Moderately likely
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The TE rates sustainability as “Moderately Likely”, and this TER cautiously agrees with this rating, as there are both positive and negative indications of the project’s political and institutional sustainability, which are complicated by the incremental effects of climate change (TE pXII).

Financial Sustainability

The prognosis for financial sustainability is deemed to be “Moderately Likely” by the TE.

The risk of the government failing to commit sufficient financial support to new protected areas’ (PAs) planning and management could result in a shortfall that PAs are unable to finance. Sustainable funding

of PAs will remain an issue for as long as the Autonomous Republic of Achara (APA) maintains, rather than delegates, its authority over PA budgets and management. However, considerable country ownership of this project has been demonstrated at national, regional and municipal levels, which is also reflected in the co-financing secured from each of these levels, all of which is evidence to suggest that the proposed protected landscape and national park(s) are likely to benefit from regional and municipal interest, attention and, subsequently, funds. Project initiatives, such as creating national park Friends Associations, provide a mechanism for increasing PA resources that is independent of the current legislative and political restrictions imposed on PA administrations.

Socio-economic Sustainability

Socio-economic sustainability is rated as “Moderately Likely” by the TE.

Conflicts and misunderstandings among public and private sector partners, NGOs and resource users are identified as a moderate risk that undermines socio-economic sustainability. Much has been achieved by the project to engage communities in participatory processes and initiatives, such as a review of the national park (NP) boundary, management planning, NPs Friends Association (including Community Rangers and Junior Rangers programmes) and cooperatives for honey and fuel from hazelnut shells production and handicrafts, to raise their awareness of the importance and value of their natural heritage and support its conservation, as a means of enhancing and securing their own livelihoods. Land and water resources protected from pollutants could be used sustainably in the interests of local livelihoods and by visitors wishing to enjoy the natural beauty, historic heritage and local culture through ecologically sustainable forms of tourism. The Mid-Term (MTR) review raises concerns about the small scale of these interventions, but the TE points out that they are intended as demonstrations for replicating and mainstreaming. The TE also notes that there has been clear evidence of the trust and support gained from communities and other stakeholders living, working or having other interests in the target areas.

Other initiatives are also being considered, such as the inclusion of Machakhela reserve in the nomination of Colchic Forests for inscription on the World Heritage List; and the establishment of one or more villages and their landscapes as destinations for cultural tourism heritage – all of which would contribute to the socio-economy development of the area.

In sum, the Protected Landscape approach paves the way for socio-economic revival within the lower valleys of Machakhela, provided adequate planning in terms of resource use and safeguards are in place to ensure that the natural, cultural and historic resources are not eroded and are exploited sustainably.

Institutional Sustainability

Institutional sustainability is rated as “Moderately Unsustainable” by the TE.

Current institutions show limited support for “de-concentration” of management authority to PA administrations or for changes needed to improve protected area (PA) management and cost-effectiveness. The assumption in the ProDoc that the Autonomous Republic of Achara (APA) would

delegate more authority to PAs to allow more adaptive management proved to be over-optimistic, although there has been some progress regarding stakeholder involvement in PA governance.

Another constraint identified in the Mid-Term Review (MTR) and in the TE is the high turnover of staff within APA, both at senior levels (e.g. the national park director in the case of this project) and within PA Administrations, especially among rangers due to their low salaries, all of which fosters instability and undermines working relationships. This situation is deemed likely to remain until the PA policy and legislation is revised, enabling APA to decentralize its operations and provide more autonomy to PA Administrations.

Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability is rated as “likely to be sustained” by the TE.

The resilience of ecosystems and their biological and physical integrity are identified in the ProDoc as being moderately at risk from the incremental impacts of climate change. As highlighted in the Mid-Term Review (MTR), despite the project’s focus on enhancing management effectiveness and protected areas (PAs) coverage, climate changes poses a significant risk to the conservation of Colchic Forests that are expected to shift to higher altitudes in the later part of the 21st century, resulting in an expansion of invasive species and loss of species with specialized habitat requirements.

The TE also highlights the hostile political environment in which the likes of the Autonomous Republic of Achara (APA) are operating in the face of powerful sectors, such as the Ministry of Energy with its controversial hydroelectric installation in the Machakhela Gorge.

5. Processes and factors affecting attainment of project outcomes

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, then 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?

Co-financing was essential to the achievement of project objectives. The GEF grant of US\$ 1.3 million leveraged over ten times its amount (nearly US\$ 15 million) in the ProDoc. This increased to almost US\$ 50 million during implementation on account of large investments in infrastructure by the Autonomous Republic of Achara (ARA). The co-financing leveraged by the project supported the establishment and management of protected areas (PAs), including improved access to them for potentially sustainable tourism benefits.

However, as noted in the MTR, ARA’s co-financing contribution “is exaggerated” as it has not been possible to disaggregate the data provided by ARA, who state in their co-financing letter that it would provide figures for the implementation of “various socio-economic and infrastructure projects in Khelvachauri and Kobuleti municipalities” irrespective of whether they were relevant to PAs, local communities within the vicinity of PAs or infrastructure development within or immediately surrounding the PAs. The TE offers a conservative estimate of actual co-financing spent by mid-term, which would be

US\$ 9.1 million (66% of pledged co-finance), based on using the figure of US\$ 7,638,036 pledged by ARA, rather than their 2016 submission of US\$ 41,897,589 to the Project Management Unit (PMU) (TE p19-22).

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 required a six-month no-cost extension to end in December 2018 instead of June of that same year. The TE explains that this extension was critical to delivering consensus on the proposed protected landscape that emerged as the adaptive management solution to the future management of the inhabited lower valleys of Machakhela Gorge (TE p17).

Stakeholders attributed occasional delays in implementation to the Autonomous Republic of Achara's (APA) centralized management of protected areas (PAs) and a lack of devolved powers for PA administration. Additionally, there were frequent changes in staff at the APA: notably it's Chairman changed 6 times and the national project director (NPD) 4 times during the project, which, the TE notes, affected stability of relationships and decision-making (TE pVIII).

5.3 Country ownership. Assess the extent to which country ownership has affected project outcomes and sustainability? Describe the ways in which it affected outcomes and sustainability, highlighting the causal links:

Strong ownership at all levels of government, national, regional and municipal, and among the communities residing in and around the protected areas was a key ingredient of the project's overall success. Relevant country representatives, including governmental officials at national and regional levels, civil society representatives and academic professionals were actively involved in the project.

The strong ownership is reflected in the US\$ 13.7 million committed in co-financing from national, regional and municipal governments. This tenfold leverage of the GEF/UNDP grant (US\$ 1.3 million) was a significant achievement in itself that increased further during project implementation (TE p31-32).

6. Assessment of project's Monitoring and Evaluation system

Ratings are assessed on a six point scale: Highly Satisfactory=no shortcomings in this M&E component; Satisfactory=minor shortcomings in this M&E component; Moderately Satisfactory=moderate shortcomings in this M&E component; Moderately Unsatisfactory=significant shortcomings in this M&E component; Unsatisfactory=major shortcomings in this M&E component; Highly Unsatisfactory=there were no project M&E systems.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

6.1 M&E Design at entry	Rating: Moderately satisfactory
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Overall, monitoring and evaluation is rated as satisfactory based on the higher of the two ratings for design at entry and implementation. M&E design is rated as “Moderately Satisfactory” by the TE, and this TER agrees with this rating, due to weaknesses in the Strategic Results Framework (SRF) and Mid-Term Review (MTR) process.

The M&E Plan in the ProDoc was satisfactory, with a comprehensive framework of monitoring activities and compiled baseline information, including status of indicators at project start and GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) for protected areas.

However, the TE highlights that “Only US\$ 43,000, little more than 3% of the GEF grant, were indicatively allocated for the M&E Plan, with no provision for technical review of the SRF and M&E during project inception and none for an independent external evaluator to undertake a MTR”. Instead, the TE explains, an internal MTR was planned, undertaken by the “CO” and UNDP-GEF Regional Coordinating Unit, which lacked independence and was unrealistic time-wise.

Furthermore, the TE identified some weaknesses in the SRF, namely overlapping indicators, insufficient indicator coverage of Outcome 1 scope and inadequacies in effectively monitoring illicit activities and their enforcement (TE pVII).

6.2 M&E Implementation	Rating: Satisfactory
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M&E implementation is deemed “Satisfactory” by the TE, and this TER agrees with this rating, given that the project produced regular and inclusive progress reports and took into account subsequent recommendations, with only minor shortcomings detailed below.

Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) contained feedback from key stakeholders and provided summaries of project performance, supported by progress and quarterly reports. The Project Executive Board (PEB) met regularly and was well represented and attended at senior levels by key implementing partners. The Technical Coordination Group (TCG), set up by the project, provided an effective platform to share progress and work plans among other partners investing in Achara’s protected areas (PAs). The UNDP Capacity Scorecard and GEF METT (Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool) for PAs were diligently and competently completed on schedule for the Mid-Term Review (MTR) and TE. MTR recommendations were thoroughly reviewed and responded to with appropriate measures taken, such as producing “SMART patrolling” across Achara’s Colchic Forest PAs and reviewing the need for a no-cost extension in November 2017.

However, the TE points out that the Strategic Results Framework (SRF) was reviewed during the inception phase but no initiative taken to address some obvious design weaknesses. In addition, risks and assumptions articulated in the ProDoc were not clearly integrated within the SRF (TE pVII).

7. Assessment of project implementation and execution

Quality of Implementation includes the quality of project design, as well as the quality of supervision and assistance provided by implementing agency(s) to execution agencies throughout project implementation. Quality of Execution covers the effectiveness of the executing agency(s) in performing its roles and responsibilities. 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.

7.1 Quality of Project Implementation	Rating: Highly satisfactory
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Project implementation is rated “Highly Satisfactory” by the TE, and this TER agrees with this rating, due to UNDP’s performance in terms of experience, relations with the host government, stability within its project team and good management of project funds.

The TE noted UNDP’s wealth of experience in biodiversity projects in Georgia and globally and its good relations with the Government of Georgia, a strong comparative advantage for the project. UNDP provided regular, solid support to the project, including active participation in bi-annual meetings, oversight of the Project Management Unit (PMU) and assistance with procurement, logistics and financial reporting.

UNDP’s Energy & Environment Unit remained stable throughout the project, with no personnel changes, which was hugely beneficial to building and maintaining a strong and dynamic working relationship with the PMU and implementing partners.

UNDP ensured that all of the Strategic Results Framework (SRF) targets were met or exceeded by end of project and that the GEF grant was expended in a timely and cost-effective manner (TE p46).

7.2 Quality of Project Execution	Rating: Moderately satisfactory
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Project execution is rated as “Satisfactory” by the TE, and moderately satisfactory by this TER, given the high staff turnover and lack of decentralization within the Autonomous Republic of Achara (APA).

The TE highlights the high level of ownership and participation among key officials from the Autonomous Republic of Achara (APA) and its regional partners that was consistent throughout the implementation phase. The protected area administrations in the project target sites worked closely with the Project Management Unit (PMU) and contributed to the delivery of a large number of outputs.

The TE also points out that there were occasional delays in implementation attributed to APA, and frequent changes in staff. Notably, the National Project Director (NPD) changed 6 times during the 4.5 years of implementation, which affected stability of relationships and delayed decision-making in the project. High turn-over of protected area administration staff was attributed to low salaries.

Most importantly, a “de-concentration”, or decentralization, of management to allow more adaptive management has proved to be elusive for APA and its implementing partners, particularly with respect to enabling PAs to become more financially sustainable, as that would entail a degree of independence and autonomy that is currently beyond existing policies and legislation (TE p46).

8. Assessment of Project Impacts

Note - In instances where information on any impact related topic is not provided in the terminal evaluations, the reviewer should indicate in the relevant sections below that this is indeed the case and identify the information gaps. When providing information on topics related to impact, please cite the page number of the terminal evaluation from where the information is sourced.

8.1 Environmental Change. Describe the changes in environmental stress and environmental status that occurred by the end of the project. Include both quantitative and qualitative changes documented, sources of information for these changes, and how project activities contributed to or hindered these changes. Also include how contextual factors have contributed to or hindered these changes.

The global environmental benefit of this project was extending the protected areas (PAs) coverage and connectivity of Georgia’s unique Colchic Forest temperate rainforest and enhancing its effective management. The project met with considerable success in achieving its objective, as indicated by a 24% increase (7,333 ha) in the coverage of PAs in Achara, from 30,469 ha to 37,802. While this does not currently meet the target of 39,202 ha, the target will be exceeded by 2,895 ha with the designation of the proposed Machakhela Protected Landscape. Thus, the total PAs coverage in Achara would become 42,097 ha. As and when this is achieved, albeit post-project, the extent of the national PAs network will have increased from the project’s baseline of 10.7% of the country to over 12%, exceeding the project’s target of 11.7% (TE pIX).

From the above evidence and considerations, the project had a significant positive impact on the ecological status of Colchic Forest, increasing the extent of its protection, and at least a minimal reduction in stress on ecological systems in Colchic Forest through improved management effectiveness. On the other hand, impacts from recent hydroelectric installation, increased visitor use and climate change may have offset the positive benefits of improved management effectiveness (TE p46, 58).

8.2 Socioeconomic change. Describe any changes in human well-being (income, education, health, community relationships, etc.) that occurred by the end of the project. Include both quantitative and qualitative changes documented, sources of information for these changes, and how project activities

contributed to or hindered these changes. Also include how contextual factors have contributed to or hindered these changes.

The deployment of the protected landscape model should ensure that pressures on Machakhela's Colchic Forest will be addressed in ways that consider communities' livelihood needs using more sustainable land use practices as demonstrated during the project. The proposed Protected Landscape is supported by local communities, which represents a tremendous change in their attitudes as a result of specific project interventions, such as the participatory review of Machakhela National Park boundaries and the development of a *Support Zone Community Action Plan* under Outputs 2.1 and 2.3, respectively. Indeed, the development of the National Park management plan was done in a participatory manner involving communities and other stakeholders, establishing an Advisory Council on which communities are represented and creating the Mtirala and Machakhela Friends Association under which community ranger and junior ranger voluntary services have been established (Output 2.2) (TE p49).

Furthermore, several project interventions had positive social impacts, such as : infrastructural investments to improve road access and facilities (National Park administration office and visitor center); supporting a wide range of community interests such as training in agriculture and traditional folk music; provision of a waste-collecting vehicle imported from Germany; establishing cooperatives (e.g. beekeeping, hazelnut cleaning machinery); development of sustainable approaches to tourism (e.g. traditional arts and crafts, inventorying cultural and historic sites, developing hiking trails, publicity materials); and reducing conflict with wildlife through deployment of electric fencing around farmers' fields/orchards; and insurance schemes (Output 2.3) (TE p49).

From a livelihood perspective, there is no baseline against which to measure socio-economic improvements, but certainly many of the project interventions have resulted in improved livelihoods at cooperative and individual levels, judging by the positive attitudes towards the project and national park administrations observed by the TE evaluators and direct feedback during interviews. The establishment of Machakhela National Park and related project support towards income generation and tourism has raised the area's profile, resulting in initial economic benefits accruing to some community members (TE p58).

8.3 Capacity and governance changes. Describe notable changes in capacities and governance that can lead to large-scale action (both mass and legislative) bringing about positive environmental change. "Capacities" include awareness, knowledge, skills, infrastructure, and environmental monitoring systems, among others. "Governance" refers to decision-making processes, structures and systems, including access to and use of information, and thus would include laws, administrative bodies, trust-building and conflict resolution processes, information-sharing systems, etc. Indicate how project activities contributed to/ hindered these changes, as well as how contextual factors have influenced these changes.

a) Capacities

The increase in extent of the protected areas (PAs) network in the Autonomous Republic of Achara (ARA) has also been mirrored by substantive development in capacity, with targets at protected area

(PA) system (20%), institutional (29%) and individual levels (13%) greatly exceeded (71%, 65% and 54%, respectively).

The project's training/capacity-building was implemented in agriculture, forest management, greenhouses and tourism services. These and other investments in training and capacity development are reflected in the UNDP Capacity Development Scorecard and METT (Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool) results, for which targets have been exceeded in all cases. As a result, capacities of local and regional authorities were strengthened to plan, deliver and monitor public services locally – e.g. technical assistance provided to PA administrations, regional government agencies and municipalities in natural resource management, ecotourism, sustainable financing and waste management (TE p25).

b) Governance

The governance models of both the national park and protected landscape in this project were developed in a participatory manner involving the communities and other stakeholders, establishing an Advisory Council on which communities are represented and creating the Mtirala and Machakhela Friends Association under which community ranger and junior ranger voluntary services have been established. This more holistic and integrated protected areas (PAs) approach, which better meets the needs of 'Parks and People' through having a greater diversity of options in the management toolbox, reflect a more social and decentralized governance model promoted by the project. This model will enable local livelihood needs to be addressed in a more sustainable and popular manner. Such an outcome will also provide both a challenge and an opportunity for a novel form of governance to be piloted.

However, this novel form of governance has been met with scepticism by central government authorities. The fact that current institutions show limited support for "de-concentration" of management authority to PA administrations or to changes needed to improve PA management cost-effectiveness is identified as a moderate risk by the TE. The assumption in the ProDoc that the Autonomous Republic of Achara (APA) would delegate more authority to PAs to allow more adaptive management proved to be over-optimistic, although there has been some progress regarding stakeholder involvement in PA governance. This situation is likely to remain until PA policy and legislation are revised, enabling APA to decentralise its operations and provide more autonomy to PA Administrations.

8.4 Unintended impacts. Describe any impacts not targeted by the project, whether positive or negative, affecting either ecological or social aspects. Indicate the factors that contributed to these unintended impacts occurring.

The designation of Machakhela National Park in Year 2 (2015) and subsequent review and demarcation of the boundary resulted in the excision of some 1,400 ha in order to address major concerns and interests of local communities, whose access and rights to fuelwood and land for cultivation had been overlooked. The project was able to address this unforeseen challenge by securing the support

of Machakhela's communities in realizing the park's value as a potential asset for their long-term benefit in terms of ecosystems services provisioning (non-timber forest products - NTFPs, clean water, ecotourism, production of organic foods etc.) The outcome of this adaptive management was a proposal to designate the Support Zone as a Protected Landscape (TE pX).

8.5 Adoption of GEF initiatives at scale. Identify any initiatives (e.g. technologies, approaches, financing instruments, implementing bodies, legal frameworks, information systems) that have been mainstreamed, replicated and/or scaled up by government and other stakeholders by project end. Include the extent to which this broader adoption has taken place, e.g. if plans and resources have been established but no actual adoption has taken place, or if market change and large-scale environmental benefits have begun to occur. Indicate how project activities and other contextual factors contributed to these taking place. If broader adoption has not taken place as expected, indicate which factors (both project-related and contextual) have hindered this from happening.

The project successfully mainstreamed sustainable environmental and natural resource management, one of the main objectives of the UNDP Georgia Country Programme for 2011-2015, specifically the outputs "sustainable practices and instruments for the management of [...] natural resources, including land, water and biological resources", "System, institutional and staff level capacities enhanced for implementation of national environmental commitments and major international agreements on climate change, biodiversity" and "Financial and operational sustainability of protected areas increased".

The project also contributed to mainstreaming the two other priorities, democratic development and poverty alleviation, through value added chains targeting the poor in rural areas, employment generation schemes targeting vulnerable populations, and capacity-building of local and regional authorities to plan, deliver and monitor public services locally (TE p32).

The TE notes that the design of the project has an inherent replication dimension. The project was designed with demonstrations, best practices, replication and scaling in mind through the establishment of the Technical Coordination Group (TCG) as a platform for sharing experiences among other projects to learn lessons, maximize synergies and avoid duplication. Examples include the following:

- Piloting fuelwood alternatives in 16 households (11 with hazelnut shells, 5 with solar) and 1 school (hazelnut shells, briquette, solar water heaters). Replicated in 2018 with another 65 households (60 with hazelnut shells, 5 with solar). Hazelnut shells were upscaled to within World Wildlife Fund (WWF) forestry activities to establish an eco-corridor in the Khulo District.
- Applying the Protected Landscape approach to governance piloted in the Kintrishi protected area (PA) complex in 2007 to the lower valley of Machakhela, which is inhabited and provides a protective buffer to the largely intact Colchic forests in the higher valleys. Elsewhere in Georgia, the Protected Landscape approach has been used, such as in Tusheti (TE p35).

9. Lessons and recommendations

9.1 Briefly describe the key lessons, good practices, or approaches mentioned in the terminal evaluation report that could have application for other GEF projects.

The TE highlights the importance of technical coordination between projects. The Technical Coordination Group (TCG) effectively served as a regional coordinating vehicle resulting in pragmatic adaptive management of schedules, logistics and resource allocation. This good practice is likely to be applicable to most UNDP-GEF projects and there may well be a leadership role for UNDP to set up and convene such coordinating mechanisms, particularly in cases where there may be tensions and competition between other donors and implementing partners.

The Project Executive Board / Steering Committee met twice annually (every six months) which is less than UNDP's aspiration/policy, as the implementing agency, which is to hold meetings quarterly.

In the case of this project, part of its success or at least timely delivery of outputs can be attributed to continuity of staff throughout the project's duration within UNDP and the Project Management Unit (PMU). Unfortunately, the same is not true for APA's representation and National Project Director, nor its PA administration staff in the target sites where turn-over of rangers and others field personnel is high due to low salaries (TE p45).

9.2 Briefly describe the recommendations given in the terminal evaluation.

The TE offers several recommendations for UNDP, the Autonomous Republic of Achara (APA) and protected area (PA) administrations, some of which are highlighted below (TE p41):

UNDP:

- To designate the Lower Valleys of Machakhela Gorge as a protected landscape, in line with the extensive research, consultation and consensus generated by the project during the latter part of its term. This would also be beneficial for the long-term future, should stakeholders ever find it appropriate to nominate the Gorge for Biosphere Reserve status.
- Staff retention and continuity within the APA is an issue that impacted the project and is likely to remain so in the immediate future. UNDP is well placed to strongly advocate for salary supplements for Machakhela National Park Administration and the provision of attractive financial provisions for recruiting staff.

APA and PA administrations:

- Sustainable Tourism Development Strategies and Action Plans have been prepared for each of the project's target PAs, with due consideration given to safeguarding their natural and cultural heritage. It is recommended that these are implemented in a coordinated manner using the Achara Tourism Advisory Council or another appropriate regional body, to raise the profile of these Strategies and Action Plans within the tourism sector aligned with Achara's regional sustainable tourism development plan(s).

- In the case of Machakhela, these plans and strategies must be aligned with the cultural village/ semi-natural landscape concept that is under development by the Achara Government and subject to stringent social and environmental safeguard procedures that should now be in place in ARA following recent investments at national and regional levels.
- Along with tourism, it is strongly recommended that APA proactively engage with Achara's agricultural sector.
- The Mtirala and Machakhela National Parks Friends Association are in their formative and somewhat vulnerable stages. Having demonstrated their value to the PA administrations and local communities through various initiatives, in the absence of the project's continuing support they now need to consolidate their charters or comparable legal instruments in terms of clearly defining their roles, scope of activities, membership, *modus operandi* and relationship with their respective PA Administrations. They then need to determine their strategy over the next few years, including securing financial sustainability.

10. Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report

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	GEF IEO comments	Rating
To what extent does the report contain an assessment of relevant outcomes and impacts of the project and the achievement of the objectives?	The report properly assesses project impacts, outcomes and achievements, both quantitatively and qualitatively.	S
To what extent is the report internally consistent, the evidence presented complete and convincing, and ratings well substantiated?	The evidence is consistent, and the ratings are substantively backed-up by explanations.	S
To what extent does the report properly assess project sustainability and/or project exit strategy?	The report provides ample information about sustainability risks in all 4 categories.	HS
To what extent are the lessons learned supported by the evidence presented and are they comprehensive?	The lessons learned are directly supported by project evidence and specifically addressed to the implementing and executing agencies.	HS
Does the report include the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used?	The project finance section provides detailed information about co-financing and costs per activity, although there is some ambiguity in terms of the Autonomous Republic of Achara's actual (disaggregated) contribution to the project.	S
Assess the quality of the report's evaluation of project M&E systems:	M&E design and implementation are properly assessed. The report clearly highlights both the pros and cons of the M&E system in all its phases.	S
Overall TE Rating		S

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