



UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Conservation and Sustainable Use of Globally Significant Biological Diversity in Khazar Nature Reserve on the Caspian Sea Coast

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Report of the Final Evaluation Mission

May 2011

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Acknowledgements

The Final Evaluator would like to thank all the staff and people connected with the Khazar Reserve Project who gave freely of their time and ideas to make the final evaluation process a success. There are far too many people to mention by name – and hopefully everyone who contributed is included in the lists of names annexed to this report – but special mention must be made of the UNDP-CO staff – Rovshen Nurmuhamedov and Djemshid Khadjiyev, who gave unstintingly of their time to try and answer every question I asked and to discuss the points I took every opportunity to raise.

Following completion of the Draft Report on 5th May 2011, review comments were received in consolidated form from the Project Office, the UNDP CO, and the Regional Coordination Unit in Bratislava in May 2011. These comments have either been included into the revised text where these related to factual inaccuracies in the draft, or have been reproduced in full and unedited as footnotes to the appropriate text to ensure a fair hearing to all parties. The Final Evaluator has made responses to some of the comments. I thank each of the reviewers sincerely for their efforts and insights which have undoubtedly improved this final report.

The views expressed in this report are intended to offer an overview of, and some of the lessons learned from, the Khazar Reserve Project after its completion. I have tried to balance my thoughts and offer fair perspectives of what was observed and learned from people more knowledgeable about the Project than I will ever be. My sincere apologies in advance if anyone should take anything written to be anything other than constructive criticism.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the UNDP-CO for organising all of the in-country logistics, and thanks to them the whole evaluation process ran smoothly. Furthermore, they worked hard to ensure that my welfare was taken care of, and their kindness has been much appreciated. I am also grateful to those who spoke English to me and to those people who provided interpretation for me – Liliya Popovich, Bahar Atayeva, and Djemshid Khadjiyev.

And finally, one of the delights of this sort of work remains coming to new and extremely welcoming countries and going home again having made new friends, seen new things, and witnessed with great admiration the dedication and enthusiasm that so many people bring to their work in conserving the important places of the world. I would like to wish them thanks and every success.

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ACRONYMS AND TERMS

Currency of Turkmenistan is the manat. At the time of the terminal evaluation, US\$ 1 = 2.843 Manat

CEP	Caspian Environmental Programme
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
EE-CIS	Eastern Europe and the CIS
EoP	End of Project
FE	Final Evaluation / Evaluator
GEF	Global Environment Facility
ha	Hectare(s)
KhR	Khazar Reserve
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MNP	Ministry of Nature protection
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NPM	National Project Manager
PA	Protected Area
PB	Project Board
PDF-B	Project Development Facility – Block B
PIR	Project Implementation Report
PO	Project Office
SECI	State Enterprise for Caspian Issues
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDP CO	UNDP Country Office
US\$	United States Dollar

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KEY POINTS

- Project overall evaluated as Marginally Satisfactory.
- Technical implementation has been good, but the management capacity to implement the Project has been ineffective leading to chronic problems, and the implementation approach is evaluated as Marginally Satisfactory.
- Project stakeholder participation has been very inclusive and successful, and has been evaluated as Highly Satisfactory.
- Project monitoring and evaluation has been evaluated as Marginally Unsatisfactory.
- Despite the fact that the Project has made only modest gains, these appear set to bring irreversible benefits to the conservation of the Khazar Reserve. Thus, sustainability has been evaluated as Highly Satisfactory.

Key successes – increased awareness of biodiversity issues leading to significantly improved relations between the Khazar Reserve and the four pilot communities and a reduction in hunting and fishing pressure; a new, state-of-the-art management plan for the Khazar Reserve which can be implemented once necessary legislative changes are made, and which will also act as a model for other protected areas; upgraded technical capacity for scientific and enforcement activities within the reserve; construction of a fully-equipped cordon (forensic checkpoint); improvements to the scientific basis of the Reserve's management, mainly through systematic bird surveys; a refurbished and improved museum and visitor centre for the Reserve; development of a small grants programme promoting alternative livelihoods which has provided grants to 16 beneficiaries; high-profile media campaign which drew the Project's attention to the President; and introduction of the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool to the Khazar Reserve and its replication in two other state reserves – a Amudarya and Repetek.

Key problem areas – limited capacity within the country for managing the implementation of the Project, and perhaps projects in general; and conservatism within the Government system towards adopting change.

The Final Evaluation (FE) of the Project was conducted over a period of 25 days between 16th March and 5th May 2011 by a single international consultant. Unfortunately, due to slightly early termination of the Project at the end of October 2010, it was carried out behind schedule some five months after the Project closed, and without access to several stakeholders, no national consultant, and no single interpreter for the mission. The Evaluation's ToR is given in Annex I, its itinerary in Annex II and the list of people interviewed in Annex III. A list of indicators, their end of Project achievement level, together with performance rating is given in Annex IV. After receipt of comments in May 2011, which have been added as footnotes to the main text, the report was finalised in May 2011.

RESULTS

Output 1.1: Adaptive participatory management practice piloted in Khazar Nature Reserve – Satisfactory. High quality management plan produced for Khazar Reserve. Greatly improved relations developed with local communities. Basis for sustainable hunting established.

Output 1.2: Strengthened reserve staff's technical knowledge and abilities – Marginally Satisfactory. No human capacity-building programme implemented. Visitor centre established at Reserve HQ and some technical publications produced. Legislative review made with some recommendations.

Output 1.3: Strengthened field conservation capacity of the reserve – Marginally Satisfactory. Scientific basis of Reserve management improved, mainly through systematic bird surveys. Some scientific training undertaken. No biodiversity conservation plan developed by stakeholders. METT introduced to the Reserve.

Output 2.1: Coastal zone management (czm) framework and planning process in place – Marginally Unsatisfactory. Output not achieved because MNP wrong political vehicle. Advocacy activities resulted in inter-ministerial Coastal Planning Working Group to build capacity for cross-sectoral planning and management.

Output 2.2: Conservation landscape and Khazar Nature Reserve's place in that landscape is defined – Marginally Satisfactory. Limited but important gains, e.g. a sensitivity map. Borders of Khazar Reserve revised and gazetted; now awaiting demarcation on the ground.

Output 2.3: Strengthened information baseline on coastal ecosystem health parameters – Marginally Unsatisfactory. Little achieved. Database software designed for tracking hunting and fishing.

Output 3.1: Social capital is strengthened in targeted communities around Khazar Nature Reserve and goodwill between Khazar Nature Reserve and local communities is nurtured and restored – Satisfactory. Significant awareness-raising activities have resulted in markedly changed attitudes of residents and improved relations with Reserve authorities. Sustainable social economic development plans developed, but not yet approved. Small grants programme established with 16 beneficiaries.

Output 3.2: Sustainable natural resource use demonstrations generate new options for coastal fishery and reduce pressure on migratory waterfowl in coastal area surrounding Khazar Nature Reserve – Marginally Satisfactory. Demonstration to re-orientate fishery practices not supported by the local government, so technical workshops and training provided to diversify the communities' economic base to lessen the burden placed on biological resources, e.g. poultry and cattle breeding, fruit and vegetable growing, and tourism. Agreements on community-based environmental governance over wildlife resources drafted but not effected.

Output 4.1: New policies within MNP to encourage adaptive management – Highly Unsatisfactory. No activities apparently undertaken.

Output 4.2: Protected area management training programme – Marginally Satisfactory. National Protected Area Training Centre developed and equipped within the Institute of Deserts, Flora and Fauna, but only limited training given. Technical publications prepared – some still awaiting publication.

Output 4.3: Operational network for nationwide replication of best practices by PAs – Marginally Satisfactory. Website developed and maintained. Successful publicity campaign implemented but only a few best practices transmitted. METT replicated in two other reserves – Amudarya and Repetek.

Output 4.4: Strengthened Caspian-wide PA information exchange and sharing of lessons learned – Marginally Unsatisfactory. Little achieved but the Project supported the Reserve in taking part in two international conferences held inside Turkmenistan..

Output 4.5: A clear and compelling economic argument for PA contribution to development and for long-term financing of Khazar Nature Reserve and the national system of protected areas – Highly Unsatisfactory. No activities apparently undertaken.

KEY ISSUES

With this Project, context is everything. It is important to recognise that this is the first GEF project to be implemented in Turkmenistan, and the biggest UNDP project to be undertaken there at the point of its commencement. Furthermore, the Project site was in a remote location, and although it was considered to be an environmental project, it was required to cover a number of social and economic issues, something its main partner agency, the Ministry for Nature Protection (MNP), was not used to doing. In a country with extremely limited capacities, its implementation was always going to be a challenge. Furthermore, the design was overly ambitious and the political constraints and realities of the key stakeholders not properly recognised. Therefore, to make any assessment relevant to the country and useful to UNDP-GEF, it has to be made in relation to this context, not to that found more generally across the region. If the assessment is simply viewed according to more absolute criteria, undoubtedly it would be found wanting. Yet such ratings of “Unsatisfactory” would help no-one in this instance and could possibly place further GEF investment at risk – investment needed not so much

in monetary terms for Turkmenistan is a relatively rich state, but in terms of new ideas that such investment brings. While change appears to happen slowly in Turkmenistan, and the centralised decision-making system is inevitably cautious and conservative, this Project does show that such projects can act as agents of change and that the ideas generated and demonstrated can find their way into the system to be acted upon ... albeit slowly. Therefore, the FE has made assessments throughout on a relative basis of the progress made against what could have been expected within the Turkmenistan context.

The single most over-riding and chronic problem that has impeded the satisfactory implementation of this Project has been the shortage of project management capacity within the country. The UNDP-CO has identified that this problem extends beyond this Project and is now appearing to be a common factor in all. During the FE mission, it was proposed by the UNDP-CO that in order to find a way around this shortage, an innovative means to project management, or at least to project administration, be developed, namely that a common, centralised unit be established which provides administrative services to a number of projects in Turkmenistan, rather than having a dedicated project implementation unit (or similarly named entity) in each project. In the short- and medium-term, the FE concedes that such an approach has merit and should be tried, but also identifies that a number of other measures will be required. Recommendations towards improving management capacity include provision of sufficient funding to facilitate inclusion of significant capacity-building and policy-orientated components, and allowance of adequate time for the latter to be achieved; fostering capacity through a system of mentoring by international project staff; getting the UNDP-CO to develop a more formal and comprehensive induction programme for project managers at the start of project managers' contracts; and providing specific, pre-scheduled, one-to-one training to project managers at regular intervals by the UNDP-CO Operations Unit. The first of these is particularly important. GEF has traditionally been very supportive of capacity building, but GEF-5 appears to have moved away from this aspect somewhat to focus much more upon infrastructure issues. While the FE sees this as a logical response, particularly in many countries in the Eastern Europe and the CIS region, e.g. Kazakhstan, where technical and managerial capacity is relatively high but money for infrastructure and equipment is desperately required, Turkmenistan seems to be an exception. Here, the Government appears to have plenty of money to co-finance infrastructural investment, but exhibits a significant need for external investment in capacity and policy issues.

Project oversight has been good, and the inclusion of local community representatives on the Project Board has no precedent in Turkmenistan. It worked particularly well giving them an opportunity to understand the Project and its benefits and importantly, it provided a mechanism for finding common solutions as partners rather than as opponents, which proved vital in dealing with some highly sensitive issues and in engendering trust and goodwill. Although the Project has made only modest gains, it seems that these are likely to be highly sustainable and will bring irreversible benefits to the conservation of the Khazar Reserve.

Finally, the slow rate of progress of certain activities does not necessarily reflect badly upon the MNP. The MNP has engaged fully with the Project throughout, showing itself to be a keen supporter and to be open to new ideas and approaches championed by the Project. However, it is widely acknowledged that the MNP is a weak ministry; hence it is limited in its influence and conservative in its approach, working carefully within the strongly centralised and regulated system, and pursuing change only slowly. It is important that GEF recognises the political reality of this, and the FE finds that although many of the ideas addressed by the Project appear to have been spurned at first glance (e.g. the Management Plan for Khazar), in fact the concept appears to have been accepted but the mechanisms for pursuing such ideas need to be put in place. In Turkmenistan, things move very slowly, the idea of integrated coastal zone management being a perfect example. Although introduced in the project design, ICZM was never going to be established as a working planning tool within its four-year lifespan, and certainly not by the MNP. However, the Project's work and MNP's influence has now put ICZM on the political map, and as a result the Government is now pursuing it. This may appear too little too late in some eyes, but context is everything in Turkmenistan, and this represents progress – slow progress admittedly, but real progress nonetheless.

Recommendations and Lessons Learned are listed on pages 41-42.

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

1. The Monitoring and Evaluation Policy at the project level in UNDP/GEF has two overarching objectives, namely to promote accountability for the achievement of GEF objectives through the assessment of results, effectiveness, processes and performance of the partners involved in GEF activities; and to promote learning, feedback and knowledge sharing on results and lessons learned among the GEF and its partners, as basis for decision-making on policies, strategies, programme management, and projects and to improve knowledge and performance. With this in mind, this Final Evaluation (FE) was initiated by UNDP Turkmenistan as the GEF Implementation Agency for the *Conservation and Sustainable Use of Globally Significant Biological Diversity in Khazar Nature Reserve on the Caspian Sea Coast Project* to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of Project activities in relation to the stated objectives, and to collate lessons learned.

2. The FE was conducted over a period of 25 days between 16th March and 5th May 2011 by a single international consultant. Unfortunately, due to slightly early termination of the Project at the end of October 2010, it was carried out behind schedule some five months after the Project closed. The approach was determined by the terms of reference ([Annex I](#)) which were closely followed, via the itinerary detailed in [Annex II](#). Full details of the objectives of the MTE can be found in the TOR, but the evaluation has concentrated on assessing the concept and design of the Project; its implementation in terms of quality and timeliness of inputs, financial planning, and monitoring and evaluation; the efficiency and effectiveness of activities carried out and the objectives and outcomes achieved, as well as the likely sustainability of its results, and the involvement of stakeholders. The report was finalised in May 2011.

3. The Evaluation was conducted through the following participatory approach:

- extensive face-to-face and Skype interviews with the project management and technical support staff, including some members of the Project Board (PB) and the Project Office (PO), Throughout the evaluation, particular attention was paid to explaining carefully the importance of listening to stakeholders' views and in reassuring staff and stakeholders that the purpose of the evaluation was not to judge performance in order to apportion credit or blame but to measure the relative success of implementation and to determine learn lessons for the wider GEF context. The confidentiality of all interviews was stressed. Wherever possible, information collected was cross-checked between various sources to ascertain its veracity, but in some cases time limited this. A full list of people interviewed is given in [Annex III](#).
- face-to-face interviews with local stakeholders, particularly the beneficiaries, at two of the villages – Chekishlyar and Gara-gol;
- a thorough review of project documents and other relevant texts, including the project documents, outputs, monitoring reports, such as progress and financial reports to UNDP and GEF, annual Project Implementation Reviews (PIR) reports, relevant correspondence, other project-related material produced by the project staff or partners;
- a field visit to the Khazar State Reserve.

4. Wherever possible the FET has tried to evaluate issues according to the criteria listed in the *UNDP-GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy*, namely:

- Relevance – the extent to which the activity is suited to local and national development priorities and organisational policies, including changes over time.
- Effectiveness – the extent to which an objective has been achieved or how likely it is to be achieved.
- Efficiency – the extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible.

- **Results** – the positive and negative, and foreseen and unforeseen, changes to and effects produced by a development intervention. In GEF terms, results include direct project outputs, short-to medium term outcomes, and longer-term impact including global environmental benefits, replication effects and other, local effects.
- **Sustainability** – the likely ability of an intervention to continue to deliver benefits for an extended period of time after completion. Projects need to be environmentally as well as financially and socially sustainable.

5. The original logframe in the Project Document has remained unrevised throughout. This logframe with three Outcomes, 10 Outputs, and 16 indicators has been used throughout as the basis for the this evaluation (see [Annex IV](#)), and the FE has evaluated the Project’s performance against these according to the current six-point evaluation criteria provided to it by the GEF. This is reproduced in Table 1 for clarity.

TABLE 1: CRITERIA USED TO EVALUATE THE PROJECT BY THE FINAL EVALUATION TEAM

Highly Satisfactory (HS)	Project is expected to achieve or exceed all its major global environmental objectives, and yield substantial global environmental benefits, without major shortcomings. The project can be presented as “good practice”.
Satisfactory (S)	Project is expected to achieve most of its major global environmental objectives, and yield satisfactory global environmental benefits, with only minor shortcomings.
Marginally Satisfactory (MS)	Project is expected to achieve most of its major relevant objectives but with either significant shortcomings or modest overall relevance. Project is expected not to achieve some of its major global environmental objectives or yield some of the expected global environment benefits.
Marginally Unsatisfactory (MU)	Project is expected to achieve some of its major global environmental objectives with major shortcomings or is expected to achieve only some of its major global environmental objectives.
Unsatisfactory (U)	Project is expected not to achieve most of its major global environment objectives or to yield any satisfactory global environmental benefits.
Highly Unsatisfactory (U)	The project has failed to achieve, and is not expected to achieve, any of its major global environment objectives with no worthwhile benefits.

6. The results of the evaluation were conveyed informally to the UNDP Programme Officer for Environment prior to the FE’s departure. No formal de-briefing meeting was held.

CONSTRAINTS

7. Full details of the objectives of the FE can be found in the ToR (Annex I), but the evaluation has concentrated on assessing the concept and design of the Project, its implementation in terms of quality and timeliness of inputs, and efficiency and effectiveness of activities carried out, and the objectives and outcomes achieved. Particular attention has been given to the likely sustainability of its results. However, the FE was considerably constrained by a number of factors:

- The itineraries of all foreign visitors to Turkmenistan have to be approved by the Cabinet of Ministers. The itinerary of the FE was approved but with a number of provisos, key amongst which was the prohibition on meeting with any of the local authorities involved in the Project. Meetings were only sanctioned with the staff of the Khazar State Reserve and with residents from the target villagers, plus the Project staff. Very little opportunity has been provided to cross-verify findings.
- UNDP-CO advised against visiting Gyzylsuw on Gyzylsuw Island, previously the community in greatest conflict with the Reserve authorities, because of the difficult logistics (unsafe boats), insufficient time in the mission, and the possibility of getting delayed on the island by springtime storms. No assessment of Project advancements here could hence be made.

- The FE mission took place 5.5 months after the Project was closed. While the UNDP-CO made every effort to enable the FE to meet with key Project staff, many of these meetings were short, limited by persons' other commitments and by the fact that in most cases the relationship between them and UNDP-CO had broken down thereby limiting their incentive or colouring their cooperation.
- No national consultant was available to form part of a FE team, apparently because of a lack of national capacity. Since most of the documentation (reports, work plans, minutes, etc.) was available only in Russian, this was a major problem despite later translation. Furthermore, it meant the evaluator did not have a knowledgeable local independent person to discuss issues with while in-country.
- No single interpreter was available for the entire mission meaning that the evaluator was unable to develop a consistent working relationship over terminology, etc. with those providing interpretation. On one day, no independent interpreter was available for a series of meetings and a UNDP officer had to stand in, and while he did an excellent job, the FE cannot be certain that his status as coming from UNDP did not influence the responses.

PROJECT CONCEPT AND DESIGN

8. The concept for the Project emanated from the Caspian Environmental Programme¹ (CEP) in 2004 and is aimed at strengthening,

“Turkmenistan’s National System of Protected Areas by demonstrating effective protected area management and biodiversity conservation in Turkmenistan’s Khazar Nature Reserve on the Caspian Sea coast”

by employing a standard approach used at that time which aimed to strengthen a country’s Protected Areas system as a whole by demonstrating models of best practice for mainstreaming. As such, the Project’s design is logical and comprehensive, meeting the twin identified key threats of habitat degradation and unsustainable exploitation of wildlife resources with efforts towards four outcomes: 1) improving the management capacity and effectiveness of a single protected area; 2) strengthening its contextual position through the introduction of integrated coastal zone management (ICZM); 3) building trust with local communities to help them to manage their natural resources and build governance capacity; and 4) mainstreaming best practices into the national system through policy and operational development.

9. Despite this logical approach, the design has a number of key conceptual weaknesses, namely:
- a) The Project is overly-ambitious, mostly through the inclusion of the ICZM component which is complex enough to form a project in its own right. Despite efforts made by the FE to trace the source for the inclusion of this component, he has drawn a blank, although both the CEP and GEF are individually identified as the possible originators.
 - b) Both the ambition of the Project and the low starting baseline suggest that the proposed timescale of only four years would be too short to achieve its aims in most countries, but that this may be exacerbated in Turkmenistan by low capacity and centralised institutional structures.
 - c) The Ministry for Nature Protection is inevitably a rather weak ministry and may not have sufficient political clout to drive the ICZM component, which begs the question of whether it is the correct partner institution for the entire project.
 - d) Most of the ideas contained in the proposed approach involve a high degree of community participation, integration of technical practices and sharing of information which, while common practice for much of the international community, is still completely at odds with the centralised, command-style of Government practised in Turkmenistan.

¹ an international initiative led by the World Bank and part-funded by the GEF.

10. Evaluations critical of a project's design are sometimes themselves criticised for looking at things with the 20:20 vision that can only come with the luxury of hindsight, and the FE is aware that evaluations made with this clarity of retrospection can be dangerous, and that it is important to understand the context of the time in which the Project was designed and the understanding that the designers had at that time. However, in this instance, these criticisms were all raised at the time of the project's review. For example, the GEF Concept Agreement Review notes and asks:

"The well highlighted risk that biodiversity matters will be overwhelmed by productive-sector programs and forgotten emphasizes the importance of the role of the executing agency. Have alternatives to MNP been considered? ... [The project] will need to attempt to mainstream BD: in hunting laws and practices; through incorporation of environmental mitigation measures into oil & gas extraction, production and transportation; through promoting infrastructure in sewerage collection and treatment, etc. which are crucial elements for the success of the project. Is the Ministry of Nature Protection the best executing agency to address these issues? The recent State Enterprise for Caspian Issues (SECI), the coordinating agency for coastal matters) within the Ministry of Oil and Gas's mandate is to integrate environment and development. What will be the role, authority and responsibility of SECI in this project? Is its participation in the Project Oversight Committee enough?"

Similarly, the Swiss Council member commented:

"The proposed four years timeline of the project is much too short to achieve the expected results".

while the German Council member commented:

"The document correctly points out that there is no strong tradition of community involvement and consultation with local people in Turkmenistan's protected area history or in Turkmenistan's natural resource management experience. The project aims at introducing new, more participatory approaches, without taking fully into account the fact that the enabling environment for public participation is weak. Turkmenistan's social and political system is not fully supportive to bottom-up approaches, and considerable efforts will be necessary to sustain achievements in this field beyond the end of the project..."

and another reviewer noted that:

"No real cognisance shown of the fact that the project is very much a western, modern bottom-up approach in a country with a very rigid, old-style top-down system and the obvious conflicts that this would bring".

11. While these issues were responded to in such a way as to facilitate the successful endorsement of the Project Document, substantively they have remained key sticking points during the implementation. The MNP itself indicated to the FE that inclusion of the ICZM component was "*an error*" and that it was believed that the idea had arisen from the CEP – not from within the MNP. While the MNP understands the importance of ICZM, it believes that it should not have been included as part of this Project – which rather begs the question of why the Government signed off on it if this was recognised at the time. Furthermore, the Project has done extremely well to pilot a number of community-based initiatives and to include the local communities in a number of activities, e.g. management planning, for the first time (see also their involvement in the Project Board; paragraph 76), but as foreseen, the Government (and/or the MNP) appear reluctant to carry these forward.

12. The following are the key objectives formulated for the Project:

Goal

The protection of Turkmenistan's globally significant biodiversity by strengthening the sustainability of its National System of Protected Areas.

Objective

A new participatory and adaptive approach to conservation and management is demonstrated in Khazar Nature Reserve and is replicated throughout the system.

Outcome 1

Khazar Nature Reserve management capacity and conservation effectiveness is secured.

Outcome 2

Cross-sector capacity for integrated coastal management established and biodiversity conservation objectives mainstreamed into productive coastal sectors surrounding Khazar Reserve.

Outcome 3

Khazar Reserve builds trust and goodwill with local communities and strengthens environmental governance over wildlife resources.

Outcome 4

Project best practices are mainstreamed into the National System of Protected Areas of Turkmenistan.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

13. The concept for the Project arose from the Caspian Environmental Programme (CEP) in 2004 through a move therein to design initiatives that could be elaborated into a programme. Since the CEP provided seed capital for the design, no PDF-A or PDF-B funds were requested from GEF. The Project entered the pipeline for GEF-3 on 16th July 2004 and the Project Document and associated papers were submitted to the GEF Council for the February 2005 Inter-session Meeting where it met with some political opposition and was deferred to the June 2005 Council Meeting, where it was subsequently approved, subject to acceptable response to comments. GEF CEO endorsement was received on 7th April 2006 as a Full-sized Project under Operational Programme #2 –Coastal and Marine Freshwater Ecosystems and as part of Strategic Priority Biodiversity #1 “*Catalyzing Sustainability of Protected Areas*” of the GEF Business Plan. UNDP-GEF signed the Project Document with the Government of Turkmenistan on 30th -31st May 2006, thereby commencing the Project. First disbursements were made on 5th July 2006. A project inception workshop was undertaken in November 2006, from which the UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Adviser was prevented from attending by visa restrictions at the time, but no Inception Report was ever produced. The Mid-term Evaluation was undertaken, somewhat late, in late-August/September 2009 and completed in January 2010.

PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

14. The Project has been executed in accordance with the standard rules and procedures of the UNDP National Implementation Modality but with direct payments (thereby UNDP is acting as a business agent to provide those services). The Project’s implementing partner agency is the **Ministry of Nature Protection** (MNP). UNDP has acted through the Project Document to enter into contractual arrangements with physical and legal persons on their behalf, and to make direct payments against all categories of the project budget, and to manage project funds, including budget planning, monitoring, revisions, disbursements, record keeping, reporting and auditing that all observe UNDP rules.

15. Project oversight has been undertaken at the strategic level by an inter-institutional Committee, known in this Project through the application of UNDP’s results-based management nomenclature as a **Project Board** (PB). The PB has been chaired by the National Project Coordinator (see paragraph 18) who is the Deputy Minister of Nature Protection and, according to the list provided to the FE, comprises 27 members drawn state government agencies, state nature reserves, local government and NGOs (see [Annex V](#)). However, this appears to be different from the list given in the MTE and from the few minutes in English that the FE viewed. The biggest difference appears to be the absence of

any UNDP-CO representation (which does appear to have been represented by the relevant programme officer), and the minutes show that the CTA also was considered to be a member at one point, although the FE notes that he should not have been since the PB is the body he reported to, hence he should not have been a member of it. The PB has met quarterly, and while the MTE suggested,

“that once every six months [as per the ToR in the Project Document] should be adequate unless there are urgent matters that need to be discussed”,

more frequent meetings were considered to be one of the reasons for the PB’s success (see paragraph 77). The PB meetings were held mainly in Turkmenbashi, a point the FE finds commendable since getting Project Boards to meet close to their project’s point of implementation is rare, and this undoubtedly encouraged a high level of local involvement (less far to travel and less overwhelming than a trip to the capital city), but occasionally they were held in Ashgabat where, as the MTE found, the members,

“in attendance were mainly from the applicable venue – in other words, when the meetings were in Ashgabat, members from Turkmenbashi did not attend, and vice versa. In effect, this is creating two PBs, one for Ashgabat and one for Turkmenbashi, and this cannot be good for the project’s governance”.

However, it appears that the full Board met twice yearly in Turkmenbashi while the core board (UNDP, MNP, Khazar Reserve, State Institute of Deserts, Flora and Fauna, and the Association of Hunters and Fishermen) met in the additional quarters in Ashgabat – certainly this was the case after the MTE.

16. Financing contributions have been in cash from GEF (US\$1,428,600) and UNDP (TRAC) (US\$ 278,000), along with some partner-managed cash co-financing additional to the Project Document from Dragon Oil Ltd. (US\$ 15,000) and USAID-Winrock (US\$ 3,800); plus in-kind co-financing from the Ministry for Nature Protection, (US\$ 590,000), EU (TACIS) (US\$ 405,000 (US\$ 140,000 more than committed in the Project Document)), UNDP (US\$200,000), Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (US\$25,000), and others (e.g. USAID, CEP, etc.) (US\$ 280,000); and in-kind co-financing additional to the Project Document from Turkmenoil (US\$ 860,000) – total US\$ 4.125 million. However, there is some confusion over exactly what constitutes co-financing (see paragraph 25), and the cash co-financing promised from the State Enterprise for Caspian Issues (SECI) (US\$ 40,000) proved not to be forthcoming.

Actual co-financing contributions:

Organization	Type (in-kind or in-cash)	Amount (US\$)
UNDP	in-cash	US\$ 58,647
MNP	in-kind	US\$ 590,000
Dragon Oil Ltd.	in-cash	US\$ 15,000
USAID	in-cash	US\$ 3,800
Total:		US\$ 667,477

17. The Project has worked closely with, and through, a large number of key local stakeholders, notably State institutions (the Ministries of Nature Protection, State Institute of Deserts, Flora and Fauna; State Agency on Caspian Issues State Committee of Fish Industry; and the State Committee of Sport and Tourism), state nature reserves (Khazar; Amudarya; Badhyz; Kaplankyr; Kopetdag; and Sunt-Hasardag), local government (the Balkan velayat²; Esenguly etrap³; Turkmenbashi etrap; Hazar town), NGO (Association of Hunters and Fishermen), educational institutions, a wide range of the mass media. It has highlighted local participation as a priority, worked tirelessly with four local

² Velayat is the equivalent of oblast or region.

³ Etrap is the equivalent of rayon or district.

communities (Belek, Chekishlyar, Gara-gol, and Gyzylsuw) to raise awareness over biodiversity issues, and worked with both them and the authorities of Khazar Reserve to build bridges, garner trust and goodwill, reduce conflict, and improve understanding. This it has done extremely successfully. As a result, the FE evaluates stakeholder participation as **Highly Satisfactory**.

NATIONAL LEVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Project Direction

18. Overall guidance and coordination of the project implementation has been the responsibility of the **National Project Coordinator** (NPC⁴), a part-time position held initially by the Minister of Nature Protection Mr. Makhtumkuli Akmuradov until his retirement in 2009, and since then by Mr. Jumamurad Saparmuradov, Deputy Minister of Nature Protection. The NPC is a state employee and is an unpaid position covered by the Government's in-kind contribution to the Project. He has been responsible for overseeing the execution of the Project on behalf of the Government, for achieving the Project's objectives, and has been accountable to UNDP for the use of Project resources.

Project Management

19. Day-to-day implementation has been the responsibility of a **Project Office** (PO), which was housed in two adjacent buildings of the National Institute of Deserts, Flora and Fauna in Ashgabat, part of the MNP with subsidiary accommodation within the Khazar State reserve's headquarters in Turkmenbashi. The PO has comprised a full-time **Chief Technical Advisor** (CTA), a **Project Administrator** (PA) and a Project Assistant, along with a number of project staff. The position of CTA was held for most of the project (October 2006 to August 2009) by Mr. Oleg Guchgeldiyev but, having become part-time (12 days/month) in January 2009, he resigned on grounds of ill-health and a number of disagreements with the UNDP-CO in August 2009. The position of PA has been held by two persons, thus:

- Ms. Makhym Orazmukhamedova – March 2007 to mid-September 2008.
- Ms. Jennet Hodjamuradova – January 2009 to October 2010.

This indicates that there was no overlap in transition between the two PAs and, perhaps more significantly, there was nobody at the level of National Project Manager or CTA for the last 14 months of the Project's life. There has been high turnover of Project Assistants, again with some gaps, thus:

- Ms. Merjen Gurbanova – December 2006 to early April 2008.
- Ms. Merdan Muhamedov – May 2008.
- Aksoltan Allayarova – July 2008.
- Mehri Nuriyeva – October 2008 to June 2010.

Furthermore, the main sub-components of the Project have been dealt with on a modular basis with specialists hired to lead them or at least undertaken a substantial part of their implementation. While full technical oversight and supervision was retained by the CTA when he was employed and with some tasks managed directly by him, it is clear that once he left there was nobody correctly placed to provide such oversight and the technical tasks were undertaken simply to the best of the experts' abilities. Specialist staffing has also not been continuous with turnover and gaps prevalent for some posts, thus:

- Communities Development Specialist – Hajarbibi Yelamanova : May 2007 - Mar 2009
– Mehri Karakulova : July 2009 - Oct 2010
- PR/ Education Programme Specialist – Byashim Berdiyev : July 2007 - Mar 2008
- Education Programme Specialist – Bibi Hudaykulyeva : Aug - Dec 2009
– Gapurjan Hamrayev : Apr - Oct 2010
- Public Relations Specialist – Dayanch Hojagyeldiyev : Jul 2008 - May 2009
– Serdar Eyeberenov : Oct 2009 - Oct 2010

⁴ Referred to as the National Project Director in both the Project Document and the Mid-term Evaluation.

- IT Specialist – Sergey Kurbanov : Jul 2007 - Oct 2010

In addition, specialists and local consultants were hired for shorter-term or for technical contracts and the PO also had a clerk and driver for at least part of the time. At the local level, the Project also employed a Local Office Administrator in Turkmenbashi, but only for nine months (Sept. 2007 to May 2008) and local Assistant Coordinators in each of the four main villages of the Project's intervention. Again, these exhibit turnover and discontinuity in staffing, thus:

- Belek – Muhammetguly Akmammedov : Jan - Oct 2010
- Chekishler – Muhammetzevire Tachmamedov : Aug 2007 - Feb 2008
– Jumaglych Guliyev : Apr 2009 - Oct 2010
- Gara-gul – Ejewgul Alerzayeva : Aug 2007 - Feb 2008
– Saparbibi Yagshymamedova : Apr 2009 - Oct 2010
- GyzyI-Suv – Berdy Berdiyev : Jan - Jun 2008
– Sapargul Annayeva : Apr 2009 - Oct 2010

Implementation Approach

20. The Project's management and implementation have been based upon the logframe throughout, although the links between the Annual Work Plans and the structure of the Project Document, which is nicely divided into detailed activities under each Output, appears to have become muddled by the PO focussing on the logframe indicators. In places, it is hard to see how certain tasks in the AWP fit within the Outputs or their associated activities. Unfortunately, no Inception Report was produced which may have provided a reference for how to deal with some of the difficulties that the management team have subsequently faced, e.g. organisational (a joint CTA/NPM), or political (the reduced likelihood of achieving Outcome 2 on integrated coastal zone management). No overall strategy for the implementation appears to have been worked out, and various activities seem to have been implemented in isolation of one another. However, technical implementation has generally been of a high order, particularly that for the management plan, and the Project, particularly the CTA, managed to overcome a fair degree of antipathy present within the four pilot communities and built trust between them and the Reserve authorities – no mean feat given the previous history of conflict which, it is reported, had involved at least one death.

21. However, poor management capacity has dominated the performance of the Project's implementation. The CTA, while technically adept and respected, lacked the management skills and the personality to meld an effective and cohesive team. The disjointed turnover of staff, noted above, did not help and at times the "team" has been riven with interpersonal rivalries, disputes, and ego issues. Support from the UNDP-CO could have been more effective, but its focus has been too much on ensuring adherence to bureaucratic procedures rather than on the more difficult issues and subtle art of man-management, and coaxing the best out of its limited project team. As a result, relations between the UNDP-CO and senior members of the Project team also broke down to varying extents. This, and concerns about the lack of delivery finally encouraged senior management of the UNDP-CO to close the Project prematurely, two months ahead of its re-scheduled end date of 31st December 2010. Nonetheless, these negative points should not be allowed overshadow the positive ones, or the limited successes achieved, and the Khazar Reserve is on a much more effective footing now than it would have been without the Project, even if several of the intended outputs and outcomes have not been achieved. As a result, the implementation approach is evaluated as **Marginally Satisfactory**.

Project Progress and Financial Assessment

22. Total disbursement of funds to the end of the Project amounted to US\$ 1,418,762 (see Table 2). If Project spending can be taken as a crude measure of the progress of implementation, then the Project has not achieved the progress originally envisaged, since this sum represents only 82.0% of the budget projected in the Project Document. However, the bulk of the unspent money is UNDP co-financing, while 94.8% of the GEF budget has been disbursed. The remaining US\$ 101,121 of unspent GEF funds is apparently committed to final activities such as this evaluation and the

publication of Turkmenistan's first bird field guide. The FE is led to understand that on completion of all Project activities, all GEF monies will have been disbursed.

23. Perhaps the most significant figure in Table 2 is that only 23% of UNDP's co-financing was actually delivered by the Project. This is due to two factors. Firstly, UNDP suffered a global cut in its budget between the time of the Project's design and the start of its implementation. In Turkmenistan, this resulted in project expenditure being cut by about 50% across the board. Secondly, the UNDP-CO implemented a strategy whereby for projects such as this one where delivery was an issue, donor and government funds were prioritised for delivery over UNDP funds to ensure partner goals were achieved. The FE believes that this is something of a two-edged sword, but nevertheless can understand the rationale.

24. The other significant issue arising from Table 2 is the clear fact that expenditure has not been even across the various outcomes. Outcome 2, the ICZM component, which met political difficulties and was effectively abandoned (see paragraph 49), has been greatly under spent (US\$168,034) while in both actual (US\$ 66,383) and percentage (183%) terms, Outcome 3, the local community component, has received considerable extra GEF funding than was originally envisaged, although when the shortfall of UNDP funds is also considered, the total still reaches less than two-thirds of the spend that was originally foreseen. Outcome 1, the management planning, is the only component overspent in total. Both Outcomes 4, the communication component, and 5, Project management, are under spent.

25. No details of Government co-financing are available and it appears that none have been kept. This is due in a large part to the fact that such Government financing was identified as "*Re-oriented MNP baseline funding*" (page 53 of the Project Document) and hence it is said that there may be difficulties in identifying this during implementation of the Project. However, it was clearly possible to identify this at the time of designing the Project, and given that the Project Document is considered a contractual agreement amongst the parties, the FE believes that there should be greater onus on the Government to identify and report its contributions regularly to the Project. This problem may be exacerbated by the fact that the ATLAS system does not track any in-kind or in-parallel funding, despite a GEF requirement for the relevant project implementation unit to be fully accountable for co-financing resources received for its project. Furthermore, as the MTE also points out, the PIR for 2008 states that:

"Due to the long time gap between the project preparation and implementation phase, the co-financing from TACIS, Counterpart [USAID] and other donors has expired. Therefore the project channelled its funds from the grant program (Activity 3.1.2.) to finance activities related to establishment information and resource centres. The same applies to Activity 3.1.2., where TACIS-REC grant program for local communities expired in 2006 and the project has to rely on its own funds".

The MTE correctly points out that since these interventions ended before the project started, they have to be considered as part of the baseline, not as co-financing. The MTE also points out a number of discrepancies in the 2009 PIR, and while no such discrepancies immediately leap from the page of the 2010 PIR, the FE remains concerned about the fact that the TACIS and USAID monies are still being included as co-financing despite the MTE's comments, and also about a figure of US\$ 860,000 from Turkmenoil which, although it occurs in the financial section as in-kind co-financing, is not mentioned anywhere else in the 2010 PIR and its purported use was never mentioned by any of the interviewees. It is therefore possible that the required co-financing ratio of 1:1 has not been achieved.

TABLE 2: TOTAL DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS (US\$) BY OUTCOME BY SOURCE* TO END OF PROJECT AGAINST FULL PROJECT BUDGET AS PER PROJECT DOCUMENT (FIGURES ROUNDED)

	GEF			UNDP			Total		
	Budget	Actual	%	Budget	Actual	%	Budget	Actual	%
Outcome 1	584,600	641,911	109.8	0	6,626	+	584,600	648,537	110.9
Outcome 2	278,000	109,966	39.6	0	0	-	278,000	109,966	39.6
Outcome 3	80,000	146,383	183.0	223,000	53,056	23.8	303,000	199,439	65.8
Outcome 4	180,000	161,959	90.0	55,000	3,621	6.6	235,000	165,580	70.5
Outcome 5	306,000	267,260	87.3	0	550	+	306,000	267,810	87.5
Total	1,428,600	1,327,479	94.8	278,000	63,853	23.0	1,706,600	1,391,332	82.0

* Table excludes Government co-funding.

SOURCE: UNDP from Atlas. Note: it is outside the scope of the FE to independently verify the financial figures contained in any of the tables and figures presented here through an audit.

26. Table 3 gives the figures for the disbursement of GEF funds by Outcome against budget in each of the project years as per the Project Document. Figure 1 illustrates these figures as a percentage of budget disbursed in each period by Outcome, and Figures 2 shows the same but cumulatively. These Figures illustrate a number of points:

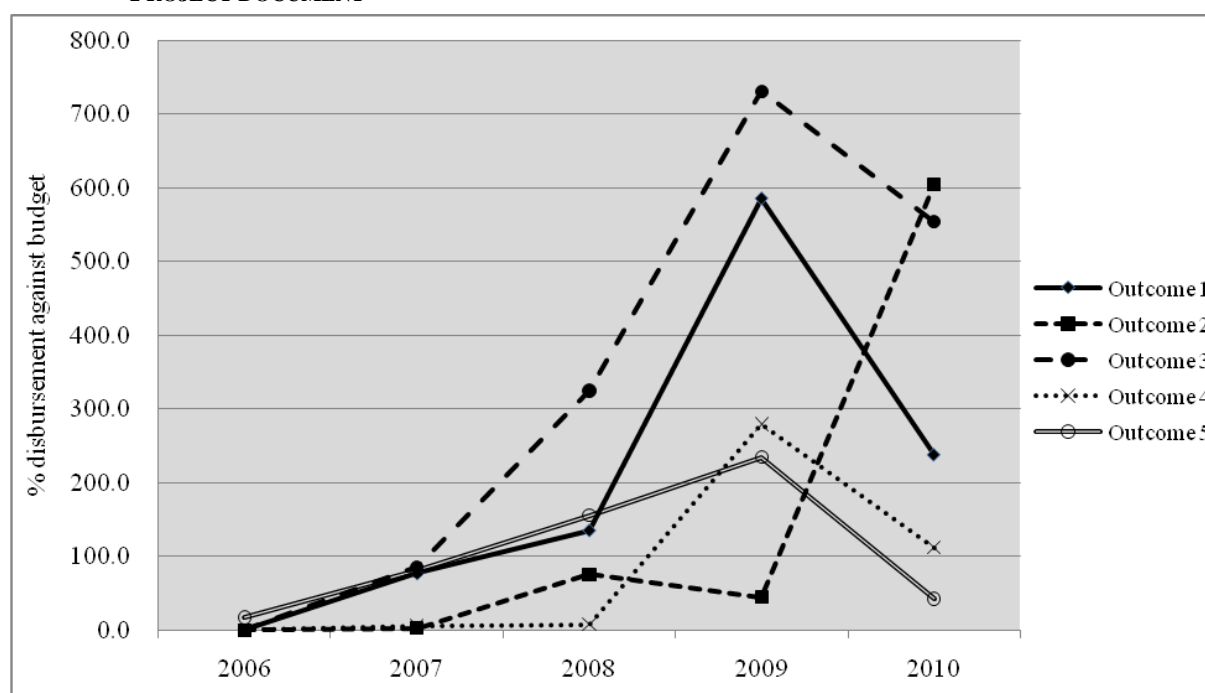
- that expenditure through 2006 and 2007 was generally slow with all Outcomes registering below 50% of the cumulative budget, and with only project management costs higher;
- increasing progress in 2008 with Outcomes 1 (management planning) and 3 (local communities) exceeding their predicted annual budgets but still falling short of the expected cumulative progress;
- most expenditure taking place in 2009 with Outcomes 1 and 3 again spending hugely in excess of predicted annual budgets (585% and 731% respectively), the latter now exceeding the predicted cumulative total; and a large spend on Outcome 4, either in an attempt to catch up or because material was now available to communicate and replicate;
- continued levels of spending in 2010 on all Outcomes above predicted budgets, although lower than in 2009 with some significant work finally possible on Outcome 2 (ICZM); and
- project management costs largely mirroring expenditures on other Outcomes which is surprising since such costs should be relatively steady and independent of the technical work, suggesting that perhaps (as is fairly common) that certain costs associated with things such as long-term consultant contracts have actually been misallocated to the project management outcome rather than the technical outcome where they really belong.

TABLE 3: TOTAL DISBURSEMENT OF GEF FUNDS (US\$) BY OUTCOME BY YEAR TO END OF PROJECT AGAINST BUDGET AS PER PROJECT DOCUMENT

	2006			2007			2008			2009			2010		
	Budget	Actual	%	Budget	Actual	%	Budget	Actual	%	Budget	Actual	%	Budget	Actual	%
Outcome 1	209,000	629	0.0	174,000	134,096	77.1	132,600	179,590	135.4	47,000	275,226	585.6	22,000	52,368	238.0
Outcome 2	69,000	0	0	106,500	2,852	2.7	71,500	54,071	75.6	24,000	10,696	44.6	7,000	42,346	604.9
Outcome 3	35,500	0	0	20,500	17,544	85.6	8,000	26,007	325.1	8,000	58,489	731.1	8,000	44,342	554.3
Outcome 4	20,000	0	0	25,000	1,417	5.7	65,000	5,005	7.7	46,000	128,681	279.7	24,000	26,854	111.9
Outcome 5	56,400	9,618	17.1	80,400	64,629	80.4	40,400	62,842	155.5	39,400	92,385	234.5	89,400	37,785	42.3
Total	389,900	10,247	2.63	406,400	220,540	54.20	317,500	327,516	103.15	164,400	565,479	344	150,400	231,126	153.67

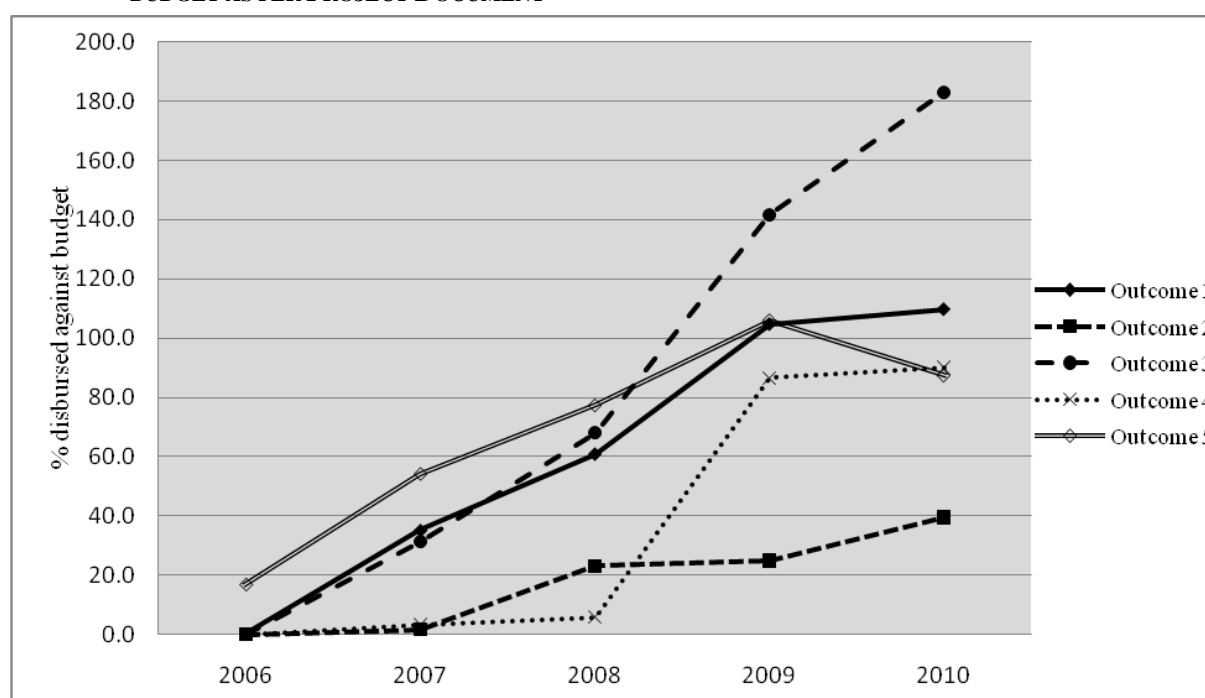
SOURCE: UNDP from Atlas. Note: it is outside the scope of the FE to independently verify the financial figures contained in any of the tables and figures presented here through an audit

FIGURE 1: PERCENTAGE DISBURSEMENT OF GEF FUNDS (US\$) BY OUTPUT BY YEAR AGAINST BUDGET AS PER PROJECT DOCUMENT



SOURCE: UNDP from Atlas.

FIGURE 2: CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGE DISBURSEMENT OF GEF FUNDS (US\$) BY OUTPUT BY YEAR AGAINST BUDGET AS PER PROJECT DOCUMENT



SOURCE: UNDP from Atlas.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

27. Project monitoring and evaluation has been evaluated as **Marginally Unsatisfactory**. Monitoring and evaluation of Project activities have been undertaken in varying detail at three levels:

- i. Progress monitoring
- ii. Internal activity monitoring

iii. Impact monitoring

28. Progress monitoring has been good and has been made through quarterly and annual reports to the UNDP-CO. The annual work plans for the Project were worked out by the PO along with inputs from the UNDP-CO and were sent to UNDP for formal approval. The PO has also been largely in daily communication with the UNDP CO regarding project, work plan, and its implementation. The PMU has ensured that the UNDP-CO received quarterly progress reports providing updates on the status of planned activities, the status of the overall project schedule, the products completed, problems incurred, and an outline of the activities planned for the following quarter. None of these report formats contained quantitative estimates of project progress, just qualitative assessments of progress made. The UNDP-CO generated its own quarterly financial reports from Atlas. These expenditure records, together with Atlas disbursement records of direct payments, served as a basis for expenditure monitoring and budget revisions, the latter taking place annually following the disbursement progress and changes in the operational work plan, and also on an *ad hoc* basis depending upon the rate of delivery. The UNDP-CO has also required quarterly delivery projections along with work plans (derived from the Annual Work Plans) and procurement tables and these have served as an additional monitoring tool, especially for quantitative estimates of the project progress.

29. From the quarterly reports, the UNDP-CO has prepared Quarterly Operational Reports (150-word fixed-format) which have been forwarded to UNDP/GEF Regional Coordination Unit in Bratislava, and in turn submitted to UNDP HQ and to GEF. The major findings and observations of all these reports have been given in an annual report covering the period July to June, the Project Implementation Report (PIR), which is also submitted by the PMU to the UNDP-CO, UNDP Regional Coordination Unit, and UNDP HQ for review and official comments, followed by final submission to GEF. The PIRs were not circulated in full to the Project Board since the translation was considered too time-consuming an exercise, but the section on indicators and delivery was translated for the attention of the NPC to agree. In addition, since the Project Board included representatives of the Etraps (Districts) as well as several national ministries, both local and national government has been kept abreast of the Project's implementation progress verbally during meetings. Annual Project Reports (APR) covering calendar years (Jan-Dec) were also prepared as part of the Annual Work Plan monitoring tools as required by UNDP's regulations. The PO and the UNDP-CO maintained a close working relationship with project staff members meeting CO staff on an almost daily basis to discuss implementation issues and problems. UNDP has also monitored the Project through numerous field visits, generally three to five per year⁵. The Project risk assessment has been updated approximately twice a year together by the project team and the UNDP-CO with the main risks identified along with adequate monitoring responses. Two of these risks were identified as being critical – the lack of project staff impeding project progress (1st Jan 2010) and the fact that the management plan for the Khazar Reserve is unlikely to be adopted by the Government (1st June 2010). Neither was satisfactorily resolved. An independent mid-term evaluation was undertaken, but extremely late in the project cycle, the field mission taking place in August 2009 – three and a quarter years into a four-year project – with the final report being completed in January 2010 – four months before the projected end of the Project and nine months before its revised end. The Project has been subject to a mandatory nationally implemented audit undertaken by an independent company appointed by open tender, and some of the major procurements for the Khazar Reserve have been selected at random for audit by UNDP's Office of Audit and Investigation (but see also paragraph 84 *et seq.*).

30. Internal activity monitoring must have been undertaken by the CTA/NPM and PA. Certainly annual and quarterly work plans were developed and these formed the guiding framework for implementation, but the FE could obtain little information on the more detailed mechanics of how activities were tracked. As the MTE pointed out, certainly “*there are no indicators in the Annual Work Plans*”. It is clear that the project was considered complex with many financial transactions each

⁵ **2006:** ?? October. **2007:** 6th February, 25th March. **2008:** 18th January, 23-27th April (Khazar nature reserve's 75th anniversary), ?? July, ?? September, ?? November. **2009:** ?? February, ?? May, ?? July, ?? October, ?? December. **2010:** ?? March 2010, ?? May 2010, ?? July 2010. [?? – date not given in PIR.]

week. Since the Project considered that the UNDP-CO was slow in dealing with these, the CTA/NPM developed a tracking system to enable him to prompt the CO to make payments (see paragraph 83). Given this, and the fact that the CTA/NPM was the driving force behind the Project's implementation (at least while he was involved) some form of monitoring must have been invoked. Unfortunately, it is also clear that the Project team has not worked together as a team; the MTE reports that:

“project staff are not a cohesive team working towards a common Objective. ... They are fully aware of their role but they relate little to each other. ... the staff do not meet regularly (except for the preparation of the Annual Work Plan) to exchange successes and failures, seek mutual advice and support, plan collaborative activities and complement what each is doing.”

and that this appears to have got worse when the PA was left effectively in charge during 2010. External consultants and contractors have been tied to results-based contracts with payments dependent upon satisfactory deliverables or milestones.

31. Impact monitoring by the Project appears to have been effectively non-existent by the Project. While it is true that METT scores have been measured for the Khazar Reserve, and introduced into two other reserves⁶, this appears largely to be simply because there is a requirement in the logframe indicators to do so. However, it is of note that even though this is a requirement, no METT score was available for Khazar in 2010 (project end) although this appears to be because of the premature closure of the Project and apparently it will be measured in 2011 (see Annex IV – indicator O1.2). No measurements have been taken to determine the effectiveness of any training course nor of any of the public awareness-raising activities and, critically, there has been no measurement of any aspect of the small grants programme – the FE was the first visit any of the grantees had received from anyone connected with the Project.

PROJECT RESULTS

DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE INDICATORS

32. The indicators relating to the Project's Development Objective have largely either not been achieved, or only partially so. While this is partially due to poor implementation, the over-ambitiousness of, and insufficient recognition of the limitations for change within the governmental system in, the design are also responsible. The Project has worked hard to maximise the opportunities that these indicators can be achieved through the subsequent, and now current, *Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area System in Turkmenistan Project*.

- New PA categories, community participation, and landscape ecology principles are adopted into law
 - Not adopted. Some sector-based legislative revisions have strengthened environmental protection, and recommendations have been developed for more balanced reserve management options and submitted to the MNP.

These have not been approved nor adopted yet by the MNP. However, while this Project has not achieved these desired changes, its recommendations have been passed onto the *Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area System in Turkmenistan Project* that is expected to produce a substantial upgrade of the PA law to include new PA categories such national parks and introduce new administrative and financial mechanisms for PA management.

- METT score improves by at least 10% annually
 - METT score for Khazar reserve has risen from a baseline of 24 to 52

⁶ Amudarya State Reserve and Repetek State Reserve.

Despite what the MTE observed to be generosity in the METT assessment, it is clear that substantive improvements have been made to the management of the Khazar Reserve, in particular through the provision of equipment.

- 100,000 hectares under community-based resource management around Khazar Reserve by end of project
 - None. Management plans for 4 pilot areas totalling more than 100,000 ha have been prepared and submitted for approval and implementation. Current planning instruments take into account the Reserve's concerns over exploitation of resources.

This still awaits action by the MNP.

- At least 50% of other protected areas in Turkmenistan apply METT to track management effectiveness
 - Two other reserves now apply the METT - Amudarya and Repetek.

It is intended that this will be expanded under the *Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area System in Turkmenistan Project*.

- At least 50% of other protected areas incorporating new, participatory management mechanisms into their PA management approach
 - None.

The Khazar Management Plan will be used by the *Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area System in Turkmenistan Project* for developing management plans for another four reserves – one for the first National Park is underway.

SUMMARY EVALUATION

33. Overall, the Project entitled *Conservation and Sustainable Use of Globally Significant Biological Diversity in Khazar Nature Reserve on the Caspian Sea Coast* has achieved most of its major relevant objectives but with significant shortcomings and has not yielded some of its expected global environment benefits, and hence the FE evaluates it as **Marginally Satisfactory**. With this Project, context is everything. It is important to recognise that this is the first GEF project to be implemented in Turkmenistan, and the biggest UNDP project to be undertaken there at the point of its commencement. Furthermore, the Project site was in a remote location, and although it was considered to be an environmental project, it was required to cover a number of social and economic issues, something its main partner agency, the MNP, was not used to doing. In a country with extremely limited capacities, its implementation was always going to be a challenge. Furthermore, as discussed above (see paragraph 9), the design was overly ambitious and the political constraints and realities of the key stakeholders not properly recognised. Therefore, to make any assessment relevant to the country and useful to UNDP-GEF, it has to be made in relation to this context, not to that found more generally across the region. If the assessment is simply viewed according to more absolute criteria, undoubtedly it would be found wanting. Yet such ratings of “Unsatisfactory” would help no-one in this instance and could possibly place further GEF investment at risk – investment needed not so much in monetary terms for Turkmenistan is a relatively rich state, but in terms of new ideas that such investment brings. While change appears to happen slowly in Turkmenistan, and the centralised decision-making system is inevitably cautious and conservative, this Project does show that such projects can act as agents of change and that the ideas generated and demonstrated can find their way into the system to be acted upon ... albeit slowly. Therefore, the FE has made assessments throughout on a relative basis of the progress made against what could have been expected within the Turkmenistan context.

34. Key Project achievements include:

- increased awareness of biodiversity issues leading to significantly improved relations between the Khazar Reserve and the four pilot communities and a reduction in hunting and fishing pressure;

- a new, state-of-the-art management plan for the Khazar Reserve which can be implemented once necessary legislative changes are made, and which will also act as a model for other protected areas;
- upgraded technical capacity for scientific and enforcement activities within the reserve;
- construction of a fully-equipped cordon (forensic checkpoint);
- improvements to the scientific basis of the Reserve's management, mainly through systematic bird surveys;
- a refurbished and improved museum and visitor centre for the Reserve;
- development of a small grants programme promoting alternative livelihoods which has provided grants to 16 beneficiaries;
- high-profile media campaign which drew the Project's attention to the President; and
- introduction of the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool to the Khazar Reserve and its replication in two other state reserves – a Amudarya and Repetek.

35. The main problem areas identified by the FE are that:

- limited capacity within the country for managing the implementation of the Project, and perhaps projects in general; and
- conservatism within the Government system towards adopting change.

36. A summary evaluation by Project Output is given in Table 4 and a more detailed summary of the level of achievements made against the indicators of success contained in the logframe is given in Annex IV. Results are discussed below by Project Outcome and key sectoral or cross-cutting issues are then discussed in the ensuing section.

TABLE 4: EVALUATION OF THE END OF PROJECT SITUATION AS PER THE REVISED LOGFRAME

Component		Evaluation*					
		HS	S	MS	MU	U	HU
Output 1.1	Adaptive participatory management practice piloted in Khazar Nature Reserve						
Output 1.2	Strengthened reserve staff's technical knowledge and abilities						
Output 1.3	Strengthened field conservation capacity of the reserve						
Output 2.1	Coastal zone management framework and planning process in place						
Output 2.2	Conservation landscape and Khazar Nature Reserve's place in that landscape is defined						
Output 2.3	Strengthened information baseline on coastal ecosystem health parameters						
Output 3.1	Social capital is strengthened in targeted communities around Khazar Nature Reserve and goodwill between Khazar Nature Reserve and local communities is nurtured and restored						
Output 3.2	Sustainable natural resource use demonstrations generate new options for coastal fishery and reduce pressure on migratory waterfowl in coastal area surrounding Khazar Nature Reserve						
Output 4.1	New policies within MNP to encourage adaptive management						
Output 4.2	Protected area management training programme						
Output 4.3	Operational network for nationwide replication of best practices by PAs						
Output 4.4	Strengthened Caspian-wide PA information exchange and sharing of lessons learned						
Output 4.5	A clear and compelling economic argument for PA contribution to development and for long-term financing of Khazar Nature Reserve and the national system of protected areas						

* Note: HS = Highly satisfactory; S = Satisfactory; MS = Marginally satisfactory; MU= Marginally unsatisfactory; U = Unsatisfactory; HU = Highly unsatisfactory.

PROJECT OUTPUTS

37. The FE has struggled to get a comprehensive picture of what the Project has actually achieved under each output. The lack of a national consultant, poorly kept records, documentation almost exclusively in Russian, and almost all staff now in other employment with little time or incentive to cooperate in listing details of achievements have all conspired to weaken this section of the report. Many staff did provide details of some activities undertaken, but not always in a structured way, and there are serious inconsistencies within the material provided suggesting that some staff remained unaware of how the various outputs of the Project fitted together into a whole. This section represents the FE's best interpretation of those reports and information garnered from the PIRs and APRs.

Outcome 1: Khazar Nature Reserve management capacity and conservation effectiveness is secured

Output 1.1: Adaptive participatory management practice piloted in Khazar Nature Reserve

38. Although a Stakeholder Working Group as envisaged by the Project Document was not formed, a modern-style management plan for the Khazar Reserve was produced to international standards by the Project under the direction of an international consultant, Mike Appleton, working through a series of workshops and roundtable discussions. This includes sections on general information, activities by components, a financial plan, a scientific monitoring plan with detailed schedules for monitoring key species, and a communication plan. It is fully costed and the resources required identified. Some work has been carried out with the Ministry of Finance since the Plan's full-scale implementation requires a 15-25% increase in funding, and while indications appear that the funding itself is not a problem, there needs to be a justification for this within a single reserve. The issue is further complicated by the fact that the Management Plan has not been approved by the MNP since its requirements do not coincide with the national regulations, although since this is outside of the Project's direct control this output has been assessed on the Plan itself, not its lack of adoption. Its adoption will require changes in the legislation and apparently while the process for this has been initiated, it will take much time. The Government's approach remains at present that of adopting a single management plan covering all eight State Reserves in the country. In addition, there are still clearly significant concerns over the concept of co-management and this idea runs contrary to both the regulations of Zapovedniks and it would seem to the mindset of those tasked with their management/protection. However, under the *Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area System in Turkmenistan Project* where creation of a National Park is the central idea, such changes and concepts are still being explored. The Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) was introduced to the Khazar Reserve (see paragraph 47) but was not measured annually (see paragraph 31).

39. Improved working relations between hunting associations and the Reserve were established and visits and consultations for hunters in "hot" poaching communities (e.g. Gyzylsuw and Garagol) were made. Discussions of joint management schemes were undertaken in 2008, and the need for sustainable hunting and fishing was raised in the various communities. The FE found strong evidence during his mission that village residents understood the need for sustainable harvesting, had formed local associations that were self-policing, accepted that they could hunt only in the newly-designated hunting areas and that all of these lay outside the boundaries of the Reserve. Key important habitats in the north of Turkmenbashi Bay were closed for hunting in 2008 by the Government of Turkmenbashi with justification from Project's specialists. Joint management of territories (protection of gull's nesting grounds in Balkan Bay) was agreed between the Reserve's management and the fishermen of Belek at the end of 2009 in exchange for limited fishing permits.

Output 1.2: Strengthened reserve staff's technical knowledge and abilities

40. None of the material provided to the FE includes any details of activities undertaken to strengthen the capacity of the Reserve's staff through training as envisaged by the Project Document. No "*comprehensive human capacity-building programme for Khazar Reserve in protected area*

management” appears to have been implemented. Although the 2010 PIR states “*The Reserve’s scientific and enforcement department were strengthened through regular trainings and ...*” no confirmatory evidence of these was provided during the mission. Although some references are made to a programme comprising ten overseas training courses and internships, developed jointly by the Project with Astrakhan University, nothing appears to become of it (see paragraph 62). An agreement with the “Nature Reserves” Experimental and Productive Centre in Moscow was made for a study tour on the management of protected areas and the development of ecological tourism for eight Turkmen nature reserve directors to be held in November 2010, but this was cancelled due to the premature closure of the Project. Some documentation refers to the addition of a single new scientist to the Reserve’s staff in 2008, and visits to the Reserve were included into the courses of some senior biology and ecology university students. Some sharing of knowledge undoubtedly took place between the project experts and reserve staff and training sessions were conducted on bird monitoring (survey techniques) and GIS use.

41. A visitor centre was established at the Reserve’s museum with free access to the internet, purchase and installation of visual equipment, and the museum’s displays were partially modernised through the use of a landscape map produced with support from the Project. The museum is now one of the better ones that the FE has seen in the CIS region. The museum director and one of the Reserve’s researchers were trained at the National Museum in Ashgabat to use internet to help visitors and lists of ecological websites and DVD environmental films were provided. Regular free visits to the centre were organised for school students and teachers, and ecological club members of Turkmenbashi city to improve public environmental awareness. A Khazar Nature Reserve Museum Guidebook was prepared and disseminated along with promotional leaflets for the museum. An agreement between the Reserve administration and the MNP makes the museum director responsible for the public relations activities of the Reserve, and the Project supported a number of environmental activists with prizes and paid for their transportation and other expenses. An agreement was achieved that future financial support for the museum’s environmental events would be provided by some oil companies operating in the region (e.g. Dragon Oil, and Petronas). The Project also supported the production of a wide range of public awareness materials (posters, leaflets, calendars) as well as a nationally publicised event in Turkmenbashi in 2008 to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Reserve. A book of scientific works on the Reserve was published to mark the event, along with other publications and souvenirs with Reserve and anniversary logos.

42. The Project produced the first field identification guide to the birds of Turkmenistan which includes text and pictures for 412 species. Permission for its publication has been received by the MNP and a tender to publish it in Turkmen and Russian was announced in October 2010. Premature closure of the Project has delayed this, but funds are still available and at the time of the FE the UNDP-CO was following through in completing this. The Turkmen language version still requires final editing. A Short Bird Guide of the Caspian Region was printed earlier, and all research and legal staff of the Khazar Reserve received copies for official use. Although the Project funded the preparation of two books – “*Monuments of Nature, Architecture and History in Balkan Velayat*” by J. Gurbangeldyev; and “*A Guide Book of Archaeological and Nature Monuments in the Western Turkmen Lowlands*” by A.N. Nigyarov – neither was published since time ran out on both. An electronic copy of the Russian language version of the former, along with academic opinions of it, was forwarded to the MNP, but the Turkmen version⁷ was not translated, and the editing of the other book by a public relations specialist was never finished. Code of Honour posters for hunters in both Turkmen and Russian were printed and disseminated.

43. The legislation of Turkmenistan was revised. The first review collated all conservation-related legislation and recommendations on some legal acts were proposed. Complete sets of all laws relating to conservation and the Reserve were distributed on CD among the stakeholders. As a result of the recommendations the *New Petroleum Law of Turkmenistan (2008)* was adopted. The second revision was aimed at the strengthening environmental compliance (Criminal Law, Administration Law, Local

⁷ All publications have to be made in the national language.

Government legislation) and improvement of the Reserve's legislation (preparation of status of border zones of the reserves) in 2009. Proposed amendments developed by the Project were approved by the Stakeholder Meeting on 19th June 2009 and were then submitted for the consideration of the Cabinet of Ministers and Mejlis (Parliament) of Turkmenistan and further endorsement by the MNP.

Output 1.3: Strengthened field conservation capacity of the reserve

44. The Project made efforts to improve the scientific basis and its advisory role within the management of the Reserve. It appears that this was mainly through undertaking systematic bird surveys. These have included aerial counts of birds wintering in the Turkmen sector of the Caspian Sea, undertaken in mid-January of 2007, 2009 and 2010; ground surveys of same in mid-January 2008 when exceptionally cold conditions made aerial surveys inadvisable; ground surveys of same during peak autumn migration of wildfowl in mid-November 2007-2010; ground surveys of breeding birds undertaken four times between April and June 2009 and three times in 2010; monthly monitoring of bird movements at 12 stations between July and October; and an additional total of 362 standard route vehicle trips along the coast of Turkmenbashi, Balkan, Soymonov, Muravyov and Keski Bays made between September 2006 and October 2010 to monitor reserve and buffer zones. A further 419 visits were made to coastal and inland sites to monitor birds in assigned hunting areas. All the data obtained has been incorporated onto a GIS, and has been used in advising on changes to hunting areas, setting hunting limits, and in the review of the Reserve's boundaries. Unfortunately, no work appears to have been conducted on other issues as foreseen in the Project Document, e.g. Caspian Seal (haul out sites and abundance), water quality, and condition of marine and terrestrial habitats. Furthermore, while the aerial bird surveys are to be applauded for the data they produced, the FE is a little concerned as to how these will be continued. The Project Document states clearly that:

"The surveys will be designed and conducted in a way that is sustainable in the Turkmen context. Project resources will enable KhR staff and the Institute of Deserts to devise a survey methodology that is low cost, participatory and that strengthens local capacity."

yet aerial surveys are certainly not low cost, and it does not appear that they were participatory nor that local capacity was strengthened. Finally, the FE is also concerned that the senior Reserve management did not appear to really understand the central role of monitoring in management of a reserve. Even allowing for the vagaries of translation, repeated probing of the issue suggested a purely academic approach to monitoring (collection of data for collection's sake) rather than targeting it to management actions or to answering questions of a practical management nature. While this may have been expected at the outset of the Project, it is disappointing to find it four years on.

45. Scientific training of Reserve staff was undertaken on subjects such as the use of GPS and data processing, practical methods to define marine boundaries by GPS, and two field trips were made for training on monitoring Caspian Sea levels. Training was also given on the methodologies for catching, marking and recording data from birds (and seals?). Cross-border communication was also established with Anzalee Reserve (Iran) to share ornithological information, and a pilot joint synchronized bird survey was undertaken in 2008.

46. There is no record of any activity associated with stakeholders developing and implementing a biodiversity conservation plan for the Reserve (Activity 1.3.2 in the Project Document), but considerable work was undertaken, and results achieved, in raising awareness amongst targeted stakeholder groups and improving the capacity of local communities to raise awareness among resource users. The local facilitators appear to have been highly effective, not least because they were well-respected in their communities. In fact the FE found this to be one of the biggest successes of the Project (at least in Chekishlyar and Gara-gol) with village residents showing high awareness of sustainable natural resource use, legal and illegal hunting areas, and the need for hunting and fishing quotas (see also paragraph 60).

47. The Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) was introduced to the Khazar Reserve and subsequently to two other reserves, (see paragraph 66) and a significant rise in the score during the

Project appears to be largely due to provision of equipment for the Reserve by the Project for scientific and enforcement purposes. This included:

- Construction of a new Cordon (a sort of checkpoint-cum-research centre) including two laboratories and equipment (e.g. binocular microscopes, electric scale, thermometers; benthic sampling equipment, salinity measurers);
- seven boats (one rubber and six aluminium) and outboard motors;
- one 4x4 vehicle and three motorcycles;
- radio communication equipment including 10 hand-held radios, 4 mobile radios for installation in cars/boats, a base radio station installed in the Khazar State Reserve, and a re-transmitter used to cover all the area of Turkmenbashi Gulf.
- GPS navigation equipment;
- Optical equipment (binoculars, cameras, video cameras, night vision aids);
- Protective equipment (wet suits, rubber boots, sleeping bags, tents);
- Office equipment (computers, printers, air conditioners, projector and screen, DVD player, assorted furniture); and
- Books (for the Reserve library, mainly on birds and fish and their artificial breeding).

Inter-agency software for tracking hunters (hunting association, local government, ministry and Reserve) was developed and installed by the Project on the computers. Dragon Oil Company provided funds for tranquilizers and equipment for the temporary immobilization and transportation of animals, seemingly associated with a re-introduction programme for Persian gazelle⁸ (*Gazella subgutturosa*) that animates management much more than the existing flora and fauna of the Reserve.

48. A detailed Enforcement Plan, including detailed procedures for dealing with poachers including progressive punishment systems (as prescribed by law) and joint actions with the state fishery inspection and border control was apparently developed as reported in the 2010 PIR but it is also reported there that “*the plan is not being implemented due to low Reserve’s capacity*” which suggests that while the Project put a lot of effort into providing equipment, either a) it did not pay enough attention to raising the capability of the enforcement staff, or b) that the MNP still does not employ enough enforcement staff to implement the plan.

Outcome 2: Cross-sector capacity for integrated coastal management established and biodiversity conservation objectives mainstreamed into productive coastal sectors surrounding Khazar Reserve

Output 2.1: Coastal zone management framework and planning process in place

49. The Project has not managed to achieve this output. The MTE notes its importance as “*almost a pre-requisite for the project*” and that “*without it the project benefits are severely limited and not secure in the long term*”. Nonetheless, it was recognised at a fairly early stage that the MNP was not the correct political vehicle to achieve integrated coastal zone management planning, and as a result the strategic decision was taken to transfer the leadership and coordination role for the entire Outcome to the State Enterprise on Caspian Issues (SECI) under the President of Turkmenistan. Again, unfortunately, this transfer became an involved and protracted process. Once completed, the Project continued to try and influence or even drive some of the issues, but the SECI reviewed and changed the workplan.

50. Within these constraints, the Project did manage to undertake several advocacy activities to ensure that the Khazar Reserve will be engaged fully in the process and recognised as an important stakeholder as a legitimate use of the Caspian coastal environment. Key amongst these were:

- provision of organisational and technical assistance in establishing an inter-ministerial Coastal Planning Working Group to build capacity for cross-sectoral planning and management of the

⁸ Also known as Goitered gazelle

Turkmen sector of the Caspian Sea and its coastal zone to ensure sustainable social and economic development of the region and conservation of its biodiversity and ecological system. The working group established in accordance with a Presidential Resolution has been working on a regular basis at the most senior level of the relevant stakeholders. It is chaired by SECI and includes:

- Ministry of Oil and Gas (Turkmen Oil and Gas Trade Corp, Turkmen Oil State Concern, Turkmenbashi Oil Refinery, etc);
 - Ministry of Nature Protection (MNP) of Turkmenistan (Khazar Nature Reserve, Caspian Ecological Control);
 - State Fishery Committee;
 - Turkmen Sea and River Lines Department (Turkmenbashi Port Administration);
 - State Committee for Tourism and Sports;
 - Khyakimliks (local authorities) of Balkan velayat and Turkmenbashi city;
 - Ministry of Health and Medical Industry;
 - Ministry of Economy; and
 - Ministry of Justice.
- conduct of a workshop on ICZM in Turkmenistan with participation of an international expert for the working group members and stakeholders;
 - facilitation of collaboration with international academic research institutions to provide training for Turkmen professionals in ICZM environmental planning and programmes; and
 - a study tour to Sweden (3-8th March 2008) to learn best practices of the coastal zone management in a developed country for eight officials (see [Annex VI](#)).

A workshop on environmental safety and sustainability planned for officials of the local authorities, oil and gas enterprises, and other relevant stakeholders was planned to be held in Turkmenbashi in November-December 2010, with the participation of two guest lecturers from Moscow's Gubkin Oil and Gas University Training Centre was cancelled when the Project was terminated early.

Output 2.2: Conservation landscape and Khazar Nature Reserve's place in that landscape is defined

51. Again, only limited activities could be achieved under this Output, but nonetheless, they are important steps forward. Although a coastal landscape-scale management plan could not be drawn up, the Project did create a database to develop environmental sensitivity maps, an important forecast and emergency response tool for man-made and natural disasters in the coastal zone. Such maps enable immediate priorities to be set in any emergency situation, such as an oil spill, and to model and forecast impacts direct responses. The maps were developed using GIS and included a coastal geomorphology index system, climatic and hydrological conditions, and the distribution of human economic activities and the wildlife which can be exposed to pollution and similar consequences, e.g. locations of populations of nesting birds. The Project also included wintering bird distribution data taken from aerial (January 2007, 2009, 2010) and ground (February 2008, and November 2007, 2008, 2009) surveys undertaken by the Project and over 700 other bird records from the Reserve and its buffer zones made within the Project's lifetime. However, the FE notes the absence of other important ecological information such as fish and seal data, although concedes the greater difficulties of collecting such information. However, this would appear to be a missed opportunity. The Project also failed to initiate development of an environmental monitoring information system due to difficulties over clarifying specifications. No information has been included on changing water levels and the consequences of these.

52. The Project analysed and proposed revision of the borders of the Khazar Reserve based on conservation needs, local communities location (avoid conflicts) and priority habitats. Although these proposals were submitted to the reserve management in 2008, feedback and the desire to proceed with

changing the borders was received only at the end of 2009. The borders are believed to have been gazetted, and maps with these marked have been distributed to the major stakeholders. A ToR was prepared and agreed for the demarcation of the reserve's borders on the ground, but the slightly premature closure of the Project meant that this task has been handed over to the *Strengthening the Management effectiveness of the Protected Area system in Turkmenistan Project* to implement, once agreement has been reached with that project board. A landscape map of the Reserve was also produced.

Output 2.3: Strengthened information baseline on coastal ecosystem health parameters

53. Little was also achieved under this Output. It appears that the only monitoring system developed or strengthened was a software programme designed for the Balkan Velayat Hunters and Fishermen Database and Municipal Services Management System in Turkmenbashi, to enable local authorities to maintain operational records of the environmental violations in the Turkmen waters of the Caspian Sea and to improve supervision/monitoring of the relevant agencies and services in Turkmenbashi city.

Outcome 3: Khazar Reserve builds trust and goodwill with local communities and strengthens environmental governance over wildlife resources

Output 3.1: Social capital is strengthened in targeted communities around Khazar Nature Reserve and goodwill between Khazar Nature Reserve and local communities is nurtured and restored

54. At the start of the Project a strategy was developed on how to work with the four local communities identified as key in relation to their dependence on the Reserve's bio-resources, namely Belek, Chekishlyar, Gara-gol, and Gyzylsuw. One Reserve specialist participated in all activities with the communities. Community resource centres were developed in each of the villages, equipped with computers and printer/copier, internet connection, DVD player, books, maps and resource materials including three videos made by the Project, pertaining to wildlife and conservation issues. However, the FE found that considerable confusion existed over the role of the centre in one community in that it was said to have been established from a small grant, despite the conceptual business plan described making no economic sense. Furthermore, the archinlik (local authority) appeared to have sequestered the use of the printer/copier to reproduce all of its official documentation without making payments to cover the consumables (paper and ink).

55. Awareness-raising events were undertaken with support from the Project, including:

- celebrations of International Bird Day and Earth Day (April 2010) for school students of Turkmenbashi city and the four target communities;
- showing of the Ramsar Convention video followed by discussions on ecological/environmental issues among local people at the village resource centres to celebrate World Biodiversity Day (May 2010);
- scientific and practical conference for biology teachers of the Balkan velayat, timed to celebrate International Nature Day (June 2010) and attended by the school teachers from the four communities. Books published under the Project were donated to the school's libraries; and
- celebration of Caspian Day for 20 students (five winners of drawing contests at each of four schools) with visits to Turkmenbashi, the Reserve and its museum.

56. Sustainable social economic development plans identifying prioritising the main development directions including the sustainable use of resources and development of alternatives were developed with the four communities. One, the "2009-2013 Plan of Action of Gara-gol Community in Khazar Town" was printed and distributed, and action plans for action plans for the Belek, Chekishlyar and Gyzylsuw communities were developed and submitted to the local authorities for consideration in early October 2010. However, the approval of these action plans remained

problematic throughout, because their community-driven approach is directly at odds with the Government's centralised management style. As a result, the activity was not completed, and yet at the request of the Regional government, the planning techniques were taught to all heads of villages along the Caspian shore.

57. Three tranches of the small grants programme were let with six projects established in the first round, one project in the second, and nine in the third. These projects included poultry farms, vegetable-growing, cattle breeding, tree planting, tourist guest houses, carpentry workshops, and tree-planting schemes. All appear to have been established very late on in the Project, although again, there is confusion between the various sources as to the dates involved. From visits to Chekishlyar and Gara-gol, the FE found a number of common issues with the programme:

- a) An inordinately long period between a resident making the application and learning that (s)he had been awarded a grant. This period was commonly a year.
- b) No form of communication from the Project to the prospective grantees in between making the application and learning of the result.
- c) An overwhelming focus on bureaucratic process by the UNDP-CO resulted in the projects starting too late in the Khazar Project cycle for any meaningful feedback to be garnered (no monitoring was undertaken) and, crucially, for any technical support to be provided (although post-grant meetings on following procedures could still be given).
- d) Despite the focus being on processes designed to ensure transparency, equality of opportunity, and relevance to the Project's objective, as well as to the elimination of fraud, the approval of some of the items in the grants appear to lack, perhaps, judgement.

An example of lack of technical support in (c) is over-crowded poultry farms. While workshops and technical "*How To*" literature had been made available to villagers, the grantee in Chekishlyar had purchased 100 chickens and ducks, housed them in very small quarters and then been disappointed that 70% had died of disease before he had any opportunity to breed from them. The grantee in Gara-gol was proposing similar arrangements. Regular support visits from the Project could have identified the issue, or introduced veterinary services, and made suggestions for mitigation at a much earlier stage. The most obvious example of (d) was a guest house in Gara-gol where a laptop computer and mobile internet connection had been purchased with grant money "*for the use of guests*". No further comment. Despite these shortcomings, a number of the projects visited during the FE have the hallmarks of success – capable people running well-thought-out and well-implemented projects (e.g. a fruit and tree-planting project in Chekishlyar, a vegetable and fruit-growing project, and one guest house in Gara-gol; but with more help, the others could have been given better prospects).

Output 3.2: Sustainable natural resource use demonstrations generate new options for coastal fishery and reduce pressure on migratory waterfowl in coastal area surrounding Khazar Nature Reserve

58. The idea of demonstrating re-orientated fishery practices, especially those related to forming fishing cooperatives, fell on stony ground, not least because the idea was not supported by the local government due to unsuccessful experiences with commercial cooperatives in the past. To offset this, and complement the small grants programme, technical workshops were provided (as indicated above) to community residents, both those (to be) in receipt of grants and others. Such workshops were held in 2009 and 2010 (in some cases as linked follow-ups) and provided technical information on the specific subject of the workshop (e.g. poultry and cattle breeding; or fruit and vegetable growing) along with more general issues such as marketing, requirements for expansion, and practical information on the natural conditions and cultural characteristics of the region (i.e. arid land, little vegetation, remote distances from big cities, one sites on an island). While most of these workshops appeared to be successful, that held in September 2010 on fish-farming and duck-breeding was not, because of inadequate planning and research prior to the event. Artificial fish-breeding would be very expensive because it large amounts of freshwater and construction of large tanks, while the idea of creating natural "aquariums" in the sea required more research and consultations with the country

experts. The State Fish Breeding Committee indicated that breeding fish could be done only in freshwater⁹ which negates the idea of putting cages in the sea and breeding under natural conditions. The duck-breeding part of the workshop did raise considerable interest from the participants.

59. Training and awareness-raising activities were held in other activities designed to diversify the economic base of the communities and lessen the burden placed on the Caspian's biological resources. These included training, expert inputs, manuals, and publications on tourism (the two guest houses in Gara-gol were amongst the grants as a result); on wool-processing (including an international expert supported by USAID); and on arid area agriculture which included visits and consultations by specialists from the National Botanical Garden, local subtropical station, and Institute of Deserts, Flora and Fauna, preparation of a manual on how to grow species, and distribution of seeds. A book on felt handicrafts was produced but its distribution was delayed because of corrections needed – no further information is available to the FE.

60. Initially, it was intended that formal agreements on environmental governance over wildlife resources be signed between the Reserve and the four selected communities, but it became apparent that this was not possible within the lifespan of the Project because the work of the Reserve is regulated by legislation that does not provide for legal agreements of this type, nor does the legislative framework of the local authorities, hunter and fisher association, fishery committee, or other relevant agencies contain such provisions. Appropriate amendments to the legislation would be required for such agreements – a very lengthy process. In view of this, the Project Board agreed to draft an agreement on community-based environmental governance over wildlife resources and communicate the meaning of this document to the selected communities, Reserve staff, the Hunter and Fisher Association members, the Fishery Committee, and local authorities during a partnership workshop. The Community Relations Officer was tasked to elaborate such a draft agreement with the legal assistance if needed, and to schedule the workshops in each community in December 2010, but it appears these were cancelled with the premature closure of the Project.

Outcome 4: Project best practices are mainstreamed into the National System of Protected Areas of Turkmenistan

Output 4.1: New policies within MNP to encourage adaptive management

61. As far as the FE can determine, no activities “*encouraging adaptive management*” or working “*with MNP staff to establish annual performance evaluations for protected area managers*” as per the Project Document took place that were associated with this Output.

Output 4.2: Protected area management training programme

62. A staff training needs assessment was undertaken by the international PA specialist and agreed with the MNP. This formed the basis of a draft national training programme for PA specialists that was also agreed by the MNP. An educational specialist was hired in September 2009 and spent three months developing a capacity-building strategy with the help of the scientific and environmental community. The justification for creating a National Protected Area Training Centre within the Institute of Deserts, Flora and Fauna was developed and agreed with the Institute, and in early 2010 this Centre was established and fully-equipped by the Project with five computers with high-speed internet connection, books, and furniture. In December 2010 all computer equipment and furniture from the Training Centre was transferred to the MNP¹⁰. A training plan, including more than 20 training sessions for 2010, was developed and agreed at a stakeholder meeting of scientists and Ministry specialists. Medium- and longer-term capacity-building programmes of two months and six

⁹ Technically not the case since there is large-scale commercial sea fish farming in many countries, but perhaps the regulations or similar in Turkmenistan do not allow it.

¹⁰ It is reported that in mid-November 2010, the telephone/internet lines to the Project's Ashgabat office and Training Centre were disconnected because the UNDP-CO had failed to pay the bills for more than 3 months. As a result, the NPC terminated this contract with the internet provider and closed the Training Centre. The equipment is currently stored in the MNP pending a possible move to a new centre in the Kopetdag Reserve, close to Ashgabat.

months durations including courses in ornithology and conservation techniques were agreed through a formal Cooperation Agreement between the MNP and Astrakhan State University in Russia. This Agreement has been signed and official approval is pending with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was planned to train at least 20 specialists, managers, and rangers of the Khazar Reserve, while practical training for ornithologists and ichthyologists of the Reserve and other Turkmenistan protected areas was agreed with Astrakhan Volga Reserve and the Caspian Scientific Fishery Institute. One PhD programme on ornithology for a Reserve specialist was agreed with Astrakhan State University. Although this was agreed by the PB and submitted to the MNP for endorsement, it appears that UNDP discovered late in the day that it could not provide funding for the long-term education of personnel and the course was abandoned. The education specialist's contract was not extended because of UNDO administration problems in January 2010 after which momentum was lost, despite a new specialist being hired several months later.

63. A number of books were published, e.g. “*Snakes in Turkmenistan*”, “*Vertebrates in Turkmenistan*” and “*A Short Bird Guide of the Caspian Region*” for training and were disseminated widely to universities, museums, the Academy of Sciences of Turkmenistan, institutes, and MNP departments, reserves, and NGOs. A book on the birds of Central Asia was also purchased, and distributed to all state reserves in Turkmenistan, while the first field identification guide book for birds in Turkmenistan has been produced and is ear-marked for publication using outstanding Project funds in 2011. A number of small guides for rangers, other small publications were prepared and disseminated. As part of the capacity-building strategy, a *Handbook for Protected Area Specialists*, a methodological guide for field work has been prepared in Turkmen and Russian, and submitted to the MNP for approval. It comprises a compilation of training materials on fieldwork methodologies for ornithology, ichthyology, herpetology, monitoring, management, finance, legal issues etc., prepared by the Training Centre teaching staff. This reference manual is seen by Project staff as a highly valuable tool for building professional capacity, particularly since it takes into account the specific natural characteristics of Turkmenistan, is well illustrated, and has been produced in Turkmen (and young specialists mostly know only their native language). The FE concurs with the Project staff and recommends that, subject to MNP approval, this book also be published using outstanding Project funds.

The FE recommends that, subject to MNP approval, the training manual entitled <i>Handbook for Protected Area Specialists</i> be published using outstanding Project funds.			
<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Task</i>	<i>Time frame</i>	<i>Deliverable</i>
MNP	Review training manual and provide approval if so inclined	As soon as possible but by end June 2011 latest	Formal agreement to publish and disseminate the training manual
UNDP-CO	Authorise procurement procedures for publishing the manual	Immediately after getting agreement	Publishing contract signed
UNDP-CO /MNP	Expedite dissemination of manual	By end of 2011 latest.	Manual in hands of practitioners

Output 4.3: Operational network for nationwide replication of best practices by PAs

64. The Project developed a website (www.hazarwetlands.com) which was launched in February 2008 and served throughout as the main source of Project-related information. The website will be operational until February 2012 although the FE believes it would be better if it was re-designed and kept open to serve the Reserve's needs and publicity. The Project also supported a very successful media campaign for the Reserve which made a big impact through it being constantly in the limelight with the Government. The President visited the Project three times. The campaign included a number of documentary films and publications on the work of the Project and the Reserve. Some films were shown on the Turkmenistan TV Channel (nationally and globally via satellite). Three films were re-printed and distributed in Turkmenistan. Two journalist contests were held nationally and more than 20 articles on Caspian biodiversity conservation issues were published in the main national newspapers. In addition, the Public Relations Specialist made numerous press-releases.

65. Workshops on “*field survey*” and “*PA legal framework and law enforcement skills*” were prepared for 16 specialists from eight nature reserves, but the MNP postponed it from July until November 2010 due to the high fire-risk situation at the time and the impossibility have reserves’ staffs away at the time. Ultimately, the workshop was not held because of the early closure of the Project. The Training Centre was attended regularly by the students of the higher educational institutions in Ashgabat, who also used the library and internet facilities for their class preparations. The Training Centre also hosted a week-long visit in July 2010 for final year university students who were doing their practical work in the PA laboratory of the Institute of Desert, Flora and Fauna.

66. The METT was introduced to two other reserves, namely Amudarya State Reserve and Repetek State Reserve, but fell short of the target of a total four others. An MNP official was trained to perform METT, and detailed instructions were developed and translated for the analysis of the METT results for decision-makers. Changes to the performance evaluation system for reserves by the MNP was agreed and planned as the next step. In December 2010, a meeting was planned to present the Khazar Reserve Management Plan, including the METT, to the senior management of the eight Turkmen state reserves to identify possibilities to develop similar plans for all the PAs. Afterwards, it was planned to make a joint proposal to approve the METT at the MNP collegium as an obligatory annual reporting format for all PAs in the country, and to discuss the amendments necessary in the legislation to allow the introduction of the management plan in practice (e.g. tourism development in PAs). The meeting was to have been attended by senior officials from the MNP, UNDP, and other GEF-funded Projects. Once again, this meeting was cancelled with the early closure of the Project.

Output 4.4: Strengthened Caspian-wide PA information exchange and sharing of lessons learned

67. Little appears to have been achieved under this Output, although the Project supported the Reserve in taking part in an international conference “*Turkmen Lake and its Impact on the Regional Ecosystem*”, and in the First International Exhibition and Conference “*Awaza: Development Perspectives*” in Balkan velayat (September 2010). As noted above (paragraph 45), cross-border communication was established with Anzalee Reserve (Iran) to share ornithological information, and a pilot joint synchronized bird survey was undertaken in 2008.

Output 4.5: A clear and compelling economic argument for PA contribution to development and for long-term financing of Khazar Nature Reserve and the national system of protected areas

68. As far as the FE can determine, no activities took place that were associated with this Output.

KEY ISSUES

69. The FE believes that this has been a reasonable if somewhat over-ambitious project, not particularly well-implemented because of management constraints, and undertaken under quite challenging social and governmental circumstances. The aim of this section is to concentrate on those key, and often difficult, cross-cutting issues that the Project has been affected by and where possible to provide some ideas to remediate some of the problems to assist future GEF projects in Turkmenistan. It is important that the reader keeps in mind that this section is not intended to show this Project in a poor light, rather to improve others.

THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Capacity shortages

70. With the possible exception of the political institutional issues that were not recognised during the Project’s design (see paragraph 9), the single most over-riding and chronic problem that has impeded the satisfactory implementation of this Project has been the shortage of project management capacity within the country. The technical prowess of the CTA has been recognised above, but so too

have been the shortcomings of his organisational management ability, the inability of the UNDP-CO to recruit a separate Project Manager, and the invidious position of the Project Administrator was placed in, in doing the Manager's job by default. Furthermore, the UNDP-CO has identified that this problem extends beyond this Project and is now appearing to be a common factor in all. During the FE mission, it was proposed by the UNDP-CO that in order to find a way around this shortage, an innovative means to project management, or at least to project administration, be developed, namely that a common, centralised unit be established which provides administrative services to a number of projects in Turkmenistan, rather than having a dedicated project implementation unit (or similarly named entity) in each project. In the short- and medium-term, the FE concedes that such an approach has merit and should be tried, but also identifies that a number of issues will have to be resolved prior to it being set-up, namely how costs will be allocated to each project in such a way as to be satisfactory to GEF (although cost savings should accrue through economies of scale); how priority will be set between projects when urgent, say procurements, are competing; and the much wider implications that will be at stake should something go wrong – the idea is heavily dependent upon the very weakness in the system that it is trying to solve, i.e. getting somebody (or later more than one) who has the capacity to provide excellent administrative services.

Capacity building

71. While centralised project administration may work, it has to be seen only as a stop-gap, and other measures will be required to support it and to solve the problem long-term. The key to this clearly has to be capacity-building, but what is the best way to do this? The FE provides two ideas:

- Firstly, GEF has traditionally been very supportive of capacity building. However, GEF-5 appears to have moved away from this aspect somewhat to focus much more upon infrastructure issues. While the FE sees this as a logical response, particularly in many countries in the Eastern Europe and the CIS region (EE-CIS), e.g. Kazakhstan, where technical and managerial capacity is relatively high but money for infrastructure and equipment is desperately required, Turkmenistan seems to be an exception. Here, the Government appears to have plenty of money to co-finance infrastructural investment, but exhibits a significant need for external investment in capacity and policy issues. Therefore, the FE recommends very strongly that for the foreseeable future, the design of GEF projects proposed for Turkmenistan provides sufficient funding to facilitate inclusion of significant capacity-building and policy-orientated components. Given the institutional, legislative, and cultural realities of the country, such project design should also allow adequate time for the latter to be achieved – things appear to move extremely slowly in Turkmenistan.

The FE recommends that for the foreseeable future, the design of GEF projects proposed for Turkmenistan provides sufficient funding to facilitate inclusion of significant capacity-building and policy-orientated components, and allows adequate time for the latter to be achieved.			
<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Task</i>	<i>Time frame</i>	<i>Deliverable</i>
UNDP Bratislava / UNDP-CO	Recognise the idiosyncrasies of the Turkmenistan situation and facilitate appropriate project design to meet the country's needs.	Foreseeable future	Projects designed promoting capacity-building and policy-orientated components

- Secondly, in-country project management capacity could be fostered through a system of mentoring by international project staff. Projects designed for Turkmenistan should consider incorporating an experienced international CTA who, along with their technical role, could provide an informal training and/or mentoring role in management and organisational issues to the person appointed as Project Manager. The ToR would have to be clear in identifying the PM's primacy in responsibility for delivery of the project, but could also make clear that a management advisory role is expected from the CTA – perhaps a CTMA (a Chief Technical and Management Advisor)? Costs would be critical. These could be reduced by perhaps recruiting skills from the EE-CIS region and/or making the post part-time – perhaps full-time for the first year to ensure the most rapid and effective transfer of skills at the outset of the project, and then

perhaps with quarterly or more infrequent visits thereafter. Furthermore, an international CTA would have to understand and be sensitive to local complexities, “*government peculiarities*”, and possibly have to overcome, what one influential interviewee called, “*Turkmenistan rejecting foreign inputs*”.

The FE recommends that during the design of GEF projects proposed for Turkmenistan, full consideration should be given to including a management advisory/mentoring role to a foreign national as part of his/her CTA duties.			
<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Task</i>	<i>Time frame</i>	<i>Deliverable</i>
UNDP Bratislava / UNDP-CO	Facilitate a management advisory/mentoring role into staffing for new projects in Turkmenistan	New projects	Management capacity building role

UNDP support role

72. In order to provide a comprehensive approach to improving both the capacity and performance of project managers, the UNDP-CO support role could be significantly improved. Project staff noted that in the current Project they had been provided with only three days training in UNDP and GEF operational procedures and that they considered this to be insufficient. Moreover, that training had not been given at the most appropriate time; rather the UNDP-CO undertook it when group sizes were considered large enough to warrant it, i.e. at a point when enough new staff had joined projects that they and longer-serving staff could all be trained at a single point. This resulted in the absurdity of some staff having to operate for several months before being trained. The FE is very pleased to note that the new Operations Manager considers that training at the inception of a project (or a contract) would be much more effective both for the project staff and UNDP’s operational staff, and hence the FE recommends this. Furthermore, three days’ training would seem inadequate, and the FE recommends that UNDP review their current training procedures and develop a more formal and comprehensive induction programme for project managers to be undertaken at the start of the PM’s contract. This should comprise more than just training on UNDP’s systems and procedures but could include issues such as organisation and prioritisation of work, internal activity monitoring, and team building.

The FE recommends that the UNDP-CO develops a more formal and comprehensive induction programme for project managers to be undertaken at the start of the PM’s contract.			
<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Task</i>	<i>Time frame</i>	<i>Deliverable</i>
UNDP-CO	Review current training procedures and identify shortcomings	Immediately	Review paper with recommendations for improvements
UNDP-CO	Develop a formal and comprehensive induction programme for project managers	Immediately after review	Comprehensive induction course for PMs.

73. In addition to the induction course recommended above, the UNDP-CO Operations Unit should also look to focus more upon the needs of the trainee by providing scheduled training at intervals throughout the project’s lifespan, e.g. one day, three or four times a year. The FE is aware that periodic training is provided by the Operations Unit, often as a result of monitoring questions to the unit from project staff and looking for recurring patterns. However, the FE recommends that specific, pre-scheduled, one-to-one training be provided by the Unit, with the subject of each session being left to the relevant PM to suggest (preferably a minimum of one month in advance in order to enable the Operations Unit to prepare) so that the training or refresher is tailored to meet his/her exact needs. Again, the schedule could be set to be most frequent over, say, the first two years of the project becoming less frequent as the PM’s experience increases. This would ensure that the Operations Unit does not become unduly over-burdened.

The FE recommends that specific, pre-scheduled, one-to-one training be provided at regular intervals to project managers by the UNDP-CO Operations Unit.

<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Task</i>	<i>Time frame</i>	<i>Deliverable</i>
UNDP-CO	Review operational capacity of Operations Unit for training.	Immediately	Agree concept of providing one-to-one training for PMs.
UNDP-CO	Develop an outline schedule for each project manager to receive one-to-one training	Immediately after review	
UNDP-CO and project managers	Inform project managers of facility for scheduled training and commence bookings	As soon as possible	Commence scheduled training

74. Finally, the UNDP-CO programme officers should use the quarterly PB meetings (or institute quarterly project meetings in those cases where PB are held only half-yearly) as more formal mechanisms for reviewing project delivery. Quantitative estimates of delivery should be made against the target agreed in the Annual or Quarterly Work Plan, and where the difference exceeds a certain percentage, e.g. $\pm 20\%$ ¹¹, the programme officer should step in and identify possible reasons and work with Operations and the project manager to find a solution. In this way, slow delivery should be able to be rectified at a much earlier stage than happened (or did not happen) in this Project.

The FE recommends that UNDP-CO programme officers formalise quarterly reporting on project delivery and invoke rectification measures where this differs from an agreed target by more than an agreed percentage.

<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Task</i>	<i>Time frame</i>	<i>Deliverable</i>
UNDP-CO	Formalise quarterly reporting on project delivery in the ToR of project managers	As soon as possible	Revised ToR
UNDP-CO	Institutionalise quarterly review on project delivery in the ToR of project board and other “committee” where appropriate	As soon as possible	Revised ToR
UNDP-CO	Improve liaison between Programmatic and Operational Sections to facilitate rectification measures	As soon as possible	Improved ability to work together to assist with project delivery

Compete in the labour market

75. Notwithstanding the foregoing discussion and recommendations, there is a need for both UNDP-GEF and the UNDP-CO recognise the underlying reasons for the shortage of project management capacity within Turkmenistan. While undoubtedly the shortcomings of the country’s educational system would appear in a large part to blame, the rise and rise of the private sector is certainly exacerbating the shortage as far as UNDP are concerned. As a result, UNDP salaries for project managers, which even five years ago may have been competitive, no longer are when compared with similar positions in the private sector (especially oil and gas) or, perhaps more relevant, the posts to which prospective UNDP project managers can be enticed into in the private sector. Higher salaries, less bureaucracy, longer term prospects/greater job security, better fringe benefits, more regular working hours all make work in the private sector a much more attractive proposition than working for UNDP, hence in a very small pool of capable labour, UNDP has to adapt to compete more effectively or accept that in Turkmenistan it will for the foreseeable future be forced to be recruiting from a second-class cohort. One of the features of this Project has been the number of “whimsical claims” for compensation and other contractual difficulties that have been raised by project staff, including suggestions that some should be accorded UN staff status – something clearly against GEF rules. The FE is not suggesting that this is altered, but the UNDP-CO could look at easing its short-term crisis in attracting suitably experienced project managers by reviewing the salaries it pays and perhaps raising them to make them more competitive. Alternatively, where projects involve the private sector (and particularly the oil and gas industry), directly or even indirectly, co-

¹¹ Over delivery may be a problem if concentration on one component is meaning another is being ignored, as in this Project where the CTA’s focus was almost entirely on Outcome 1.

financing could be sought from it not in the usual form of cash but through an in-kind contribution of an experienced project manager dedicated to the project for its lifetime. This would enable UNDP to overcome the issues of salary, fringe benefits, and job security while facilitating the engagement of high quality, experienced staff.

76. Finally, if none of the above appears to solve the problem of shortage of quality staff, or even perhaps as an additional measure, the UNDP-CO could look at training one or two project managers of their own through appropriate overseas (business) institutions using their own funds or funds raised from other donors. The trained personnel could then be deployed on projects either as a) UNDP staff where the core cost is payable by GEF and the incremental cost (associated with UN staff benefits) is paid as co-financing by the UNDP-CO; or b) a project staff member as current where no UN staff contract applies. If the latter, the candidate trainees would have to be made aware of this from the outset to avoid problems at a later stage. In addition, in order to defray the possibility of the trainee undertaking the training and then walking away before the UNDP-CO can garner the benefit of that training, the contract with the trainee would have to ensure that significant penalties (the cost of the training and more) would be payable by the trainee to UNDP in the event of him/her breaking the contract – so called golden handcuffs. The FE makes this, and the suggestion in paragraph 75, as suggestions only, not formal recommendations, in order to provide the UNDP-CO with as many possible ideas to overcome the problem.

THE PLANNING CONTEXT

Project Oversight

77. Oversight of the Project by the Project Board has been good. Although it was very large (see Annex V), it provided complete representation of all the major stakeholders, has met regularly throughout the four years and, according to the members interviewed and the Project staff, operated effectively and efficiently in dealing with the issues placed before it. Indeed, one interviewee described it as “*one of the most effective project boards ever*”. Crucially, this was the first project board to include local people on it, and this gave an opportunity for them to understand the Project and the benefits that it could bring, as well as to comment upon the activities that they were interested in. Importantly, it provided a mechanism for finding common solutions as partners rather than as opponents, and this proved vital in dealing with some highly sensitive issues and in engendering trust and goodwill. The success of this Project Board has been recognised by all concerned and has been replicated on more recent projects in Turkmenistan.

Sustainability

78. The sustainability of those aspects of the Project that have been completed would generally appear to be good. Despite there being difficulties within the government system of adopting some of the Project’s key changes, e.g. the management plan, the institutional sustainability appears good. The MNP appears to accept the need for change and continues to work within the Government to this end, mainly through the *Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area System in Turkmenistan Project* where the need for new PA categories and associated legislation is supported. The technical and equipment base for managing the Khazar Reserve has been improved and, crucially, trust has been built and communication increased between the Reserve staff and the local communities. Although the Project realised only limited achievements with regard to its targets for ICZM, the issue has been incorporated into the Government’s agenda as a result of its advocacy and now has a correctly-placed champion – SECI. The outlook for the long-term financial sustainability of the Project is also positive. Although still awaiting approval for the management plan, the increased costs associated with this do not appear to be problematic. The common view is that the State will be able to absorb these, and the Ministry of Finance simply needs a properly argued justification from the MNP for these costs to be approved. Adoption of the management plan however, will be delayed until the necessary legislative changes have also been made. The social sustainability also appears solid. The awareness-raising activities have certainly been beneficial, and as one interviewee said “*This*

suddenly tied all the loose ends of our observations [of declining resources] together” while another indicated that the villagers had “*learned that the [resources] were not endless*”. All village residents interviewed displayed an understanding of the need to manage biological resources, abide by the new hunting and fishing regulations (sites, seasons and quotas), and some indicated that relations between their village and the Reserve authorities had improved. Economic sustainability appears to be interlinked with these attitudes. One person pointed out that the “*interest in fishing is diminishing. People want to do something more profitable and this has been heavily influenced by the Project*”. The businesses in receipt of small grants are generally at too early a stage to assess their sustainability individually, and while some appear to be struggling, others are well-managed. What they do all have in common, however, is that they are all catering to a very real market-led demand and this should help to cement their long-term profitability and hence their sustainability. In another direction, the economic fortunes of the villages (at least of Chekishlyar and Gara-gol) appear to be improving independently from the Project’s interventions because of the increasing demand for skilled and unskilled labour in the oil and gas industry, and employment in this sector amongst male village residents is raising incomes and decreasing time (and possibly incentives) for hunting and fishing. Therefore, notwithstanding that the Project has made only modest gains, the FE believes that these gains are set to last bringing irreversible benefits to the conservation of the Khazar Reserve, hence it evaluates the likely sustainability of the Project as **Highly Satisfactory**.

THE MANAGEMENT CONTEXT

Country Driven-ness and Coordination

79. Any assessment of country driven-ness has to look first at the MNP and then at the Government. The MNP has engaged fully with the Project throughout, shown itself to be a keen supporter of the Project, and to be open to new ideas and approaches championed by the Project. However, it is widely acknowledged that the MNP is a weak ministry, lacking the economic muscle of key sectoral ministries or the political strength of the Ministry of Defence. As such, it is limited in its influence and conservative in its approach, working carefully within the strongly centralised and regulated system, and pursuing change only slowly. GEF has to recognise the political reality of this and the FE finds that although many of the ideas addressed by the Project appear to have been spurned at first glance (the key example being the Management Plan for Khazar), in fact the concept appears to have been accepted but the mechanisms for pursuing such ideas (perhaps normal in many countries but radical in Turkmenistan) are not yet in place. With regard to the Management Plan, the *Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area System in Turkmenistan Project* currently underway, may provide such a mechanism. The reality of the situation in Turkmenistan is that things move very slowly. ICZM is a perfect example. While ICZM was introduced in the project design with the idea that this Project could establish it as a working planning tool within its four-year lifespan, this was never realistic and certainly could not be driven by the MNP. Little country driven-ness there then? Perhaps not at the outset, yet despite its limitations, the Project’s work and MNP’s influence has put ICZM on the political map and lodged it in its correct home of SECI under the President’s Office, and as a result the Government is now pursuing it. This may appear too little too late in some eyes, but to repeat the point made in paragraph 33, context is everything, and in Turkmenistan this represents progress – slow progress admittedly, but real progress nonetheless.

80. There is one large negative, however, that while not exactly illustrating a lack of country driven-ness, does highlight the conflicting requirements of the Government and the relative priorities attached to these. The issue relates to the fact that the area of land on which the Project-built cordon is sited, and the cordon itself according to some accounts, has been identified as being needed by the military who, it is said, will take over the land and the facility shortly¹², as part of building a new naval base, maritime access to which will be by a new corridor to be declared through the existing State Reserve. The reasons for, and needs of, such a base to be sited here are clearly outside of the FE’s ToR.

¹² MNP and the Reserve say that they will dismantle the cordon building and move it piece by piece to a new site. The laboratory equipment has already been removed and stored, awaiting an outcome.

Nonetheless, the issue sends completely the wrong signals to the international donor community dealing with environmental protection.

Project Management

Project Implementation Team

81. It is clear that management of the implementation of the Project has been generally poor. While the CTA has excellent credentials for technical work, particularly in the Khazar Reserve and all the villages where he commanded exceptional respect, and worked with commitment and diligence to further the aims of the Project, it is also clear that he did not have the correct degree of organisational or man-management skills to fulfil the role of Project Manager. However, in his defence, it must also be noted that he was provided with only three days training in on administrative issues and UNDP procedures, something both he and the FE believe to be too little (see paragraph 72), and he was being asked to fulfil both roles within one employment contract when almost all other projects split these roles. Undoubtedly this is due to the problems that the UNDP-CO faced (and still faces) with the lack of capacity within the country (see paragraph 70 *et seq.*). The problem was raised by the CTA with the UNDP-CO late in 2008, and as the Mid-term Evaluation (MTE) states:

“In January 2009 the PMU underwent a degree of re-organization to accommodate the CTA’s wish to divest himself of some responsibilities, reduce his workload and work part-time. While some responsibilities of the CTA were passed on to the Project Administrator, the transfer was never entirely clear and neither of the two incumbents was clear about his/her responsibilities or happy with the way things had developed. The situation has become unacceptably stressful, often requiring the intervention of UNDP. It has also started to affect project performance and all agree that a solution needs to be found.”

Relations between the CTA and the UNDP-CO also started to deteriorate with UNDP insisting (quite properly) that GEF rules stated that Project Managers/CTAs could not become members of UNDP staff and the CTA trying to show UNDP in a bad light to the Ministry. Although UNDP attempted to recruit a Project Manager, no significant progress had been made to that end by the time the CTA decided to quit in August 2009, amid some level of acrimony and “*whimsical claims for compensation*”.

82. Subsequently, things did not improve. While individual staff continued to show motivation and professionalism to their work, the lack of cohesiveness as a team to which the MTE drew attention, finally betrayed any sense of unity. For the last two years (at least) of the Project’s life, the team (for want of a better word) was riddled with tensions and intrigues and differing levels of commitment. The situation was then exacerbated when the Project Administrator and a number of other staff applied for the advertised role of Project Manager but none were appointed; nor was any other outside candidate. The ensuing friction between the staff candidates led to already fractious relationships breaking down almost completely with accusations and counter-accusations of financial malpractice. Such accusations were also levelled at UNDP staff. The Project Administrator, already rejected for the role of Project Manager, was then left playing exactly that role throughout 2010 after UNDP-CO decided that it was now too late in the Project to try to find a Project Manager. Although she asked the UNDP-CO for additional staff to assist her, this was refused on the grounds that the Project Document did not identify such a need and that the previous PA had coped adequately before. However, it seems that she was being asked to undertake this role without the benefit of having a CTA present so that for the last ten months of the Project’s life, it had no technical leadership. The UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor notes in his review of the 2010 Project Implementation Report (PIR) that:

“... the project has made modest progress in the implementation of the outputs, compared to previous years. For several months the project was operating without a project manager. Judging by the PIR as reported by the team this year, this has had a negative impact on the attainment of project outputs. ... in the 2010 PIR no improvement

in the quality of operation is visible. ... At the same time, recommendations of international consultants with respect to those activities that are KEY to its success (e.g. Outcome 1) remain ignored for years. Project's reporting on progress in community engagement is very watery, which, in the opinion of RTA, is a regret, given that there seem to have existed a momentum at some point (at least that was visible during the RTA mission) when communities and the reserve and the Ministry could indeed agree on a scheme for community-based conservation. ...

The project rating is marginally satisfactory, as the RTA believes that the project has the potential to catch up with the delays, and concentrate on achieving the key objectives that are important for the ecological condition of the Khazar in the long-term. Depending on the progress in the next months, and largely on the efficiency of the management team, the project rating in 2011 may return to satisfactory, or may go down."

In the event, the Project never did catch up. Relationships between staff, and between some staff and UNDP, had deteriorated so badly by late 2010 and delivery slowed to unacceptable levels that senior UNDP-CO management took the decision to close the Project early (end of October rather than end of December 2010), probably in no small part influenced by the final sentence of the quotation above, using the fact that it had exceeded its registration period with the Government as a suitable mechanism. All remaining contracts were so terminated.

UNDP Role

83. While the limitations of the Project implementation team have been highlighted, the FE finds that the UNDP-CO is not exempt from shouldering some of the responsibilities for poor implementation performance. In many ways, this is not altogether surprising since the widespread deficiencies of the labour market in Turkmenistan are acknowledged both by the UNDP-CO with regard to recruitment of project staff and programme/operations staff (paragraph 70 *et seq.*), and by higher level offices about the UNDP-Co capacity. For example, at the point ahead of pipeline entry, the Project had been proposed for direct execution (subsequently altered) and one of the comments made in correspondence seen by the FE stated:

"I note the intention to use DEX as the execution modality. How strong is our office in Turkmenistan? I would not be surprised to learn that it is in fact rather weak. This introduces a risk that needs to be acknowledged."

The FE views these shortcomings as having affected the Project adversely in five ways:

- Insufficient training of Project staff – this has been dealt with under UNDP Support Role above (see paragraph 72) along with recommendations for improvements.
- Overly bureaucratic procedures – the FE is frequently critical of the seemingly unnecessary UNDP bureaucracy that blights the implementation of many UNDP-GEF projects; unfortunately this is another instance. All Project staff interviewed complained that the procedures followed were too cumbersome and time-consuming^{13,14}, and were the cause of major delays and associated problems, e.g. the time-consuming nature of these procedures resulted in there being only three rounds of small grants distributed rather than five. The FE is aware of the need to follow correct procedures to guard against favouritism and fraud, yet he also notes that these same procedures are common to all offices and yet not all offices suffer the same degree of problems associated with them – Latvia being a notable exception that he has observed. The FE is also much encouraged that in interviews with the Resident Representative

¹³ As an example, the FE was provided with the procedure to be followed for the selection of national experts: Draft ToR → Announce → Collect applications → Set up commission to open applications → Open applications → Set up committee to shortlist candidates → Shortlist candidates → Set up committee to interview candidates → Interview candidates → Select candidate → Make offer → Undertake a reference check → Make a request for contract and include all minutes of all commissions and caommitess → Deputy Resident Representative signs.

¹⁴ In 2008, the CTA was concerned about the time it took the UNDP-CO to process payments, so he set up a tracking system. It is claimed that this showed that the average time to process payments over the year was 25 days, not the 10 days target. The FE cannot verify this claim.

and the newly-appointed Operations Manager, the need for streamlining procedures and improving efficiency is recognised and being worked on. It is hoped that this will benefit other GEF projects current in the country. The FE also suggests that the UNDP-CO consider sending appropriate staff to other selected UNDP country offices identified for their efficiency, to learn how procedures are implemented more efficiently elsewhere (or even to be trained in how to achieve this).

- Mistakes – while bureaucracy is one thing, mistakes simply compound the problem. While the FE concedes that everyone (including sadly himself) makes mistakes, the number apparent as having been made by the UNDP-CO is greater than the FE has ever encountered previously, and has led to significant failings in the implementation of this Project. Four examples:
 - Perhaps one of the most serious, as reported in paragraph 62), was the significant amount of time and work that was wasted by the Project in establishing medium- and longer term capacity-building programmes (including a PhD programme for Reserve staff) through a formal Cooperation Agreement with Astrakhan State University, only for UNDP to discover late in the day that it could not provide funding for the long-term education of personnel and the courses were abandoned.
 - There were contractual problems at different times with at least two national experts (the lawyer and the education specialist) because the wrong sort of contract had been signed and, although they were both deep into their contracts at the point the errors were discovered, rather than taking a commonsense approach and finding a compromise beneficial to the Project, the bureaucratic instincts of the CO insisted that the contracts were re-let through the proper procedures. Both experts were not re-employed as a result, leading to delays and lack of continuity with those aspects of the Project.
 - The contract of the small grants specialist (who had been working from 2008) was not extended because the request from the Project to do so was lost by the CO. As a result, the incumbent was given a short-term agreement through a request for services while his job was announced as a vacancy! While he did apply, by the time he was re-selected he had found another job and moved on.
 - The Agreements for the third round of the small grant programme were signed by the archins and the grantees in April 2010 but not signed by UNDP until 28th July. However, subsequently, pages 2 and 5 were replaced and items 3 and 7 changed without notifying the local authorities.
- Conflict resolution – possibly the most contentious issue because it involves personalities. The FE is aware that in many projects interpersonal difficulties can affect performance detrimentally, and furthermore is aware that the personalities of some of this Project's staff would tend to make UNDP's job more difficult rather than easier. Egos; tendencies to continue arguments beyond their useful life; towards confrontation; towards finger-pointing and attaching blame; towards blaming individuals rather than reviewing systems; and towards reducing issues to personalities rather than understanding technical issues, have all fed into varying degrees of destructive relations, both between staff members and between staff and UNDP-CO staff. In some instances, this may have led to the undermining of potentially valid grievances. However, the FE is concerned that relationships between the senior members of the Project staff and the UNDP Programmatic staff had reached such a low point as he witnessed during the FE mission, and while not attempting to take sides in a complex series of disputes, does believe that the conflict resolution skills of programmatic staff and possibly some senior managers could be improved to minimise the chances of this recurring. The FE believes it enough to bring this issue to the attention of senior management as a suggestion rather than a full-blown recommendation requiring a management response so that they can select the most appropriate means for improvement and equipping UNDP staff with better project-based skills.
- Early closure of the Project – in view of the foregoing (conflicts) and what was described as “increasing noise” emanating from the Project, the reasoning behind the decision to close the Project early is entirely understandable. However, the FE believes that it was probably

something of a knee-jerk reaction to what seemed like an interminable problem. Certainly, the expiry of the Project's registration provided UNDP and the MNP with a convenient mechanism through which to solve their problems, but the FE believes that the decision was hurried and not properly thought through. Certainly the Regional Technical Advisor in Bratislava was not consulted, a fact that the FE finds extraordinary, and although the assessment was that the Project was unlikely to deliver anything further substantively, the FE also believes that the seeming rush to solve the problem that the Project was now seen as, perhaps blinded those making the decision to activities that were nearing completion in November/December 2010. Certainly, in the discussion of Project results above, the FE has noted a number of things that were cancelled because of early closure, and while, unfortunately, he is not in a position to cross check the veracity of these, a more cautious approach to let the Project complete its revised lifespan (and deal with the problem issues in a less drastic way) would appear, at least to the FE, to have been a better decision. Activities apparently scheduled for November/December 2010 included: METT score for 2010 (cancelled) (see paragraph 38); study tour to Moscow for directors of eight reserves (cancelled) (see paragraph 40); publication of the bird guide (delayed) (see paragraph 42); ground marking of the Reserve's boundaries (delayed) (see paragraph 52); community workshops on community-based environmental governance (cancelled) (see paragraph 60); technical training workshops for specialists from eight reserves (cancelled) (see paragraph 65); and a meeting of senior staff from MNP, UNDP and GEF projects to approve application of METT throughout PA system (cancelled) (see paragraph 66).

Financial Probity

84. The FE was alarmed to learn of accusations of bribery and corruption involving both Project staff members and UNDP-CO staff. These involved direct theft of money by Project staff and receipt of kick-backs by UNDP staff from successful vendors on procurement contracts. The FE notes very clearly that these accusations are unsubstantiated – not necessarily that they are unfounded. The interviewee provided the FE with credible details of kick-back dealings by UNDP staff, but none of these accusations can be corroborated by a third party witness or by the Project's accounts. The interviewee claims that his/her probity has been besmirched by staff and UNDP for reporting on these issues; UNDP-CO in turn indicates that it has faced "*a soap opera*" of dealings with the interviewee over these and other contractual issues that continued to the end of December 2010 and possibly even beyond. The FE makes no judgement over who is right or wrong, but records the following observations:

- Turkmenistan remains a high risk fraud environment in which bilateral and multilateral agencies face serious challenges in terms of the financial management of their resources by government agencies because of the extremely regulated system of bank transparency and accountability;
- The UNDP Resident Representative and auditors are very aware of this situation;
- Since 2010, the emergence of new authorisation regarding the opening of bank accounts by Ministries has led to systematic improvements in passing resources to government agencies;
- All independent financial auditors and UNDP office audits (including one by UNDP Bratislava undertaken in January 2011) have found no evidence of fraud or mismanagement by UNDP-CO staff.

85. Nonetheless, the issue of possible corrupt practices of the sort involving kick-backs remains and no amount of independent auditing will uncover them. The suggestion is that a staff member may approach one (or more likely all) of the respondents to a tender and suggest that if (s)he exerts his/her influence inside UNDP to win that respondent the tender, then the respondent would pay him/her an agreed percentage of the contract price (probably in cash). By their very nature, uncovering such practices would require the powers afforded only to a criminal investigation to examine bank accounts, persons' accrued physical assets against registered income, etc. None of this is either possible or desirable in response to unsubstantiated allegations of the sort encountered here, hence the FE declines to recommend an independent audit of the Project's finances; the more so since recent such audits have uncovered no evidence of malpractice. However, given it is not outside the realms of

fantasy that such practices could still be occurring, it is conducive of the FE to try to prevent this happening in future projects. Therefore, the FE recommends that all future requests for proposals should include a public statement to the effect that no kick-backs are payable on any UNDP consultancy or procurement contract, and that if any vendor finds him(her)self approached for the same, they should report it in confidence to the Resident Representative immediately.

The FE recommends that all future requests for proposals should include a public statement to the effect that no kick-backs are payable on any UNDP consultancy or procurement contract, and that if any vendor finds him(her)self approached for the same, they should report it in confidence to the Resident Representative immediately.			
<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Task</i>	<i>Time frame</i>	<i>Deliverable</i>
UNDP-CO	Change CO policy to include said statement on all requests for proposals	Immediately	New procurement policy
UNDP-CO	Implement mechanism for providing said statement into requests for proposals through template or instructions to all projects	Immediately policy agreed	Requests for proposals include said statement

Adaptive Management

86. Despite the problems encountered, the adaptive management displayed by the Project has been fairly good. In some cases this has meant dealing with the constraints as best as they can, e.g. doubling-up the roles of CTA and NPM when only one person was available and making the best of this unappealing situation for as long as possible. In other cases, it has meant pushing particular ideas as far as possible within Government so as to move ideas forwards to be taken up by others, e.g. the advocacy for ICZM and getting SECI to take responsibility for it; completing the management plan for Khazar and letting the *Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area System in Turkmenistan Project* introduce the new categories of PAs necessary for its official adoption. In the case of the aborted demonstration of re-orientated fishery practices, through forming fishing cooperatives (Output 3.2), the project introduced a raft of training and awareness-raising activities that have successfully complemented the small grants programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Approximately in order of importance as perceived by the FE.

- For the foreseeable future, the design of GEF projects proposed for Turkmenistan provides sufficient funding to facilitate inclusion of significant capacity-building and policy-orientated components, and allows adequate time for the latter to be achieved.
- During the design of GEF projects proposed for Turkmenistan, full consideration should be given to including a management advisory/mentoring role to a foreign national as part of his/her CTA duties.
- The UNDP-CO develops a more formal and comprehensive induction programme for project managers to be undertaken at the start of the PM's contract.
- Specific, pre-scheduled, one-to-one training be provided at regular intervals to project managers by the UNDP-CO Operations Unit.
- UNDP-CO programme officers formalise quarterly reporting on project delivery and invoke rectification measures where this differs from an agreed target by more than an agreed percentage.
- All future requests for proposals should include a public statement to the effect that no kick-backs are payable on any UNDP consultancy or procurement contract, and that if any vendor finds him(her)self approached for the same, they should report it in confidence to the Resident Representative immediately.
- Subject to MNP approval, the training manual entitled *Handbook for Protected Area Specialists* be published using outstanding Project funds.

LESSONS LEARNED

87. Only two lessons seem pertinent to other projects:

- **Include local representation in projects**

The inclusion of local representation on the Project Board, and at many other levels of planning and economic activities has proved to be one of the Project's key successes. Even in a country where top-down, command-and-control systems still mean that many of the end products of this bottom-up approach are still to be realised (and may never be), local people's inclusion has reduced conflicts, built trust, and engendered a partnership approach that has been illusory in the past. Although the political environment in Turkmenistan remains distrustful of such an approach, UNDP-GEF should continue to champion it since the positive results achieved may mean that it becomes too successful to ignore.

- **Small grants programmes require follow-up support**

While the Project has managed to operate a small grants programme, many aspects of its implementation have been found wanting – length of the decision-making period; lack of communication; no follow-up support. Lessons from a very successful small grants programme implemented in Latvia showed that keys to the success were to make the application process a) easy for the applicant; b) well supported to deal with questions; and c) to have clear and concise aims and criteria. In countries such as Turkmenistan where the local capacity is low, it is also important that the project provides technical support and advice to beneficiaries after the grant has been given (or at least offers such provision on request) to increase the chance of the grant successfully reaching its aim.

ANNEX I: FINAL EVALUATION TERMS OF REFERENCE

UNDP/GEF Project

“Conservation and sustainable use of globally significant biological diversity in Khazar Nature Reserve on the Caspian Sea Coast”

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The implementation of the UNDP/GEF Project “Conservation and sustainable use of globally significant biological diversity in Khazar Nature Reserve on the Caspian Sea Coast” began in October 2006 with an objective to optimize sustainable management of wetland biodiversity at the important nature reserve in Turkmenistan.

The project is to strengthen Turkmenistan’s National System of Protected Areas by demonstrating effective protected area management and biodiversity conservation in Turkmenistan’s Khazar Nature Reserve (KhR) on the Caspian Sea coast. Two of the world’s major flyways converge on Turkmenistan’s Caspian coastal region. This fact makes the coastal wetlands of KhR especially important for migratory birds. The area also includes important wintering areas for the Caspian sturgeon and some of the most important habitats for the Caspian seal, the only Caspian endemic species.

The conservation and sustainable use of such a wide range of biological diversity requires more integrated approaches to conservation and coastal resource management in Turkmenistan. This project is designed to provide the tools, the expertise, and the arena for stakeholders to adopt these new practices in ways that are appropriate for Turkmenistan and that strengthen Turkmenistan’s National System of Protected Areas. In so doing, the project is to generate substantial global environmental and national sustainable development benefits.

The total project budget is US\$ 1,706,600. The GEF contribution is US\$ 1,428,600. The Implementing Agency for the project is the Ministry of Environment of Turkmenistan.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE FINAL EVALUATION

The evaluation is to be undertaken in accordance with the “GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy” (see <http://www.thegef.org/gef/taxonomy/term/358>), which indicates that all regular and medium size projects supported by GEF should undergo a final evaluation upon completion of implementation.

Final evaluations are intended to assess the relevance, performance and success of the project. It looks at early signs of potential impact and sustainability of results, including the contribution to capacity development and the achievement of global environmental goals. It will also identify/document lessons learned and make recommendations that might improve design and implementation of other UNDP/GEF projects.

As per Monitoring and Evaluation Policy final evaluation at the project level in UNDP/GEF has two overarching objectives:

- a) promote accountability for the achievement of GEF objectives through the assessment of results, effectiveness, processes and performance of the partners involved in GEF activities. GEF results will be monitored and evaluated for their contribution to global environmental benefits; and
- b) promote learning, feedback and knowledge sharing on results and lessons learned among the GEF and its partners, as basis for decision-making on policies, strategies, program management, and projects and to improve knowledge and performance.

Evaluation Audience

This Final Evaluation of the UNDP/GEF Project “Conservation and sustainable use of globally significant biological diversity in Khazar Nature Reserve on the Caspian Sea Coast” is initiated by UNDP as the GEF Implementing Agency. It aims to provide managers (at the level of regulatory bodies of the Ministry of Nature Protection, the nature reserve administration, and UNDP-GEF levels) with a comprehensive overall assessment of the project and with a strategy for replicating the results. It also provides the basis for learning and accountability for managers and stakeholders.

Objectives of the Evaluation

The overall goal of the evaluation is to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of project activities in relation to the stated objective so far, and to produce possible recommendations on its completion strategy.

The purpose of the Evaluation is:

- To assess overall performance against the Project objectives as set out in Project Document and other related documents;
- To assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the Project;
- To critically analyze the implementation and management arrangements of the Project;
- To assess the sustainability of the Project’s interventions;
- To list and document initial lessons concerning Project design, implementation and management;
- To assess Project relevance to national priorities.

Project performance will be measured based on Project Logical Framework (see Annex 1), which provides clear performance and impact indicators for project implementation along with their corresponding means of verification.

The evaluation should assess:

Project concept and design

The evaluators will assess the project concept and design. The evaluators should review the problem(s) addressed by the project and the project strategy, encompassing an assessment of the appropriateness of the objectives, planned outputs, activities and inputs as compared to cost-effective alternatives. The executing modality and managerial arrangements should also be judged. The evaluators will assess the achievement of indicators and review the work plan, planned duration and budget of the project.

Implementation

The evaluation will assess the implementation of the project in terms of quality and timeliness of inputs and efficiency and effectiveness of activities carried out and timeliness of achieved results. Also, the effectiveness of management, financial accountability, as well as the quality and timeliness of monitoring and backstopping by all parties to the project should be evaluated. In particular, the evaluation is to assess the Project team’s use of adaptive management in project implementation.

Project outputs, outcomes and impact

The evaluation will assess the outputs, outcomes and impact achieved by the project as well as the likely sustainability of project results. This should encompass an assessment of the achievement of the immediate objectives and the contribution to attaining the overall objective of the project. The

evaluation should also assess the extent to which the implementation of the project has been inclusive of relevant stakeholders and to which it has been able to create collaboration between different partners. The evaluation will also examine if the project has had significant unexpected effects, whether of beneficial or detrimental character.

The evaluation will assess the aspects as listed in evaluation report outline attached in Annex 2.

*In addition to a descriptive assessment, the evaluation will also provide **ratings** of Project achievements according to GEF Project Review Criteria, using the following divisions: Highly Satisfactory, Satisfactory, Marginally Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory.*

Aspects of the Project to be rated are:

- Implementation approach;
- Management of globally significant species;
- Outcome/Achievement of objectives (meaning the extent to which the project's environmental and development objectives were achieved);
- Stakeholder participation/public involvement;
- Sustainability;
- Replication approach;
- Cost-effectiveness;
- Monitoring and evaluation.

Issues of special consideration:

The evaluation will review and assess changes in development conditions, by addressing the following questions, with a focus on the perception of change among stakeholders:

- Has the project achieved its objectives and outcomes as set in project document?
- Has the project established a management basis for long term sustainability and development of project outcomes?
- Has the project helped the protection of endangered species in the project site? (With a special attention to indicator species mentioned in the Tracking Tool and the Logframe Matrix, see Annex 1.)
- Have there been changes in local stakeholder behavior (i.e. threats, land use management practices, ...) that have contributed to improved conservation? If not, why not?
- Has the project elaborated innovative incentives to motivate the local population to apply biodiversity friendly and alternative income generation practices?
- Has awareness on biodiversity conservation and subsequent and nature values increased among various population groups (children, school students, nature reserve staff, visitors, farmers, local population) as a result of the project?
- Is there adequate territorial planning in place, or in progress, ensuring long-term conservation of biodiversity and cultural values?
- Assess the underlying factors beyond the project's immediate control that influence outcomes and results. Consider the appropriateness and effectiveness of the project's management strategies for these factors.

For future development support in the region, UNDP is especially interested in the assessment of the support model applied in the project, its implications for the long-term impact and sustainability of the project results.

The Evaluation Report will present recommendations and lessons of broader applicability for follow-up and future support of UNDP and/or the Government, highlighting the good and bad practices in addressing issues relating to the evaluation scope.

III. PRODUCTS EXPECTED FROM THE EVALUATION

The key product expected from this final evaluation is a comprehensive analytical report in English that should, at least, include the contents as indicated in Annex 2 of this TOR.

The Report of the Final Evaluation will be stand-alone document that substantiates its recommendations and conclusions. The report will have to provide to the GEF Secretariat complete and convincing evidence to support its findings/ratings.

The Report will include a table of planned vs. actual project financial disbursements, and planned co-financing vs. actual co-financing in this project, according the table attached in Annex 3 of this TOR.

The Report will be supplemented by Rate Tables, attached in Annex 4 of this TOR.

The length of the evaluation report shall not exceed 30 pages in total (not including annexes).

IV. EVALUATION TEAM – QUALITIES AND REQUIREMENTS

A team of independent experts will conduct the evaluation. The evaluators selected should not have participated in the project preparation and/or implementation and should not have conflict of interest with project related activities.

The evaluation team will be composed of **one International Consultant or Team Leader and one National Consultant**. The consultants shall have prior experience in evaluating similar projects. Former cooperation with GEF is an advantage.

Team Qualities:

- Recent experience with result-based management evaluation methodologies;
- Experience applying participatory monitoring approaches;
- Experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios;
- Recent knowledge of the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy;
- Recent knowledge of UNDP's results-based evaluation policies and procedures
- Competence in Adaptive Management, as applied to conservation or natural resource management projects;
- Recognized expertise in the management and sustainable use of wetlands in temperate ecosystems;
- Familiarity with protected area policies and management structures in Turkmenistan;
- Demonstrable analytical skills;
- Work experience in relevant areas for at least 10 years;
- Experience with multilateral or bilateral supported conservation projects;
- Project evaluation experiences within United Nations system will be considered an asset;
- Excellent English communication skills, Russian would be an asset (for the National Consultant excellent Turkmen and Russian communication skills, English would be an asset)

- Excellent Computer literacy
- Relevant education

Specifically, the international expert (team leader) will perform the following tasks:

- Lead and manage the evaluation mission;
- Design the detailed evaluation scope and methodology (including the methods for data collection and analysis);
- Decide the division of labor within the evaluation team;
- Conduct an analysis of the outcome, outputs and partnership strategy (as per the scope of the evaluation described above);
- Draft related parts of the evaluation report; and
- Finalize the whole evaluation report.

The National Consultant will provide input in reviewing all project documentation, especially if available only in Turkmen or Russian, and will provide the International Consultant with a compilation of information prior to the evaluation mission.

Specifically, the national expert will perform tasks with a focus on:

- Review documents;
- Prepare a list of the outputs achieved under project;
- Organize the mission programme and provide translation/interpretation when necessary;
- Participate in the design of the evaluation methodology;
- Conduct an analysis of the outcome, outputs and partnership strategy (as per the scope of the evaluation described above);
- Draft related parts of the evaluation report;
- Assist Team leader in finalizing document through incorporating suggestions received on draft related to his/her assigned sections.

The evaluation will be undertaken in-line with GEF principles:

- Independence
- Impartiality
- Transparency
- Disclosure
- Ethical
- Partnership
- Competencies and Capacities
- Credibility
- Utility

Individual consultants are invited to submit applications together with their CV for these positions.

International Consultant will perform the functions of Team Leader. The Team Leader will have overall responsibility for the delivery and quality of the evaluation products. Team roles and responsibilities will be reflected in the individual contracts.

V. METHODOLOGY OR EVALUATION APPROACH

An outline of an evaluation approach is provided below; however it should be made clear that the evaluation team is responsible for revising the approach as necessary. Any changes should be in-line

with international criteria and professional norms and standards (as adopted by the UN Evaluation Group¹⁵). They must be also cleared by UNDP before being applied by the evaluation team.

The evaluation must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. It must be easily understood by project partners and applicable to the remaining period of project duration.

The evaluation will take place mainly in the field. The evaluation is expected to follow a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with the government counterparts, the National Project Manager, Steering Committee, project team, and key stakeholders. The evaluator is expected to conduct a mission to Turkmenistan, to Ashgabat and to the Khazar Nature Reserve to interview the project team, project partners and key stakeholders.

The evaluation team is expected to consult all relevant sources of information, such as the project document, project reports, project budget revisions, progress reports, project files, national strategic and legal documents, Final GEF Tracking Tool (METT) and any other material that it may consider useful for evidence based assessment.

The Final GEF Tracking Tool (METT) prepared by national consultant/entity prior to start of evaluation, should be commented by evaluator and comments raised should be incorporated into the final version of the METT.

The list of documentation to be reviewed is included in Annex 5 of this Terms of Reference;

The evaluation team is expected to use interviews as a means of collecting data on the relevance, performance and success of the project. Team is also expected to visit the project site.

The methodology to be used by the evaluation team should be presented in the report in detail. It shall include information on:

- Documentation reviewed;
- Interviews;
- Field visits;
- Questionnaires;
- Participatory techniques and other approaches for the gathering and analysis of data.

Although the evaluation team should feel free to discuss with the authorities concerned, all matters relevant to its assignment, it is not authorized to make any commitment or statement on behalf of UNDP or GEF or the project management.

The evaluation team should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The principal responsibility for managing this evaluation lies with UNDP Country Office Turkmenistan. UNDP Turkmenistan will contract the evaluators and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the evaluation team. UNDP and the Ministry of Nature Protection will be responsible for liaising with the Evaluators team to set up stakeholder interviews, arrange field visits, coordinate with the Government etc.

The activity and timeframe are broken down as follows:

¹⁵ See <http://www.uneval.org/>

Activity	Timeframe	
	international expert	the national consultant
Desk review	4 days	4 days
Briefings for evaluators by PM and UNDP	1 day	1 day
Field visits, interviews, questionnaires, de-briefings	5 days	3 days
Drafting of the evaluation report	9 days	7 days
Validation of preliminary findings with stakeholders through circulation of draft reports for comments, meetings and other types of feedback mechanisms	3 days	3 days
Finalization of the evaluation report (incorporating comments received on first draft)	3 days	3 days

Working Days:

Team Leader (international expert) – 25 working days

Technical expert(s) (national expert(s)) – 21 working days

The proposed date for the in-country mission to Turkmenistan is April - May 2011.

The draft and final report shall be submitted to the UNDP Turkmenistan.

Prior to approval of the final report, a draft version shall be circulated for comments to government counterparts and project management. UNDP and the stakeholders will submit comments and suggestions within 5 working days after receiving the draft.

Timeframe for submission of first draft of the report: within 10 working days after the mission.

The evaluation should be completed by 31 May 2011.

If any discrepancies have emerged between impressions and findings of the evaluation team and the aforementioned parties, these should be explained in an annex attached to the final report.

ANNEX II : ITINERARY OF ACTIVITIES OF THE FINAL EVALUATION MISSION

* = Member of Project Steering Committee.

Date		Activities
Mon	21 st March	Evaluator travels to Ashgabat
Tue	22 nd March	am: 1. Evaluator arrives Ashgabat. 2. Meeting with UNDP Programme Officer for Environment, Energy & Disaster Risk Reduction (Rovshen Nurmuhamedov*). 3. Administrative arrangements. pm: 1. Document review.
Wed	23 rd March	am: 1. Meeting with Project Public Relations Specialist (Mr. Serdar Eyeberenov). 2. Meeting with Project Community Development Specialist (Ms. Mehri Karakulova). 3. Meeting with Project IT Specialist (Mr. Sergey Kurbanov). pm: 1. Time wasted waiting for an abortive meeting with representative of the Hunters' Association (Mr. Viktor Bojko*). 2. Meeting with UNDP-GEF Regional Practice Leader – Environment and Energy (Ms. Adriana Dinu).
Thu	24 th March	am: 1. Meeting with Deputy Minister for Nature Protection and NPC (Mr. Jumamurad Saparmuradov*) and Head of Dept. for Coordinating Environmental Programmes, MNP (Dr. Muhammet Durikov). 2. Meeting with UNDP Programme Officer for Environment, Energy & Disaster Risk Reduction (Rovshen Nurmuhamedov*). 3. Meeting with UNDP-GEF Regional Practice Leader - Environment (Ms. Adriana Dinu). pm: 1. Document review. 2. Travel to Turkmenbashi and Awaza.
Fri	25 th March	am: 1. Travel to Turkmenbashi. 2. Meeting with Director of Khazar State Reserve (Mr. Amanmyrat Nuriyev*) and Deputy Director for Science, Khazar State Reserve (Mr. Berdi Berdiyev). pm: 1. Field visit to Khazar Reserve (“cordon”). 2. Meeting with Director of Khazar Reserve (Mr. Amanmyrat Nuriyev*). 3. Travel to Awaza.
Sat	26 th March	am: 1. Travel to Chekishlyar. pm: 1. Travel to Chekishlyar (total 10 hours). 2. Meeting with Archin of Chekishlyar village (Mr. Mahammet Tachmammedov). 3. Meeting with Project Community Facilitator for Chekishlyar village (Mr. Jumaglych Guliyev).
Sun	27 th March	am: 1. Visit to Khazar Reserve (Chekishlyar). 2. Meeting with small grant recipient (Mr. Orazdurdy Kuliyeve). 3. Meeting with small grant recipient (Mr. Rebbimberdi Sapardurdiyev). 4. Meeting with small grant recipient (Mrs. Annabibi Garajayeva). pm: 1. Travel to Garagol (8.5 hours).
Mon	28 th March	am: 1. Visit to Khazar Reserve (Garagol). 2. Meeting with Acting Hakim of Hazar city (Mr. Rahim Nuriev). 3. Meeting with Archin of Garagol village (Mr. Artyk Artykov). 4. Meeting with Project Community Facilitator for Garagol village (Mrs. Saparbibi Yagshymamedova). 5. Meeting with Head of Garagol Resource Centre (Ms. Jemal Soyurova). 6. Meeting with small grant recipient (Ms. Yazbibibi Hudaiberdiyeva). pm: 1. Meeting with small grant recipient (Mr. Orazgeldi Abalakov). 2. Meeting with small grant recipient (Mr. Tuwakhmamed Hudaiberdiyev) 3. Second meeting with Archin of Garagol village, now as a small grant recipient (Mr. Artyk Artykov). 4. Travel to Turkmenbashi (6 hours).
Tue	29 th March	Free day birding in Khazar Reserve
Wed	30 th March	am: 1. Travel to Ashgabat (plane delayed because of fog). pm: 1. Meeting with Project Administrator (Ms. Jennet Hodjamuradova). 2. Meeting with Project Chief Technical Advisor (Mr. Oleg Guchgeldiyev). 3. Meeting with UNDP Resident Representative (Mr. Lenni Montiel).

Date		Activities
Thu	31 st March	am: 1. Document Review. pm: 1. Meeting with UNDP Operations Manager (Ms. Mary Risaeva). 2. Meeting with Deputy Minister for Nature Protection and NPC (Mr. Jumamurad Saparmuradov*). 3. Meeting with UNDP Programme Officer for Environment, Energy & Disaster Risk Reduction (Rovshen Nurmuhamedov*).
Fri	1 st April	am: 1. Evaluator departs Ashgabat for UK.
Wed	13th April	Pm: 1. Skype meeting with Regional Technical Specialist for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Management (Mr. Maxim Vergeichik).

ANNEX III : PERSONS INTERVIEWED

* = PSC Member. (S) = skype interview. Alphabetic order.

UNDP / GEF

Adriana Dinu	Regional Practice Leader Environment and Energy
Djemshid Khadjiev	Programme Assistant for Environment, Energy & Disaster Risk Reduction
Lenni Montiel	Resident Representative
Mary Risaeva	Operations Manager
Maxim Vergeichik	Regional Technical Specialist for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Management (S)
Rovshen Nurmuhamedov	Programme Officer for Environment, Energy & Disaster Risk Reduction

Project Staff

Jennet Hodjamuradova	Project Administrator
Jumaglych Guliyev	Community Facilitator for Chekishlyar village
Mehri Karakulova	Community Development Specialist
Oleg Guchgeldiyev	Chief Technical Advisor
Saparbibi Yagshymamedova	Community Facilitator for Garagol village
Serdar Eyeberenov	Public Relations Specialist
Sergey Kurbanov	IT Specialist

Ministry for Nature Protection

Amanmyrat Nuriyev	Director of Khazar State Reserve
Berdi Berdiyev	Deputy Director for Science, Khazar State Reserve
Jumamurad Saparmuradov	Deputy Minister and NPC
Muhammet Durikov	Head of Dept. for Coordinating Environmental Programmes

Community Stakeholders and Beneficiaries

Annabibi Garajayeva	Small grant recipient (Chekishlyar village)
Artyk Artykov	Archin of Garagol village and small grant recipient
Jemal Soyurova	Small grant recipient/Head of Garagol Resource Centre
Mahammet Tachmammedov	Archin of Chekishlyar village
Orazdurdy Kuliyeu	Small grant recipient (Chekishlyar village)
Orazgeldi Abalakov	Small grant recipient (Garagol village)
Rebbimberdi Sapardurdiyev	Small grant recipient (Chekishlyar village)
Tuwakmamed Hudaiberdyev	Small grant recipient (Garagol village)
Yazbibibi Hudaiberdiyeva	Small grant recipient (Garagol village)

Other

Rahim Nuriev	Acting Hakim of Hazar city
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ANNEX IV : SUMMARY EVALUATION OF PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS BY OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

The Project logframe in the Project Document was not revised hence the present evaluation matrix uses this logframe.

KEY:

GREEN = Indicators show achievement successful at the end of the Project.

YELLOW = Indicators show achievement nearly successful at the end of the Project.

RED = Indicators not achieved at the end of Project

Project Goal: The protection of Turkmenistan's globally significant biodiversity by strengthening the sustainability of its National System of Protected Areas.

#	Aim	Performance Indicator	Baseline	End of Project Target	Delivery Status at Terminal Evaluation	Comments	HS	S	MS	MU	U	HU
OI.1	Objective: A new effective, participatory and adaptive approach to conservation and management is demonstrated by Khazar Nature Reserve and constitutes a model for replication throughout the system.	New PA categories, community participation, and landscape ecology principles are adopted into law	Not adopted	Are adopted and under implementation by EoY 2	Not adopted. Some sector-based legislative revisions have strengthened environmental protection, and recommendations have been developed for more balanced reserve management options and submitted to the MNP.	Revision of the PA legislation was a key prerequisite of the project. While this Project failed to achieve these desired changes, its recommendations have been passed on to the <i>Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area System in Turkmenistan Project</i> that is expected to produce a substantial upgrade of the PA law to include new PA categories such as national parks and introduce new administrative and financial mechanisms for PA management.						
OI.2		METT score improvement)	24	Improves at least 10% annually	2009 score was 52 (although FE notes that MTE considered assessors to be generous).	2010 METT was not conducted. 2011 METT will be undertaken for all the nature reserves.						

#	Aim	Performance Indicator	Baseline	End of Project Target	Delivery Status at Terminal Evaluation	Comments	HS	S	MS	MU	U	HU
OI.3		Hectares under community-based resource management around Khazar Reserve	None	100,000 by year 4	None. Management plans for 4 pilot areas totalling more than 100,000 ha have been prepared and submitted for approval and implementation. Current planning instruments take into account the Reserve's concerns over exploitation of resources.							
OI.4		# of other protected areas in Turkmenistan applying METT to track management effectiveness	None	At least 50% by end of project	Two other reserves now apply the METT - Amudarya and Repetek.	This will be expanded under the <i>Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area System in Turkmenistan Project</i> .						
OI.5		# of other protected areas incorporating new, participatory management mechanisms into their PA management approach	None	At least 50% by end of project	None.	Khazar MP will be used by the <i>Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area System in Turkmenistan Project</i> for developing management plans for another 4 reserves – one for the 1 st NP is underway.						
O1.1	Outcome 1: Khazar Nature Reserve management capacity and conservation effectiveness is secured.	Adaptive management program for Khazar Nature Reserve operational. Presence of specific management objectives	[No objectives defined ¹⁶] No specific management objectives in place	Objectives defined; workplan approved by EoY 1	Workplan submitted for approval							

¹⁶ Baseline not explicitly stated in logframe but implied.

#	Aim	Performance Indicator	Baseline	End of Project Target	Delivery Status at Terminal Evaluation	Comments	HS	S	MS	MU	U	HU
O1.2		Application of METT to track progress	METT not applied.	METT applied annually	METT applied in 2009	Will be applied in 2011						
O1.3		# newly trained professional staff on payroll for Khazar Nature Reserve	3	4 by yr 2 and 6 by yr 4	Apparently 1 new staff member added during Project.	3 professional staff upgraded their qualification as a result of the training programme						
O1.4		Populations of indicator species; target bird, fish, and mammal species w/in the Reserve	Greater Flamingo (<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>) 5,785 Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) 191,098 Pochard (<i>Aythya ferina</i>) 17,758 Mute Swan (<i>Cygnus olor</i>) 7,620 Caspian Gull (<i>Larus cachinnans</i>) 1,486 Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) 481 White-tailed Eagle (<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>) 118 Grey Heron (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>) 54	Remains stable or increases by yr 4	Said to stable yet figures from Jan 2010 aerial survey do not support this with drops in all species except Pochard: Greater Flamingo 0 Coot 49,220 Pochard 30,352 Mute Swan 1,477 Caspian Gull 245 Redshank 55 White-tailed Eagle 98 Common Heron 6 However, see "comments"	Figures are notoriously variable as shown below with numbers fluctuating more because of weather conditions than any human factors. Cf. numbers in baseline and EoP with these from Feb 2008 ground, Jan 2009 aerial, Nov. 2009 ground surveys. Greater Flamingo: 8,781 / 1,233 / 18,746 Coot: 22,027 / 55,412 / 88,115 Pochard: 4,058 / 13,645 / 1,028 Mute Swan: 3,517 / 4,293 / 122 Caspian Gull: 693 / 564 / 690 Redshank: 431 / 27 / 287 White-tailed Eagle: 88 / 64 / 91 Grey Heron: 53 / 2 / 163						
O1.5		# of species/habitats for which active conservation plans are being implemented	0	At least 4 by year 2; 8 by year 3	None	Said to be 4 but no evidence seen or presented to support this.						
O2.1	Outcome 2: Cross-sector capacity for integrated coastal management established and	Coastal Planning Working Group is operational	Does not exist	Established by Yr 1	Working group was established by year 2 under the State Enterprise for Caspian Sea							

#	Aim	Performance Indicator	Baseline	End of Project Target	Delivery Status at Terminal Evaluation	Comments	HS	S	MS	MU	U	HU
O2.2	biodiversity conservation objectives mainstreamed into productive coastal sectors surrounding Khazar Nature Reserve	Biodiversity-friendly coastal zoning, development, and construction standards approved/not approved as Gov't policy	No standards currently	Standards approved by EoY 3	None approved							
O2.3		Khazar Nature Reserve is gazetted on the authoritative official government maps.	Not gazetted; Not clearly marked	Is gazetted EoY 3; Is clearly marked	Khazar Nature Reserve is gazetted. Maps circulated.	Contract for concrete ground markers has been let.						
O2.4		Target landscape species conservation priorities incorporated into key productive sector planning and development review mechanisms	Not incorporated	Incorporated into Oil/gas, fisheries, port, and tourism development by EoY 4.	Tourism planning and industries integrate the reserve's information on bird migration and other vital biodiversity resources such as seals	A limited but welcome first step, somewhat overshadowed by the probability of the development of a new naval base within the Khazar Reserve, but the latter outside of the Project's control.						
O3.1	Outcome 3: Khazar Nature Reserve builds trust and goodwill with local communities and strengthens environmental governance over wildlife resources.	# of fishermen working as part of new cooperative	0	> 20 fishermen part of coop by EoY 2	Fisheries cooperative vetoed by local government.	Instead, all fishermen-members of the hunting association have to comply with hunting ethics as a result of agreement with the reserve						
O3.2		Community-based hunting management operational in target areas based upon mutually agreed sustainable harvest levels	No such management exists. Zero hunters involved	Target levels agreed among stakeholders and monitoring underway. At least 20 in one community by EoY 2.	Harvest levels agreed with lead coordination by the hunting association (part of the agreement)							

#	Aim	Performance Indicator	Baseline	End of Project Target	Delivery Status at Terminal Evaluation	Comments	HS	S	MS	MU	U	HU
O3.3		% decrease in # of birds harvested annually in Khazar Nature Reserve	No baseline, estimated at 530,000 on 2006-2007 (no official data exists)	At least a 30% reduction by year 3	60% decrease of birds harvested. The results of 2009 survey conducted by the Project in Chekishlyar and Garagel show the average rate of hunting per hunter was down again by 4.8 times. No survey was conducted in 2010.	With no baseline, this indicator is effectively meaningless, but at least trend of two surveys is in the right direction.						
O3.4		% people in four target communities who agree with the statement <i>"the reserve is improving social and economic conditions in our community"</i> .	Unknown – supposed to be determined at project launch but no survey carried out	30% up by EoY 3	43% stated good relationship as a result of a survey conducted in Nov 2010.	Again, with no baseline, this indicator is meaningless and cannot be assessed.						
O4.1	Outcome 4: Project best practices are mainstreamed into the National System of Protected Areas of Turkmenistan	PA management training program incorporated into MNP's national PA system	No such program exists	Trainers appointed/ first courses offered by yr 2	Training programme not yet incorporated into MNP's national PA system. First courses provided only in 2010.							
O4.2		MNP adoption of best practices demonstrated at Khazar	No new best practices	MNP incorporates at least four key best practices into national PA policy and oversight	2 reserves apply METT and benefit from the training centre resources, guide book for birds was finalized for general use	Although welcomed, this does not really meet the target as envisaged by the Project Document						

#	Aim	Performance Indicator	Baseline	End of Project Target	Delivery Status at Terminal Evaluation	Comments	HS	S	MS	MU	U	HU
O4.3		# of protected areas in Turkmenistan applying specific new practices demonstrated at Khazar w/respect to improved financial and human resource management, data management, field surveys, and community relations	None	At least 40% by EoY 3	2 reserves apply METT but none apply specific new practices.							

ANNEX V : LIST OF PROJECT BOARD MEMBERS

Name	Title	Agency
State government		
Saparmuradov Juma	Deputy Minister and Chair of PB	Ministry of Nature Protection
Amanov R ¹⁷ .	Head of Department on Protected Areas	Ministry of Nature Protection
Esenov Paltamet	Director	State Institute of Deserts, Flora and Fauna
Toyli Komekov	Chairman	State Agency on Caspian Issues
Chakiyev Chaky	Chairman's Assitant	State Agency on Caspian Issues
Sahatov Amanmurat	Chairman	State Committee of Fish Industry
Muhiyev Muhy	Deputy Chairman	State Committee of Fish Industry
Geldiyeva Galina	Head of Department on legal matters	State Committee of Fish Industry
Ataliyev Yalkapberdi ¹⁸	Chairman	State Committee of Sport and Tourism
State nature reserves		
Marochkina Valentina	Head of Research Department	Amudarya State Reserve
Hudaykulyev Nurmehammet	Head of Research Department	Badhyz State Reserve
Nuriyev Amanmyrat	Director	Khazar State Reserve
Annatuvakov Aman	Head of Research Department	Khazar State Reserve
Amanov Arazmurat	Head of Research Department	Kaplankyr State Reserve
Potayeva Aknabat	Head of Research Department	Kopetdag State Reserve
Hojamuradov Hojamurad	Head of Research Department	Sunt-Hasardag State Reserve
Local government¹⁹		
Niyazliyev Orazmyrat	Khyakim of Balkan velayat	Khyakimlik of Balkan velayat
Bayriyev Saylov	Head of International department	Khyakimlik of Balkan velayat
Oraztuvakov N	Khyakim of Esenguly etrap	Khyakimlik of Esenguly etrap
Gylyjov O.	Deputy Director	Khyakimlik of Esenguly etrap
Kurenov Kuren	Khyakim of Turkmenbashi etrap	Khyakimlik of Turkmenbashi etrap
Tujanov Meret	Khyakim of Hazar town	Khyakimlik of Hazar town
Hanmammedova A.	Head of Administrative Department	Khyakimlik of Hazar town
Begliyev Suleyman	Archin	Village of Belek
Tachmamedov Muhammed	Archin	Village of Chekishlyar
Artykov Artyk	Archin	Village of Gara-Gol
NGOs		
Durdiyev Ashyr	Director	Society of Hunters and Fishermen
Bozhko Viktor	Head of Department	Society of Hunters and Fishermen

¹⁷ Preceded by Eyeberdiyev Bekmurat (former Head of Ecological Programmes Department) and Masharipov R. (former Head of Department on Protected Areas).

¹⁸ Preceded by Ilyasov G. formerChairman).

¹⁹ The Khyakimlik of Turkmenbashi town was formerly represented by its former Khyakims Atayev and Oraz Pomanov A.

ANNEX VI: LIST OF MEMBERS OF STUDY TOUR TO SWEDEN IN MARCH 2008.

1. Mr. Jumamurad Saparmuradov, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Nature Protection of Turkmenistan
2. Mr. Muhy Muhyev, Vice-Chairman, State Fishery Committee of Turkmenistan
3. Ms. Gulyalek Hadjieva, Head of Department, State Enterprise for Caspian Issues (at present, out of office due to her training programme)
4. Mr. Oraz Ataev, Deputy Khyakim (Vice-Governor) of Balkan velayat (at present, Khyakin (Mayor) of Turkmenbashy City)
5. Mr. Tachdurdy Tuymanov, Deputy Khyakim (Vice-Mayor) of Turkmenbashy City (at present, Khyakim (Mayor) of Gumdag Town)
6. Mr. Jumadurdy Tagandurdyev, Deputy Khyakim of Turkmenbashy Etrap (district)
7. Mr. Meredmammed Tujanov, Khyakim (Mayor) of Khazar Town
8. Mr. Amanmurad Nuryev, Director, Khazar State Reserve.