



## United Nations Environment Programme

Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP GEF project “Sustainable Land Management  
in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains an Integrated Trans-boundary  
Initiative in Central Asia”

by

Francis Hurst and Firuz Ibragimov

Evaluation Office

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AKF	Aga Khan Foundation
APRs	Annual Project Reports
APR	Annual Project Reviews
BSP	Bali Strategic Plan
CA	Central Asia
CACs	Central Asian Countries
CACILM	Central Asian Countries Initiatives on Land Management
CAR	Central Asian Region
CARMC	Central Asian Regional Mountain Centre
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CS	Civil Society
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CTA	Chief Technical Assistant
DGEF	UNEP (former) Division of GEF Coordination
DRC	UNEP/Division of Regional Cooperation
DSS	Decision Support System
EA	Executing Agency
EAP	Environmental Action Plan
EKH	Environment Knowledge Hub
FPs	Focal Points
FSP	GEF Full Size Project
FSU	Former Soviet Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEB	Global Environmental Benefits
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEFSEC	GEF Secretariat
GIS	Geographic Information System
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
IA	Implementing Agency
IEM	Integrated Ecosystems Management
IFS	Integrated Financing Strategies
IMIS	Integrated Management Information System
LFM	Logical Framework Matrix
LFTT	Logframe Tracking Tool
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MHPP	Micro Hydro Power Plant
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSP	GEF Medium Size Project
MTR	Mid-Term Review
MTS	UNEP Medium Term Strategy
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MSDSP	Mountain Societies Development and Support Program
NEA	National Executing Agency

NAPCD	National Action Programmes to Combat Desertification
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NCS	National Conservation Strategy
NEAP	National Environmental Action Plan
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NSDS	National Sustainable Development Strategy
NCMRD	National Center for Mountain Regions Development
NPIU	National Project Implementation Unit
NSC	National Steering Committee
OP	EF Operational Programme
OshU	Osh State University
PALM	Pamir-Alai Land Management Project
PATSAP	Pamir-Alai Transboundary SLM Strategy and Action Plan
PDF B	Project Development Facility Block B
REA	Regional Executing Agency
PES	Payment for Environmental Services PFU
PFU	Program Facilitation Unit
PIR	Project Implementation Review
POPs	Persistent Organic Pollutants
ROAP	UNEP/ Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
RAS-IDG	Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Geosphere Dynamics
SD	Sustainable Development
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SSDS	Sub-regional Sustainable Development Strategy
SSFA	Small Scale Funding Agreement
SDU	Sub-District Unit
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
STAP	Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel
TE	Terminal Evaluation
TORs	Terms of reference
UNE	University of New England
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNU	United Nations University
UNU-EHS	United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security
UNU-ViE	United Nations University Vice-Rectorate in Europe

## Project Details<sup>1</sup>

<b>GEF project ID:</b>	2377	<b>IMIS number:</b>	GFL-2328-2770-4984
<b>Focal Area(s):</b>	Land Degradation	<b>GEF OP #:</b>	OP# 15: Sustainable Land Management
<b>GEF Strategic Priority/Objective:</b>	SLM-1, SLM-2	<b>GEF approval date:</b>	9 August 2007
<b>Approval date:</b>	10 September 2007	<b>First Disbursement:</b>	12 October 2007
<b>Actual start date:</b>	12 Oct 2007	<b>Planned duration:</b>	48 months
<b>Intended completion date:</b>	July 2011	<b>Actual or Expected completion date:</b>	May 2012
<b>Project Type:</b>	FSP	<b>GEF Allocation:</b>	US\$ 3,000,000
<b>PDF GEF cost:</b>	US\$ 650,000	<b>PDF co-financing:</b>	US\$ 475,000
<b>Expected MSP/FSP Co-financing:</b>	US\$ 6,697,380	<b>Total Cost:</b>	US\$ 10,822,380
<b>Mid-term review/eval. (planned date):</b>	Sept 2010	<b>Terminal Evaluation (actual date):</b>	May-Oct 2012
<b>Mid-term review/eval. (actual date):</b>	Aug-Oct 2010	<b>No. of revisions:</b>	Nil
<b>Date of last Steering Committee meeting:</b>	November 2011 (Dushanbe), project Completion Workshop, incl. ISC team, May 2012	<b>Date of last Revision*:</b>	N/A
<b>Disbursement as of 30 June 2008 (UNEP):</b>	US\$ 1,565,016	<b>Actual expenditures reported as of 30 June 2011 :</b>	US\$ 2,108,219
<b>Total co-financing realized as of 30 June 2010:</b>	6,693,092 (Dec 2012)	<b>Leveraged financing:</b>	US\$ 1,771,126 (2010 expenditures entered after June 11)

<sup>1</sup> Source: UNEP GEF Project Implementation Report (PIR) Fiscal Year 2011 & Terminal Report

## Executive Summary

### Project Description

The Pamir project was designed to be an Integrated and trans-boundary Initiative in Central Asia. It grew out of a concern to address what were perceived to be the interlinked problems of land degradation and poverty within one of Central Asia's critical mountain 'water towers' and biodiversity hotspots.

The project was aligned to the GEF Operational Programme (OP15) on Sustainable Land Management and would address the GEF Sustainable Land Management Strategic Priority on *Targeted Capacity Building* (SLM-1) by contributing to the improvement of the enabling technological, institutional, policy and legislative environment for sustainable land management within the High Pamir and Pamir Alai mountain region, at the trans-boundary, national and local levels. The project would also support the development and implementation of innovative sustainable land management practices, building where possible on indigenous systems, in line with SLM-2.

Originally designed as a two-phase, eight year project it was submitted to the GEF Secretariat (GEFSEC) in November 2005, GEF CEO approval was granted in September 2007 for the implementation of a four-year project. Subsequently, the GEF Secretariat advised that, under GEF IV rules, a second phase would not be approved. This decision was likely to have a profound effect on any project, placing the project partners in an unenviable position where they might risk the cancellation of a project and the loss of investments in the project design.

### Implementation and Execution Arrangements

The project's execution and implementation arrangements were complex. The Project's implementation agency was the UNEP Division of GEF Coordination (UNEP DGEF) based in the ROAP - UNEP/Division of Regional Cooperation (DRC)/ Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) in Bangkok, Thailand, while the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS) in Bonn, Germany, was the international executing agency for the project. As such it is responsible for oversight and coordination of project activities among the different project partners.

National Executing Agencies (NEAs) assigned by the Governments of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were responsible for overall project execution in their respective countries.

In Kyrgyzstan, the project was executed by the National Centre for Mountain Regions Development (NCMRD), which hosts the national project implementation office in Bishkek. A field office, coordinating the execution of field level activities was established on the premises of the University of Osh and is sub-contracted by the Kyrgyz NEA. The national and field officers were responsible for the recruitment of project personnel and consultants and for coordination of the work of all project partners working in Kyrgyzstan. National research agencies undertaking the component 2 adaptive research activities, however, were directly sub-contracted by UNU.

In Tajikistan, the project was executed by the Centre for Support and Development of Protected Areas in Tajikistan, which hosted the national project office in Dushanbe and two field offices – one in Khorog and one in Jirgital. Unlike in Kyrgyzstan, community-based land use planning activities in Tajikistan were implemented by a separate agency, the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme<sup>2</sup> (MSDSP), which was directly sub-contracted by UNU. UNU also sub-contracted Tajik research agencies and NGOs undertaking adaptive research.

Direct facilitation of project activities at the ten project pilot sites (six in Tajikistan and four in Kyrgyzstan) was undertaken by field facilitators based at the pilot sites or in larger nearby settlements.

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<sup>2</sup> The MSDSP is part of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) dedicated to improving the quality of life of the people in the mountainous oblasts of Tajikistan

Overall project implementation was overseen by UNEP and an International Steering Committee (ISC) comprising of senior representatives from the GEF Implementing and Executing Agencies for the project, from key government agencies in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, as well as from the major co-financing partners. Two National Steering Committees would oversee project work flow and implementation in each of the project countries<sup>3</sup>.

### **Project Objectives and Outcomes**

The immediate development objective was:

*“to address the link between poverty, vulnerability and land degradation at the community level, through the promotion of sustainable land management practices that contribute to improving the livelihoods and economic well-being of the inhabitants of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains”.*

The immediate environmental objective was:

*“to mitigate the causes and negative impacts of land degradation on the structure and functional integrity of the ecosystems of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains through mainstreaming sustainable land management tools and practices from household, community, local government, national and regional levels”.*

The project had five components and four outcomes. A fifth outcome was listed as project management but was not part of the project’s log frame matrix (LFM) although following the inception phase this was added to the LFM.

**Component 1:** Improving the enabling legal, policy, institutional, and strategic planning, environment for sustainable land management.

*The intended **Outcome (1)** would be: Enhanced regional cooperation between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan creating the enabling regional strategic planning, and national legislative, policy, institutional, technical, and economic incentive, environment, for the sustainable management of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai mountain ecosystems.*

**Component 2:** Capacity building for sustainable land management.

*The intended **Outcome (2)** would be: Improved capacity of Tajikistan’s and Kyrgyzstan’s public and private sector agency research and advisory support service providers to promote sustainable land management within the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains.*

**Component 3:** Poverty alleviation through community-based sustainable land management.

*The intended **Outcome (3)** would be: A reduction in rural poverty and economic vulnerability through restoration and enhancement of the productive and protective functions (ecological goods and services) of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai mountain ecosystems.*

**Component 4:** Evaluating the impact and lessons for replicating project experience.

*The intended **Outcome (4)** would be: Generic guidelines for up-scaling and replication of the lessons learnt, from the project’s experience with sustainable land management, within comparable trans-boundary mountain regions within Asia and elsewhere.*

**Component 5:** Project management.

*The intended **Outcome (5)** would be: An operational project management structure and monitoring and evaluation system ensuring the effective implementation of the project.*

### **Conclusions of the Terminal Evaluation**

The PALM project is satisfactory and has achieved much of what it set out to do. The project has faced considerable challenges ranging from the protracted design phase, the cancellation of the second phase at the very beginning of the project, internal institutional changes within the REA and difficulties establishing the NEAs due to institutional changes taking place during the start up. In addition to these the CTA for the project sadly died at the beginning of the project and there have been instances of serious political and social instability within the project area during its implementation.

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<sup>3</sup> Source: TE ToR

The project partners have relied upon their experience in the project area, much of which was gained during the project development phase. As a result the project has been highly productive in many areas.

The TE finds that there has been a tendency to focus on outputs rather than outcomes (probably due in a large part to the truncated timeframe and the absence of an overarching CTA figure to coordinate the various components). In some instances this has led to a partial achievement of outcomes.

However, the project has addressed many of the livelihood and SLM issues within the project area and at a regional level as well as having a considerable geographical scope.

#### **Achievements of outcomes, outputs and activities:**

***Outcome 1 Enhanced regional cooperation between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan creating the enabling regional strategic planning, and national legislative, policy, institutional, technical, and economic incentive, environment, for the sustainable management of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai mountain ecosystems.***

The project has stimulated trans-boundary discussion between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and the resulting Pamir-Alai Trans-boundary Strategy and Action Plan was produced as a result. The project has largely provided for the Law on Soil Fertility<sup>4</sup> (Kyrgyzstan) and the Law on Mountain Territories (Tajikistan) as well as the Laws on Pastures in both countries and has left a certain capacity for SLM policy and legislation as a result. The TE has a number of concerns that are raised in the report.

***Outcome 2 Improved capacity of Tajikistan's and Kyrgyzstan's public and private sector agency research and advisory support service providers to promote sustainable land management within the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains***

The project has stimulated a number of service providers and has been appreciated at the local level by beneficiaries. In Tajikistan micro-projects were delivered through the subcontracted MSDP and in Kyrgyzstan they were directly implemented by the NEA. Both have made considerable efforts with an impressive 165 micro-projects with only seven failures. The Kyrgyz NEA has made considerable efforts and endured a steep learning curve in developing the micro-projects. The MSDSP already had systems in place in the field already. The micro-projects have on the whole had good results. The TE is more cautious than the project in drawing SLM and livelihood conclusions from these but accepts that the cancelled second phase has had a significant impact upon this issue. Regardless of this the process has included SLM in both SDU service providers and the operations of the MSDSP.

Another strand of this component was "adaptive research". Initially this was to be carried out by ICARDA but they withdrew very early on from the project and in the event the REA implemented this activity. The TE finds the "adaptive research" has produced a mixture of research projects some of which have important SLM and livelihood applications. As with the micro-projects, the process has built the capacities of academic institutions and organizations and embedded an SLM within both their institutional cultures and their curriculums.

***Outcome 3 A reduction in rural poverty and economic vulnerability through restoration and enhancement of the productive and protective functions (ecological goods and services) of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai mountain ecosystems***

This was an ambitious outcome. It has been difficult for the TE to fully assess this due to weaknesses in the project's LFM. Certainly the project has been highly productive with a large number of outputs associated with this aspect of SLM although the TE has concerns that there may have been too much focus on outputs, although this has to be measured against the GEFSEC decision to foreshorten the project by four years and also the absence of a CTA figure may have contributed to this.

***Outcome 4 Generic guidelines for up-scaling and replication of the lessons learnt, from the project's experience with sustainable land management, within comparable trans-boundary mountain regions within Asia and elsewhere***

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<sup>4</sup> The TE uses the short name of the Laws

The project has undoubtedly produced large quantities of studies and guidelines many of them insightful and of use. The TE is concerned that given the time frames and the complexity of these systems it might have been premature to be attempting to draw generic lessons from the projects interventions; in particular to be linking these with long term ecosystem resilience and rural livelihood improvements. In the event the project did not produce a set of generic guidelines but instead produced SLM policy guidelines which might be more appropriate under the circumstances.

***Outcome 5 An operational project management structure and monitoring and evaluation system ensuring the effective implementation of the project***

The project has developed a regional network of partners with an interest and capacities to support the up-scaling of SLM in the broader region and neighbouring trans-boundary ranges and strengthened institutional capacities for facilitating SLM in the Pamir-Alai region of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and available to support future government initiatives and donor projects with a focus on SLM in the region. However, the TE is not convinced that this equates to the outcome and would have expected to see substantive indicators capable of tracking this process throughout the project's lifetime.

**Project design**

The project was ambitious, even as an eight-year project it was attempting much in terms of the issues that it was trying to address and the scale it was intending to work on. There were a number of weaknesses in the design which was on the whole a conventional design for a project. However, the partners already had considerable experience in the region and the PDF phase<sup>5</sup> had provided them with considerable insight and additional experience. The TE does not imply criticism of the project in this remark, but rather recognizes that this was and remains an intrinsically challenging and highly unpredictable operating environment for projects. The PALM project was complex and was ambitious (in this sense it was no different from many other GEF projects) and as such it had little flexibility because projects are time-bound and in many ways locked into the contractual aspects of the LFM, there is no "fat" on them to allow them to sit out the difficult times (e.g. during the crisis in Kyrgyzstan). A critical component of the design (in the opinion of the TE) was the inclusion of a substantive CTA to provide an overarching effect to keep the multiplicity of activities and outputs together in order to fully achieve the outcomes. Without this position there was always a risk that, in the febrile atmosphere of implementing a project, there would be an overemphasis on the delivery of programmed outputs.

**Implementation approach and adaptive management**

The complexity of the project coupled with the absence of the CTA position raises questions about implementation approach and adaptive management. Clearly the project had much adapting to do given the shock of the GEFSEC decision and it is clear that there has been some innovative means in which the project *per se* has responded to changes in circumstances (e.g. political crisis, challenges with banking, etc.) and perhaps a lesser project might have easily "fallen apart". However, the TE does raise concerns that the lack of a CTA and the ambitious nature of the project has at times led to a focus primarily on outputs and less attention to bringing these together to achieve the outcomes. However, this must be considered against the issue of the cancelled second phase of the project, and the implications this has for the expected levels of performance given the time and resources available.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

The LFM from the Project Document had a number of weaknesses which were exacerbated during the revision of the LFM during the inception phase. The TE is of the opinion that this has, at times, made it difficult for the project to monitor, evaluate and make adaptations. Reporting has taken place and largely on time.

There has been considerable confusion surrounding the project's LFM with changes being made a number of points in the project cycle which has made it hard for the TE to follow.

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<sup>5</sup> The project development phase (or fund)

## **Co-financing**

The Project Document documented co-financing amounting to US\$ 6,697,380 disaggregated into US\$ 3,076,400 cash and US\$ 3,620,980 in-kind. The project Terminal Report accounts for US\$ 6,693,092 disaggregated into US\$ 2,618,605 cash and US\$ 4,074,487. The final reporting is quite impressive considering substantial co-financing commitments from ICARDA (US\$ 280,000), UNESCO (US\$ 70,000) and The Mountain Institute (US\$ 85,000) were cancelled at the start of project implementation. It appears that the reporting on co-financing placed a considerable burden on the REA as is not uncommon in GEF projects.

## **Processes Affecting the Attainment of Results**

The unexpected cancellation of the second phase has had a profound effect upon the project indeed it has at times threatened the very continuity. There have been a number of events taking place that have impacted upon the project including political and civil disturbances in both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Clearly the project was working in a challenging environment. The unfortunate and untimely death of the CTA has very likely had a lasting impact upon the project which might have been avoided had a replacement individual been found. With all due respect for the project's actual course of action, this position should have been filled as quickly as was reasonable. Other critical events that have likely impacted upon the project were the withdrawal of co-financing by ICARDA, in particular, as well as the other two co-financiers. It is understood that ICARDA was going to drive the adaptive research activities and in the event this was taken up by the UNU.

## **Sustainability**

The TE considers that there are good indications that the project's achievements will be sustainable at the trans-boundary level, through enhanced capabilities for SLM research, SLM technologies and approaches such as the LADA methodology for community-based land use planning amongst others. However, the TE raises concerns about the financial implications of continued support to these on-going processes. The TE recognizes the argument advanced by the project that by internalizing the costs and benefits and building partnerships there is greater resilience. The TE agrees that these are indeed worthy long-term objectives but unlikely to be achieved within the lifetime of a single project and, for the foreseeable future, external finance will be necessary to drive SLM improvements in the project's area.

## **Lessons learned**

The single most important lesson from the TE is that the GEFSEC decision to cancel the second phase had a profound effect upon the project. Clearly such decisions should not be made in the future without some sort of prior notice or flexibility to clear projects that are nearing completion in their design phase. However, of greater importance, and implication, is the contradiction that occurs through log frame planning. The TE does not argue that the LFM is the best way of planning for projects, it almost certainly is, but it is not a perfect tool and has some limitations, particularly related to GEF projects that are by their very nature addressing highly unpredictable and complex systems. When circumstances change it invariably throws up a contradiction between the contractual function and the adaptive management planning function of the LFM.

Clearly the circumstances had changed and yet the outcomes from the project's intervention were expected to remain the same. In these instances it should be possible to quickly assess whether there is urgent need for a project and if so then there can be a rapid evaluation of the changes deemed necessary to consider whether they are *contractual* (i.e. the project designers are moving the goal posts) or *adaptive* (i.e. the project is reasonably responding to a change in circumstances or a reasonable assumption that has not held true). There is nothing adaptive about this at all. There is an urgent need for a mechanism to review LFM's (or SRF as they are now known) up to the outcome level in situations such as this or drastically scale down the expectations of how adaptive GEF projects can be.

## **Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1:** Given the challenges faced by the project, in particular those when the project had, with some justification, to use non-standard means of transferring funds to maintain continuity of the project, it is important that these are reviewed by an independent auditor<sup>6</sup>. There are two reasons for this. Firstly the evaluator has to record these matters and is not in a position to judge whether the benefits of continuing the project outweighed the risks and the hazard that clearly accompany such a course of action and it is also important for the sake of transparency that these issues are assessed through an accepted mechanism.

[UNEP Evaluation Office: - Evaluator 's Recommendation not supported –refer to footnote]

Secondly, as an associated lesson, it is highly likely that a similar set of circumstances could arise in the future. In which case it would be useful for implementing and executing agencies to have some precedent, whether these are guidelines or not, which they can refer to rather than exposing managers, individuals, to make judgments that could have serious consequences. It is easy to see how a manager could make a decision given their natural commitment to keep the project moving forwards.

**Recommendation 2:** The REA and the NEAs develop formal exit strategies starting with a retroactive<sup>7</sup> process and moving to the post project phase. This would serve a number of purposes; firstly it would bring the project to a logical conclusion. Secondly, it would give the REA and NEAs an opportunity to assess both which of, and where, the outputs and outcomes are vulnerable through a formalized planning approach and consider any post project opportunities that might reduce vulnerabilities.

#### Project ratings

Project ratings Criterion	Summary Assessment	Rating
<b>A. Attainment of project objectives and results</b>	- The project has achieved a number of things, the development of the PATSAP, SLM legislation, LADA methodology to facilitate community-based land use planning and the notable successes from the micro-projects are tangible results leading to the overall SLM objective	S
1. Effectiveness	- The foreshortening of the project by the GEFSEC, confusion surrounding the LFM and not replacing the position of the CTA have resulted in a greater focus on outputs leading to only partial realization of the outcomes	MS
2. Relevance	- The project fitted well within the regional and sub-regional policy framework as well as a number of global Conventions (amongst others, the UNCCD). It was closely aligned with the UNEP mandate and the outcomes and objectives were in line with those of the GEF OP 15 Land Degradation	HS

<sup>6</sup> The UNEP Evaluation Office respects the opinion of the evaluator with regard to risks associated with the funds transfer mechanisms discussed in this evaluation. However, in view of the fact that the project has already been fully audited, and that there does not appear to be evidence of financial wrongdoing, the Evaluation Office is of the opinion that commissioning an additional audit would be of limited value.

<sup>7</sup> Applying to a period prior to enactment

Project ratings Criterion	Summary Assessment	Rating
3. Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The project has been very efficient in delivering outputs but the TE has concerns that, as a result of the additional pressures placed upon the project by the cancelation of the second phase, challenges during the inception phase and these are expressed under the efficiency rating. The TE has concerns regarding the risk of unorthodox used in <i>extremis</i> but has some sympathy with the project given the circumstances</li> </ul>	MS
<b>B. Sustainability of project outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The project delivered numerous outputs and these are certainly in part contributing to the outcomes, issues such as country ownership and any future benefits from SLM that have been internalized within the system provide some level of confidence in sustained impact</li> </ul>	S
1. Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Any SLM initiative in either country is vulnerable in this context and the TE is less confident than the project that SLM is at a stage where it can effectively take place without external financing, although the TE agrees that this is should be the ultimate goal. The TE would have had greater confidence in a “S” rating had there been clear exit plans for the project in both countries</li> </ul>	MS
2. Socio-political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The project outputs and outcomes have been embedded at all levels of the administration as well as in the academic community and the MSDSP</li> </ul>	S
3. Institutional framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- As above</li> </ul>	S
4. Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The majority of the project’s outputs are addressing environmental sustainability and even if the outcomes are partially achieved this criteria is satisfactory</li> </ul>	S
<b>C. Catalytic role</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The project has acted as a catalyst (see sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.2.3, 5.2.4) for promoting SLM</li> </ul>	S
<b>D. Stakeholders participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There has been broad stakeholder participation in the design and implementation of the project and this has been at various levels within the system</li> </ul>	S
<b>E. Country ownership / driven-ness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is clear ownership of the outputs and they are closely aligned with land use reforms taking place in both countries</li> </ul>	S
<b>F. Achievement of outputs and activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The project has achieved all of the outputs and has in some instance been highly productive. This also needs to be viewed in the context of the challenges the project has faced as a result of the GEFSEC decision to cancel the second phase and the external impacts that have affected project performance</li> </ul>	S
<b>G. Preparation and readiness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Despite the considerable experience in the region of the project partners the project was beset by numerous challenges resulting from the GEFSEC decision, moving the REA within the parent organization during the project’s start-up, institutional uncertainty in both countries, financial challenges, civil and political unrest and the untimely and sad death of the CTA the project was prepared and ready</li> </ul>	S

Project ratings Criterion	Summary Assessment	Rating
<b>H. Implementation approach and adaptive management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- As stated above the project has adapted to the many challenges (e.g. responding to the cancellation of the ICARDA-managed component). However, the TE considers that the failure to replace the CTA position when coupled with the truncated project lifetime resulted in too much emphasis on outputs and only partial achievement of the outcomes</li> </ul>	MS
<b>I. Financial planning and management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Given the issues outlined in section 6.5 the TE is cautious in rating this aspect of the project and suggests that the rating be revised according to the outcome of any audit process in the future</li> </ul>	MS
<b>J. Monitoring and Evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reporting on the whole has been regular however the TE has concerns regarding the quality of reporting in particular the confusion surrounding the LFM</li> </ul>	MS
1. M&E Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The TE has concerns about the usefulness of the indicators in the LFM and that outcome 4 (generic guidelines was in fact an output). The TE recognizes the arguments put forwards for including a management outcome (outcome 5) but is not wholly convinced that this was justified</li> </ul>	MS
2. M&E Plan Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The M&amp;E plan has been implemented</li> </ul>	S
3. Budgeting and funding for M&E activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This is the area of poorest budget execution with a budget to actual ratio of 0.584 however, the M&amp;E activities appear to have been carried out in a timely manner</li> </ul>	S
<b>K. UNEP Supervision and backstopping</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There has been considerable guidance from the UNEP/DRC/ROAP however; the TE feels that these positions are generally underfinanced in UNEP-GEF projects to allow the sort of hands-on backstopping necessary. Furthermore, there should have been an insistence by the Implementing Agency that the CTA position was filled as quickly as was reasonable given the circumstances of its vacancy. But, this has to be seen in light of the challenges faced by the project during the start-up</li> </ul>	S

## Section 1 Evaluation Background

### 1 Evaluation objectives, scope and methodology

- 1 The Terminal Evaluation (TE) is initiated and commissioned by the Evaluation Office of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Nairobi. In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy, the UNEP Evaluation Manual and the Guidelines for GEF Agencies in Conducting Terminal Evaluations, the terminal evaluation of the project “*Sustainable Land Management in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains an Integrated Trans-boundary Initiative in Central Asia GEF Project ID 2377*” is undertaken in the closing months of the project to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability.

#### 1.1 Evaluation methodology

- 2 The TE was carried out by two independent consultants with international and regional experience in GEF project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Prior to the in-country mission the evaluators carried out a desk-based study and review of the Project’s documentation to establish an understanding of the Project as represented by the standard UNEP-GEF documentation (e.g. Project Document, Project Implementation Report (PIR), etc.). The purpose of this exercise is to carry out a “scoping” exercise; becoming familiar with the Project’s strategy, the various components and to identify the priority issues that needed to be examined and challenged in depth.
- 3 The in-country(s) mission took place between the 14<sup>th</sup> May and the 12<sup>th</sup> June<sup>8</sup>, 2012. The Team Leader subsequently visited the UNEP/DRC/ROAP in Bangkok between 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> June. The process consisted of focused meetings and discussions (in person by electronic communications) with the UNEP Evaluation Office (Nairobi), UNEP-GEF Coordination Office (Nairobi), UNEP/DRC/ROAP, Tajik and Kyrgyz EAs, project partners and stakeholders starting with a briefing of the purpose and the process of GEF monitoring and evaluation and conducted in order to facilitate an understanding of the various player’s perspectives.
- 4 The in-country missions also included visits to the pilot sites and attend the PALM Project Completion Workshop in Bishkek.
- 5 Analysis of findings and drafting of the TE Report followed the in-country(s) including further analysis of the findings and drafting of the report for comment by the Project’s partners before submission of the final draft.

#### 1.2 Limitations of the Terminal Evaluation

- 6 The dispersed nature of the projects execution framework has moderately limited the process of evaluating the project with an Execution Agency based in a third country has restricted the extent to which the TE could interact with the project partners. Ordinarily the TE team would have preferred to spend more time with the REA; however, the TE recognizes that, to some extent, there is a question of logistics and costs.
- 7 The logical framework approach is a widely used approach to the design and planning, and the monitoring and evaluation of most international development projects. In this instance the LFM

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<sup>8</sup> 14<sup>th</sup> May – 29<sup>th</sup> May Kyrgyzstan, 29<sup>th</sup> May – 13<sup>th</sup> June Tajikistan. It should be noted that during this time the TE Team were also evaluating the UNEP GEF “Support to the Implementation of the Regional Environment Action Plan in Central Asia, REAP” project

was changed during the Inception Phase and changed outputs reported in the Inception Report. However, the LFM itself was never revised and the indicators changed<sup>9</sup> (as far as the TE can discern). While the goal and objectives remained the same, an additional outcome was added and a number of outputs were changed (see section 2.1.4). The Inception Report stated that:

*“This sub set of activities is aimed at developing tools and indicators that can generate more macro-level information for project management, UNU, UNEP, GEF and others, on the environmental and socio-economic impact of the project<sup>10</sup>. As an integral part of the Project M&E it would re-confirm impact indicators at Objective and Outcome(s) level, and be part of the formal Logframe Tracking Tool used for UNEP DGEF project monitoring. It would involve an initial baseline assessment (as early as possible but not later than spring of 2009) and a follow up assessment at mid-term, as well as during the last year of the project. This would be undertaken by project management staff, with training and guidance from the UNU-EHS team. Where assessments are undertaken within the pilot SDUs then these would be done in partnership with the community members involved in the community-based participatory impact assessments, rather than as a separate exercise”....and:*

*“The starting point for the development of these tools and indicators would be a review of the M&E systems developed by similar or related projects, including the GEF/UNDP project on land degradation assessment indicators, which is being implemented by the UNU International Network on Water, Environment and Health (INWEH), as well as more area-specific initiatives such as GEF ADB CACILM project. These will be adapted to the project needs, in line with the M&E components of the formally agreed UNEP GEF project document and will be incorporated in an overall project M&E Plan”.<sup>11</sup>*

- 8 With no revised LFM attached to the Inception Report it is hard for the TE to decipher quite what was meant by this. The project was evaluated using the log frame matrix and the indicators contained in it. Versions of the original LFM were included in the Half-yearly Reports and the Project Implementation Reports (PIR), which are presumably what the project referred to as the LogFrame Tracking Tool, but the indicators are not consistent with a number of changes across years, and, as the sections repeated from the Inception Report seem to indicate, the indicators that were to be used in the monitoring and evaluation could be determined during the project. The TE found this confusing and notes that by the first PIR, indicators were included in the reporting on the LFM but the inclusion of the goal, objectives and outcomes differs over the four years until 2010 when there seems to be a revision back to the original LFM from the Project Document.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, this issue was not addressed during the MTR and perhaps made more confusing with the statement that:

*“An **overall project M&E plan**, including a log-frame tracking tool with 17 project impact indicators was developed in consultation with UNEP and completed in July 2010. UNEP however advised since the onset of the project (February 2008) regarding the urgent need for*

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<sup>9</sup> “There appears to be no formal revision of the logframe. Changes were made and could be found in the inception report (outputs level) and PIR (outcome indicators). Changes were not formally documented in a document approved by the ISC. The PIRs are a reporting tool, for UNEP/GEF use, and as such do not represent a proper formal documentation of the changes at the outcome indicator level agreed by the ISC”. Comment on First Draft Terminal Evaluation report by EO Nairobi

<sup>10</sup> “In the original project proposal this sub set of activities came under component 5.2. During project inception it was considered more effective to implement this as part of the revised component 4.1.”(footnote from Inception Report)

<sup>11</sup> PALM Inception Report, section 4.1.2, p. 27

<sup>12</sup> The Project Team makes the following comment “The project indicators were revised during the inception phase, which continued until early 2009 and integrated in the 2009 PIR report. Only one of the indicators was changed in 2010, i.e. in the course of project implementation, because it appeared being an unfeasible indicator due to of measurement difficulties.”

*the Project M&E Plan and provided examples and templates. The SLM impact assessment indicators constitute a part of the overall project M&E system”<sup>13</sup>.*

- 9 In the event the number of outputs were changed during the Inception Phase and an additional management outcome was also added which was essentially operational and not an outcome.
- 10 The TE finds the situation of the project’s LFM confusing. The ToR for the TE states that: “*The planned outputs under each component, as per the Logical Framework Matrix modified at the June 2008 International Steering Committee (ISC) meeting, are presented in Annex 1 of the TORs*”<sup>14</sup>. However these are not the outputs reported in the PIR up to 2011. As no revised LFM with outputs appears to have been produced, which would be the reasonable course of action for a GEF project; the TE used the outputs from the PIR and not those in the TE ToR . Thus the LFM does not provide an efficient tool for tracking the progress or impact of the project *per se*.
- 11 Lastly the project’s Terminal Report (TR) was delayed and received later than anticipated / promised as a draft on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2012, after completion of the evaluation mission.<sup>15</sup>

## 2 Context

- 1 *The Sustainable Land Management in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains an Integrated Trans-boundary Initiative in Central Asia*<sup>16</sup> was developed amidst concerns about land degradation in the post-Soviet Central Asian states, particularly in relation to Mountain systems. The project aimed to address the interlinked problems of land degradation and poverty within one of Central Asia’s critical mountain ‘water towers’ and biodiversity hotspots. This would be achieved through a trans-boundary approach that sought to improve the technological, institutional, policy and legislative environment required for enabling mountain communities to take primary responsibility for the productive and sustainable management of their local ecosystem resources<sup>17</sup>.

### 2.1 Environmental context

- 12 The project area focused on the High Pamir and Pamir Alai Mountains of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. This mountain region is highly diverse, containing within its borders a great variety of climatic, topographic and ecological conditions, leading to different forms of land use and natural resource based livelihood systems. The area can be divided into three broad sub-regions differentiated on the basis of topographic and climatic differences, as well as socio-cultural and land use differences: The Western Pamir Mountains – covering an area of approximately 25,700 km<sup>2</sup> is characterized by deeply incised valleys separated by high glaciated mountain ranges with peaks rising to an altitude of over 7,000m. The Eastern Pamirs – covering an area of 38,000 km<sup>2</sup> is characterized by a series of arid high gently sloping plateaus, at an average altitude of 3,500-4,500m, The Alai Mountain Ranges – covering an area of approximately 35,000 km<sup>2</sup> in the south of Kyrgyzstan and northern parts of central Tajikistan. The sub-region comprises three principal geological formations: (i) the Alai mountain range with a maximum elevation of 5,500m; (ii) the Trans-Alai mountain range with glaciated peaks rising to over 7,000m; and (iii) the Alai Valley, a plateau at an altitude of around 2,800m, lying between the Alai and Trans-Alai mountain ranges.
- 13 The High Pamir and Pamir Alai Mountains of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan represent a significant proportion of the mountains of Central Asia. This mountain region is highly diverse, containing within its borders a great variety of climatic, topographic and ecological conditions, leading to

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<sup>13</sup> MTR p. 36, para. 96

<sup>14</sup> TE ToR, para. 13, p. 3

<sup>15</sup> The Project Team note that the “Terminal Report was delivered some 3 months after official completion of the project” ....., “fully in line with the contractual requirement as stated in the contract with UNEP”.

<sup>16</sup> Hereinafter referred to as *the PALM project or the project*.

<sup>17</sup> Source: PALM Project Document

different forms of land use. They serve a crucial ecological function as the ‘water towers’ of Central Asia.

## 2.2 Socio-political context

- 14 While there are an increasing number of national and regional policy initiatives (see section 4.2.2) intended to address environmental degradation and in particular, mountain ecosystems, it is reasonable to state that the socio-political context can be characterized as one of poor governance and essentially an early transitional stage from a highly centralized and authoritarian approach towards land management to one which, in theory, decentralizes authority and responsibility to a local level. However, in practice this transition is very much in its infancy. One of the legacies of the former Soviet Union (FSU) is deference to authority despite most of the target communities having a nomadic pastoralist history.
- 15 Issues such as land ownership are complex and to a great extent the complexity of the political-administrative system still largely dictates how land is used and might arguably be responsible for the sustainable land management challenges the project sought to address.
- 16 Local communities have traditionally practiced livestock keeping through a vertical transhumance system although this has been severely disrupted in the past through state interventions such as the collectivization of agriculture under the FSU.

## 2.3 Economic context

- 17 Presently, *“various types of human activity can be identified as the direct causes of land degradation within the High Pamir and Pamir Alai Mountains. The regional root causes of land degradation, or the underlying reasons for the above direct causes, can be found within the wider social, cultural, economic, policy and legislative environment in which the farmers, herders and forest users operate.*
- 18 *Severe pressure has come with the rise in poverty and economic vulnerability of its population, following the enforced transformation to a market economy. Limited livelihood opportunities available to the inhabitants of the region since 1991, due to the deteriorating economic situation, have led, out of economic necessity, to a greater reliance on exploiting the local wildlife resources for food and income”<sup>18</sup>.* While there is considerable truth in these statements it is important to stress that the situation pre-1991 is unlikely to have been sustainable and it is important to consider that *“local wildlife resources”*, if taken to be the sum of biological diversity (e.g. pastures, timber and non-timber forest products, etc.), have always been the livelihood opportunities for these mountain communities as there is little else. What has changed is the means by which they are managed.
- 19 The environmental damage caused by poverty and the collapse of the agricultural sector, which had hitherto been heavily supported without reference to social, economic or environmental sustainability, might be considered as a continuum of the process rather than a direct outcome of the collapse of the Soviet Union. This is mentioned here not as a *critique* of the project’s design, but rather as an illustration of the challenge faced in designing a large scale project intervention within the context of a continuous process. In any event the Project Document makes a convincing argument for an intervention.

## 3 The Project

### 3.1 Description of the project

- 20 The Pamir project was designed to be an Integrated and trans-boundary Initiative in Central Asia. It grew out of a concern to address what were perceived to be the interlinked problems of land

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<sup>18</sup> Source: ToR PALM TE

degradation and poverty within one of Central Asia's critical mountain 'water towers' and biodiversity hotspots.

- 21 The project was aligned to the GEF Operational Programme (OP15) on Sustainable Land Management and would address the GEF Sustainable Land Management Strategic Priority on *Targeted Capacity Building* (SLM-1) by contributing to the improvement of the enabling technological, institutional, policy and legislative environment for sustainable land management within the High Pamir and Pamir Alai mountain region, at the trans-boundary, national and local levels. The project would also support the development and implementation of innovative sustainable land management practices, building where possible on indigenous systems, in line with SLM-2.
- 22 Originally designed as a two-phase, eight year project, it was submitted to the GEF Secretariat (GEFSEC) in November 2005, GEF CEO approval was granted in September 2007 for the implementation of a four-year project. Subsequently, the GEF Secretariat advised that, under GEF IV rules, a second phase would not be approved. Such a decision would be likely to have a profound effect on any project, and placed the project partners in an unenviable position where they might risk the cancellation of a project and the loss of investments in the project design.

### **3.1.1 Project rationale**

- 23 The underlying philosophy was to address the technological, institutional, policy and legislative environment required for enabling mountain communities to take primary responsibility for the productive and sustainable management of their local ecosystem resources. In the course of the project a regional strategy and action plan for sustainable development of the High Pamir and Pamir Alai mountains was to be developed through participatory multi-level and multi-sectoral stakeholder consultations.
- 24 To stimulate and ensure the effective and efficient implementation of the regional strategy, participatory community-based resource assessment, land use planning and micro-project implementation would be undertaken at selected hot spots in the context of the trans-boundary framework. The demonstration effect of the community-based SLM activities was expected to help mobilize the additional resources for up-scaling the initiative in the Pamir Alai region and in other trans-boundary mountain environments in Central Asia. In addition to direct global environmental benefits that would be accrued in the Pamir-Alai Mountains, the development of replicable generic guidelines that could be used to address the problems of land degradation in similar mountain environments were to be added benefits of the project.

### **3.1.2 Project implementation and execution arrangements**

- 25 The project's execution and implementation arrangements were complex. The Implementing Agency was the UNEP Division of GEF Coordination (UNEP DGEF) based in the UNEP/Division of Regional Cooperation (DRC)/ Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) in Bangkok, Thailand, while the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS) in Bonn, Germany, was the international Executing Agency for the project. As such it was responsible for oversight and coordination of project activities among the different project partners.
- 26 National Executing Agencies (NEAs) assigned by the Governments of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were responsible for overall project execution in their respective countries.
- 27 In Kyrgyzstan, the project was executed by the National Center for Mountain Regions Development (NCMRD), which hosts the national project implementation office in Bishkek. A field office, coordinating the execution of field level activities was established on the premises of the University of Osh and is sub-contracted by the Kyrgyz NEA. The national and field officers were responsible for the recruitment of project personnel and consultants and for coordination of the work of all project partners working in Kyrgyzstan. National research agencies in both

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan undertaking the component 2 *adaptive research* activities, however, were directly sub-contracted by UNU.

- 28 In Tajikistan, the project was executed by the Center for Support and Development of Protected Areas in Tajikistan, which hosted the national project office in Dushanbe and two field offices – one in Khorog and one in Jirgital. Unlike in Kyrgyzstan, community-based land use planning activities in Tajikistan were implemented by a separate agency, the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme<sup>19</sup> (MSDSP), which was directly sub-contracted by UNU.
- 29 Direct facilitation of project activities at the ten project pilot sites (six in Tajikistan and four in Kyrgyzstan) was undertaken by field facilitators based at the pilot sites or in larger nearby settlements.
- 30 Overall project implementation was overseen by UNEP and an International Steering Committee (ISC) comprising of senior representatives from the GEF Implementing and Executing Agencies for the project, from key government agencies in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, as well as from the major co-financing partners. Two National Steering Committees would oversee project work flow and implementation in each of the project countries<sup>20</sup>.

### 3.1.3 Overall goal and objectives

- 31 *The Project Document describes the goal of the PALM project as being:*  
*“to restore, sustain, and enhance, the productive and protective functions of the trans-boundary ecosystems of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains, of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, so as to improve the social and economic well-being of the rural communities and households utilizing the region’s ecosystem resources to meet their livelihood needs, while preserving its unique landscape and globally important biodiversity”.*
- 32 *The immediate development objective (purpose) was:*  
*“to address the link between poverty, vulnerability and land degradation at the community level, through the promotion of sustainable land management practices that contribute to improving the livelihoods and economic well-being of the inhabitants of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains”.*
- 33 *The immediate environmental objective (purpose) was:*  
*“to mitigate the causes and negative impacts of land degradation on the structure and functional integrity of the ecosystems of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains through mainstreaming sustainable land management tools and practices from household, community, local government, national and regional levels”.*

### 3.1.4 Project components, outputs and project outcomes

- 34 The project (as described in the Project Document) consisted of five components<sup>21</sup> and four outcomes (Annex 9). The fifth component was essentially an operational component addressing project management and governance issues. However, during the Inception Phase this was turned into an outcome. Changing the outcomes of a project should require significant justification and the consent of the GEF Secretariat which recognizes that they can be a key driver of change in the causal pathways of the project and arguably contribute to the project’s environmental objective (section 2.1.3, para. 20). The TE also recognizes that in Kyrgyzstan where the PMU was nested in the NCMRD and a working relationship with the Osh University there is indeed a case for this. In Tajikistan the TE is not convinced of evidence of an exit strategy for the PMU and this (project management structures as an outcome) is harder to justify. Indeed

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<sup>19</sup> The MSDSP is part of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) dedicated to improving the quality of life of the people in the mountainous oblasts of Tajikistan

<sup>20</sup> Source: TE ToR

<sup>21</sup> The TE notes that these were further defined by subcomponents in the Project Document narrative but this was not reflected in the project’s log frame matrix

if this had been the case then the TE would have expected to see appropriate indicators (see Annex 9).

35 By any measure this was a very ambitious and complex project spread across a vast geographic area, varying ecological systems, encompassing different socio-political and administrative systems, different ethnic groups and cultures. At first glance the project took a fairly conventional approach, contained within the first three components, addressing the enabling environment, capacity building and poverty alleviation, principally developing community-based land use planning and through micro-projects with a broadly SLM basis and an assimilation of that experience which could be broadcast to a larger audience and inform land use in the future.

36 The project partners had considerable experience in the project area stemming from the PDF-B phase which would undoubtedly stand them in a good position to carry this out. Notwithstanding this prior experience, if these issues are unpacked and remembering the scale at which the project intended to engage with these issues, then it is not unreasonable to reflect that this was indeed an ambitious undertaking. For instance the project document specifies one component 3 output as:

*“A minimum of 48 [Sub-District Units] SDUs with their own land use plan for the improved management of their local ecosystem resources, and functioning community-based civil society organizations engaging in the planning and implementation of field level sustainable land management activities”*

37 Given the four barriers to effective environmental management identified in the Regional Environmental Action Plan (REAP); (i) *Barrier 1: Lack of sufficient and adequate regional institutional, political, regulatory and financial mechanism for sustainable environmental management;* (ii) *Barrier 2: Lack of harmonized and unified data, as well as an efficient mechanism for data management and exchange;* (iii) *Barrier 3: Insufficient public participation at all political levels in environmental management, and;* (iv) *Barrier 4: Insufficient capacity for project development, implementation and resource mobilization,* was pushing the boundaries of what is, and is not, possible within a project. This is an observation of the TE and need not necessarily imply criticism of the project’s plan, *per se*.

38 In the Inception Report the number of SDUs was reduced to ten in response to the reduction of time available from eight to four years imposed by the GEFSEC.

*“By the autumn of 2009 each of the pilot SDUs should have completed their land use/ecosystem resource management plan. These plans would be expected to have identified a number of SLM activities that individual communities and/or households could implement themselves, using their own resources of land, labour and cash, with any external support being limited to the provision of information and technical guidance by the project management and/or other advisory support service providers”<sup>22</sup>.*

39 While it is admirable to expect high achievement, it is reasonable to consider that, from an adaptive management approach at least, there is a tacit assumption that the plan would go accordingly and would not require the long and protracted iterative process that often characterizes community-based planning, and, there would be no “*shocks and surprises*”; those external events that are unpredictable and have a high impact on the process. However, the TE considers that the extended PDF phase may have provided sufficient confidence in the plan.

### **3.1.4.1 The enabling environment and trans-boundary cooperation**

40 Component 1 was aimed at addressing the enabling environment for SLM and developing the trans-boundary management aspects between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Largely driven by component 1 the project was designed to improve the enabling environment (legal, policy,

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<sup>22</sup> GEF/UNEP/UNU Sustainable Land Management (SLM) in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains (PALM) An Integrated and Transboundary Initiative in Central Asia Phase I: Strengthening of the enabling environment for SLM in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai region & pilot demonstration of the benefits of community-based land use planning and implementation September 2007 – August 2011 INCEPTION REPORT, June 2008

institutional and strategic planning) in favour of SLM. This included enhanced regional cooperation between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan creating the enabling regional strategic planning, and national legislative, policy, institutional, technical, and economic incentive, environment, for the sustainable management of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai mountain ecosystem which was to be addressed through the Pamir-Alia Trans-boundary Strategy and Action Plan (PATSAAP).

- 41 The “improved enabling legal and regulatory framework for the sustainable and equitable management, and utilization, of the ecosystem resources of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountain region”, in the event was to be achieved by “capacities for undertaking the recommended reforms strengthened through targeted trainings contributing to the development and adoption of a law “On the Protection of Soil Fertility on Agricultural Lands” in Kyrgyzstan, and the development of two draft laws “On pastures” and “On mountain territories” in Tajikistan in line with the recommended reforms<sup>23</sup>” and lastly through mainstreaming “concepts and principles mainstreamed within the environmental management, and economic development, plans and policies of those institutions with administrative and technical responsibility for economic development, environmental preservation, and land use, within the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains”. These were summarized in the outputs as the trans-boundary strategy and action plan, legal and regulatory instruments in place and SLM mainstreamed into plans, policies and institutions.

### **3.1.4.2 Micro-projects**

- 42 Component 3 was largely reliant upon the use of micro-projects to address “*ecosystem degradation and rural poverty through implementing innovative field level sustainable land management practices, and related micro-projects*” (Project Document) or “*to improved livelihoods through more sustainable land use*” (Inception Report and PIR). This is a relatively commonly-used approach in projects and was based upon the project’s existing experience and knowledge within the area (see section 2.1.4, para. 25). The type, locations and participants in micro-projects that were funded reflected community priorities identified in the course of the community-based land use planning process.
- 43 The component appears to have been successful with only 7 out of 165 micro-projects (2 in Tajikistan and 5 in Kyrgyzstan) having failed to generate their expected benefits and have led to tangible improvements in the livelihoods of the majority of the beneficiaries<sup>24</sup>. This was a considerable undertaking, even given the existing experience of the project partners in the area. In Tajikistan this was undertaken by the MSDSP whereas in Kyrgyzstan the micro-projects were directly implemented through the NEA and field facilitators, a remarkable task given that they did not have the sort of pre-existing systems (for implementing micro-projects) that were available to the MSDSP.
- 44 Certainly they have generated many interesting results, especially where the interventions have been directly linked to pasture management (*e.g.* winter livestock folds). It might be prudent to delay drawing conclusions on the particular impact of these interventions on SLM *per se*, especially where micro-projects were related to tree crops, fodder production or similar activities. A fact that is tacitly recognised in the Terminal Report that suggests that further research is important.
- 45 A number of micro-projects were designed to provide community-conservation of biodiversity and the TE is more cautious in drawing conclusions and would require further validation of their impact on biodiversity.

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<sup>23</sup> P. 6 PALM Terminal Report

<sup>24</sup> PALM Terminal Report (section 6.2.2.1)

### 3.1.4.3 Adaptive research

46 Adaptive research was described in the Project Document as *“research aimed at the identification, refinement, validation, and adoption of innovative sustainable land management practices and technologies with the potential to improve and sustain the preservation/restoration of mountain ecosystem stability, functions and services while addressing the economic well-being and livelihood needs of the inhabitants of the High Pamir and Pamir Alai Mountains<sup>25</sup>”*. Selection of institutions was through request for proposals and a Adaptive Research Selection Committee. However, International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) that was planned to be the lead agency in this sub-component withdrew from the project in July 2009 largely due to budget issues and internal restructuring<sup>26</sup>. The REA stepped in and continued the tendering process and by June 2010 the first of eight<sup>27</sup> adaptive research projects were contracted and started. The following topics were the subject of adaptive research:

- Assessing the impact of sustainable land use systems for enhancing food security and mitigating climate change in the Tajik Pamir
- Identification of new high-forage crops adapted to climate change for the fodder cropping
- Market Based incentives for sustainable management of indigenous goats in Pamir of Tajikistan
- Regional Water and Small Hydropower Potentials in the Pamir-Alai Mountains
- Assessment of Market Value Chain of Mountainous Products in Kyrgyzstan
- Herders’ Manual: Managing Pastures and Livestock in Kyrgyzstan and Tajik Pamir
- A preliminary investigation into the ability and cost effectiveness of inter-seasonally stored solar thermal energy to provide for indoor heating needs in existing and improved housing stock in the Pamir, comparing theoretical models to real results and verifying the technical potential of an innovative technology
- Maintenance and rational use of biodiversity of medical and useful herbs in the Pamir and Alai region as well as introduction of new species into cultivation to enhance socio-economic basis for development in Kyrgyzstan

47 The quality of the proposals submitted was, on the whole, very good and the adaptive research has produced some interesting and useful results. Under this type of arrangement there are likely to be mixed results, this is the nature of research, and adaptive research, as described in the Project Document, imposes even more risks. However, the TE takes the view that the GEF funding is about taking risks, or at least reducing the financial impacts of risks. In the event the adaptive research produced some interesting and useful studies (e.g. the study on solar energy or the assessment of the impact of sustainable land use systems for securing food security and mitigating climate changes).

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<sup>25</sup> Project Document, p. 22, para. 83

<sup>26</sup> Any budget issues were not connected to the PALM project other than through their subsequent impact on the project

<sup>27</sup> Although the Project Document stated 12 adaptive research projects would be undertaken the TE feels that under the circumstances 8 is satisfactory

### 3.1.5 Project inception phase and changes to the log frame

48 Following the Inception Phase of the project changes were made to the outputs although the objectives remained the same, however, as discussed above (para. 23) a fifth (management) outcome was added. In order to try and better understand these changes they are listed below alongside the outputs from the Project Document:

Output	Project Document Output	Inception Report Output & PIR
1.1	<i>A trans-boundary sustainable land management strategy and action plan prepared for the entire High Pamir-Alai Mountains region outlining: (i) a common set of principles, technical standards and management requirements for sustainable, profitable and equitable use of the region's mountain ecosystem resources; and (ii) an intervention schedule detailing the order of priority for addressing the degradation problems on an ecosystem and Sub-district Unit (SDU) basis</i>	Trans-boundary SLM Strategy and Action Plan
1.2	<i>An improved enabling legal and regulatory framework in place for the sustainable and equitable management, and utilisation, of the ecosystem resources of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountain region.</i>	Improved legal and regulatory framework for SLM
1.3	<i>Sustainable land management concepts and principles mainstreamed within the environmental management, and economic development, plans and policies of those institutions with administrative and technical responsibility for economic development, environmental preservation, and land use, within the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains.</i>	SLM concepts and principles mainstreamed
2.1	<i>A core group of public and private sector agencies, in both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, providing improved advisory support services on sustainable land management practices, to farmers, herders, forest, and wildlife resource users within the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains.</i>	Advisory Service providers with enhanced capacities to facilitate community-based land use planning and implementation
2.2	<i>An enhanced capacity amongst government and academic research institutes to work with mountain communities, leading to the validation and adoption of a number of innovative and sustainable agronomic, animal husbandry and mountain ecosystem resource management practices with the potential to address mountain specific ecological and economic concerns.</i>	Academic institutes and government agencies with enhanced capacities for adaptive research
3.1	<i>A minimum of 48 SDUs with their own land use plan for the improved management of their local ecosystem resources, and functioning community-based civil society organisations engaging in the planning and implementation of field level sustainable</i>	Community-based resource assessments and land use plans at selected pilot sites developed

	<i>land management activities.</i>	
3.2	<i>A minimum of 48 SDUs addressing ecosystem degradation and rural poverty through implementing innovative field level sustainable land management practices, and related micro-projects.</i>	Selected micro-projects at pilot sites implemented leading to improved livelihoods through more sustainable land use
3.3	<i>The commercial value of conserving the unique landscape and biodiversity resources of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains realised through development of the area's potential for environmentally sensitive tourism, with the costs and benefits shared equitably with the local communities.</i>	The potential of environmentally sensitive tourism in the project area assessed and eco-tourism master plans prepared by selected communities <i>No output in the PIRs and it is not clear from the Inception report whether the project intended to do this or not</i>
4.1	<i>A validated conceptual framework being used to evaluate the impact of sustainable land management on reducing the vulnerability of rural livelihoods to land degradation, improving economic wellbeing, and restoring the protective and productive functions of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains ecosystem.</i>	Tools and indicators for SLM impact assessment in the project developed
4.2	<i>A set of generic lessons learnt for the improved implementation of sustainable land management interventions in Central Asian trans-boundary high altitude mountain regions.</i>	Generic guidelines for replicating and up-scaling the project experience
4.3	<i>Experience gained from project implementation used to develop generic guidelines that can be used for the design and implementation of sustainable land management interventions, and the formulation of enabling legal and institutional frameworks, within comparable trans-boundary mountain regions within Asia and elsewhere.</i>	No output in Inception Report and PIRs
4.4	<i>Experience gained from project implementation used to develop recommendations for up-scaling and replication of the project's approach within Central Asian trans-boundary high altitude mountain regions.</i>	No output in Inception Report and PIRs
5.1	<i>An operational international, regional and national management structure for the effective implementation of the project's trans-boundary and sub-regional component activities.</i>	Regional project management
5.2	<i>An operational management decision support/monitoring and evaluating system providing those responsible for promoting sustainable land management within the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai mountains with a means of storing baseline information, and comparing it with subsequently recorded data to measure changes over time.</i>	National project management

- 49 In the Inception Report (p. 41, section IX Summary of Proposed Changes) it states that:  
*"The regular duties of financial and progress reporting and monitoring and evaluation, which were part of the original output 5.2, have been integrated in the management responsibilities of the national and regional project personnel"*
- 50 To which there is a footnote:  
*"Footnote 36: While financial reporting has already begun and the first semi-annual progress report is due at the end of July 2008, indicator-based impact and project monitoring will begun upon the identification of appropriate indicators and the development of an M&E Plan and baseline in the spring of 2009".*
- 51 This could suggest that there was some confusion over the purpose of the LFM which serves both a contractual and, a monitoring and evaluation function to inform adaptive management. However, the project reasonably argues that *"the original LFM of the 8-year project was revisited and revised during the inception phase of the project, which – given the need for significant adaptations to a shorter timeframe of project as well as the unstable and changing political/institutional situation in the countries, extended for more than 1.5 years. It lasted from the start of the project in September 2007 until April 2009, when the national execution arrangements in the two countries were finalized, the national and field offices operationalized and sub-contractual agreements with key co-financing agencies completed<sup>28</sup>"* and adds that given the circumstances a formal revision of the project LFM would have been useful with the changes that were made and could be found in the inception report (outputs level) and PIR (outcome indicators) included and that this document was subsequently endorsed by the International Steering Committee (ISC).

### 3.1.6 Project financing and co-financing

- 52 The Project Document provides a figure for co-financing for phase I (Table 1). The TE will take these figures to be the final co-financing commitments at the start of the project and they are repeated in the project's Inception Report (Inception Report, Annex 8, Project Budget). Earlier copies of the Project Document suggest that there was considerable confusion about the length of the project and the amounts of co-financing; this confusion carries through to the final draft in which the co-financing appears to reflect the shorter project duration but the narrative still refers to two phases and an eight-year project duration including the co-financing and GEF commitment (see Table 1), importantly with little apparent revision to the project's strategy or scale (when expressed as outcomes) despite these changes in project co-financing and fifty *per cent* less time than originally planned for implementation. However, the TE takes this to be a measure of the impact caused by the GEFSEC decision to foreshorten the original eight-year project.

**Table 1 Project financing (including co-financing) from Project Document (US\$)**

Activity	Baseline	Alternative	Increment
Outcome 1	5,000,000	7,328,360	2,328,360
Outcome 2	15,500,000	17,727,880	2,227,880
Outcome 3	121,000,000	127,378,080	6,378,080
Outcome 4	5,000,000	9,327,600	3,837,600

<sup>28</sup> Project comment 1 to First Draft of Evaluation Report

Administration	0	3,276,160	3,276,160
Planning/PDFB	0	650,000	650,000
Total	146,500,000	165,688,080	19,188,080
GEF contribution			6,650,000 <sup>29</sup>
Co-financing			12,538,080

Source document<sup>30</sup>

**Table 2 Summary of co-financing from Project Document (US\$)**

Source	Classification	Type	Amount (US\$) <sup>31</sup>
Tajik National Park	Government	Cash	600,000
Kyrgyz National Centre for Mountain regions Development	Government	In-kind	400,000
Osh University	National University	In-kind	75,000
Tajik Agricultural Academy	National University	In-kind	50,000
UNU	UN Agency	In kind	1,659,300
		Cash	200,000
IAEA	UN Agency	In-kind	30,000
		Cash	270,000
UNESCO	UN Agency	In-kind	20,000
		Cash	50,000
ICARDA	UN Agency	In-kind	280,000
KAF/MSDSP	International NGO	Cash	1,640,000
The Mountain Institute	International NGO	In-kind	85,000
Hokkaido University	International University	In-kind	330,000
		Cash	70,000
Nihon University	International University	In-kind	75,600
		Cash	44,400

<sup>29</sup> Including PDFB sum

<sup>30</sup> Pamir-alai SLM Executive Summary.pdf

<sup>31</sup> The amounts here are those given for the intended first phase of the project (therefore there is a discrepancy between Table 1, which contains “phase” 1 & 2, and Table 2)

CDE University of Berne	International University	In-kind	
University of New England	International University	In-kind	18,000
		Cash	232,000
CAIAG	Research Institute	In-kind	418,080
IDG Russian Academy of Sciences	Research Institute	In-kind	50,000
Total co-financing			6,697,380

- 53 The TE can find no record of the letters of commitment and sums such as that promised by the Tajik National Park should have been questioned. The REA, for the record, states that it is in possession of letters of commitment and that the letter from the TNP states that the contribution is in-kind. The figure of US\$ 600,000 in cash provides a picture of a much larger financed project than was the case.

## Section II Project Performance and Impact

### 4 Attainment of the objectives and planned results

#### 4.1 Achievement of outputs and activities

- 54 The achievement of the outputs and activities needs to be assessed in the context of the decision of the GEFSEC to cancel the second phase (see section 9, Lessons Learned). Clearly this had a traumatic effect on the project which, in the event, it did well to recover from.
- 55 The project has been extremely efficient in ensuring that activities took place and in producing the projects outputs. These outputs have been listed in other sections of the report and are well-documented in the project's own Terminal Report.
- 56 Under outcome 1, Enhanced regional cooperation between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan creating the enabling regional strategic planning, and national legislative, policy, institutional, technical, and economic incentive, environment, for the sustainable management of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai mountain ecosystems.; at the trans-boundary and policy level the project has produced the PATSAP and various SLM-related laws in both countries.
- 57 Under outcome 2, Improved capacity of Tajikistan's and Kyrgyzstan's public and private sector agency research and advisory support service providers to promote sustainable land management within the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains; at the academic and research level the project has carried out the adaptive research programme, integrated SLM into the curriculums of participating Universities and built on synergies between national and international Universities with SLM capacities.
- 58 With regard to community training, the project has reached 5,000 farmers, community leaders, school teachers, local NGOs and government officials, as well as the key advisory service providers operating in the Pamir-Alai Mountains, and provided SLM training on twenty seven different topics.
- 59 Under outcome 3, A reduction in rural poverty and economic vulnerability through restoration and enhancement of the productive and protective functions (ecological goods and services) of

the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai mountain ecosystems; the project has improved the management of 250,000 ha of agricultural land using the LADA methodology to promote community-based land use planning in sixty-five pilot communities at ten SDUs. Through the micro-projects 6,695 farmers in the ten SDUs are engaged in and benefiting from improvements in land use and management practices or from alternative livelihood opportunities which were tested through 165 micro-projects of which only seven failed.

- 60 Under outcome 4, Generic guidelines for up-scaling and replication of the lessons learnt, from the project's experience with sustainable land management, within comparable trans-boundary mountain regions within Asia and elsewhere; the project has developed approaches for participatory SLM impact assessment developed and/or adapted and tested generating useful knowledge for the design of land use monitoring systems in similar projects and regions and a set of SLM policy guidelines.
- 61 Under outcome 5, An operational project management structure and monitoring and evaluation system ensuring the effective implementation of the project; the project has developed a regional network of partners with an interest and capacities to support the up-scaling of SLM in the broader region and neighbouring trans-boundary ranges and strengthened institutional capacities for facilitating SLM in the Pamir-Alai region of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan that are available to support future government initiatives and donor projects with a focus on SLM in the region<sup>32</sup>. However, the TE is not convinced that this equates to the outcome particularly given the weaknesses in the indicators for this outcome (see Annex 9)

#### **4.1.1 Effectiveness and Efficiency**

- 62 Effectiveness is a measure of the extent to which the project has achieved its main objective and its outcomes. These would normally be based upon the achievements of objective measures or indicators set out in the project's LFM. However, considering the weakness of the indicators (see section Annex 9) there is some difficulty in correlating the achievement of the indicators and the progress towards the outcomes and the objective.
- 63 However, the TE can look at the achievements of the project and assess these anyway in order to arrive at a reasonable conclusion.
- 64 Efficiency involves an assessment of the cost-effectiveness and timeliness of project execution, which is the performance of the project. This assessment, as well as any confusion over the LFM, has to be considered in the light of curtailing of the second phase at a very late stage by the GEFSEC and the external challenges taking place that faced the project during its establishment (*e.g.* the political and institutional (Tajikistan) uncertainty and unpredictability taking place in both countries around the time the project was being established), placing the project and its various partners in an extremely difficult position. Indeed these challenges were not limited to the start-up period and the project was to face further challenges related to political instability within the region at a number of points throughout the project's lifetime.
- 65 The project, REA and NEAs appear to have handled these crises with a degree of efficiency and expedience in order to keep the project progressing.
- 66 The effectiveness of the project's interventions is harder to determine. Clearly, considerable work has been carried out, for instance, the hard work done by the NEA in Kyrgyzstan and the MSDSP in Tajikistan and the field coordinators to initiate, undertake and conclude a programme of micro-projects is, amongst other examples, worthy of note. The TE is more cautious in drawing conclusions of the effectiveness of the project but recognizes that this reflects a difference of opinion between project and TE. These differences are set out here, however, for the avoidance of doubt; the TE accepts the project's opinion while advancing an alternative view for comparison. For instance:

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<sup>32</sup> Source: PALM project Terminal Report

- 67 The project has developed the regional strategy (PATSAF). A tool for identifying key SLM needs, options, and priorities in the trans-boundary region and for mobilizing multi-level stakeholder commitment to follow-up on them. It provides a decentralized implementation mechanism, considered as most suitable and effective by the participating stakeholders, which was defined in the strategy. Targeted steps towards its operationalization were undertaken in the framework of the project resulting in a wide range of multi-level follow-up activities, initiated by individual stakeholders and/or supported by the project, provided a basis for the internalization of costs, the allocation of additional state resources and the removal of political barriers to SLM in the trans-boundary region in-line with the goals and priorities identified in the regional SLM strategy<sup>33</sup>.
- 68 The document has been accepted by the State Agency on Environmental Protection and Forestry (Kyrgyzstan) and the Committee on Environmental Protection (Tajikistan). The TE's concerns centre around the fact that it does not charge any one institution with the responsibility for its implementation, rather it relies on a Trans-boundary Coordination Council which will rotate between the two agencies, and unless there are intergovernmental orders over the implementation mechanism for execution of PATSAF and there is no budget associated with it, the TE feels these concerns are reasonable. The project on the other hand feels that this presents a better chance of sustainability and that a secretariat would present a "top-down" approach.
- 69 The use of the LADA methodology for community-based land use planning represents an important step in local-level resource use planning and appears to have made good use of the project's prior experience in the area although it is not clear how this (the LADA methodology) has been integrated into the larger and emerging Pasture Committees under the new Laws on Pastures.<sup>34</sup>
- 70 The micro-projects were a remarkable undertaking just in terms of the logistics and in a number of instances they have generated some very interesting SLM experience (e.g. the summer sheep folds in Tajikistan amongst others) and are likely to provide a catalyst for SLM. Once again the TE is cautious in drawing conclusions from these because a number of them have a general rural development focus and it is too early to judge whether they have significant SLM benefits. However, the TE recognizes that there might have to be a balance between SLM and meeting the aspirations of local communities and draws attention to the challenges faced by the project, resulting from the GEFSEC decision to curtail the second planned phase.
- 71 The Law on Soil Fertility in Kyrgyzstan has been signed into force on the 10th August 2012 and represents a large volume of work by the Kyrgyz NEA in particular. The TE recognizes that this represents a considerable achievement by the NEA and in particular by the PMU. With regards the Law itself the TE cautiously observes that land use in the project area is predominantly pasture and the Law on Soil Fertility appears to be more directed at agricultural lands and furthermore (in the draft seen by the TE) there is no differentiation between the causes of degradation, scale of degradation, severity of degradation and categories of perpetrators<sup>35</sup>. This

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<sup>33</sup> Source: Comments on the First Draft TE Report

<sup>34</sup> The project commented (November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013): *"The emerging pasture committees are responsible for the management of pastures only. The LADA assessment methodology covers all types of land resources, thus it provides a methodology for a broader assessment. It is true, however, that there is a need for harmonization of pasture assessment methodologies used locally by different projects and in different localities to ensure the consistent implementation of the new laws. There is also a need for coordination of the broader LADA-based land use planning processes with the emerging pasture use planning processes. With this in mind the project supported the establishment of the pasture coordination council in Kyrgyzstan and contributed to relevant expert meetings and round-tables in Tajikistan, where the LADA-based methodology used by the project was presented. Locally, it also involved members of the emerging pasture committees, where those were established during the project implementation, in LADA-based trainings and planning led by the project."*

<sup>35</sup> In the draft Law seen by the TE

categorisation would help in understanding what this law is really about, and for whom. It would ensure a fair system (in principle) of crime and punishment, rights and duties. Regulations and a schedule attached to this would suffice to counteract arbitrary sole expropriation for "rational use".

- 72 However, the TE also understands that the Law will still need to pass through a process of further refinement and review by Parliament at which point these issues may well be addressed.
- 73 Lastly the TE raises the question as to whether it is possible to develop generic guidelines (as stated in the Project Document) from the project's interventions when the timeframe was so significantly reduced and it might be more cautious to wait and see the likely impact before doing so. In the event the project produced policy-related guidelines and not generic ones which arguably is a much better output, particularly given the GEFSEC imposed time constraints on the project.

## 4.2 Relevance

### 4.2.1 Sub-regional environmental relevance

- 74 The Project Document built a strong case for an intervention in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai mountains stating that land degradation is adversely affecting the structure and functional integrity of the ecosystem, its ability to provide ecosystem goods and services, particularly water and threatened the downstream livelihoods and agricultural production. It also made a strong case for biological diversity conservation, stressing the project area's importance to globally important species and that the project area was part of a larger global biodiversity hotspot. The root cause of this was considered to be *"poverty and economic vulnerability amongst the inhabitants of the region, following the enforced transformation to a market economy after the collapse of the Soviet Union, lies at the root of much of the current ecosystem degradation"*. Fuel poverty in particular was singled out as a driving force behind land degradation, singling it out as the *"principal cause of the most severe land degradation to be found within the region"*<sup>36</sup>.
- 75 While there were a number of statements that could be challenged about *"ecosystem stability"* or the *"enforced transformation to a market economy"* the Project Document builds a convincing case for a project intervention in terms of biodiversity conservation *per se*, conserving the ecosystem services of the area and the social implications of unsustainable land use in terms of human suffering and security.

### 4.2.2 Sub-regional policy relevance

- 76 The PALM project is sufficiently aligned with a number of regional and national policy initiatives, *inter alia*, the Regional Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Mountain Area Development<sup>37</sup> (RSAPSMAD), the Regional Environmental Action Plan (REAP) for Central Asia<sup>38</sup>, prepared at the official request of the Ministers of Environment of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, has identified mountain eco-systems degradation as one of the five priority issues, and the Sub-regional Action Programme for the Central Asian Countries on Combating Desertification within the UNCCD Context (SRAP/CD)<sup>39</sup>.
- 77 The project's component activities appear to have been designed to support the national as well as the broader regional environmental and development strategies of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, with regard to the sustainable management of the natural resources of their mountainous

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<sup>36</sup> Project Executive Summary p. 2

<sup>37</sup> Prepared in 2001 with the support of ADB Project RETA #5878-REG "Regional Cooperation for Sustainable Mountain Development in Central Asia".

<sup>38</sup> The REAP was presented in September 2001 at the Environment Ministerial Conference in Almaty, Kazakhstan when it was approved by the Interstate Sustainable Development Commission (ISDC) of Central Asia.

<sup>39</sup> The text of which was agreed to, in Havana Cuba 3rd September 2003, by the countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

regions. As part of their obligations, as signatories to the UNCCD in 2000, both countries have prepared comprehensive national action plans (NAP) to combat desertification which given the arid and semi-arid nature of the project area and their role in water provisioning are highly relevant to the PALM project.

- 78 Both countries have developed National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) that identify the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai mountains as centres of endemism and biodiversity hotspots.

### 4.2.3 UNEP mandate and policy relevance

- 79 The objectives of the PALM project were clearly relevant to the UNEP mandate and policies of the time as outlined in the UNEP Sub-programme 3 (Policy Implementation, Section 2) which has an objective:

*“The overall objective of the sub-programme is to enhance the human, technical and institutional capacity of Governments and other stakeholders to implement environmental policy and to improve environmental management”*

- 80 The expected outcomes being:

*“Strengthened capacity of Governments and other relevant stakeholders in the implementation of environmental policies and programmes for environmental management in the context of sustainable development”*

*“Enhanced capacity at the international, regional and national levels to better prevent, prepare for, respond to and mitigate the impacts of environmental emergencies and/or disasters with impacts on the environment”*

*“Enhanced cooperation and capacity at the international and national levels for the implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, as endorsed at the first Global Programme of Action (GPA) Intergovernmental Review Meeting, held in Montreal, Canada in November 2001 (UNEP/GCSS VII.6), and the World Summit on Sustainable Development”*

*“Greater availability and use of biodiversity information and policy analysis products for developing countries and multilateral environmental agreements bodies”.*

### 4.2.4 GEF focal areas, strategic priorities and operational programmes relevance

- 81 The TE agrees, to an extent, with the statement in the Project Document (Draft Full Project Brief, Revised 25 November 2005, p. 6, para. 1) that the PALM project:

*“conforms to the objective of the Operational Program on Sustainable Land Management (OP#15) in that its component activities are designed to mitigate the causes and negative impacts of land degradation on the structure and functional integrity of the ecosystems of the High Pamir and Pamir Alai Mountains. The project will address the GEF Sustainable Land Management Strategic Priority on Targeted Capacity Building (SLM-1) by contributing to the improvement of the enabling technological, institutional, policy and legislative environment for sustainable land management within the High Pamir and Pamir Alai mountain region, at the trans-boundary, national and local levels. The project will also support the development and implementation of innovative sustainable land management practices, building where possible on indigenous ones, in line with SLM-2. Through the development of a trans-boundary strategic planning framework and action plan the project will pursue a strategic approach to identifying the region’s land degradation threats, as well as determining the constraints to, and options for, overcoming them”.*

- 82 The GEF OP#15, Sustainable Land Management, which to a large extent will be the median against which the Project’s performance will be judged, was defined (at the time) by the document Operational Program on Sustainable Land Management (OP#15) revised in 2003.

- 83 Within GEF OP#15 Land degradation is broadly defined as “... any form of deterioration of the natural potential of land that affects ecosystem integrity either in terms of reducing its sustainable ecological productivity or in terms of its native biological richness and maintenance of resilience.”<sup>40</sup>
- 84 The expected outcomes of GEF-supported activities on sustainable land management include the following:
- Institutional and human resource capacity is strengthened to improve sustainable land management planning and implementation to achieve global environment benefits within the context of sustainable development.
  - The policy, regulatory and economic incentive framework is strengthened to facilitate wider adoption of sustainable land management practices across sectors as a country addresses multiple demands on land resources for economic activities, preservation of the structure and functional integrity of ecosystems, and other activities.
  - Improvement in the economic productivity of land under sustainable management and the preservation or restoration of the structure and functional integrity of ecosystems.
- 85 The project addresses, at least in its stated objectives, aspects of GEF Sustainable Land Management Strategic Priority on Targeted Capacity Building (SLM-1) and supports the development and implementation of innovative sustainable land management practices, building where possible on indigenous systems (SLM-2).

## Project Theory of Change

- 86 Part of the UNEP-GEF project evaluation methodology requires the TE to carry out a Theory of Change (ToC) exercise in order to the causal intent of the design which can be used as a framework to understand and assess the actual project outcomes and impacts (expected and unexpected) during field visits and interviews<sup>41</sup>.
- 87 The TE ToC was developed during the Inception Reporting prior to the country visits based upon the outputs contained within the ToR which are not those that are contained in the PIR.
- 88 A second ToC (Figure 1) was developed during the analysis of the TE findings and is presented below. The TE Inception Report ToC is provided in Annex 5 for comparison.<sup>42</sup>
- 89 The Theory of Change Diagram for the PALM project is presented in Table 2 and adjusted from the ToC presented in the TE Inception Report to reflect the outputs contained in the Inception Report and PIR and not the Project Document.
- 90 The initial ToC (Annex 5), developed in the TE Inception Report, demonstrates a certain logic in achieving the projects objectives. That is, it addresses the enabling environment, recognizes the issue of scale across borders, and builds local capacity at the service provider and user level, and attempts to demonstrate SLM through the micro-projects with the intention to capture the experience through a learning process.
- 91 The challenge for the TE is to then review this logic in light of the timeframe imposed by the GEFSEC and the manner in which the project has adapted to this and with respect to what reasonable performance should be expected with the time and resources available.
- 92 In this instance the impact (as depicted in the ToC) is heavily dependent upon three assumptions that for the time being appear to be largely outside the project’s control. These are i) that there is continued financing of the project’s outputs and outcomes, ii) that the outcomes from PALM are included in the Integrated Financing Strategy(s) that are currently being developed by the Global Mechanism (GM) under the CACILM Multi-country Capacity Building Project (MCB) and furthermore that these Integrated Financing Strategies (IFSs) are further improved to fit the specific circumstances of each country so that they are accepted by the Ministry of Finance in

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<sup>40</sup> GEF1999. Report of the STAP Expert Group Workshop on Land Degradation (GEF/C.14/Inf. 15)

<sup>41</sup> For a more detailed explanation of the ToC used by the UNEP EO see Annex 1

<sup>42</sup> A detailed guidance on the ToC is attached to the TE Terms of Reference

order to provide sufficient financing of SLM activities which is still proving problematic (and is beyond the means of control of the PALM project) and, iii) that the PATSAP and the land use plans are recognized in the Law on Pastures and the land use plans are embedded in the emerging Pasture Committees.<sup>43</sup>

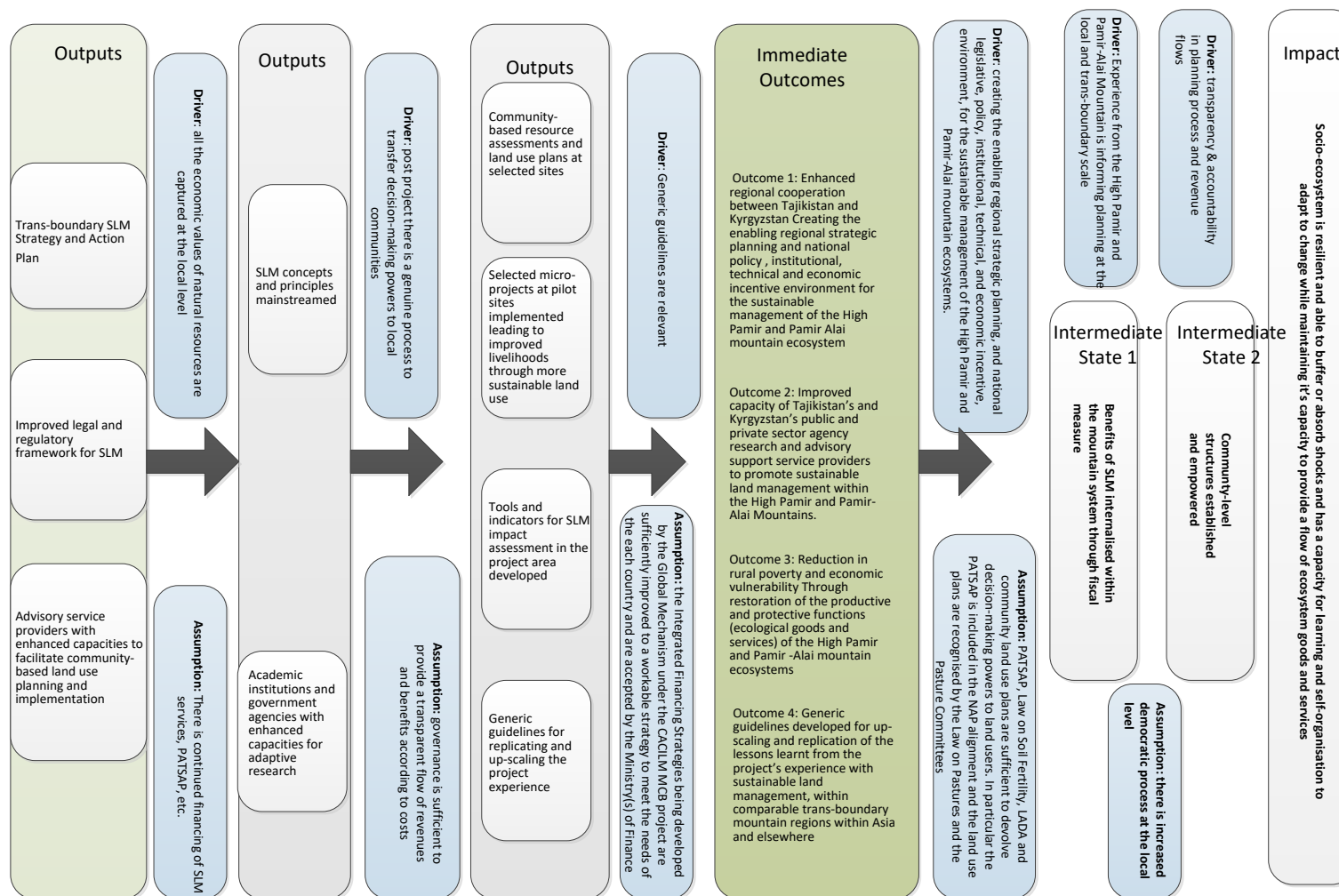
- 93 The project also argues that “a wide range of multi-level follow-up activities, initiated by individual stakeholders and/or supported by the project, have already provided a basis for the internalization of costs, the allocation of additional state resources and the removal of political barriers to SLM in the trans-boundary region in line with the goals and priorities identified in the regional SLM strategy<sup>44</sup>”.
- 94 It is important to stress that not all of these assumptions need to hold true for the project outcomes, indeed as the projects own view points out; there are numerous ways in which these can be met, as long as some of them are being met then the process continues to move forward. Therefore the ToC can reasonably indicate that the impact ratings are Likely. Given the moderate concerns of the TE outlined in section 4.1.1 it is not possible to give Highly Likely impact rating.

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<sup>43</sup> The project commented (November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013): “The PATSAP actually provides a much broader framework for guiding land use planning in the transboundary region than the national pasture laws, so it cannot be embedded in them. Rather, the principles and recommendations regarding pastures and integrated land use promoted by PATSAP can and have been taken into account by relevant stakeholders in the two countries, thus contributing to the development of a pasture law in Tajikistan and the continued improvement of the law in Kyrgyzstan. Similarly, as noted earlier, community level land use plans include the management of cropland, forests and other land resources in addition to pastures, thus the emerging pasture committees and associated pasture use plans should be coordinated with and embedded in the broader land use plans so as to comply with the principles of integrated and sustainable land management, rather than the other way round. To ensure this, the land use plans have been embedded in the existing local governance structures (local authorities and village organizations), which are best suited to ensure such coordination at the local level”.

<sup>44</sup> Project response to first draft of TE Report, comment 13

**Figure 1 Project Theory of Change post Terminal Evaluation.**



**Table 4 Outcome ratings**

<i>Results rating of project entitled:</i>	<i>Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP GEF project “Sustainable Land Management in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains an Integrated Trans-boundary Initiative in Central Asia” GEF Project ID 2377</i>						
		Rating (D – A)		Rating (D – A)		Rating (+)	Overall
Outputs	Outcomes		Intermediary		Impact (GEBs)		
1. B	1. B	B	1. B	B	1.		BB
2. B	2. B		2.B		2.		
3.B	3.B		3. B		3.		
4. A	4.B		4. B		4.		
	<b>Rating justification:</b>		<b>Rating justification:</b>		<b>Rating justification:</b>		
	Outcome 1: The development of the regional strategy (PATSAP) has identified key SLM needs, options and priorities in the transboundary region and for provides a tool for mobilizing multi-level stakeholder commitment to follow-up on them. A decentralized implementation mechanism, which was seen as most suitable and effective by the participating stakeholders, was defined in the strategy and targeted steps towards its operationalization were undertaken in the framework of the project. A wide range of multi-level follow-up activities, initiated by		Outcome 1: The PATSAP is in place but the TE remains moderately concerned that many of the activities will face national-level barriers and require national-level funding mechanisms. The Law on Soil Fertility (Kyrgyzstan) and the Law on Mountain Territories (Tajikistan) has been enacted by Parliament and there are Laws on Pastures in both countries.  Outcome 2: Osh University and the Tajik Agrarian University have adopted SLM measures in many of their teachings, organisations such as the MSDSP have		Outcomes 1 – 4: The TE notes that this was a complex project and was heavily impacted by the GEFSEC decision to cancel the second phase. It would be unreasonable to expect visible GEBs given the challenges faced by the project		

	<p>individual stakeholders and/or supported by the project, have already provided a basis for the internalization of costs, the allocation of additional state resources and the removal of political barriers to SLM in the transboundary region in line with the goals and priorities identified in the regional SLM strategy.</p> <p>Outcome 2: The project has improved service providers capacity and there is genuine commitment to continue with this but the TE is concerned that there are genuine financing constraints that would need to be addressed at the national level. However, it is highly likely that some levels of service provision will continue where financing is available.</p> <p>Outcome 3: The project will have had an impact on a number of households livelihoods and in a number of instances there are clear linkages between benefit and SLM. The TE has moderate concerns that it is premature to judge the outcomes of some interventions<sup>45</sup></p> <p>Outcome 4: The project has produced policy guidelines rather than generic guidelines but given the truncated project timeframe this was probably a reasonable decision</p>		<p>experienced adaptive research and SLM methodologies have been integrated into local agricultural service providers</p> <p>3: The micro-projects have had some positive impacts and combined with the barrier removal from other outcomes is promising but it is premature to make clear linkages between livelihood security and SLM</p> <p>Outcome 4: The policy guidelines provide the basis for future decision-making</p>				
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<sup>45</sup> As a result of the GEFSEC decision on project timeframe

## 5 Sustainability and catalytic role

### 5.1 Sustainability

#### 5.1.1 Socio-political sustainability

95 At the regional and national level the PATSAP has been accepted by the State Agency on Environmental Protection and Forestry (Kyrgyzstan) and the Committee on Environmental Protection (Tajikistan) and establishes the Trans-boundary Coordination Council with membership of the two key national agencies, the Kyrgyz NCMRD and the three constituent administrative regions of the Pamir-Alai mountains (Gorno-Badakschan Autonomous Oblast [GBAO] and Jirgital Region in Tajikistan and Osh Oblast in Kyrgyzstan) who have signed a trans-boundary memorandum of cooperation on the implementation of the PATSAP and there is clearly commitment to reform of the legal framework with the enactment of the Law on Soil Fertility and the Mountain territories Law as well as the ongoing process of establishing the progressive Law on Pastures in each country. However, this needs to be measured against the GEFSEC decision to cancel the second phase of the project. This brings into play the contradictions between the ambitious aims of the project's design and the somewhat arbitrary timeframe allowed by the GEFSEC (as a result of the decision to cancel the second phase at short notice) therefore the TE judges this aspect of sustainability as moderately likely.

#### 5.1.2 Financial resources

96 The PALM project terminal Report states<sup>46</sup> that:

- *At the local level, most of the micro projects supported by the project are expected to be financially self-sustainable and final impact assessments found a readiness to re-invest in maintaining them*
- *The development of three new draft legislations on SLM and the integration of regional SLM priorities in national financing strategies and development plans suggest that additional funds may be allocated to SLM in the medium term.*
- *In the meantime, existing institutional commitments and on-going efforts to raise additional funds are expected to help meet urgent priority financing needs*

97 The TE is less confident that most of the micro-projects will be financially self-sustainable despite the final impact assessments finding a readiness to re-invest in maintaining them<sup>47</sup>. Certainly there are some<sup>48</sup> which are going to be both economically and ecologically/environmentally sustainable and these are of real interest. Without taking away from the impact of those micro-projects, the TE is more cautious in reaching a conclusion on financial sustainability from this aspect.

98 The TE notes that, presumably, two of these legislations are now Law (the "Law on Soil Fertility"<sup>49</sup>, Kyrgyzstan and the "Law on Mountain Territories", Tajikistan) as a result of the project. Both Laws have financial implications; the Law on Mountain Territories has financial implications, particularly as they relate to pasture management in reducing pasture rents and benefits to people living in mountain areas. The Law on Soil Fertility also has financial implications to land owners and land holders. It would appear that under the Law the measures land owners must take are very costly. Therefore who will ensure that they can financially

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<sup>46</sup> PALM project Terminal Report, DRAFT, section 6.5.4 Financial Sustainability, p. 63

<sup>47</sup> It should be noted that the TE only saw a small number of micro-projects

<sup>48</sup> As the figure given is "most" the TE feels that "some" is a reasonably quantifiable figure

<sup>49</sup> The TE uses the short names of the Laws

sustain the implementation of this legislation? If they cannot, then will their land be taken away from them? Therefore the TE is cautious in associating this with a sustainable flow of financing.

- 99 Again the TE is cautious in reaching a conclusion about sustainability based upon “*national financing strategies and development plans*”. For instance, both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were developing Integrated Financing Strategies (IFS(s)). These will be the key financing documents under the UNCCD, the natural Focal Point for the PALM project and for SLM *per se*. However, the IFS have proved difficult, amongst other reasons, to include in the National Action Plans (NAP) alignment process currently taking place for a number of reasons<sup>50</sup>, <sup>51</sup>.
- 100 Ordinarily, the TE would need to see some quantification of the financing needs to keep the project outputs or to meet the *urgent priority financing needs* before it could agree with this with any confidence leading to a moderately likely conclusion for financial sustainability. However, the TE broadly agrees with the project that judging financial sustainability and the projects efforts to meet this should be viewed in the context of the four-year project timescale and not the broader aspirations of the eight years as envisaged in the Project Document.

### 5.1.3 Institutional framework

- 101 The Terminal Report states that “a limited number of new institutional structures, as needed were established, to fill in existing institutional gaps. In most cases, however, they were embedded in established partner agencies that are likely to continue to support them in the project’s aftermath<sup>52</sup>” because the project worked primarily with established national and local agencies. However, a limited number of new institutional structures were established. At the policy level there was the pasture coordination council<sup>53</sup> established under the premises of the Pasture department of the Ministry of Agriculture, Kyrgyzstan. At an educational level, in addition to working with the Osh State University (Kyrgyzstan) and the Tajik Agrarian University with which the project has established courses on SLM based upon the project-generated experience and materials, SLM Resource Centres were also established at both Universities. The TE team did not visit the Osh State University centre but is reliably informed that it has considerable resources. However, the TE was less confident about the Tajik Agrarian University SLM Centre being sustainable in the aftermath of the project because it appeared to lack the necessary resources. Therefore the TE feels that, overall, the institutional sustainability is likely.

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<sup>50</sup> Final Evaluation UNDP-GEF project “CACILM: Multi-country Capacity Building Project” - PIMS 3231 SLM FSP, Final Draft February 2013

<sup>51</sup> The project commented (November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013): “It is true that national financing of SLM under the IFS is a challenging task but unlike IFS, national strategies targeting the improved management of individual land resources, such as pastures, cropland, forests and biodiversity have proved more readily acceptable tools for directing state and donor co-financing towards agreed sustainability targets. Some of the key issues and recommended actions with respect to those individual land use systems suggested by the regional SLM strategy that was developed by the project have been integrated in the national pasture development strategy in Kyrgyzstan, whose implementation is already underway, and in the national agricultural development strategy, whose development was underway at the time of the project completion. On 30th of October 2013, with financial support of GIZ a follow-up Pasture Coordination Council Meeting took place. This platform which was established / launched by PALM is alive and giving results as before. In that meeting, a National Association of Pasture Users was created. Another project might be started with support of World Bank next year. Finally, the State program on sustainable pasture use is adopted by the government. Furthermore, in recognition of the fact that in both countries SLM financing is likely to remain donor-led for some time, the PALM project’s experience and recommendations have been shared with other development agencies leading follow-up investments in SLM, most notably ones managing future GEF funds for SLM, such as the World Bank, ADB, FAO and others (see above). Unfortunately, whether those are taken up remains outside the control of the project, but there is now evidence that this could well be the case. “

<sup>52</sup> PALM project Terminal Report, p. 62

<sup>53</sup> PALM project Terminal Report, p. 63

### **5.1.4 Environmental sustainability**

102 The project's environmental objective was to mitigate the causes and negative impacts of land degradation on the structure and functional integrity of the ecosystems of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains through mainstreaming sustainable land management tools and practices from household, community, local government, national and regional levels. In the project's LFM there are a mix of indicators some of which relate to the eight-year project timeframe and some which might be measurable on a lesser (four-year) timeframe. The project has met what might reasonably be expected of it in terms of the trans-boundary , national, local and community capacities, trainings, etc., and SLM integration into planning to provide for a Likely rating on this aspect.

## **5.2 Catalytic role**

### **5.2.1 Catalyzed behaviour changes**

103 The project has catalyzed behavior changes at various levels throughout the system. At the regional level there is a means and willingness to collaborate around the PATSAP, at the national and at the provincial-level (GBAO and Jirgital Region in Tajikistan and Osh Oblast in Kyrgyzstan) there is greater collaboration between agencies and local government administration (SDUs) with regards SLM which could translate into SLM activities and incorporating SLM into the planning process.

104 At the community level the implementation of the micro-projects the local communities provides a mix of SLM and those inclined to attempt to address development challenges (for instance, the water supply to 120 hectare of the pasture lands in Kashka Suu village, the craft centre at Kashka-Suu Iygilik Sub District Unit, the sheep fold at Kashka Suu Village, some of the agro-forestry initiatives, etc.).

105 The situation is less clear with regards biodiversity conservation and the TE is not as confident in identifying behaviour changes from this aspect. However, while this was given considerable prominence in the Project Document this needs to be viewed in light of the challenges imposed upon the project by the GEFSEC decision to foreshorten the overall project lifetime. However, it should be recognized that the project has introduced community-based land use planning which requires a significant shift in behavior and roles of different actors and at different levels of authority within the overall land use system.

### **5.2.2 Incentives**

106 The project carried out expert and community-based evaluations of changes in the state of land resources, which were conducted separately through annual impact reporting, the end-of-project household survey and the focus group discussions which reported a very positive response indicating that the project has established incentives for SLM.

107 With regards those micro-projects specifically concerning biodiversity; in most cases, a clear economic and/or social incentive, in addition to the ecological one, was identified by the participating communities. Some examples include the collection and sales of wild berries, the use of indigenous grasses (e.g. chi) for the production of traditional handicrafts, the use of local medicinal herbs by traditional healers, the production of better quality honey, the use of the site for educational purposes, or simply the production of better quality hay on a small area of the designated community conservation area.

108 The TE recognises that these do indeed provide strong incentives for SLM and when it comes to biodiversity it is important to recognise that the cancellation of the second phase meant that only modest gains were likely to be possible by the project. Without criticising the achievements of the project the TE raises the issue of the LADA methodology, the community land use

planning, and the resource utilization incentives and suggests that this needs close scrutiny in the future to ensure that the incentives are linked to wise management of the resources *in situ*.

### 5.2.3 Institutional changes

109 Institutional changes have taken place with the establishment of the Trans-boundary Council and within the two key academic institutions (Osh State University and the Tajik Agrarian University) as well as the way that these institutions view research in the future.

110 In Kyrgyzstan the project established the Pasture Coordination Council and in Tajikistan the MSDSP now includes biodiversity and SLM as an integral component of their village assessments, strategic work approach and development support.

### 5.2.4 Policy changes

111 The project has brought about policy changes, most notably at the trans-boundary level with the PATSAP and supporting national agencies (State Committee for Environmental Protection and the NCMRD) and the PATSAP Council.

112 Within this policy framework there are a number of legislations which the project has been involved in developing (e.g. the Tajik Law on Mountain Territories and the Kyrgyz Law on Soil Fertility) and the Law on Pastures in both countries (for example, see Annex 10).

### 5.2.5 Catalytic financing

113 The TE has mixed views about the project's impact on catalytic financing. Understandably the cancellation of the second phase of the PALM project, which had a greater emphasis on financial sustainability and given that the outcomes of the first phase would be supported by the second, has had an impact upon this. The project argues that sustainable financing was not an explicit deliverable or output of the project<sup>54</sup> and the TE agrees with this but argues that financial sustainability of project outcomes *per se* is critical to sustainability and therefore it would be appropriate to have a project exit strategy which, *inter alia*, includes aspects of sustained financing of those outcomes that require it.

114 Interestingly the project takes the view that the "*large level of integration in local and national SLM mechanisms, laws and partnerships, that is proving to become a successful approach for change and sustainability*". While the argument has merit, the TE takes the view that there are too many risks inherent in this strategy and that given the issues set out in section 5.1.2 the project's achievements are vulnerable.

### 5.2.6 Created opportunities

115 There are a number of individuals who have contributed to the successes of the PALM project and are worthy of note. Osh State University appears to have been very active in its support to the project and it has likely contributed to the activities at the local level. In both countries the focal point representatives at the local (site) level are worthy of mention and recommendation both for their volume of work and their commitment.

## 5.3 Replication

116 An important aspect of the PALM project was to generate experience and lessons that could be summarized into: *Generic guidelines for up-scaling and replication of the lessons learnt, from the project's experience with sustainable land management, within comparable trans-boundary mountain regions within Asia and elsewhere*.

117 It was also without doubt, and notwithstanding the project partner's prior experience in the project area, a complex and ambitious undertaking. Given the timeframe for implementation that was imposed upon the project by the GEFSEC decision to cancel the second phase, there is

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<sup>54</sup> Project comment 19 on draft TE Report

an unstated assumption that the project would generate sufficient experience that had relevance outside the specificities of the project site or even the particular micro-project site.

118 The TE recognizes that the project has generated experience and, had the project intended to only internalize this and existing experience within the system then this would have been a different matter, but the Project Document has clearly stated that it would generate *generic lessons* that would be useful in other countries and in other systems. Therefore it is necessary to be more cautious about any lessons in order to avoid them coming to be considered ‘best practice’ without adequate evidence and further validation. However, this might prove to be an academic point about the project’s design and a weakness in the Inception Phase (to recognize the risks of generating generic lessons during the reduced project lifetime) because the project eventually produced a set of policy guidelines<sup>55</sup>, which are likely to prove more appropriate than the original planned generic guidelines.

119 The TE realizes that much of the experience is of interest will prove useful in the future in shaping SLM *per se*. However, the TE is not convinced that there will be any scaling-up unless there is continued donor financing, although it might be argued that the short space of time between the implementation and the end of the project means that this is not yet visible.

120 This view is contrary to that of the project which takes the view that by achieving a high *level of integration in local and national SLM mechanisms, laws and partnerships* there will be replication at different levels and areas within the system.<sup>56</sup>

## 6 Processes affecting attainment of project results

### 6.1 Preparation and readiness

121 A number of, arguably external, factors have beset the PALM project. The first and most significant has been the GEFSEC decision taken at the end of the GEF III cycle and at a very late stage in the project’s design, to cancel the second phase. The TE understands this happened to a number of projects at similar development stages and some of these were even cancelled<sup>57</sup>. This has had a profound effect on the project creating a considerable burden in terms of realigning the project’s strategy with the truncated timeframe, amongst others. There was the sad and untimely death of the project’s Chief Technical Adviser shortly after the inception phase, and there was an institutional reorganization within the REA<sup>58</sup>, the withdrawal of ICARDA, and during the inception phase there was considerable institutional turmoil in both countries leading to difficulties in establishing the NEAs and, post the inception phase, there have been incidents of civil and political unrest in both countries. All have impacted upon the project in a multiplicity of ways. All of which illustrates the challenges of implementing and executing large and complex projects in this highly unpredictable environment.

122 However, the project makes clear that the partners already had considerable experience in the region and the PDF phase<sup>59</sup> had provided them with considerable insight and additional

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<sup>55</sup> In the event the project has produced Policy Guidelines, UNU-EHS Publication Series, Policy Brief No. 5, August 2012

<sup>56</sup> The project commented (November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013): “The statement above is not necessarily contradictory to the project’s view. As noted earlier, the need for continued external financing of SLM, in addition to locally-driven follow-up and changes, was recognized and the project made sure its experiences were shared with relevant development partners, so as to serve as building blocks in future initiatives involving SLM financing.”

<sup>57</sup> Comments by EO on First Draft TE Report

<sup>58</sup> The Regional Project Implementation Unit (RPIU) at the United Nations University was established at the UNU Vice-Rectorate in Europe (UNU-ViE) in September 2007. Due to an internal re-organization, in the second half of 2008, the RPIU was moved to the UNU Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS). Source PALM draft Terminal Report

<sup>59</sup> The project development phase (or fund)

experience and yet still “things went wrong”. The TE does not imply criticism of the project in this remark, but rather recognizes that this was and remains a challenging and highly unpredictable operating environment for projects, *per se*. The PALM project was complex and was ambitious (in this sense it was no different from many other GEF projects) and as such it had little flexibility because projects are time-bound and in many ways locked into the contractual aspects of the LFM, there is no “fat” on them to allow them to sit out the difficult times (e.g. during the crisis in Kyrgyzstan).

123 The project argues that it is unwise to address SLM “*by looking at limited aspects of the complex issue and preferably in a small case study area*” and if the project had done this it would be “*doing the same as the last fifty years of SLM attempts worldwide*”<sup>60</sup>. Therefore, the project argues, it (the PALM project) was “purposefully designed to address multiple facets of SLM systematically”, and the project is, to a large extent, correct.

124 However, GEF projects are somewhat arbitrarily divided into large, and medium sizes and expectations of what can be achieved by large projects are high, arguably too high. Furthermore, they are heavily dependent upon everything going to plan whereas the systems that they are seeking to influence are socio-politically, economically and ecologically, highly unpredictable. Risks are intensified when the available time for project implementation is foreshortened.

125 In the PALM instance things did go wrong (not necessarily as a fault of the project), decisions were made and in the final analysis these may have been the right or the wrong decisions, the TE has the advantage of hindsight and any judgment should be viewed in this light.

126 An example of this can be seen in the difference between the micro-projects in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. In Kyrgyzstan a much larger number and wider diversity of micro-project themes was tried, including biodiversity conservation. Whereas in Tajikistan where the micro-projects were implemented by the MSDSP, an NGO which already had considerable experience in implementing micro-projects, and importantly, it had in place the systems necessary for implementing micro-projects. In Tajikistan fewer projects were initiated and they were all relatively conventional agricultural or animal husbandry oriented projects, including the summer sheep folds (see section 4.1.1 para. 71) according to the information available to the TE.

127 It is important that the integrity and efforts of the Kyrgyz NEA and the Field Facilitators is recognized as equal to those of the MSDSP, indeed the individual courage of the NEA members and Field Facilitators to take on this task has to be acknowledged and a record is there in the project documentation of their efforts. However, the point being, that the MSDSP knew what was most likely to work, chose a very narrow focus, appears to have avoided biodiversity conservation *per se*, and in the instances of the sheep folds and other pasture developments may produce some very important lessons *vis a vis* biodiversity conservation and pasture management<sup>61</sup>.

128 The prior investment in the systems necessary to make this work had already been made. In Tajikistan this resource was already available but was not available in Kyrgyzstan (which adds to, and not subtracts from; the efforts of those involved in the micro-projects in Kyrgyzstan). The project’s view, that the micro-projects are largely sustainable and will deliver economic, biodiversity and SLM benefits, cannot be substantiated by the TE, indeed in trying to do so it exposes weaknesses in the whole monitoring and evaluation process (because the TE cannot

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<sup>60</sup> Project comments on the First Draft TE Report

<sup>61</sup> In Kyrgyzstan the micro-projects were directly implemented by the national project, whereas in Tajikistan the MSDSP was responsible for their implementation. In early 2010, the MSDSP Tajikistan received approximately 75 applications from community-based organizations (CBOs) / Jamaats from the target neighborhoods in both countries. As a result, it was determined only 24 micro-projects selected and approved by the National Coordination Committee in Tajikistan for a total amount of US\$ 52,987. In total there are 424 households beneficiary of the selected projects. In Kyrgyzstan, the national project has received about 110 micro-project proposals out of which 31 was selected for amount of US\$ 91,690 for a total in both countries for US\$ 144,677. Source: Information provided by NEAs; National Consultant Report for the TE

look at each and every micro-project) and created considerable conflict between the project and the terminal evaluation<sup>62</sup>.

129 Micro-projects are difficult, they are time consuming, and there is a financial risk. Furthermore they are particularly difficult to evaluate when dealing with issues such as SLM when there are timeframes that extend beyond those of the project.

## 6.2 Implementation approach and adaptive management

130 It is important to consider just how adaptive a project, particularly a project as large in scope and scale as the PALM project, can be in four years given the pressures that are placed upon management. While the project's inception phase did make some adjustments and these could be attributed to adaptive management the TE has some concerns.

131 The project does appear to have been focused mostly on the outputs. The project's LFM and the indicators have been confusing for the TE to follow throughout the course of the project. This may be because the indicators were moving towards the likely outcomes of the project rather than a re-assessment of the overall strategy, a literal equivalent to "*moving the goalposts*". While it is quite reasonable for a project to drastically alter its LFM in response to changes in circumstances or assumptions not holding true, in this instance the TE does not think that this was the case and the changes made were related to the expedience of producing the outputs rather than a re-think of the overall strategy.

132 The TE comments that there is an element of unfairness in approving a project intended to be two-phases over eight years into one which has a single phase and half the time to achieve its objectives. The project has pointed out that the GEFSEC decision was unexpected and it left those charged with implementing and executing the project with an onerous choice of attempting the project within a very short timeframe or simply walking away from it. A view which the TE has much sympathy with.

133 The tragic loss of the projects Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) shortly after the project started is likely to have had a significant impact upon the project. However, the TE does not support the view that the CTA was "*irreplaceable*"<sup>63</sup> and therefore the position could not be filled by a substantive replacement CTA. If the loss had taken place in the closing months this would have been understandable, however it did not. Any project in which individuals are considered "*irreplaceable*" has to be challenged.<sup>64</sup> The CTA is a significant figure in any project and if it is deemed necessary to have a CTA then when one is lost through whatever circumstances he or she should be replaced. The project argues that the various roles were filled by international experts covering various technical aspects<sup>65</sup>. However, a project is more than the individual technical aspects, achieving the outcomes are essentially about bringing all of these together in a coherent strategy. Indeed, there is a risk that individual experts without an overarching coordination might fragment a project into individual outputs. There are numerous GEF projects

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<sup>62</sup> Cf. Comments on the First Draft TE Report

<sup>63</sup> PALM Project Director, *pers. comm.* (22/05/2012)

<sup>64</sup> The project commented (November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013) "The functions of the CTA were taken over by other international experts, thus the statement that the CTA was not replaced is misleading. Indeed, there was a period of time between the demise of the original CTA and the recruitment of relevant experts who took over his functions]...[The term "*irreplaceable*" was used to indicate the invaluable contribution of the CTA to the development of the project!]....[ The original CTA had participated in the PDF B phase as well as the inception phase; his insights with respect to specific aspects of the project were huge and no single person brought on board for the remainder 2 years would have had the same breath of local, project-specific knowledge.]...[a new CTA could have had different perspectives on how to go about things which in itself could be a positive outcome but also carries lots of risks. This is why the project decided to rely on several persons and mechanisms to cover specific aspects of the project]"

<sup>65</sup> Project comments on first draft TE RE Report

with both embedded and part time CTAs. Both situations have merit and can work equally as well; however, in this instance it seems that the CTA was to be a permanent position (Project Document p 122).<sup>66</sup>

134 The withdrawal of ICARDA from the project at a very early stage necessitated the project finding a different route to implement the adaptive research projects which involved the REA directly requesting expressions of interest and proposals, evaluating these and awarding contracts and the number of research projects was reduced from twelve to eight. This was a substantial undertaking by the executing agency as a result of the change in circumstances and does illustrate an adaptive approach.

135 However, in the event the TE concludes that as a result of the GEFSEC cancellation of the second phase and the lack of a regionally based CTA coordination<sup>67</sup> the project has focused more on outputs rather than outcomes. The project has adapted in response to changes in circumstances, including the foreshortening of the project's lifetime but this has not been without consequence to the outcomes.

### 6.3 Stakeholder participation and public awareness

136 There appears to have been considerable stakeholder participation during the project planning phase which was documented in the Project Document and this has carried over into the project implementation and is likely to continue through structures such as the various councils established by the project.

137 The project has used the PATSAP planning process to facilitate high and medium level participation in the development of the strategy and action plan, this has provided a platform for future trans-boundary participation between the two countries. In both countries there has been a broad participation by legal experts, stimulated and facilitated by the project, in developing the Law on Soil Fertility (Kyrgyzstan) and the Law on Mountain Territories (Tajikistan). Furthermore, the project has established a basis for the participation of academics, technocrats and policy-makers

138 In Kyrgyzstan it has helped to establish the Pasture Coordination Council with the Ministry of Agriculture providing a national level forum for broad participation on pasture issues and at the very local level the use of the LADA methodology allows for a broad community and individual land user participation.

139 The project has been remarkable with its communications and public awareness programme making interesting use of printed materials. In Kyrgyzstan the project had a dedicated communications officer which has kept SLM issues in the public eye through a very active communications programme and the UNU Media Studio in Tokyo was sub-contracted in the

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<sup>66</sup> The project commented (November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013): "**The position of the CTA was never envisioned as a permanent one and was certainly not a full time position.** Furthermore, the CTA, whose demise the TE refers to, was responsible for oversight of primarily the community-based land use planning process, rather than the project as a whole, thus his replacement with individual experts focused on relevant technical tasks was in line with the design of the original project as approved by GEF."

<sup>67</sup> The project commented (November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013): "The decision not to have a regionally-based coordination unit was made due to the truncation of the project (from 8 to 4 years) as the establishment of a regional office was deemed unsustainable given the lack of sufficient time and resources to ensure its continued existence. The value of the establishment of such a new regional structure, even for the much larger in scope and time CACILM project, has been questioned (by GEF staff, among others) ) and the fact that it is no longer operational in its original form and location is a clear indication of the unsustainability of such regional structures, at least with respect to the specific topic and region and location in Kyrgyzstan. The TE seems to be mistaking that decision with the demise of the CTA, whose role focused on guiding field-level activities rather than the execution of the overall project (other people had this latter role) and whose functions were taken over by other international experts as/when needed in the course of the project."

framework of component 1.3 on SLM mainstreaming, to develop six short documentary videos<sup>68</sup> on critical land degradation issues and SLM options tested in the framework of the project.

## 6.4 Country ownership and driven-ness

- 140 There is a strong country ownership of the project's aims, objectives and achievements. Examples of this are evident at the trans-boundary and national level in the PATSAP Council (currently held by the NCMRD in Bishkek) but will rotate between this institution and the Committee on Environmental Protection in Dushanbe the adoption of the Laws on soil fertility and mountain territories and the general reforms taking place in pasture management with associated Laws in both countries and the Pasture Council in Kyrgyzstan. All of these are either regionally or nationally "owned" outputs of the project.
- 141 The project has been enthusiastically endorsed by at least one Parliamentarian in each country (see, for example, Annex 10) particularly with regards to its work on national legislation.
- 142 Clearly there is ownership within the academic community in both countries as evidenced, inter alia, by the inclusion of SLM in their teaching and curriculums and the International University of Kyrgyzstan is adapting a PALM training module on legal and policy reform.
- 143 The SDUs represent a very local level of ownership. There is again an enthusiastic appreciation of the LADA methodology and the micro-projects to be found at this level.
- 144 Lastly the MSDSP has integrated SLM methodologies into local agricultural service providers.

## 6.5 Financial planning and management

- 145 The Terminal Report still remains a draft and lacks sufficient financial clarity to make any judgments as required by the TE's ToR (TE ToR, p.13, para. 51, a), b), c), d) and para. 52). The draft Terminal Report is labeled "PALM \_Terminal Report\_Last Draft (finance to be updated) (2).doc", all of which does not give the TE sufficient confidence to draw robust conclusions.
- 146 The TE can only comment on the information provided by the project. The Terminal report does not provide a breakdown of expenditures by component and therefore the TE cannot comment upon the cost effectiveness of each intervention.<sup>69</sup> However, this appears to be a difference between the accepted project reporting format and the TE required reporting format<sup>70</sup> and not due to any shortcoming in the project's reporting.
- 147 The project appears to have had a number of financial challenges (*e.g.* the move from the UNU Center in Tokyo to the UNU Vice-Rectorate in Bonn in September 2007, national security issues in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, amongst others) which are largely reported in the MTR and need not be repeated here except to note that: *"In the second half of 2010 banking transactions via public (institutional) accounts in Kyrgyzstan, including financial transactions via UNDP, were further constrained. In order to avoid disruptions in project implementation, the IEA supported the NEA in Kyrgyzstan in accessing operational funds via an emergency transfer to an individual bank account"*<sup>71</sup>. The TE notes that this is unusual and risky both for the Executing Agency and the individual involved<sup>72</sup>. The TE is surprised that this was allowed to happen given that there was at least one irregularity in the project's finances in the first year of operation which appears to have been reported in the MTR as: *delays in funds disbursement in Tajikistan requiring use of*

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<sup>68</sup> The project commented (November 23rd 2013): "the videos have continued to be distributed across national and regional TV networks and covered in the print media in Russian and Eastern Europe after the end of the project. One newspaper published a story on this last year and we were informed of at least two instances of the videos being shown on TV and having reached people in the countryside of Bulgaria and Russia thus serving as examples of land transformations in regions, where they could be of use).

<sup>69</sup> The project commented (November 23rd 2013) "the breakdown was not a requirement of GEF or UNEP, thus UNU did not submit those detailed breakdowns. But these are available upon request".

<sup>70</sup> EO comment on first draft TE Report A177

<sup>71</sup> PALM draft Terminal Report, p. 26

<sup>72</sup> For the sake of clarity, it appears that the funds transferred in Kyrgyzstan were fully accounted for.

the UNDP office financial services and re-negotiation of contractual arrangements with the NEA<sup>73</sup> but the TE understands that a considerable sum of money went missing, as far as the TE can ascertain this was as much as US\$30,000<sup>74</sup> but was subsequently recovered by the project and accounted for<sup>75</sup>. However, the project argues that the arrangement (in Kyrgyzstan) was with a longstanding and trusted member of the NEA (for the record, the TE concurs with this statement). However, it remains risky both for the individual and the project.<sup>76</sup>

148 The TE does not share the confidence of the Terminal Report that UN procurement procedures were always followed (Annex 3, PALM Terminal Report). For instance, the vehicle used by the project is a two-wheel drive vehicle however, it appears that a four-wheel drive vehicle was tendered for and the vehicle itself (G4GC 9636127) does not appear to be registered in the project name.<sup>77</sup>

149 Given the challenges faced by the project, in particular those when the project had, with some justification, to use non-standard means of transferring funds to maintain continuity of the project, it is important that these are reviewed by an independent auditor. The TE has to report these matters and is not in a position to judge whether the benefits of continuing the project outweighed the risks and the hazard that clearly accompany such a course of action and it is also important for the sake of transparency that these issues are assessed through an accepted mechanism<sup>78</sup>.

## 6.5.1 Co-financing

150 Annex 4 provides a summary of the co-financing. The Project Document documented co-financing amounting to US\$ 6,697,380 disaggregated into US\$ 3,076,400 cash and US\$ 3,620,980

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<sup>73</sup> PALM MTR, p. 10, para 41

<sup>74</sup> TM and PALM Project Director, *pers. comm.* (22/05/2012)

<sup>75</sup> The project commented (November 23rd 2013): "No funds were unaccounted for in the PALM project. There was indeed an issue with fund management in Tajikistan as reported by the REA in various documents, as well as discussed with UNEP Task Manager. The REA received information that although funds were made available, staff of the NEA were not being paid despite reports that this was the case. The REA immediately contacted the NEA (Mr Kokul Kasirov), and took the following actions: 1. Informed Kokul Kasirov that funds needed to be expended immediately as planned. The REA made sure this was the case by contacting other staff of the NEA; 2. Blocked any other fund transfers to the NEA until a green light was given by the REA's administration that all was in order including full accountability on the use of the advanced funds; 3. Changed the fund transfer mechanism to the NEA, going via UNDP and giving authority to the national project officer (at the time) of the NEA, Mr Murod Ergashaev to dispense the funds; This solved the problem of fund transfer and management to/in Tajikistan for the remainder of the project."

<sup>76</sup> The project commented (November 23rd 2013): "We would like to emphasize that UNU is audited annually by independent auditor. Moreover, the audit field work was held in Bonn for biennium 2010-2011 and we cleared it successfully. This is based on the understanding that United Nations' rules and procedures conform to internationally accepted standards in compliance with the principles of transparency and care being taken to avoid any conflict of interests. As such, the payment method we used should not be considered as an "unorthodox" approach. that we took the following actions to meet the criteria specified in UN financial rule and regulations for this payment which amount to 42800 USD: 1 A letter of attorney was issued by NEA KYR (NCMRD) giving authority to receive fund via the individual bank account of the trusted member of the NEA (Mr. Maksatbek Anarbaev) and submitted to UNU; 2. Change in payee beneficiary name and bank account information was requested in writing and approved by an authorized official at UNU; 3. Payment was approved by approving officer at UNU. ; 4. UNU sent UNDP following documents to proceed with the payment; -approved payment voucher, a letter of attorney from NCMRD, Vendor form (the bank account details of Mr. Anarbaev), A scan of Mr. Anarbaev's passport; 5. Check receipt was acknowledged by NEA KYR and further reported in Q3/2010 financial report. We will not deny that a risk was taken, but it was a very controlled situation, far less riskier than compromising project activities in the region when then the losses, in addition to credibility, would have been several 100,000s USD of failed activities (as opposed to 42,800 USD which were urgently needed in the field for the short window of summer activities. Again, all money was accounted for.

<sup>77</sup> The project commented (November 23rd 2013): "This vehicle (G4GC 9636127) was for NEA TAJ. We have a letter to delegate the procurement process to the NEA TAJ and its bid submission form.

<sup>78</sup> The UNEP Evaluation Office respects the opinion of the evaluator with regard to risks associated with the funds transfer mechanisms discussed in para 147. However, in view of the fact that the project has already been fully audited, and that there does not appear to be evidence of financial wrongdoing, the Evaluation Office is of the opinion that commissioning an additional audit would be of limited value..

in-kind. The project Terminal Report accounts for US\$ 6,693,092 disaggregated into US\$ 2,618,605 cash and US\$ 4,074,487. The final reporting is quite impressive considering substantial co-financing commitments from ICARDA (US\$ 280,000), UNESCO (US\$ 70,000) and The Mountain Institute (US\$ 85,000) were cancelled at the start of project implementation.

- 151 The TE was surprised to see that the Tajik National Park had promised US\$ 600,000 in cash co-financing. Quite where this sum arose from is not clear and it has not been possible to find anyone who can explain how such a large sum from a financially challenged protected areas system was included in the Project Document. However, this was apparently known to the REA because it was stated on the letter of commitment held by the REA. Without knowing this the inclusion of this figure gives an impression of a much larger cash-financed project.<sup>79</sup>

## 6.6 UNEP supervision and backstopping

- 152 There was clearly a good relationship and reporting between the REA and UNEP/DRC/ROAP. Certainly there appears to have been considerable support to the REA in establishing the reporting system which has been diligent in as much as reports have been submitted in a timely fashion. During the start-up phase there is considerable advice to the REA on issues such as recruiting the CTA, much of it with a very practical nature (*for example*, the placing of job applications for the CTA outside of an academic sphere, interpreting the Project Document, *etc.*) However, the issue of the LFM should have been picked up at this level<sup>80</sup>. The indicators are insufficient merely restating objectives or in some case targets and as the GEF places considerable emphasis on the achievement of outcomes, the result or the *impact* of the project were not being adequately monitored throughout its implementation. To be fair this was not picked up during the MTR and the GEF presumably must have agreed the changes to the LFM therefore there must be a shared responsibility.
- 153 The TE concludes that an Implementing Agency in Bangkok, Thailand, and an Executing Agency based in Bonn, Germany, working in a region where fiduciary experience is known to be weak is likely to be challenging and there should have been a constant representation of at least the REA between the two countries, if only to ensure that the complex plan of activities to outputs to outcomes, objective and impacts remained “glued” together. Importantly, the TE states this with the benefit of hindsight and not from within the febrile environment of establishing a project that has just been reduced in timescale by 50%.
- 154 The TE is of the opinion that the CTA should have been replaced<sup>81</sup>, indeed it should have been a condition to the continued funding of the project, UN rules on procurement and financial matters should have been strictly enforced<sup>82</sup>, even if it resulted in delays<sup>83</sup>. However, the TE

<sup>79</sup> The project commented (November 23rd 2013): “At the start of the project the figure was justified with the expected establishment of an environmental education center in Murgab by the committee on environment in Tajikistan (based on international hunting revenues).”

<sup>80</sup> The project commented (November 23rd 2013): “The issue of need to improve on the M&E Plan including logframe was picked up early in the project by the UNEP TM, as well as its follow up by the REA was being assessed regularly)... {The fact that the logframe was not entirely up to standards cannot be denied yet given practical considerations, reports from the REA regarding preparation of more detailed M&E indicators and data collection mechanisms (specifically related the micro-projects), as well as the fact the project was making great headways in its implementation and results, made the TM decide to not make these indicators a decisive issue to put more pressure on the REA. The matter of having a few ‘inadequate’ indicators and/or targets was picked up by the UNEP TM early in the project and he requested the REA to improve on them, firstly during inception and later during project implementation when it appeared that one or two indicators appeared to be not be feasible. The biggest concern of the TM has, however, been that M&E data related to micro-projects and research grants did start way too late.

<sup>81</sup> <sup>81</sup> The project commented (November 23rd 2013): **UNEP [project representatives] as well as UNU fully disagree with this opinion.**

<sup>82</sup> **The project commented (November 23rd 2013): The project “remained within UN rules”**

<sup>83</sup> The project commented (November 23rd 2013): “the TE needs to contextualize the comments. A delay in December is not problematic in the region. A delay in April/May means postponement of all activities by one (1) full year given the very

recognizes that the project and UNEP feel that the needs of the project at the time justified the risk.

## 6.7 Monitoring and evaluation

155 The issues relating to the LFM have been discussed at length throughout this report and are summarized here.

### 6.7.1 Monitoring and evaluation design

156 There were significant weaknesses in the LFM. The original Project Document LFM had four outcomes and fairly reasonable indicators (for both objectives and outcomes) and importantly, “critical steps and milestones” associated with the outputs, although it is questionable whether outcome 4, *generic guidelines*, is really an outcome in itself. However, the 2008 LFM which is used as the basis for monitoring in the PIR these “critical steps and milestones” are absent. The TE is of the firm opinion that given the substantive changes that had occurred between project design and implementation there should have been a revised LFM produced through a log frame planning workshop either prior to the inception phase or during the inception phase in order to provide some form of quality control.

157 In the event the changes were decided by the International Steering Committee (ISC) and through a process of participation with project partners and stakeholders. However, the TE would be more confident if there had been some sort of *ad hoc* report detailing the decision-making (e.g. a LFM/project planning workshop report) rather than the confusing account provided in the Inception Report.

158 Therefore, there were significant changes to the LFM including the addition of a fifth outcome, *“an operational international, regional and national management structure for the effective implementation of the project’s trans-boundary and sub-regional activities”*, which is not an outcome at all. However, the EO notes that *“if management structures have been influenced at national / regional levels as part of the intervention, and these structures are beyond the direct and immediate control of the project (and likely to be sustained), this can be considered by the evaluator as a legitimate outcome of the project (even if it does not feature explicitly in the project design)”*<sup>84</sup>. While the TE would be sympathetic to this view in the case of Kyrgyzstan that there might be follow on management in both instances there is no reasonable documented exit strategy that explains how this will occur.

159 In addition to this the wording and in many cases the entirety of objective and outcome indicators were changed. The indicators selected (discounting the outcome 5 indicators) that emerged from this process contained a mix of targets, means of measurement and verification or were simply re-stating outputs, targets themselves, or simply things that the project had to do (e.g. outcome 1, *“the number of PALM facilitated high level meetings, workshops, training events and exchange visit involving policy makers, technical experts and land users from both countries over the life time of the project”*).<sup>85</sup>

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short summer period available for field work in high mountain environments of the region.” A postponement by a year would have meant many things: 1. Requiring additional funding (indeed current costs would still have been incurred during an “idle” period); 2. Trying to secure the continued commitment of the communities (but see comment above); 3 Differences in project execution timelines between the two countries, complicating discussions and agreements between the two countries. The civil conflict in KG was not a trivial affair and the project took a limited, calculated risk on one occasion, remaining within UN rules, which allowed for its normal execution despite all the constraints. The project was committed to the communities it was working with.

<sup>84</sup> Comments on first draft TE Report

<sup>85</sup> The project commented (November 23rd 2013): The PALM team agrees that some of the indicators do not adequately reflect project impacts but we argue that a set of core indicators, particularly at the objective level, provide a good indication of project impacts, both ecological and socio-economic, despite the constraints in measuring those in the timeframe of the project.

160 The effect of this on monitoring and evaluation is that the indicators might inform one that the project is doing lots of things, which apparently it has; but they will not provide an indication of any change.

161 The TE is of the opinion that the project would have reaped the benefits of a clearly specified LFM at inception phase in planning, monitoring, evaluating and adapting the project. Therefore it is reasonable to conclude that, when combined with the absence of an overarching CTA, this has in many ways contributed to the project producing a number of discrete outputs or deliverables, some of them interesting, some of them well developed, but not all of them necessarily contributing optimally to the intended overall impact of the project.

### **6.7.2 Monitoring and evaluation plan implementation**

162 The monitoring and evaluation system was operational in as much as there was timely reporting and issues raised by the Half-yearly Reports and PIR were addressed therefore it was tracking progress in the operational sense despite some weaknesses at the beginning of the project which appear to have been addressed reporting overall appears to have been on time. As has been already discussed, changes were made to the LFM during the inception Phase and Inception Report (although a revised LFM was not produced at the time). The changes were subsequently agreed at an ISC meeting in 2009. These changes were documented in the following way and were in line with project protocol in as much as:

- Changes in outputs are reflected in the Inception Report and approved during the Inception Meeting
- Changes in impact indicators are reflected in the PIR reports
- Changes in activities were reflected in the project workplan, which was updated and approved by the ISC on an annual basis

163 However, what is not clear is whether this was really challenging the project sufficiently to indicate the effectiveness of the intervention. What is meant by this is that the project did make changes but only in relation to events that effected its operation and not in terms of adapting the strategy as a result of learning from experience. There does not seem to have been the analysis of outputs and questions raised as to whether these were the best means of achieving the outcomes and objectives or indeed whether the quality of these outputs was sufficient to justify the conclusions.

164 For instance, the TE saw a very small number of the micro-projects. Of those it saw in both countries a number were highly innovative and of real interest to anyone dealing with SLM in the region, many were useful both to the project for experience and the people involved in them, some were looking good but it would be a long time before they might be considered economically or environmentally (from an SLM perspective) interesting and some consisted of a couple of strands of barbed wire covered in wool where livestock was running under it. However, each one was presented equally as a success and the TE cannot find the sort of critical analysis that might differentiate between what works, what does not work and importantly, what might have real SLM implications; and many of these do have real SLM implications (in the modest view of the TE) but without actually visiting the sites it is very hard to tell.

165 With all the pressures on the project resulting from the GEFSEC decision it is possible that some very important lessons generated by this project are, if not missed, then hard to determine. Annex 6 provides a record of the monitoring and evaluation

### **6.7.3 Complementarities with UNEP and UNDP programmes and strategies**

166 On paper, the PALM project had considerable synergies with UNDP programmes, such as the on-going CACILM project(s) that is working with SLM (e.g. Sustainable Pasture Management, etc.) through a number of national demonstration projects, as well as partnering with the regional

ADB implemented regional project; as well as a number of other initiatives taking place in, within and between the two countries such as the CARITAS<sup>86</sup> (poverty alleviation), GIZ<sup>87</sup> (hunting and forestry) and German Agro Actions (agriculture). UNDP also has a number of civil society and local governance initiatives both regionally and nationally.

167 These complementarities exist between the different agencies programmes and strategies<sup>88</sup> and certainly in the early part of the project there appeared to be attempts to integrate the two initiatives (for example: “CDE PATSAP Coordinator met with representatives from the Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management (CACILM) in Bishkek and took part in a CACILM SLMIS workshop in Almaty, Kazakhstan. CACILM has agreed to exchange data freely with GEF PALM. To access CACILM datasets, the different teams should go through UNU, in order to coordinate such requests<sup>89</sup>”).

## 7.1 Linkages to UNEP’s expected accomplishments and POW (2010-2011)

168 The Project Document (Section 4, a), p. 11) made a reasonable case for the project meeting the Action Plan on Complementarity Between the Activities Undertaken by UNEP under the GEF and its Programme of Work (1999) by addressing the Action Plan’s strategic objective of “promoting multi-country cooperation directed to achieving global environmental benefits” and the Land Use Management and Soil Conservation Policy of UNEP (UNEP/GC.22/INF/25) “that emphasizes UNEP’s role in addressing the environmental dimensions of land use management and stresses its role in supporting the implementation of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification”

169 The objectives of the PALM project were clearly relevant to the UNEP mandate and policies of the time as outlined in the UNEP Sub-programme 3 (Policy Implementation, Section 2) particularly in relation to the development of the regional agreements such as the regional (trans-boundary) strategy and action plan. The POW Sub-programme 3 synergies have already been outlined in section 4.2.3. Whilst it is recognised that UNEP GEF projects designed prior to the production of the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS) <sup>90</sup>/ Programme of Work (POW) 2010/11 would not necessarily be aligned with the Expected Accomplishments articulated in those documents, complementarities may still exist. In this instance there is clear alignment in the Project Documents stated objectives and outcomes with at least two of the crosscutting priorities of the MTS, namely the ecosystem management accomplishments and environmental governance.

170 Although not formulated when the project was being designed the project’s objectives and outcomes had considerable synergies with the UNEP Ecosystem Management (2010 – 2011).<sup>91</sup>

## 7.2 Alignment with the Bali Strategic Plan (BSP)

171 The PALM project outcomes and objectives were closely aligned with the BSP in as much as there was an emphasis on technocratic aspects in components I, II and IV and a focus of attention on learning lessons. The TE comments that there was considerable reliance, both in design and the introduction of technologies, upon science for addressing what might arguably be considered to be an adaptive and not a technical challenge requiring a collective action rather than the introduction of any new technologies.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>86</sup> <http://www.caritas.org/worldmap/asia/tajikistan.html>

<sup>87</sup> <http://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/382.html> & <http://www.giz.de/en/SID-AFBAAB89-CCBB8409/worldwide/356.html>

<sup>88</sup> UNEP-ROAP “paper trail” (copies of emails from the ROAP)

<sup>89</sup> PALM Terminal Report, p. 30

<sup>90</sup> <http://www.unep.org/PDF/FinalMTSGCSS-X-8.pdf>

<sup>91</sup> <http://www.unep.org/themes/freshwater/pdf/ecosystemmanagementprogramme.pdf>

<sup>92</sup> The project commented (November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013): At least two of the four project components (I and III) focused explicitly on participatory strategic planning aimed at addressing the type of collective action

## 7.3 Gender

172 The project does not appear to have had a specific gender policy and strategy in place. It could be assumed that by targeting the poorer households there would be a good chance that this would mean that women-headed households (given the high rate of male work-migration in both countries) were captured in this way. The land use planning should have provided a platform for women to participate in land management.

## 7.4 South-South cooperation

173 South-South cooperation is the term used to describe the exchange of resources, technology, and knowledge between developing countries.

174 During the development of the PATSAP there were opportunities for collaboration between both countries and the exchange of ideas between the two countries.

175 The REA and project ISC has had several meetings facilitated by both UNEP and UNU to enable the exchange of best practices towards pasture management in particular the sharing of experience of Kyrgyzstan in developing a Law on Pastures.

## Section III Conclusions and Recommendations

**Table 6 Project ratings**

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Rating
<b>A. Attainment of project objectives and results</b>	- The project has achieved a number of things, the development of the PATSAP, SLM legislation, LADA methodology to facilitate community-based land use planning and the notable successes from the micro-projects are tangible results leading to the overall SLM objective	S
1. Effectiveness	- The foreshortening of the project by the GEFSEC, confusion surrounding the LFM and not replacing the position of the CTA have resulted in a greater focus on outputs leading to only partial realization of the outcomes	MS
2. Relevance	- The project fitted well within the regional and sub-regional policy framework as well as a number of global Conventions (amongst others, the UNCCD). It was closely aligned with the UNEP mandate and the outcomes and objectives were in line with those of the GEF OP 15 Land Degradation	HS
3. Efficiency	- The project has been very efficient in delivering outputs but the TE has concerns that, as a result of the additional pressures placed upon the project by the cancelation of the second phase, challenges during the inception phase and these are expressed under the efficiency rating. The TE has concerns regarding the risk of unorthodox used in <i>extremis</i> but has some sympathy with the project given the circumstances	MS
<b>B. Sustainability of project outcomes</b>	- The project delivered numerous outputs and these are certainly in part contributing to the outcomes, issues such as country ownership and any future benefits from SLM that have been internalized within the system provide some level of confidence in sustained impact	S

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problems raised by the TE and participatory approaches were employed in the more research-oriented components (II and IV) to avoid the introduction of technocratic solutions.

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Summary Assessment</b>	<b>Rating</b>
1. Financial	- Any SLM initiative in either country is vulnerable in this context and the TE is less confident than the project that SLM is at a stage where it can effectively take place without external financing, although the TE agrees that this should be the ultimate goal. The TE would have had greater confidence in a "S" rating had there been clear exit plans for the project in both countries	MS
2. Socio-political	- The project outputs and outcomes have been embedded at all levels of the administration as well as in the academic community and the MSDSP	S
3. Institutional framework	- As above	S
4. Environmental	- The majority of the project's outputs are addressing environmental sustainability and even if the outcomes are partially achieved this criteria is satisfactory	S
<b>C. Catalytic role</b>	- The project has acted as a catalyst (see sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.2.3, 5.2.4) for promoting SLM	S
<b>D. Stakeholders participation</b>	- There has been broad stakeholder participation in the design and implementation of the project and this has been at various levels within the system	S
<b>E. Country ownership / driven-ness</b>	- There is clear ownership of the outputs and they are closely aligned with land use reforms taking place in both countries	S
<b>F. Achievement of outputs and activities</b>	- The project has achieved all of the outputs and has in some instance been highly productive. This also needs to be viewed in the context of the challenges the project has faced as a result of the GEFSEC decision to cancel the second phase and the external impacts that have affected project performance	S
<b>G. Preparation and readiness</b>	- Despite the considerable experience in the region of the project partners the project was beset by numerous challenges resulting from the GEFSEC decision, moving the REA within the parent organization during the project's start-up, institutional uncertainty in both countries, financial challenges, civil and political unrest and the untimely and sad death of the CTA the project was prepared and ready	S
<b>H. Implementation approach and adaptive management</b>	- As stated above the project has adapted to the many challenges ( <i>e.g.</i> responding to the cancellation of the ICARDA-managed component). However, the TE considers that the failure to replace the CTA position when coupled with the truncated project lifetime resulted in too much emphasis on outputs and only partial achievement of the outcomes	MS
<b>I. Financial planning and management</b>	- Given the issues outlined in section 6.5 the TE is cautious in rating this aspect of the project and suggests that the rating be revised according to the outcome of any audit process in the future	MS
<b>J. Monitoring and Evaluation</b>	- Reporting on the whole has been regular however the TE has concerns regarding the quality of reporting in particular the	MS

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Rating
	confusion surrounding the LFM	
1. M&E Design	- The TE has concerns about the usefulness of the indicators in the LFM and that outcome 4 (generic guidelines was in fact an output). The TE recognizes the arguments put forwards for including a management outcome (outcome 5) but is not wholly convinced that this was justified	MS
2. M&E Plan Implementation	- The M&E plan has been implemented	S
3. Budgeting and funding for M&E activities	- This is the area of poorest budget execution with a budget to actual ratio of 0.584 however, the M&E activities appear to have been carried out in a timely manner	S
<b>K. UNEP Supervision and backstopping</b>	- There has been considerable guidance from the UNEP/DRC/ROAP however, the TE feels that these positions are generally underfinanced in GEF projects to allow the sort of hands-on backstopping necessary. Furthermore, there should have been an insistence by the Implementing Agency that the CTA position was filled as quickly as was reasonable given the circumstances of its vacancy. However, this has to be seen in light of the challenges faced by the project during the start-up	S
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Criteria rated on a six-point scale as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability is rated from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU).

## 8 Conclusions

176 The TE ToR required the evaluation to focus on the following sets of key questions, based on the project's intended outcomes<sup>93</sup>:

- (a) How successful was the project in enhancing regional cooperation between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan creating the enabling regional strategic planning, and national legislative, policy, institutional, technical, and economic incentive environment, for the sustainable management of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai mountain ecosystems?
- (b) To what extent has the project improved capacity of Tajikistan's and Kyrgyzstan's public and private sector agency research and advisory support service providers to promote sustainable land management within the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains?
- (c) Has the project reduced rural poverty and economic vulnerability in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai mountain ecosystems through community-based sustainable land management in the ten pilot SDUs?
- (d) How successful was the project in setting up generic guidelines for up-scaling and replication of the lessons learnt from the project's experience with sustainable land management, within comparable trans-boundary mountain regions within Asia and elsewhere?

177 The project has achieved success in enhancing regional cooperation and strategic planning between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan through establishing the PATSAP and the processes followed

<sup>93</sup> TE ToR p. 7, para. 32

in developing the trans-boundary strategy and action plan. It has provided support to the development of several SLM oriented laws in both countries and built the capacities of a broad spectrum of institutions and agencies either directly or indirectly involved in land management in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains as well as linking SLM to livelihoods security both in the minds of the local communities and those in the administration.

178 In doing this and through the adaptive research programme, field facilitators and MSDSP programme it has built the capacity of public and private sector organizations to deliver SLM-oriented services and research.

179 The project will have reduced rural poverty and economic vulnerability in the project area and has provided a methodology and process for enhancing community-based land management.

180 The project has not produced generic guidelines and has instead produced policy guidelines. Given that the TE has concerns about the suitability of guidelines produced as a result of the truncated project experience the TE consider this to be no bad thing.

181 On this basis the TE can judge the PALM project to have been successful in at least partially achieving the outcomes and this has to be measured against the GEFSEC decision to cancel the project's second phase while its own rules inhibited the adjustment of outcomes within the LFM. Thus the project went ahead with only four years of implementation and outcomes based on eight years of project engagement.

## 9 Lessons learned

182 A number of lessons have been documented in the PALM Terminal Report and need not be repeated here. These lessons capture the SLM experience and have been used in developing the policy guidelines and other outputs from the project.

183 The evaluation prefers, without taking away from the project's many achievements, to draw a lesson from the project based upon an event that has had a profound effect on the project, at times it has put the GEF investment and the investment of the projects partners at risk, it has consumed considerable time and effort of those involved in the project, not in actually getting on with the business in hand, but rather providing a distraction to the core SLM business of the project.

184 The GEFSEC decision to cancel the second phase at short notice and after the project partners had invested so much in developing the Project Document, was in the broadest possible sense of the word, *unfair*. There were many very justifiable reasons for the GEFSEC doing this, but it was still a profound blow to the project, when it need not have been so traumatic both for the partners and for the shape of the project to come.

185 There are a number of points worth considering in respect to this. The first point is that the inception phase is the first time in the project cycle when adaptive management can be brought to bear on the overall project intervention strategy<sup>94</sup>. The second point is that the log frame matrix<sup>95</sup> is the principal planning and, monitoring and evaluation tool for GEF projects. As such it is very useful, but it is just a tool. It should be clearly recognized that the SRF serves two functions. Firstly it is a planning and monitoring tool establishing a logical hierarchy of objective, outcomes, outputs, and down to the level of activities necessary to achieve the objective. Furthermore, it develops indicators necessary to track progress and measure the effectiveness or impact of an intervention. This is its adaptive management function. However, it also functions as a contractual tool ensuring that there is conformity to the projects stated objective, outcomes and outputs preventing "mission creep"<sup>96</sup> and ensuring there is an effective *quid pro quo* between the GEF and the Implementing Agency and Executing Agency, the *project*.

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<sup>94</sup> The second is the MTR

<sup>95</sup> strategic results framework (SRF)

<sup>96</sup> The expansion of a project or mission beyond its original objectives and goals.

- 186 It is for this reason that the GEFSEC is understandably extremely cautious about changing the outcomes in a LFM once they have been agreed in order to avoid projects receiving GEF funds for one thing and using them for another, or, having failed to achieve what they set out to do, simply moving the LFM to fit what has happened. This is not for a moment to suggest that this is what has happened in the PALM project, merely to state the GEFs position.
- 187 However, given that SLM project planning is taking place in multiple fields such as ecology, economics, natural resource management, politics, business and the social sciences. In these fields there are a large and unquantifiable number of known and potential variables, all subject to continual change, all interacting with each other in ways that may or may not be predictable. Applying science or logic to the problems will make no difference to our inability to predict precisely or accurately given the complexity of multivariate, non-linear, cause and effect relationships; which is another way of saying that the world is full of nasty shocks and surprises.
- 188 Quite clearly the cancellation of the second phase of the PALM project came as a both a shock and a surprise to both UNEP and the UNU and there was no intimation that this was going to happen beforehand. However, when it did happen it was not possible to drastically review the project in light of these changed circumstances. Clearly, there was still a need for a GEF intervention (remembering that this project has scored Highly Satisfactory for its relevance) and yet the circumstances *vis a vis* the timeframe and the overall financing had been drastically altered. The military equivalent of landing on the wrong beach, a day later than planned and with half the forces, but proceeding with the original plan of battle while expecting the same outcome.
- 189 The project might argue that they did adapt the plan and the TE would agree with them wholeheartedly except that they were not able, through no fault of their own, to change the outcomes to what might be possible under the prevailing circumstances. When this happens the LFM, a planning tool intended to facilitate adaptive management effectively constrains planning, it makes it less adaptive.
- 190 The lesson is, and it is in the GEFs best interests, that there should be some mechanism that can rapidly review an adapted project LFM (or SRF), perhaps a rapid review committee<sup>97</sup>, because time is of the very essence, and make a judgment as to whether the changes are of a contractual issue or are being requested in the interests of adapting a project to changing circumstances, that is, adaptive management. GEF projects are ambitious, they have very little “fat” on them (see section 6.1, para. 123), these efficiencies and the natural ambition of project partners when the circumstances are misaligned with the outcomes (*i.e.* a four-year project with outcomes to be achieved in eight years), in many ways it is expecting too much of project managers.

## 10 Recommendations

- 191 The ToRs for the TE provide the following guidance on the recommendations to be made in this report:

*“Recommendations are actionable proposals on how to resolve concrete problems affecting the project or the sustainability of its results. They should be feasible to implement within the timeframe and resources available (including local capacities), specific in terms of who would do what and when, and set a measurable performance target”.*

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<sup>97</sup> It is surprising how often this happens with GEF projects but perhaps, given the complexity and unpredictability of the systems they are seeking to change it should not come as any surprise

192 **Recommendation 1:** Given the challenges faced by the project, in particular those when the project had, with some justification, to use unorthodox means of transferring funds to maintain continuity of the project, it is important that these are reviewed by an independent auditor<sup>98</sup>.

[UNEP Evaluation Office: - Evaluator 's Recommendation not supported –refer to footnote]

193 There are two reasons for this. Firstly the TE has to report these matters and is not in a position to judge whether the benefits of continuing the project outweighed the risks and the hazard that clearly accompany such a course of action and it is also important for the sake of transparency that these issues are assessed through an accepted mechanism.

194 Secondly it is highly likely that a similar set of circumstances could arise in the future. In which case it would be useful for implementing and executing agencies to have some precedent, whether these are guidelines or not, which they can refer to rather than exposing managers, individuals, to make judgments that could have serious consequences. It is easy to see how a manager could make a decision given the natural commitment of him or her to keep their project moving forwards.

195 **Recommendation 2:** The REA and the NEAs develop formal exit strategies starting with a retroactive<sup>99</sup> process and moving to the post project phase. This would serve a number of purposes; firstly it would bring the project to a logical conclusion. Secondly, it would give the REA and NEAs an opportunity to assess both which of, and where, the outputs and outcomes are vulnerable through a formalized planning approach and consider any post project opportunities that might reduce vulnerabilities.

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<sup>98</sup> The UNEP Evaluation Office respects the opinion of the evaluator with regard to risks associated with the funds transfer mechanisms discussed in this evaluation. However, in view of the fact that the project has already been fully audited, and that there does not appear to be evidence of financial wrongdoing, the Evaluation Office is of the opinion that commissioning an additional audit would be of limited value..

<sup>99</sup> Applying to a period prior to enactment

## Annex 1 Terms of Reference

### TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE EVALUATION

#### Objective and Scope of the Evaluation

2. In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy<sup>100</sup>, the UNEP Evaluation Manual<sup>101</sup> and the Guidelines for GEF Agencies in Conducting Terminal Evaluations<sup>102</sup>, the terminal evaluation of the Project “Sustainable Land Management in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains - An Integrated and Transboundary Initiative in Central Asia”, (PALM) is undertaken at the end of the project to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP, governments, universities, local communities, the GEF and their partners. Therefore, the evaluation will identify lessons of operational relevance for future project formulation and implementation. It will focus on the following sets of **key questions**, based on the project’s intended outcomes, which may be expanded by the consultants as deemed appropriate:

- (a) How successful was the project in enhancing regional cooperation between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan creating the enabling regional strategic planning, and national legislative, policy, institutional, technical, and economic incentive environment, for the sustainable management of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai mountain ecosystems?
- (b) To what extent has the project improved capacity of Tajikistan’s and Kyrgyzstan’s public and private sector agency research and advisory support service providers to promote sustainable land management within the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains?
- (c) Has the project reduced rural poverty and economic vulnerability in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai mountain ecosystems through community-based sustainable land management in the ten pilot SDUS?
- (d) How successful was the project in setting up generic guidelines for up-scaling and replication of the lessons learnt from the project’s experience with sustainable land management, within comparable trans-boundary mountain regions within Asia and elsewhere?

#### Overall Approach and Methods

3. The terminal evaluation of the Project “Sustainable Land Management in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains - An Integrated and Transboundary Initiative in Central Asia”, (PALM) will be conducted by a team of independent consultants under the overall responsibility and management of the UNEP Evaluation Office (Nairobi), in consultation with the UNEP GEF Coordination Office (Nairobi) and the Project Task Manager.

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<http://www.unep.org/eou/StandardsPolicyandPractices/UNEPEvaluationPolicy/tabid/3050/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

<sup>101</sup>

<http://www.unep.org/eou/StandardsPolicyandPractices/UNEPEvaluationManual/tabid/2314/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

<sup>102</sup>

[http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/documents/TE\\_guidelines7-31.pdf](http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/documents/TE_guidelines7-31.pdf)

4. It will be an in-depth evaluation using a participatory approach whereby key stakeholders are kept informed and consulted throughout the evaluation process. Both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods will be used to determine project achievements against the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts.

5. The findings of the evaluation will be based on the following:

(a) A **desk review** of project documents<sup>103</sup> including, but not limited to:

- Relevant background documentation, inter alia UNEP and GEF policies, strategies and programmes pertaining to sustainable land management and land degradation;
- Project design documents; Annual Work Plans and Budgets or equivalent, revisions to the logical framework and project financing;
- Project Inception Report, June 2008 and summary points of associated ISC meeting;
- Project reports such as progress and financial reports from countries to the EA and from the EA to UNEP; Steering Committee meeting minutes; annual Project Implementation Reviews and relevant correspondence;
- The Mid-term Review report;
- Documentation related to project outputs such as: Pamir-Alai Transboundary Strategy and Action Plan (PATRAP); adaptive research documents on land degradation; community-based natural resource assessments, resource use and management plans; micro-project proposals by community groups; project website; issues of electronic newsletter PALM Update; documentary movie.
- The final project completion report.

(b) **Interviews**<sup>104</sup> with:

- Project management and execution support;
- UNEP Task Manager (Bangkok) and Fund Management Officer (Nairobi);
- Country lead execution partners and other relevant partners;
- Relevant staff of GEF Secretariat;
- Representatives of universities and other relevant organisations.

(c) **Country visits.** The evaluation team will visit selected pilot sites (at least two) in each country, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

#### Key Evaluation principles

6. Evaluation findings and judgments should be based on **sound evidence and analysis**, clearly documented in the evaluation report. Information will be triangulated (i.e. verified from different sources) to the extent possible, and when verification was not possible, the single source will be mentioned<sup>105</sup>. Analysis leading to evaluative judgments should always be clearly spelled out.

7. The evaluation will assess the project with respect to **a minimum set of evaluation criteria** grouped in four categories: (1) Attainment of objectives and planned results, which comprises the assessment of outputs achieved, relevance, effectiveness and efficiency and the review of outcomes towards impacts; (2) Sustainability and catalytic role, which focuses on financial, socio-political, institutional and ecological factors conditioning sustainability of project outcomes, and also assesses efforts and achievements in terms of replication and up-scaling of project lessons and good

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<sup>103</sup> Documents to be provided by the UNEP and UNDP are listed in Annex 7.

<sup>104</sup> Face-to-face or through any other appropriate means of communication

<sup>105</sup> Individuals should not be mentioned by name if anonymity needs to be preserved.

practices; (3) Processes affecting attainment of project results, which covers project preparation and readiness, implementation approach and management, stakeholder participation and public awareness, country ownership/driven-ness, project finance, UNEP supervision and backstopping, and project monitoring and evaluation systems; and (4) Complementarity with the UNEP strategies and programmes. The lead consultant can propose other evaluation criteria as deemed appropriate.

8. **Ratings.** All evaluation criteria will be rated on a six-point scale. However, complementarity of the project with the UNEP strategies and programmes is not rated. Annex 3 provides detailed guidance on how the different criteria should be rated and how ratings should be aggregated for the different evaluation criterion categories.

9. In attempting to attribute any outcomes and impacts to the project, the evaluators should consider the difference between **what has happened with** and **what would have happened without** the project. This implies that there should be consideration of the baseline conditions and trends in relation to the intended project outcomes and impacts. This also means that there should be plausible evidence to attribute such outcomes and impacts to the actions of the project. Sometimes, adequate information on baseline conditions and trends is lacking. In such cases this should be clearly highlighted by the evaluators, along with any simplifying assumptions that were taken to enable the evaluator to make informed judgements about project performance.

10. As this is a terminal evaluation, particular attention should be given to learning from the experience. Therefore, **the “why?” question** should be at front of the consultants’ minds all through the evaluation exercise. This means that the consultants needs to go beyond the assessment of “what” the project performance was, and make a serious effort to provide a deeper understanding of “why” the performance was as it was, i.e. of processes affecting attainment of project results (criteria under category 3). This should provide the basis for the lessons that can be drawn from the project. In fact, the usefulness of the evaluation will be determined to a large extent by the capacity of the consultants to explain “why things happened” as they happened and are likely to evolve in this or that direction, which goes well beyond the mere assessment of “where things stand” today.

#### Evaluation criteria

##### Attainment of Objectives and Planned Results

11. The evaluation should assess the relevance of the project’s objectives and the extent to which these were effectively and efficiently achieved or are expected to be achieved.

- (a) *Achievement of Outputs and Activities:* Assess, for each component, the project’s success in producing the programmed outputs as presented in Table A1.1 (Annex 1), both in quantity and quality, as well as their usefulness and timeliness. Briefly explain the degree of success of the project in achieving its different outputs, cross-referencing as needed to more detailed explanations provided under Section 3 (which covers the processes affecting attainment of project objectives). The achievements under the regional and national demonstration projects will receive particular attention.
- (b) *Relevance:* Assess, in retrospect, whether the project’s objectives and implementation strategies were consistent with: i) Sub-regional environmental issues and needs; ii) the UNEP mandate and policies at the time of design and implementation; and iii) the relevant GEF focal areas, strategic priorities and operational programme(s).
- (c) *Effectiveness:* Assess to what extent the project has achieved its main objective **to restore, sustain, and enhance the productive and protective ecosystem functions of**

**the trans-boundary ecosystems of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan** and its component objectives as presented in Table 2 above. To measure achievement, use as much as appropriate the indicators for achievement proposed in the Logical Framework Matrix (Logframe) of the project, adding other relevant indicators as appropriate. Briefly explain what factors affected the project's success in achieving its objectives, cross-referencing as needed to more detailed explanations provided under Section 3.

- (d) *Efficiency*: Assess the cost-effectiveness and timeliness of project execution. Describe any cost- or time-saving measures put in place in attempting to bring the project to a successful conclusion within its programmed budget and (extended) time. Analyse how delays, if any, have affected project execution, costs and effectiveness. Wherever possible, compare the cost and time over results ratios of the project with that of other similar projects. Give special attention to efforts by the project teams to make use of / build upon pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. to increase project efficiency.
- (e) *Review of Outcomes to Impacts (ROtI)*: Reconstruct the logical pathways from project outputs over achieved objectives towards impacts, taking into account performance and impact drivers, assumptions and the roles and capacities of key actors and stakeholders, using the methodology presented in the GEF Evaluation Office's ROtI Practitioner's Handbook<sup>106</sup> (summarized in Annex 8 of the TORs). Assess to what extent the project has to date contributed, and is likely in the future to further contribute to changes in stakeholder behaviour as regards to: i) enhanced regional cooperation, ii) increased adoption by local stakeholders of sustainable land management practices and research, iii) increased investment in sustainable land management and the likelihood of those leading to changes in the natural resource base and benefits derived from the environment so that: a) causes and negative impacts of land degradation on the structure and functional integrity of the ecosystems of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains are mitigated and b) the productive and protective functions of the trans-boundary ecosystems of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains are restored and enhanced.

#### Sustainability and catalytic role

12. **Sustainability** is understood as the probability of continued long-term project-derived results and impacts after the external project funding and assistance ends. The evaluation will identify and assess the key conditions or factors that are likely to undermine or contribute to the persistence of benefits. Some of these factors might be direct results of the project while others will include contextual circumstances or developments that are not under control of the project but that may condition sustainability of benefits. The evaluation should ascertain to what extent follow-up work has been initiated and how project results will be sustained and enhanced over time. Application of the ROtI method will assist in the evaluation of sustainability.

13. Four aspects of sustainability will be addressed:

- (a) *Socio-political sustainability*. Are there any social or political factors that may influence positively or negatively the sustenance of project results and progress towards impacts?

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<sup>106</sup> [http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/documents/Impact\\_Eval-Review\\_of\\_Outcomes\\_to\\_Impacts-RotI\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/documents/Impact_Eval-Review_of_Outcomes_to_Impacts-RotI_handbook.pdf)

Is the level of ownership by the main national and regional stakeholders sufficient to allow for the project results to be sustained? Are there sufficient government and stakeholder awareness, interests, commitment and incentives to execute, enforce and pursue the programmes, plans, agreements, monitoring systems etc. prepared and agreed upon under the project?

- (b) *Financial resources.* To what extent are the continuation of project results and the eventual impact of the project dependent on continued financial support? What is the likelihood that adequate financial resources<sup>107</sup> will be or will become available to implement the programmes, plans, agreements, monitoring systems etc. prepared and agreed upon under the project? Are there any financial risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project results and onward progress towards impact?
- (c) *Institutional framework.* To what extent is the sustenance of the results and onward progress towards impact dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance? How robust are the institutional achievements such as governance structures and processes, policies, sub-regional agreements, legal and accountability frameworks etc. required to sustaining project results and to lead those to impact on human behaviour and environmental resources?
- (d) *Environmental sustainability.* Are there any environmental factors, positive or negative, that can influence the future flow of project benefits? Are there any project outputs or higher level results that are likely to affect the environment, which, in turn, might affect sustainability of project benefits?

14. **Catalytic Role and Replication.** The *catalytic role* of GEF-funded interventions is embodied in their approach of supporting the creation of an enabling environment and of investing in pilot activities which are innovative and showing how new approaches can work. UNEP and the GEF also aim to support activities that upscale new approaches to a national, regional or global level, with a view to achieve sustainable global environmental benefits. The evaluation will assess the catalytic role played by this project, namely to what extent the project has:

- (a) *catalyzed behavioural changes* in terms of use and application by the relevant stakeholders of: i) technologies and approaches show-cased by the demonstration projects; ii) strategic programmes and plans developed; and iii) assessment, monitoring and management systems established at a national and sub-regional level;
- (b) provided *incentives* (social, economic, market based, competencies etc.) to contribute to catalyzing changes in stakeholder behaviour;
- (c) contributed to *institutional changes*. An important aspect of the catalytic role of the project is its contribution to institutional uptake or mainstreaming of project-piloted approaches in the regional and national demonstration projects;
- (d) contributed to *policy changes* (on paper and in implementation of policy);
- (e) contributed to sustained follow-on financing (*catalytic financing*) from Governments, the GEF or other donors;

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<sup>107</sup> Those resources can be from multiple sources, such as the public and private sectors, income generating activities, other development projects etc.

- (f) created opportunities for particular individuals or institutions (“*champions*”) to catalyze change (without which the project would not have achieved all of its results).

15. *Replication*, in the context of GEF projects, is defined as lessons and experiences coming out of the project that are replicated (experiences are repeated and lessons applied in different geographic areas) or scaled up (experiences are repeated and lessons applied in the same geographic area but on a much larger scale and funded by other sources). The evaluation will assess the approach adopted by the project to promote replication effects and evaluate to what extent actual replication has already occurred or is likely to occur in the near future. What are the factors that may influence replication and scaling up of project experiences and lessons?

Processes affecting attainment of project results

16. **Preparation and Readiness.** Were the project’s objectives and components clear, practicable and feasible within its timeframe? Were the capacities of executing agencies properly considered when the project was designed? Was the project document clear and realistic to enable effective and efficient implementation? Were the partnership arrangements properly identified and the roles and responsibilities negotiated prior to project implementation? Were counterpart resources (funding, staff, and facilities) and enabling legislation assured? Were adequate project management arrangements in place? Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated in the project design? Were lessons learned and recommendations from Steering Committee meetings adequately integrated in the project approach? What factors influenced the quality-at-entry of the project design, choice of partners, allocation of financial resources etc.?

17. **Implementation Approach and Adaptive Management.** This includes an analysis of approaches used by the project, its management framework, the project’s adaptation to changing conditions (adaptive management), the performance of the implementation arrangements and partnerships, relevance of changes in project design, and overall performance of project management. The evaluation will:

- (a) Ascertain to what extent the project implementation mechanisms outlined in the project document have been followed and were effective in delivering project outputs and outcomes. Were pertinent adaptations made to the approaches originally proposed?
- (b) Assess the role and performance of the units and committees established and the project execution arrangements at all levels;
- (c) Evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of project management by the EA and how well the management was able to adapt to changes during the life of the project;
- (d) Assess the extent to which project management responded to direction and guidance provided by the Steering Committee and IA supervision recommendations;
- (e) Identify administrative, operational and/or technical problems and constraints that influenced the effective implementation of the project, and how the project partners tried to overcome these problems;
- (f) Assess the extent to which Mid-Term review recommendations were followed in a timely manner.

18. **Stakeholder<sup>108</sup> Participation and Public Awareness.** The term stakeholder should be considered in the broadest sense, encompassing project partners, government institutions, private interest groups, local communities etc. The assessment will look at three related and often overlapping processes: (1) information dissemination between stakeholders, (2) consultation between stakeholders, and (3) active engagement of stakeholders in project decision making and activities. The evaluation will specifically assess:

- (a) the approach(es) used to identify and engage stakeholders in project design and implementation. What were the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches with respect to the project's objectives and the stakeholders' motivations and capacities? What was the achieved degree and effectiveness of collaboration and interactions between the various project partners and stakeholders during the course of implementation of the project?
- (b) the degree and effectiveness of any public awareness activities that were undertaken during the course of implementation of the project; or that are built into the assessment methods so that public awareness can be raised at the time the assessments will be conducted;
- (c) how the results of the project (strategic programmes and plans, monitoring and management systems, sub-regional agreements etc.) engaged key stakeholders in sustainable land management.

19. The ROtI analysis should assist the consultants in identifying the key stakeholders and their respective roles, capabilities and motivations in each step of the causal pathway from activities to achievement of outputs and objectives to impact.

20. **Country Ownership and Driven-ness.** The evaluation will assess the performance of the Governments of the countries involved in the project, namely:

- (a) in how the Governments have assumed responsibility for the project and provided adequate support to project execution, including the degree of cooperation received from the various contact institutions in the countries involved in the project and the timeliness of provision of counter-part funding to project activities;
- (b) to what extent the political and institutional framework of the participating countries has been conducive to project performance. Look, in particular, at the extent of the political commitment to enforce (sub-) regional agreements promoted under the project;
- (c) to what extent the Governments have promoted the participation of communities and their non-governmental organisations in the project; and
- (d) how responsive the Governments were to UNEP and UNU-EHS coordination and guidance, to UNEP supervision and Mid-Term Report recommendations.

21. **Financial Planning and Management.** Evaluation of financial planning requires assessment of the quality and effectiveness of financial planning and control of financial resources throughout the project's lifetime. The assessment will look at actual project costs by activities compared to budget

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<sup>108</sup> Stakeholders are the individuals, groups, institutions, or other bodies that have an interest or stake in the outcome of the project. The term also applies to those potentially adversely affected by the project.

(variances), financial management (including disbursement issues), and co-financing. The evaluation will:

- (a) Verify the application of proper standards (clarity, transparency, audit etc.) and timeliness of financial planning, management and reporting to ensure that sufficient and timely financial resources were available to the project and its partners;
- (b) Assess other administrative processes such as recruitment of staff, procurement of goods and services (including consultants), preparation and negotiation of cooperation agreements etc. to the extent that these might have influenced project performance;
- (c) Present to what extent co-financing has materialized as expected at project approval (see Table 1). Report country co-financing to the project overall, and to support project activities at the national level in particular. The evaluation will provide a breakdown of final actual costs and co-financing for the different project components (see tables in Annex 4).
- (d) Describe the resources the project has leveraged since inception and indicate how these resources are contributing to the project's ultimate objective. Leveraged resources are additional resources—beyond those committed to the project itself at the time of approval—that are mobilized later as a direct result of the project. Leveraged resources can be financial or in-kind and they may be from other donors, NGO's, foundations, governments, communities or the private sector.

22. Analyse the effects on project performance of any irregularities in procurement, use of financial resources and human resource management, and the measures taken by the EA or IA to prevent such irregularities in the future. Assess whether the measures taken were adequate.

23. **UNEP Supervision and Backstopping.** The purpose of supervision is to verify the quality and timeliness of project execution in terms of finances, administration and achievement of outputs and outcomes, in order to identify and recommend ways to deal with problems which arise during project execution. Such problems may be related to project management but may also involve technical/institutional substantive issues in which UNEP has a major contribution to make. The evaluators should assess the effectiveness of supervision and administrative and financial support provided by UNEP including:

- (a) The adequacy of project supervision plans, inputs and processes;
- (b) The emphasis given to outcome monitoring (results-based project management);
- (c) The realism and candour of project reporting and ratings (i.e. are PIR ratings an accurate reflection of the project realities and risks);
- (d) The quality of documentation of project supervision activities; and
- (e) Financial, administrative and other fiduciary aspects of project implementation supervision.

24. **Monitoring and Evaluation.** The evaluation will include an assessment of the quality, application and effectiveness of project monitoring and evaluation plans and tools, including an assessment of risk management based on the assumptions and risks identified in the project document. The evaluation will assess how information generated by the M&E system during project

implementation was used to adapt and improve project execution, achievement of outcomes and ensuring sustainability. M&E is assessed on three levels:

- (a) *M&E Design.* Projects should have sound M&E plans to monitor results and track progress towards achieving project objectives. An M&E plan should include a baseline (including data, methodology, etc.), SMART indicators and data analysis systems, and evaluation studies at specific times to assess results. The time frame for various M&E activities and standards for outputs should have been specified. The evaluators should use the following questions to help assess the M&E design aspects:
- Quality of the project logframe as a planning and monitoring instrument; analyse/compare logframe in Project Document, revised logframe (2008) and logframe used in Project Implementation Review reports to report progress towards achieving project objectives;
  - SMART-ness of indicators: Are there specific indicators in the logframe for each of the project objectives? Are the indicators measurable, attainable (realistic) and relevant to the objectives? Are the indicators time-bound?
  - Adequacy of baseline information: To what extent has baseline information on performance indicators been collected and presented in a clear manner? Was the methodology for the baseline data collection explicit and reliable?
  - Arrangements for monitoring: Have the responsibilities for M&E activities been clearly defined? Were the data sources and data collection instruments appropriate? Was the frequency of various monitoring activities specified and adequate? In how far were project users involved in monitoring?
  - Arrangements for evaluation: Have specific targets been specified for project outputs? Has the desired level of achievement been specified for all indicators of objectives and outcomes? Were there adequate provisions in the legal instruments binding project partners to fully collaborate in evaluations?
  - Budgeting and funding for M&E activities: Determine whether support for M&E was budgeted adequately and was funded in a timely fashion during implementation.
- (b) *M&E Plan Implementation.* The evaluation will verify that:
- the M&E system was operational and facilitated timely tracking of results and progress towards projects objectives throughout the project implementation period;
  - annual project reports and Progress Implementation Review (PIR) reports were complete, accurate and with well justified ratings;
  - the information provided by the M&E system was used during the project to improve project performance and to adapt to changing needs;
  - projects had an M&E system in place with proper training, instruments and resources for parties responsible for M&E.

Complementarities with UNEP strategies and programmes

25. UNEP aims to undertake GEF funded projects that are aligned with its own strategies. The evaluation should present a brief narrative on the following issues:

- (a) *Linkage to UNEP's Expected Accomplishments and POW 2010-2011.* The UNEP MTS specifies desired results in six thematic focal areas. The desired results are termed Expected Accomplishments. Using the completed ROTI analysis, the evaluation should comment on whether the project makes a tangible contribution to any of the Expected Accomplishments specified in the UNEP MTS. The magnitude and extent of any contributions and the causal linkages should be fully described. Whilst it is recognised that UNEP GEF projects designed prior to the production of the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS)<sup>109</sup>/ Programme of Work (POW) 2010/11 would not necessarily be aligned with the Expected Accomplishments articulated in those documents, complementarities may still exist.
- (b) *Alignment with the Bali Strategic Plan (BSP)*<sup>110</sup>. The outcomes and achievements of the project should be briefly discussed in relation to the objectives of the UNEP BSP.
- (c) *Gender.* Ascertain to what extent project design, implementation and monitoring have taken into consideration: (i) possible gender inequalities in access to and the control over natural resources; (ii) specific vulnerabilities of women and children to environmental degradation or disasters; and (iii) the role of women in mitigating or adapting to environmental changes and engaging in environmental protection and rehabilitation. Assess whether the intervention is likely to have any lasting differential impacts on gender equality and the relationship between women and the environment. To what extent do unresolved gender inequalities affect sustainability of project benefits?
- (d) *South-South Cooperation.* This is regarded as the exchange of resources, technology, and knowledge between developing countries. Briefly describe any aspects of the project that could be considered as examples of South-South Cooperation.

#### The Consultants' Team

26. For this evaluation, a team of two independent consultants will be hired, of which at least one from the project sub-region. The evaluation team will combine the following – at least decade-long:

- (a) Evaluation of environmental projects
- (b) Expertise in land degradation and sustainable land management
- (c) Extensive knowledge of the region
- (d) Fluency in both written and oral English and Russian

In addition, the Team Leader will have an education background in conservation and the Supporting Consultant in land management.

27. The **Team Leader** will be responsible for coordinating the data collection and analysis phase of the evaluation, and preparing the main report. (S)He will ensure that all evaluation criteria are adequately covered by the team. **Annex 6** provides a matrix which presents the distribution of responsibilities between evaluation team members (to be finalized in consultation with the Team Leader).

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<sup>109</sup> <http://www.unep.org/PDF/FinalMTSGCSS-X-8.pdf>

<sup>110</sup> <http://www.unep.org/GC/GC23/documents/GC23-6-add-1.pdf>

28. The **Supporting Consultant** will prepare a technical working paper that will be appended to the main report, the content of which will be agreed upon with the Team Leader. The Supporting Consultant is also expected to contribute to selected sections of the main report as agreed with the Team Leader, and provide constructive comments on the draft report prepared by the Team Leader.

29. *By undersigning the service contract with UNEP/UNON, the consultants certify that they have not been associated with the design and implementation of the project in any way which may jeopardize their independence and impartiality towards project achievements and project partner performance. In addition, they will not have any future interests (within six months after completion of their contract) with the project's executing or implementing units.*

#### Evaluation Deliverables and Review Procedures

30. The Team Leader will prepare and submit an **inception report** to the UNEP Evaluation Office before starting fieldwork or desk based phone/email interviews. See Annex 11 for annotated Table of Contents of Inception Report.

31. The inception report lays the foundations for the main evaluation. Its purpose is to develop an evaluation framework that includes:

- A review of the quality of project design to help identify how project design impacts on project implementation and performance;
- An analysis of the project's theory of change, creating a baseline which can be used to assess the actual project outcomes and impacts (expected and unexpected) during field visits and interviews;
- A detailed plan for the evaluation process.

The main components of the inception report are:

32. Review of the Quality of Project Design: The review of project design is done on the basis of the project document and log frame. The Team Leader should also familiarize her/himself with the history and wider context of the project (details available on UNEP and GEF website, documentation from past projects etc). The analysis should be used to complete the 'Template for assessment of the quality of project design' (in the Annex 9 of the TORs). The rating system follows the Evaluation ratings used for the main evaluation (also described in the annex of the TORs).

33. Theory of Change Analysis: Annex 8 of the TORs on Introduction to Theory of Change/Impact pathways, the ROTI Method and the ROTI results score sheet describes in details the Theory of Change approach. The Theory of Change analysis should be captured in a Theory of Change diagram, found in the annex. The diagram can be shared with project stakeholders in the course of the evaluation, as tool to aid discussion. Please note that the ratings requested in the annex are not needed in the inception report's Theory of Change analysis. The team leader should complete the ratings after the field visits/interviews. The ToC diagram and ratings should be incorporated in final evaluation report.

34. Evaluation Process Plan: The evaluation process plan is based on a review of the project design, theory of change analysis and also of all the project documentation (listed in TORs). The evaluation plan should include: summary of evaluation questions/areas to be explored/questions raised through document review; description of evaluation methodologies to be used.;\_list of data sources, indicators; list of individuals to be consulted; detailed distribution of roles and

responsibilities among evaluation consultants (for larger evaluation teams); revised logistics (selection of sites to be visited)/dates of evaluation activities

35. **The main evaluation report** should be brief (no longer than 35 pages – excluding the executive summary and annexes), to the point and written in plain English. The report will follow the annotated Table of Contents outlined in Annex 2. It must explain the purpose of the evaluation, exactly what was evaluated and the methods used (with their limitations). The report will present evidence-based and balanced findings, consequent conclusions, lessons and recommendations, which will be cross-referenced to each other. The report should be presented in a way that makes the information accessible and comprehensible. Any dissident views in response to evaluation findings will be appended in footnote or annex as appropriate.

36. **Technical working paper.** The format and contents of the working paper prepared by the Supporting Consultants should be agreed upon with the Team Leader and approved by the UNEP Evaluation Office before any data collection and analysis work is undertaken. It is recommended that the working papers follow the same structure as the main evaluation report, for easy reference by the Team Leader (Annex 2). The Team Leader will carry out a first review of the working papers and provide comments to the Supporting Consultants for improvement. Only a version acceptable to the Team Leader will be submitted to the EO as an appendix to the draft main report.

37. **Report summary.** The Team Leader will prepare a 15-slide presentation summarizing the key findings, lessons learned and recommendations of the evaluation.

38. **Review of the draft evaluation report.** The Team Leader will submit the zero draft report to the UNEP EO after having received, read and taken under consideration the final project completion report, expected in July-August 2012, according to the tentative outline in Annex 10. The Team Leader will revise the draft following the comments and suggestions made by the EO. The EO will then share the first draft report with the UNEP GEF Coordination Office (Nairobi) and the UNEP/DRC/ROAP. The UNEP Task Manager will forward the first draft report to the other project stakeholders, for review and comments. Stakeholders may provide feedback on any errors of fact and may highlight the significance of such errors in any conclusions. Comments would be expected within two weeks after the draft report has been shared. Any comments or responses to the draft report will be sent to the UNEP EO for collation. The EO will provide the comments to the Team Leader for consideration in preparing the final draft report. The Team Leader will submit the final draft report no later than 2 weeks after reception of stakeholder comments. The Team Leader will prepare a **response to comments** that contradict the findings of the evaluation team and could therefore not be accommodated in the final report. This response will be shared by the EO with the interested stakeholders to ensure full transparency.

39. Consultations will be held between the consultants, EO staff, the UNEP/GEF, UNEP/ UNEP/DRC/ROAP\_ and key members of the project execution team. These consultations will seek feedback on the proposed recommendations and lessons.

40. Submission of the final Terminal Evaluation report. The final report shall be submitted by Email to:

Segbedzi Norgbey, Head  
UNEP Evaluation Office  
P.O. Box 30552-00100  
Nairobi, Kenya  
Tel.: (+254-20) 762 3387  
Email: [segbedzi.norgbey@unep.org](mailto:segbedzi.norgbey@unep.org)

41. The Head of Evaluation will share the report with the following persons:

Maryam Niamir-Fuller, Director  
UNEP/GEF Coordination Office  
P.O. Box 30552-00100  
Nairobi, Kenya  
Tel: (+254-20) 762 4686  
Email: [maryam.niamir-fuller@unep.org](mailto:maryam.niamir-fuller@unep.org)

Ibrahim Thiaw, Director  
UNEP/Division of Environmental Policy Implementation (DEPI)  
P.O. Box 30552-00100  
Nairobi, Kenya  
Tel: (+254-20) 762 24782  
Email: [ibrahim.thiaw@unep.org](mailto:ibrahim.thiaw@unep.org)

Ms. Tomoko Nishimoto, Director  
UNEP/Division of Regional Cooperation (DRC)  
P.O. Box 30552, Nairobi, Kenya  
Tel: (+254-20) 762 4153  
Email: [tomoko.nishimoto@unep.org](mailto:tomoko.nishimoto@unep.org)

Mr. Young-Woo Park, Regional Director & Regional Representative  
UNEP/Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP)  
United Nations Building,  
Rajdamnern Nok Avenue  
Bangkok 10200, Thailand  
Tel: (+66 2) 281-6101/+66 2 288 1870  
Fax: (+66-2) 280 3829  
Email: [parky@un.org](mailto:parky@un.org)

Mr. Max Zieren  
GEF Regional Focal Point Asia/Task Manager Biodiversity and Land Degradation  
Division of Environmental Policy Implementation (DEPI)  
UNEP Regional Office Asia Pacific  
Tel: (+66 2) 288-2101  
Fax: (+66 2) 288 1087  
Email: [max.zieren@unep.org](mailto:max.zieren@unep.org)

42. The final evaluation report will be published on the UNEP Evaluation Office web-site [www.unep.org/eou](http://www.unep.org/eou) and may be printed in hard copy. Subsequently, the report will be sent to the GEF Office of Evaluation for their review, appraisal and inclusion on the GEF website.

43. As per usual practice, the UNEP EO will prepare a **quality assessment** of the zero draft and final draft report, which is a tool for providing structured feedback to the evaluation consultants. The quality of the report will be assessed and rated against both GEF and UNEP criteria as presented in Annex 5.

44. The UNEP Evaluation Office will also prepare a **commentary** on the final evaluation report, which presents the EO ratings of the project based on a careful review of the evidence collated by the evaluation team and the internal consistency of the report. These ratings are the final ratings that the UNEP Evaluation Office will submit to the GEF Office of Evaluation.

#### Resources and Schedule of the Evaluation

45. This Terminal Evaluation will be undertaken by two independent evaluation consultants contracted by the UNEP Evaluation Office. The consultants will work under the overall responsibility of the UNEP Evaluation Office and they will consult with the EO on any procedural and methodological matters related to the evaluation. It is, however, the consultants' individual responsibility to arrange for their travel, obtain documentary evidence, meetings with stakeholders, field visits, and any other logistical matters related to their assignment. The UNEP Task Manager and regional and national project staff will provide logistical support (introductions, meetings, transport, lodging etc.) for the country visits where necessary, allowing the consultants to conduct the evaluation as efficiently and independently as possible.

46. The **Team Leader** will be hired for nine weeks of work spread over April-October 2012. (S)He will travel to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to visit project field sites, meet with project staff and join the project final workshop to be held in Kyrgyzstan in May 2012.

47. The **Supporting Consultant** will be hired for 5 weeks of work spread over April-October 2012. (S)He will travel to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to visit project field sites, meet with project staff and join the project final workshop to be held in Kyrgyzstan in May 2012.

## Annex 2 Evaluation framework

### Summary of evaluation process

48. The evaluation will follow (but not be restricted to) the methodology outlined below. Prior to the in-country mission the evaluator carried out a **desk-based study** and review of the Project's documentation to establish an understanding of the Project as represented by the standard UNEP-GEF documentation (*e.g.* Project Document, Project Implementation Report (PIR), Terminal Report, *etc.*). The purpose of this exercise is to carry out a "scoping" exercise becoming familiar with the Project's strategy, the various components and to identify the priority issues that needed to be examined and challenged in depth. Unfortunately not all documentation was available prior to the in-country mission and therefore the most significant documentation examined were the:

- Project Document,
- Half-yearly Reports, Annual Project Reviews/Project Implementation Reports (APRs/PIRs),
- Minutes of Steering Committee meetings,
- Output reports,
- PALM project website <http://www.ehs.unu.edu/palm/>
- National MTRs
- External MTR

49. The **in-country(s) mission** will consist of focused meetings and discussions (in person by electronic communications) with the UNEP Evaluation Office (Nairobi), UNEP-GEF Coordination Office (Nairobi), UNEP/DRC/ROAP, Project partners and stakeholders starting with a briefing of the

purpose and the *process* of GEF monitoring and evaluation. The subject of these meetings will focus on (but not be limited to) the following sets of key questions, based on the project's intended outcomes, which may be expanded by the consultants as deemed appropriate:

- i. How successful was the project in enhancing regional cooperation between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan creating the enabling regional strategic planning, and national legislative, policy, institutional, technical, and economic incentive environment, for the sustainable management of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai mountain ecosystems?
- ii. To what extent has the project improved capacity of Tajikistan's and Kyrgyzstan's public and private sector agency research and advisory support service providers to promote sustainable land management within the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains?
- iii. Has the project reduced rural poverty and economic vulnerability in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai mountain ecosystems through community-based sustainable land management in the ten pilot SDUS?
- iv. How successful was the project in setting up generic guidelines for up-scaling and replication of the lessons learnt from the project's experience with sustainable land management, within comparable trans-boundary mountain regions within Asia and elsewhere?

50. In country missions will also include visits to both countries (Tajikistan, Kirgizstan) to meet with national PALM (NPIU) staff and stakeholders, visit the pilot sites and attend the PALM Project Completion Workshop in Bishkek. The Completion Workshop will also have a session on the terminal evaluation where the evaluators and stakeholders will be interacting on the TE with a presentation and Q&A session. The international consultant will also travel to Bangkok, Thailand to meet with the UNEP ROAP Task Manager.

51. Analysis of findings and drafting of the TE Report: following the in-country(s) visit there will be further analysis of the findings and drafting of the report for comment by the Project's partners before submission of the final draft.

### **Additional issues identified by the TE**

52. In addition to the issues identified in the TE ToR a number of issues have materialised in analysing the project's overall strategy and are presented here as:

- i. To what extent has the reduced duration of the project (the cancellation of the second phase) affected the chances of achieving the outcomes and producing valuable lessons?
- ii. To what extent has the project's unwillingness to address sport and trophy hunting affected the likelihood of sustainable and community-based biodiversity management?
- iii. To what extent has the project shifted the "balance of power" with regards to local communities' ability to have both authority and responsibility for the management of renewable natural resources?
- iv. To what extent has the project affected change in the property regimes from single state and single private "owners" to recognising common property systems?
- v. Has the project addressed the simple equation *vis a vis* biodiversity resources that *people will manage a resource sustainably when the benefits of management are greater than the costs?*

### **Description of evaluation methodologies**

53. The approach can be described thus:

*Emphasis on constructive analytical dialogue:* with the project partners providing the project participants with an opportunity to explain the strategies applied to date, the challenges that had been faced and the inevitable nuances that affect a project. In this way the TE is able to deepen the partner's conceptual understanding of the key issues underlying the project and the driving forces that have shaped, and continue, shaping events.

*Defining the scope of the TE focus:* through discussions with the UNEP Evaluation Office and Task Manager the areas and extent of inquiry to be defined.

*Critical analysis of the project design:* the original design, the Project Document, is challenged against best practices and in light of the project's experience to consider whether there were flaws in its logic and approach or whether there were assumptions, known or unknown, that have not proven correct.

*Critical reflection on the measures of project success:* measuring progress and performance against the indicators provided in the project's logical framework with the participation of the project partners and reflecting on their relevance and adequacy, and where these were in doubt, alternative or complimentary indicators can be identified and/or re-phrased.

*Assessment of the project's performance and impact to date:* analysing the performance and progress against the indicators and reasonably expected impacts of the project's implementation.

*An examination of process:* critically examining the project's actions and activities to ensure that there was sufficient effort in ensuring that elements of capacity building and participation, establishing processes and mechanisms, that would enable the targets to be achieved in the longer term rather than being *expedient*.

*Synthesizing plausible future impacts:* using the Theory of Change and other analytical methods to identify plausible future outcomes resulting from the impact of the project in the future.

*Jointly defining the conclusions and recommendations with the UNEP Evaluation Office and ROAP Task Manager:* ensuring that there is a common understanding of any weaknesses or shortcomings in the project's implementation and an understanding the reasons for, and the appropriate detail of, any remedial actions.

## **Description of data collection and analysis methods**

54. Data collection will be carried out through examination of the project's documentation, the reports, agreements, minutes of meetings, web sites, and financial information, *etc.*, provided to the TE.

55. Interviews with individuals and representatives of institutions involved in the implementation of the project and where possible the current users of the resulting services and beneficiaries of the project's outcomes.

56. The TE will determine both the performance by the project (how well the project was implemented?), and the effectiveness of the interventions (the outcomes and plausible impact of the overall project intervention).

57. The TE will, through a process of discussion with participants, examine the key questions from the ToR expressed in section 5.2 and 5.2.1. In particular the TE will try to determine whether the project's approach was based upon a realistic understanding of the driving forces shaping the ecosystem in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains, what assumptions were made about the factors affecting the socio-ecosystem, to what extent has the project drifted from core GEF SLM

values (including biodiversity) to conventional SLM methodologies, to what extent can generic guidelines be developed from the project, - given that the ecosystem, communities and project are operating at fundamentally different timescales, to what extent has the implementation of the project and the prosecution of the micro-projects and various interventions followed an adaptive management approach and is there a fundamental philosophical challenge to the project in addressing the issues of authority and responsibility, costs and benefits and tenure and pricing *vis a vis* the range of biodiversity resources and ecosystem services and their sustainable management.

58. The TE will not develop the draft evaluation report until the project development completes the Terminal Project Report.

59. Following this the TE team will analyse the findings and assess the project's overall performance and impact. The TE team will work closely together. The Lead Consultant will be responsible for the delivery of the Final Report, the Supporting Consultant will provide a brief summary report (based upon the ToR for the evaluation) which will cover the areas outlined in Annex 4.

## **Project indicators**

60. The following indicators were given in the project's LFM for the objective, outcomes and outputs. The list below has a number of inadequacies and inefficiencies in the LFM with regards to the selection and level that indicators are used in the LFM (see section 3.7, para. 45). They will be used to assess to what extent the project has achieved its objective, outcomes and outputs. However, given the number of indicators listed it may not be possible to quantify or qualify every indicator in detail<sup>111</sup>:

### **5.2.1 Overall goal indicators:**

- The trans-boundary mountain ecosystems of the High Pamir and Pamir Alai mountains providing improved ecological services and benefits.
- Improved management of the region's croplands and pastures producing higher returns, more diversified products, and a reduction in the area affected by land degradation.
- Quantitative and qualitative increase in the area's bio-diversity (in particular the endemic and/or globally vulnerable species of fauna and flora).
- Improved welfare status of those rural households whose livelihoods derive from utilization of the ecosystem resources of the High Pamir and Pamir Alai mountains.
- An improved enabling technical, institutional, legal and policy environment for sustainable land management within the High Pamir and Pamir Alai mountains.

## **Development objective indicators**

The causative factors underlying the link between poverty, vulnerability and land degradation understood, and measures to mitigate the negative impacts identified and implemented leading to:

- Human vulnerability to anthropogenic – induced land degradation decreased by 30% in the participating minimum of 48 sub-district units (SDUs) by end of PY8
- Income from natural resources management activities increased by 10% in the participating SDUs by end of PY8
- A minimum of 2000 farmers, and representatives from local CBOs and local authorities with enhanced capacities to assess their local land and ecosystem resources, to plan their management in an integrated framework, and to develop and implement micro-project proposals that improve both their livelihoods and environment by end of PY4 and 3000 by end of PY8.

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<sup>111</sup> Annex 5 contains a table of indicators that will be reviewed as to their relevance post Inception Phase and their quality as indicators

- At least 10 locally validated sustainable resource use measures/approaches providing higher returns to the households and communities that adopt them than they get from their current resource use activities available as replicable best practices for other SDUs in the Pamir-Alai mountains by end of PY8

## **Environmental objective indicators**

The concepts and principles of sustainable land management incorporated into local, national and regional level land use plans/strategies for mitigating the causes and negative impacts of land degradation on the structure and functional integrity of the ecosystem resources of the High Pamir and Pamir Alai Mountains leading to:

- At least 400 000 ha of land (including cultivated, pasture and forest land) in the High Pamir and Pamir Alai Mountains brought under improved land management and 20% improvement in carbon stores above and below ground on 3,000 ha of land by end of PY4 with demonstration effect on another 1.2 mill ha by end of PY8
- 20% of improved carbon stores above and below ground ecosystems on 3000 ha of land by end of PY8
- Integrated community, national and transboundary mechanisms and measures for protection and/or restoration of 10 endangered animal and 20 plant species undertaken by end of PY8
- A minimum of 1000 local and national officials, and representatives from research institutes and support service providers with enhanced technical and research capacities for mainstreaming sustainable land and ecosystem management policies and practices at the local, national and transboundary levels by end of PY4 and 2000 by end of PY8

## **Outcome indicators**

### **Outcome 1:**

A regional strategy and action plan for the sustainable management of the ecosystem resources of the High Pamir and Pamir Alai Mountain region guiding local level land use plans and improved ecosystem management prepared by end of PY4.

- At least two (one/country) key national laws/legislative instruments regulating the use of land and other ecosystem resources in the High Pamir and Pamir Alai area improved by end of PY4, creating the legal basis for sustainable land management within the High Pamir & Pamir-Alai Mountain region.
- Evidence that the concepts and principles of sustainable land management have been incorporated into at least two (one /country) environmental management, and/or economic development plans, to be implemented within the High Pamir and Pamir Alai mountains by end of PY4

### **Outcome 2:**

- Rural communities reporting an increase in the quality and quantity of advisory support services received from public and/or private sector agencies.
- At least four (two/country) key institutions conducting adaptive research into the area specific constraints and opportunities for sustainable land management faced by rural communities in the High Pamir and Pamir Alai mountains by end of PY4.

### **Outcome 3:**

- Ecosystem resource degradation assessments undertaken, and land use/improved ecosystem management plans prepared, for a minimum of 24 SDUs by PY 4 and 48 SDUs in the High Pamir and Pamir Alai by end of PY8
- At least 100 micro-projects implemented by a minimum of 24/48 of the High Pamir and Pamir Alai SDUs by end of PY4/PY8.
- Environmentally sensitive tourism plans developed and implemented within a minimum of 10 of the High Pamir and Pamir Alai SDUs.

#### **Outcome 4:**

- A validated vulnerability analysis framework.
- Generic lessons identified for the implementation of sustainable land management in trans-boundary regions.
- Generic guidelines prepared for the upscaling and replication of the lessons learnt within comparable high altitude trans-boundary mountain regions.

#### **Output indicators:**

##### **Output 1.1:**

- Review existing related central Asian, national and local environmental and economic development strategies and action plans
- Undertake gap filling studies and field surveys
- Undertake stakeholder consultation, negotiation and conflict resolution
- Identify priority communities and ecosystems
- Reach agreement on a trans-boundary sustainable land management strategy and action plan for the entire High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains region
- Develop a joint trans-boundary institutional mechanism for overseeing and regularly reviewing the implementation of the strategy and action plan.

##### **Output 1.2:**

- Review existing national laws and regulations against the requirements for SLM within the High Pamirs and Pamir Alai Mountains
- Identify gaps, conflicts and overlaps in existing legislation
- Formulate an improved enabling legal and regulatory framework at the trans-boundary, national and local levels
- Draft at least two new/improved laws, implementing rules, regulations and legislative guidelines for the trans-boundary, national and local levels by end of PY4.

##### **Output 1.3:**

- Raise awareness of central and local government planners and policy makers on the concepts and principles of SLM
- Develop guidelines for mainstreaming SLM concepts, principles and standards into regional, national and local environmental management, and economic development, plans and policies for the High Pamir and Pamir Alai Mountains

##### **Output 2.1:**

- Identify, and assess the capacity of, the public and private sector agencies that can provide research and advisory support services to farmers, herders and forest users within the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains.
- Build the capacity of at least one of these advisory support service providers per country.

- Provide them with the technical information, participatory planning guidelines, extension literature and other materials required for promoting sustainable land management in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains.

## **Output 2.2:**

- Government and academic research institutes invited to bid for project provided targeted research grants.
- Preparation and submission of adaptive research proposals to address mountain specific sustainable land management constraints and opportunities.
- Awarding of adaptive research grants.
- Implementation of at least 10 adaptive research trials in partnership between the research scientists and local farmers, herders, forest, and/or wildlife resource users.

## **Output 3.1:**

- Assess the degradation status of each participating SDU's ecosystem resources
- Develop community-based SDU wide land use/ecosystem management plans.
- Build the capacity of community-based civil society organisations to plan and implement field level sustainable land management activities.

## **Output 3.2:**

- Prepare SDU portfolio of micro-project proposals.
- Screen SDU portfolio of micro-project proposals according to the eligibility criteria.
- Fund and implement eligible micro-projects.

## **Output 3.3:**

- Assess the constraints and opportunities for environmentally sensitive tourism within the High Pamir and Pamir Alai mountains
- Develop with the local communities a 'master plan' for the commercial equitable development of environmentally sensitive trekking, ecotourism (wildlife watching and botanical tours) and limited trophy hunting based livelihood enterprises
- Develop the tourism infrastructure and market it within and outside Central Asia.

## **Output 4.1:**

- Develop and test a vulnerability analysis framework for assessing the impact of land degradation on mountain communities.
- Undertake baseline studies using the vulnerability analysis framework.
- Conduct follow up midterm and final year studies to determine changes in vulnerability and assess the impact of sustainable land management on livelihoods and economic well-being.

## **Output 4.2:**

- Internationally renowned academic institutions invited to submit case study proposals
- Screening and commissioning of case studies.
- Conduct at least three (one/geographic subregion) in-depth case studies to identify generic lessons that can be learnt from project experience.

## **Output 4.3:**

- Identify and review the project impact (environmental and socio-economic).
- Evaluate efficiency and effectiveness of project design and implementation.

- Review and refine the process used to formulate the enabling legal and institutional framework.
- Prepare a set of generic guidelines for the design and implementation of sustainable land management interventions, and the formulation of enabling legal and institutional frameworks, within comparable transboundary mountain regions within Asia and elsewhere.
- Review and disseminate the generic guidelines at an international workshop/expert consultation held within the region.

#### **Output 4.4:**

- Review the outputs from components 4.1-4.3 to determine the scope for up-scaling and replication of project interventions.
- Develop recommendations for: (i) up-scaling activities to cover the rest of the High Pamir and Pamir Alai Mountain region; and (ii) replicating the project approach in comparable trans-boundary mountain regions within Asia and elsewhere.
- Determine the lessons from project experience that can contribute to the further development and refinement of GEF OP#15 strategic priorities.

#### **Output 5.1:**

- Establishment of the IPPSC and the two NPSCs.
- Appointment of two NPHs and a RPO.
- Recruitment of 2 NPOs.
- Operationalisation of the 2 NPOs (including the appointment/ secondment of the technical and administrative support staff for each office)
- Appointment of the REAG.

#### **Output 5.2:**

- Develop a harmonised M&E system with verifiable indicators for assessing changes in land degradation status and socio-economic well being within the region.
- Develop a harmonised M&E system for assessing the impact of changes in the legal, regulatory, policy and institutional environment for sustainable land management at the regional and local level
- within the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains.
- Undertake baseline land degradation status, and socio-economic situation, assessments within representative SDUs.
- Undertake periodic follow up studies to determine changes in the base-line data and project impact.

### **Annex 3 Evaluation programme**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Venue</b>
<b>Tuesday, 15 May 2012</b>			
TDM	Travel to Bishkek, <b>Kyrgyzstan</b>	Francis, Firuz	
<b>Wednesday, 16 May 2012, PALM Kyrgyzstan</b>			
09:00 – 11:00	Mr.Mamatov Tologon, PALM KG Manager, Scientific Secretary of the International	Francis, Firuz	PALM office

	Institute of Mountains;		
11:00 – 12:00	Mr.Anarbaev Maksatbek, PALM KG Administrative and Financial Officer, Head of Planning Department of the National Center for Mountain Regions Development of the Kyrgyz Republic;	Francis, Firuz	PALM office
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch	Francis, Firuz	PALM office
13:00 – 14:30	Mr.Kubanychbekov Zairbek, PALM KG Knowledge and Communication Officer.	Francis, Firuz	PALM office
14:30 – 17:00	Planning for the field trip, deskwork.	Francis, Firuz, Tologan, Maksatbek.	PALM office
<b>Thursday, 17 May 2012 PALM Kyrgyzstan Field trips</b>			
	08:00 AM - Flight to Osh	Francis, Firuz and Maksatbek	
11-12:30	Arrive Josholu Sub District Unit and meetings with:  Professor, Kolanov Orunbek, Dean of Natural Sciences Faculty of the Osh State University, PALM KG Facilitator in Josholu Sub District Unit;  Toroev Kanybek, Head of Josholu Sub District Unit Administration, Alai Rayon	Francis, Firuz and Maksatbek	
12:00-13:00	Lunch	Francis, Firuz and Maksatbek	
13:00 -16:00	Visits and meetings with PALM beneficiaries in Josholu Sub District Unit	Francis, Firuz and Maksatbek	
16:00 - 16:30 16:30 – 17:00	Arrive Lenin Sub District Unit and meetings with:  Dr. Attokurov Aibek, Director of Institute of Ecology of the Osh Technological University, PALM KG Facilitator in Lenin Sub District Unit;  Mr.Saliev Abdymital, Head of Lenin Sub District Unit Administration, Alai Rayon	Francis, Firuz and Maksatbek	

17:00 – 19:00	Visits and meetings with PALM beneficiaries in Lenin Sub District Unit	Francis, Firuz and Maksatbek	
<b>Friday, 18 May 2012 PALM Kyrgyzstan Field trips</b>			
08:00 – 12:00	Visits and meetings with PALM beneficiaries in Lenin Sub District Unit	Francis, Firuz and Maksatbek	
12:00-13:00	Lunch	Francis, Firuz and Maksatbek	
13:00 – 18:00	13:00 PM - Leave Lenin Sub District Unit (Sogondu village) – Arrive Kashka-Suu Sub District Unit	Francis, Firuz and Maksatbek	
18:00 – 18:30	Andarov Kutbidin, PALM KG Facilitator in Kashka-Suu Sub District Unit;	Francis, Firuz and Maksatbek	
18:30 – 19:30	Visits and meetings with PALM beneficiaries in Kashka-Suu Sub District Unit	Francis, Firuz and Maksatbek	
<b>Saturday, 19 May 2012 PALM Kyrgyzstan Field trips</b>			
08:30 – 12:00	Until 12:00 PM Visits and meetings with PALM beneficiaries in Kashka-Suu Sub District Unit	Francis, Firuz and Maksatbek	
12:00-13:00	Lunch	Francis, Firuz and Maksatbek	
13:00 – 18:00	13:00 PM – Leave Kashka-Suu Sub District Unit  18:00 PM – Arrive Osh	Francis, Firuz and Maksatbek	
18:00 – 19:30	Dinner with:  Makhammadov Akhmadzhan, Deputy Governor, Osh Oblast (Co-Director of PALM National Steering Committee, Head of National Coordination Council on realization the Strategy and Action Plan (PAT SAP);  Dr. Attokurov Kursantbek, Director of College of Medicine of the Osh State University, PALM KG Field Officer;	Francis, Firuz and Maksatbek	
<b>Sunday, 19 May 2012 PALM Kyrgyzstan Field trips</b>			

08:00	Flight to Bishkek Day off (Sunday)	Francis, Firuz and Maksatbek	
<b>Monday, 21 May 2012 PALM Kyrgyzstan</b>			
09:00 – 10:00	Professor, Irina Mukambaeva, Kyrgyz National University (Expert Economist);	Francis, Firuz	PALM office
10:00 – 11:00	Dr.Daiyrbek Dzhancharov, Expert of the World Bank Project “Competitiveness and Agribusiness Center” (Expert on Livestock and Pasture Management);	Francis, Firuz	PALM office
11:00 – 12:00	Mr.Mambetov Omurbek, Consultant of the FAO Office in KG (Expert Agronomist);	Francis, Firuz	PALM office
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch		
13:00 – 14:00	Ms.Mambetaipova Cholpon, Head of International Relationship Department of the Ministry of Social Development (Social Expert);	Francis, Firuz	PALM office
14:00 – 15:00	Dr.Usupbaev Adilet, Senior Scientist of the National Academy of Science (Ecosystem Expert).	Francis, Firuz	PALM office
15:00 – 17:00	Desk work		
<b>Tuesday-Wednesday, 22-23 May 2012 PALM Kyrgyzstan</b>			
08:30 – 17:00	Project completion workshop PALM project, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.	Francis, Firuz	PALM office
<b>Tuesday, 29 May 2012</b>			
	Travel to Tajikistan	Francis, Firuz	
14:00 – 15:00	Meeting Mr. Djalil Buzrukov, Chief of SIC ISDC, Tajikistan branch.	Francis, Firuz	‘Vefa’ Center
15:00 -17:00	Deskwork	Francis, Firuz	‘Vefa’ Center
<b>Monday, 04 June 2012 PALM Tajikistan</b>			
09:00 – 10:00	Meetings in Dushanbe with PALM national project staff, Mr. Murod Ergashev.	Francis, Firuz,	PALM project office
11:00 – 12:00	Meeting with Nurali Saidov, Chairperson of	Francis, Firuz,	State Agency for

	State Agency for Protected Areas.		Protected Area office
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch	Francis, Firuz, Murod Ergashev	
14:00 – 15:00	Meeting with Timur Nazarov. Committee for Environmental Protection, PALM project Consultant.	Francis, Firuz,	PALM project office
15:00 – 16:00	Meeting with Murod Aminjonov, PALM project Consultant.	Francis, Firuz, Murod Ergashev	Soil Science Research Institute
16:00 – 17:00	Meeting with Mr. Salimov Talbak, Chairperson of Committee for Environmental Protection.	Francis, Firuz	Committee for Environmental Protection
<b>Tuesday, 05 June 2012 PALM Tajikistan</b>			
09:30 – 10:30	Meetings with Safarov Olimjon, Parliament of Tajikistan.	Francis, Firuz,	Parliament of Tajikistan
10:30 – 12:00	Meeting with Khudodod Aknazarov, Pamir Biological Institute	Francis, Firuz,	PALM office
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch	Francis, Firuz, Murod Ergashev	
14:00 – 16:00	Meeting with Isrorov Isror, Deputy Chairman of GBAO province.	Francis, Firuz, Murod Ergashev	PALM office
16:00 – 17:00	Deskwork, Review and consolidation of information, planning of field trips.	Francis, Firuz	PALM project office
<b>Wednesday, 06 June 2012 PALM Tajikistan</b>			
09:00 – 12:00	Meeting with Mirzohaydar Isoev, UNDP Tajikistan.	Francis, Firuz,	UNDP E&E programme office
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch	Francis, Firuz,	
15:30 – 17:00	Overview and discussing the Kazakhstan REAP staff responds. If needed to call and clarify the stated responds.	Francis, Firuz,	CACILM MCB office
<b>Thursday, 07 June 2012 PALM Tajikistan</b>			
09:00 – 11:00	Deskwork, Review and consolidation of information. Planning of field trip.	Francis, Firuz	

11:00 – 17:00	Travel to PALM sites	Francis, Firuz	
08 - 11 June 2012 PALM			
09:30 – 12:00	PALM project sites, Jirgatal district (yangishahr, Pildon, Jirgatal sites).	Francis, Firuz, Murod Ergashev	
Tuesday, 12 June			
	Return to Dushanbe and wrap up	Francis, Firuz,	
Wednesday, 13 June			
Travel to Bangkok		Francis	
Thursday-Friday 14-15 June			
Meeting PALM with Task manager and others			
Saturday 16 June			
Return home base		Francis	

## Annex 4 Summary of co-financing

### Co-financing actual

Co financing (Type/Source)	IA own Financing (mill US\$)		Government  (mill US\$)		Other*  (mill US\$)		Total  (mill US\$)		Total  Disbursed (mill US\$)
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	
– Grants									
– UNEP		<sup>112</sup>							
– Tajik National Park			600,000	nil			600,000	nil	
– Kyrgyz National Park							nil	nil	
– Osh University					nil	14,000	nil	14,000	14,000
– Tajik Agricultural Academy					nil	1,384	nil	1,384	1,384
– UNU (in Bonn) – UNU (Media Centre)					200,000	346,851	200,000	346,851	346,851
– IAEA					270,000	374,164	270,000	374,164	374,164

<sup>112</sup> Non reported in the Terminal Report

– ICARDA					nil			nil	
– UNESCO					20,000	cancelled	20,000	nil	
– AKF/MSDSP					1,640,000	1,689,254	1,640,000	1,689,254	1,689,254
– The Mountain Institute					nil	cancelled			
– Hokkaido University					70,000	71,850	70,000	71,850	71,850
– Nihon University					44,400	14,205	44,400	14,205	14,205
– CDE					nil	5,780	nil	5,780	5,780
– UNE					232,000	77,300	232,000	77,300	77,300
– CAIAG					nil				
– IDG-CRC					nil	31,886	nil	31,886	31,886
– UEA					nil				
– ADB project in Tajikistan					nil				
– UCA					14,000	27,500	14,000	27,500	27,500
– Centre for Geoinf. (Z-GIS)					nil				
– MGG Kashemiri Z.					nil				
– Kyrgyz GIS Centre					nil				
– NGO Kishovarz					nil				

– NCCR (via N. Guiniso)					nil	14,622	nil	14,622	14,622
– Bioresurs					nil				
– Rural Development Fund					nil	9,631	nil	9,631	9,631
– Loans	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	
– Credits	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	
– Equity investments	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	
– In-kind support									
– UNEP		113							
– Tajik National Park				432,710					432,710
– Kyrgyz National Park				666,245					666,245
– Osh University					75,000	89,990			89,990
– Tajik Agricultural Academy					50,000	nil	50,000	nil	
– UNU (in Bonn) – UNU (Media Centre)					1,659,300	1,346,261	1,659,300	1,346,261	1,346,261
– IAEA					30,000	nil	30,000	nil	

<sup>113</sup> Non reported in the Terminal Report

– ICARDA					280,000	cancelled	280,000	cancelled	
– UNESCO					50,000	nil	50,000	nil	
– AKF/MSDSP					nil				
– The Mountain Institute					85,000	cancelled	85,000	cancelled	
– Hokkaido University					330,000	472,218	330,000	472,218	472,218
– Nihon University					75,600	94,060	75,600	94,060	94,060
– CDE					100,000	273,492	100,000	273,492	273,492
– UNE					18,000	229,482	18,000	229,482	229,482
– CAIAG					418,080	290,400	418,080	290,400	290,400
– IDG-CRC					50,000	30,584	50,000	30,584	30,584
– UEA					nil	8,000	nil	8,000	8,000
– ADB project in Tajikistan					nil	20,000	nil	20,000	20,000
– UCA					16,000	30,500	16,000	30,500	30,500
– Centre for Geoinf. (Z-GIS)					14,000	17,180	14,000	17,180	17,180
– MGG Kashemiri Z.					3,750	3,889	3,750	3,889	3,889
– Kyrgyz GIS Centre					2,000	2,747	2,000	2,747	2,747
– NGO Kishovarz					6,925	6,925	6,925	6,925	6,925

– NCCR (via N. Guiniso)					30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000
– Bioresurs					6,000	nil	6,000	nil	
– Rural Development Fund					10,714	nil	10,714	nil	
– Totals			600,000	1,098,955	5,800,769	5,624,155	5,800,769	5,624,155	6,723,110

\*This refers to contributions mobilized for the project from other multilateral agencies, bilateral development cooperation agencies, NGOs, the private sector and beneficiaries



## Project costs: Budgeted vs. Actual

Component	Estimated cost at design (US\$)	Actual cost (US\$)	Expenditure ratio (actual/planned)	Project balance (US\$)
Project personnel	344,549	302,042	0.876	42,507
Consultants	103,236	94,871	0.918	8,365
Administrative support	38,813	31,596	0.814	7,217
Travel (above staff)	148,528	125,158	0.842	23,369
Sub-contracts	1,643,316	1,563,559	0.951	79,756
Training	204,852	181,739	0.887	23,112
Meetings & conferences	176,405	122,624	0.695	53,781
Expendable equipment	20,912	17,813	0.851	3,099
Non-expendable equipment	51,437	41,437	0.805	10,000
Operation & maintenance	37,175	30,447	0.819	6,728
Reporting costs	114,386	66,247	0.597	48,138
Miscellaneous	31,385	25,271	0.805	6,114
Evaluation	85,000	49,665	0.584	35,334
Total	3,000,000	2,652,473	0.884	347,526

## Annex 5 Review of project design

61. Summary of project design ratings:

Criteria	Rating
<b>Overall rating for Relevance</b>	<b>Satisfactory:</b> There was broad alignment with UNEP, GEF, Regional and stakeholder priorities and needs
<b>Overall rating for Intended Results and Causality</b>	<b>Satisfactory:</b> the project's strategy was sufficiently robust to achieve the objective but there are concerns about the time available and the need to follow a

	<i>process. However, this appears to have been addressed during the inception phase and the TE at this point feels there is sufficient evidence for a Satisfactory rating unless proved otherwise during the field work</i>
<b>Overall rating for Efficiency</b>	<b>Satisfactory:</b> the design had tried to tie the project in closely with existing structures, institutions and on-going programmes
<b>Overall rating for Sustainability / Replication and Catalytic Effects</b>	<b>Satisfactory:</b> for the time it was designed and the disparate nature of regional collaboration the project presented a reasonable strategy and in all likelihood the most efficient way of driving the process of transboundary cooperation and to an extent addressing some of the inequalities in land and resource tenure at the local level (although the latter might have been more explicit in the design and this will be assessed during the field work)
<b>Overall rating for Risk Identification and Social Safeguards</b>	<b>Moderately Satisfactory:</b> the project design would have benefited from a clearer risk log (described above) but is deserving of the benefit of the doubt.
<b>Overall rating for Governance and Supervision Arrangements</b>	<b>Satisfactory:</b> the governance model described by the Project Document was sufficient, even progressive for the region at the time and intelligently addressed the issue of a two-country project
<b>Overall rating for Management, Execution and Partnership Arrangements</b>	<b>Satisfactory:</b> the management, execution and partnership arrangements described by the Project Document, for what was a complex project, are satisfactory
<b>Overall rating for Financial Planning / budgeting</b>	<b>Satisfactory:</b> there were clear instructions for financial reporting and budgeting
<b>Overall rating for Monitoring</b>	<b>Satisfactory:</b> There was adequate provision and design for monitoring
<b>Overall rating for Evaluation</b>	<b>Satisfactory:</b> there was a robust plan for monitoring evaluation

## Project relevance

### Sub-regional environmental relevance

62. The Project Document built a strong case for an intervention in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai mountains stating that: *“Land degradation is adversely affecting the structure and functional integrity of the ecosystems of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai mountains, and threatens their crucial ecological function as the ‘water towers’ of Central Asia. Continuing degradation within this trans-boundary region will have a negative impact on agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods in the adjacent downstream lowlands, stretching down to the endangered Aral Sea. The project area also lies at the heart of one of Central Asia’s mountain biodiversity hotspots. Current levels of habitat degradation are a threat to the survival of many of the region’s globally vulnerable species of fauna and flora. Increased poverty and economic vulnerability amongst the inhabitants of the region, following the enforced transformation to a market economy after the collapse of the Soviet Union, lies at the root of much of the current ecosystem degradation. In particular the lack of a reliable and*

*affordable supply of electricity, and the expense of imported fossil fuels (coal, paraffin and diesel) for cooking and heating, has forced people to turn to the exploitation of locally available biomass resources (firewood, shrubs, dung and peat) and this is the principle cause of the most severe land degradation to be found within the region”<sup>114</sup>.*

63. While there were a number of statements that could be challenged about “ecosystem stability” or the “enforced transformation to a market economy” the Project Document builds a convincing case for a project intervention in terms of biodiversity conservation *per se*, conserving the ecosystem services of the area and the social implications of unsustainable land use in terms of human suffering.

## **Sub-regional policy relevance**

64. The PALM project is sufficiently aligned with a number of regional and national policy initiatives such as, *inter alia*, the Regional Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Mountain Area Development<sup>115</sup> (RSAPSMAD), the Regional Environmental Action Plan (REAP) for Central Asia<sup>116</sup>, prepared at the official request of the Ministers of Environment of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, has identified mountain eco-systems degradation as one of the five priority issues, and the Sub-regional Action Programme for the Central Asian Countries on Combating Desertification within the UNCCD Context (SRAP/CD)<sup>117</sup>.

65. The project’s component activities appear to have been designed to support the national as well as the broader regional environmental and development strategies of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, with regard to the sustainable management of the natural resources of their mountainous regions. As part of their obligations, as signatories to the UNCCD in 2000, both countries have prepared comprehensive national action plans (NAP) to combat desertification which given the arid and semi-arid nature of the project area and their role in water provisioning are highly relevant to the PALM project.

66. Both countries have developed National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (BSAPs) that identify the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai mountains as centres of endemism and biodiversity hotspots.

## **UNEP mandate and policy relevance**

67. The objectives of the PALM project were clearly relevant to the UNEP mandate and policies of the time as outlined in the UNEP Sub-programme 3 (Policy Implementation, Section 2) which has an objective:

*“The overall objective of the sub-programme is to enhance the human, technical and institutional capacity of Governments and other stakeholders to implement environmental policy and to improve environmental management”*

68. The expected outcomes being:

*“Strengthened capacity of Governments and other relevant stakeholders in the implementation of environmental policies and programmes for environmental management in the context of sustainable development”*

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<sup>114</sup> Project Executive Summary p. 2

<sup>115</sup> Prepared in 2001 with the support of ADB Project RETA #5878-REG “Regional Cooperation for Sustainable Mountain Development in Central Asia”.

<sup>116</sup> The REAP was presented in September 2001 at the Environment Ministerial Conference in Almaty, Kazakhstan when it was approved by the Interstate Sustainable Development Commission (ISDC) of Central Asia.

<sup>117</sup> The text of which was agreed to, in Havana Cuba 3rd September 2003, by the countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

*“Enhanced capacity at the international, regional and national levels to better prevent, prepare for, respond to and mitigate the impacts of environmental emergencies and/or disasters with impacts on the environment”*

*“Enhanced cooperation and capacity at the international and national levels for the implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, as endorsed at the first Global Programme of Action (GPA) Intergovernmental Review Meeting, held in Montreal, Canada in November 2001 (UNEP/GCSS VII.6), and the World Summit on Sustainable Development”*

*“Greater availability and use of biodiversity information and policy analysis products for developing countries and multilateral environmental agreements bodies”*

69. The Project Document (Section 4, a), p. 11) states that:

*“As Implementing Agency (IA), UNEP’s role in GEF is detailed in the Action Plan on Complementarity Between the Activities Undertaken by UNEP under the GEF and its Programme of Work (1999). This Project addresses the Action Plan’s strategic objective of “promoting multi-country cooperation directed to achieving global environmental benefits”. It will do this by establishing international cooperation mechanisms and the sharing of knowledge of good practice between countries. The Project is also consistent with the Land Use Management and Soil Conservation Policy of UNEP (UNEP/GC.22/INF/25) that emphasizes UNEP’s role in addressing the environmental dimensions of land use management and stresses its role in supporting the implementation of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification”*

## **GEF focal areas, strategic priorities and operational programmes relevance**

70. The TE agrees, to an extent, with the statement in the Project Document (Draft Full Project Brief, Revised 25 November 2005, p. 6, para. 1) that:

*“The project, Sustainable Land Management in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains - an Integrated and Trans-boundary Initiative in Central Asia, has been designed to make a contribution to the overall operational goal of the GEF focal area on land degradation, by catalyzing partnerships between concerned institutions, land users, and other stakeholders, at the community, local government, national and trans-boundary regional levels, with the aim of addressing the interlinked problems of land degradation and poverty within one of Central Asia’s ‘water towers’ and mountain biodiversity hotspots. It likewise conforms to the objective of the Operational Program on Sustainable Land Management (OP#15) in that its component activities are designed to mitigate the causes and negative impacts of land degradation on the structure and functional integrity of the ecosystems of the High Pamir and Pamir Alai Mountains. The project will address the GEF Sustainable Land Management Strategic Priority on Targeted Capacity Building (SLM-1) by contributing to the improvement of the enabling technological, institutional, policy and legislative environment for sustainable land management within the High Pamir and Pamir Alai mountain region, at the trans-boundary, national and local levels. The project will also support the development and implementation of innovative sustainable land management practices, building where possible on indigenous ones, in line with SLM-2. Through the development of a trans-boundary strategic planning framework and action plan the project will pursue a strategic approach to identifying*

the region's land degradation threats, as well as determining the constraints to, and options for, overcoming them".

71. The GEF OP#15, Sustainable Land Management, which to a large extent will be the median against which the Project's performance will be judged, is defined (at the time) by the document Operational Program on Sustainable Land Management (OP#15) revised in 2003.

72. Within GEF OP#15 Land degradation is broadly defined as "... any form of deterioration of the natural potential of land that affects ecosystem integrity either in terms of reducing its sustainable ecological productivity or in terms of its native biological richness and maintenance of resilience."<sup>118</sup>

73. The expected **outcomes** of GEF-supported activities on sustainable land management include the following:

- Institutional and human resource capacity is strengthened to improve sustainable land management planning and implementation to achieve global environment benefits within the context of sustainable development.
- The policy, regulatory and economic incentive framework is strengthened to facilitate wider adoption of sustainable land management practices across sectors as a country addresses multiple demands on land resources for economic activities, preservation of the structure and functional integrity of ecosystems, and other activities.
- Improvement in the economic productivity of land under sustainable management and the preservation or restoration of the structure and functional integrity of ecosystems.

74. The project addresses aspects of GEF Sustainable Land Management Strategic Priority on *Targeted Capacity Building* (SLM-1) and supports the development and implementation of innovative sustainable land management practices, building where possible on indigenous systems (SLM-2).

## Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building (BSP)

75. The PALM project outcomes and objectives are in line with the Bali Strategic Plan, indeed they are closely aligned with the BSP in as much as there is an emphasis on technocratic aspects in components I, II and IV and a focus of attention on learning lessons. The TE does not draw any conclusion from this at this point in the evaluation process but merely notes that by the final design there was considerable reliance upon science for addressing what might arguably be considered to be an adaptive and not a technical challenge requiring a collective action rather than the introduction of any new technologies.

## Sustainability

76. Section 4.2 of the Project Document (p. 29, para. 128, 129) provides the project's assessment of sustainability. No mention is made of environmental or socio-political sustainability. The only measures of sustainability are Financial Sustainability and Institutional Sustainability. The TE is at something of a loss to explain this and will attempt to understand the reasoning behind this approach and why it could be that this was not picked up in the review or at the Inception Phase. While the STAP Technical Review (Annex 10, Project Document, section 3.7. p. 86) highlights the positive aspects of "*communities [are] being engaged in ecosystem assessment and land use planning*". However, one might have felt that more attention might have been given to socio-political sustainability given that "*in developing world the delivery of the products of professional science and technology to rural communities has consistently been marked by asymmetrical relationships*" and that "*firstly, science and technology are associated with power – the entire power apparatus of government, international and national development agencies, private capital and*

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<sup>118</sup> GEF1999. Report of the STAP Expert Group Workshop on Land Degradation (GEF/C.14/Inf. 15)

*bureaucracy – which determines in large part what rural communities can or cannot do. The second aspect is a pervasive assumption of the inherent superiority of professional science and technology over the abilities of rural people to understand and manage the resource base on which they depend for their livelihood” (Murphree, et al, 1998)*

## **Institutional sustainability**

77. *“The project will be working with existing institutions, at both the national and local government levels, all of which will continue to exist post project. The project’s institutional capacity building activities (component 2.1) are designed to ensure that personnel in both private and public sector institutions at the national and local levels will have the skills required to enable them to continue supporting project initiated activities post project. The project will assist in the development of a trans-boundary institutional, policy and regulatory coordination mechanism for combating ecosystem degradation and promoting sustainable land management within the High Pamir and Pamir Alai Mountain region. This need will continue to be there post project, and it is anticipated that the two counties will want the necessary inter-agency coordination to continue. The modality of post-project continuity of the established coordination mechanisms at the national and regional level will be given due attention in the midterm review when the interests and capabilities of the stakeholder institutions could be properly assessed”.* The TE broadly agrees with these statements, notwithstanding the earlier comments about the role of non-state and non-institutional actors in the SLM and natural resources management (Section 3.2, para. 28).

## **Financial sustainability**

78. *“Financial sustainability of the project will be ensured through mainstreaming the concepts and principles of sustainable land management into the environmental management, and economic development, plans and policies of those institutions with administrative and technical responsibility for economic development, environmental preservation, and land use, within the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains. It is also anticipated that once the national and local government authorities, in both countries, see that combating ecosystem resource degradation through sustainable land management offers not only environmental benefits, but also clear economic ones, they will be prepared to allocate more of their revenue budgets to sustaining such activities. Likewise the donor community can be expected to provide additional financial support for the community-based integrated land use planning, and ecosystem resource management approach of the GEF supported improvement, when they see this as reducing the region’s need for short term food aid and other social welfare support programs. Arrangements for addressing specific needs for post-project financing e.g. of the established regional coordination mechanisms, and up-scaling of project activities, will be incorporated in the regional development strategy”.* Again a critical analysis of this statement leaves one feeling that the project design saw a continued dependency of local communities on external support. It is hard to find any mention of the necessary transfer of “power”, internalising the authority and responsibility as well as the costs and benefits of sustainable land management within the system that are a very necessary basis for SLM at the community level.

79. For instance there is no mention of the high value hunting resources that could, under the right conditions, provide both the income and the motivation for the sustainable management of marginal and vulnerable habitats. Admittedly this is a very big step to take in a political system that is still extremely centralised and regards most of these resources as the property of the state; but there are sufficient examples of why this is necessary and even a small step in this direction could be viewed in a very positive light by the evaluation, if for instance there had been more analysis and a clear use of adaptive management approaches.

## **Measures planned to promote replication and up-scaling (Replicability)**

80. The Project Document's strategy to promote up-scaling and replication is given as a two-fold approach (Project Document, section 4.3, p. 30, para 130):

*"One of the principal justifications for GEF support for this project is that the lessons learnt from implementation of the component tasks and activities will be replicable in similar high altitude mountain regions in Central Asia and elsewhere. In particular, under component 4, experience gained from project implementation will be used to develop:*

- i. a generic guidelines framework for the design and implementation of sustainable land management activities in comparable trans-boundary mountain regions within Asia and elsewhere.*
- ii. generic guidelines for the formulation of enabling legal and institutional frameworks for the protection and sustainable management of the ecosystem resources of high altitude mountain regions.*

*The concrete possibilities for replication of the project's experience in other trans-boundary mountain ranges in Asia, such as the Tien Shan, Altay Shan, Hindu Kush, Karakorum and Himalaya, will be explored in the course of the project in close collaboration with relevant regional networks, such as the ICIMOD coordinated PARDYP Network (including institutions from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Myanmar, Bhutan and China), as well as in the broader framework of the UNU Global Mountain Partnership Programme"*

81. The TE makes the following comments on these statements: Given that the project was dealing with a socio-ecosystem and one which is highly complex and unpredictable but might largely be shaped by the way that local rural communities respond to different sets of circumstances, the process of developing SLM systems at the community level is as important as any adoption of new technologies because it will be at this level that decisions are made which directly impact upon the system. If the project was working with a process (*i.e.* one which built social capital and empowered local communities to sustainably manage and benefit from natural resources) then *time* would play a large part in the success or failure of the intervention. Given that rural communities are inherently conservative and the issue of *trust* plays an important part in building the lasting relationships between state, institutions and local communities the project was originally intended to last for eight years but its timeframe was reduced to four years. Therefore it would be necessary to be more cautious about any perceived lessons in order to avoid them coming to be considered 'best practice' without adequate evidence. Issues where there might appear to be potential for widely applicable lessons to be learnt, but where further validation would be required, might be explored. The importance of this becomes clear when one considers the following statement from the Project Brief (section 1.8, p. 15, para. 39):

*"No comprehensive studies have been undertaken into the current degradation status of the ecosystem resources of the High Pamir and Pamir Alai Mountains. As a result there is no base-line quantitative information on the areal extent or severity of the different types of land degradation that are believed to have occurred in the past, or are currently occurring. However interviews conducted during the PDF-B phase studies, with local land users and other key informants, provide strong anecdotal evidence that degradation is occurring and has got considerably worse in the last 10 or so years"*

82. That the "threat" was based upon anecdotal evidence and the response would have had barely had time to have any measurable effect (a fact that is illustrated by the growth rates of the woody shrub *teresken*, *Eurotia ceratoides*) makes it risky indeed to draw generic lessons and any such guidelines would be largely untested.

83. Without actually seeing what lessons will be drawn from the project's experience the TE feels that the claims made in the Project Document, in light of the reduced timeframe from eight to four years, were likely to be overblown.

## **Preparation and readiness**

### **Implementation arrangements**

84. The TE ToR provides a more detailed account of the projects implementation arrangements:

*"The Project's implementation agency is UNEP while the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS) in Bonn, Germany, is the international executing agency for the project. As such it is responsible for oversight and coordination of project activities among the different project partners.*

*National Executing Agencies (NEAs) assigned by the Governments of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are responsible for overall project execution in their respective countries.*

*In Kyrgyzstan, the project is executed by the National Center for Mountain Regions Development (NCMRD), which hosts the national project implementation office in Bishkek. A field office, coordinating the execution of field level activities was established on the premises of the University of Osh and is sub-contracted by the Kyrgyz NEA. The national and field officers are responsible for the recruitment of project personnel and consultants and for coordination of the work of all project partners working in Kyrgyzstan. National research agencies undertaking adaptive research, however, are directly sub-contracted by UNU.*

*In Tajikistan, the project is executed by Center for Support and Development of Protected Areas in Tajikistan, which hosts the national project office in Dushanbe and two field offices – one in Khorog and one in Jirgital. Unlike in Kyrgyzstan, community-based land use planning activities in Tajikistan are implemented by a separate agency, namely, MSDSP, which is directly sub-contracted by UNU. UNU also sub-contracts Tajik research agencies and NGOs undertaking adaptive research.*

*Direct facilitation of project activities at the ten project pilot sites (six in Tajikistan and four in Kyrgyzstan) is undertaken from field facilitators based at the pilot sites or in larger nearby settlements.*

*Overall project implementation is overseen by UNEP and an International Steering Committee (ISC) comprising of senior representatives from the GEF Implementing and Executing Agencies for the project, from key government agencies in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, as well as from the major co-financing partners. Two National Steering Committees oversee project work flow and implementation in each of the project countries."*

85. The Midterm Review noted that: *"Support to Country Programmes: The Regional Project Implementation Unit (RPIU) experienced a number of changes during project preparation and implementation. It was initially based at the UN Center in Tokyo, Japan during project preparation, before shifting to Bonn, Germany at the start of project implementation, first at the UNU Vice-Rectorate in Europe (UNU-ViE) in September 2007. Due to an internal re-organization, in the second half of 2008, the RPIU was moved to the UNU Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS). Initial ideas during the PDF B phase (when an 8 year project was intended) to base the RPIU in one of the two project countries were eventually discarded in favour of its current location"* (MTR Section 2.2.1, p. 7, para. 29).

86. The TE notes that this was a complex arrangement for the project's implementation that appears to have worked efficiently for the purposes of implementing the project. However, there does not appear to be any structure to include the sub-district unit, the *Jamoat* in Tajikistan and the *Aiyl Okmet* in Kyrgyzstan in the implementation of the project. Quiet what implications this might have for the sustainability of the project will be examined by the TE.

## Financial planning

87. The Project Document sets out the financial reporting in section V, p. 42, para. 166 with a comprehensive list of annexes (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 [co-financing]).

88. There appears to have been reasonable and elaborate financial planning and, as was reflected in the MTR, there were initial problems in rolling this out to the national level; however, these appear to have been addressed following the MTR. In particular "in addition the total expenditures incurred during the year ending 31 December certified by a duly authorised official, should be reported in an opinion by a recognized firm of public accountants and should be dispatched to UNEP within 180 days, (*i.e.* by 30 June)". It is not clear whether there was a request for auditing (or indeed a need for auditing). The TE will try to determine whether this was necessary.

## Monitoring of co-financing

89. According to GEF logic, co-financing should be considered as part of the 'GEF project' and be essential for the achievement of its objective, it should be subject to continuous monitoring in order to determine whether and how it continues to complement the GEF funds invested in the project.

90. There is every indication that the co-financing, as well as the monitoring of the co-financing, was an integral component of the project's monitoring framework and has been regularly monitored and accounted. The TE evaluation report will provide a full account of expected, realized and leveraged co-financing.

## Monitoring and evaluation design

91. The Project Document describes a relatively standard approach to project monitoring and evaluation.

Type of M&E activity	Responsible Parties	Time frame	Compliance	Comments
Inception Workshop (IW)	Executing Agency	Within first two months of project start up	Yes	Changes to LFM but LFM not revisited
Inception Report	Executing Agency	Immediately following IW	Yes	Prepared in June 2008
PIR	UNEP ROAP	Annually	Yes	2008, 2009, 2010, 2011
Measurement of Means of Verification for Project Progress and Performance	Included in PIR	Annually prior to PIR and to the definition of annual work plans		LFM has not been updated since changes were made during the inception Phase
Steering Committee Meetings	ISC, Executing Agency	Following IW and annually thereafter.	Yes	Dates of ISC meetings?
Technical and periodic status	NPIU, Hired consultants as	As required	Yes	Reports submitted to

Type of M&E activity	Responsible Parties	Time frame	Compliance	Comments
reports	needed			Executing Agency
National MTR	National PIU	At the mid-point of project implementation and prior to the external MTR	Yes	
Mid-term External Evaluation	Executing Agency	At the mid-point of project implementation.	Yes	November 2010
Final External Evaluation	UNEP EO	At the end of project implementation	In progress	N/A
Terminal Report	Executing Agency, RPIU, & NPIU	At least one month before the end of the project	N/A	N/A
Audit	Executing Agency, UNEP	Yearly	No	No project-specific financial audit has been carried out
Visits to field sites	UNEP-ROAP, Executing Agency, RPIU, NPIU Government representatives	Yearly average ?	Yes	Regular PM field

92. The TE notes that changes were made to the LFM during the inception Phase and Inception Report. These changes were documented in the following way and were in line with project protocol in as much as:

- (a) Changes in outputs are reflected in the Inception report and approved during the Inception meeting
- (b) Changes in impact indicators are reflected in the PIR reports
- (c) Changes in activities were reflected in the project workplan, which was updated and approved by the ISC on an annual basis

93. However, the project's LFM was never revised to reflect these changes.. The TE will consider if this has had an impact upon the progress, in particular the ability to monitor both progress and process within the project, in particular the project will need to explain how the changes made during the Inception Phase were adequately tracked without revising the LFM. The LFM is the central monitoring tool for progress and performance of GEF projects and the failure to update and revise the LFM could suggest a weakness in the monitoring and evaluation, but this is not supported by the reporting which appears to have been diligent.

## Theory of Change and Review of Outcome to Impacts

94. Part of the UNEP-GEF project evaluation methodology requires the TE to carry out a Theory of Change (ToC) exercise in order to create a baseline which can be used to assess the actual project outcomes and impacts (expected and unexpected) during field visits and interviews.

95. Because final evaluations are carried out very soon after a project ends it is not always possible to identify the longer term impacts, the Global Environmental Benefits (GEBs) that might result from the project's interventions. A ToC exercise uses a methodology to try to identify what are

termed “intermediate states”, in other words is the project following a trajectory likely to result in an impact that equates to the global objectives (GEBs) of GEF funding. The ToC recognizes that the project and social, ecological and economic processes are operating at different timeframes and invariably there will be an intermediate state between completion of a project and the appearance of the impact(s) of the intervention.

96. It is not necessary to reiterate the ToC methodology<sup>119</sup> other than to note that it attempts to recreate the logical hierarchy of the project’s LFM, that is, how activities led to outputs, outputs contributed to outcomes and these outcomes will eventually result in an impact bringing about desirable change as measured by the GEF Global Environmental Benefits, which themselves can be determined from the relevant Operational Programme (in this instance OP#15 Sustainable Land Management, see Section 3.1.4 of this report).

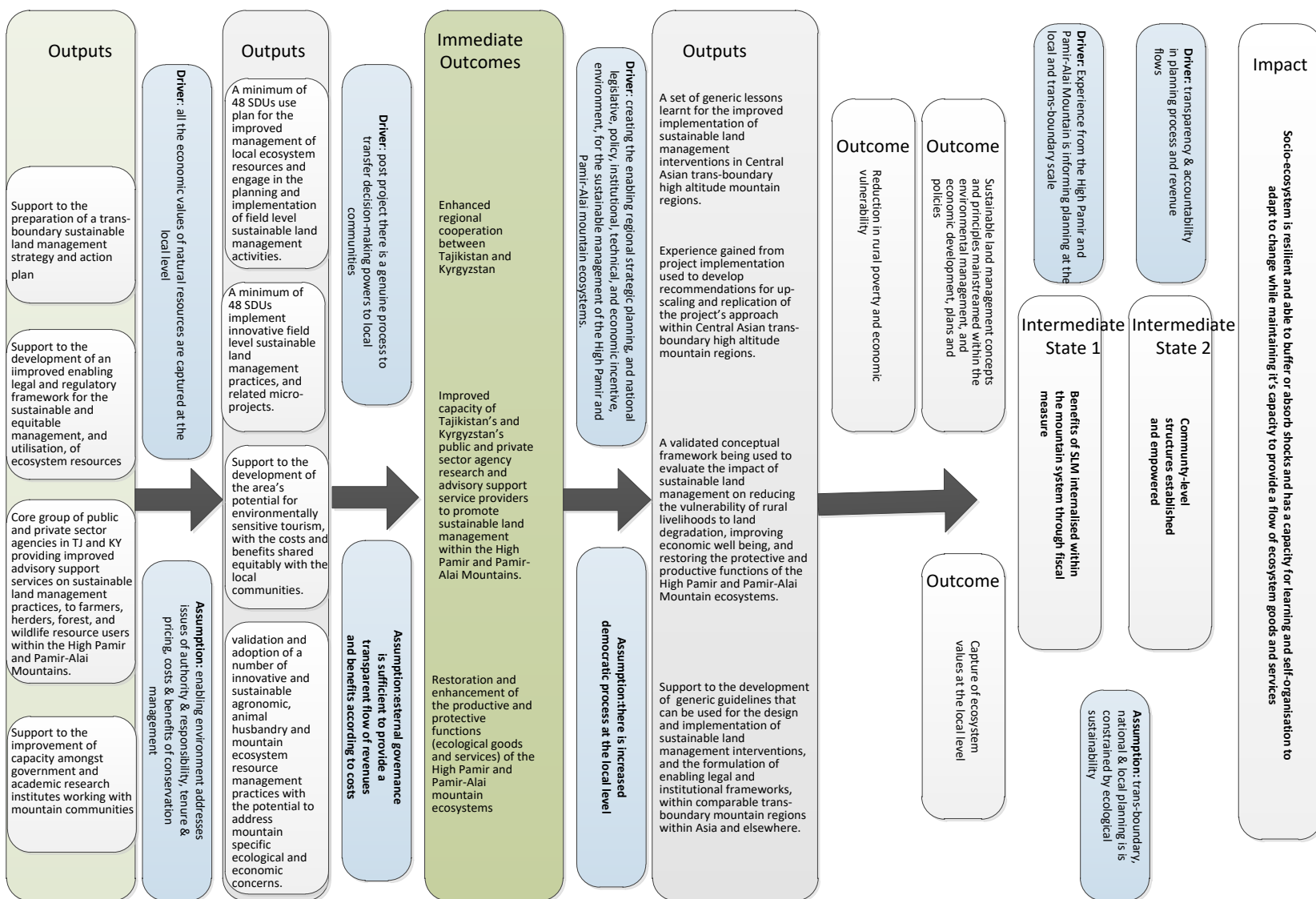
97. From this it is then theoretically possible to determine the Drivers at impact (the significant factors that if present are expected to contribute to the realization of the intended impacts and can be influenced by the project) and other levels and the Assumptions (the significant factors that if present are expected to contribute to the realization of the intended impacts but are largely beyond the control of the project). Based upon this analysis it should be possible to recognize if a project has produced sufficient changes and to identify the intermediate states, that is, whether what the project has put in place will bring about the long term changes and have a lasting impact.

98. The preliminary Theory of Change for the PALM project is presented in Table 2 below.

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<sup>119</sup> A detailed guidance on the ToC is attached to the TE Terms of Reference

## Project theory of change



## Annex 6 Monitoring and evaluation framework

Type of M&E activity	Responsible Parties	Time frame	Compliance	Comments
Inception Workshop (IW)	Executing Agency	Within first two months of project start up	Yes	Changes made to LFM
Inception Report	Executing Agency	Immediately following IW	Yes	Prepared in June 2008
PIR	UNEP and REA	Annually	Yes	2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
Measurement of Means of Verification for Project Progress and Performance	Included in PIR	Annually prior to PIR and to the definition of annual work plans		LFM has not been updated since changes were made during the first ISC meeting or shared with the NEAs. A definitive LFM was not produced until the Terminal Report
Steering Committee Meetings	ISC, Executing Agency	Following IW and annually thereafter.	Yes	Twice yearly
Technical and periodic status reports	NEA(s), Hired consultants as needed	As required	Yes	Reports submitted to Executing Agency
MTR including national and regional programs	REA, NEAs and UNEP	At the mid-point of project implementation and prior to the external MTR	Yes	July - September 2010, Final Report November 2010, approximately delayed with one year late due to delays in starting up the project
Mid-term Review	Executing Agency	At the mid-point of project implementation.	Yes	
Final External Evaluation	UNEP EO	At the end of project implementation	In progress	Zero Draft delivered for comment 30/01/2013
Terminal Report	Executing Agency, RPIU, & NPIU	At least one month before the end of the project	Partly	First draft without complete financial data as of 30/01/2013
Audit	Executing Agency, UNEP	Yearly	No	No project-specific financial audit has been carried out (not required as EA is UN member)
Visits to field sites	UNEP-ROAP, Executing Agency, RPIU, NPIU Government representatives	Continuous throughout project	Yes	Regular PM field

## Annex 7 Project components and outputs

**Component 1:** Improving the enabling legal, policy, institutional, and strategic planning, environment for sustainable land management consisting of three outputs:

**Output 1.1:** A trans-boundary sustainable land management strategy and action plan prepared for the entire High Pamir-Alai Mountains region outlining: (i) a common set of principles, technical standards and management requirements for sustainable, profitable and equitable use of the region's mountain ecosystem resources; and (ii) an intervention schedule detailing the order of priority for addressing the degradation problems on an ecosystem and Sub-district Unit (SDU) basis

**Output 1.2:** An improved enabling legal and regulatory framework in place for the sustainable and equitable management, and utilisation, of the ecosystem resources of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountain region.

**Output 1.3:** Sustainable land management concepts and principles mainstreamed within the environmental management, and economic development, plans and policies of those institutions with administrative and technical responsibility for economic development, environmental preservation, and land use, within the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains.

The intended **Outcome (1)** of these outputs would be: Enhanced regional cooperation between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan creating the enabling regional strategic planning, and national legislative, policy, institutional, technical, and economic incentive, environment, for the sustainable management of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai mountain ecosystems.

**Component 2:** Capacity building for sustainable land management consisting of two outputs:

**Output 2.1:** A core group of public and private sector agencies, in both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, providing improved advisory support services on sustainable land management practices, to farmers, herders, forest, and wildlife resource users within the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains.

**Output 2.2:** An enhanced capacity amongst government and academic research institutes to work with mountain communities, leading to the validation and adoption of a number of innovative and sustainable agronomic, animal husbandry and mountain ecosystem resource management practices with the potential to address mountain specific ecological and economic concerns.

The intended **Outcome (2)** of these outputs would be: Improved capacity of Tajikistan's and Kyrgyzstan's public and private sector agency research and advisory support service providers to promote sustainable land management within the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains.

**Component 3:** Poverty alleviation through community-based sustainable land management consisting of three outputs:

**Output 3.1:** A minimum of 48 SDUs with their own land use plan for the improved management of their local ecosystem resources, and functioning community-based civil society organisations engaging in the planning and implementation of field level sustainable land management activities.

**Output 3.2:** A minimum of 48 SDUs addressing ecosystem degradation and rural poverty through implementing innovative field level sustainable land management practices, and related micro-projects.

**Output 3.3:** The commercial value of conserving the unique landscape and biodiversity resources of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains realised through development of the area's potential for environmentally sensitive tourism, with the costs and benefits shared equitably with the local communities.

The intended **Outcome (3)** of these outputs would be: A reduction in rural poverty and economic vulnerability through restoration and enhancement of the productive and protective

functions (ecological goods and services) of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai mountain ecosystems.

**Component 4:** Evaluating the impact and lessons for replicating project experience consisting of four outputs:

**Output 4.1:** A validated conceptual framework being used to evaluate the impact of sustainable land management on reducing the vulnerability of rural livelihoods to land degradation, improving economic wellbeing, and restoring the protective and productive functions of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains ecosystem.

**Output 4.2:** A set of generic lessons learnt for the improved implementation of sustainable land management interventions in Central Asian trans-boundary high altitude mountain regions.

**Output 4.3:** Experience gained from project implementation used to develop generic guidelines that can be used for the design and implementation of sustainable land management interventions, and the formulation of enabling legal and institutional frameworks, within comparable trans-boundary mountain regions within Asia and elsewhere.

**Output 4.4:** Experience gained from project implementation used to develop recommendations for up-scaling and replication of the project's approach within Central Asian trans-boundary high altitude mountain regions.

The intended **Outcome (4)** of these outputs would be: Generic guidelines for up-scaling and replication of the lessons learnt, from the project's experience with sustainable land management, within comparable trans-boundary mountain regions within Asia and elsewhere.

**Component 5:** Project management consisting of two outputs:

**Output 5.1:** An operational international, regional and national management structure for the effective implementation of the project's trans-boundary and sub-regional component activities.

**Output 5.2:** An operational management decision support/monitoring and evaluating system providing those responsible for promoting sustainable land management within the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai mountains with a means of storing baseline information, and comparing it with subsequently recorded data to measure changes over time.

The intended **Outcome (5)** of these outputs would be: An operational project management structure and monitoring and evaluation system ensuring the effective implementation of the project

## **Annex 8 Brief CVs of the evaluation team**

**Francis Hurst** has a BSc. in Zoology and a MSc. in Conservation.

## Annex 9 Review of project outcomes

Objectives & Outcome	Indicator	Reported in Draft Terminal Report (level at June 30 <sup>th</sup> 2012)	TE comments
<b>Environmental objective:</b> To mitigate the causes and negative impacts of land degradation on the structure and functional integrity of the ecosystems of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains through mainstreaming sustainable land management tools and practices from households, community, local government, national and regional levels	#1: Regional, national and local priorities with respect to land use and management in the Pamir-Alai region converging around a set of targeted measures reflected in strategic planning, policy and project documents across governance levels	An SLM strategy and four action plans, specifying targeted measures for sustainable use and management of the region's croplands, pastures, forest and biodiversity, and for ensuring human security developed, endorsed and integrated in regional, national and local development plans, providing a basis for mobilizing increased support for and targeted investments in SLM	The project has developed the PATSAP which provides the basis for this indicator
	#2: Community-based land-use plans with SLM measures serving as the basis for the improved management of the ecosystem resources within 300,000 ha of the Pamir Alai region	Land use problems and priorities with respect to ca. 250,000 ha of agricultural lands in the Pamir-Alai region have been identified by 65 communities at ten pilot SDUs across the project area. 165 targeted measures demonstrating feasible SLM technologies and approaches have been implemented by the pilot communities. An estimated 6704 households, i.e. ca. 52% of the total number of households (12902) at the pilot sites has been engaged in the development and implementation of the SLM micro-projects.	The project has used the LADA methodology to develop community-based land use planning and to introduce SLM technologies and approaches. The scope of the intervention has been evaluated and reported by the technical experts. 165 micro-projects were implemented and only 7 have been considered to fail which is a remarkable achievement
<b>Development objective:</b> To address the link between poverty, vulnerability and land degradation through the promotion of sustainable land management practices that contribute to improving the livelihoods and	#3: Increasing % of rural HHS adopting and benefiting from SLM practices (measured through income and productivity surveys against control sites)	6704 households, i.e. ca. 52% of the total number of households at the ten pilot sites (12902) have been engaged in SLM (after accounting for double counting). Final impact assessments suggest that ca. 88% of those engaged in SLM or 46% of the total population at the pilot sites are already benefiting from SLM. This number is expected to increase to 50% in the coming years when projects involving tree plantations and other SLM practices with delayed impacts start to produce benefits as well.	This is an impressive achievement, particularly so given the challenges faced by the project. The TE is more cautious in linking income benefits to SLM benefits at this point in time but the outcome is largely satisfactory

economic well-being of the inhabitants of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains.			
	#4: Land degradation trends at pilot SDUs halted or reduced relative to baseline, measured through expert and community assessments	The findings of the final impact assessment suggest that ca. 80% of the implemented micro-projects have led to visible improvements in the state of land. Improvements from direct impacts cover an area of 1757 ha of agricultural land, from estimated secondary impacts ca. 1317 ha, and an estimated 2038 ha of distant pastures, forest and wildlife habitats are expected to benefit from implemented management improvements in the future.	Again an impressive achievement, particularly when viewed against the constraints imposed by the cancellation of the second phase and other disruptive factors. The TE is more cautious than the project in assessing this indicator (it should be recognized that the TE only visited a very small proportion of the sites). In particular the TE feels that there would need to be more time to examine the linkages between SLM and benefit, especially where the micro-projects relate to wildlife, improved pasture <i>vis a vis</i> diversity and resilience, etc. However, when measured against the truncated timeframe of the project this indicator is sufficiently met to be deemed satisfactory
<b>Outcome 1:</b> Enhanced regional cooperation between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan creating the enabling regional strategic planning, and national legislative, policy, institutional, technical, and economic	#5: The number of PALM facilitated high level meetings, workshops, training events and exchange visits involving policy makers, technical experts and land users from both countries over the life time of the project	Three regional high level meetings, 11 regional trainings, more than 30 stakeholder and expert consultation meetings, as well as three international study tours and one summer school, involving representatives from both countries have been held since the start of the project (Note: This includes PDF B meetings reported in the baseline)	This is not an outcome indicator. It may be a target or an output milestone. The indicator could be easily manipulated by simply having more meetings but it conveys nothing of the quality of the intervention. As a general “rule of thumb” if an outcome is this difficult to understand it then it is probably not going to happen. However, this is not a judgment on

incentive, environment, for the sustainable management of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai mountain ecosystems.			the quality out the meetings etc., merely a comment on the quality of the indicator
	#6: Consensus on a SLM Strategy including program priorities in the Pamir-Alai region reached among a core group of major stakeholders	A regional SLM strategy and action plan have been finalized, endorsed and integrated in national, oblast and district level development plans, providing a basis for increased state financing for SLM. Three new laws of relevance to SLM have been developed. One of them has been adopted and is already in force, and two others are under consideration by relevant government authorities.	The PATSAP has been endorsed at the national level, oblast and districts although the TE is less confident that this provides a basis for increased state financing for SLM. The Law on Mountain Territories and the Law on Soil Fertility have been adopted and the Laws on Pastures provide a good basis for going forwards with pasture management
	#7: # of news reports and announcements on project activities, results and related issues published in local and international media	80 news reports, radio and TV and internet communications on the PALM have been published in the local and international media. A quarterly newsletter was published in English and Russian; and a bilingual website was developed and updated on a regular basis	This is indeed impressive (and the TE was impressed at the energy of the communication programme) but once again it is not an outcome indicator. One might expect to see some sort of quantification of a change in people's perceptions about land use at various levels of society
<b>Outcome 2:</b> Improved capacity of Tajikistan's and Kyrgyzstan's public and private sector agency research and advisory support service	8#: # of innovative SLM technologies and approaches with demonstrated capacity to provide increased income to resource users identified and verified through participatory research and advisory service support	31 different types of measures aimed at improving land use and human security have been tested at project sites. More than 20 types of activities have begun to generate benefits for local communities. Others are expected to do so in the future. The complete list is given below:  <u>Croplands:</u>	Mention has been made at the performance of the project in delivering both the adaptive research and the micro-projects programme given the challenges faced by the project (in particular the cancellation of the second phase by GEFSEC and the

providers to promote sustainable land management within the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains.	<p>1)(Re)construction of irrigation canals</p> <p>2)Use of water pumps for irrigation</p> <p>3) Orchards with improved fruit varieties</p> <p>4)Improved potatoes varieties</p> <p>5) Garlic cultivation</p> <p>6) Vegetables in greenhouses</p> <p>7) Use of compost in cultivation</p> <p><u>Haylands:</u></p> <p>8)Reclamation of land via terraces</p> <p>9)Cultivation of alfa-alfa</p> <p>10) Cultivation of lucerne</p> <p>11)Intercropping: Fruit trees+ per. grass</p> <p>12)Intercropping: Barley + per. grass</p> <p><u>Pastures:</u></p> <p>13) (Re)construction of roads and bridges to summer pastures as a basis for rotational seasonal grazing</p> <p>14) Construction of stables at spring/autumn pastures as a basis for reducing livestock pressure on village surroundings</p> <p>15) Controlled seasonal use of village pastures via fencing</p> <p>16) Improved access to water on pastures</p> <p>17) Restoration of degraded pastures via cultivation of nitrogen</p>	<p>withdrawal of ICARDA. The TE also accepts that in many ways the process of implementing the micro-projects can be as important as the “output” itself. Certainly there have been some very interesting results (for instance the summer sheep folds, amongst others) and therefore the TE considers this satisfactory. However, there are several observations and once again some of these reflect the profound impact of the SEFSEC decision upon the project). Firstly, related to the wording of the indicator, the term “demonstrated” within the short space of time available to the project and particularly so when that timeframe is dramatically reduced. The second issue is related to the number of “technologies” and in particular those involving the introduction of new crops or improved varieties and the improvement of natural pastures and feels it may be prudent to consider these interventions in terms of issues such as climate change and system or ecosystem resilience. Lastly, and accepting that this was an inevitable artifact of the GEFSEC decision, the micro-projects in particular appear to have led to an over-focus on outputs at the expense of the outcome. However,</p>
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		<p>fixing perennial grasses</p> <p><u>Forests/biodiversity:</u></p> <p>18) New plantation of fast growing trees</p> <p>19) Restoration of existing forests via fencing and re-plantation</p> <p>20) Establishment of tree nurseries for restoration of endangered local species;</p> <p>21)Conservation of local horse breeds</p> <p><u>Human security</u></p> <p>(alternative income and energy):</p> <p>22)Improved sheep varieties (gissar)</p> <p>22)Improved goat varieties (downy)</p> <p>23)Yak husbandry</p> <p>24) Bee-keeping;</p> <p>25) Poultry farming</p> <p>26) Trout-breeding;</p> <p>27)Eco-tourism</p> <p>28)Handicrafts;</p> <p>29)Yurt-making</p> <p>30) Solar panels</p> <p>31) House insulation</p>	<p>under the circumstances this understandable.</p>
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	<p>#9: # of SLM-related training modules developed and tested at PALM pilot sites by advisory service providers and adaptive research agencies</p>	<p>Trainings modules on 28 different SLM topics related to the four regional SLM action plans have been developed and tested. Those include:</p> <p><u>Planning:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Land degradation assessment</li> <li>2) Participatory land use planning</li> <li>3) Proposal writing</li> <li>4) Participatory impact assessment</li> <li>5) GIS applications for land use planning</li> </ol> <p><u>Cropland:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6) Soil fertility management</li> <li>7) Agro-technical rules in crop cultivation</li> <li>8) Land and water management</li> <li>9) Use of fertilizer and advanced irrigation technologies</li> <li>10) Integrated pest management</li> <li>11) Horticulture and orchards development</li> <li>12) Cultivation of early vegetables in greenhouses</li> <li>13) Soil and water conservation technologies</li> </ol> <p><u>Pastures:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14) Sustainable pasture management</li> <li>15) Fodder crop cultivation</li> </ol>	<p>In the 2010 PIR this indicator was worded “<i>Enhanced understanding amongst the advisory support service providers (research and extension) operating within the Pamir Alai region on alternative SLM technologies and approaches</i>” which provides a better indicator for an outcome than the one used in the Terminal Report.</p> <p>The trainings were a mix of what might be considered standard rural development trainings and SLM trainings and the TE accepts that this was probably necessary given the absence of such training and extension services in the area at the project s beginning.</p>
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		16) Improvement of livestock species and composition 17) Veterinary norms in livestock breeding 18) Cashmere goat breeding <u>Biodiversity:</u> 19) Biodiversity conservation 20) Ecological balance in nature 21) Medicinal herbs 22) Ecosystem management 23) Teresken conservation <u>Human security:</u> 24) Alternative energy 25) Alternative income generation 26) Disaster preparedness 27) Eco-tourism development 28) Handicrafts development  Note: this does not include national level trainings on research methodologies, strategic planning and policy development and evaluation, where advisory service providers were not directly involved	
<b>TOutcome 3:</b> Reduction in rural poverty and economic	#10: Increasing # of SLM micro-projects emanating from community-based land use plans implemented and resulting in tangible	165 SLM micro-projects have been implemented. Ca. 67% of them are already generating positive financial returns for the households, either directly or through savings in inputs and	The TE would expect to see indicators that provided a greater measure of, for instance, the reduction in the vulnerability of

<p>vulnerability through restoration and enhancement of the productive and protective functions (ecological goods and services) of the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai mountain ecosystems.</p>	<p>improvements in rural incomes</p>	<p>labour. Others are expected to do so in the future.</p>	<p>local households, even some sort of measure of the restoration of ecosystem goods and services.</p> <p>The TE notes that two additional indicators were associated with this outcome in the Project Document LFM:</p> <p><i>Ecosystem resource degradation assessments undertaken, and land use/improved ecosystem management plans prepared, for a minimum of 24 SDUs by PY 4 and 48 SDUs in the High Pamir and Pamir Alai by end of PY8</i></p> <p><i>Environmentally sensitive tourism plans developed and implemented within a minimum of 10 of the High Pamir and Pamir Alai SDUs</i></p> <p>The issue of outputs over outcomes has been discussed at length and the TE feels that the ecosystem resource degradation assessments constitute a more apt indicator to measure a change of restoration and enhancement of productive and protective functions (not withstanding the eight-year</p>
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			<p>timeframe, etc.).</p> <p>The TE has already remarked upon this achievement at some length</p>
	<p>#11: Representatives from poor and vulnerable social groups at pilot communities provided with increasing opportunities for income generation through engagement in community-based SLM planning and implementation.</p>	<p>Poor/marginal members of the communities were identified based on local knowledge and engaged in SLM via one or more of the below approaches:</p> <p>1) Trainings organized by the project, which increase awareness, knowledge and skills to undertake SLM;</p> <p>2) SLM micro-projects supported by the project. In Kyrgyzstan 53% of all households engaged in SLM are poor and in Tajikistan 81%</p> <p>3) In Tajikistan, a special approach for engaging the poor was the (a) distribution of solar panels as a basis for access to electricity and savings from kerosene, as well as their (b) employment in construction and other work supported by the project</p> <p>4) In Kyrgyzstan, the focus has fallen on (a) social integration of the poor through their engagement in collective resource use and management structures called jamoats, as well as through targeted (b) provision of starting capital for alternative income generation</p>	<p>A more robust indicator and the TE broadly agrees with it.</p> <p>The process followed by the project through the land use planning exercise and selection of micro-projects, etc., training and employment will have effected local communities and has or is likely to create opportunities in the future.</p>
<p><b>Outcome 4:</b></p> <p>Generic guidelines developed for up-scaling and replication of the lessons learnt, from the project's experience with sustainable land management, within</p>	<p>#12: # of key stakeholder groups familiar with the generic / methodological guidelines developed, published and disseminated by the project</p>	<p>Info on key outputs and lessons learnt from PALM project implementation and generic guidelines have been presented at 47 different workshops and conferences organized by stakeholder groups outside the project. This does not include stakeholders reached through targeted project activities, such as 1)farmer days, 2) training workshops for advisory service providers, 3) policy consultations with government officials, 4) donor coordination meetings; 5) lectures and courses for</p>	<p>This outcome might have been better phrased as approximately: <i>"Improved understanding of processes leading to land degradation"</i> or something representing the reverse of the situation. Generic guidelines are not an outcome in itself. It also raises questions whether generic</p>

comparable trans-boundary mountain regions within Asia and elsewhere.		<p>students; 6) media publications</p> <p>Generic guidelines related to:</p> <p>a) Regional strategic planning;</p> <p>b) Strengthening of the legal, policy and institutional environment for SLM;</p> <p>c) community-based land degradation assessment and planning</p> <p>d) SLM impact assessment</p> <p>have been developed and are available online.</p> <p>In addition, a policy brief, including recommendations for up-scaling and references, as well as lessons used from project implementation was published and is available online in English and Russian.</p>	<p>guidelines can be developed in such a short space of time given the timeframes of SLM and there would be a significant risk that any guidelines were developed before any of the project's activities might have had a chance to validate any hypothesis about an intervention. The TE considers this a significant risk given the comments about focusing on outputs that was a likely result of the cancelled second phase. In the event it appears that the project produced policy guidelines</p>
	#13: # of papers by local and international researchers discussing project results and related issues published in scientific journals and conference/workshop proceedings	Ca. 40 academic publications discussing project results or related issues have been published by national and international project partners since the start of the project	The project appears to have produced a number of interesting papers
<p><b>Outcome 5:</b></p> <p>An operational international, regional and national management structure for the effective implementation of the project's trans-boundary and sub-regional component activities.</p>	#14: % of approved progress and financial reports submitted by IEA to IA	100% of submitted reports	<p>The TE has mentioned the use of a management (<i>e.g.</i> para. 23, 155) as an outcome in GEF projects at some length. The TE feels that there may be some justification in this in the case of Kyrgyzstan but cannot find sufficient evidence for it in Tajikistan. <i>Inter alia</i>, the TE might look for things such as an exit strategy for both NEAs and the REA and a more convincing and process-oriented set of indicators prior to</p>

			the projects starting. In the event, all of the outcome 5 indicators are likely to end when the GEF grant closes and share the same characteristics of outcome 1.
	#15: International Steering Committee (ISC) meeting/consulting regularly, approving annual workplans plans and budgets & overseeing project implementation.	8 ISC meetings have been organized since the start of project implementation	
	% of approved progress and financial reports submitted by NEA to IEA	100% of submitted reports	
	National Steering Committees (NSC) meeting regularly, approving national annual workplans plans and budgets & overseeing project implementation in the respective countries.	10 NSCs meetings have been organized since the start of project implementation	

## **Annex 10 Unofficial translation provided by project**

Assembly of Representatives, Supreme Assembly, Parliament of the Republic of  
Tajikistan

Agriculture, Water and Land Committee

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**United Nations University  
Institute for Environment and Human Security**

As a Member of Parliament and member of National Supervisory Committee (NSC) for the PALM Project "Sustainable Land Management in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains" would like to express gratitude to GEF/UNEP/UNU for implementation of such important project for our mountain country addressed to sustainable land management. Personally I'm aware of the results of the PALM Project in Tajikistan, especially in formulation and improving of legislative base for sustainable land management. During research under the specific Project component, experts came to conclusion that solving of many issues of livelihoods in high mountain area with aggravation of social-economic issues directly link with reforming of legislative base, including adoption of new laws such as Law "About pastures" and Law "About mountain territory".

This project gave a basis for initiative to formulate above mentioned Laws. Considering the importance of the issues, Parliament agreed and adopted the Draft Law "About pastures", which was developed by working group created with financial support from UNDP and consultative support from Legal Experts of PALM Project.

Working group was established under my supervision for development of the Draft Law "About mountain territory", which was initiated by PALM Project. Preliminary version of Law was discussed during a number of round tables organized by public and international organizations as well as NSC PALM Project meetings. Recommendations made by legal experts and members of NSC of PALM Project were incorporated into Draft Law.

Currently the Draft Law is on national discussion stage and will be adopted by the Parliament of the Republic next few months.

This project provided significant contribution into enhancement of national experts' knowledge, through trainings by sharing advance experience in legislative base analysis and sustainable land management, including experience sharing in Switzerland.

Similar trainings on experience sharing were organized for local farmers from project territory. This promoted enhancement of knowledge and awareness among local people with regard to rights and benefits provided by existing legislation.

On behalf of the Parliament of the Republic would like to express readiness for further support UNU initiatives in organizing research of compliance legislative system and adoption of new legislative acts addressed improving of living condition for the people in high mountain area of the Republic.

Sincerely Yours,

Member of Parliament

O. Safarov