

# **UNDP-GEF project “Demonstrating Local Responses to Combating Land Degradation and Improving Sustainable Land Management in Southwest Tajikistan”**

**PIMS 3366 SLM MSP**

**Final Evaluation**

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
APR	Annual Progress Report
CACILM	Central Asian Initiative for Land Management
CO	Country Office
CP	Communities Programme (UNDP)
CTA	Chief Technical Adviser
DIM	Direct Implementation Modality
FFS	Farmer Field School
FSU	Former Soviet Union
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographic Information System
GoT	Government of Tajikistan
Ha	Hectare(s)
LDU	Land Degradation Unit
HEP	Hydro Electric Power
MLF	Micro-finance Programme
MTE	Mid-term Evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NPM	National Project Manager
PDF-A	Project Development Facility – Block A
PIR	Project Implementation Report
PMU	Project Management Unit
TA	Technical Assistance
TE	Terminal Evaluation
TJS	Tajikistan Somoni
ToR	Terms of Reference
TRAC	Target for Resource Assignments from the Core
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
MLF	Micro Loan Fund
OEC-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Cooperation Directorate
JRC	Jamoat Resource and Advocacy Centre
LFM	Logical Framework Matrix
WOCAT	World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies
WUA	Water Users Association

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## 1 Executive Summary

This report provides an account and the findings and conclusions of the Terminal Evaluation (TE) of the UNDP-GEF Project (*PIMS 3366 SLM MSP*) *Demonstrating Local Responses to Combating Land Degradation and Improving Sustainable Land Management in Southwest Tajikistan* that is being directly implemented by United Nations Development Programme Tajikistan.

The field work for the TE took place from the 21<sup>st</sup> to the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2011 and was carried out by two independent Consultants (National and International). The evaluation process consisted of studying the project's documentation, field visits and interviews with project stakeholders and a detailed analysis of the findings.

Evaluation is an integral part of the UNDP-GEF project cycle management. The TE is guided by its Terms of Reference and UNDP-GEF Project Monitoring and Evaluation Policies and Procedures. The evaluation process is independent of both UNDP and GEF and the opinions and recommendations in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the GEF, UNDP, or the Project Management Unit, however, once accepted the TE becomes a recognised component of the project's documentation.

This TE is initiated by the UNDP Tajikistan as the Implementation Agency for this Project and it aims to provide managers (at the Ministry of Agriculture, PMU, UNDP Tajikistan Office and Communities<sup>1</sup> Programme and GEF levels) with strategy and policy options for more effectively and efficiently achieving the project's expected results and for replicating those results. It also provides the basis for learning and accountability for managers and stakeholders.

Terminal Evaluations are intended to provide an objective and independent assessment of project implementation and impact, including achievement of global environmental benefits and lessons learned to guide future SLM efforts. Specifically, the TE assess the extent to which the planned project outcomes and outputs have been achieved, as well as assessing the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the project as defined in the guidelines for Terminal Evaluations.

The SLM is the first SLM project to be implemented in the Central Asia sub-region and one of the earliest GEF SLM Strategic Priority 2 (Demonstration Projects) in what was a globally new programme area. Regionally, the Tajikistan SLM Project was therefore a *first generation* project with little if any regional, or indeed GEF, experience or precedents to build upon. Furthermore it was a demonstration project within the regional GEF-ADB Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management (CACILM). The SLM Project was intended to test a set of methods and approaches at local level for addressing land degradation problems so that this experience could be incorporated into the larger regional initiative.

The Project is a medium size Project implemented in the area of Shaartuz which lies within the southern part of the Khatlon Oblast (region) which is located in the South-West of Tajikistan. The project area thus borders to the south with Afghanistan and to the west with Uzbekistan. The southern border with Afghanistan is formed by the Panj River, which then becomes the Amu Darya after entry by the Vakhsh tributary. The other major tributary to the Amu Darya in the area is the

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<sup>1</sup> The UNDP CO Communities Programme shared responsibilities with the PMU

Kafirnigan River. Within the project area four Districts and four Jamoats (sub-districts) are involved: the Jamoat named after S. Khudoikulov (Kabodiyon district), Jamoat Jura Nazarov (Shaartuz district), Jamoat Nuri Vakhsh (Jilikul district) and Jamoat Telman (Kumsangir district).

The project has been directly implemented in accordance with DIM guidelines under the umbrella of UNDP's Communities Programme (CP). Accordingly UNDP was the implementing agency and has also acted as the executing agency.

The total Project budget was US\$ 2,053,000 of which US\$ 25,000 was granted for the PDF A and US\$ 975,000 was GEF contribution to the Project making a total GEF contribution of US\$ 1,000,000. Co-financing was comprised of UNDP CO, US\$ 390,000 (TRACK funds US\$ 204,000 and CP funds US\$ 186,000), Government of Tajikistan, US\$ 267,000, bilateral funding US\$ 40,000 (USAID Winrock International), NGOs, US\$ 152,000 (CARE), Jamoat Resource Centres, US\$ 154,000 and other funding of US\$ 50,000 from FAO which did not materialise.

An eight month budget neutral (using under-spent funds) project extension was requested and granted bringing the Project's closed date to December 2011, the justification being a number of unanticipated challenges<sup>2</sup>:

- The time taken to develop local governance structures.
- The time it took to introduce new technologies especially related to fuel efficiency.
- Short comings with the original NGO engaged by the Project requiring the termination and re-recruitment of a new contractor.
- The difficulties in finding locally qualified consultants to evaluate the major interventions (FFS, community forestry, microfinance loans programme and the fuel efficient stoves).

The Project's strategy can be characterised as:

- Providing support and facilitation to local governance to resolve the challenges resulting from the historical system of land use and administration.
- Introducing a number of appropriate technologies and methodologies for improving land, and water management, and agriculture at a local scale.
- Providing some modest and targeted capital investments to key areas of the system.

This was described in the Project Document as a long-term development goal of:

*"The improvement of the sustainability of arid climate irrigation land management in Tajikistan in order to safeguard the livelihoods and economic well-being of rural populations and the functional integrity of national ecosystems".*

The Project Objective was stated as:

*"..to demonstrate the potential to implement replicable Sustainable Land Management initiatives at the local level in Tajikistan and to build the capacity of local structures to do this"*

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<sup>2</sup> The TE feels that, even with the most careful planning, these challenges difficulties would only have materialised once the Project was up and running and therefore could not reasonably have been foreseen.

This was to be achieved through two outcomes:

*“Outcome 1: Local government and civil society structures have the capacity and awareness to regulate, plan and monitor sustainable management of irrigated land”.*

*“Outcome 2: Appropriate and viable local level initiatives for improving sustainability of land and water management tested and available for replication”.*

From concept, design and inception through to implementation this Project has been, and remains, an “intelligent” project with a capacity for learning as defined by the skills to carry out expert thinking; that is, solving problems for which there are no rule-based solutions, and complex communication; interacting with others to acquire information, to explain it, or to persuade others of its implications for action.

The Project was well designed; the inception phase was technically very well implemented revising the original design in a number of key areas addressing the inevitable shortcomings of the original design and responding to changes in the circumstances.

The UNDP Communities Programme has played a significant role in the Project’s execution including material, logistical and technical support. There has been strong leadership by the PMU and the technical assistance, both international and national has been used to very good effect.

The Project has put process before project expedience in a way that has embedded the experience at the local level within local government, non-government and community based structures.

There are a number of important aspects to the Project in regards to the way that it has been able to adapt intelligently to changes in circumstances, for instance by linking the micro-finance programme to the provision of extension services as a means to ensure, as much as practicable, financial sustainability. However the greatest achievements of the Project, in terms of the GEF Global Objectives are likely to be in the development of a fledgling community forest management system and the inclusion of ecosystem resilience in the rural development agenda.

The TE summarises the Project’s rating as Highly Satisfactory and according to the TE ToR:

### **Project Formulation**

#### **Conceptualisation and Design – Highly Satisfactory -**

The Project Document is well written and clearly there was a considerable amount of *thought that* went into developing the Project. There was obviously a very good understanding of the cause and effect nature of various policies and other legal instruments and the institutional arrangements (not just in terms of what they were) but also how they were interacting and importantly, how they were likely to interact given changes in the various parameters. This was important because when things did not necessarily work as predicted, the Project was able to go back and examine why it was not working and fix it (*e.g.* with regards to the NGO support), and, for instance, in drawing up the ToR for the external consultants.



The other important factor the Project design has managed to address is the issue of scale. The Project was able to operate on a number of different scales. Physical scale is important because it reflects the levels at which decision-making takes place, for instance the WUA (Winrock/USA) are operating at a *Water Unit* scale, whereas the SLM Project was able to work at the level at which groups of *dekhan* farmers are organising themselves. Thus the Water Users Association Project and the SLM Project were able to complement each other with considerable effectiveness. It is this intervention at different scales, combined with the facilitation of the Project that demonstrated how the water resources needed to be managed at different levels. This management or *decision-making* is at the heart of the Project’s approach and the contrast with the previous highly centralised decision-making process.

Importantly the Project had planned modest capital investments in infrastructure and was able to leverage more funding, in both cash and in-kind, to overcome the barriers resulting from years of neglect to the irrigation system.

#### Stakeholder Participation – **Highly Satisfactory** -

Participation by stakeholders is at the heart of the SLM Project. The effects of a highly centralised and authoritarian system in previous years had eroded the capacity for stakeholders at the local level to make whatever decisions were necessary for sustainable land management. In short, there had been created a culture of dependency and it was critical to re-start the process of local-level decision-making without which the larger national reforms (such as the creation of *dekhan* farms, debt forgiveness, WUAs, *etc.*) would have little impact. In order to do this the Project was prepared to risk *project expedience* in favour of *process*. That is, it was absolutely necessary for stakeholders to start making decisions and to avoid at all costs the Project taking over the decision-making role. While this may sound simple, it is in fact a very careful balancing act requiring considerable confidence, judgement and in many instances “nerve” on the part of the PMU given that they have a very short time frame to execute the Project and it is easy to “cut corners”.

Clearly this was not the case; an example of this is in the micro-finance programme. At the time of the MTE the regional microfinance institution (VakshMicrofin) was legally constrained from using the JRCs as a service provider which affected the JRCs ability to continue with the Land Degradation Units (LDUs) and the FFS Consultants, as well as making microcredit unaffordable by raising interest rates. The Project responded to this by successfully arguing that the micro-lending be moved from *VakshMicroFin* to a local micro-financing union (*Rushti Obshoron*) in Shaartuz that did want to use the LDUs and FFS Consultants as loan officers and could legally pay for such services. These staff are a crucial part of how the microfinance union operates and so are likely to continue to fulfil both function post project.

Therefore, there has been significant stakeholder participation within the Project. Importantly this has also carried through from the design, inception and into the implementation. The stakeholder participation has been on a number of levels, reflecting once again the ability of the Project to operate at different scales, thus national-level stakeholders, local government institutions, donor organisations and agencies, local communities and individuals have been able to develop a relationship with the Project which has been characterised by considerable trust and confidence.

An important aspect of this relationship, and one that is hard to define in terms of repeating the process, is the approachability and openness of the PMU to stakeholders and a willingness to, as stated earlier, *be in control but not controlling* the process which has allowed stakeholders at the local level to take a high degree of ownership in the process, and outcomes of, the Project’s intervention.

## **Project Implementation**

### **Implementation Approach - Highly Successful -**

The PMU has functioned as a unit; that is there has been considerable team work and the consultants appear to have been integrated into the unit in a way that has made them more accountable and to take ownership of the outcomes of their specific inputs.

There is “quiet” confidence within the PMU that allows it to challenge its own assumptions and in adaptive management terms to accept “mistakes”, to learn from them and make adaptations to the original “hypothesis”. This has occurred at all levels whether it is in getting a small-scale hydroelectric power (HEP) system to work or at a broader policy level, as was the case with the microfinance programme. This confidence to address a problem rather than “sweep it under the carpet” has meant that when faced with a problem the Project has often come up with a solution that is applicable at the local level. For instance all of the components in the HEP installations can be sourced locally in markets making both affordable and sustainable.

The PMU has worked well with local institutions and there appears to be an element of trust in the relationship which has resulted in considerable respect and cooperation. It is likely that UNDP’s Area Office’s long standing presence in the area has played a role in this process. The fact that most of the activities are embedded in the JRC, Jamoat or within the *dekhan* farms has also contributed to this transparent relationship although it should be noted that considerable effort by the PM was needed to build these relationships at the Hukumat level, perhaps reflecting the more political agenda at this scale and the need to still meet quotas for strategic crops. However, these relationships have been very useful in mobilising resources from different sources (*e.g.* a drag line from the Hukumat, money for fuel from the *dekhan* farmers, *etc.*) and the PMU has been facilitating this process and leveraging funds from other donors to increase the extent of the work.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation – Highly Satisfactory -**

The Project was able to draw down on the resources of the UNDP CP and evaluations of the FFS, MFP, LDU and community forest activities were undertaken in collaboration with the Monitoring and Evaluation team of the UNDP CP. Much of the field data collection work was carried out by the SLM Project Consultants but evaluation design, data analysis and evaluation conclusions were prepared by the CP Monitoring and Evaluation team in order to ensure an unbiased independent view. In this case it has produced a good outcome. In practice the Project has managed effectively with the resources available to ensure that there is sufficient monitoring and evaluation and that lessons are not just learned by the Project but developed into a format that can be broadcast. However, considering these projects are demonstration projects there is a wealth of data informing future management interventions and in particular establishing a “*culture*” or experimentation, monitoring, feedback and adaptation (which is something that this Project has excelled at even without a

dedicated monitoring officer and the link up with the CP Monitoring and Evaluation team has greatly enhanced) which would be better captured by having a dedicated monitoring officer as a requirement for a project.

Perhaps what has marked this Project out as exceptional is that it has clearly had that adaptive feedback loop where the results from monitoring (even if they were not being formally monitored as has been the case with the small scale hydroelectric generation) have been fed back into the Project and adaptations made to the intervention.

## Results

Attainment of Outcomes/Achievement of objectives - **Highly Satisfactory** -

The Project has made full use of the opportunities presented by larger national and structural changes in the policy environment and at times it has taken the initiative when the enabling environment had become less favourable (e.g. by moving the microfinance programme to a local microcredit organisation). It has addressed the full range of issues associated with SLM from creating *de facto* protected areas through sustainable utilisation of forest resources and community forestry initiatives, the repair of key parts of the infrastructure system, crop diversification, appropriate and sustainable technologies such as bio-drainage, shelterbelts, etc., reducing pressure on resources through fuel efficiency, supporting the organisation and empowerment of local governance institutions, civil society and community-based organisations.

The TE makes five recommendations

### **Recommendation 1: Extending the effective life of the Project**

Responsibility: UNDP

Timeframe for decision: Urgent

A compelling case is made (section 4.3.2) for continuing to support the processes that the Project has been driving (e.g. Farmer Field Schools, *dekhan* Farmers Association, Jamoat and JRC decision-making, using and adapting proven SLM technologies and methodologies to exploit the opportunities arising from larger national and structural reforms, etc.).

However, the TE realises that this recommendation does not fit into any existing UNDP-GEF project management cycle. Clearly it is not an extension (one has already been given to the Project), rather it is recognising that something is working, and working well, therefore there are considerable gains to be made by following the process and "exploiting" the considerable intellectual and social capital that the Project has built up.

It would not be unreasonable therefore to recommend that, given the pressing need to develop local level governance and build the capacity for sustainable land management this Project has considerable merit and the development gains should be pursued and consolidated. Four options for achieving this are provided in the main report

### **Recommendation 2: Applying the lessons emerging from the SLM Project**

Responsibility: UNDP (RGP and CRM Project)

Timeframe for decision: Medium term

It is not necessary to wait until new projects are designed to apply the experience of the SLM Project. Many lessons can be incorporated to already existing projects including: the vertical integration of different levels of decision-making, the attention to process rather than simply trying to apply technologies, the emphasis on governance and ensuring that ecosystem sustainability is the basis for economic and social development, *etc.*

The SLM Project has never assumed that a particular technology or intervention will work, rather it has approached the issue cautiously and been prepared to acknowledge mistakes and work with stakeholders to make something work (or in some instances to abandon an idea when it clearly was too early to introduce something).

This experience has applications in a number of current UNDP programmes and projects such as the Rural Growth Programme (RPG) and the Climate Risk Management Project (CRM). The three projects should arrange a workshop to formulate strategies that will include the experience from the SLM Project into the activities of the other projects.

### **Recommendation 3: Negotiate a new agreement for the collaborative tugai forestry management**

Responsibility: SLM Project, PMU

Timeframe for decision: Urgent

The present agreement (between the three local communities and the *Hukumat*) is for five years. The strength of tenure or proprietorship which is what motivates the local community to invest their time and efforts in protecting the tugai forest patches is directly correlated to the length of that agreement. Negotiating the renewal of the agreement with the facilitation of the Project is an opportunity to build on the successes so far. There are tens of different "off-the-shelf" agreements that can be brought to the table, all of them excellent but none of them will be as useful as an agreement that is negotiated between the local community and *Hukumat* and facilitated by the Project. This facilitation is necessary because there is an asymmetrical distribution of power in the relationship between the two parties that can most easily be overcome by the presence of third-party facilitator.

It is critical that these negotiations in developing the "second generation" agreements are carried out with the full participation of the local communities and that their interests and opinions are heard during the process. In Turkey there is a well-known saying; *"if you do not have a seat at the table then you are probably on the menu"*.

Therefore the Project should begin this process with a view to completing it before the end of the Project even though the Agreement has another two years to run.

### **Recommendation 4: The Project completes the internal evaluation reports**

Responsibility: SLM Project, PMU

Timeframe for decision: Urgent

The Project should publish the internal evaluation of three of the principle approaches used during the project: the Farmer Field Schools and Micro-finance, the collaborative forestry approach, and the Land Degradation Unit and improved resource governance.

**Recommendation 5: The surveys initially carried out by the Project are repeated before the Project ends**

Responsibility: SLM Project, PMU

Timeframe for decision: Urgent

Baseline surveys were carried out at the beginning of the Project on awareness and perception of land use issues as well as basic indicators on the status of land/degradation in the Project area. These need to be repeated in order to provide an empirical measure of the impact of the Project.

The principle lesson derived from this Project is that GEF projects, particularly those designed as demonstration projects should have an independent monitoring officer.

It is important to discriminate between a project adapting to circumstances and adaptive management. Every project should react to *events* as they happen. But adaptive management as described by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is more than simply reacting to events. Adaptive management requires a reasoned and detailed understanding (a *hypothesis*) of how a system is working, clearly articulated objectives of management interventions, a detailed monitoring system and critically a transparent and coherent description of what assumptions are lurking within the *hypothesis*.

The point of this is that; in a GEF Project (and particularly in a demonstration project) there are two levels of adaptive management taking place. Firstly the project *per se* needs to be constantly challenging its own *hypothesis* of how the system is working; this is the standard GEF-UNEP monitoring and evaluation process. However, because it is also a demonstration project it should also be applying adaptive management internally to each component of demonstration because GEF projects are not about research. For instance in the case of the tugai community forestry one might expect to see a range of different treatments (*e.g.* different intensities of grazing, wood harvesting, *etc.*) and a credible monitoring programme in place. Thus the efficacy of the different treatments on processes such as natural regeneration, or indices such as species diversity could be compared along with other variables such as cost efficiency, time scales *etc.*

## 2 Introduction

This report provides an account and the findings and conclusions of the Terminal Evaluation (TE) of the UNDP-GEF *Project (PIMS 3366 SLM MSP) Demonstrating Local Responses to Combating Land Degradation and Improving Sustainable Land Management in Southwest Tajikistan* (herein after referred to as the Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Project or *the Project*) that is being directly implemented (DIM) by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Tajikistan.

The field work for the TE took place from the 21<sup>st</sup> to the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2011 and was carried out by two independent Consultants (National and International). The preliminary findings and recommendations of the TE were presented during a feedback meeting on the 28<sup>th</sup> October 2011 to the UNDP Country Office and an *Aide Memoire* (Annex 7) provided a written account of the evaluation immediately following the field work.

Evaluation is an integral part of the UNDP-GEF project cycle management. The TE is guided by its Terms of Reference (ToR)<sup>3</sup> and UNDP-GEF Project Monitoring and Evaluation Policies and Procedures<sup>4</sup>. The evaluation process is independent of both UNDP and GEF and the opinions and recommendations in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the GEF, UNDP, or the Project Management Unit (PMU), however, once accepted the TE becomes a recognised component of the project’s documentation.

This TE is initiated by the UNDP Tajikistan as the Implementation Agency for this Project and it aims to provide managers (at the Ministry of Agriculture, PMU, UNDP Tajikistan Office and Communities<sup>5</sup> Programme and GEF levels) with strategy and policy options for more effectively and efficiently achieving the project’s expected results and for replicating those results. It also provides the basis for learning and accountability for managers and stakeholders.

Terminal Evaluations are intended to provide an objective and independent assessment of project implementation and impact, including achievement of global environmental benefits and lessons learned to guide future SLM efforts. Specifically, the TE will assess the extent to which the planned project outcomes and outputs have been achieved, as well as assessing the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the project as defined in the guidelines for Terminal Evaluations.

The evaluation also evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of project design, implementation, monitoring and adaptive management and sustainability of project outcomes, including the project exit strategy. The evaluation covers the entire project including non-GEF financed components.

The TE addressed a number of key issues such as:

- The performance of the Project – has it done what it said it would do?
- The effectiveness of the interventions – having done what it set out to do, has it worked?
- The impact of the Project – what are the outcomes now, and in the future, of the Project’s intervention.

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<sup>3</sup> See Annex 1

<sup>4</sup> <http://thegef.org/MonitoringandEvaluation/MEPoliciesProcedures/mepoliciesprocedures.html>

<sup>5</sup> The UNDP CO Communities Programme shared responsibilities with the PMU

The Evaluators initially carried out a desk-based review of the Project’s documentation prior to carrying out the field trip. The field trip consisted of interviews with local participants and project partners as well as the Project staff. During the field tour various visits were made to inspect the Project’s interventions accompanied by the relevant staff from the participating Jamoats and Jamoat Resource and Advocacy Centres (JRC), Water Users Association (WUA), Farmer Field School participants, local community, etc. A comprehensive list of the people met is given in Annex 2.

Interviews and discussions were also carried out with the Hukumat and UNDP Country Office, Communities Programme and the National Coordinator of GEF/ADB Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management (CACILM).

The TE will not systematically list the Project’s achievements in terms of “deliverables”. To a large extent these have already been recorded in the Mid Term Evaluation (MTE<sup>6</sup>) as they were scheduled in the first half of the Project. The TE is sufficiently aligned with the findings of the MTE that both documents will support each other and there is no need to repeat the information provided by the MTE. Therefore the TE will focus on the process followed by the Project and try to determine the long term impacts and necessary follow on actions needed to reduce the vulnerability of the project’s successes and the changes that it has put in place. Where there is a significant change in circumstances between the MTE and the TE it will be noted in this report. Similarly, the TE will not reiterate the detailed reporting of the various initiatives (FFS, MFP, LDU, community forestry, etc.) that has been adequately covered in the MTE, WOCAT documents and the Project’s own evaluations in conjunction with the UNDP CP Monitoring and Evaluation team.

### **3 The Project and Its Development Context**

In addition to the local socio-economic and ecological aspects of the SLM Project it is also important to remember that the GEF Operational Programme 15 (OP#15) Sustainable Land Management is one of the most recent of all GEF Operational Programmes with the GEF Council approving the SLM OP in 2002 and the first funding coming on stream in 2003. Regionally the Tajikistan SLM Project was therefore a *first generation* project with little if any regional, or indeed GEF, experience or precedents to build upon. Furthermore it was a demonstration project within the regional GEF-ADB Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management (CACILM). The SLM Project was intended to test a set of methods and approaches at local level for addressing land degradation problems so that this experience could be incorporated into the larger regional initiative. However, it is also noted that the Project’s primary responsibility should be to the local stakeholders and therefore sustainability of the outcomes is critical.

#### **3.1 The GEF Objective (GEF Operational Programme #15)**

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

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<sup>6</sup> The TE broadly agrees with the MTE’s account of the Project’s deliverables

Within GEF OP#15 Land degradation is broadly defined as "... *any form of deterioration of the natural potential of land that affects ecosystem integrity either in terms of reducing its sustainable ecological productivity or in terms of its native biological richness and maintenance of resilience.*"<sup>7</sup>

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

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

### **3.1 Description of the Project**

The Project is a medium size Project in the area of Shaartuz which lies within the southern part of the Khatlon Oblast (region) which is located in the South-West of Tajikistan. The project area thus borders to the south with Afghanistan and to the west with Uzbekistan. The southern border with Afghanistan is formed by the Panj River, which then becomes the Amu Darya after entry by the Vakhsh tributary. The other major tributary to the Amu Darya in the area is the Kafirnigan River. Within the project area four Districts and four Jamoats (sub-districts) are involved: the Jamoat named after S. Khudoikulov (Kabodiyon district), Jamoat Jura Nazarov (Shaartuz district), Jamoat Nuri Vakhsh (Jilikul district) and Jamoat Telman (Kumsangir district).

The Project PDF A<sup>8</sup> was developed in July 2004; Project Document in March 2006 and the Project started in April 2007 with an inception phase lasting until July 2007. The MTE was carried out in July 2009 and the scheduled closure date was December 2011 with a duration of four years.

The SLM Project is framed within the larger regional initiative GEF-ADB CACILM and is specifically designed as a demonstration project. The project has been directly implemented in accordance with DIM guidelines under the umbrella of UNDP's Communities Programme (CP). Accordingly UNDP was the implementing agency and has also acted as the executing agency.

The total Project budget was US\$ 2,053,000 of which US\$ 25,000 was granted for the PDF A and US\$ 975,000 was GEF contribution to the Project making a total GEF contribution of US\$ 1,000,000. Co-financing was comprised of UNDP CO, US\$ 390,000 (TRACK funds US\$ 204,000 and CP funds US\$ 186,000), Government of Tajikistan, US\$ 267,000, bilateral funding US\$ 40,000 (USAID Winrock

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<sup>7</sup> GEF 1999. Report of the STAP Expert Group Workshop on Land Degradation (GEF/C.14/Inf. 15)

<sup>8</sup> Project Development Fund (conceptual and design period of the Project)



International), NGOs, US\$ 152,000 (CARE)<sup>9</sup>, Jamoat Resource Centres, US\$ 154,000 and other funding of US\$ 50,000 from FAO which did not materialise.

An eight month budget neutral (using under-spent funds) project extension was requested and granted, the justification being:

- The time taken to develop local governance structures.
- The time it took to introduce new technologies especially related to fuel efficiency.
- Shortcomings with the original NGO engaged by the Project.
- The need to evaluate the major interventions (FFS, community forestry, microfinance loans programme and the fuel efficient stoves).

The closure date of the Project was thus December 2011.

### 3.2 Project Context

The SLM Project is set in the context of a socio-political, ecological and economic system that can quite reasonably be described as having undergone catastrophic change in very recent history.

Arguably the causal effects of land degradation in South-West Tajikistan can be traced back further; but it is useful to start with the relatively recent collapse of the former Soviet Union (FSU). It would be far too simplistic to see this withdrawal of the administrative structures, technical knowhow and finance as the reason behind the current land degradation in the area, not least because land was already being managed unsustainably during this period.

A more critical analysis would also identify that the FSU imposed a system of centralised management on all aspects of the economy and society and was readily prepared to discount environmental sustainability and social equity to support other sectors of the central economy which in itself was unsustainable. Importantly the FSU denied local administrative structures and local communities the opportunity to determine their own futures and largely destroyed the capacity for planning that is necessary for solving complex problems that are a very large part of sustainable land management.

Following the breakup of the FSU Tajikistan endured a period of civil war which further eroded the capacity for local government and communities to recover and develop their own systems for planning and managing land use. *This combined with the centralised and authoritarian system of administration* has meant that there is still a tendency to administrate rather than to plan and manage.

Furthermore, many of the governance structures of the FSU have endured simply because it takes time to dismantle them and in many instances this vacuum in governance has been filled by enterprises that have, in some instances, exploited local communities.

Therefore, any project seeking to address SLM issues would necessarily be facing not just a technical challenge that could be resolved by the introduction of new technologies and methodologies for land management or financing, but also an adaptive challenge, necessitating considerable effort to

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<sup>9</sup> Source: Mid Term Evaluation

build the capacity for land management at the local level and, in particular, to change the behaviour of individuals, institutions and agencies and they ways in which they interact. Importantly these were being addressed on irrigated, or formerly irrigated, lands

To address these issues the Project's strategy can be characterised as:

- Providing support and facilitation to local governance to resolve the challenges resulting from the historical system of land use and administration.
- Introducing a number of appropriate technologies and methodologies for improving land, and water management, and agriculture at a local scale.
- Providing some modest and targeted capital investments to key areas of the system.

This was described in the Project Document as a long-term development goal of:

*"The improvement of the sustainability of arid climate irrigation land management in Tajikistan in order to safeguard the livelihoods and economic well-being of rural populations and the functional integrity of national ecosystems".*

The Project Objective was stated as:

*"..to demonstrate the potential to implement replicable Sustainable Land Management initiatives at the local level in Tajikistan and to build the capacity of local structures to do this"*

This was to be achieved through two outcomes:

*"Outcome 1: Local government and civil society structures have the capacity and awareness to regulate, plan and monitor sustainable management of irrigated land".*

*"Outcome 2: Appropriate and viable local level initiatives for improving sustainability of land and water management tested and available for replication".*

The primary stakeholders are the local farming communities, Dekhan farmers, the Hukumat, Jamoat and the JRC and the WUA.

Secondary stakeholders are the State Committee for Land Management, State Committee for Environment Protection and Forestry, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry for Water Resources and Land Reclamation and a number of local non-governmental organisations that participated in the Project as well as the UNDP Tajikistan, in particular the Communities Programme and CACLM.

## 4 Findings and Conclusions

From concept, design and inception<sup>10</sup> through to implementation this has been, and remains, an "intelligent" project with a capacity for learning as defined by the skills to carry out expert thinking;

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<sup>10</sup> The TE notes that the Project produced a most authoritative and informative inception report and given the often overlooked or misunderstood importance of the inception phase of a project it would be useful to develop a format for GEF inception reports, although the TE also realises that there are risks involved in doing this which might then

that is, solving problems for which there are no rule-based solutions, and complex communication; interacting with others to acquire information, to explain it, or to persuade others of its implications for action<sup>11</sup>.

An important facet of the SLM Project has been its use and application of technical assistance (TA) or consultants. The TA component has been thoughtfully incorporated into the design of the Project from the start ensuring that there have been long standing relationships with the consultants and that their contribution to the project has been maximised. One of the outcomes of this is that the Project has been prepared to try interventions and make "mistakes" which have formed the basis of the learning process and are a necessary part of adaptive management in as much as correcting the mistake is the basis of learning how to solve complex problems<sup>12</sup>.

This has not happened by accident but can be directly attributed to the design of the Project, a well executed inception phase and report, the thoughtful drafting of consultant's terms of reference (ToR), the careful selection of consultants on criteria not just related to their technical expertise but also their character and ability to communicate and. An additional important aspect was the mentoring and leadership provided by the Project Manager and CTA, which can be characterised as: *In control* but not necessarily *controlling*. In this aspect the Project has a certain amount of humility, that is, it does not assume superior knowledge when dealing with complex problems but still has the confidence to make decisions and later critically analyse the results. This "humility" is important when we consider that:

*Murphree et al noted that "in the development world the delivery of the products of professional science and technology to rural communities has consistently been marked by asymmetrical relationships" and that "firstly, science and technology are associated with power – the entire power apparatus of government, international and national development agencies, private capital and bureaucracy – which determines in large part what rural communities can or cannot do. The second aspect is a pervasive assumption of the inherent superiority of professional science and technology over the abilities of rural people to understand and manage the resource base on which they depend for their livelihood" (Murphree, et al, 1998)<sup>13</sup>*

While this project ethos has in some instances caused delays it is clear that the costs and benefits of such an approach in terms of achieving sustainable impacts have been positive, and have been a result of the Project diligently following *process* rather than *expedience*.

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add to the bureaucratic load of a project.

<sup>11</sup> Levy, Frank and Murmane Richard: *The New Division of Labour: How Computers are Creating the Next Job Market*. Princeton: Princeton University Press and Russell Sage Foundation. 2004. Cited in *The Road Not Travelled*. pp. 86 – 87. Cited in Whitaker, B., 2009. *What's Really Wrong with the Middle East*.

<sup>12</sup> A measure of this approach was the Project's willingness to change the TA on participation when the NGO implementing this component were clearly not up to the challenge. The Project engaged a local (Shaartuz-based) NGO that had less experience but willingness to learn and a more suitable ethos.

<sup>13</sup> Marshall W Murphree, Phanuel Mugabe and Michael J Murphree, 1998. *Socio-economic Considerations in the Community Initiation and Implementation of the M2C2 Programme.*; Background Paper For The Gwaai River Workshop, August 4-7 1998.

## 4.1 Project Formulation

The project formulation is assessed on at least five criteria: conceptualisation/design, country-ownership/drivenness, replication approach and other aspect such as the comparative advantage of the Implementing Agency, *etc.*

In summary, the Project Design provides an intelligent and reasonable strategy to address the problems identified by the Project Document. Indeed, the Project Document provides a detailed account of the policy and institutional environment as well as a thoughtful analysis of the situation.

The Project's strategy can be broadly characterised as addressing the institutional and policy constraints that form the parameters within which land use currently takes place and as a consequence can be considered unsustainable by a number of reasonable measures and introducing and nurturing a number of technologies and methodologies designed to redress the local causes of land degradation.

### 4.1.1 Conceptualisation/Design

The TE ToR requires the evaluators to assess three components of the Project:

- Was there sufficient careful analysis and thought in the Project's design, did the design phase ask the right questions, was there sufficient information and did the designers "construct" a reasonable response?
- Was the analysis and the strategy correctly transposed into the LFM, was the planning and resultant *plan* a coherent response to the analysis of the challenge?
- Were the indicators selected to measure the progress, effectiveness and impact of the Project's intervention capable of indicating what was happening with both the Project and the process it was interacting with?

Normally there is a fourth component requiring the evaluation to consider whether the Project had lessons from similar projects had been incorporated into the Project's design. However, in this case there were no precedents to go upon because this was the first SLM project in the Region. But, the TE feels that the Project manager, CTA and the considerable experience of the UNDP CP were brought to bear in designing this Project and this has played a very large part in its successful outcome. This, combined with the wise use of TA resulted in interventions such as the Farmer Field Schools (FFS), the targeting of capital investment to small project, the micro-loans programme and the use of energy-saving technologies, amongst others was drawn from other projects that were not GEF SLM projects but were brought together into a GEF SLM project and combined with initiatives such as the community forest management and ecosystem resilience components that had their roots in more conventional conservation projects.

The Project Document is well written and clearly there was a considerable amount of what we might refer to as *analysis*, or even *problem conceptualisation*, but the TE will call it *thought*, that went into developing the Project. There was obviously a very good understanding of the cause and effect nature of various policies and other legal instruments and the institutional arrangements, not just in terms of what they were, but also how they were interacting and importantly, likely to interact given changes in the various parameters. This was important because when things did not necessarily work as predicted, the Project was able to go back and examine why it was not working and fix it

(e.g. with regards to the NGO support), and, for instance, in drawing up the ToR for the external consultants.

The other important factor the Project design has managed to address is the issue of scale. The Project was able to operate on a number of different scales. Physical scale is important because it reflects the levels at which decision-making takes place, for instance the WUA are operating at a *Water Unit* scale, whereas the SLM Project was able to work at the level at which groups of *dekhan* farmers are organising themselves. Thus the Water Users Association Project<sup>14</sup> and the SLM Project were able to complement each other with considerable effectiveness. It is this intervention at different scales, combined with the facilitation of the Project that demonstrated how the water resources needed to be managed at different levels. This management or *decision-making* is at the heart of the Project's approach and the contrast with the previous highly centralised decision-making process with the arrangement between *dekhan* farmers for opening or closing sluice gates was very striking.

Importantly the Project had planned modest capital investments in infrastructure and was able to leverage more funding, in both cash and in-kind, to overcome the barriers resulting from years of neglect to the irrigation system.

In short the Project had:

- Brought to the design a considerable body of experience and understanding (institutional and individual).
- Used this experience to develop the Project's design, the Project Document and log frame matrix (LFM).
- This experience had a profound effect upon the Project's design and the way that it interacted with UNDP and the CP.
- Provided a very reasonable analysis of the institutional, policy and legal framework (the enabling environment).

However, in developing the LFM, the indicators chosen were essentially re-stating outputs and activities<sup>15</sup> or are actually targets or deliverables, which appears to have been a common problem with many UNDP-GEF projects developed around the time that this one was being designed. The roots of this probably lie in a drive to develop SMART<sup>16</sup> indicators by the UNDP-GEF Regional Office. Unfortunately this often resulted in the use of what are ostensibly targets or in some instances outputs. In this case the "indicators" selected are essentially targets or a means to assess an indicator but not actually an indicator *per se*.

The TE notes that additional indicators were developed following the recommendations<sup>17</sup> of the MTE and while these were very precise and certainly showed considerable accountability of the Project, *some* still have the appearance of being targets. Therefore, while this might have affected the ability to monitor the Project's effectiveness and impact (*i.e.* in terms of sustainable land

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<sup>14</sup> Water and Energy Program USAID 2004-2009 Winrock International /USAID Tajikistan

<sup>15</sup> This was picked up in the MTE and the TE broadly agrees with the findings of the MTE.

<sup>16</sup> Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound.

<sup>17</sup> Mission Report of the CTA, 15 – 21 February 2010, 5th March 2010

management *per se*) it has not affected that performance and the TE does not consider this to be a critical issue, and indeed, the Project could argue that this difference is simply in the way the indicators are worded.

The problem may lie in the interpretation of the term “indicator”. The English Language dictionary definition of an indicator is “*an instrument which gives you information*” and the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines (2010) considers that “*the OECD DAC Evaluation Network has, for more than a decade, been the most active and authoritative forum for discussing professional norms and standards in the evaluation of development and grant-related issues*”. Therefore, according to OECD/DAC, an indicator is: “*a quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect changes connected to an intervention, or to help assess the performance of a development actor*<sup>18</sup>”. By this definition and measure the TE can, on balance, state that the indicators selected following the MTE are acceptable and give a reliable indication of both performance and, to an extent, impact.

#### **4.1.2 Country Ownership/Driveness**

The Project concept has its origins as far back as the early 2000’s when Tajikistan was developing a number of national strategies that effectively form the *de facto* national policy framework for land management. These included the National Strategy for Combating Desertification (2002), National Biodiversity Conservation Action Plan (2003), and the country's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2002).

The development of a number of “demonstration projects” of which the Tajikistan SLM Project was one was driven by the larger regional ADB-GEF CACILM Project, which was being developed as a multi-country and donor partnership to support the development and implementation of national level programmatic framework for more comprehensive and integrated approaches to sustainable land management in the region.

In tandem with this, there were also a number of far reaching reforms and legislation in the agricultural and water sectors, and some crucial follow up actions (such as the *dekhan* farmers debt forgiveness from so-called Future Companies debts, development of Water Users Associations, *etc.*) that, although arguably were largely driven by donors, significantly enhanced the possibilities of achieving the outcomes of the SLM Project and placed it firmly within the national development context and agenda.

#### **4.1.3 Stakeholder Participation**

Participation by stakeholders is at the heart of the SLM Project. As the TE has commented already, the effects of a highly centralised and authoritarian system in previous years had eroded the capacity for stakeholders at the local level to make whatever decisions were necessary for sustainable land management. In short, there had been created a culture of dependency and it was critical to re-start the process of local-level decision-making without which the larger national reforms (such as the creation of *dekhan* farms, debt forgiveness, WUAs, *etc.*) would have little

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<sup>18</sup> DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation, May 2002

impact. In order to do this the Project was prepared to risk *project expedience* in favour of *process*. That is, it was absolutely necessary for stakeholders to start making decisions and to avoid at all costs the Project taking over the decision-making role. While this may sound simple, it is in fact a very careful balancing act requiring considerable confidence, judgement and in many instances "nerve" on the part of the PMU given that they have a very short time frame to execute the Project and it is easy to "cut corners".

Clearly this was not the case; an example of this is in the micro-finance programme. At the time of the MTE the regional microfinance institution (VakshMicrofin) was legally constrained from using the JRCs as a service provider which affected the JRCs ability to continue with the Land Degradation Units (LDUs) and the FFSs Consultants, as well as making microcredit unaffordable by raising interest rates.

The Project responded to this by successfully arguing that the micro-lending be moved from *VakshMicroFin* to a local micro-financing union (*Rushti Obshoron*) in Shaartuz that did want to use the LDUs and FFS Consultants as loan officers and could legally pay for such services. These staff are a crucial part of how the microfinance union operates and so are likely to continue to fulfil this function post project.

Therefore, there has been significant stakeholder participation within the Project. Importantly this has also carried through from the design, inception and into the implementation. The stakeholder participation has been on a number of levels, reflecting once again the ability of the Project to operate at different scales, thus national-level stakeholders, local government institutions, donor organisations and agencies, local communities and individuals have been able to develop a relationship with the Project which has been characterised by considerable trust and confidence.

An important aspect of this relationship, and one that is hard to define in terms of repeating the process, is the approachability and openness of the PMU to stakeholders and a willingness to, as stated earlier, *be in control but not controlling* the process which has allowed stakeholders at the local level to take a high degree of ownership in the process, and outcomes of, the Project's intervention.

The Project Document did not specify any particular policy or strategy to address issues of gender which is something that the MTE noted with particular reference to the impact of migration for work and female-headed households, the number of women accessing micro-credit in the first round of loans and the participation in the Farmer Field Schools (FFS). The TE shares this view to a point but suggests that an interesting aspect of this project is that it has been raising intelligent questions and given more time and resources it might be able to develop intelligent answers to these questions. Some of these questions are related to the role of women in agriculture and by association, in SLM. But, to have developed a specific gender strategy from the start would firstly be asking a lot of a medium-sized project and secondly, it would have largely been built on assumptions about the role of women within the Project's area.

Clearly women have an important role to play in SLM and it would be safe to assume that they are disadvantaged as a result of their gender; furthermore there are cultural issues at play<sup>19</sup> which restrict the participation of women in activities such as the FFS and access to micro-credit. The Project noted in their internal evaluation of the FFS that the "*FFS has a male bias in the selection of trainees (34 men and 9 women). This reflects the situation in Tajikistan where male trainees are more likely to make decisions and have a greater influence on dissemination of agricultural information as compared to female trainees*"<sup>20</sup>.

Currently there are 107 *dehkan* farms who are active "clients" of the Project. Out of these fifteen are women (*i.e.* are headed by a woman). The issue of low number of women is explained by limited number of *dehkan* farms that are officially headed by them. The Project has a priority for women while granting the micro-credits, but nevertheless not that many women have come forward. However, if the shareholders and workers of these 107 *dehkan* farms are included then the majority of the participants are female as most men are absent due to migration. There is obviously a lot going on within the *dehkan* farms, socially and functionally they are relatively new (although also carrying with them socio-cultural and administrative hierarchical arrangements from previous periods) and the internal arrangements are not necessarily uniform. Admittedly the Project could have spent more time studying this, but then GEF projects are not research projects *per se*. To have fixed on a specific strategy during the design stage would have run considerable risk in really not understanding the dynamics of the *dehkan* farms, perhaps even trying to fix something that isn't even broken.

The PMU is aware of these shortcomings but one has to say that there is a ceiling on what a GEF medium-sized project can, given the time and resources available, take on and if it were to continue for another two years (and be adequately resourced for this period) then it may be possible to insist that there was a study on the barriers to women participation in agriculture, that women FFS trainers were trained and employed, and the Project became more proactive in driving the issue of women's participation in agriculture, and steps were put in place to make micro-credit more available to landless women, for household plots and for those working on Presidential Lands (where women have the greatest access to land). Unfortunately the GEF SLM projects require any project to address such a broad range of issues (arguably this is what sets the GEF approach to SLM ahead of most other initiatives in particular the insistence on ecosystem resilience and the more holistic approach that this requires) that unless gender inequalities were directly related to land degradation (and this connection was clearly visible from the start) it would likely have resulted in some other activity being sacrificed. As there is no superfluous "fat" on the Project it is hard to see how the Project could have added this to its activities without something else being cut and the TE is generally satisfied that the Project has made efforts to ensure that women have as much access to the process and to the benefits from the Project as is practicable.

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<sup>19</sup> The TE note that "cultural issues" are often used as a "get out clause" by many projects when challenged on their gender policy but in this case there are clearly differences between different ethnic groups within the Project's area and these differences affect the level of women's participation in the Project's activities.

<sup>20</sup> Evaluation Report on the Farmer Field School and Micro-Financing Component of the UNDP-GEF SLM Project. P. 4.



#### 4.1.4 Replication Approach

To determine the way in which lessons and experiences coming out of the Project were, and could, be used in the future it is important to separate the individual characters working in and around the Project from the specific things that were done and to keep in mind the DIM modality when comparing this with other similar projects. Therefore the TE has identified the following:

- The Project was nested within the UNDP CP which has a considerable body of experience and because of the system of regional offices was able to support operations and logistics. Clearly there was a two-way flow of experience between the CP and the SLM Project, in particular relating to the question of a *replication approach* was the understanding developed by the CP that ecosystem resilience, that is, the ability of the ecosystem to continue to supply ecosystem goods and services underpins any social or economic development.
- The approach followed by the SLM Project has been closely studied by the UNDP CP and has likely influenced the Rural Growth Programme being implemented in Soghd Oblast and the Zerafshav Valley. In all likelihood it will influence the activities of the Programme in the future in particular with the design and execution of the UK DFID-funded project in the RGP+ which is a continuation of the existing RGP. Certainly the use of extension services have proved expensive in other areas and requiring continued external support. But the financing of extension services in the SLM Project have been studied with interest by the CP and may well be "scaled-up" to other projects.
- An important aspect of this will be the integration of protected areas and the ecosystem into development and SLM initiatives and a greater understanding of the importance of ecosystem resilience and ecosystem goods and services in the development process.

Clearly at the technical level the demonstration aspects of the Project are being replicated or scaled up. The involvement of the Hukumat is evidence that the technical aspects of the Project are being replicated; their willingness to invest in the Project's activities is reasonable evidence of this. After all, why wouldn't the technical aspects be replicated, as they make very good sense?

#### 4.1.5 Other Aspects

As has been discussed earlier, there was considerable experience brought to bear in designing and planning this project. Not just the experience in SLM but also in understanding what makes a good *project* and how to implement a project.

The first aspect of this is that the design of the Project did not try to answer every question but rather put much of the "problem solving" into the project implementation phase thus avoiding the pitfalls of unrealistic assumptions and inaccurate predictions about how the *system* would respond. This is very important when dealing with complex and unpredictable socio-ecosystems and was used to great effect in having a properly designed, implemented and reported *inception phase* which continued to re-assess the situation and fine-tune the design.

The second aspect was in the deployment of TA. Not all UNDP-GEF projects employ a long-term CTA. However, it is the TE's opinion that this long-term relationship has been beneficial in building the necessary trust between TA and project stakeholders and allowing the TA to adapt approaches over

time. As has been mentioned earlier there has been a very careful selection and preparation of the ToR of TA for this project which has allowed the project to “get the most out of the consultants”.

The third aspect has been the considerable trust between the PMU and UNDP Country Office<sup>21</sup>. This may sound surprising, but it is not always the case. This trust has allowed the Project to follow a process and adapt where necessary. Trust is a very important component of any project, reducing the transaction costs and although initially time consuming to build, saves time in the long run, and time in any project is a valuable commodity.

The fourth aspect has been leadership, hard to define, but very apparent and a critical component. There has been leadership at a number of levels which has had a profound effect upon the Project outcomes. Not all of this is attributable to the Project *per se*. For instance within the Jamoat and JRC and the *dekhan* farmers there is emerging considerable leadership and responsibility qualities, but one might also argue that the Project is aligned to the process that is taking place at the local level. However, within the Project, it is closely linked with the trust between different levels within the UNDP and PMU management.

## 4.2 Project Implementation

The TE has already stated that this has been a well-implemented project which has been able to demonstrate a level of self-assessment and learning that has greatly contributed to successfully achieving its objectives.

### 4.2.1 Implementation Approach

Project execution and implementation has been directly through (DIM) the UNDP CO Tajikistan, which has the benefit of established Area Offices reflecting the level of commitment by the UNDP to Tajikistan. Therefore the SLM Project has operated out of the Area Office in Shaartuz. It covers four Jamoats in four different Districts under one Hukumat providing a diversity of situations to test and demonstrate the Project’s effectiveness.

In addition to the national Project Manager (PM) and international CTA, there are three locally employed consultants for the FFS, irrigated agriculture and forestry components. A measure of the level of integration of the Project into the local institutional framework is the Forestry Consultant who has been supervising a Jamoat-level Forester hired by the Hukumat.

Where specific experience has been lacking the Project has drawn down upon TA, for instance in developing the FFS, the community forestry and the fuel efficient stoves. In a few instances this has not worked (*e.g.* with the biogas plant) but the Project has recovered well and made reasonable decisions and acted decisively.

The PMU has functioned as a unit; that is there has been considerable team work and the consultants appear to have been integrated into the unit in a way that has made them more accountable and to take ownership of the outcomes of their specific inputs.

There is “quiet” confidence within the PMU that allows it to challenge its own assumptions and in adaptive management terms to accept “mistakes”, to learn from them and make adaptations to the

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<sup>21</sup> Arguably facilitated by the DIM modality

original “hypothesis”. This has occurred at all levels whether it is in getting a small-scale hydroelectric power (HEP) system to work or at a broader policy level, as was the case with the microfinance programme. This confidence to address a problem rather than “sweep it under the carpet” has meant that when faced with a problem the Project has often come up with a solution that is applicable at the local level. For instance all of the components in the HEP installations can be sourced locally in markets making both affordable and sustainable.

The PMU has worked well with local institutions and there appears to be an element of trust in the relationship which has resulted in considerable respect. It is likely that UNDP’s Area Office’s long standing relationship with the area has played a role in this process. The fact that most of the activities are embedded in the JRC, Jamoat or within the *dekhan* farms has also contributed to this transparent relationship although it should be noted that the system of governance still requires considerable effort by the PM to build these relationships at the Hukumat level perhaps reflecting the more political agenda at this scale and the need to still meet quotas for strategic crops. However, these relationships have been very useful in mobilising resources from different sources (*e.g.* a drag line from the Hukumat, money for fuel from the *dekhan* farmers, *etc.*) and the PMU has been facilitating this process and leveraging funds from other donors to increase the extent of the work.

#### **4.2.2 Monitoring and Evaluation**

The TE broadly agrees with the findings of the MTE with regards monitoring and evaluation but notes the following. Notwithstanding the MTE’s comments<sup>22</sup> and the TE’s comments on the LFM there has been “adequate periodic oversight of activities during implementation to ensure the extent to which inputs, work schedules, other required actions and outputs are proceeding according to plan<sup>23</sup>” by providing Quarterly Progress Reports (QPR), Project Implementation Reports (PIR), the CTA Reports, the Midterm Evaluation and following this the Forestry, FFS and Microloan Finance component and the fuel-efficient stoves internal evaluations which were carried out in participation with the UNDP CP Monitoring and Evaluation Team.

It is extraordinary that GEF projects don’t have a dedicated monitoring officer with a dedicated budget given the (very necessary) importance attached to monitoring and evaluation. However, medium-sized GEF projects are, by their very nature, limited by budget and until there is some form of budgetary multiplier applied to medium-sized projects to cover the cost of monitoring it is inevitable that there will be incomplete monitoring of the impacts (at least) of both the project *per se* and the individual interventions.

SLM projects, as are most GEF projects, are extremely complex to monitor. For instance, as the MTE points out there was a need for both “development” and “environmental” indicators and this is further complicated by the timescales over which a project is operating which are very often significantly shorter than the timescales that affect communities and ecological and environmental processes. This inconsistency sets up a tension between “project” versus “process”.

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<sup>22</sup> For instance, regarding the LFM and the risk assessment and assumptions, *etc.*

<sup>23</sup> ToR TE

The comments on monitoring and indicators made during the MTE are, in the TE’s opinion valid although somewhat confusing. Furthermore, the TE reiterates the importance placed upon monitoring and evaluation by both UNDP and GEF but questions whether any GEF projects, given their largely experimental nature, can be adequately monitored unless there is a separate budget available for the monitoring and evaluation. The TE is aware that there is a budget for monitoring and evaluation in all GEF projects, in this instance it was US\$ 62,000 approximately 3.1% of the total espoused budget in the Project Document.

It is questionable just how adaptive GEF projects can be as long as they rely largely upon the Project Manager to monitor all components of the Project. In this instance there were perhaps seven (FFS, saxaul plantations, bio-drainage, Tugai community forests, agro-forestry and shelterbelts, etc.) experimental interventions all of which would have benefited from having their own specific monitoring programme for a range of indicators, from effectiveness in reducing water logging of fields to their impact on increasing species diversity or reducing the livelihood risk to households. To have expected a Project Manager to monitor all of these, while meeting the stringent requirements of the project monitoring *per se* is simply asking too much.

In this instance the Project was able to draw down on the resources of the UNDP CP and evaluations of the FFS, MFP, LDU and community forest activities were undertaken in collaboration with the Monitoring and Evaluation team of the UNDP CP. Much of the field data collection work was carried out by the SLM Project Consultants but evaluation design, data analysis and evaluation conclusions were prepared by the CP Monitoring and Evaluation team in order to ensure an unbiased independent view. In this case it has produced a good outcome but, considering this was a demonstration project there could have been a wealth of data informing future management interventions and in particular establishing a “*culture*” or experimentation, monitoring, feedback and adaptation which is something that this Project has excelled at even without a dedicated monitoring officer and the link up with the CP Monitoring and Evaluation team has greatly enhanced.

Perhaps what has marked this Project out as exceptional is that it has clearly had that adaptive feedback loop where the results from monitoring (even if they were not being formally monitored as has been the case with the small scale hydroelectric generation) have been fed back into the Project and adaptations made to the intervention.

#### **4.2.3 Stakeholder Participation**

Stakeholder participation in the Project has been very good. As has already been stated, accessibility of the PMU has been excellent partly due to the UNDP Area Office and partly due to the individuals working within the PMU. In particular there is evidence that participation in the Project was far from passive and the PMU have been actively adapting the Project’s approach and activities according to the feedback from participants. Instances of this are, *inter alia*:

- The terms of micro-loans are adjusted depending upon the crop to allow an interest only repayment until the crop is harvested at which time the principal is repaid and the loan is closed.
- The establishment of a “tool bank” to give farmers access to equipment and tools<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Leveraged financing from the “Tajik Afghan Poverty Reduction Initiative” which was funded by Japanese Government

- The timing of FFS which met every fortnight during planting and harvesting and more frequently during the autumn, *etc.*

In all local communities and *dekhan* farmers have been able to participate in the decision-making process. The "vehicle" for this participation appears to have been the linkage with the FFS, LDU, JRC and Jamoat, which is further linked to the microfinance programme. This very democratic approach is extremely important because it represents the first steps towards real self-determination at the local level and reduces the local dependency upon central agencies. There are many issues wrapped up in this approach and its importance should not be underestimated. Clearly this Project could never hope to introduce sufficient technologies that would cover every eventuality in such a dynamic and unpredictable system; to attempt to do so would be to deny future options. However, it has stimulated the process, through participation, enabling local-level problem solving and allowing local people to negotiate with external agencies on a more equal basis; this in itself is a good measure of resilience.

There has also been considerable institutional participation. The Project was working largely with the JRC because this was the level at which it would be most effective and because of the long association with the UNDP CP. However, the Jamoat may likely to be the longer term vehicle for local planning (despite the fact that it currently doesn't receive a budget) although it is not entirely clear what will happen as UNDP CP phase out their funding of the JRCs. Whatever the outcome the Jamoat and JRCs have been closely participating with the Project which has brought significant relevance to them as local governance structures which is important in itself because arguably these structures do represent the local interests and above these structures the focus may be on meeting external demands before local needs.

The Project has worked well with other donor initiatives, in particular the USAID WUA project implemented by Winrock International, establishing two new WUAs and supporting an additional two that were already established with the bulk of the Project's capital investment being used to repair infrastructure on a share basis with local *dekhan* farmers who provided considerable labour inputs. Once again individual relationships have been fostered ensuring that there was very real participation and that leveraged assistance was tailored to the needs of the SLM Project and that individuals have been prepared to "go the extra mile" to help the SLM Project. Clearly the UNDP CP has played a large part in the Project, not just in logistical and material support but also intellectually through assisting with the internal evaluation of major initiatives.

The Project has a broad appeal not just because it is addressing real problems faced by local people on a daily basis, but also because of its *modus operandi*. A common theme with many of the people interviewed was that they generally felt that they had been involved in the problem solving and could speak animatedly and intelligently about the Project and what it had done *with* them. As the Head of the Telman Jamoat (Kumsangir district), who incidentally happened to be a woman mentioned: "*the Project comes with the input of the people*" and "*they had learned that they themselves can do something*". This feeling of a local project for local people had been increased by the use of the mobile theatre group to provide an SLM message. In all, it has been this openness of the Project that appears to have allowed significant local participation.

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through the Japanese Embassy.

As this Project was designed as a demonstration project within the framework of the larger, regional CACLIM Project one might have expected to see greater participation by the regional project. While there has been participation by the national coordinator which is strengthened through the UNDP country network there has been a noticeable absence of participation by the regional CACLIM Project. Participation is a two-way process and the SLM Project has provided information to the regional Project (and through WOCAT<sup>25</sup>) but the regional Project appears to have made little if any effort to participate in the demonstration project. The TE understands that the regional project has recently undergone a terminal evaluation and perhaps the answers to this lack of participation can be found in there.

#### 4.2.4 Financial Planning

There have been no significant financial issues related to the Project. The Project’s components were reasonably priced and it is hard to see how they could have been made more cost effective. The limited capital investment in infrastructure and other grants (US\$ 316,000, Outcome 2) was still modest and a very necessary investment to enable the process to go forwards. The careful selection of these investments, particularly the infrastructure investment, allowed the Project to have an extensive impact upon farmers. The TA budget was also modest and once again due to careful planning appears to have had a far reaching and profound effect upon the Project outcomes.

Given the normal bureaucratic process of disbursing funds through a large organisation the TE believes that this Project has performed well, much of which is very likely due to the efficiency of UNDP in Tajikistan.

Co-financing was realistic and only two promised commitments were not fulfilled from CARE International (US\$ 152,000 in-kind and FAO – USD 50,000 in-kind). The TE feels that this reflects more on CARE International and the Project should not be held responsible. Other co-financers have given more than originally promised (Winrock International/USAID an additional US\$ 5,000 and the World Food Programme an additional US\$ 34,000 which was not included in the original Project sum, all in-kind) and the shortfall in the co-financing is to be normally expected and did not severely restrict the Project’s performance or outcomes.

**Table 1 Co-financing**

Source	Classification	Type	Amount Promised (US\$)	Amount realised (US\$)
UNDP	TRAC	Cash grant	204,000	204,000
UNDP	CP	Cash grant	186,000	186,000
GoT	Government	In-kind	267,000	118,252
JRC (x4)		In-kind	154,000	91,082
FAO		In-kind	50,000	-
Winrock Int./USAID	NGO/Bilateral	In-kind	40,000	45,000
CARE Int.	NGO	In-kind	152,000	-
WFP		In-kind		34,308
Dekhan Farms, WUA		In-kind		93,969
<b>Total co-financing</b>			<b>1,053,000</b>	<b>772,611</b>

<sup>25</sup> World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies

At the time of the TE (October 2011) there was approximately US\$12,000 remaining in unspent funds representing a budget execution of 98.7% and it is highly likely that the remaining funds will be dispersed before the Project closes.

#### **4.2.5 Sustainability**

The TE can be reasonably confident that the Project's achievements have a realistic chance of sustaining after the Project closes. The LDU, FFS and the technical Consultants have proved their worth and there is a good chance that they will be financed either privately or through local government as well as through the microfinance programme.

The value of the Jamoat-level land use plan has been recognised and is valued by decision-makers. There are obvious risks that this might be "captured" by larger national interest in cotton growing but the Project's effect on *dekhan* farmers and their ability to organise themselves far outweighs any such risk.

All of the Project's interventions have been in line with, at least the espoused if not the practiced, national policy agenda. At the level that the Project has been working there is a genuine self-interest in ecosystem resilience which is likely to provide a strong motivation for local participation in the future.

#### **4.2.6 Execution and Implementation Modalities**

The DIM and execution of the SLM Project has worked well. UNDP Tajikistan has a very effective programme and is remarkably efficient. The CP has a clear agenda which fits conveniently with the SLM Project, the GEF influences bringing an added dimension of ecosystem resilience to the more central development agenda so that they have largely complimented each other.

Generally the project execution has been very good. When problems have been encountered, for instance in the shortcomings with local NGOs, the project execution and implementation has dealt with it without making a drama out of a crisis.

### **4.3 Results**

The TE has not systematically listed the Project's achievements in terms of "deliverables". To a large extent these have already been recorded in the MTE as they were scheduled in the first half of the Project. Therefore the TE has focused on the process followed by the Project and tried to determine the long term impacts and necessary follow on actions needed to reduce the vulnerability of the project's successes and the changes that it has put in place.

Similarly, the TE has not concentrated on the technical lessons provided by the Project (again these have largely been reported during the MTE). Many of these technologies are already proven and the important experience generated by this Project has been the implementation or the approach. By facilitating this process the Project has built local capacities empowering them to organise and resolve complex problems. Importantly it is gradually introducing the concept that development, be it economic or social, must be founded on the ecosystems ability to provide for society and that this ecosystem, or indeed socio-ecosystem, requires a governance system that has broad participation and clearly understood levels at which decisions are made.

Arguably the challenges faced by the system, that is; the land use, physical and biological resources, institutions and local communities, are not technical challenges but adaptive challenges. No matter how much technology is applied, without addressing the institutional constraints and weaknesses in governance, technology will not make land use any more sustainable. The Project has been facilitating the participation of different players at the local level, in particular the local communities or *dekhan* farmers and strengthening the relationships between community and local government.

#### **4.3.1 Attainment of Outcomes/Achievements of Objectives**

The Project Document described a long-term development goal of:

*"The improvement of the sustainability of arid climate irrigation land management in Tajikistan in order to safeguard the livelihoods and economic well-being of rural populations and the functional integrity of national ecosystems".*

By any measure this is ambitious and quite reasonably it could not be achieved within the short space of time that is a GEF medium-sized project. However, the TE is required to assess whether the intervention of the Project has made this more likely.

In reality the Project could have achieved one of three outcomes related to this long term goal;

1. it could have made no difference whatsoever,
2. it could have moved the process backwards and made it even harder to achieve this
3. or it could have moved the process in the right direction towards achieving this.

Clearly the latter is the case in the SLM Project, which allows the TE to determine that this has been, at least, a satisfactory project. The challenge remains as to how far it has moved the process "in the right direction" and to determine the *quality* of the changes brought about by the Project's intervention. This will allow the TE to determine just how successful the Project has been. Fortunately there was a baseline established against which the TE can now measure change and determine whether this change is attributable to the Project's activities or not.

Attributing change to the Project is not always as simple as it seems because good projects tend to have a catalytic effect, as has been the case with the SLM Project, where the support of the PMU has built the confidence of local people, institutions and other stakeholders to begin to take some control over their futures.

The Project Objective was stated as:

*"..to demonstrate the potential to implement replicable Sustainable Land Management initiatives at the local level in Tajikistan and to build the capacity of local structures to do this"*

It may seem particularly pedantic to argue the wording of the Project's objective but it is important to ensure from the outset that the objective is stated clearly and can have applied to it the sort of SMART indicators that are so much loved by evaluators. Unfortunately the use of the word "*potential*" poses something of a problem to the evaluator when it comes to measurement. However, in this case the TE is confident that what is meant here is that the Project would demonstrate that things could be done at a local level that would reduce land degradation and that



by removing barriers and building capacity of local-level institutions people would be quite capable of improving land management and managing common pool resources at a number of different levels.

Furthermore, investment levels need not necessarily be high and many of the technologies and methodologies need not be highly technocratic, nor expensive, indeed, as repeated *ad nauseam* in this report, SLM is not so much a technical challenge but an adaptive challenge.

Implicit in this approach was the GEF SLM principle of ecosystem resilience, that is, the ecosystems ability to respond to changing circumstances and continue to supply the ecosystem goods and services necessary to support a reasonable quality of life, both now and in the future.

In a sense the Project has been lucky in that it has come at a time of transition which has brought in a number of larger scale national reforms, many driven by donor organisations but implemented by the GoT that has created a favourable enabling environment. This should not take away from the success of the Project but it should be noted that many of the Project's successes would not have been possible, or at least as successful, if external drivers such as the reduction in the power of the Future Companies, the development of the WUA and the debt forgiveness of the *dekhan* farmers had not taken place.

However, the TE judges that the Project has made full use of these opportunities and at times it has taken the initiative when the enabling environment had become less favourable (*e.g.* by moving the microfinance programme to a local microcredit organisation). It has addressed the full range of issues associated with SLM from creating *de facto* protected areas through sustainable utilisation of forest resources and community forestry initiatives, the repair of key parts of the infrastructure system, crop diversification, appropriate and sustainable technologies such as bio-drainage, shelterbelts, *etc.*, reducing pressure on resources through fuel efficiency, supporting the organisation and empowerment of local governance institutions, civil society and community-based organisations. It has generated lessons that, while difficult to express in what has increasingly become a "sound-bite" culture of "lessons learned", would benefit anyone in SLM who might care to take the time to learn from them. While achieving all of this it has diligently ensured that a process has been followed which has had a profound impact upon the participants and their ability to continue to recover and practice sustainable land management after the Project has closed.

On this basis the TE recommends this Project's outcomes as being Highly Successful in achieving the two Project outcomes:

*"Outcome 1: Local government and civil society structures have the capacity and awareness to regulate, plan and monitor sustainable management of irrigated land".*

*"Outcome 2: Appropriate and viable local level initiatives for improving sustainability of land and water management tested and available for replication".*

#### **4.3.1.1 Land Degradation Units**

There is little that the TE can add to what has been already stated by the MTE and a very detailed description is provided there for the four LDUs established by the Project. The issue of sustainability will be dealt with separately in section 4.3.1.2 because it affects a number of the initiatives started by the Project (e.g. the FFS, LDUs, forestry, etc.) and there has been a significant and positive change in this aspect since the MTE was carried out. However, it is noted that the LDU were a measure of how this Project was operating. They were not originally envisaged in the Project Document but during the Inception Phase the need to bring the planning process closer to the resource users was identified and thus the LDU concept was developed. Originally the Jamoat was intended to play the monitoring role and the JRC would provide a "public face" and awareness building. However, although data is still mainly collected through the Jamoat it would appear that the JRC provides the monitoring in terms of adjusting the Jamoat Land Use Plan and the FFS consultants have joined the LDU (which is logical as they are in regular contact *vis a vis* a range of *dekhan* farmers planning issues).

The TE notes that the PMU (and the UNDP CP) showed considerable initiative in linking with the UNDP-GEF Gissar Mountains Project which did have GIS and mapping capability to develop the LUPs. However the TE is still not clear how the Land Use Plan (LUP) will be adjusted as quite clearly these plans and the maps will change over time.

Lastly, the MTE noted with regards the LDUs that "*the project has taken a step away from seeing the district as the lowest level for planning and instead embraced the jamoat, which does not have its own budget like the district.*" The TE broadly agrees with this and adds that the Project is developing a system that is incorporating a number of principles that have been identified as necessary for the successful management of natural resources by local communities and the LDU . One of these principles being:

***The unit for collective management should be as small as practicable and functionally efficient within ecological and socio-political constraints. From a social dynamics perspective scale is an important consideration; large-scale externally imposed structures tend to be ineffective, increasing the potential for corruption, evasion of responsibility and lethargy in respect of broad participation. Where collective management structures are based on existing collective management structures and are at a scale that ensures regular contact of the members, it becomes possible to enforce conformity to rules through peer pressure and control individual actions through collective sanction<sup>26</sup>.***

Although the LDU is not a collective management structure in the truest sense it is still performing a similar function through the participation of the FFS and the *dekhan* farmers.

#### **4.3.1.2 Microfinance Programme**

The microfinance programme (MFP) has been extensively reported on during the MTE and questions were raised as to its sustainability due to changes in the national policy framework which were

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<sup>26</sup> Principles for developing a sustainable use system (adapted from Murphree, M. J., Wildlife Division Support Project, CREMA Review Report No. 56. Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission, Ghana and IUCN. October 2005)

aimed at consolidating all microfinance into amalgamated into regional Micro Loan Funds (MLFs) and in order to comply with this in 2006 the VakshMicrofin MLF was created.

By way of recapping:

*"In order to address this problem [access to affordable farm credit] the SLM project established a revolving fund, on the basis of the extensive experience and tested methodologies of the UNDP Communities programme and JRC's. This fund attempted to address the shortfall in financial resources necessary to invest in maintenance of infrastructure. In addition, access to secure, low interest credit for purchase of annual farm inputs (seed, fertilizer, fuel, etc) was intended to help break the vicious circle that farmers are trapped in related to debts to the so-called "futures companies" as they would no longer be obliged to purchase such inputs at inflated prices from them but could source them directly from the open market."<sup>27</sup>*

At the time of the MTE the regional microfinance institution (VakshMicrofin) was legally constrained from using the JRCs as a service provider which affected the JRCs ability to continue with the Land Degradation Units (LDUs) and the FFSs Consultants, as well as making microcredit unaffordable by raising interest rates. There was also a general belief that VakshMicrofin had little interest in continuing the service and apportioning some of the interest to finance critical components of the "package" to farmers such as the FFS, the LDUs, etc. This raised justifiable concerns about the sustainability of the MFP.

The Project responded by moving the micro-lending component from *VakshMicroFin* to a local micro-financing union (*Rushti Obshoron*) in Shaartuz that also wanted to use the LDUs and FFS Consultants as loan officers and could legally pay for such services. These staff are a crucial part of how the microfinance union operates and so are likely to continue to fulfil this function post project.

The situation at the time of the TE is therefore significantly different (from that encountered by the MTE) with the fund managed by the local Microfinance Union, *Rushti Obshoron*. The FFS, forestry Consultants and the LDU members function as loan officers; thus fund has interest *plus* growth and the agreement for the payment of these services through the JRC remains in place.

At the time of the TE the revolving fund provides some financial sustainability for the JRCs, FFS, LDU, forestry officers, etc. It provides accessible credit to farmers and has built the capacity of the local microfinance union *Rushti Obshoron*. The fund has grown from the initial US\$ 100,000 provided by the Project in 2006/7 to approximately US\$ 250,000 through the dispersal of additional Project funds and some growth in the fund.

With the bulk of the funds in circulation it currently has serviced loans to approximately 255 farming households, including 73 women-headed households.

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<sup>27</sup> Source: Evaluation Report on The Farmer Field School and Micro-financing Component of the UNDP /GEF SLM Project

#### **4.3.1.3 Farmer Field Schools**

The FFS is an example of an innovation used elsewhere in the region that has been successfully introduced through the Project and has taken on the *ethos* and culture found within the SLM Project.

There have been four FFS established in the target Jamoats. By any measure they have worked well. The FFS are targeted at private *dekhan* farmers, landless families and rural unemployed women and their families. While they have a largely male bias women have been involved in the FFS and there have been specific activities directed at household plots and Presidential Lands which are where women have the most access to agricultural land.

The FFS employ four local agronomist consultants who have operated with the support and guidance of the Project National Consultant. The atmosphere is very relaxed, indeed friendly, and the consultants are very ready to adapt the process of learning. For instance, in Khudokulov Jamoat the FFS are carried out in the Uzbek language (rather than Tajik) reflecting the ethnic makeup of the participants. This ability to replicate the informal atmosphere of the overall project within the FFS is very important and makes the FFS very accessible. There is a very clear sense of ownership with participants continuing to participate and interact with the FFSs after they have finished training. Once again, it is not just the transfer of technical knowledge that has been an important aspect of the FFS approach but also in developing a local "culture" or organisation and self-help.

As was discussed in the previous section, the earlier concerns about the financial sustainability of the FFS have large been allayed by the new microfinance arrangements and the profits from the revolving funds. However, this does not appear to have reduced the innovation within the FFS and they are still considering ways to expand the system through charging for services and adding additional services that might be charged for, such as an equipment pool that farmers can utilise for a fee. The FFS has continued to introduce new approaches combining both an agronomy and a land management message including issues such as seed selection, post harvest storage and generally responding to the needs of the participants.

#### **4.3.1.4 Community Forestry and Saxual Forestry**

The establishment of the tugai community managed forest is an important development. Firstly it is necessary to recognise that Tajikistan is in transition from a controlled and centralised economy to something which will resemble a free-market economy. Neither of these two states readily recognises common property which is essentially what this initiative is driving towards. It marks a significant change in the way that forests can be managed and should provide valuable lessons for the development of forestry in Tajikistan.

The TE broadly agrees with the MTE on the significance of this development but differs in its assessment of the outcome. The current arrangements are based upon a leasehold agreement negotiated with the *Hukumat* and the three participating villages. The leasehold arrangements are for five years and the communities are extremely vulnerable in as much as they are investing in the tugai forest but they have little security of tenure. Furthermore, there are numerous restrictions on what they can and cannot do with the forested areas. The security of tenure, and in particular the length of tenure, will directly affect the level of investment by the participating local communities

and there is no guarantee that they will have their leasehold renewed or that the state will not place unacceptable conditions on any future leasehold.

Admittedly the state, community and Project have done remarkably well to get this far, and the TE would not wish to underestimate the significance of this development. However, it is important to stress that the whole arrangement is extremely vulnerable and will take many more years of negotiations and adaptations before it can be judged to be "*safe*" in the sense that there is an equitable and resilient management system in place. That said, the Project has made all of the right steps in this direction thus far and it is regrettable that the collective experience of the Project will not be around much longer to continue to facilitate this process.

One last aspect of the tugai forest intervention is that it is essentially a protected area in as much as the principle objective of the area is the conservation of the ecosystem, its goods and services. The fact that sustainable use is the "tool" that is used to conserve it does not matter. While the local community may value it for its utility, the state values it for its role in river bank and water control, *etc.*, and others might value it for its biodiversity. However, it is part of the overall SLM approach providing a mix of production and protected areas as part of the SLM package.

If the process continues in favour of the community management then it will be important to place as few restrictions as possible on the economic uses and the benefits that the communities derive from the area. Conservation can be defined as the sum of all values that are placed upon a resources and the overall sustainability of the ecosystem is critical. In other words, activities such as hunting and fishing, tourism, wood collection, *etc.*, if considered sustainable should not be ruled out in future leasehold agreements.

There are many issues surrounding the tugai forests that will come into play in the future. These habitats are extremely robust and adapted to disturbance; therefore they have a very quick recovery period and can withstand considerable disturbance and as such they might provide a useful testing ground to develop collaborative and even community-based forestry management approaches in Tajikistan.

The saxaul forests have been more problematic, indeed they are ecologically at the other end of the spectrum. The need to have an external forestry officer to police the system is an issue that needs, in time, to be resolved. The fact that the Directorate of Forestry cannot afford to carry out these simple duties is a reflection that the state is often a very poor custodian of natural resources, lacking both the motivation and the materials resources to carry out its statutory role.

The use of the saxaul areas to protect farmland is something that will need to "play out" over time. Sustainability (in this sense used in the very restricted terms of who will continue to pay for the protection of these areas) presents a challenge that is as yet unresolved. If they are a direct benefit to farmers then there is a possibility that they will see a way to ensuring that these areas are conserved, this falls within the area of governance and will take time to mature. The alternative is that if an agreement cannot be reached between irrigated farmers and people grazing their livestock, or the costs of protecting them are greater than the benefits, then perhaps these areas should be abandoned, either for grazing or for irrigation, this is the basis of *governance* in making these trade-offs. It is highly likely that there is a way forward, but at the moment the Project has

only just begun unpicking the threads of a system that has its roots many decades earlier, and for a considerable period of time, has been driven by motivations very far from ecosystem sustainability. Time and intelligent facilitation rather than any superimposed solutions are more likely to be sustainable. The former is essentially what the Project has been providing, except that they have run out of time. One has to question the wisdom of the GEF intervention that expects to unravel a century of mismanagement and many millions of investment in just three to four years; and then demands of a project that it somehow demonstrates sustainability.

On this basis the TE feels (the term is used guardedly) that the community-based forestry component of the Project is heading in the right direction).

This is in stark contrast with the trees planted on *dekhan* farms and other lands where there is issues of authority and responsibility and tenure are less complex, or in the case of tenure, are more secure. The Project has created a demand for trees and by example demonstrated that these can provide both economic return and land management functions and the outcome of this component is much more visible and secure.

The use of trees for bio-drainage as a means to improve waterlogged land appears to be working well but it will need time to fully assess the effects of this on large areas of waterlogged land.

#### **4.3.1.5 Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency**

This component of the Project's strategy was initially designed to reduce the dependency upon fuel wood and thus reduce the rate of deforestation which was having a negative impact upon wind and water erosion as well as shelterbelts for crops to reduce desiccation in summer.

It has had mixed results but has continued to progress. As has been documented in the MTE the initial consultant hired for this component produced disappointing results and the emphasis was switched to something more experimental through a local NGO.

The micro hydroelectricity generation has been an interesting experiment and one that has been largely carried out as a self-help exercise. The one unit that is working has used parts that can all be acquired easily in local markets and provides sufficient electricity (5 KW) to light 14 households. . At the time of the TE mission it was clearly still in use (when water is available and other power supply absent) and valued by the community whom had made several modest modifications to the unit.

The fuel efficient stove appears to have worked well and can provide considerable economies to a household. Once again the Project has demonstrated that it is ready to seize opportunities and has further introduced a heat exchange unit to insert in the flu of a conventional stove (or the fuel efficient stove). These represent considerable savings for households and one can assume therefore that they also reduce the average household fuel consumption and as a result reduce the pressure on forest resources such as shelterbelts. The Project estimated that the combined fuel efficient stove and heat exchanger could pay for themselves in three months providing a financial saving in the first winter (four months), this saving was the equivalent of 720 kg of fuel (cow dung) over the entire winter (230 TJS in the first winter and 720 TJS in subsequent winters at today's fuel prices).

The attempt to produce energy from bio-gas did work but initial problems with the construction appear to have resulted in there being little confidence in the new technology despite the fact that it

has been proven elsewhere. As the considerable investment in this technology requires confidence there has obviously been a certain amount of resistance. Given more time and resources it is the sort of thing the Project could demonstrate again, having learned from the first attempt. However, the Project was, on balance, wise to abandon the bio-gas experiment for the time being given that there was limited time available.

The MTE provided a “Project Scoring by Outcome and Output Indicators of Project Document/Inception Report” and noted that “the log frame’s indicators are not SMART and their application does not capture Outcomes sufficiently well. They will be amended by the project”. The TE has provided a similar assessment for comparison below.

<b>Table 2 Project Scoring by Outcome and Output Indicators of Project Document/Inception Report</b>			
	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Criteria for Evaluation of Satisfactory Performance</b>	<b>TE Rating</b>
<b>Objective:</b> to demonstrate the potential to implement replicable Sustainable Land Management initiatives at the local level in Tajikistan and to build the capacity of local structures to do this”	<p>By the end of the project, authorities, CBO’s and farmers in 4 Jamoats in 4 districts will have the knowledge and improved capacity to collaboratively plan, implement and monitor sustainable resource management.</p> <p>Appropriate and sustainable local level approaches to addressing and reversing land degradation will have been demonstrated and tested by year 4</p> <p>By the end of the project stakeholders at local, district, region and national level will be aware of, and have the information required to replicate, appropriate local level SLM initiatives.</p>	Not applicable in a Midterm Evaluation	<p>Satisfactory</p> <p>Highly satisfactory</p> <p>Highly satisfactory</p>
<b>Outcome 1:</b> local government and civil society structures have the capacity and awareness to regulate, plan and monitor sustainable management of irrigated land.	<p>Individuals at farmer level, internal Jamoat authority and CBO level and at district level have understanding and consensus on key SLM issues by yr. 2</p> <p>Key individuals within Jamoat authorities, JRC’s, Dekhan farmer association and WUA’s, know how to undertake participatory planning and decision making by yr.2</p> <p>4 Jamoat resource use plans which were consensually agreed and have clear implementation mechanisms by yr.3</p>	<p>Satisfactory</p> <p>Marginally Satisfactory (due to NGO failure)</p> <p>Marginally Satisfactory (due to NGO failure)</p>	<p>Highly Satisfactory</p> <p>Highly satisfactory (the Project responded by engaging and training another NGO).</p> <p>Satisfactory (Highly Satisfactory if the Project can come up with a way for adjusting mapping)</p>



	Key basic monitoring data available in the 4 Jamoats by yr. 3	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
	2 WUA's in 2 Jamoats present and functioning by yr 3	Highly Satisfactory	Highly satisfactory
	4 WUA's in 4 Jamoats have increased operational capacity by yr.4	Progress towards PY 4 Satisfactory	Satisfactory
<u>Outcome 2:</u> Appropriate and viable local level initiatives for improving sustainability of land and water management tested and available for replication	At least an additional 10 key irrigation infrastructure repairs undertaken by yr. 3	Highly Satisfactory	Highly satisfactory
	Ongoing farm maintenance of irrigation infrastructure observable, on basis of appropriate credit facilities by yr.3	Highly Satisfactory	Highly satisfactory
	At least 2 dekhon farmer in each Jamoat has taken up one or a number of better farming practices demonstrated by yr.4	Satisfactory	Highly satisfactory
	A Farmer Field School present in each Jamoat by yr.3	Satisfactory	Highly satisfactory
	At least 1 farming extension person in each of the 4 Jamoat's exists and has sustainable support by yr. 4.	Satisfactory and in place PY 3	Highly satisfactory
	At least 4 joint community and state forestry / erosion control initiatives established by yr.3	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
	At least 4 river bank protection areas established and clear community /		

	<p>state management and protection roles agreed by yr. 4</p> <p>At least 5 demonstrations of how to increase efficiency of biomass for energy (housing insulation, efficient stoves, etc) by yr. 3</p> <p>At least 2 demonstrations of appropriate renewable energy options (biogas, etc) for reducing biomass consumption for energy by yr 3.</p> <p>Appropriate local level SLM approaches lessons learned and replication guidelines available by yr 5</p> <p>Increased awareness and opportunity to replicated appropriate local initiatives to address SLM issues at district, oblast, national and international donor community level by yr 5</p> <p>Replication of best practices within CACILM initiatives</p>	<p>Highly Satisfactory, in place for one site PY 3</p> <p>Marginally Satisfactory (too early, NGO failure to perform)</p> <p>Marginally Satisfactory (reason above)</p> <p>Progress towards target Satisfactory</p> <p>Progress towards target Satisfactory</p> <p>Marginally Satisfactory due to weak links to CACILM</p>	<p>Highly satisfactory</p> <p>Satisfactory (probably too ambitious a target – not clear if 5 different options or 5 sites)</p> <p>Marginally satisfactory (needs more time and Micro-HEP is not applicable as does not reduce local biomass consumption which is mostly used for heating)</p> <p>Highly satisfactory</p> <p>Highly satisfactory</p> <p>Highly Satisfactory (Project cannot be held responsible for CACILM’s failures)</p>
<p><b>Output 1.1.</b> Increased awareness at all levels within the project area of land degradation and unsustainable land management issues</p>		<p>Satisfactory</p>	<p>Satisfactory</p>

<b>Output 1.2.</b> Regulatory and operational capacity of Jamoat (local district authorities) and civil groups (JDC’s and village committees) to sustainably manage land resources increased	Satisfactory	Highly satisfactory
<b>Output 1.3.</b> Establishment and capacity development of Water User Associations to collaboratively plan and manage water and land more effectively	Highly Satisfactory	Highly satisfactory
<b>Output 2.1.</b> Appropriate approaches and techniques for addressing immediate land degradation problems of land users tested and demonstrated	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
<b>Output 2.2:</b> Increased technical and managerial capacity of ‘dekhan” farmers to sustainable manage land and water resources	Highly Satisfactory	Highly satisfactory
<b>Output 2.3:</b> Replicable models for sustainable reduction of wind and water erosion	Marginally Satisfactory (too early to assess and enabling conditions for replicability needs to be established)	Satisfactory (seems to be working)
<b>Output 2.4:</b> Dissemination of best practices and lessons learned regarding appropriate local level approaches to improving sustainable land management	Not applicable. Too early	Highly satisfactory (Project has done its utmost to ensure that lessons are learned and information, including mistakes, are disseminated)

#### 4.3.2 Sustainability

*"Any belief that sustainability can be precisely defined is flawed. It is a contested concept, and so represents neither a fixed set of practices or technologies, nor a model to describe or impose on the world. Defining what we are trying to achieve is part of the problem, as each individual has different values. For us to prescribe a concrete set of technologies, practices or policies would be to exclude future options, undermining the notion of sustainability itself. Sustainable [land management] is, therefore, not so much a specific strategy as it is an approach to understanding complex ecological and social relationships in rural areas<sup>28</sup>".*

Certainly the Project has tried to internalise as much as possible the costs and benefits of sustainable land management within the local system (that is within the immediate vicinity of the irrigation systems). It would be very easy to determine sustainability by the fact that the FFSs, LDUs, and the local consultants and microfinance are all supportive of each other, at least in financial aspects as a direct effect of the PMU lobbying for the microfinance component to remain local. However, sustainability cannot be determined on financial aspects alone. Clearly there is, at least on paper, a national enabling environment and policy support to SLM and a range of national policy documents that the TE could point to and would lead one to believe that that SLM is mainstreamed into the national economy and local production activities. This much is clear; that the Project has been able to capitalise on the favourable changes in the national policy environment and has provided a positive feedback to those changes, because it has been a good project.

Indeed in this sense the SLM Project came along at a fortuitous time with a number of critical national reforms in agriculture and the water sector that have resulted in opportunities that the SLM Project has been able to capitalise upon with its mix of capacity building and experimental land management techniques (for example, the establishment of *dekhan* farmers, the freedom of farmers to determine which crops they grow, debt forgiveness by the Government of the loans made by the Future Companies and the reduction in their pervasive influence over farmers, as well as the successful outcome of the WUA).

However, it is less fortuitous that it is closing at a time of great uncertainty and at a point in the process where local institutions, local communities and individuals are beginning to exercise the lessons that have come from the Project. When asked what represented the greatest challenge for a statesman, Harold Macmillan, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1957 to 1963 replied: *'Events, my dear boy, events'*.

The greatest indication of sustainability of the outcomes from this Project is in the approach it has taken and it would be misleading to single out any one intervention as the means by which sustainability can be judged, if indeed that were possible *a priori*. However, the Project has carefully unpicked the mess<sup>29</sup> that was left behind after the withdrawal of the FSU and has diligently built up

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<sup>28</sup> Adapted from: Parks, People and Professionals: Putting 'Participation' into Protected Areas Management, Michel Pimbert and Jules N. Pretty. In: Social Change and Conservation, Eds. Krishna B Ghimire and Michel P Pimbert, Earthscan Publications Ltd. UK, 1997

<sup>29</sup> The Oxford English Dictionary defines a mess as (1) a dirty or untidy condition or thing and (2) A difficult or confused

the abilities, and confidence, of local institutions and local people to make decisions about the socio-ecosystem upon which they depend. Therefore we could argue that the ecosystem is more resilient as a result of the intervention of the Project because ecosystem "*resilience can be defined as the capacity of a system to undergo disturbance while maintaining both its existing functions and controls and its capacity for future change*<sup>30</sup>".

However, the Project is coming to an end at a period in time when there is considerable uncertainty. This uncertainty, which through no fault of the Project, is going to place enormous stress on the system and is going to require considerable planning and management by the local administration as well as adjustments within the civic or societal arrangements if it is not to be overrun by *events*. Returning migrants, increasing fuel prices, uncertainties with neighbouring countries, climate change *ad infinitum* will likely stress the resilience of this particular system at a point in time where it is most vulnerable. The TE believes this Project measures up to any normal measures of UNDP-GEF sustainability but notes that these are very fragile gains and there are considerable vulnerabilities as a result of the likely future *events*.

When we examine the situation at a larger scale, it is unfortunate that the only tool we have to engage with a process is the project. Projects are by their very nature time bound and to a large extent inflexible. In this instance the process that was leading to land degradation prior to the project has been fundamentally changed for the better because of events *and* because of the Project. However, it is unfortunate that the Project is ending when there is an opportunity to build upon its successes and take advantage of the opportunities that are currently coming available.

The SLM Project has come along at a fortuitous time, a number of critical national reforms in agriculture and the water sector that have resulted the WUA, the establishment of *dekhan* farmers, the freedom of farmers to determine which crops they grow, the debt forgiveness by the Government of the loans made by the Future Companies and the reduction in their pervasive influence over farmers, are all presenting opportunities that the SLM Project has been able to capitalise upon with its mix of capacity building and experimental land management techniques.

Therefore the TE's concerns are not so much about the Project's sustainable impact but are focused on the next steps. It is sometimes useful in these circumstances to draw on military strategy, not because it is well-known for its intelligent design or successful outcomes, but rather because the rapidly evolving theatre of war and the need to act upon incomplete intelligence reports, and the battlefield are about as close as it gets to designing, planning and implementing a project intended to effect change in a socio-ecological systems. In this case we might draw the lesson that when a breakthrough is achieved we should support it with more resources. Sadly with projects this is the opposite; rarely do they achieve a decisive breakthrough and on those few occasions that they do, the project cycle comes to an end.

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situation.

<sup>30</sup> Gunderson, L.H. (2000). *Ecological resilience – in theory and application*. Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics 31, 425-439.

To put some perspective on this, of the ten UNDP GEF project evaluations carried out by the by the consultant in the past, only two of these would have measured up to this category, and one of these was easily brought to a conclusion within the project's lifetime because it was very focused on a single issue. The SLM Project is addressing a much more complex situation and requires more time if the full value of its successes are to be realised. It is clear to the TE that the benefit of extending the life of the Project in this instance would be considerable and there are compelling arguments for continuing to support the process in this instance.

#### **4.3.3 Contribution to Upgrading Skills of National Staff**

The management of natural resources in the Project's area is complex. For instance in forestry, ostensibly, it is the Directorate of Forestry that manages forest resources. In reality there is little by way of management being carried out by the Directorate. In many ways it is merely a representative of the state in the area and struggles to finance itself through various arrangements for exploiting forest resource on Directorate land, simply to finance its own existence. The Committee for Environmental Protection and the Forestry Directorate have largely proved ineffective in protecting the tugai forest areas or the *saxaul* areas whereas the Project has been working.

As this transition progresses there is a real risk that these agencies will become redundant unless they are able to re-invent themselves as service providers rather than managers. To what extent this has happened with the Directorate of Forestry and the Committee for Environmental Protection is not immediately clear. It would be reasonable to assume that their involvement in the Project has had an effect on their understanding of what is happening. In the case of the Environmental Committee, perhaps the first real test will come when the community forest agreements for the tugai areas need to be re-negotiated. It would be unreasonable to expect the Project to have built these skills within the Committee and the Directorate because until there had been a demonstration it is unlikely that there would have been any appetite for change.

With the Jamoat and the JRC it is much clearer because these are essentially civic organisations that are responsible to people at the local level. Within these organisations the Project has had a profound effect in upgrading skills from the FFS to the LDUs and their capacity to carry out land use planning and to represent their constituent's interests in the planning process.

The local consultants (irrigation, FFS and forestry) have increased their skills and abilities and there is every indication that they will continue to provide a resource to local communities and local government either in their current capacity as extension workers or as private individuals.

## **5 Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 1: Extending the effective life of the Project**

Responsibility: UNDP

Timeframe for decision: Urgent

A compelling case has already been made (section 4.3.2) for continuing to support the processes that the Project has been driving (*e.g.* Farmer Field Schools, *dekhan* Farmers Association, Jamoat and JRC decision-making, using and adapting proven SLM technologies and methodologies to exploit the opportunities arising from larger national and structural reforms, *etc.*).

However, the TE realises that this recommendation does not fit into any existing UNDP-GEF project management cycle. Clearly it is not an extension (one has already been given to the Project), rather it is recognising that something is working, and working well, therefore there are considerable gains to be made by following the process and "exploiting" the considerable intellectual and social capital that the Project has built up.

It would not be unreasonable therefore to recommend that, given the pressing need to develop local level governance and build the capacity for sustainable land management this Project has considerable merit and the development gains should be pursued and consolidated.

Therefore there are a number of options open to UNDP (it is unlikely that there would be additional GEF financing):

**Option 1:** To close the Project according to the already agreed timetable. This would not be disastrous as the TE makes clear that it has already had considerable impact.

**Option 2:** To continue to support the two local consultants (Forestry and farmer Field School) through the UNDP CP and the UNDP Area Office. This would ensure that there was continued support to the *dekhan* farmers. However, it is unlikely that this arrangement would provide the technical support necessary to address some of the bigger challenges that are likely to be thrown at this particular system, but it would ensure continued expansion of the benefits of the FFSs and the forestry initiatives.

**Option 3:** The Project Manager (PM) remains in place and continues to drive this process, particularly developing the *dekhan* farmers Association and the community forestry programme building their capacity further to negotiate with external interests and ensuring that they can interact with the more powerful local government agencies. Certainly this would speed up the learning process because these structures are still young and lack the confidence to try new approaches, fearful of making mistakes they tend to be risk averse. Thus the adaptive learning process represents a considerable risk to both *dekhan* farmers/local tugai communities and local government and they are quite understandably wary of innovation. Having the PMU remain in place reduces this risk and increases the confidence of stakeholders to try, test and adapt SLM innovations.

**Option 4:** The full team remains in place. The PM and the Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) have developed an effective and productive working relationship. The CTA providing a broader experience that can be adapted by working together in the field (PM, FFS, local government, *dekhan* farmers, local communities) to test assumptions ensuring that SLM technologies, methodologies and importantly the governance issues are adapted. It is this demonstration (the thinking part) component perhaps more than any, which makes the project successful.

## **Recommendation 2: Applying the experience emerging from the SLM Project**

Responsibility: UNDP (RGP and CRM Project)

Timeframe for decision: Medium term

It is not necessary to wait until new projects are designed to apply the experience of the SLM Project. The vertical integration of different levels of decision-making, the attention to process

rather than simply trying to apply technologies, the emphasis on governance and ensuring that ecosystem sustainability is the basis for economic and social development can be applied to ongoing projects.

The SLM Project has never assumed that a particular technology or intervention will work, rather it has approached the issue cautiously and been prepared to acknowledge mistakes and work with stakeholders to make something work (or in some instances to abandon an idea when it clearly was too early to introduce something).

This experience has applications in a number of current UNDP programmes and projects such as the Rural Growth Programme (RPG) and the Climate Risk Management Project (CRM). The three projects should arrange a workshop to formulate strategies that will include the experience from the SLM Project into the activities of the other projects.

**Recommendation 3: Negotiate a new agreement for the collaborative tugai forestry management**

Responsibility: SLM Project, PMU

Timeframe for decision: Urgent

The present agreement (between the three local communities and the *Hukumat*) is for five years. The strength of tenure or proprietorship which is what motivates the local community to invest their time and efforts in protecting the tugai forest patches is directly correlated to the length of that agreement. Negotiating the renewal of the agreement with the facilitation of the Project is an opportunity to build on the successes so far. There are tens of different "off-the-shelf" agreements that can be brought to the table, all of them excellent but none of them will be as useful as an agreement that is negotiated between the local community and *Hukumat* and facilitated by the Project. This facilitation is necessary because there is an asymmetrical distribution of power in the relationship between the two parties that can most easily be overcome by the presence of third-party facilitator.

It is critical that these negotiations in developing the "second generation" agreements are carried out with the full participation of the local communities and that their interests and opinions are heard during the process. In Turkey there is a well-known saying; *"if you do not have a seat at the table then you are probably on the menu"*.

Therefore the Project should begin this process with a view to completing it before the end of the Project even though the Agreement has another two years to run.

**Recommendation 4: The Project completes the internal evaluation reports**

Responsibility: SLM Project, PMU

Timeframe for decision: Urgent

The Project should publish the internal evaluation of three of the principle approaches used during the project: the Farmer Field Schools and Micro-finance, the collaborative forestry approach, and the Land Degradation Unit and improved resource governance.



These evaluations will result in technical documents that should be produced in, Russian and English with a limited number of "hard copies", the main means of dissemination being by electronic "pdf" files to reduce costs. A Shorter version that summarises the methodology and findings might be considered to be published in Tajik as hard copies for distribution in the Project area<sup>31</sup>.

**Recommendation 5: The surveys initially carried out by the Project are repeated before the Project ends**

Responsibility: SLM Project, PMU

Timeframe for decision: Urgent

Baseline surveys were carried out at the beginning of the Project on awareness and perception of land use issues as well as basic indicators on the status of land/degradation in the Project area. These need to be repeated in order to provide an empirical measure of the impact of the Project.

## 6 Lessons Learned

The lessons learned section of GEF evaluations appears to becoming increasingly hard to write if the evaluator is to avoid using clichés<sup>32</sup>. Therefore the lessons learned section of the TE will try to avoid this pitfall. There are many interesting aspects to this Project which would benefit from closer analysis. For instance the dynamic between different levels of governance institutions and the general direction that they look to, past a certain level and it would appear that the main interests are in meeting a national agenda whereas below this level it is clear that they genuinely serve the interests of their local constituents, there are interesting aspects of scale relating to the larger national reforms in the enabling environment (*e.g.* debt forgiveness, the creation of the *dekhan* farms, *etc.*) all of which are critical to what the Project has achieved and might be largely meaningless if the Project (and likely other projects working in these fields) had not been operating at the local level.

These issues of scale have also been present in the levels at which other donor agencies have been operating, for instance the Winrock/USAID WUA Project which has allowed the SLM Project to "key" off from the larger water users units to a local level illustrating the need for donors to work at these different levels.

There is also the early beginnings of collaborative management between the state and tugai forest communities that provides a wealth of possibilities particularly given that Tajikistan is in transition from a highly centralised and controlling state towards something that resembles a free-market economy, neither of which readily recognise common property resources. However, these are observations, works in progress (and perhaps better demonstrated elsewhere if lessons are to be drawn from them) and therefore the TE will draw one lesson from the SLM Project.

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<sup>31</sup> As a minimum the financing arrangement discussed earlier should be reflected in all of these documents because quite clearly the situation has changed and there is a reasonable chance of financial sustainability now given that they are under a local a local micro-financing union

<sup>32</sup> A phrase or opinion that is overused and betrays a lack of original thought.

The lesson the TE draws from the SLM Project is not directly related to the many and apparently successful demonstrations that this Project has implemented but rather it is directed at GEF demonstration projects *per se*. GEF demonstration projects, and arguably all GEF projects, should have, in addition to the Project Manager, a Monitoring Officer.

Adaptive management is a phrase that is used in almost every GEF project but with little attention to what it actually means. Adaptive management or experimental management requires a level of scientific rigour in designing the intervention, identifying the assumptions, defining what success might look like (the objectives) and a statistically robust monitoring system (that might include comparisons and a control). Adaptive management is essentially a means to allow management to proceed without the need for extensive research. Within any GEF project there are two levels of adaptive management: that of monitoring the performance and impact of the project (essentially the role of the EA, PMU and Project Manager which is already covered in the project cycle management) and also to ensure that specific interventions are achieving what was expected of them, the latter being the role of a monitoring officer.

The TE discriminates between the Project adapting to circumstances and adaptive management. Every project should react to *events* as they happen. But adaptive management as described by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is more than simply reacting to events. Adaptive management requires a reasoned and detailed understanding (a *hypothesis*) of how a system is working, clearly articulated objectives of management interventions, a detailed monitoring system and critically a transparent and coherent description of what assumptions are lurking within the *hypothesis*. Furthermore, adaptive management, as described by the CBD requires an institutional culture that will accept failure or mistakes and learn from them. Lastly, adaptive management distinguished between mistakes and incompetence by monitoring:

- Implementation – did the project or intervention do what it planned to do (*i.e.* is the plan still untested because the implementation is poor);
- Effectiveness – is the plan meeting the predicted outcomes and objectives (*i.e.* has the plan been tested and found to have flaws), and;
- Validation of the model’s parameters and relationships (*i.e.* which assumptions, variables and interactions were correct).

The point of this is that; in a GEF Project (and particularly in a demonstration project) there are two levels of adaptive management taking place. Firstly the project *per se* needs to be constantly challenging its own *hypothesis* of how the system is working; this is the standard GEF-UNEP monitoring and evaluation process. However, because it is also a demonstration project it should also be applying adaptive management internally to each component of demonstration because GEF projects are not about research. For instance in the case of the tugai community forestry one might expect to see a range of different treatments (*e.g.* different intensities of grazing, wood harvesting, *etc.*) and a credible monitoring programme in place. Thus the efficacy of the different treatments on processes such as natural regeneration, or indices such as species diversity could be compared along with other variables such as cost efficiency, time scales *etc.*

It is important to note that organisations that have been using adaptive management often refer to it as *experimental management* and plan the “*experiment*”, including clearly articulated objectives

and assumptions, statistically robust monitoring criteria and a means to compare between experiments on the basis of management criteria such as time and investment and a stopping point. Lastly it is worth mentioning that the evaluator has never seen a GEF project that has actually incorporated adaptive management, as a “science<sup>33</sup>”, into its design and therefore does not see that this is a justification to penalise this particular project, indeed there have been measures put in place to extract as much as possible from the various interventions. Therefore the lesson should be that demonstration projects, at least, should have a monitoring officer to develop an internal monitoring programme (the design of the monitoring programme cannot be done in the Project Design phase because this would be too inflexible) which is for all intents and purposes independent of the PMU.

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<sup>33</sup> Monitoring is sometimes described as “quick and dirty science”

## 7 Annexes

### Annex 1 Terms of Reference



*Tajikistan*

#### TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### FOR TERMINAL EVALUATION:

<b>Project Title:</b>	UNDP/GEF project “Demonstrating Local Responses to Combating Land Degradation and Improving Sustainable Land Management in SW Tajikistan” (this project is a part of CACILM programme) - PIMS 3366 SLM MSP
<b>Functional Title:</b>	International Consultant for Terminal Evaluation National Expert for Terminal Evaluation
<b>Duration:</b>	Estimated 20 working days over the period of: September-October 2011.
<b>Terms of Payment:</b>	Lump sum payable upon satisfactory completion and approval by UNDP of all deliverables, including the Evaluation Report

**Travel costs:** The costs of in-country mission(s) of the Consultant are to be included in the lump sum.

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## INTRODUCTION

### a) UNDP/GEF Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) policy:

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) policy at the project level in UNDP/GEF has four objectives: i) to monitor and evaluate results and impacts; ii) to provide a basis for decision making on necessary amendments and improvements; iii) to promote accountability for resource use; and iii) to document, provide feedback on, and disseminate lessons learned. A mix of tools is used to ensure effective project M&E. These might be applied continuously throughout the lifetime of the project – e.g. periodic monitoring of indicators -, or as specific time-bound exercises such as mid-term reviews, audit reports and final evaluations.

In accordance with UNDP/GEF M&E policies and procedures, all regular and medium-sized projects supported by the GEF should undergo a final evaluation upon completion of implementation. A final evaluation of a GEF-funded project (or previous phase) is required before a concept proposal for additional funding (or subsequent phases of the same project) can be considered for inclusion in a GEF work program. However, a final evaluation is not an appraisal of the follow-up phase.

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.

### b) The project objectives and its context within the program country

The “Demonstrating Local Responses to Combating Land Degradation and Improving Sustainable Land Management in SW Tajikistan” is a part of the overall GEF/ADB Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management (CACILM).

Within that context, the project goal is to contribute to “The improvement of the sustainability of arid climate irrigation land management in Tajikistan in order to safeguard the livelihoods and economic well-being of rural populations and the functional integrity of national ecosystems”.

The project has, through local on-ground pilot activities, test and demonstrate replicable ways in which rural farmers and communities can address key land degradation and livelihood problems themselves. From these activities it is drawing lessons and best practices which can be directly replicable throughout the irrigated areas of the country i.e. 98% of Tajikistan’s arable land), and the central Asian region as a whole.

The project has been directly implemented in accordance with DIM guidelines under the umbrella of UNDP’s Communities Programme (CP). Accordingly UNDP as the implementing agency has also act as the executing agency.

The two main components (outcomes) of the project, and their outputs, are:

1: Local government and civil society structures have the capacity and awareness to regulate, plan and monitor sustainable management of irrigated land

*Output 1.1.* Increased awareness at all levels within the project area of land degradation and unsustainable land management issues

*Output 1.2.* Regulatory and operational capacity of Jamoat (local district authorities) and civil groups (JDC's and village committees) to sustainably manage land resources increased

*Output 1.3.* Establishment and capacity development of Water User Associations to collaboratively plan and manage water and land more effectively

2: Appropriate and viable local level initiatives for improving sustainability of land and water management tested and available for replication

*Output 2.1.* Appropriate approaches and techniques for addressing immediate land degradation problems of land users tested and demonstrated

*Output 2.2:* Increased technical and managerial capacity of 'dekhan' farmers to sustainably manage land and water resources

*Output 2.3:* Replicable models for sustainable reduction of wind and water erosion

*Output 2.4* Dissemination of best practices and lessons learned regarding appropriate local level approaches to improving sustainable land management

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION**

In accordance with the UNDP/ GEF Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) policies and procedures, all projects must undergo terminal evaluation at the end of the project. Consequently the UNDP Country Office in Tajikistan has initiated this evaluation.

The four general aims are: i) to monitor and evaluate results and impacts; ii) to provide a basis for decision making on necessary amendments and improvement; iii) to promote accountability for resource use; and iv) to document, provide feedback on, and disseminate lessons learned.

Terminal Evaluations (TE) are intended to provide an objective and independent assessment of project implementation and impact, including achievement of global environmental benefits and lessons learned to guide future SLM efforts. Specifically, the TE will assess the extent to which the planned project outcomes and outputs have been achieved, as well as assess the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the project as defined in the guidelines for Terminal Evaluations .

The evaluation will also evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of project design, implementation, monitoring and adaptive management and sustainability of project outcomes, including the project exit strategy. The evaluation covers the entire project including non-GEF financed components.

The main stakeholders of the evaluation are: CACILM, UNDP Tajikistan, and the GoT, specifically the National Project Coordinator, and the State Committee on Land Resources, UNDP/GEF Regional Center for Europe and CIS (Bratislava).

The overall purpose of the evaluation is to evaluate the projects impact and relevance in regard to the objectives of the GEF Land Degradation focal area, and to learn lessons regarding the design and implementation of future such projects.

### **PRODUCTS EXPECTED FROM THE EVALUATION**

The key product expected from this final evaluation is a comprehensive analytical report in English that should, at least, follow minimum GEF requirements as indicated in the Annex.

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

The length of the final evaluation report shall not exceed 40 pages in total (not including annexes). The report should be submitted to the UNDP Country office in Tajikistan within two weeks of completion of the in-country part of the mission. The UNDP Country office will ensure circulation for comments of the draft report to relevant parties, including: the project management, CACILM National Secretariat, Committee for Environmental Protection, National Land Committee, and other parties to be selected by the UNDP CO. If there are discrepancies between the impressions and findings of the evaluation team and the aforementioned parties the Evaluator is obliged to explain these in an annex attached to the final report.

The evaluation report outline should be structured along the following lines:

1. Executive summary
2. Introduction
3. The project(s) and its development context
4. Findings and Conclusions
  - 4.1 Project formulation
  - 4.2 Implementation
  - 4.3 Results
5. Recommendations
6. Lessons learned
7. Annexes

### **METHODOLOGY OR EVALUATION APPROACH**

An outline of an evaluation approach is provided below; however it should be made clear that the evaluator is responsible for revising the approach as necessary. Any changes should be in-line with international criteria and professional norms and standards. 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 should provide as much gender disaggregated data as possible.

The evaluation will take place mainly in the field. The evaluator is expected to follow a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with the government counterparts, the National Project Manager, Chief Technical Adviser, Steering Committee, project team, and with key local stakeholders in the project implementation area (district and sub-district authorities, CBO's, community groups, peasant farmers, etc) .

The evaluator team is expected to consult all relevant sources of information, such as the project document, project reports – incl. Annual Reports, project budget revision, progress reports, Mid-Term Evaluation Report, CTA mission reports, project files, , and any other material that s/he may consider useful for evidence based assessment.).

The evaluator is expected to extensively visit the project field sites and to use interviews as a means of collecting data on the relevance, performance and success of the project.

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 (if used);
- ♣ Participatory techniques and other approaches for the gathering and analysis of data.

*Although the evaluators should feel free to discuss with the authorities concerned, all matters relevant to the assignment, they are not authorized to make any commitment or statement on behalf of UNDP or GEF or the project management.*

## **EVALUATION TEAM: RESPONSIBILITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS**

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.

### **International Consultant**

#### Duties and Responsibilities:

Specifically, the International Consultant (team leader) will perform the following tasks:

- Desk review of documents, development of draft methodology, detailed work plan and Terminal Evaluation (TE) outline (maximum 4-day homework);
- Debriefing with UNDP CO, agreement on the methodology, scope and outline of the TE report (1 day);
- Interviews with project implementing partner (executing agency), relevant Government, NGO and donor representatives and UNDP/GEF Regional Technical Advisor (maximum 3 days);
- Field visit to the pilot project site and interviews (2 days);
- Debriefing with UNDP (1 day);
- Development and submission of the first TE report draft (maximum of 4 days). Submission is due on the 16-th day of the assignment. The draft will be shared with the UNDP CO, UNDP/GEF (UNDP/GEF RCU Bratislava) and key project stakeholders for review and commenting;
- Finalization and submission of the final TE report through incorporating suggestions received on the draft report (maximum 5 days);
- Supervision of the work of the national expert (during entire evaluation period).

#### Required Qualifications:

- Master's degree in Land Management, Natural Resource Management, Environmental Economics or other related areas;
- 7 years of working experience in providing management or consultancy services to the land management projects;
- Practical knowledge and experience of designing and managing integrated land use and sustainable resource use initiatives;
- Practical experience with implementing multilateral or bilateral supported natural resource projects;
- 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;
- Familiarity with natural resource use sector, particularly agricultural policies and management structures, in CIS and ideally in Tajikistan;
- Demonstrable analytical skills;
- At least 5 years relevant work experience in CIS and ideally in Tajikistan;
- Project evaluation experiences within United Nations system will be considered an asset;
- Excellent English skills (oral, aural, written and presentation).

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. If a proposal is accepted from a consulting firm, the firm will be held responsible for the delivery and quality of the evaluation products and therefore has responsibility for team management arrangements.

#### **National Expert**

### Duties and Responsibilities:

The National Consultant will provide input in reviewing all project documentation 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:

- Collection of background materials upon request by TE Team Leader/International Expert;
- Provision of important inputs in developing methodologies, work plans and TE report outlines;
- Desk review of materials;
- Participation in debriefings with UNDP CO representatives;
- Assistance to the TE Team Leader in conducting interviews with relevant stakeholders; provide both oral and written translation from/to English/Russian/Tajik, whenever necessary;
- Field visit and assistance to the TE Team Leader in interviewing local stakeholders at project sites;
- Participation in debriefing with UNDP and project implementing partners;
- Assistance to the TE Team Leader in developing the first draft of the TE report;
- Assistance to the TE Team Leader in finalization of the Final Terminal Evaluation report.

National Expert will assist International Consultant with the oral and written translation between English and Russian/Tajik as required. The National Expert will work closely with the International Consultant and coordinate all activities with the responsible staff of the Energy and Environment Programme of UNDP Tajikistan, Programme Unit of the UNDP Country Office. Travels are also planned in the due course to the project sites throughout the country.

### Required Qualifications:

- Advanced university degree in social sciences or other related field. Postgraduate degree(s) will be an advantage;
- Minimum 3 years of relevant experience, preferably in the field of environmental management/biodiversity conservation;
- Previous experience with the development projects implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- Participation in the similar evaluations in the past is a strong advantage;
- Proven analytical skills;
- Good interpersonal, communication, facilitation and presentation skills;
- Fluency in English, Russian and Tajik both written and spoken is essential;
- Computer literacy.

The evaluation will be undertaken in-line with GEF principles<sup>34</sup>:

- Independence
- Impartiality
- Transparency

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<sup>34</sup> See p.16 of the GEF's Monitoring and Evaluation Policy

- Disclosure
- Ethical
- Partnership
- Competencies and Capacities
- Credibility
- Utility

The evaluators must be independent from both the policy-making process and the delivery and management of assistance. Therefore applications will not be considered from evaluators who have had any direct involvement with the design or implementation of the project. This may apply equally to evaluators who are associated with organizations, universities or entities that are, or have been, involved in the policy-making process and/or delivery of the project. Any previous association with the project, the State Committee for Nature Protection, UNDP-Tajikistan Environment & Energy unit or other partners/stakeholders must be disclosed in the application. This applies equally to firms submitting proposals as it does to individual evaluators.

If selected, failure to make the above disclosures will be considered just grounds for immediate contract termination, without recompense. In such circumstances, all notes, reports and other documentation produced by the evaluator will be retained by UNDP.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS**

UNDP Country Office Tajikistan will serve as the main operational point for the evaluation. It will be responsible for liaising with the project team to set up the stakeholder interviews, for coordinating with the Government on various aspects of evaluation, for hiring of national consultants if found necessary and ensuring timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the evaluation team.

These Terms of Reference follow the UNDP-GEF policies and procedures, and together with the final agenda will be agreed upon by the UNDP-GEF Regional Coordinating Unit, UNDP Country Office and the Government. These three parties will receive a draft of the final evaluation report and provide comments on it prior to its completion.

The project team will be responsible for logistical arrangements of the field visits.

Although the final report must be cleared and accepted by UNDP before being made public, the UNDP Evaluation Policy is clear the evaluation function should be structurally independent from operational management and decision-making functions in the organization. The evaluation team will be free from undue influence and has full authority to submit reports directly to appropriate levels of decision-making.

UNDP management will not impose restrictions on the scope, content, comments and recommendations of evaluation reports. In the case of unresolved difference of opinions between any of the parties, UNDP may request the evaluation team to set out the differences in an annex to the final report.

The report shall be submitted to the UNDP Tajikistan office.

The activity and timeframe are broken down as follows:

Activity	Timeframe and responsible party
<u>Mission preparation</u> To review documents, obtain necessary non-project background or supporting documents, finalize evaluation methodology, prepare learning sessions, surveys etc, develop hypotheses about the project strategies and management.	4 days by the international evaluator 4 days by the national expert
<u>Mission – 1<sup>st</sup> phase:</u> Visits to the field, interviews, questionnaires, de-briefings	5 days by the international evaluator 5 days by the national expert
<u>Mission- 2<sup>nd</sup> phase:</u> Consolidation of findings, drawing of conclusions, preparing the first draft of the evaluation report, discussion of draft with key stakeholders	5 days by the international evaluator 5 days by the national expert
<u>Post mission Wrap-up:</u> Finalization of the evaluation report (incorporating comments received on first draft, follow-up of lose-ends and collection of outstanding information, etc.).	6 days by the international evaluator 6 days by the national expert

Working Days:

International Consultant / Team Leader – 20 working days

Technical expert (national expert) – 20 working days

*The proposed dates for the in-country mission to Tajikistan are suggested for September 2011. The assignment is to commence no later than September 5 2011.*

**SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION- SPECIFIC ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED**

Below is a suggested outline for evaluation report and description of the specific issues to be addressed during the evaluation process:

**1. Executive summary**

- Brief description of project
- Context and purpose of the evaluation
- Main conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned

**2. Introduction**

- Purpose of the evaluation

- Key issues addressed
- Methodology of the evaluation
- Structure of the evaluation

### **3. The project(s) and its development context**

- Project start and its duration
- Problems that the project seek to address
- Immediate and development objectives of the project
- Main stakeholders
- Results expected

### **4. Findings and Conclusions**

In addition to a descriptive assessment, all **criteria marked with (R) should be rated** using the following divisions: Highly Satisfactory, Satisfactory, Marginally Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory

#### **4.1. Project Formulation**

Conceptualization/Design (R). This should assess the approach used in design and an appreciation of the appropriateness of problem conceptualization and whether the selected intervention strategy addressed the root causes and principal threats in the project area. It should also include an assessment of the logical framework and whether the different project components and activities proposed to achieve the objective were appropriate, viable and responded to contextual institutional, legal and regulatory settings of the project. It should also assess the indicators defined for guiding implementation and measurement of achievement and whether lessons from other relevant projects (e.g., same focal area) were incorporated into project design.

Country-ownership/Driveness. Assess the extent to which the project idea/conceptualization had its origin within national, sectoral and development plans and focuses on national environment and development interests.

Stakeholder participation (R) Assess information dissemination, consultation, and "stakeholder" participation in design stages.

Replication approach. Determine the ways in which lessons and experiences coming out of the project were/are to be replicated or scaled up in the design and implementation of other projects (this also related to actual practices undertaken during implementation).

Other aspects to assess in the review of Project formulation approaches would be UNDP comparative advantage as IA for this project; the consideration of linkages between projects and other interventions within the sector and the definition of clear and appropriate management arrangements at the design stage.

#### **4.2. Project Implementation**

Implementation Approach (R). This should include assessments of the following aspects:

- (i) The use of the logical framework as a management tool during implementation and any changes made to this as a response to changing conditions and/or feedback from M and E activities if required.

- (ii) Other elements that indicate adaptive management such as comprehensive and realistic work plans routinely developed that reflect adaptive management and/or; changes in management arrangements to enhance implementation.
- (iii) The project's use/establishment of electronic information technologies to support implementation, participation and monitoring, as well as other project activities.
- (iv) The general operational relationships between the institutions involved and others and how these relationships have contributed to effective implementation and achievement of project objectives.
- (v) Technical capacities associated with the project and their role in project development, management and achievements.

Monitoring and evaluation (R). Including an assessment as to whether there has been adequate periodic oversight of activities during implementation to establish the extent to which inputs, work schedules, other required actions and outputs are proceeding according to plan; whether formal evaluations have been held and whether action has been taken on the results of this monitoring oversight and evaluation reports.

Stakeholder participation (R). This should include assessments of the mechanisms for information dissemination in project implementation and the extent of stakeholder participation in management, emphasizing the following:

- (i) The production and dissemination of information generated by the project.
- (ii) Local resource users and NGOs participation in project implementation and decision making and an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the approach adopted by the project in this arena.
- (iii) The establishment of partnerships and collaborative relationships developed by the project with local, national and international entities and the effects they have had on project implementation.
- (iv) Involvement of governmental institutions in project implementation, the extent of governmental support of the project.

Financial Planning: Including an assessment of:

- (i) The actual project cost by objectives, outputs, activities
- (ii) The cost-effectiveness of achievements
- (iii) Financial management (including disbursement issues)
- (iv) Co-financing <sup>35</sup>

- Sustainability. Extent to which the benefits of the project will continue, within or outside the project domain, after it has come to an end. Relevant factors include for example:

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<sup>35</sup> Please see guidelines at the end of Annex 1 of these TORs for reporting of co-financing

development of a sustainability strategy, establishment of financial and economic instruments and mechanisms, mainstreaming project objectives into the economy or community production activities.

Execution and implementation modalities. This should consider the effectiveness of the UNDP counterpart and Project Co-ordination Unit participation in selection, recruitment, assignment of experts, consultants and national counterpart staff members and in the definition of tasks and responsibilities; quantity, quality and timeliness of inputs for the project with respect to execution responsibilities, enactment of necessary legislation and budgetary provisions and extent to which these may have affected implementation and sustainability of the Project; quality and timeliness of inputs by UNDP and GoC and other parties responsible for providing inputs to the project, and the extent to which this may have affected the smooth implementation of the project.

### **4.3. Results**

Attainment of Outcomes/ Achievement of objectives (R): Including a description and rating of the extent to which the project's objectives (environmental and developmental ) were achieved using Highly Satisfactory, Satisfactory, Marginally Satisfactory, and Unsatisfactory ratings. If the project did not establish a baseline (initial conditions), the evaluators should seek to determine it through the use of special methodologies so that achievements, results and impacts can be properly established.

This section should also include reviews of the following:

Sustainability: Including an appreciation of the extent to which benefits continue, within or outside the project domain after GEF assistance/external assistance in this phase has come to an end.

Contribution to upgrading skills of the national staff

### **5. Recommendations**

- Corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project
- Actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the project
- Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives

### **6. Lessons learned**

This should highlight the best and worst practices in addressing issues relating to relevance, performance and success.



## **Annex 2 Itinerary List of Meetings & People Met**

October 21, 2011

Dushanbe

Sukhrob Khoshmukhamedov – UNDP, AAR Program

Gulbahor Nematova – UNDP CP Manager

Firuz Ibragimov - MCCBP Coordinator

Mirzohaydar Isoev – Program analyst, E&E Program

Firdavs Faizulloev – Project Manager, UNDP Shaartuz Area Office

Mark Anstey - Chief Technical Advisor

October 22

Shaartuz Area Office

Firdavs Faizulloev - Project Manager, UNDP Shaartuz Area Office

Mark-Anstey - Chief Technical Advisor

Buran Urokov – FFS National Consultant

Najmiddin Abdurakhimov – Forestry National Consultant

Mirzohaydar Isoev – Program analyst, E&E Program

October 23

Kabodiyon District, Jamoat Khudoykulov

Abdumanon Abdusalomov – Chairman of JRC\Loan Officer

Ural Chukmarov – FFS consultant\Loan Officer

Halima Khudoyberdieva– Head of the Dekhkan Farm “Pikho”

Khairinisso Sarieva – Head of the Dekhkan Farm “ Kholdura”

Kudrat Toshboev – member of JRC/farmer

Komil Ernazarov – Member of the Dekhkan Farm “Zafar”

Abdurahmon Normurodov – Member of the Dekhkan Farm “Zafar”

Nemat Shermatov– member of the Dekhkan Farm “Zafar”

October 24

Shaartuz District, Jamoat Jura Nazarov

Saidjafar Turaev – FFS consultant\Loan Officer

Juma Kurbonshoev – LDU consultant\Loan Officer

Jurakhon Dustyorov – Chairman of WUA

Jurakul Oltiev – Forestry Officer\Loan Officer

October 25

Jilikul District, Jamoat Nuri Vakhsh

Mahmadrahim Ismoilov - Chairman of the Jilikul District

Shamsiddin Eshbekov – Chairman of the Jamoat “Nuri Vakhsh”

Norkul Yuldoshev – Chairman of JRC

Kurbonmahmad Bekmurodov – Chairman of the Tugai Forest Protection Committee

Barno Erdanova – Deputy Chairman of JRC

Khujamkul Bekmuradov – member of the Tugai Forest Protection Committee

Abdurazzok Berdiev – LDU Consultant\Loan Officer

Kulsoat Mardaev – FFS Consultant | Loan Officer

Mukaddas Ishbekova – Head of the Dekhkan Farm “Akhmed”

October 26

Kumsangir District, Jamoat Telman

Gulshan Kululova – Chairlady of the Telman Jamoat

Rahimjon Nazarov – FFS Consultant\Loan Officer

Ikrom Akhmedov – LDU Consultant | Loan Officer

Vali Sultonov – Head of the Dekhkan Farm “Sulton”

Bakhodur Halilov – Head of the Dekhkan Farm “Bakhtiyor”

Vaisiddin Burhonov – Head of the Dekhkan Farm “Makhsum”

October 27

Abdurahim Arabov –Head of the Environment Protection Department, Shaartuz District

Khudoyor Idibekov – Head of the District Forestry Department, Shaartuz District

October 28

W.C. Bell - WUA/Community Organization Development Advisor, USAID

Sukhrob Khoshmukhamedov - UNDP, AAR Program, Debriefing on the preliminary findings of the evaluation team

### **Annex 3 Documents Reviewed**

PDFA

Project Document

Inception Report

Mid Term Evaluation

Internal Evaluation Reports (FFS & Micro-finance, Fuel Efficiency, Community Forestry)

CTA Mission Reports

PIMS

Project Quarterly Reports

Quarterly Progress Monitoring Matrixes

APR/PIR

### Annex 4 Rating Table

PROJECT COMPONENT OR OBJECTIVE	RATING SCALE						RATING
	HU	U	MU	MS	S	HS	
<b>PROJECT FORMULATION</b>						HS	HS
Conceptualization/Design							HS
Stakeholder participation							HS
<b>PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION</b>							HS
Implementation Approach							HS
The use of the logical framework							S
Adaptive management							HS
Use/establishment of information technologies							S
Operational relationships between the institutions involved							HS
Technical capacities							HS
<b>Monitoring and evaluation</b>							S
Stakeholder participation							HS
Production and dissemination of information							S
Local resource users and NGOs participation							HS

Establishment of partnerships							HS
Involvement and support of governmental institutions							S
<b>PROJECT RESULTS</b>							HS
<b>Attainment of Outcomes/ Achievement of objectives</b>							HS
Achievement of objective							S
Outcome 1							HS
Outcome 2							HS
<b>OVERALL PROJECT ACHIEVEMENT &amp; IMPACT</b>							HS

## Annex 5 Co-financing

Co-financing (Type/Source)	IA own Financing (mill US\$)		Government (mill US\$)		Other* (mill US\$)		Total (mill US\$)		Total Disbursement (mill US\$)	
	Plann ed	Actua l	Plann ed	Actua l	Plann ed	Actua l	Plann ed	Actua l	Plann ed	Actual
Grants – UNDP CO	204,0 00	204,0 00					204,0 00	204,0 00	204,0 00	204,0 00
Loans/Conce ssional (compared to market rate)										
Credits										
Equity investments										
In-kind support – UNDP CP – GoT – JRC (x4) – FAO – Winrock Int./USAID – CARE – WFP – <i>Dekhan Farms</i>	186,0 00	186,0 00	267,0 00	118,2 52	154,0 00 50,00 0 40,00 0 152,0 00 0 93,96 9	91,08 2 0 45,00 0 0 34,30 8 93,96 9	396,0 00	264,3 59		
Other (*)										
<b>Totals</b>	390,0 00	390,0 00	267,0 00	118,2 52	396,0 00	264,3 59	600,0 00	468,0 00	204,0 00	204,0 00