

Increasing Representation of Effectively Managed Marine Ecosystems in the Protected Area System

Azerbaijan

**GEF Agency: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Executing Entity: Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources**

**GEF Biodiversity Focal Area; GEF Project ID: 4730
UNDP PIMS: 4327; UNDP Atlas Project ID: 0007216**

Terminal Evaluation Report

March 12, 2019



Photo: Wetland in Shirvan National Park; credit: Josh Brann.

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Acronyms

APR	Annual Project Report
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COP	Conference of Parties
CSO	Civil Society Organization
GEF	Global Environment Facility
Ha	hectares
KM	Kilometers
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MSP	Medium-size Project
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NIM	National Implementation
PB	Project Board
PIMS	Project Information Management System
PIR	Project Implementation Report
PSC	Project Steering Committee
TE	Terminal Evaluation
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USD	United States dollars

I. Executive Summary

Table 1 Project Summary Data

Project Title: <i>Increasing representation of effectively managed marine ecosystems in the protected area system</i>				
GEF Project ID:	4730		<i>at endorsement (Million US\$)</i>	<i>at completion (Million US\$)</i>
UNDP Project ID:	4327	GEF financing:	\$1.29	\$1.29
Country:	Azerbaijan	IA/EA own:	\$0.15	\$0.15
Region:	Europe & CIS	Government:	\$6.34	\$6.44
Focal Area:	Biodiversity	Other:	\$0.00	\$0.00
FA Objectives, (OP/SP):	BD-1:	Total co-financing:	\$6.49	\$6.57
Executing Entity:	Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources	Total Project Cost:	\$7.78	\$7.86
Other Partners involved:	National Academy of Sciences, KfW, WWF-Azerbaijan; Caucasus Nature Fund, NGO "Ornithological Society",	ProDoc Signature (date project began):		June 30, 2014
		Revised Operational Closing Date:		March 29, 2019

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW

1. The Azerbaijan project *"Increasing representation of effectively managed marine ecosystems in the protected area system"* project ("Azerbaijan MPAs project") is a GEF-funded medium-sized project working to secure and strengthen Azerbaijan's network of marine and coastal protected areas, particularly the Gizil-Agaj National Park. The project officially commenced June 30, 2014, implementation began January 30, 2015 with the inception workshop, and is planned for completion March 29, 2019. The project is a under the GEF's biodiversity focal area. The project has GEF funding of \$1.29 million USD, and planned co-financing of \$6.49 million USD, for a total project cost of \$7.78 million. The project is executed under UNDP's National Implementation (NIM) modality, with the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources (MENR) as the main executing partner. UNDP is the implementing agency supporting execution and implementation, and is responsible for oversight of delivery of agreed outputs as per agreed project work plans, financial management, and for ensuring cost-effectiveness. At policy and strategic level the Project Board guides the project.

2. As stated in the Prodoc, the project goal is: *"To establish, and effectively manage, a system of protected areas to conserve representative samples of Azerbaijan's globally unique biodiversity."* The project objective is: *"To improve the management effectiveness, including operational effectiveness and ecosystem representation, of Azerbaijan's coastal and marine protected area system, with due consideration for its overall sustainability, including ecological, institutional and financial sustainability"*. The project is structured in two components (outcomes), consisting of seven outputs:

- **Component / Outcome 1: Enhanced management effectiveness of the Gizil-Agaj reserve complex**
 - Output 1.1. Establish a consolidated national park
 - Output 1.2. Prepare an integrated park management plan

- Output 1.3. Demarcate the park boundary, and renovate the access control infrastructure
 - Output 1.4. Procure critical park equipment
 - **Component / Outcome 2: Improved collaborative governance of, and institutional expertise in, the management of marine and coastal protected areas**
 - Output 2.1. Prepare a financial plan
 - Output 2.2. Strengthen capacity of MENR to implement the Financial Plan
 - Output 2.3. Identify and monitor critical thresholds for ecosystem health
3. The project strategic results framework, with expected indicators and targets, is included in the project document (pp. 59-62). The project results framework represents the primary foundational element for assessing project results (progress toward the expected outcomes and objective) and effectiveness.
4. According to GEF and UNDP evaluation policies, terminal evaluations are required for all GEF funded medium-size projects (MSPs), and the terminal evaluation was a planned activity of the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan of the MPAs project. As per the evaluation Terms of Reference (TORs) the terminal evaluation reviews the actual performance and progress toward results of the project against the planned project activities and outputs, based on the standard evaluation criteria: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, results and sustainability. The evaluation assesses progress toward project results based on the expected objective and outcomes, as well as any unanticipated results. The evaluation identifies relevant lessons for other similar projects in the future, and provides recommendations as necessary and appropriate. The evaluation methodology was based on a participatory mixed-methods approach, which included two main elements: a) a desk review of project documentation and other relevant documents; and b) interviews with key stakeholder conducted during the evaluation field mission to Azerbaijan, as well as additional interviews conducted by phone. The evaluation is based on evaluative evidence from the project development phase through December 31, 2018, when the terminal evaluation data collection phase was completed. The desk review was begun in December 2018, and the evaluation field mission was completed December 10th - 13th, 2018.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS ON THE MAIN EVALUATION CRITERIA

5. With respect to **relevance**, the project is considered **relevant / satisfactory**, as the project clearly supports national biodiversity priorities, as outlined in the NBSAP (2016) and other policy documents. The project support's Azerbaijan's implementation of the CBD, including making progress toward relevant Aichi Biodiversity Targets (e.g. related to MPAs, etc.). The project also supports other relevant international agreements, such as the Ramsar Convention. The project is in-line with and supportive of the respective GEF-5 biodiversity focal area strategic objectives. The project strategy and design were generally relevant and sound.
6. Project **efficiency** is rated **moderately satisfactory**. The project's management (execution), financial management, and reporting are strong points. By the end of implementation the project was running smoothly, though it took some time to reach that point. The departure of the first project manager early in the project's life resulted in a non-ideal situation where the project did not have a regular project manager for more than one year, and

the project was under implementation solely by a project assistant, with backstopping by a UNDP Senior Program Advisor. Although this may have resulted in some initial financial savings on staff salaries, it was not ultimately an efficient approach to implementation. The project team is highly professional and has demonstrated good planning, reporting, and financial management. The total project management cost as a share of the total GEF contribution was roughly in-line with the originally budgeted amount, equal to 9.5% of the total GEF funding (in-line with GEF requirements). Some of the project investments did not ultimately provide significant benefits to the MPAs targeted (e.g. tourist boat), although all appropriate approval procedures were followed. Other key results were delayed (e.g. full operation of the Gizil-Agaj administration building). The MTR recommended that the project strengthen stakeholder engagement and country ownership, and by the end of the project these aspects had been significantly improved. The project did have a nine-month no-cost extension, but this did not increase management costs as a share of the total budget. The fact that the Gizil-Agaj National Park was not approved until only six months remained in project implementation meant that some other project activities were delayed and did not have sufficient time to be fully effective (e.g. environmental monitoring). Project co-financing was in-line with expectations, with 101.2% of co-financing reported, and actual co-financing is likely to be higher. UNDP also provided adequate oversight as the implementing agency, though in retrospect there may have been opportunities for more intensive oversight; although the circumstances are understandable, it would have been better if UNDP had ensured a more rapid transition from the initial project manager to the second project manager.

7. Project **results / achievement of overall outcomes** is rated **satisfactory**. The project achieved 9 of 15 results indicator targets, and partially met 4 of 15; two indicator targets could not be assessed. The key overarching result achieved by the project was the approval of the Gizil-Agaj National Park, which occurred September 26, 2018. Other results include:

- Preparation of initial management plan for Gizil-Agaj National Park.
- Provision of equipment and materials to improve the management effectiveness of the MPAs, particularly in Gizil-Agaj National Park, and corresponding training of staff.
- Investments in PA management infrastructure, such as administration buildings, ranger stations, and watch towers.
- Increase in Gizil-Agaj National Park METT score from baseline of 25% to 63% (significantly exceeding the target of 45%).
- Development of environmental monitoring protocols for the MPAs.
- The preparation of business plans for each of the MPAs, and an overall financial plan for the all MPAs.
- Implementation of highly improved and efficient financial management and planning software for the management of MPAs, and training of key staff to use the software.

8. While the project was able to generate many valuable and important results, there remains a great need for ongoing investment and support into MPAs in Azerbaijan, as well as the overall national PA system, which is not functioning at the level of international standards. A majority of the most important project results were achieved in the final 12 months of the project, and given the increased engagement and attention of the leadership of the MENR, there

is currently an opportunity through new projects and initiatives to achieve even more impressive results related to MPAs, and to the PA system as a whole.

9. The Azerbaijan MPAs project has achieved the project objective and the two planned outcomes. The project's **effectiveness** is rated **moderately satisfactory**. Although the project achieved its most important expected results, the overall sequencing of the workplanning and sequencing of implementation of activities did not allow some of the project activities to be as fruitful as they could have been. The most notable example is the environmental monitoring framework, which was only completed within the last six months of the project, and therefore did not have time to be fully field tested, institutionalized, and implemented. In addition, the project could have been more effective if all key stakeholders had been fully engaged throughout the entire implementation process.

10. The GEF Evaluation Office and UNDP require a rating on project **impact**, which in the context of the GEF biodiversity focal area, relates to actual change in environmental status (e.g. improvements in the status of biodiversity, intact ecosystems, improved ecosystem services related to biodiversity, etc.). Considering that the Gizil-Agaj National Park was established only six months prior to project completion, there was **negligible** impact on biodiversity status, and **minimal** impact on reducing threats to biodiversity within the life of the project, although there is some anecdotal evidence that threats have been reduced (i.e. reduced illegal shooting of waterfowl). These impact ratings should not be considered as a negative reflection of the project results, they simply mean that as of the end of the project there has not yet been sufficient time for impact-level results to manifest and be documented. On the contrary, the establishment of the Gizil-Agaj National Park is a **significant** step in progress toward impact in the medium- to long-term.

11. There are some risks to the sustainability of the project results but overall **sustainability** is considered **moderately likely**. The overall project result of the establishment of Gizil-Agaj National Park is likely to be sustained. There are a variety of risks to all components of sustainability however. Financial risks to sustainability relate to the status of future government support for MPA management, including implementation of some project outputs (e.g. business/financial plans; monitoring protocols). In addition, it was frequently mentioned that the low salaries of PA staff is an ongoing drag on the system, as such low salaries do not attract many well-qualified staff, and create many risks by putting financial pressure on PA staff. Socio-economic risks remain present, as not all local stakeholders near MPAs are fully supportive of their existence, although stakeholder ownership (particularly at the national level) has continued increasing during project implementation. Institutional and governance risks to sustainability exist in terms of the overall status of Azerbaijan's PA system, which is not fully systematized or standardized, and does not function as a cohesive single system. This means that PAs with lower management capacity and less opportunity to generate revenue are weaker and remain so over time; some such PAs are MPAs. There also remain environmental risks to sustainability, despite the approval of the Gizil-Agaj National Park. There are still illegal activities (e.g. illegal hunting) carried out in the PAs that have negative environmental effects. The risk of major ecological damage due to oil spills is present, and climate change is likely to have large effects on coastal and marine PAs, particularly through fluctuations in the level of the Caspian Sea.

RECOMMENDATIONS

12. The recommendations of the terminal evaluation are listed below, with the primary target audience for each recommendation following in brackets.

13. Recommendation 1: UNDP and the MENR should develop partnership with Ministry of Tourism to support the development of eco-tourism in and around national parks and other protected areas. This could include, for example, joint marketing strategies, such as naming 2020 the “Year of National Parks in Azerbaijan”, and working with tour operators to develop new tourist offerings that focus on experiences in national parks. [MENR, UNDP]

14. Recommendation 2: The project team should try co-organize the final project wrap-up workshop or conference with the Ministry of Tourism, to catalyze and support further cooperation between MENR and the Ministry of Tourism. [Project Team, MENR]

15. Recommendation 3: At the end of the project all of the MPAs involved in the project (four of them) should complete the METT scorecard, to support learning and ongoing improved management. [Project Team]

16. Recommendation 4: To support long-term sustainability, the project team should support MENR to identify the equipment and materials (e.g. boats, vehicles, monitoring equipment, water quality monitoring chemicals, etc.) that were provided to the PAs by the project, and set a planned depreciation schedule to help the MENR set a long-term financial plan for the eventual replacement of the equipment once it reaches the end of its useful life. [Project Team, MENR]

17. Recommendation 5: Protected area business / financial plans should be regularly assessed, updated, and revised (approximately every 3 years). [MENR]

18. Recommendation 6: The Government of Azerbaijan and international development partners should maintain a strong focus on the further development and capacity strengthening of the national PA system. This project has made a number of important steps forward for MPAs, and some other PAs in the country have increased their capacity in recent years. However, for Azerbaijan’s PA system to meet international standards, there remains a large need to systematize the management of PAs in Azerbaijan. There is a need to manage the system as a whole, financially, and operationally, so that management capacities are standardized between all PAs, and the system functions cohesively as a whole to conserve the biodiversity of Azerbaijan. Therefore, the Government of Azerbaijan and development partners should collaborate to immediately identify opportunities for additional large-scale (>\$1 million USD) investments in Azerbaijan’s protected area system as a whole. [Government of Azerbaijan, UNDP, GEF, other development partners]

19. Recommendation 7: To support long-term strengthening of the national protected area system, the Government of Azerbaijan should conduct a capacity needs assessment of protected areas staff in Azerbaijan. This should include a benchmarking exercise to compare PA staff salaries relative to global norms, in terms of GDP/capita or other similar metrics that consider national budgetary resources in relative terms. [MENR]

20. Recommendation 8: MPAs in Azerbaijan should be provisioned with basic materials for oil spill mitigation and clean-up, such as oil booms. Oil spill response plans should be prepared, and MPA staff should be trained and empowered to use these materials in case of emergency. Oil spills can have catastrophic impacts on sensitive coastal ecosystems, and a minimal amount

of preparation can significantly reduce damage in case of an emergency. One example of oil spill preparation that may be useful for Azerbaijan can be found in Russia's oil spill prevention and response training in the Gulf of Finland. [MENR]

21. Recommendation 9: To support financial sustainability, protected areas should be able to issue permits for a small fee for the collection of medicinal plants, but only at a level that is sustainable. [MENR]

22. Suggestions and Opportunities Related to Environmental Monitoring:

- UNDP, the MENR, and the Academy of Sciences could collaborate to test and pilot eDNA technology for monitoring wetland/river fish species and other relevant species.
- UNDP could support MENR and the Academy of Sciences to analyze how water quality in MPAs is affecting biodiversity. This topic needs additional scientific analysis, and could be carried out in order to improve ecosystem management, as well as to further justify future water quality monitoring efforts.
- MENR could expand environmental monitoring protocols, and the analysis of monitoring data, to assess the complex relationships between different parts of marine and coastal ecosystems in MPAs, particularly in relation to climate change impacts. For example, it would be helpful to better understand the potential carrying capacity of Shirvan National Park for goitered gazelle, and the potential for that carrying capacity to fluctuate due to climate impacts.
- With the support from the National Academy of Sciences, MENR could prioritize some key topics for vegetation monitoring within MPAs. This could include the impacts of climate change on vegetation in MPAs, the carrying capacity for wildlife within MPAs (e.g. gazelles, roe deer), and the sustainable yield of medicinal plants.

LESSONS

23. The below lessons have been documented through the terminal evaluation process:

- a) **Lesson:** If projects are planned for a reasonably long implementation period then lengthy no-cost extensions can be avoided, and workplanning and financial management can be improved. The Azerbaijan MPAs project was originally planned for four years, which is relatively long for a project of only \$1.29 million USD in GEF funding. The project did require a no-cost extension, but the required extension would have been much longer and more disruptive if the project had been originally planned for a shorter implementation period.
- b) **Lesson:** Projects should always have a fully engaged project manager; in any situation where a project manager departs from their post prior to project completion, UNDP (or any other GEF Agency) should identify a replacement as quickly as possible. The project manager is the primary key person responsible for successful implementation of the project, and there are few circumstances when a project can be successfully implemented without a project manager in place who is empowered to drive the project forward. The Azerbaijan MPAs project lost its initial project manager early in the project implementation period, and a new project manager was not fully in place for more than one year afterwards, which slowed and created inefficiencies in project implementation.

- c) **Lesson:** When working on establishing protected areas, it is best to spend the necessary time at the beginning working with all stakeholders to create a good map with boundaries agreed by all stakeholders. This can help smooth the later steps in the approval process, especially if there are government requirements relating to changing official land classifications, such as agricultural land. In the case of the Azerbaijan MPAs project, the proposal for the Gizil-Agaj National Park had to be submitted to the cabinet level more times than necessary, as the map and boundaries were not adequately agreed by all stakeholders in advance.
- d) **Lesson:** If the scope of a project includes establishment of a PA as well as other related activities, it is best to focus all energy on the establishment of the PA first, so other activities can follow afterwards. In the case of the Azerbaijan MPAs project, the Gizil-Agaj National Park was established late in the project implementation, which meant there was little time for some other activities that depended on the establishment of the national park.
- e) **Lesson:** Activities that involve environmental monitoring should be started as early as possible so that there is time to collect monitoring data over multiple seasons, and multiple field seasons (over multiple years). The monitoring program for the Azerbaijan MPAs project was not created until less than six months before project completion. Initial monitoring activities were only started in fall 2018 (with less than one year of project implementation remaining, and only fall and winter seasons left in the project lifetime), so it was not possible to collect more than a preliminary set of monitoring data.
- f) **Lesson:** Environmental monitoring programs should be designed to minimize future required inputs (especially costly materials), to increase the likelihood of sustainability when the monitoring programs will be implemented by local stakeholders. For example, the water quality monitoring program developed in the Azerbaijan MPAs project requires the use of some chemicals for testing water samples, but some of the testing chemicals are expensive and may not be easy for the PA staff to procure in the future, once the initial supply is depleted.
- g) **Lesson:** When the time and attention necessary is taken to develop customized technology solutions, these solutions can greatly improve efficiency in the future. The Azerbaijan MPAs project supported the MENR to work with a 3rd party vendor to identify and develop financial management software that is tailored to the particular needs of the MENR. The MENR staff using the software find it extremely useful, and very well suited to their work, and it has greatly increased their efficiency.
- h) **Lesson:** When enforcement conditions in a protected area are poor, bringing in additional people in the form of members of the public who are tourists can actually be a good means of improving enforcement, as it increases the number of people viewing potential illegal activities within the PA. When Gizil-Agaj was a strict protected area with no access for tourists, monitoring and enforcement was problematic. According to stakeholders, the number of illegal activities and the degree of enforcement has improved since it became a national park and has been opened to the public (even though the formal level of protection has decreased).
- i) **Lesson:** Clear signage and communication about the boundaries of PAs can improve the interactions with local stakeholders. In Gizil-Agaj National Park the relations between local

fishermen and park rangers were improved once boundary buoys were installed demarcating the boundaries of the marine portions of the PA.

- j) **Lesson:** Much of a project's results depend on national ownership, often at the highest levels. In the Azerbaijan MPAs project, after three years of project implementation, there was a change in senior leadership of the MENR in the spring of 2018, and the Gizil-Agaj National Park was established a few months later.

AZERBAIJAN MPAs PROJECT TERMINAL EVALUATION SUMMARY RATINGS TABLE

Evaluation Ratings:			
1. Monitoring and Evaluation	Rating	2. Implementation & Execution	Rating
M&E Design at Entry	MS	Quality of UNDP Implementation	S
M&E Plan Implementation	MS	Quality of Execution - Executing Agency	S
Overall Quality of M&E	MS	Overall Quality of Implementation / Execution	S
3. Assessment of Outcomes	Rating	4. Sustainability	Rating
Relevance	R / S	Financial Resources	ML
Effectiveness	MS	Socio-political	ML
Efficiency	MS	Institutional Framework and Governance	ML
Overall Project Outcome Rating	S	Environmental	ML
5. Impact	Rating	Overall Likelihood of Sustainability	ML
Environmental Status Improvement	N		
Environmental Stress Reduction	M		
Progress Toward Stress/Status Change	S	Overall Project Results	S

Standard UNDP-GEF Ratings Scale

Rating Criteria	Rating Scale
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant (R) Not-relevant (NR)
Effectiveness, Efficiency, Results, GEF principles, other lower-level ratings criteria, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly satisfactory (HS): There were no shortcomings in the achievement of objectives in terms of effectiveness or efficiency Satisfactory (S): There were minor shortcomings in the achievement of objectives in terms of effectiveness or efficiency Moderately satisfactory (MS): There were moderate shortcomings in the achievement of objectives in terms of effectiveness or efficiency Moderately unsatisfactory (MU): There were significant shortcomings in the achievement of objectives in terms of effectiveness or efficiency Unsatisfactory (U): There were major shortcomings in the achievement of objectives in terms of effectiveness or efficiency Highly unsatisfactory (HU): There were severe shortcomings in the achievement of objectives in terms of effectiveness or efficiency
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likely (L): Negligible risks to sustainability, with key outcomes expected to continue into the foreseeable future Moderately Likely (ML): Moderate risks, but expectations that at least some outcomes will be sustained Moderately Unlikely (MU): Substantial risk that key outcomes will not carry on after project closure, although some outputs and activities should carry on Unlikely (U): Severe risk that project outcomes as well as key outputs will not be sustained
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant (S): The project contributed to impact level results (changes in ecosystem status, etc.) at the scale of global benefits (e.g. ecosystem wide, significant species populations, etc.) Minimal (M): The project contributed to impact level results at the site-level or other sub-global benefit scale

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negligible (N): Impact level results have not (yet) been catalyzed as a result of project efforts
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not applicable (N/A) • Unable to assess (U/A) • Not specified (N/S)

II. Azerbaijan MPAs Project Terminal Evaluation Approach

24. The terminal evaluation is initiated by UNDP, which is the GEF Agency for the project, in line with the monitoring and evaluation plan of the project. The evaluation will be carried out as a collaborative and participatory exercise, and will identify key lessons and any relevant recommendations necessary to ensure the achievement and sustainability of project results.

A. Terminal Evaluation Purpose, Objectives and Scope

25. The **purpose** of the evaluation is to provide an independent external view of the progress toward the project's objective and expected outcomes, and to provide feedback and recommendations to UNDP and project stakeholders that can help consolidate project results and support the sustainability of the project after completion.

26. The **objective** of the terminal evaluation is to:

- Identify potential project design issues;
- Assess progress toward achievement of expected project objective and outcomes;
- Identify and assess current risks to the success of the project;
- Identify and document lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP and GEF programming in the region; and
- Make recommendations for any necessary measures to consolidate the results and support sustainability of the project.

27. The **scope** of the evaluation is as outlined in the Terms of Reference for the evaluation, and covers the following aspects, integrating the GEF's Operational Principles, as appropriate. The scope is elaborated in more detail in the evaluation inception report, which is available on request.

i. Project Strategy

- Project design
- Results Framework/Logframe

ii. Progress Towards Results

- Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis
- Impact and Global Environmental Benefits
- Catalytic role: Replication and up-scaling

iii. Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

- Management Arrangements
- Work Planning
- Finance and co-finance
- Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems
- Stakeholder Engagement and Partnership Approach
- Reporting
- Communications

iv. Sustainability

- Financial risks to sustainability
- Socio-economic risks to sustainability
- Institutional Framework and Governance risks to sustainability
- Environmental risks to sustainability

v. Conclusions and Recommendations

- Lessons learned
- Recommendations

28. In addition, the UNDP requires that all evaluations assess the **mainstreaming of UNDP programming principles**, which include:

- UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)/Country Program Action Plan (CPAP) / Country Programme Document (CPD) Linkages
- Poverty-Environment Nexus / Sustainable Livelihoods
- Disaster Risk Reduction / Climate Change Mitigation / Climate Change Adaptation
- Crisis Prevention and Recovery
- Gender Equality / Mainstreaming
- Capacity Development
- Rights-based Approach

29. Evaluative evidence will be assessed against the main UNDP and GEF evaluation criteria, as identified and defined in Table 1 below:

Table 2. GEF and UNDP Main Evaluation Criteria for GEF Projects

Relevance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which the activity is suited to local and national development priorities and organizational policies, including changes over time. • The extent to which the project is in line with the GEF Operational Programs or strategic priorities under which the project was funded. • Note: Retrospectively, the question of relevance often becomes a question as to whether the objectives of an intervention or its design are still appropriate given changed circumstances.
Effectiveness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which an objective has been achieved or how likely it will be achieved.
Efficiency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible; also called cost-effectiveness or efficacy.
Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen changes to and effects produced by a development intervention. • In GEF terms, results include direct project outputs, short to medium-term outcomes, and longer-term impact including global environmental benefits, replication effects and other local effects.

Sustainability

- The likely ability of an intervention to continue to deliver benefits for an extended period of time after completion: financial risks, socio-political risks, institutional framework and governance risks, environmental risks
- Projects need to be environmentally, as well as financially and socially sustainable.

B. Principles for Design and Execution of the Evaluation

30. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the GEF M&E Policy,¹ which includes the following principles for evaluation: Credibility, Utility, Impartiality, Transparency, Disclosure, and Participation. The evaluation was also conducted in line with United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards.² The evaluation provides evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The evaluation followed a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with government counterparts, and with the UNDP project teams.

C. Evaluation Approach and Data Collection Methods

31. The evaluation methodology was based on a participatory mixed-methods approach. The evaluation is based on evaluative evidence from the project development phase through December 31, 2018, when the terminal evaluation data collection phase was completed. The evaluation commenced November 12th, 2018 with the signing of the evaluation contract, and the evaluation field mission is being carried out from December 10th – 14th, 2018.

32. The TE evaluation matrix, describing the indicators and standards applied with respect to the evaluation criteria, is attached as Annex 3 to this report. The interview guide used to provide a framework for qualitative data collection is included as Annex 4 to this evaluation report. The standard UNDP-GEF rating tables and rating scale applied is included as Annex 5 to this report. The list of individuals interviewed is included as Annex 6 to this report.

33. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with the guidance outlined in the UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results,³ and in accordance with the evaluation guidance as outlined in the GEF M&E Policy.

34. The collection of evaluative evidence was based on three primary data collection methodologies:

1. Desk review of relevant documentation (a list of documents reviewed included as Annex 7 to this report).
2. Semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders at local, regional, and national
3. Field visit to projects sites

35. As such, the terminal evaluation process involved four main steps, some of which overlapped temporally:

1. Desk review of project documentation
2. Organization of field mission and completion of key stakeholder interviews

¹ See <http://www.thegef.org/gef/Evaluation%20Policy%202010>.

² See http://www.uneval.org/normsandstandards/index.jsp?doc_cat_source_id=4.

³ See <http://www.undp.org/evaluation/handbook>.

3. Analysis of data, follow-up to address any data gaps, and drafting of the evaluation report, then circulation to evaluation participants for additional feedback and input
 4. Finalization of the evaluation report and follow-up with the project team and stakeholders
36. Key stakeholders targeted for interviews were intended to represent the main project stakeholders, partners and beneficiaries, and those most knowledgeable about various aspects of the project. The evaluation also sought to include a representative sample covering all different types of stakeholders, including national and local government, civil society, local communities, and the private sector.

D. Limitations to the Evaluation

37. All evaluations face limitations in terms of the time and resources available to adequately collect and analyze evaluative evidence. For the Azerbaijan MPAs project terminal evaluation, there were no additional notable limitations. All key documents were available in English language, or were translated. The project team and stakeholders provided all requested information and data for the evaluation data collection process. During the evaluation field mission one of the four project field sites (Samur-Yalama National Park) was not visited due to time limitations, but this was the sites with the smallest scope of project activities, and information about the project activities in this site was available through other sources, such as documents and interviews. Wherever possible the evaluation has tried to draw on multiple data sources for triangulation of evaluation findings. Altogether the evaluation challenges were manageable, and the evaluation is believed to represent a fair and accurate assessment of the project.

III. Project Overview

A. Azerbaijan MPAs Project Development Context

38. This section contains a brief description of the project development context. It draws from the project document, which contains more extensive and detailed information.

39. Together with four other countries (Russia, Iran, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan), Azerbaijan shares the largest inland body of water in the world, the Caspian Sea, covering a total surface area of 371,000 km² (not including Garabogazköl Aylagy). The Caspian Sea is landlocked with limited flow-through. There are almost 130 rivers discharging into the Caspian Sea, but the majority have low discharge rates (only eight have a developed delta, the Volga, Terek, Sulak, Samur, Kura, Ural, Atrek, and Sefidrud rivers). The largest inflows of freshwater comes from the Volga, which accounts for nearly 80% of the mean river discharge per year. The river catchment is extremely large, with an area of approximately 3.6 million km², of which the Volga catchment accounts for 1.4 million km².

40. One of the Caspian Sea's unique features is the relative instability of its sea level. Sea levels in the Caspian Sea have been fluctuating since the Sea became a closed basin about 5.5 million years ago. The Sea is now between -26 and -27 m below oceanic sea levels. The Sea is known to have had peaks and lows ranging from +50 m to -80 m over the last 100,000 years – a fluctuation in levels of some 130 meters during this period. The northern part of the sea is

relatively flat, with a maximum depth of about 10 m, while the southern region - which is part of an active tectonic zone - reaches a maximum depth of 1,025 m (the Lenkaran hollow). The average depth of the Caspian Sea is ~187 m. Generally the shallow northern third of the sea freezes in winter. Sea level is cyclical, generally reaching its lowest value in winter and rising during May–July, following the spring floods. The inflow of freshwater (compensated by evaporation over the sea) results in the formation of a north-south salinity gradient ranging from 1-2 parts per thousand (ppt) in the north to 13.5 ppt in the south.

41. The biological diversity of the Caspian Sea and its coastal zone makes the region particularly significant. One of the most important characteristics of the Caspian Sea's biodiversity is the relatively high level of endemic species among its fauna. The highest number of endemic species across the various taxa is found in the mid-Caspian Sea region, while the greatest diversity is found in the northern section of the Caspian Basin. The coastal region is characterized by a wide range of habitats; these include habitats in vast river systems and extensive wetlands such as the deltas of the Volga, Ural and Kura rivers, the wetland systems along the Iranian coast and the exceptionally saline bay of the Kara-Bogaz- Gol Gulf. At the other extreme, habitats are also found in the sandy and rocky deserts on the Caspian Sea's eastern coast. The wetlands in the region play a significant role as a feeding and resting area for migratory birds.

42. Due to various human activities, plus threats from invasive species, climate change and fluctuations in the water levels of the Caspian Sea, the coastal habitats of the Caspian Sea are constantly changing and biodiversity is declining. As a result, 112 plant species and 240 species of animals in the Caspian Sea coastal zone have been noted by the Caspian Coastal Site Inventory (CCSI) and included in the IUCN Red List (2006) or National Red Books. One species of fungi, one species of lichen, one species of moss, and 109 species of vascular plants make up the list of rare and endangered plant species. Red Book animals are represented by 77 invertebrate species, one species of cyclostomes, 18 species of fish, 7 species of amphibians, 26 species of reptiles, 79 species of birds and 32 species of mammals.

43. Azerbaijan's current protected area system totals 892,546ha ha (~10.3% of the country) and comprises nine National Parks (322,306 ha); eleven State Nature Reserves (209,083 ha); and twenty four State Nature Sanctuaries (361,157 ha). Of the formal protected areas in Azerbaijan, seven (3 National Parks, 2 State Nature Reserves and 2 Nature Sanctuaries) are located in and around the coastal zone of the Caspian Sea, as summarized in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Azerbaijan's Marine and Coastal Protected Areas

Region	Protected Area	Size	Biodiversity significance
Lenkaran, Masalli and Neftchala Regions	Gizil-Agaj State Nature Reserve	88,360 ha	Semi-desert, grassland, permanent freshwater marshes and pools, permanent brackish and saline lakes, marshes and coastal saline lagoons. A large area of the gulf of Greater Gizil-Agaj is covered with seagrass meadows.
	Lesser Gizil-Agaj State Nature Sanctuary	10,700 ha	An important spawning and nursery ground for fish (e.g. herring, Zander, kutum, bream, carp, catfish, and striped mullet), and an important wintering and dry season habitat for birds (e.g. Black

			<p>Francolin, Sultan Hen, Flamingoes, Little Bustard, and Bald Coot).</p> <p>Over 20 bird species occurring in the area have been listed in the Red Data Book for Azerbaijan. The area has been listed on the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance</p>
Salyan and Neftchala Regions, Baku City (Garadag district)	Shirvan National Park	54,373 ha	<p>Saline semi-desert hills and plains located in the south-eastern Kura-Araz lowlands. Surrounded by the Caspian Sea to the east and a number of lakes (e.g. Lake Flamingo) to the north</p> <p>Important habitat for Goitered Gazelle, listed in the Red Data Book of Azerbaijan.</p> <p>Sixty five bird species inhabit the shores of the adjacent Caspian Sea and lakes.</p>
	Shirvan State Nature Reserve	4,657 ha	
	Bandovan Nature Sanctuary	4,930 ha	
Baku City ((Azizbeyov district)	Absheron National Park	783 ha	<p>Coastal shores, saline semi-desert and dry steppe. Habitat for rare and endangered flora and fauna species, including the Caspian Seal, Goitered Gazelle, Tufted Duck, Herring Gull and Mallard.</p>
Khachmaz region	Samur-Yalama National Park	11,772ha	<p>Last remaining fragments of oakwood forest in the Khudat Lowland Forest ecosystem.</p> <p>Important coastal wetland habitats along the Caspian Sea for endangered species of fish and migratory birds</p>
TOTAL (ha)		175,575 ha	

B. Problems the Azerbaijan MPAs Project Seeks to Address

44. The project document identifies multiple threats to the biodiversity of Azerbaijan's coastal and marine protected areas. These are:

- *Land degradation*
- *Habitat fragmentation*
- *Unsustainable levels of natural resource use*
- *Pollution*
- *Invasive species*
- *Climate change*

45. The project document highlights two main barriers to secure and well-managed coastal and marine protected areas in Azerbaijan. These are:

- *Barrier 1: Inadequate planning, funding, staff, infrastructure and equipment to effectively manage the consolidated Gizil-Agaj reserve complex*
- *Barrier 2: Limited capacities for the coordinated planning, resourcing and administration of the network of marine and coastal protected areas*

C. Azerbaijan MPAs Project Description and Strategy

46. As stated in the Prodoc, the project goal is: "To establish, and effectively manage, a system of protected areas to conserve representative samples of Azerbaijan's globally unique

- **Component / Outcome 1: Enhanced management effectiveness of the Gizil-Agaj reserve complex**

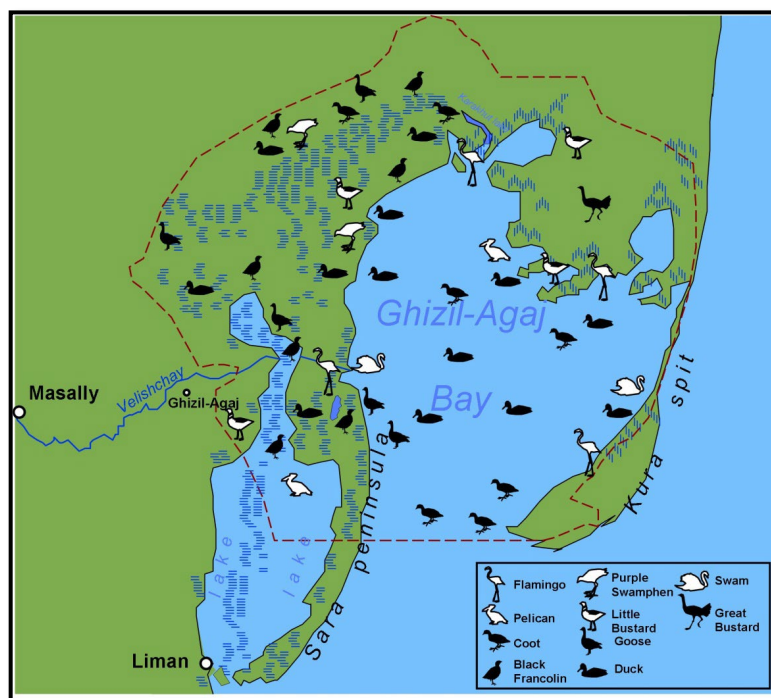
47. The project activities targeted in total the four main marine and coastal protected areas in Azerbaijan: Gizl-Agaj State Nature Reserve (now national park), Absheron National Park, Shirvan National Park, and Samur-Yalama National Park (see Figure 1). The largest focus of project activities though were in Gizil-Agaj, which is shown in the map in Figure 2 below.

Legend

- National Park
- State Nature Reserve
- State Nature Sanctuary
- territory partly covered by Shahdag NP
- proposed Samur-Yalama NP

(Ghizil-Aga) complex

Figure 2 Contextual Map of Gizil-Agaj PA Complex



48. The project strategic results framework, with expected indicators and targets, is included in the project document (pp. 59-62). The project results framework represents the primary foundational element for assessing project results (progress toward the expected outcomes and objective) and effectiveness.

49. The project officially commenced June 30, 2014, , implementation began January 30, 2015 with the inception workshop, and is planned for completion March 29, 2019. The project is a under the GEF's biodiversity focal area. The

project has GEF funding of \$1.29 million USD, and planned co-financing of \$6.49 million USD, for a total project cost of \$7.78 million. The project is executed under UNDP's National Implementation (NIM) modality, with the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources (MENR) as the main executing partner. UNDP is the implementing agency supporting execution and implementation, and is responsible for oversight of delivery of agreed outputs as per agreed project work plans, financial management, and for ensuring cost-effectiveness. At policy and strategic level the Project Board guides the project.

D. Implementation Approach and Key Stakeholders

i. Implementation Arrangements

50. The Azerbaijan MPAs project was implemented under UNDP's National Implementation (NIM) modality, with the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources as the responsible national Executing Entity. The UNDP Azerbaijan Country Office also supported project implementation.

51. The Project Manager carried out the day-to-day administration of the project. The Project Manager was based in the UNDP Azerbaijan Country Office, in Baku, Azerbaijan. The office location is not far from the MENR offices, and within a few hours' drive of each of the targets PAs. The Project Manager was formally working full-time on the project, and received administrative support from a project assistant. The initial project manager was changed early in the project implementation, and the initial project assistant eventually became the new project manager; then a new project assistant was contracted for the remaining duration of the project.

52. A project board was constituted as the executive decision-making body for the project. The project board was not a wider multi-stakeholder steering committee as some UNDP-GEF projects have, but rather, as described by the project document: *"The Project Board will consist*

of the National Focal Point for Biodiversity in Azerbaijan, the Head of the Department on Protected Areas of MENR, the UNDP Deputy Resident Representative (DRR) and the Representative of UNDP's Sustainable Development Unit in Azerbaijan. The Project Board will ensure that the project remains on course to deliver the desired outcomes of the required quality. The PB will meet at least four times per annum (more often if required)."

ii. Key Stakeholders

53. The Prodoc includes a full analysis of project stakeholders, summarized in Table 4 below.

Table 4 Key Stakeholders for the Azerbaijan MPAs Project (Source: Prodoc)

Organisation	Mandate of the organisation
Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources (MENR): - Department of Protection of Biodiversity and Development of Specially Protected Nature Areas - Department of Reproduction and Protection of Biological Resources of Water Bodies (Azerbaijan Fishery Scientific Research Institute (AFSRI))	MENR is the central executive authority responsible the protection of the environment; sustainable use and management of water, air, soil and biological resources; waste management; environmental impact management; meteorological forecasting; and environmental and hydrological surveying and monitoring.
Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (ANAS): - Institutes of Botany and Zoology (IBZ)	ANAS is the state institution responsible for developing basic and applied research in the social, natural, humanitarian and technical sciences. ANAS coordinates and manages the activities of all research institutions and higher educational establishments.
Ministry of Agriculture (MA)	MA is the central executive body responsible for regulating and controlling the means of agricultural production and processing. It develops and implements state policy in land reclamation and irrigation. It also provides agricultural planning; veterinary; horticultural; plant protection; and quarantine support services to the agricultural industry.
State Land and Cartography Committee (SLCC)	SLCC is the central executive power body responsible for land surveying; land demarcation; registration of land ownership and rights; land mapping; land use planning; land reform; and land use monitoring.
Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MCT)	MCT is an executive for culture, arts, heritage monuments, publishing and cinematography. MCT is also responsible for the planning, marketing and development of tourism.
Ministry of Justice (MJ)	MJ is central executive authority responsible for preparing and gazetting national legislation and regulations.
Ministry of Economic Development (MED)	MED is the central executive authority responsible for socio-economic development and international cooperation, including <i>inter alia</i> : macroeconomics, trade, investment, and business development.
Ministry of Finance (MF)	MF is the central organ of executive power for national financial policy and the management of state finances. The MF prepares, administers and monitors the state budget.
Coastal rayons (notably the Neftchala, Masally and Lenkaran rayons traversing Gizil-Agaj reserve complex)	The Chief Executive of each of the rayons are responsible for local implementation of the President of Azerbaijan's executive powers.
State Maritime Administration (SMA)	SMA is the administration responsible for the regulation and administration of: maritime navigation and safety; registration of ships; hydrographic services; marine port facilities; and protection of the marine environment.

Organisation	Mandate of the organisation
State Border Service (SBS): The Azerbaijan Coast Guard (ACG)	The SBS is a state law enforcement agency responsible for protecting and securing the country's borders.
Local municipalities	Municipalities are responsible for resolving a range of social, economic and ecological problems within the territories of municipalities that are outside the control of the relevant State programs. These may include programs to address issues in the areas of education, health, culture, local infrastructure and roads, communication services, cultural facilities, and assistance to old, poor and sick people and children without parents.
Donor agencies and conservation trusts	The donor agencies (e.g. GIZ, BMZ, EU and BMU) and conservation trusts (e.g. CNF) financing protected area activities in Azerbaijan will be important project partners. They will share, coordinate and collaborate with the project as and where relevant.
NGOs	NGOs - most notably REC-Caucasus, WWF and Azerbaijan Ornithological Society -are important project partners. They will share, coordinate and collaborate with the project as and where relevant.

E. Key Milestone Dates

54. Table 3 below indicates the key project milestone dates. As an MSP, the project was approved by the GEF under expedited procedures. The project was planned for a 48-month implementation period. The terminal evaluation was conducted in November 2018-January 2019, and the project will finish, March 29, 2019. The project will then be financially closed at the end of UNDP's fiscal year, December 31, 2019.

55. The project's total documented lifespan was 97 months, which is more than 8 years. This is only starting from the time that the PIF was first submitted to the GEF, before which there was likely at least a number of months of agency and country discussions to develop the PIF. This is a rather long period of time for an MSP, even considering that the project had a planned 48 month implementation period (which is also above average for GEF MSPs). There were a few points in the project lifecycle where steps in the project lifecycle took longer than what would have been expected. The terminal evaluation did not specifically investigate the cause of these delays.

56. The first such delay was between "PIF Clearance" and "PIF Approval" by the GEF Secretariat. The PIF was technically cleared January 18th, 2012, but then the PIF was not fully approved until June 1, 2012, almost 6 months later. During the interim the PPG was approved and the STAP review took place, but on the whole the PIF approval is usually much faster after PIF technical clearance.

The second such delay was between GEF CEO Endorsement July 3, 2013, and UNDP Prodoc signature approximately 12 months later, June 30, 2014. Following UNDP Prodoc endorsement, the inception workshop did not take place until seven months later, at the end of January 2015. Therefore this was an approximately 19 month period where the project was fully approved by the GEF and ready for implementation, but during which implementation did not start. The GEF and UNDP business standard for the time between GEF final approval and project start-up is a maximum of six months – three months to agency prodoc approval, and then three months to project inception workshop.

Table 5 Azerbaijan MPAs Project Key Milestone Dates⁴

Milestone	Expected Date [A]	Actual Date [B]	Months (Total)
1. PIF Submission	N/A	November 29, 2011	
2. First GEF Secretariat Review	December 9, 2011	December 9, 2011	0 (0)
3. Revised PIF First Re-submission	N/A	December 16, 2011	0.5 (0.5)
4. Second GEF Secretariat Review	December 30, 2011	January 2, 2012	0.5 (1)
5. Revised PIF Second Re-submission	N/A	January 5, 2012	0 (1)
6. Third GEF Secretariat Review / PIF Clearance	January 19, 2012	January 18, 2012	0.5 (1.5)
7. PPG approval	N/S	March 27, 2012	2.5 (4)
8. STAP Review	N/A	May 11, 2012	1.5 (5.5)
9. GEF Secretariat "Concept" (i.e. PIF) approval	N/S	June 1, 2012	0.5 (6)
10. Submission of Revised* Request for GEF CEO Endorsement	June 1, 2013	May 22, 2013	11.5 (17.5)
12. GEF CEO Endorsement	June 22, 2013	July 3, 2013	1.5 (19)
13. UNDP Prodoc signature (Implementation Start)	October 3, 2013	June 30, 2014	12 (31)
14. Inception Workshop	September 30, 2014	January 30, 2015	7 (38)
15. Mid-term Evaluation	June 30, 2016	March-May 2017	26 (64)
16. Terminal Evaluation	March 2018	December 2018	21 (85)
17. Project Operational Completion	June 30, 2018	March 29, 2019	3 (88)
18. Project Financial Closing	December 31, 2018	December 31, 2019	9 (97)

⁴ Sources: 1.A. Not applicable; 1.B. PIF; 2.A. Per GEF Secretariat business standards; 2.B. GEF Review Sheet; 3.A. Not applicable; 3.B. PIF; 4.A. Per GEF Secretariat business standards; 4.B. GEF Secretariat Review Sheet; 5.A. Not applicable; 5.B. PIF; 6.A. Per GEF Secretariat business standards; 6.B. GEF Review Sheet; 7.A. Not specified; 7.B. GEF online PIMS project timeline; 8.A. Not applicable; 8.B. Date in file name of STAP review report; no date provided in document; 9.A. Not specified; 9.B. GEF online PIMS project timeline; 10.A. Within 12 months of PIF approval, per GEF business standards for MSPs; *Date of initial submission of Request for GEF CEO Endorsement not available; 10.B. Submission date from Request for CEO Endorsement document; 11.A. N/A for MSPs; 11.B. N/A for MSPs; 12.A. Within 30 days of Request for CEO Endorsement submission, per GEF Secretariat business standards; 12.B. GEF online PIMS project timeline; 13.A. Within 3 months of GEF project approval, per GEF business standards for agencies; 13.B. 2017 PIR; 14.A. Within 3 months of UNDP Prodoc signature; 14.B. Project inception workshop report; 15.A. 24 months after Prodoc signature (mid-way through 48 month project implementation); 15.B. Mid-term review evaluation mission to date of MTR report; 16.A. Within 3 months of expected project completion (48 months after Prodoc signature); 16.B. Terminal evaluation data collection phase including mission to Azerbaijan; 17.A. 48 months after UNDP Prodoc signature; 17.B. Actual project operational closing; 18.A. End of fiscal year following project operational completion, per UNDP standard operating procedures; 18.B. End of fiscal year following project operational completion, per UNDP standard operating procedures.

EVALUATION FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

IV. Relevance

57. With respect to **relevance**, the project is considered **relevant / satisfactory**, as the project clearly supports national biodiversity priorities for Azerbaijan. The project design and strategy were appropriate and relevant. The project also conforms with GEF biodiversity focal area strategies and priorities for GEF-5, and is directly supportive of and relevant to CBD strategic priorities and targets. The project is also relevant to the Ramsar Convention, and Convention on Migratory Species.

A. Relevance of the Azerbaijan MPAs Project Objective to GEF Strategic Objectives

58. The GEF has limited financial resources so it has identified a set of strategic priorities and objectives designed to support the GEF's catalytic role and leverage resources for maximum impact. The GEF's strategic priorities are carefully structured to reflect global priorities, as indicated in CBD COP decisions. All GEF-funded projects must adequately align with and support GEF strategic priorities. The project was approved and is being implemented under the strategic priorities for GEF-5 (July 2010 – June 2014).⁵

59. Under the GEF-5 biodiversity strategic objectives, the project's objective is directly in line with and supportive of Objective 1 (see Table 6 below).

Table 6 GEF-5 Biodiversity Strategic Objectives Supported by the MPAs Project

Objective 1. Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems	Outcome 1.1: Improved management effectiveness of existing and new protected areas	Indicator 1.1: Protected area management effectiveness score as recorded by Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool	Target 1.1: Eighty-percent (80%) of projects meet or exceed their protected area management effectiveness targets covering 170 million hectares of existing or new protected areas.	Output 1. New protected areas (number) and coverage (hectares) of unprotected ecosystems. Output 2. New protected areas (number) and coverage (hectares) of unprotected threatened species (number)
	Outcome 1.2: Increased revenue for protected area systems to meet total expenditures	Indicator 1.2: Funding gap for management of protected area systems as recorded by protected area	Target 1.2: Eighty-percent (80%) of projects meet or exceed their target for reducing the protected area management funding gap in protected area systems that	Output 3. Sustainable financing plans (number).

⁵ For the focal area strategic priorities for GEF-5, see GEF Council document GEF/R.5/31, "GEF-5 Programming Document," May 3, 2010.

	required for management	financing scorecards	develop and implement sustainable financing plans.	
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60. In terms of direct contributions to these GEF-5 strategic priorities, the project succeeded in meeting the below targets:

- Target 1.1: The METT target was exceeded for Gizil-Agaj National Park; the target was >45%, and the level achieved was 63%. This was for a protected area covering 99,060 ha.
- Target 1.2: The project results exceeded the project target in relation to the Financial Sustainability Scorecard; the project target was 35% and the level achieved was 37%. It is not clear this corresponds as yet to a reduced funding gap, though in the long-term it should contribute to a reduction in the funding gap.

61. Regarding Outputs 1, 2, and 3, the project did not establish new protected areas covering previously unprotected ecosystems or species. The project did produce four business plans (which can be considered “sustainable financing plans”), one for each CMPA (though these are not yet fully implemented).

B. Relevance of the Azerbaijan MPAs Project to CBD and other Multilateral Agreements

62. The GEF is the financial mechanism for the CBD, and projects supported with GEF funding must align with relevant CBD priorities and strategies. Azerbaijan is a party to the CBD, having approved the convention on November 1, 2000. The Azerbaijan MPAs project supports CBD objectives by supporting the Convention's Articles 6 (General Measures for Conservation and Sustainable Use), 7 (Identification and Monitoring), 8 (In-situ Conservation), 10 (Sustainable Use of Components of Biological Diversity), 11 (Incentive Measures), 12 (Research and Training), 13 (Education and Awareness), 14 (Impact Assessment and Minimizing Adverse Impacts) and 17 (Exchange of Information). The project is supportive of the CBD's Program of Work on Protected Areas, and also supports multiple Aichi Biodiversity Targets:

- *Target 1: By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.*
- *Target 5: By 2020, the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, is at least halved and where feasible brought close to zero, and degradation and fragmentation is significantly reduced.*
- *Target 11: By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.*
- *Target 12: By 2020 the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, has been improved and sustained.*
- *Target 14: By 2020, ecosystems that provide essential services, including services related to water, and contribute to health, livelihoods and well-being, are restored and safeguarded,*

taking into account the needs of women, indigenous and local communities, and the poor and vulnerable.

- *Target 17: By 2015 each Party has developed, adopted as a policy instrument, and has commenced implementing an effective, participatory and updated national biodiversity strategy and action plan.*
- *Target 19: By 2020, knowledge, the science base and technologies relating to biodiversity, its values, functioning, status and trends, and the consequences of its loss, are improved, widely shared and transferred, and applied.*

63. The Azerbaijan MPAs project is also clearly relevant to and supportive of the Ramsar Convention, and the Convention on Migratory Species (in relation to birds). Although these are not officially GEF conventions, the GEF endeavors to support all relevant multilateral agreements to the extent feasible.

C. Relevance of the Project Approach: Project Strategy and Design

64. The project strategy was relatively straightforward, as the project focused on various aspects of strengthening management capacity for coastal and marine protected areas, with a particular focus on Gizil-Agaj. There were no notable issues with the project design or strategy, the issues the project faced in implementation related to country ownership, and sequencing and timing of some project activities; these are discussed in Section VI of this report, on results.

V. Project Management and Cost-effectiveness (Efficiency)

65. Project **efficiency** is rated *moderately satisfactory*. The project's management (execution), financial management, and reporting are strong points. By the end of implementation the project was running smoothly, though it took some time to reach that point. The departure of the first project manager early in the project's life resulted in a non-ideal situation where the project did not have a regular project manager for more than one year, and the project was under implementation solely by a project assistant, with backstopping by a UNDP Senior Program Advisor. Although this may have resulted in some initial financial savings on staff salaries, it was not ultimately an efficient approach to implementation. The project team is highly professional and has demonstrated good planning, reporting, and financial management. The total project management cost as a share of the total GEF contribution was roughly in-line with the originally budgeted amount, equal to 9.5% of the total GEF funding (in-line with GEF requirements). Some of the project investments did not ultimately provide significant benefits to the MPAs targeted (e.g. tourist boat), although all appropriate approval procedures were followed. Other key results were delayed (e.g. full operation of the Gizil-Agaj administration building). The MTR recommended that the project strengthen stakeholder engagement and country ownership, and by the end of the project these aspects had been significantly improved. The project did have a nine-month no-cost extension, but this did not increase management costs as a share of the total budget. The fact that the Gizil-Agaj National Park was not approved until only six months remained in project implementation meant that some other project activities were delayed and did not have sufficient time to be fully effective (e.g. environmental monitoring). Project co-financing was in line with expectations, with 101.2% of co-financing reported, but actual non-tracked co-financing is likely higher; it is also difficult to exactly track

co-financing in USD terms, given the large shifts in exchange rates that occurred during the life of the project. UNDP also provided adequate oversight as the implementing agency, though in retrospect there may have been opportunities for more intensive oversight; although the circumstances are understandable, it would have been better if UNDP had ensured a more rapid transition from the initial project manager to the second project manager.

A. Implementation, Including UNDP Oversight

66. UNDP is the GEF Agency responsible for the project, and carries general backstopping and oversight responsibilities. On the whole UNDP adequately supported the project, and provided high quality backstopping and financial management support. The most significant issue in relation to UNDP implementation was that there was a period of time when the Project Manager position was vacant, and it was not filled as rapidly as it might have been. During this time the project received additional support from the senior UNDP task leader. Stakeholders involved in the project provided feedback indicating that UNDP is a strong and reliable partner, although sometimes the UN bureaucracy can be frustrating. Overall for the Azerbaijan MPAs project implementation by UNDP is considered **satisfactory**.

B. Execution (Project Management)

67. This was a national implementation project (NIM), meaning that the MENR was the primary responsible national executing partner. At the same time, the project implementation team (project manager and project assistant) were contracted directly by UNDP, and the project office was on the UNDP premises, although it was not far from the MENR office. On the whole project execution was good. Multiple stakeholder remarked during the terminal evaluation that the level of country ownership, specifically in relation to the conversion of the Gizil-Agaj PA to a National Park, was greatly improved when there was a change of leadership in the MENR, which occurred early in 2018. Had this change occurred earlier in the project's life the project may have been able to achieve even more significant results.

68. The day to day management of the Azerbaijan MPAs project was considered **satisfactory**. The project was characterized by good workplanning, reporting, financial delivery, and stakeholder engagement at the local level. The one shortcoming was the fact that there was actually not a project manager in place for a period of time during the first half of the project, following the departure of the first project manager. This issue is discussed further in other sections of this report.

C. Partnership Approach and Stakeholder Participation

69. The scope of the Azerbaijan MPAs project did not require a widespread stakeholder engagement process, though there were a small number of key stakeholders engaged in project implementation. The most significant stakeholder was the MENR, which was the national executing partner agency. The MENR is principally responsible for the establishment and management of protected areas in Azerbaijan, and therefore was the key partner in the process of converting the Gizil-Agaj PA into the national park. The MTR highlighted the fact that the project could have had broader stakeholder engagement, and to a certain extent broader engagement was envisioned at the project development stage. It was planned that the project execution structure would include a Technical Working Group (TWG) involving multiple all

relevant stakeholders, but this TWG was never constituted. The MTR recommended that the TWG be established, in concordance with the project document, but by the time of the MTR, the TWG had more or less become obsolete, and the Project Steering Committee determined that establishing the TWG in the last third of the project would more likely delay the project results than it would advance them.

70. The MTR also recommended that the project involve other external partners, such as the Caspian Center for Marine Monitoring, in line with the project document stakeholder engagement plan (Part III, p. 72 of the project document). Ultimately, in terms of national and international partners the project was rather insular, though the scope of the project activities did not really require broad stakeholder engagement at the national and international levels. The project worked closely with the national and local stakeholders necessary for the conversion of the Gizil-Agaj National Park, including the State Land and Cartography Committee, and the local communities in the territory of the protected area. The project also did involve the academy of sciences during the project activities establishing the monitoring plans.

71. The Ministry of Tourism has always been considered a relevant stakeholder, as tourism is considered critical for the ultimate financial sustainability of the protected areas targeted by the project. The project did not strongly engage the Ministry of Tourism during implementation, but perhaps it would have been premature to do so until the Gizil-Agaj National Park was actually established, which only occurred in September, 2018, during the last six months of the project. Now that the national park is fully established, however, now would be an appropriate time to for the MENR to develop a strong partnership with the Ministry of Tourism for the development of the tourism market in relation to protected areas, and marketing of nature tourism. This evaluation recommends that the MENR establish a Memorandum of Agreement in relation to the marketing of protected areas in Azerbaijan for tourism. This could include, for example, joint marketing strategies such as naming 2020 the “Year of National Parks in Azerbaijan”. Positive steps in this direction could be taken through measures such as co-organizing the project wrap-up workshop with the Ministry of Tourism, to catalyze and support further cooperation between MENR and the Ministry of Tourism.

D. Risk Assessment and Monitoring

72. The Azerbaijan MPAs project document includes the project risk analysis (pp. 45-47 of the Prodoc). The risk analysis highlighted four risks, which were rated in the range of moderate to low. Risks were monitored during project implementation quarterly through UNDP’s Atlas risk log, and annually through the PIR; no critical risks were identified during the project’s implementation.

E. Flexibility and Adaptive Management

73. Flexibility is one of the GEF’s ten operational principles, and all projects must be implemented in a flexible manner to maximize efficiency and effectiveness, and to ensure results-based, rather than output-based approach. Thus, during project implementation adaptive management must be employed to adjust to changing circumstances.

74. On the whole the project was implemented in an adaptive manner, following a results-based approach. Budget revisions were made throughout the implementation period, in

accordance with UNDP and GEF procedures, requirements and guidelines. There were not major issues or changes in the project context that required adaptive management.

75. The one issue that did arise was an adaptive measure that was taken, which perhaps should not have been. At the June 2016 Project Steering Committee meeting the Project Director representative of the MENR proposed that the project purchase boats to support tourism development, although this was not in the original scope of the project. The PSC members agreed, and a boat was purchased, which took a significant amount of the project budget. Ultimately the boat purchase did not contribute to the achievement of the project objective or outcomes, and by the end of the project the boat was in use at a protected area outside the scope of the project. Although the boat purchase was completed with PSC approval and in accordance with required financial management and oversight procedures, this was an example of a decision that ultimately did not advance the project agenda.

F. Financial Planning by Component and Financial Management

76. The breakdown of project GEF financing is indicated in Table 7 below. The total GEF-allocation was \$1,291,500. An additional \$150,000 in cash co-financing from UNDP TRAC funds was also expected, for a total project budget of \$1,441,500 that was to be overseen by UNDP (i.e. not including externally managed cash and in-kind co-financing). Of the GEF funds, \$875,500 (67.8% of the total) was planned for Component 1, and Component 2 was budgeted at \$293,500 (22.7%). Project management was budgeted at \$122,500, or 9.5% of the total.

77. As of September 30, 2018 the project has spent \$1,211,959 of the GEF funding, or 93.8% of the planned GEF funds. It is anticipated that the remaining balance of \$79,541 was spent in the remaining project implementation period through March 2019. In addition, 69.3% of the UNDP TRAC funds had been spent. The expenditure amounts per component were roughly in-line with the planned amounts, except that as of September 30, 2018 the expenditure for Component 2 was below the planned amounts. It is anticipated that the expenditure for Component 2 increased notably in the 4th quarter of 2018 as the project completed the monitoring program during this time.

Table 7 Project Planned vs. Actual Financing, Through September 30, 2018 (\$ USD)

	GEF amount planned	Share of total GEF amount	GEF amount actual	% of GEF amount actual	% of original planned
Component 1 - GEF	\$875,500	67.8%	\$890,762	73.5%	101.7%
Component 1 – UNDP TRAC	\$0	n/a	\$7,809	n/a	n/a
Component 2 – GEF	\$293,500	22.7%	\$210,883	17.4%	71.9%
Component 2 – UNDP TRAC	\$0	n/a	\$2,321	n/a	n/a
Monitoring and Evaluation*	\$72,500	5.6%	N/S	N/S	N/S
Project Coordination and Management - GEF	\$122,500	9.5%	\$110,315	9.1%	90.1%
Project Coordination and Management – UNDP TRAC	\$150,000	n/a	\$93,860	n/a	69.3%**
Total[†]	\$1,441,500	100.0%	\$1,315,950	100.0%	100%

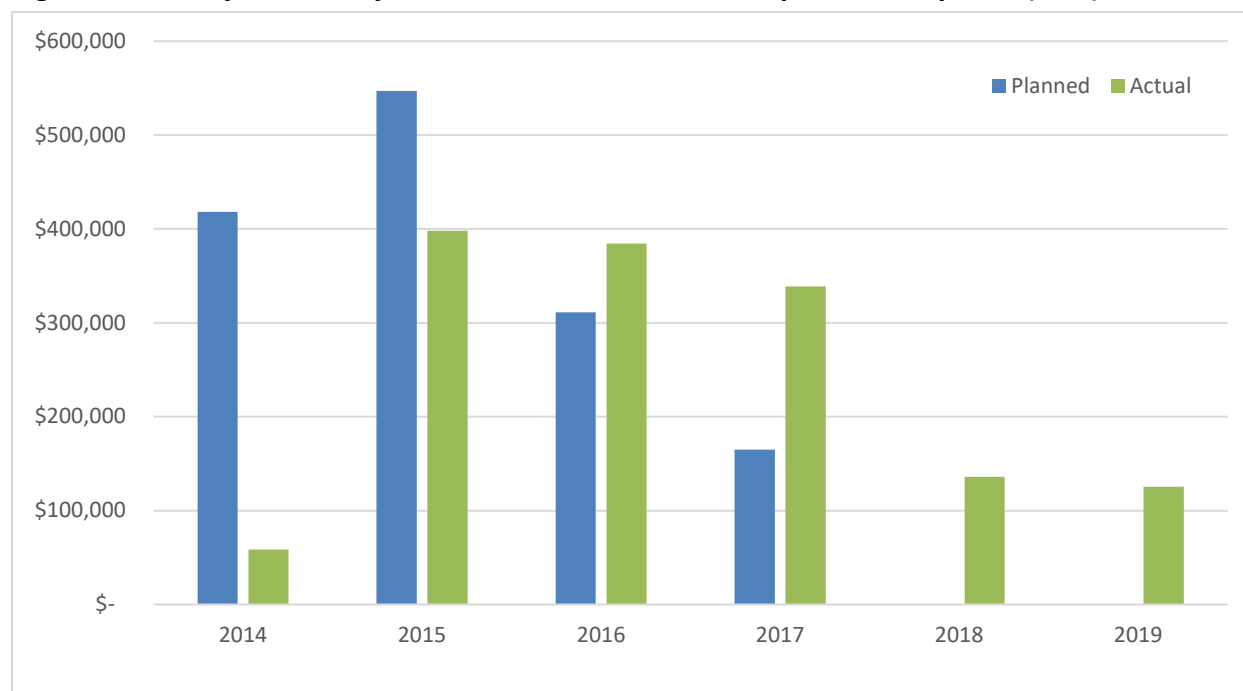
Sources: Project Document for planned amount; project financial documents provided by UNDP for actual amounts.

*The project document includes a detailed M&E budget. However, the total M&E budget includes activities that would be funded from the project management budget line (such as annual reporting) or other sources (such as UNDP oversight). As such, the funds for M&E activities were drawn from across project budget lines.

*** Percentage of all UNDP TRAC funds, spent vs planned, not just project coordination and management expenditure. UNDP TRAC funds were originally planned only for project coordination and management, but \$10,131 of UNDP TRAC funds were spent on Components 1 and 2.*

78. The project was planned for 48 months, but this was originally planned to be four calendar years, starting in 2014. However, the project did not officially start until mid-2014, and then ultimately did not start in practical terms until the beginning of 2015. So, in fact, the planned budget for 2014 in the Prodoc can be considered roughly equivalent to the actual expenditure for 2015. Figure 3 below shows the project's planned vs actual expenditure by year. The project document was a little bit ambitious in terms of annual financial delivery, with an expectation that 67% of the total project budget would be delivered in the first two years, while in practice UNDP GEF projects more typically reach 35-50% of financial delivery in the first half of the project. The main reason that the project financial delivery was extended was the delay of the approval of the Gizil-Agaj National Park, as further discussed in later Section VI on effectiveness and results.

Figure 3 Azerbaijan PAs Project Total Planned vs Actual Expenditure by Year (USD)



79. On the whole, the project's financial planning and management is considered adequate, though the project's main shortcomings in terms of the overall efficiency of the project were in this area. Most specifically, the project's unplanned purchase of a tourist boat for \$123,000, or approximately 9% of the project's total cash budget, turned out not to be a cost-effective approach. This decision was well-intentioned, was country-driven, and was executed through the appropriate financial procurement channels. Per the recommendation of the MTR, the project was able to provide a justified business case for the purchase. However, as of the end of the project the tourist boat were not in operation in service of any of the protected areas targeted by the project. At best, this decision was very premature in terms of the potential utility of the boat for the project PAs, and at worst it significantly hampered the project's ability to provide

significant additional support to enhance the management effectiveness of the targeted PAs. The project did not clean as much length of the canals in the Gizil-Agaj PA as originally planned (though the necessity of cleaning these canals is not fully clear from a scientific perspective), and the project was only able to provide minimal monitoring and enforcement equipment to the three targeted PAs other than Gizil-Agaj. It should be noted that the decision to procure the tourist boat occurred in the period when the project was without a regular project manager. It is impossible to say if having a project manager in place at that time would have altered this decision, but there was no one in place with a view of the overall project scope, objective, and planned results who was empowered at that time to gently re-direct the PSC's misguided interest in this purchase. Another part of this equation is that the project results framework did not include indicator targets for the three PAs in the scope of the project other than Gizil-Agaj, and therefore there may have been less attention given to actually enhancing the management effectiveness of these PAs. The project ultimately exceeded the METT target for Gizil-Agaj, so the argument could be made that the tourist boat issue did not affect the achievement of the expected project results; but the project results likely could have been much greater were it not for this issue, in terms of increases in management effectiveness of the other three PAs.

80. While the tourist boat issue was significant, the project also greatly benefited from an improvement in the USD-Azeri manat (local currency) exchange rate during the course of the project, so that the project's local purchasing power was much greater during implementation than was expected at the time the project was approved. At the time the project was approved the exchange rate was 0.78 Azeri manats to the USD. In February 2015, and December 2015 the local currency was subject to two large devaluations, to exchange rates of 1.05 and 1.55, respectively (see Figure 4 below). During the final year of the project, the exchange rate averaged 1.70 manat/USD. Although a weighted average exchange rate for the project implementation period has not been calculated, the difference in the exchange rate meant that after December 2015, compared to the time when the project was approved, the project's purchasing power in local currency essentially doubled. Only \$83,250 of the project's budget was contracted through international consultants, where the exchange rate would not have been a factor; although some of the equipment procurement may also have been from foreign sources. Therefore the project had quite a bit of financial flexibility during implementation. On the other hand, the inflation rate in Azerbaijan was also a relevant factor in the project's financial management and purchasing power. In the case of this project the exchange rate situation ended up being a positive factor, but many projects are not so lucky; UNDP would be wise to develop improved hedging strategies to ensure that there are no unpleasant exchange rate surprises during project implementation.

81. The project did not have an audit, although an audit is indicated in the project M&E plan, "According to applicable procedures", with an indicative cost of \$4,500. Although a project-specific audit was not conducted, the project is subject to the UNDP Azerbaijan Country Office overall organizational financial audit procedures. The MTR further recommended that a project audit be conducted by the end of 2017, but this recommendation was not followed-up on.

Figure 4 USD vs Azeri Manat Exchange Rate During Project Implementation (Source: XE.com)



G. Planned and Actual Co-financing

82. The expected project co-financing was \$6,491,069, from the national government and UNDP. This is an expected co-financing ratio of 5 : 1. Table 6 below shows planned and actual co-financing. According to data provided by the project team, the project had received a total of at least \$6.57 million USD in co-financing as December 31, 2018. This is 101.2% of the expected co-financing. Other than the UNDP TRAC co-financing, the breakdown of co-financing is not tracked by project outcome because it is not managed by the project, and much of the co-financing has gone to support all aspects of the project.

Table 8 Planned and Actual Co-financing Received, as of December 31, 2018 (USD)

Sources of Co-finance	Name of Co-financer	Type of Co-financing	Planned	Actual	Explanation	% of Expected Amount
GEF Agency	UNDP TRAC	Cash	\$150,000	\$150,000	UNDP TRAC funding has supported Outcome 1 and 2 (\$10,131), and project management (\$139,869): 1. Part of the Project Manager's salary; Project Assistant's salary, UNDP Programme Officer's travel expenses, 2. Project car maintenance, fuel and	100%

					insurance expenses, 3. Communication and translation expenses, 3. Office supplies, 4. IT equipment and accessories for project assistant, 5. Bank charges; TE consultancy fee;	
National Government	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources	In-kind	\$200,000	\$220,000	1. Project Focal Person's (Head of the Biodiversity Department) time spent on the project, especially on the lengthy National Park establishment process; 2. Time of staff in Biodiversity and International Relation Departments spent on the project, 3. Data and overall guidance provided for the project by MENR for free, 4. Time of all 4 Park Managers' and the remaining parks' ranger and scientific staff spent on project; Time spent on the organization of stakeholder meetings and tours around the park for monitoring;	110%
National Government	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources	Cash	\$6,141,069	\$6,200,000	1. Landscaping works in Gizilagaj National Park; 2. Construction of roads in 4 CMPAs; 3. Repair and landscaping works in buildings for Ecotourism services constructed in Shirvan NP; 4. Preparation of the layout of the administrative building in Samur-Yalama NP; 5. Receiving of initial approvals from the Institute of Geology and Geophysics,	101.1%

					Ministry of Emergence, State Committee for Construction and Architecture on construction of a new administrative building in Samur-Yalama NP; 6. Expenses of staff in Biodiversity staff to travel to 4 CMPAs under the project; 7. Renovation and repair works in the Gizilagaj Administrative building; 8. Dredging of shallow boundary canals in Giziagaj NP; 9. Electricity and water supply works for the outposts in Gizilagaj NP; 10. Transportation and delivery of purchased goods to CMPAs under the project; 11. Fees for the Ministry's independent experts who provided consultancy services to prepare and check the technical tender documents; 12. Labor force involved during the construction of outposts and roads in Gizilagaj NP and other CMPAs ; 13. Annual fee allocated to ERP private company for the provision of the technical support to the relevant finance and accounting staff in the MENR and 4 CMPAs;	
Total			\$6,491,069	\$6,570,000		101.2%

Sources: Planned from Project Document. Actual total co-financing received as per data from UNDP/Project Team.

83. It appears that some sources of likely co-financing have not been fully accounted, and therefore it is likely that the actual co-financing received is greater than indicated. For example, there is no co-financing indicated in relation to in-kind contributions by NGOs for bird monitoring.

H. Monitoring and Evaluation

84. The Azerbaijan MPAs project **M&E design** generally meets UNDP and GEF minimum standards, although there are some issues with the results framework design; M&E design is considered **moderately satisfactory**. **M&E implementation** is considered **moderately satisfactory**, and therefore **overall M&E** is considered **moderately satisfactory**.

i. M&E Design

85. The Azerbaijan MPAs project M&E plan is outlined in the project document, including a budgeted M&E plan in table format (Part IV, pp. 54-57 of the Prodoc). The M&E plan describes each of the planned M&E activities, including roles, responsibilities, and timeframe. The identified M&E activities include inception workshop and report, annual progress reporting (APR/PIR), the independent external evaluations, project terminal report, and audit. The M&E plan includes a specific brief section on “Learning and Knowledge Sharing”; in addition, it was expected lessons would be captured in the various M&E activities and reports, since, for example, they are automatically included in the annual PIR, and Terminal Evaluation. The M&E plan is summarized in a table showing responsible parties, budget, and timeframe for each of the M&E activities, with the total expected budget of \$72,500. This is adequate for a project of this size and scope, representing approximately 5.6% of the GEF allocation. However the plan does not indicate if the M&E costs are to be fully covered by GEF resources, or would be also partially funded by project. The project’s budget plan does not have a specific M&E budget line; the resources for M&E activities is to be drawn from various project components, such as project management. The budget notes from the project document Total Budget and Workplan (Section III, pp. 63-66 of the project document) indicate that the costs of international consultants for the MTR and terminal evaluation would be covered under Project Management costs through UNDP TRAC funding. The project M&E plan is appropriately designed and well-articulated, and conforms to GEF and UNDP M&E minimum standards.

86. The project results framework is a critical component of the project’s overall M&E framework. On the whole the results framework indicators and targets generally meet SMART criteria, although there are three important overall issues related to the results framework.

87. First, many of the indicator target values are not clearly rationalized; this is an issue for many, if not most, UNDP GEF projects. Projects must have targets that are based on some scientific or other rationale explaining what benefit will be reached by achieving the target value. Too often project developers simply fall back on approximate figures that “sound reasonable” for the project budget, such as “50% increase”. This is not an adequate way to establish targets, and is a disservice to the project.

88. The second issue is that a number of the project’s targets were denominated in USD, and as discussed previously there were significant exchange rate and inflation fluctuations during the life of the project, rendering the USD-denominated targets almost meaningless. If targets are going to be denominated in USD, they should be indexed in a way that considers potential

exchange rates and other external factors so that the baseline and end-of-project values can be meaningfully compared. One of the project indicators could not be assessed due to the target being indicated in USD.

89. The third issue relates to the results framework impact targets relating to monitoring of bird populations. It is a positive step that the results framework has impact level indicators and targets, but these indicators could have been improved. Bird populations, especially large populations of tens of thousands of birds, are typically highly challenging to accurately assess. In addition, there can be large natural stochastic variations from year to year, depending on environmental conditions, which may not reflect actual changes in the number of birds in the population, as some parts of the population may choose to use alternate habitat zones outside of the project target area. Therefore such impact indicators should be assessed on a rolling annual basis (i.e. rolling 5-year average) to track trends over multiple years. In addition, unless well-established and consistent monitoring procedures are in place, the number of birds in large migratory avian populations should be avoided as an impact indicator.

ii. M&E Implementation

90. The project M&E activities were generally implemented in an adequate manner, apart from a few key points; M&E implementation is considered **moderately satisfactory**. The project team provided reports at required reporting intervals (i.e. quarterly progress reports, annual PIR), and UNDP oversight has been appropriate. Approximately two PSC meetings were held per year, although the project document foresaw four meetings per year; however, two meetings per year were considered adequate considering the PSC membership consisted of only the MENR representative, UNDP representatives, and the project team. The project team was in regular email and direct personal contact with the PSC members outside of the PSC meetings, as necessary. The project did not have a financial audit (as discussed at the end of Section V.F above on financial management), although an audit was planned in the M&E plan, and was recommended by the MTR.

91. Although mid-term reviews (MTRs) are not required for GEF medium-sized projects, this project did include one, which is considered good practice. The MTR was conducted in March-June 2017. This was slightly 9-12 months later than anticipated; with the project start of June 30, 2014 the MTR would have been expected in mid-2016. However, the project inception meeting was not held until January 30, 2015, so the MTR would have been expected by approximately the end of 2016. In addition, the MTR was conducted after expenditure of more than 63% of the GEF funds, and therefore the project had limited flexibility to respond to MTR recommendations that had any significant budget implications. The MTR recommendations, and a summary on the project's responsiveness to the recommendations are included in Annex 8 of this evaluation report. On the whole, the project did adequately respond to a majority of the MTR recommendations that were accepted and considered valid. A few important recommendations were only partially implemented, or implementation is ongoing.

VI. Effectiveness and Results: Progress Toward the Objective and Outcomes

92. The Azerbaijan MPAs project has achieved the project objective and the two planned outcomes. The project's **effectiveness** is rated **moderately satisfactory**. Although the project achieved its most important expected results, the overall sequencing of the workplanning and

sequencing of implementation of activities did not allow some of the project activities to be as fruitful as they could have been. The most notable example is the environmental monitoring framework, which was only completed within the last six months of the project, and therefore did not have time to be fully field tested, institutionalized, and implemented. In addition, the project could have been more effective if all key stakeholders had been fully engaged throughout the entire implementation process, i.e. if there had been as strong of country ownership from MENR at the beginning of the project as there was at the end of the project.

93. Project **results / achievement of overall outcomes** is rated **satisfactory**. The project achieved 9 of 15 results indicator targets, and partially met 4 of 15; two indicator targets could not be assessed. The key overarching result achieved by the project was the approval of the Gizil-Agaj National Park, which occurred September 26, 2018. Other results include:

- Preparation of initial management plan for Gizil-Agaj National Park.
- Provision of equipment and materials to improve the management effectiveness of the MPAs, particularly in Gizil-Agaj National Park, and corresponding training of staff.
- Investments in PA management infrastructure, such as administration buildings, ranger stations, and watch towers.
- Increase in Gizil-Agaj National Park METT score from baseline of 25% to 63% (significantly exceeding the target of 45%).
- Development of environmental monitoring protocols for the MPAs.
- The preparation of business plans for each of the MPAs, and an overall financial plan for the all MPAs.
- Implementation of highly improved and efficient financial management and planning software for the management of MPAs, and training of key staff to use the software.

94. While the project was able to generate many valuable and important results, there remains a great need for ongoing investment and support into MPAs in Azerbaijan, as well as the overall national PA system, which is not functioning at the level of international standards. A majority of the most important project results were achieved in the final 12 months of the project, and given the increased engagement and attention of the leadership of the MENR, there is currently an opportunity through new projects and initiatives to achieve even more impressive results related to MPAs, and to the PA system as a whole.

95. Detailed and specific information identifying many project results not covered in this section is available in the “Self-assessment” column of Annex 9 of this report, which includes the project results framework and the project’s reporting on indicators and targets from the 2018 PIR.

96. The project objective level results indicators are summarized in Table 9 below. A detailed terminal evaluation assessment of the status of achievement of each indicator target is included in Annex 9.

Table 9 Azerbaijan MPAs Project Objective Level Indicators

Indicator	Baseline	Target	Status
1. Financial sustainability scorecard for national system of protected areas	15%	>35%	Achieved.
2. Capacity development indicator score for protected area system	Systemic: 34% Institutional: 20% Individual: 13%	Systemic: >50% Institutional: >40% Individual: >25%	Achieved.
3. Total annual budget (HR, OPEX and CAPEX) allocation for marine and coastal PAs (US\$/ha)	All PAs: US\$3.03/ha Gizil-Agaj: US\$ 2.53/ha	All PAs: >US\$4/ha Gizil-Agaj: >US\$4/ha	Unable to assess.
4. Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool scorecard: Gizil-Agaj	25%	>45%	Achieved.

A. Component / Outcome 1: Enhanced management effectiveness of the Gizil-Agaj reserve complex

97. The first component of the project focused on consolidation of the Gizil-Agaj PA complex (joining the two original PAs) and conversion of the PA to national park status. The total GEF funding planned for the component was \$875,500 million USD, which was 67.8% of the total GEF funding for the project; the actual expenditure as of September 30, 2018 was \$890,762 USD. The component activities were organized around four outputs:

- Output 1.1. Establish a consolidated national park
- Output 1.2. Prepare an integrated park management plan
- Output 1.3. Demarcate the park boundary, and renovate the access control infrastructure
- Output 1.4. Procure critical park equipment

98. Key results indicators for Component 1 are summarized in Table 11 below.

Table 10 Component 1 Indicators and Targets

Indicator	Baseline	Target	Status
5. Extent (ha) of area surveyed, and formally proclaimed and managed as the Gizil-Agaj national park	0 ha	>100,000ha	Achieved (at 99,060 ha).
6. Total number of mixed breeding population of Pelecaniformes and Ciconiiformes in Gizil-Agaj	70000	>100,000	Unable to assess.
7. Total number of wintering waterbirds in Gizil-Agaj	400000	400,000 - 500,000	Unable to assess.
8. Average number (#/month during spawning season) of illegal sturgeon poaching incidents (or violation of fishing permits) occurring in Gizil-Agaj	Spring: >8 Autumn: >6	Spring: <2 Autumn: <2	Achieved.
9. Average number (#/month during winter) of recorded illegal bird hunting incidents occurring in Gizil-Agaj	Winter: >25/month	Winter: <10/month	Achieved.
10. Average number (#/month/year) of cattle illegally grazing in Gizil-Agaj	>500/month	<10/month	Achieved.

B. Component / Outcome 2: Improved collaborative governance of, and institutional expertise in, the management of marine and coastal protected areas

99. The second component of the project aimed for completion and adoption of the SAP. The total GEF funding for Component 2 was originally planned at \$293,500 USD, which was 22.7% of the total GEF funding for the project; actual expenditure as of September 30, 2018 was \$210,883. The component activities were organized around three outputs:

100. Output 2.1. Prepare a financial plan

101. Output 2.2. Strengthen capacity of MENR to implement the Financial Plan

102. Output 2.3. Identify and monitor critical thresholds for ecosystem health

103. Key results indicators for Component 2 are summarized in Table 11 below.

Table 11 Component 2 Indicators and Targets

Indicator	Baseline	Target	Status
11. Income/annum (US\$), by source, from marine and coastal protected areas	Government: US\$480,822 Donors: US\$277,720 Entry fees: US\$3,902\$ Tourism services: US\$0 Fines: US\$45,356 Resource use: US\$0 Concessions: US\$0 (baseline year = 2011/2012)	Government: >US\$750,000 Donors: >US\$500,000 Entry fees: >US\$15,000 Tourism services: >US\$10,000 Fines: >US\$75,000 Resource use: >US\$10,000 Concessions: >US\$10,000 (target year = 2016/17)	Achieved.
12. Number of MENR staff completing in-service financial training and skills development programmes	(not set or not applicable)	>10	Partially achieved.
13. Number of non-state stakeholder institutions and private sector businesses investing in, and/or supporting the administration of, marine and coastal protected areas	Donor agencies: 2 NGOs: 1 Private businesses: 0	Donor agencies: 4 NGOs: 2 Private sector: 2	Partially achieved.
14. Number of business plans operational in individual marine and coastal national parks	(not set or not applicable)	4	Partially achieved.
15. Number of indicators of ecosystem health being regularly monitored and used to guide decision-making in marine and coastal protected areas	(not set or not applicable)	>10	Partially achieved.

C. Impacts and Global Environmental Benefits

104. The GEF Evaluation Office and UNDP require a rating on project impact, which in the context of the GEF biodiversity focal area, relates to actual change in environmental status (e.g.

improvements in species, improvements in ecosystems, improved ecosystem services related to biodiversity, etc.).

105. The Azerbaijan MPAs project made significant progress toward stress reduction or status change. This was mainly through the notable achievement under Outcome 1 of the approval of the Gizil-Agaj National Park. Previously the protected area formally had a higher level of protection, where no human presence was allowed inside the protected area, apart from management staff. However, in practice, due to this “closed-to-the-public” status, there was reportedly a large amount of illegal activity happening inside the protected area, including large amounts of illegal hunting / poaching. Since the national park has been established and the protected area has been opened to the public, the illegal activities have (anecdotally) diminished by a large margin. As one stakeholder stated,

“I’m very optimistic, because the opening of the protected area is critical for better protection. In Azerbaijan you must open the protected areas in order to have nature conservation and protection. When it is closed [people] just make illegal money. So the best conservation that the project could do was to open the protected area to the public, because then the illegal hunters don’t go, they are afraid of the eyes of people, because the people see this and get shocked, and start writing letters to the authorities. I can’t say when impacts will happen, because we still don’t know how the Gizil-Agaj National Park will be functioning. So now, it depends on the number of visitors: more tourists, more access to the national park, more protection. But I can’t say when or how there will be positive impacts.”

106. Although the project made significant progress toward impacts, there has not yet been sufficient time for actual impacts to occur and be documented. The conversion of the Gizil-Agaj National Park only occurred at the end of September 2018, approximately six months before project completion (only 2.5. months prior to the terminal evaluation).

107. The project results framework did include two impact-level indicators (indicators 6-7, under Component 1), but the indicators could not be assessed. The results framework also included some stress reduction indicators (indicators 8-10 under Component 1) (i.e. reduction in illegal hunting, poaching, etc.), which are considered to have been achieved, but given the scope and timing of project activities, is unlikely that the project made any significant contribution to the change from the baseline value; if there was a change from the baseline level it may have been due to other influences. Therefore, based on the above, the impact ratings for the project must be assessed as follows:

- *Environmental status improvement* is assessed as **negligible**;
- *Environmental stress reduction* is assessed as **minimal**; and
- *Progress toward stress reduction/status change* is assessed as **significant**.

VII. Key GEF Performance Parameters

108. Sustainability is one of the five main evaluation criteria, as well as being considered one of the GEF operational principles.

109. UNDP-GEF project evaluations are also required to discuss the mainstreaming of UNDP program principles. This is covered in Annex 12 of this evaluation report.

A. Sustainability

110. There are some risks to the sustainability of the project results but overall **sustainability** is considered ***moderately likely***. The overall project result of the establishment of Gizil-Agaj National Park is likely to be sustained. There are a variety of risks to all components of sustainability however. Financial risks to sustainability relate to the status of future government support for coastal and marine protected areas management, including implementation of some project outputs (e.g. business/financial plans; monitoring protocols). In addition, it was frequently mentioned that the low salaries of protected area staff is an ongoing drag on the system, as such low salaries do not attract many well-qualified staff, and create many risks by putting financial pressure on protected area staff. Socio-economic risks remain present, as not all local stakeholders near MPAs are fully supportive of their existence, although stakeholder ownership (particularly at the national level) has continued increasing during project implementation. Institutional and governance risks to sustainability exist in terms of the overall status of Azerbaijan's protected area system, which is not fully systematized or standardized, and does not function as a cohesive single system. This means that protected areas with lower management capacity and less opportunity to generate revenue are weaker and remain so over time; some such protected areas are coastal and marine protected areas. There also remain environmental risks to sustainability, despite the approval of the Gizil-Agaj National Park. There are still illegal activities (e.g. illegal hunting) carried out in the protected areas that have negative environmental effects. In terms of environmental risks to sustainability, the risk of major ecological damage due to oil spills is present, and climate change is likely to have large effects on coastal and marine protected areas, particularly through fluctuations in the level of the Caspian Sea.

B. Catalytic Role: Replication and Up-scaling

111. The Azerbaijan MPAs project has some catalytic potential, although the majority of the project results were focused at the level of one protected area, Gizil-Agaj. The main project result that has significant potential for replication and upscaling is the advancement of the updated and modern software system for financial management of protected areas. This software was implemented for the MENR, with key relevant staff trained. The software has been so positively received that the MENR is reportedly considering adopting it for all protected areas, at a minimum, and potentially for the financing management of the MENR as a whole.

112. The project document included a brief section on replication, but did not specifically outline a detailed replication plan. Some of the project results have replication potential, such as the business plans that were developed. However, they need to actually be implemented in the targeted protected areas before they are likely to be replicated to other protected areas. The environmental monitoring framework could also be replicated, although the framework is specifically designed for coastal and marine protected areas and the project encompassed all such protected areas in the country.

C. Gender Equality and Mainstreaming

113. Gender equality and mainstreaming was marginally considered during the project, potentially partly due to the fact that the project was designed prior to implementation of

UNDP's Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017, and the project design did not include a gender analysis. The MTR summarizes the situation with respect to gender mainstreaming:

"The indicators in the project results framework are not disaggregated by gender. A gender analysis was not made at project preparation or afterwards, and there is no specific gender dimension in the project. Gender questions were raised at the project review phase. The project responded by explaining that the anticipated direct socioeconomic and gender equity benefits of the project will be small to insignificant. The response further indicated that 'although project will identify approaches to, and mechanisms for, the direct involvement of the private sector, local communities and women in the ongoing provision of tourism/recreation services in, and sustainable resource use from, marine and coastal protected areas, it is not able to quantify the extent and nature of the likely beneficiation to be derived from these efforts'."

114. The project did not report any additional information on gender mainstreaming in the 2015-2017 PIRs, but did elaborate a bit in the 2018 PIR. The PIR states that the project specifically included women in the different training courses carried out by the project, which supported gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the context of the fact that in rural areas of Azerbaijan women are still not regarded as equals in professional or societal realms.

VIII. Main Lessons Learned and Recommendations

A. Lessons from the Experience of the Azerbaijan MPAs Project

115. The terminal evaluation has identified the below notable lessons from the experience of the Azerbaijan MPAs project. These lessons should be aggregated by UNDP for application to other similar future initiatives.

116. **Lesson:** If projects are planned for a reasonably long implementation period then lengthy no-cost extensions can be avoided, and workplanning and financial management can be improved. The Azerbaijan MPAs project was originally planned for four years, which is relatively long for a project of only \$1.29 million USD in GEF funding. The project did require a no-cost extension, but the required extension would have been much longer and more disruptive if the project had been originally planned for a shorter implementation period.

117. **Lesson:** Projects should always have a fully engaged project manager; in any situation where a project manager departs from their post prior to project completion, UNDP (or any other GEF Agency) should identify a replacement as quickly as possible. The project manager is the primary key person responsible for successful implementation of the project, and there are few circumstances when a project can be successfully implemented without a project manager in place who is empowered to drive the project forward. The Azerbaijan MPAs project lost its initial project manager early in the project implementation period, and a new project manager was not fully in place for more than one year afterwards, which slowed and created inefficiencies in project implementation.

118. **Lesson:** When working on establishing protected areas, it is best to spend the necessary time at the beginning working with all stakeholders to create a good map with boundaries agreed by all stakeholders. This can help smooth the later steps in the approval process, especially if there are government requirements relating to changing official land classifications, such as

agricultural land. In the case of the Azerbaijan MPAs project, the proposal for the Gizil-Agaj National Park had to be submitted to the cabinet level more times than necessary, as the map and boundaries were not fully agreed by all stakeholders in advance.

119. **Lesson:** If the scope of a project includes establishment of a PA as well as other related activities, it is best to focus all energy on the establishment of the PA first, so other activities can follow afterwards. In the case of the Azerbaijan MPAs project, the Gizil-Agaj National Park was established late in the project implementation, which meant there was little time for some other activities that depended on the establishment of the national park.

120. **Lesson:** Activities that involve environmental monitoring should be started as early as possible so that there is time to collect monitoring data over multiple seasons, and multiple field seasons (over multiple years). The monitoring program for the Azerbaijan MPAs project was not created until less than six months before project completion. Initial monitoring activities were only started in fall 2018 (with less than one year of project implementation remaining, and only fall and winter seasons left in the project lifetime), so it was not possible to collect more than a preliminary set of monitoring data.

121. **Lesson:** Environmental monitoring programs should be designed to minimize future required inputs (especially costly materials), to increase the likelihood of sustainability when the monitoring programs will be implemented by local stakeholders. For example, the water quality monitoring program developed in the Azerbaijan MPAs project requires the use of some chemicals for testing water samples, but some of the testing chemicals are expensive and may not be easy for the PA staff to procure in the future, once the initial supply is depleted.

122. **Lesson:** When the time and attention necessary is taken to develop customized technology solutions, these solutions can greatly improve efficiency in the future. The Azerbaijan MPAs project supported the MENR to work with a 3rd party vendor to identify and develop financial management software that is tailored to the particular needs of the MENR. The MENR staff using the software find it extremely useful, and very well suited to their work, and it has greatly increased their efficiency.

123. **Lesson:** When enforcement conditions in a protected area are poor, bringing in additional people in the form of members of the public who are tourists can actually be a good means of improving enforcement, as it increases the number of people viewing potential illegal activities within the PA. When Gizil-Agaj was a strict protected area with no access for tourists, monitoring and enforcement was problematic. According to stakeholders, the number of illegal activities and the degree of enforcement has improved since it became a national park and has been opened to the public (even though the formal level of protection has decreased).

124. **Lesson:** Clear signage and communication about the boundaries of PAs can improve the interactions with local stakeholders. In Gizil-Agaj National Park the relations between local fishermen and park rangers were improved once boundary buoys were installed demarcating the boundaries of the marine portions of the PA.

125. **Lesson:** Much of a project's results depend on national ownership, often at the highest levels. In the Azerbaijan MPAs project, after three years of project implementation, there was a change in senior leadership of the MENR in the spring of 2018, and the Gizil-Agaj National Park was established a few months later.

B. Recommendations for Consolidating Results and Supporting Sustainability

126. The recommendations of the terminal evaluation are listed below, with the primary target audience for each recommendation following in brackets.

127. Recommendation 1: UNDP and the MENR should develop partnership with Ministry of Tourism to support the development of eco-tourism in and around national parks and other protected areas. This could include, for example, joint marketing strategies, such as naming 2020 the “Year of National Parks in Azerbaijan”, and working with tour operators to develop new tourist offerings that focus on experiences in national parks. [MENR, UNDP]

128. Recommendation 2: The project team should try co-organize the final project wrap-up workshop or conference with the Ministry of Tourism, to catalyze and support further cooperation between MENR and the Ministry of Tourism. [Project Team, MENR]

129. Recommendation 3: At the end of the project all of the MPAs involved in the project (four of them) should complete the METT scorecard, to support learning and ongoing improved management. [Project Team]

130. Recommendation 4: To support long-term sustainability, the project team should support MENR to identify the equipment and materials (e.g. boats, vehicles, monitoring equipment, water quality monitoring chemicals, etc.) that were provided to the PAs by the project, and set a planned depreciation schedule to help the MENR set a long-term financial plan for the eventual replacement of the equipment once it reaches the end of its useful life. [Project Team, MENR]

131. Recommendation 5: Protected area business / financial plans should be regularly assessed, updated, and revised (approximately every 3 years). [MENR]

132. Recommendation 6: The Government of Azerbaijan and international development partners should maintain a strong focus on the further development and capacity strengthening of the national PA system. This project has made a number of important steps forward for MPAs, and some other PAs in the country have increased their capacity in recent years. However, for Azerbaijan’s PA system to meet international standards, there remains a large need to systematize the management of PAs in Azerbaijan. There is a need to manage the system as a whole, financially, and operationally, so that management capacities are standardized between all PAs, and the system functions cohesively as a whole to conserve the biodiversity of Azerbaijan. Therefore, the Government of Azerbaijan and development partners should collaborate to immediately identify opportunities for additional large-scale (>\$1 million USD) investments in Azerbaijan’s protected area system as a whole. [Government of Azerbaijan, UNDP, GEF, other development partners]

133. Recommendation 7: To support long-term strengthening of the national protected area system, the Government of Azerbaijan should conduct a capacity needs assessment of protected areas staff in Azerbaijan. This should include a benchmarking exercise to compare PA staff salaries relative to global norms, in terms of GDP/capita or other similar metrics that consider national budgetary resources in relative terms. [MENR]

134. Recommendation 8: MPAs in Azerbaijan should be provisioned with basic materials for oil spill mitigation and clean-up, such as oil booms. Oil spill response plans should be prepared, and MPA staff should be trained and empowered to use these materials in case of emergency. Oil spills can have catastrophic impacts on sensitive coastal ecosystems, and a minimal amount

of preparation can significantly reduce damage in case of an emergency. One example of oil spill preparation that may be useful for Azerbaijan can be found in Russia's oil spill prevention and response training in the Gulf of Finland. [MENR]

135. Recommendation 9: To support financial sustainability, protected areas should be able to issue permits for a small fee for the collection of medicinal plants, but only at a level that is sustainable. [MENR]

136. Suggestions and Opportunities Related to Environmental Monitoring:

- UNDP, the MENR, and the Academy of Sciences could collaborate to test and pilot eDNA technology for monitoring wetland/river fish species and other relevant species.
- UNDP could support MENR and the Academy of Sciences to analyze how water quality in MPAs is affecting biodiversity. This topic needs additional scientific analysis, and could be carried out in order to improve ecosystem management, as well as to further justify future water quality monitoring efforts.
- MENR could expand environmental monitoring protocols, and the analysis of monitoring data, to assess the complex relationships between different parts of marine and coastal ecosystems in MPAs, particularly in relation to climate change impacts. For example, it would be helpful to better understand the potential carrying capacity of Shirvan National Park for goitered gazelle, and the potential for that carrying capacity to fluctuate due to climate impacts.
- With the support from the National Academy of Sciences, MENR could prioritize some key topics for vegetation monitoring within MPAs. This could include the impacts of climate change on vegetation in MPAs, the carrying capacity for wildlife within MPAs (e.g. gazelles, roe deer), and the sustainable yield of medicinal plants.

IX. Annexes

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Annex 2: GEF Operational Principles

Annex 3: Azerbaijan MPAs Project Terminal Evaluation Matrix

Annex 4: Interview Guide

Annex 5: Rating Scales

Annex 6: Evaluation Mission Itinerary and Individuals Interviewed

Annex 7: Documents Reviewed

Annex 8: Azerbaijan MPAs Project MTR Recommendations and Project Responsiveness

Annex 9: Azerbaijan MPAs Project Results Framework Assessed Level of Indicator Target Achievement

A. Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Note: Standardized annexes to the TORs not included here for space considerations.

TERMINAL EVALUATION TERMS OF REFERENCE

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with UNDP and GEF M&E policies and procedures, all full and medium-sized UNDP support GEF financed projects are required to undergo a terminal evaluation upon completion of implementation. These terms of reference (TOR) sets out the expectations for a Terminal Evaluation (TE) of the Increasing representation of effectively managed marine ecosystems in the protected area system (Azerbaijan)(PIMS #4327.)

The essentials of the project to be evaluated are as follows:

PROJECT SUMMARY TABLE

Project Title:	Increasing representation of effectively managed marine ecosystems in the protected area system			
GEF Project ID:	00085349		<i>at endorsement (Million US\$)</i>	<i>at completion (Million US\$)</i>
UNDP Project ID:	00072166	GEF financing:	USD 1,291,500	1,291,500
Country:	Azerbaijan	IA/EA own:		
Region:	RBEC	Government:	In kind: 6,341,069	In kind: 6,341,069
Focal Area:	Neftchala. Masally and Lankaran	Other:	UNDP:150,000	UNDP:150,000
FA Objectives, (OP/SP):		Total co-financing:	7,782,569	7,782,569
Executing Agency:	UNDP	Total Project Cost:	1,441,500	1,441,500
Other Partners involved:	Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources	ProDoc Signature (date project began):		June, 2014
		(Operational) Closing Date:	Proposed: March 2019	Actual: March 2019

OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

The Government of Azerbaijan has established a network of six protected areas (3 National Parks, 2 State Nature Reserves and 2 State Nature Sanctuaries) located within the coastal zone of the Caspian Sea, covering an area of 175,575ha. A lack of adequate investment in sustaining a professional staff complement; modernizing the planning and management systems; and developing and maintaining infrastructure and equipment in these coastal and marine protected areas is however compromising the Government's capacity to effectively secure the conservation values of these protected areas. The largest of these marine and coastal protected areas - the Gizil-Agaj State Nature Reserve (88,360 ha) and adjacent Lesser Gizil-Agaj State Nature Sanctuary (10,700 ha) - is considered one of the most important wetlands for wintering and breeding waterbirds in the Western Palearctic and thus forms the spatial focus for project interventions.

The project **goal** is: To establish, and effectively manage, a system of protected areas to conserve representative samples of Azerbaijan's globally unique biodiversity.

The project **objective** is: To improve the management effectiveness, including operational effectiveness and ecosystem representation, of Azerbaijan's coastal and marine protected area system, with due consideration for its overall sustainability, including ecological, institutional and financial sustainability.

In order to achieve the project objective, and address the barriers the project's intervention has been organised into two **components** (this is in line with the components presented at the PIF stage):

Component 1: Enhanced management effectiveness of the Gizil-Agaj reserve complex

Component 2: Improved collaborative governance of, and institutional expertise in, the management of marine and coastal protected areas

The project is expected to produce the following outcomes:

Outcome 1 - The outcome under the 1st component is focused on supporting an improvement in the management capacity (i.e. planning tools, knowledge management, staffing, infrastructure, equipment and funding) of Gizil-Agaj to address the external threats to, and pressures on, the conservation values of the reserve complex.

Outcome 2 - The outcome under the second component is focused on: Creating the enabling conditions for increasing, diversifying and stabilising the financial flows to coastal and marine protected areas; and developing and implementing a long term monitoring system to ensure that the integrity of ecosystems are not pushed over critical thresholds⁶ in the commercialisation of, and natural resource use in, coastal and marine protected areas.

The TE will be conducted according to the guidance, rules and procedures established by UNDP and GEF as reflected in the UNDP Evaluation Guidance for GEF Financed Projects.

The objectives of the evaluation are to assess the achievement of project results, and to draw lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project, and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP programming.

EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHOD

An overall approach and method⁷ for conducting project terminal evaluations of UNDP supported GEF financed projects has developed over time. The evaluator is expected to frame the evaluation effort using the criteria of **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact**, as defined and explained in the UNDP Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed Projects. A set of questions covering each of these criteria have been drafted and are included with this TOR. The evaluator is expected to amend, complete and submit this matrix as part of an evaluation inception report, and shall include it as an annex to the final report.

The evaluation must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The evaluator is expected to follow a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with government counterparts, in particular the GEF operational focal point, UNDP Country Office, project team, UNDP GEF Technical Adviser based in the region and key stakeholders. The evaluator is expected to conduct a field mission to Gizil Agaj Protected Area, including the following project sites *Absheron National Park, Shirvan National Park and Samur-Yalama National Park in case found necessary*. Interviews will be held with the following organizations and individuals at a minimum: Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources.

⁷ For additional information on methods, see the [Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results](#), Chapter 7, pg. 163

The evaluator will review all relevant sources of information, such as the project document, project reports – including Annual APR/PIR, project budget revisions, midterm review, progress reports, GEF focal area tracking tools, project files, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the evaluator considers useful for this evidence-based assessment. A list of documents that the project team will provide to the evaluator for review is included in [Annex B](#) of this Terms of Reference.

EVALUATION CRITERIA & RATINGS

An assessment of project performance will be carried out, based against expectations set out in the Project Logical Framework/Results Framework (see [Annex A](#)), which provides performance and impact indicators for project implementation along with their corresponding means of verification. The evaluation will at a minimum cover the criteria of: **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact**. Ratings must be provided on the following performance criteria. The completed table must be included in the evaluation executive summary. The obligatory rating scales are included in [Annex D](#).

Evaluation Ratings:			
1. Monitoring and Evaluation	rating	2. IA& EA Execution	rating
M&E design at entry		Quality of UNDP Implementation	
M&E Plan Implementation		Quality of Execution - Executing Agency	
Overall quality of M&E		Overall quality of Implementation / Execution	
3. Assessment of Outcomes	rating	4. Sustainability	rating
Relevance		Financial resources:	
Effectiveness		Socio-political:	
Efficiency		Institutional framework and governance:	
Overall Project Outcome Rating		Environmental :	
		Overall likelihood of sustainability:	

PROJECT FINANCE / COFINANCE

The Evaluation will assess the key financial aspects of the project, including the extent of co-financing planned and realized. Project cost and funding data will be required, including annual expenditures. Variances between planned and actual expenditures will need to be assessed and explained. Results from recent financial audits, as available, should be taken into consideration. The evaluator(s) will receive assistance from the Country Office (CO) and Project Team to obtain financial data in order to complete the co-financing table below, which will be included in the terminal evaluation report.

Co-financing (type/source)	UNDP own financing (mill. US\$)		Government (mill. US\$)		Partner Agency (mill. US\$)		Total (mill. US\$)	
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Actual	Actual
Grants								
Loans/Concessions								
• In-kind support								
• Other								
Totals								

MAINSTREAMING

UNDP supported GEF financed projects are key components in UNDP country programming, as well as regional and global programmes. The evaluation will assess the extent to which the project was successfully mainstreamed with

other UNDP priorities, including poverty alleviation, improved governance, the prevention and recovery from natural disasters, and gender.

IMPACT

The evaluators will assess the extent to which the project is achieving impacts or progressing towards the achievement of impacts. Key findings that should be brought out in the evaluations include whether the project has demonstrated: a) verifiable improvements in ecological status, b) verifiable reductions in stress on ecological systems, and/or c) demonstrated progress towards these impact achievements.⁸

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS & LESSONS

The evaluation report must include a chapter providing a set of **conclusions, recommendations** and **lessons**.

IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The principal responsibility for managing this evaluation resides with the UNDP CO in Azerbaijan. The UNDP CO will contract the evaluators and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the evaluation team. The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the Evaluators team to set up stakeholder interviews, arrange field visits, coordinate with the Government etc.

EVALUATION TIMEFRAME

The total duration of the evaluation will be 21 days according to the following plan:

Activity	Timing	Completion Date
Preparation	15.10.2018 (7days)	Date: 22.10.2018
Evaluation Mission	03.12.2018 (7 days)	Date: 07.12.2018
Draft Evaluation Report	17.12.2018 (5 days)	Date: 21.12.2018
Final Report	04.02.2019 (2 days)	Date: 05.02.2019

EVALUATION DELIVERABLES

The evaluation team is expected to deliver the following:

Deliverable	Content	Timing	Responsibilities
Inception Report	Evaluator provides clarifications on timing and method	No later than 2 weeks before the evaluation mission.	Evaluator submits to UNDP CO
Presentation	Initial Findings	End of evaluation mission	To project management, UNDP CO
Draft Final Report	Full report, (per annexed template) with annexes	Within 3 weeks of the evaluation mission	Sent to CO, reviewed by RTA, PCU, GEF OFPs
Final Report*	Revised report	Within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on draft	Sent to CO for uploading to UNDP ERC.

*When submitting the final evaluation report, the evaluator is required also to provide an 'audit trail', detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final evaluation report.

⁸ A useful tool for gauging progress to impact is the Review of Outcomes to Impacts (ROtI) method developed by the GEF Evaluation Office: [ROTI Handbook 2009](#)

TEAM COMPOSITION

The evaluation team will be composed of **1 international evaluator**. The consultant shall have prior experience in evaluating similar projects. Experience with GEF financed projects is an advantage. The evaluator selected should not have participated in the project preparation and/or implementation and should not have conflict of interest with project related activities.

The Team member must present the following qualifications:

- Master's degree in environmental management, or other closely related field
- Minimum 10 years of professional experience in conducting evaluations and reviews of environmental conservation and sustainable development projects
- Strong background in evaluating biodiversity conservation projects, including protected areas and sustainable use of biodiversity
- At least two years of experience in business and/or marketing strategy analysis and development
- In-depth knowledge of monitoring and evaluation policies of United Nations organizations, the Global Environment Facility of UNDP and GEF
- Previous working experience and field work in CIS countries, particularly Azerbaijan, is an asset

EVALUATOR ETHICS

Evaluation consultants will be held to the highest ethical standards and are required to sign a Code of Conduct (Annex E) upon acceptance of the assignment. UNDP evaluations are conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the [UNEG 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluations'](#)

PAYMENT MODALITIES AND SPECIFICATIONS

%	Milestone
20%	At contract signing
30%	Upon submission of the Inception Report
30%	Upon submission and approval of the initial draft version of the terminal evaluation report
45%	Upon submission and approval (UNDP-CO and UNDP RTA) of the final terminal evaluation report

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applicants are requested to apply online <http://jobs.undp.org> by 05.10.2018. Individual consultants are invited to submit applications together with their CV for these positions. The application should contain a current and complete C.V. in English with indication of the e-mail and phone contact. Shortlisted candidates will be requested to submit a price offer indicating the total cost of the assignment (including daily fee, per diem and travel costs).

UNDP applies a fair and transparent selection process that will take into account the competencies/skills of the applicants as well as their financial proposals. Qualified women and members of social minorities are encouraged to apply.

B. Annex 2: GEF Operational Principles

<http://www.gefweb.org/public/opstrat/ch1.htm>

TEN OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GEF'S WORK PROGRAM

1. For purposes of the financial mechanisms for the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the GEF will **function under the guidance of, and be accountable to, the Conference of the Parties (COPs)**. For purposes of financing activities in the focal area of ozone layer depletion, GEF operational policies will be consistent with those of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and its amendments.
2. The GEF will provide new, and additional, grant and concessional funding to meet the agreed **incremental costs** of measures to achieve agreed global environmental benefits.
3. The GEF will ensure the **cost-effectiveness** of its activities to maximize global environmental benefits.
4. The GEF will fund projects that are **country-driven** and based on national priorities designed to support sustainable development, as identified within the context of national programs.
5. The GEF will maintain sufficient **flexibility** to respond to changing circumstances, including evolving guidance of the Conference of the Parties and experience gained from monitoring and evaluation activities.
6. GEF projects will provide for **full disclosure** of all non-confidential information.
7. GEF projects will provide for consultation with, and **participation** as appropriate of, the beneficiaries and affected groups of people.
8. GEF projects will conform to the **eligibility** requirements set forth in paragraph 9 of the GEF Instrument.
9. In seeking to maximize global environmental benefits, the GEF will emphasize its **catalytic role** and leverage additional financing from other sources.
10. The GEF will ensure that its programs and projects are **monitored and evaluated** on a regular basis.

C. Annex 3: Azerbaijan MPAs Project Terminal Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
Evaluation Criteria: Relevance			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project's objective align with the priorities of the local government and local communities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of coherence between project objective and stated priorities of local stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local stakeholders Document review of local development strategies, environmental policies, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local level field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project's objective fit within the national environment and development priorities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of coherence between project objective and national policy priorities and strategies, as stated in official documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National policy documents, such as National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, National Capacity Self-Assessment, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review National level interviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the project concept originate from local or national stakeholders, and/or were relevant stakeholders sufficiently involved in project development? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of involvement of local and national stakeholders in project origination and development (number of meetings held, project development processes incorporating stakeholder input, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project staff Local and national stakeholders Project documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project objective fit GEF strategic priorities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of coherence between project objective and GEF strategic priorities (including alignment of relevant focal area indicators) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GEF strategic priority documents for period when project was approved Current GEF strategic priority documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the project linked with and in-line with UNDP priorities and strategies for the country? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of coherence between project objective and design with UNDAF, CPAP, CPD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNDP strategic priority documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project's objective support implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity? Other relevant MEAs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linkages between project objective and elements of the CBD, such as key articles and programs of work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convention website National Strategies and Action Plan for each convention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review

Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
Evaluation Criteria: Efficiency			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the project cost-effective? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality and adequacy of financial management procedures (in line with UNDP, and national policies, legislation, and procedures) Financial delivery rate vs. expected rate Management costs as a percentage of total costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Interviews with project staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are expenditures in line with international standards and norms? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost of project inputs and outputs relative to norms and standards for donor projects in the country or region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Interviews with project staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the project implementation approach efficient for delivering the planned project results? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequacy of implementation structure and mechanisms for coordination and communication Planned and actual level of human resources available Extent and quality of engagement with relevant partners / partnerships Quality and adequacy of project monitoring mechanisms (oversight bodies' input, quality and timeliness of reporting, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents National and local stakeholders Project staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Interviews with project staff Interviews with national and local stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the project implementation delayed? If so, has that affected cost-effectiveness? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project milestones in time Planned results affected by delays Required project adaptive management measures related to delays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Interviews with project staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the contribution of cash and in-kind co-financing to project implementation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of cash and in-kind co-financing relative to expected level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Interviews with project staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent is the project leveraging additional resources? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount of resources leveraged relative to project budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Interviews with project staff

Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
Evaluation Criteria: Effectiveness			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the project objectives likely to be met? To what extent are they likely to be met? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of progress toward project indicator targets relative to expected level at current point of implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the key factors contributing to project success or underachievement? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of documentation of and preparation for project risks, assumptions and impact drivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the key risks and barriers that remain to achieve the project objective and generate Global Environmental Benefits? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presence, assessment of, and preparation for expected risks, assumptions and impact drivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the key assumptions and impact drivers relevant to the achievement of Global Environmental Benefits likely to be met? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions undertaken to address key assumptions and target impact drivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
Evaluation Criteria: Results			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have the planned outputs been produced? Have they contributed to the project outcomes and objectives? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of project implementation progress relative to expected level at current stage of implementation Existence of logical linkages between project outputs and outcomes/impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the anticipated outcomes likely to be achieved? Are the outcomes likely to contribute to the achievement of the project objective? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of logical linkages between project outcomes and impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are impact level results likely to be achieved? Are the likely to be at the scale sufficient to be considered Global Environmental Benefits? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental indicators Level of progress through the project's Theory of Change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
Evaluation Criteria: Sustainability			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are project results likely to be dependent on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial requirements for maintenance of project benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews

Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
continued financial support? What is the likelihood that any required financial resources will be available to sustain the project results once the GEF assistance ends?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of expected financial resources available to support maintenance of project benefits Potential for additional financial resources to support maintenance of project benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do relevant stakeholders have or are likely to achieve an adequate level of “ownership” of results, to have the interest in ensuring that project benefits are maintained? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of initiative and engagement of relevant stakeholders in project activities and results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do relevant stakeholders have the necessary technical capacity to ensure that project benefits are maintained? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of technical capacity of relevant stakeholders relative to level required to sustain project benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are the project results dependent on socio-political factors? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of socio-political risks to project benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are the project results dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of institutional and governance risks to project benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there any environmental risks that can undermine the future flow of project impacts and Global Environmental Benefits? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of environmental risks to project benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
Cross-cutting and UNDP Mainstreaming Issues			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the project take incorporate gender mainstreaming or equality, as relevant? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of appropriate engagement and attention to gender-relevant aspects of the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review

D. Annex 4: Interview Guide

Terminal Evaluation Draft Interview Guide

Overview: The questions under each topic area are intended to assist in focusing discussion to ensure consistent topic coverage and to structure data collection, and are not intended as verbatim questions to be posed to interviewees. When using the interview guide, the interviewer should be sure to target questions at a level appropriate to the interviewee. The interview guide is one of multiple tools for gathering evaluative evidence, to complement evidence collected through document reviews and other data collection methods; in other words, the interview guide does not cover all evaluative questions relevant to the evaluation.

Key

Bold = GEF Evaluation Criteria

Italic = GEF Operational Principles

I. PLANNING / PRE-IMPLEMENTATION

A. **Relevance**

- i. Did the project's objectives fit within the priorities of the local government and local communities?
- ii. Did the project's objectives fit within national priorities?
- iii. Did the project's objectives fit GEF strategic priorities?
- iv. Did the project's objectives support implementation of the relevant multi-lateral environmental agreement?

B. *Incremental cost*

- i. Did the project create environmental benefits that would not have otherwise taken place?
- ii. Does the project area represent an example of a globally significant environmental resource?

C. *Country-drivenness / Participation*

- i. How did the project concept originate?
- ii. How did the project stakeholders contribute to the project development?
- iii. Do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project?
- iv. Do the local communities support the objectives of the project?
- v. Are the project objectives in conflict with any national level policies?

D. Monitoring and Evaluation Plan / Design (*M&E*)

- i. Were monitoring and reporting roles clearly defined?
- ii. Was there either an environmental or socio-economic baseline of data collected before the project began?

II. MANAGEMENT / OVERSIGHT

A. Project management

- i. What were the implementation arrangements?
- ii. Was the management effective?
- iii. Were workplans prepared as required to achieve the anticipated outputs on the required timeframes?
- iv. Did the project develop and leverage the necessary and appropriate partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders?
- v. Were there any particular challenges with the management process?
- vi. If there was a steering or oversight body, did it meet as planned and provide the anticipated input and support to project management?
- vii. Were risks adequately assessed during implementation?
- viii. Did assumptions made during project design hold true?
- ix. Were assessed risks adequately dealt with?
- x. Was the level of communication and support from the implementing agency adequate and appropriate?

B. Flexibility

- i. Did the project have to undertake any adaptive management measures based on feedback received from the M&E process?
- ii. Were there other ways in which the project demonstrated flexibility?
- iii. Were there any challenges faced in this area?

C. Efficiency (*cost-effectiveness*)

- i. Was the project cost-effective?
- ii. Were expenditures in line with international standards and norms?
- iii. Was the project implementation delayed?
- iv. If so, did that affect cost-effectiveness?
- v. What was the contribution of cash and in-kind co-financing to project implementation?
- vi. To what extent did the project leverage additional resources?

D. Financial Management

- i. Was the project financing (from the GEF and other partners) at the level foreseen in the project document?
- ii. Were there any problems with disbursements between implementing and executing agencies?
- iii. Were financial audits conducted with the regularity and rigor required by the implementing agency?
- iv. Was financial reporting regularly completed at the required standards and level of detail?
- v. Did the project face any particular financial challenges such as unforeseen tax liabilities, management costs, or currency devaluation?

E. Co-financing (*catalytic role*)

- i. Was the in-kind co-financing received at the level anticipated in the project document?

- ii. Was the cash co-financing received at the level anticipated in the project document?
- iii. Did the project receive any additional unanticipated cash support after approval?
- iv. Did the project receive any additional unanticipated in-kind support after approval?

F. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

- i. Project implementation M&E
 - a. Was the M&E plan adequate and implemented sufficiently to allow the project to recognize and address challenges?
 - b. Were any unplanned M&E measures undertaken to meet unforeseen shortcomings?
 - c. Was there a mid-term evaluation?
 - d. How were project reporting and monitoring tools used to support adaptive management?
- ii. Environmental and socio-economic monitoring
 - a. Did the project implement a monitoring system, or leverage a system already in place, for environmental monitoring?
 - b. What are the environmental or socio-economic monitoring mechanisms?
 - c. Have any community-based monitoring mechanisms been used?
 - d. Is there a long-term M&E component to track environmental changes?
 - e. If so, what provisions have been made to ensure this is carried out?

E. Full disclosure

- i. Did the project meet this requirement?
- ii. Did the project face any challenges in this area?

III. ACTIVITIES / IMPLEMENTATION

A. Effectiveness

- i. How have the stated project objectives been met?
- ii. To what extent have the project objectives been met?
- iii. What were the key factors that contributed to project success or underachievement?
- iv. Can positive key factors be replicated in other situations, and could negative key factors have been anticipated?

B. Stakeholder involvement and public awareness (*participation*)

- i. What were the achievements in this area?
- ii. What were the challenges in this area?
- iii. How did stakeholder involvement and public awareness contribute to the achievement of project objectives?

IV. RESULTS

A. Outputs

- i. Did the project achieve the planned outputs?
 - ii. Did the outputs contribute to the project outcomes and objectives?
 - B. Outcomes
 - i. Were the anticipated outcomes achieved?
 - ii. Were the outcomes relevant to the planned project impacts?
 - C. Impacts
 - i. Was there a logical flow of inputs and activities to outputs, from outputs to outcomes, and then to impacts?
 - ii. Did the project achieve its anticipated/planned impacts?
 - iii. Why or why not?
 - iv. If impacts were achieved, were they at a scale sufficient to be considered Global Environmental Benefits?
 - v. If impacts or Global Environmental Benefits have not yet been achieved, are the conditions (enabling environment) in place so that they are likely to eventually be achieved?
 - D. Replication strategy, and documented replication or scaling-up (*catalytic role*)
 - i. Did the project have a replication plan?
 - ii. Was the replication plan “passive” or “active”?
 - iii. Is there evidence that replication or scaling-up occurred within the country?
 - iv. Did replication or scaling-up occur in other countries?
- V. LESSONS LEARNED
 - A. What were the key lessons learned in each project stage?
 - B. In retrospect, would the project participants have done anything differently?
- VI. SUSTAINABILITY
 - A. Financial
 - i. To what extent are the project results dependent on continued financial support?
 - ii. What is the likelihood that any required financial resources will be available to sustain the project results once the GEF assistance ends?
 - iii. Was the project successful in identifying and leveraging co-financing?
 - iv. What are the key financial risks to sustainability?
 - B. Socio-Political
 - i. To what extent are the project results dependent on socio-political factors?
 - ii. What is the likelihood that the level of stakeholder ownership will allow for the project results to be sustained?
 - iii. Is there sufficient public/stakeholder awareness in support of the long-term objectives of the project?
 - iv. What are the key socio-political risks to sustainability?
 - C. Institutions and Governance
 - i. To what extent are the project results dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance?

- ii. What is the likelihood that institutional and technical achievements, legal frameworks, policies and governance structures and processes will allow for the project results to be sustained?
 - iii. Are the required systems for accountability and transparency and the required technical know-how in place?
 - iv. What are the key institutional and governance risks to sustainability?
- D. Ecological
- i. Are there any environmental risks that can undermine the future flow of project impacts and Global Environmental Benefits?

E. Annex 5: Rating Scales

Progress towards results: use the following rating scale	
Highly Satisfactory (HS)	Project is expected to achieve or exceed all its major global environmental objectives, and yield substantial global environmental benefits, without major shortcomings. The project can be presented as “good practice”.
Satisfactory (S)	Project is expected to achieve most of its major global environmental objectives, and yield satisfactory global environmental benefits, with only minor shortcomings.
Moderately Satisfactory (S)	Project is expected to achieve most of its major relevant objectives but with either significant shortcomings or modest overall relevance. Project is expected not to achieve some of its major global environmental objectives or yield some of the expected global environment benefits.
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Project is expected to achieve its major global environmental objectives with major shortcomings or is expected to achieve only some of its major global environmental objectives.
Unsatisfactory (U)	Project is expected not to achieve most of its major global environment objectives or to yield any satisfactory global environmental benefits.
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	The project has failed to achieve, and is not expected to achieve, any of its major global environment objectives with no worthwhile benefits.
Adaptive management AND Management Arrangements: use the following rating scale	
Highly Satisfactory (HS)	The project has no shortcomings and can be presented as “good practice”.
Satisfactory (S)	The project has minor shortcomings.
Moderately Satisfactory (S)	The project has moderate shortcomings.
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	The project has significant shortcomings.
Unsatisfactory (U)	The project has major shortcomings.
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	The project has severe shortcomings.
Sustainability: use the following rating scale	
Likely (L)	There are no or negligible risks that affect this dimension of sustainability/linkages
Moderately Likely (ML)	There are moderate risks that affect this dimension of sustainability/linkages
Moderately Unlikely (MU)	There are significant risks that affect this dimension of sustainability/linkages
Unlikely (U)	There are severe risks that affect this dimension of sustainability
Impact	
Significant (S)	By project completion project directly contributed to scientifically documented large scale impacts.
Minimal (M)	By project completion project directly contributed to anecdotal and/or relatively small site-specific impacts.
Negligible (N)	By project completion project no direct contribution of project to impacts.

F. Annex 6: Evaluation Mission Itinerary and Individuals Interviewed

The following people were interviewed as key stakeholders for the evaluation.

Evaluation Mission Itinerary			
Date	Time	Description	Location
Monday, 10 December	10.00 – 11.45	Meeting with Mr. Chingiz Mammadov, UNDP Senior Programme Adviser and the Project team	UNDP
	12.00 – 12.45	Meeting with Mr. Rashad Allahverdiyev, Head of the Subdivision on the Development of Strictly Protected Nature Areas, Management of Hunting and Ecotourism under the Department on Biodiversity Protection and Development of Specially Protected Nature Areas, (Focal person for Ramsar convention)	MENR
	13.00 – 14.00	Meeting with Mr. Rafiq Verdiyev, Head of International Hydrological Program Association (NGO)	
	14.15 – 15.00	Meeting with Mr. Hikmat Alizade, Head of the Department on Biodiversity Protection and Development of Specially Protected Nature Areas (Focal person for CBD)	MENR
	15.00 – 15.45	Meeting with Ms. Arzu Samadova, Head of the Subdivision on Restoration of Biodiversity under the Department on Biodiversity Protection and Development of Specially Protected Nature Areas (Focal for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety)	MENR
	16.00 – 17.00	Meeting with Mr. Elshad Askerov, Country Director of WWF	UNDP
Tuesday, 11 December	10.00 – 11.00	Meeting with Mr. Suleyman Suleymanov, Associate Professor and the Leading Scientific Employee, Institute of Zoology under the Azerbaijan National Academy of Science	UNDP
	11.15 – 12.00	Meeting with Mr. Vahid Farzaliyev, Head of the Laboratory on plant conservation and monitoring, Central Botanical Garden under the Azerbaijan National Academy of Science	National Botanical Garden
	12.00 – 12.45	Meeting with Mr. Vusal Mirzayev, Head of Local Governance Assistance (NGO)	UNDP
	13.00 – 14.00	Lunch	
	14.15 – 15.00	Meeting with Mr. Ahad Agayev, Expert on Water Quality Assessment and Head of Agriman LLC (private company) and Mr. Khayyam Idrisov, Senior Engineer, Caspian Complex Ecological Monitoring Administration	UNDP
	15.15 – 16.00	Meeting with Mr. Yashar Hasanov, Chief Accountant, Department on Biodiversity Protection and Development of Specially Protected Nature Areas	MENR
	18.00 – 18.30	Skype conversation with Mr. James Jackelman, the International consultant on strategic planning and management service to conservation programmes and projects	UNDP or Hotel
	09.00 - 10.00	Travel from Baku to Absheron National Park	

Wednesday, 12 December	10.00 – 12.00	Introduction to PA management; Meeting with Mr. Etibar Ibrahimov, the Park's Director, Mr. Ferahim Huseynov, the Park's Inspector (Former Park's Director), Ms. Shahla Aliyeva, the Chief Accountant;	Abseron NP
	12.00 – 13.00	Travel from Absheron National Park to Baku	
	13.00 – 14.00	Lunch time	
	14.00 – 15.30	Travel from Baku to Shirvan National Park	Shirvan NP
	15.30 – 16.30	Introduction to PA management; Meeting with Mr. Arzu Mustafayev, the Park's Director, Mr. Seymur Kerimov the Deputy Director, Mr. Vugar Mirzayev, the Chief Accountant	Shirvan NP
	16.30 – 18.00	Travel from Shirvan NP to Lenkaran (Hotel)	Mandarin Hotel
	18.20 – 20.00	Dinner	Khan Lankaran (restaurant)
Thursday, 13 December	08.15 – 08.45	Breakfast	Khan Lankaran (restaurant)
	08.45 – 09.15	Travel from Khan Lankaran to Gizilagaj NP	
	09.15 – 12.00	Introduction to PA management, Visiting the newly built Administrative building, Information Center, Access control infrastructure and central outpost; Visiting the current Guest House and former Administrative building; Meeting with Mr. Aftandil Abbasov, the Park's Director, Ms. Malahat Kerimova, the Chief Accountant and the rest of the team. (small tour within the park)	Gizilagaj NP
	11.30 – 14.00	Travel from Lenkaran to Baku	
	14.00 – 15.45	Late lunch	Baku
	15.00 – 16.20	Debriefing meeting with Mr. Alessandro Fracassetti, UNDP RR a.i; <i>[CANCELED]</i>	UNDP
	17.00 – 18.00	Mr. Elchin Sultanov, Head of Azerbaijan Ornithological Society (NGO); Head of Ornithological Group of Laboratory of Terrestrial Vertebrates, Institute of Zoology under the Azerbaijan National Academy of Science	UNDP
	18.00 – 18.30	Wrap up meeting with the project team	

G. Annex 7: Documents Reviewed

Project documentation

- GEF Project Information Form (PIF) and Log Frame Analysis
- List and contact details for project staff, key project stakeholders, including Project Boards, and other partners to be consulted;
- Project sites, highlighting suggested visits;
- Project document;
- Annual Work Plans;
- Annual Project Reports;
- Project Implementation Review;
- GEF Operational Quarterly Reports;
- Midterm Review Report (MTR);
- Management response to MTE;
- Annual Project Implementation Reports (PIRs);
- Project budget and financial data;
- Inception report;
- Project Board Meeting minutes;
- Knowledge and legislation related products.

H. Annex 8: Azerbaijan MPAs Project MTR Recommendations and Project Responsiveness

Table 12 Assessment of Project Follow-up to MTR Recommendations

	MTR Recommendation	Recommendation Sub-points	TE Assessment of Post-MTR Follow-up
1	Develop and implement a proactive and participatory plan to facilitate establishment of the Gizil-Agaj National Park. It is imperative that the project initiate activities associated with establishing the national park, including but not limited to:	a. Constitute the envisaged technical working group (TWG), with broad stakeholder representation.	Acceptable response; not completed, recommendation not accepted by PSC; at the time of the recommendation there was no further need to constitute the working group, as agreement had been reached on establishing the PA.
		b. Clarify the need for delineating buffer zones, initiate consultations with land owners and local government partners regarding planned expansion area and buffer zones.	Ongoing; partially addressed through discussions with stakeholders prior to establishment of the PA. Following establishment, the PA management is continuing dialogue regarding buffer zones with local stakeholders.
		c. Facilitate the compilation of the requisite documentation, including authorizations from the local Rayons.	Completed.
		d. Prepare a critical path based work plan for achieving the project end target (National Park proclaimed), and develop specific terms of references for the key tasks. The 2017 work plan should be updated accordingly. Co-financing support from the MENR should be integrated into the work plan e.g., in a separate consolidated Gantt chart, which could be adopted in the next steering committee meeting); sharing responsibilities and ownership of the process.	Completed.
		e. Facilitate advocacy for declaring the national park.	Completed.
2	Facilitate improved country ownership. Certain proactive steps should be taken to facilitate improvements in country ownership, including but not limited to the following:	a. Review and amend steering committee membership. For example, as outlined in the project document, the MTR consultant concurs with having the MENR Director of Protection of Biodiversity and Development of Specially Protected Nature Assets as a member of the steering committee.	Completed.
		b. Increase the frequency of steering committee meetings, convene the meetings at the MENR office, and invite members of the TWG to observe and/or support the meetings.	Partially completed; October 2018 PSC meeting held at MENR office. TWG not constituted (recommendation not accepted by PSC). Frequency of meetings not increased (acceptable).

	MTR Recommendation	Recommendation Sub-points	TE Assessment of Post-MTR Follow-up
		c. Advocate for government investment in construction of gas supply system for the newly constructed administration building at the Gizil-Agaj reserve.	Completed (completion of gas line pending at time of TE, but work is scheduled)
		d. Working with Gizil-Agaj technical staff, facilitate preparation of an updated Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) for the wetland site. The current RIS dates back to 2001 and is prepared in French language.	Partially completed; the project team is in communication with and has provided information to the Ramsar focal point in Azerbaijan; however, the Ramsar Information Sheet available on the Ramsar site global database remains the 2001 French edition.
3	Freeze further infrastructure investment until a reconciled project budget and work plan are developed and agreed upon by the project steering committee. Planned investments on infrastructure and equipment should be suspended until a reconciled work plan is prepared, indicating how residual resources are planned to be allocated over the remaining course of the project.		Completed.
4	Develop and implement a focused stakeholder involvement plan. Stakeholder involvement should be broadened; some specific actions include but are not limited to the following:	a. Experts from the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences should be more involved (partnership arrangements need to be determined).	Completed; experts involved as part of establishment of monitoring program.
		b. Ministry of Culture and Tourism should be involved, particularly with respect to business planning and communication/awareness.	Partially completed; TE discussions indicate there are ongoing discussions between MENR and MCT.
		c. Regular interaction should be arranged with administrative and operational staff of the four (4) coastal and marine protected areas.	Completed; MTR recommendation not fully defined: "regular interaction", however, since the MTR, when the project assistant was promoted as project manager there has been much more frequent communication and interaction between the project team and the staff of the PAs.
		d. The staff and systems of the Caspian Center for Marine Monitoring should be consulted in development of the ecosystem health monitoring plans.	Completed; following the MTR the project team cooperated directly with the Caspian Center staff, and the water quality monitoring component was completed through a joint initiative of the center and the private company Agriman LLC, which specializes in water monitoring.
		e. Communication lines should be developed among the donor community in Azerbaijan and also in the Caspian basin as a whole.	Completed (MTR recommendation not specific); the UNDP project coordinator shared information about the project during regular meetings with other donors in the country, and information on the project was shared with the Tehran Convention focal point in

	MTR Recommendation	Recommendation Sub-points	TE Assessment of Post-MTR Follow-up
			MENR, who was expected to share the information further with the other Caspian basin countries.
5	Assess current hydrological regime within the Gizil-Agaj wetland ecosystem and implement specific mitigations, budget permitting. The added value of this project would be enhanced with provision of current information regarding the hydrological regime within the Gizil-Agaj wetland ecosystem. Recognizing that there are limited resources available, a hydrological systems engineer (allocated in the project document) should be recruited to make an assessment. Based upon the results of the assessment, it might be feasible to implement specific mitigation measures. At a minimum a mitigation plan should be prepared as part of the engineering assessment.		Partially completed; a hydrologist was contracted by the project, who carried out an assessment of the hydrological system of the Gizil-Agaj National Park, with support from an international consultant. The recommendations from the assessment were included in the Gizil-Agaj National Park management plan. The implementation of recommendations is ongoing.
6	Consider following the general processes outlined in the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) in development of the ecosystem health based monitoring plans. Following the guidelines of the MSFD would be consistent with Azerbaijan's progress with respect to approximation to EU directives. Recognizing the project does not have the resources to facilitate full compliance with the MSFD, it would be advisable if project activities would be oriented in that direction.	a. Carry out an initial assessment (liaise with MENR on the scope).	Completed.
		b. Establish environmental targets and indicators (keep it simple).	Completed.
		c. Establish and implement a monitoring program (as planned in the project document).	Completed.
7	As part of financial planning activities envisaged under Outcome 2, assess and report on the business case associated with the purchase of the tourist boat. The purchase of the tourist boat accounts for nearly 10% of the GEF implementation grant. It would be sensible to support the rationale of this investment with a business case, something that could be completed as part of the business planning activities under Outcome 2.		Completed; justification of boat purchase still inadequate.
8	Strengthen project monitoring &	a. Revisit and update the BD tracking tools, including baseline ones, through a focus group discussion with	Completed.

	MTR Recommendation	Recommendation Sub-points	TE Assessment of Post-MTR Follow-up
	evaluation and management systems.	national and subnational stakeholders.	
		b. Gizil-Agaj has >20 years of data that has not been fully compiled or interpreted. Work with the operational staff, help develop a simple data management system (e.g., using Excel). Link this to the ecosystem monitoring program, as well as to the project level monitoring requirements.	Partially completed, ongoing; this compilation and analysis of data was discussed, and it was determined to address this following the development of the ecological monitoring program under the project. The PA staff will further develop this, in collaboration with partners such as local NGOs and the National Academy of Sciences, which also have collected data from the site. The initial priority focus will be on data collected over the past 5 years.
		c. A financial audit should be made of the project, possibly following the completion of calendar year 2017.	Not completed / partially completed; per the MTR management response, the decision on whether to have a financial audit is within the jurisdiction of the UNDP Office of Audit. A financial audit was not completed in the second half of the project. However, a UNDP internal audit team from UNDP HQ will be reviewing financial, procurement, and program aspects during an internal audit to be conducted in April 2019, following project completion.
9	Bolster project management. As a first step, the acting project manager should be recognized as project manager. Budget permitting, a project management assistant should be recruited to support the project manager with procurement and administrative tasks, allowing the project manager to focus more on strategic aspects and liaising with project partners.		Completed.
10	Articulate a justification for a time extension. The project should reassess progress at the time of preparing the 2017 PIR report, and at that time decide whether a time extension is warranted. In the case a time extension is determined warranted, a justification should be articulated and a period of time for the extension agreed upon, understanding that only one extension is possible according to current GEF policy.		Completed.
11	Miscellaneous recommendations:	a. The project team should confirm whether a construction and occupancy permits are required for the newly constructed administration building at the Gizil-Agaj reserve. If permits are required, they should be retroactively requested, to ensure that documentation is complete before project closure.	Completed.
		b. The Ramsar Secretariat publication "Handbook on the Best Practices for	Adequate.

	MTR Recommendation	Recommendation Sub-points	TE Assessment of Post-MTR Follow-up
		Planning, Design and Operation of Wetland Education Centres”, published in 2014 is a good source to aid the design of the visitor and education center at the Gizil-Agaj wetland.	
		c. The project should reach out to the Secretariat to the Tehran Convention which is presumably currently based in Baku. Opening communication lines with the Secretariat might lead to entry points for collaboration on regional projects and programs, thus enhancing the likelihood that project results would be sustained after GEF funding ceases.	Completed, as discussed in point 4.e above.
		d. Implementing a photograph competition among Gizil-Agaj ranger staff, using the new digital cameras, could be a good way to improve staff morale and also provide hands-on training in improving staff skills in taxonomy.	Not completed; acceptable. There has not been a need to conduct a competition to improve staff morale, as the staff are carrying out environmental monitoring activities using the new digital cameras and equipment, and assisted experts by taking photos of birds, mammals, and other species. Under the new PA leadership, the park rangers regularly use the camera equipment to document species found in the PA, and share this information with the biodiversity department on a regular basis.

I. Annex 9: Azerbaijan MPAs Project Results Framework Assessed Level of Indicator Target Achievement

Results Framework Assessment Key

Green = Achievement Likely / Achieved / Exceeded	Yellow = Partially Achieved / Achievement Uncertain	Red = Achievement Unlikely	Gray = Not applicable
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Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Target	Self-assessment (2018 PIR)	Terminal Evaluation Assessment
Objective: To improve the management effectiveness, including operational effectiveness and ecosystem representation, of Azerbaijan's coastal and marine protected area system, with due consideration for its overall sustainability, including ecological, institutional and financial sustainability				
1. Financial sustainability scorecard for national system of protected areas	15%	>35%	<p>37% as confirmed by the terminal FSC. EoP target is achieved.</p> <p>During this reporting period the following progress and achievements were made that contributed to the increase in FSC and attainment of the EoP target:</p> <p>Partnership development with the private sector has become a priority for the MENR since the appointment of a new Minister. In this regard, the laws and policies to support the partnership with the private sector is currently underway.</p> <p>MENR started initial negotiations with the Ministry of Finance and private companies to develop an online ERP (enterprise resource planning) system to help manage all its financial and accounting, procurement, HR and other departments' operations through this centralized and standardized online platform.</p> <p>The project also provided its support to the Ministry in this direction by contracting a consultant company which will develop the same ERP online software for all 4 Coastal and Marine Protected Areas (CMPAs), including the Department on the Protection of</p>	Achieved. The target is not clearly rationalized, and therefore it is difficult to assess the overall benefit to the system of reaching the 37% mark. However, the project has made valuable contributions to the financial sustainability of the MPAs, most significantly with the implementation of the new ERP software, and associated

Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Target	Self-assessment (2018 PIR)	Terminal Evaluation Assessment
			<p>Biodiversity and Development of Specially Protected Areas. Trainings of the accountants, who will be responsible for accessing and using the online ERP system, are also envisaged under this contract and will be conducted very soon.</p> <p>There are slight improvements observed in government budgeting for PA systems. Discussions have started on whether PA budgets should include funds to finance threat reduction strategies in buffer zones. MENR plans to finance it as a pilot in Zagatala-Balakan biosphere reserve.</p> <p>After the establishment of Goy-Gol National Park, the Ministry has started to measure financial returns on tourism related investments. Investments were mainly made on building hotel and restaurant in the territory of Goy-Gol National Park.</p> <p>MENR has a simple monitoring and reporting system to show why funds are allocated across PA sites.</p> <p>Cost-effectiveness of expended funds across PAs has been partially evaluated. However, it yet needs to be improved and digitalized. Also, a systematic approach needs to be applied and further improved.</p> <p>In terms of digitalization, the newly appointed Minister initiated a reform on developing an internal system of document sharing and making electronic requests.</p> <p>To improve the financial and accounting management system in coastal and marine protected areas, the project has conducted several trainings with the participation of accountants from all four coastal and marine protected areas, including the accountant from the Department on the Protection of Biodiversity and Development of Specially Protected Areas.</p> <p>To reduce unemployment rate according to the employment strategy adopted at the national level, the Protected Areas employ staff from the surrounding local communities.</p> <p>During this reporting period, the project managed to hire a consultant to make the protected area entry and user collection fee effective. The recommendations were presented to the Ministry and will be applied by the Ministry depending on the budget.</p>	<p>training of PA accounting staff. Other improvements have occurred more by chance than by project intervention, due to the changing of leadership of the MENR during the final year of the project. In this regard, however, some of the project outputs, such as the business plans for each of the MCPAs, have a higher likelihood of implementation and sustainability after the project.</p>
2. Capacity development indicator score for protected area system	Systemic: 34% Institutional: 20% Individual: 13%	Systemic: >50%	Systemic: 53% Institutional: 46% Individual: 38%	Achieved. The target values are not clearly rationalized, therefore

Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Target	Self-assessment (2018 PIR)	Terminal Evaluation Assessment
		<p>Institutional: >40%</p> <p>Individual: >25%</p>	<p>Results and findings of the Capacity development assessment are presented below:</p> <p>During this reporting period, significant progress was made at the individual capacity level. In particular, since the appointment of the new Minister, capacities to implement policies, legislation and strategies have been developed. In this regard, the new team has been formed within the Protection of Biodiversity and Development of Specially Protected Nature Areas to develop new innovative ideas on how to improve overall the capacity of the Ministry and other entities, including the Protected Areas to better implement policies, legislation and strategies adopted by the Minister.</p> <p>Frequent meetings with Protected Area and Department managers were conducted. New strategies and policies have been set by the newly appointed Minister.</p> <p>During this reporting period, MENR initiated a Human Resources restructuring plan. Capacity of the staff has started to be monitored, evaluated and reported properly. The performance assessment system includes some feedback mechanism and measurement of performance; however, it still needs to be improved and centralized.</p> <p>At the systemic level, MENR, with a new progressive leader on board, has necessary skills for effective protected area management and planning. For example, the former Deputy Director of Biodiversity Protection and Development of Specially Protected Nature Areas has been promoted to the Director position at MENR. Also, the former Deputy Director of the Gizilagaj Protected Area has been promoted to the Director position at MENR. However, capacity should be developed at sites (e.g. Protected Areas).</p> <p>Project conducted several trainings in the Gizilagaj Protected Area on building the capacity of the staff on how to use laboratory equipment and patrolling equipment.</p> <p>In general, some Protected Areas have reasonably good leadership, but there is still a need for improvement. For example, newly appointed Gizilagaj PA Director is very experienced and has strong management skills. However, in order to better apply the new policies and strategies adopted by the new management in MENR on developing alternative funding mechanisms, the Director needs to develop business skills and attract private sector to invest in the Protected Area which soon will be proclaimed as a National Park. Most Protected Areas have management plans, but some of them are old and not comprehensive.</p>	<p><i>the overall benefit of achieving the target is difficult to assess. Nonetheless, the project has made some valuable contributions, as outlined in the self-assessment. As with other aspects of the project, some of the positive results have been due to the fortuitous change of leadership of the MENR during the final year of the project.</i></p>

Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Target	Self-assessment (2018 PIR)	Terminal Evaluation Assessment
			<p>In this reporting period, the project in consultation with MENR, contracted local and international consultants and prepared a comprehensive management plan for the Gizilagaj Protected Area.</p> <p>The financial management plan, including 4 business plans for each coastal and marine protected areas have also been prepared by the project. These business plans have been accepted by the Ministry. However, the business plans cannot be operationalized due to budget constraints of the project. The Ministry will take lead in implementation and application of the recommendations provided in business plans for coastal and marine protected areas.</p>	
3. Total annual budget (HR, OPEX and CAPEX) allocation for marine and coastal PAs (US\$/ha)	All PAs: US\$3.03/ha Gizil-Agaj: US\$ 2.53/ha	All PAs: >US\$4/ha Gizil-Agaj: >US\$4/ha	<p>All PAs: US\$ 2.05/ha Gizil-Agaj: US\$ 1.67/ha</p> <p>In general, total budget allocated for CMPAs remains the same with slight increase in AZN currency. Small changes in indicators can be seen because of small fluctuations in currency exchange rates.</p> <p>The total annual budget allocated for Gizilagaj PA remains unaltered.</p> <p>The budget allocated for CMPAs may be seen lower, however, as mentioned earlier this inconsistency has happened due to a sharp devaluation of the local currency against USD.</p> <p>According to the figures provided by the Ministry, the total budget allocated for CMPAs was 595,000 AZN and for Gizil-Agaj was 280,500 AZN during this reporting period. If we take the average exchange rate of USD against AZN before the devaluation as 1 USD=0.78 AZN, then, the total budget allocated for CMPAs per ha will be USD 4.47 (762,821 USD/170,646 ha) and for Gizil-Agaj (359,615 USD/99,060ha) - USD 3.63.</p> <p>That said, in USD terms annual government funding decreased since the baseline but in local currency the funding increased since the baseline. It is also worth showing that the funding has increased by 1-2 percent in AZN terms for coastal and marine protected areas. Alternative sources of funding remain crucial to cover mainly the CAPEX and OPEX costs. Also, the HR budget needs to be increased as well.</p> <p>Budget issues have become a priority issue for the newly appointed Minister. Since his appointment, the Minister's office, with the assistance provided by UNDP, contracted an international audit/consulting company to assist with the optimization of the Ministry and provide recommendations on alternative funding mechanisms. This shows how the Ministry is interested in increasing its budget to cover HR, CAPEX and OPEX as well as increasing revenue generation across all of its local entities, including the coastal and marine protected areas.</p>	<p>Unable to assess. The target is also not clearly rationalized. It would have been more helpful if the target had been indicated in local currency, or in percentage terms. The significant fluctuations in the exchange rate between the Azerbaijan manat and USD during the project make assessing this indicator challenging. However, assessing the target becomes further complicated by the fact that inflation has increased significantly during project lifetime as well. Therefore, assessing the actual level of budget allocation to the CMPAs in real terms from project start to finish is complex. It</p>

Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Target	Self-assessment (2018 PIR)	Terminal Evaluation Assessment
				<i>does appear that in absolute terms the government budget allocation for the CMPAs has increased from project start to finish, likely partially due to the projects efforts and the attention focused on the CMPAs during the project implementation period.</i>
4. Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool scorecard: Gizil-Agaj	25%	>45%	<p>63% - EoP target achieved</p> <p>In comparison with previous year's reporting period, there was a slight positive change in the METT score.</p> <p>The following activities implemented by the project contributed to improved management effectiveness of Gizilagaj Protected Area.</p> <p>In this reporting period, the project successfully managed to complete the demarcation of the boundaries in Gizilagaj Protected Area.</p> <p>A company was contracted to install buoys (a sea boundary indicator/marker) along the shallow water boundaries of the protected area. Also, the shallow boundary canals dredged in previous years help the protected area management to identify the boundaries of Gizilagaj Protected Area and prevent illegal entry by the livestock.</p> <p>In addition, two outposts and two watchtowers were built for the ranger staff in Gizilagaj Protected Area. Rangers were provided with necessary patrolling equipment. The purchased equipment includes: patrol cars, boats, GPS, water bottles, first aid supplies, portable generators, torches, digital cameras, sleeping bags, etc. The patrolling equipment help rangers to properly perform their duties.</p> <p>A four-year strategic management plan for Gizilagaj Protected Area has also been prepared during this reporting period. An experienced international consultant led the preparation process of the management plan with the support of local consultants.</p>	<p><i>Achieved. Concur with self-assessment. Furthermore, the Gizil-Agaj National Park was officially established September 26, 2018 (consolidating the two previous protected areas that had varying levels of protective status). As with most indicators, the target value is not clearly rationalized, but there has obviously been a large increase in the management capacity and effectiveness of the Gizil-Agaj National Park, which should lead to biodiversity benefits.</i></p>

Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Target	Self-assessment (2018 PIR)	Terminal Evaluation Assessment
			<p>Protected Area management and the Ministry were consulted and actively involved during the preparation process.</p> <p>A concept design of the visitor center at the newly built administrative building for Gizilagaj PA was developed during this reporting period. Visitor center is expected to be ready by the end of this year.</p>	
Outcome 1: Enhanced management effectiveness of the Gizil-Agaj reserve complex				
5. Extent (ha) of area surveyed, and formally proclaimed and managed as the Gizil-Agaj national park	0 ha	>100,000ha	<p>99,060 ha (pending Cabinet's decision)</p> <p>Although the Gizilagaj Protected Area has not been proclaimed as a National Park, inputs and letters of support from all relevant stakeholders were received by MENR</p> <p>An institutional expert hired by the project together with the Protected Area Management and MENR facilitated the stakeholder consultation process. A consultant was hired to organize small discussion sessions with the members of key stakeholders to receive their inputs and opinions on the boundaries and other necessary details which must be considered before submitting the package of documents to the Cabinet of Ministers.</p> <p>Boundary surveys were conducted with the participation of Local Executive Power representatives of Lankaran, Masalli and Neftchala rayons. During the survey, 99,060 ha has been found relevant to include into the territory of the Gizilagaj National Park. It includes the territory of Gizilagaj State Nature Reserve, Gizilagaj State Nature Sanctuary and unprotected wetland area in Neftchala.</p> <p>Information materials about Government's intent to establish a National Park were prepared by the Institutional expert in consultation with MENR. These materials include the proposed boundaries of the park, the draft regulations for the park, the institutional arrangements for the park.</p> <p>All these materials were reviewed by relevant stakeholders (All three Executive Power Representatives, Ministry of Agriculture, State Border Service, State Maritime Administration, State Academy of Science and the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources) and their secure letters were received by MENR.</p>	<i>Achieved. Concur with self-assessment. The Gizil-Agaj National Park was formally established September 26, 2018.</i>

Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Target	Self-assessment (2018 PIR)	Terminal Evaluation Assessment
			<p>Park boundary description with final draft regulations will be submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers to recommend a Presidential Decree on designation of the Gizilagaj PA as a national park.</p> <p>If everything goes as planned without delays from the side of the Cabinet of Ministers, Gizilagaj will be proclaimed as a National Park in September 2018.</p>	
6. Total number of mixed breeding population of Pelecaniformes and Ciconiiformes in Gizil-Agaj	70000	>100,000	<p>98,000</p> <p>According to the information provided by Gizilagaj Protected Area Management, the total number of mixed breeding population of Pelecaniformes and Ciconiiformes in Gizilagaj is 98,000.</p> <p>Increasing number of bird's population can be explained by strengthened enforcement and protection activities implemented by the Protected Area Management with the help of the project.</p> <p>Patrolling equipment, uniforms, vehicles and boats provided by the project encouraged the rangers to perform their duties duly.</p> <p>Improved infrastructure along the boundaries, including the remodeled outposts and watchtowers within the territory of Gizilagaj Protected Area helped the rangers to maintain 24-hour of patrolling and protection.</p>	<p>Unable to assess. It is highly likely that the project's efforts have contributed to reduced anthropogenic threats to bird populations at Gizil-Agaj National Park. However, historical monitoring data from the protected area is not considered sufficiently reliable to make this detailed level of assessment. The target is also not clearly rationalized.</p>
7. Total number of wintering waterbirds in Gizil-Agaj	400000	400,000 - 500,000	<p>582,778</p> <p>According to the information provided by Gizilagaj Protected Area Management, the total number of wintering waterbirds in Gizilagaj totals 582,778.</p> <p>Increasing number of wintering waterbirds can be explained by strengthened enforcement and protection activities implemented by the Protected Area Management with the help of the project.</p> <p>Patrolling equipment, uniforms, vehicles and boats provided by the project encouraged the rangers to perform their duties duly.</p> <p>Improved infrastructure along the boundaries, including the remodeled outposts and watchtowers within the territory of Gizilagaj Protected Area helped the rangers to maintain 24-hour of patrolling and protection.</p>	<p>Better practice for biodiversity impact targets is to assess trends over a 5 (or more) year rolling period, as there is natural stochastic variation, especially for migratory birds, which sometimes shift their behavior depending on environmental conditions. In addition, there are limitations</p>

Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Target	Self-assessment (2018 PIR)	Terminal Evaluation Assessment
				to monitoring methods for such large numbers of birds.
8. Average number (#/month during spawning season) of illegal sturgeon poaching incidents (or violation of fishing permits) occurring in Gizil-Agaj	Spring: >8 Autumn: >6	Spring: <2 Autumn: <2	<p>According to the information provided by Gizilagaj administration, the number of incidents on violation of fishing permits on average was lower than 2 both in Spring and Autumn months.</p> <p>In accordance with the provided information, there were total 7 incidents, 4 in Spring and 3 in Autumn.</p> <p>A decrease in the number of violations of fishing permits can be explained by enhanced security system as well as the increased number of awareness-raising campaigns in surrounding settlements.</p>	Achieved. Concur with self-assessment. Indicators relating to documented numbers of poaching incidents are problematic, because they depend on "known unknowns", i.e. the number of undocumented poaching incidents. The number of documented poaching incidents could go up or down based on a variety of factors, and increasing or decreasing values could be positive or negative in relation to the actual level of poaching.
9. Average number (#/month during winter) of recorded illegal bird hunting incidents occurring in Gizil-Agaj	Winter: >25/month	Winter: <10/month	<p>Average number of recorded illegal bird hunting incidents in winter months were recorded as the following:</p> <p>According to the information provided by the Gizilagaj PA management, the total the number of incidents during winter months was 3. On average, it can be recorded as 1 incident per month.</p> <p>Such a decrease in the number of illegal bird hunting incidents during winter months can be explained by enhanced security system as well as the increased number of awareness-raising campaigns in surrounding settlements.</p>	
10. Average number (#/month/year) of cattle illegally grazing in Gizil-Agaj	>500/month	<10/month	<p>55 head of cattle per month on average</p> <p>During this reporting period, the number of cattle illegally grazing in Gizilagaj PA was 655 (13 incidents). 11 incidents (530 head of cattle) were recorded in 2017 during July-December months and 2 incidents (125 head of cattle) were in 2018, from January to July.</p> <p>The average number of cattle illegally captured in the protected area during this reporting period was 55.</p> <p>Even though the number is higher than the number in previous reporting period, the increase is attributed to the improved patrolling capacity of PA rangers.</p>	Achieved. Concur with self-assessment. The Gizil-Agaj National Park was approved in September 2018, which should further significantly improve protection and reduce illegal incursions.

Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Target	Self-assessment (2018 PIR)	Terminal Evaluation Assessment
			Previously they did not have proper observation and transportation equipment such as binoculars, patrol vehicles and other equipment, however, since the commencement of the project the ranger staff has been equipped with proper and modern observation and transportation equipment which enhanced their patrolling capacity.	
Outcome 2: Improved collaborative governance of, and institutional expertise in, the financial management of marine and coastal protected areas				
11. Income/annum (US\$), by source, from marine and coastal protected areas	Government: US\$480,822 Donors: US\$277,720 Entry fees: US\$3,902\$ Tourism services: US\$0 Fines: US\$45,356 Resource use: US\$0 Concessions: US\$0 (baseline year = 2011/2012)	Government: >US\$750,000 Donors: >US\$500,000 Entry fees: >US\$15,000 Tourism services: >US\$10,000 Fines: >US\$75,000 Resource use: >US\$10,000 Concessions: >US\$10,000 (target year = 2016/17)	Government: US\$ 350,000 Donors: 976,000 USD Entry fees: 2,800 USD Tourism services: US\$0 Fines: US\$ 35,300 USD Resource use: US\$0 Concessions: US\$0 If compared with the baseline figures, the funds allocated by the government may be seen lower, however, the allocated government funding in AZN increased. If we take the currency exchange of USD against AZN (1USD = 0.78AZN) before devaluation, the budget allocated by the government would have exceeded the target level (762,821 USD). In general, this trend is positive, and the government continues investing in coastal and marine protected areas. Also, the appointment of the new management to MENR is another positive sign from the government side showing that the country administration intends to develop a new strategy and generate alternative funding mechanisms in all protected areas. There is a slight increase in entry fee and fine figures for CMPAs in AZN as well. Donor's funds allocation during this reporting period is recorded very high. It almost doubled the previously mentioned figures. KfW, German government owned-development bank, invested 500,000 EURs in Samur Yalama National Park. It accomplished the following activities in Samur-Yalama National Park: demarcating the territory; enhancing the capacity of park's and municipality staff;	<i>Achieved. Concur with self-assessment. The target is not clearly rationalized, which makes it difficult to assess the overall significance of this achievement, but overall government investment has exceeded the target (if exchange rate fluctuations are not considered). Some of the other funding sources are less regular, and potentially have lower correspondence with the project activities.</i>

Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Target	Self-assessment (2018 PIR)	Terminal Evaluation Assessment
			<p>conducting public awareness; preparing the management plan and new administration building's construction project; purchasing ATV, IT equipment and uniforms for the rangers.</p> <p>The project financed by GEF and UNDP allocated 360, 770 USD to support the development of coastal and marine protected areas. During this reporting period, the project provided funding and completed the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Built 2 outposts and 2 watchtowers in the territory of Gizilagaj Protected Area; - Prepared 4-year strategic management plan for the Gizilagaj Protected Area; - Prepared a financial management plan for the network of coastal and marine protected areas; - Developed 4 business plans for each coastal and marine protected area - Facilitated the proclamation process of Gizilagaj National Park - Purchased IT and monitoring equipment for all coastal and marine protected areas - Conducted financial skill development trainings - Prepared the concept design of the visitor center in newly built Gizilagaj Administration building; - Conducted study tour to South Africa with the participation of the representative from MENR and Gizilagaj Protected Area; The purpose of the study tour was to gain knowledge and expertise on the management system of the national parks in South Africa. It also included familiarizing with the management plans of the national parks, especially the long-term tourism planning and strategy, financial management and cost-effectiveness system of the parks. The equipment provided to the rangers, effective and low-cost security measures applied to prevent illegal entries to the parks, the infrastructure and organization of the tourism/visitor centers of the national parks in South Africa were also under attention. <p>The number of NGOs supporting the development of coastal and marine protected areas remains unchanged.</p>	

Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Target	Self-assessment (2018 PIR)	Terminal Evaluation Assessment
			<p>WWF conducted capacity building activities in Shirvan National Park in the amount of 35,000 USD (financed by CNF).</p> <p>Even though the concession target level is 0, the project managed to hire a local consultant who facilitates the tourism and recreation concession process in Gizil-Agaj PA. The consultant has prepared his initial report on the most feasible concession to pilot in Gizilagaj Protected Area. However, the recommendations made by the consultant is not possible to implement before the end of the project. Firstly, Gizilagaj is still a Protected Area where such piloting activities are not allowed to conduct according to the country's legislation. It can be implemented after it's proclamation as a National Park. Secondly, because of the budget constraints, MENR will take lead and plans to apply the recommendations provided by the local consultant hired by the project during the piloting of tourism concession in Gizilagaj after the project's completion.</p>	
12. Number of MENR staff completing in-service financial training and skills development programmes	(not set or not applicable)	>10	<p>5</p> <p>In consultation with MENR, the project managed to prepare a financial management plan for the network of marine and coastal protected areas.</p> <p>This plan includes a detailed financial analysis that identifies realistic funding needs and gaps; analysis of viable financial mechanisms, and an understanding of the enabling activities needed for their implementation.</p> <p>During the meetings with the Ministry and presentation of the financial plan, 5 accountants, 4 from the coastal and marine protected areas and 1 from the Department on Protection of Biodiversity and Development of Specially Protected Areas, were identified suitable to participate in trainings to develop their financial and accounting skills.</p> <p>Also, the project plans to conduct 1-2 weeks trainings for these 5 accountants on how to access and use ERP financial and accounting software. This online ERP platform will be installed across the Ministry in all departments and the management of all operations (e.g. HR, procurement, accounting and etc.) will be maintained through this system.</p> <p>During this period, the project contracted a consultant company which will install this ERP software for 4 coastal and marine protected areas and the Department on the Protection of Biodiversity and Development of Specially Protected Areas.</p>	<p><i>Partially achieved. Concur with self-assessment. The total number of 10 was not fully achieved, as only 5 staff were trained. This was one staff person for each of the four MPAs, plus the relevant staff member from the central MENR level. Ideally it would have been best if a back-up person had been trained for each location, but there are not staff members who are duplicative for this function, so it would have been irrelevant to train other random staff members for functionality that is</i></p>

Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Target	Self-assessment (2018 PIR)	Terminal Evaluation Assessment
			The project also supplied the network of coastal and marine protected areas with necessary IT equipment to ensure their access into this system.	<i>not part of their job description.</i>
13. Number of non-state stakeholder institutions and private sector businesses investing in, and/or supporting the administration of, marine and coastal protected areas	Donor agencies: 2 NGOs: 1 Private businesses: 0	Donor agencies: 4 NGOs: 2 Private sector: 2	<p>Donor agencies: 3 NGOs: 3 Private sector: 0</p> <p>Number of the donor agencies remain the same as in the previous reporting period. It includes KFW, UNDP and GEF.</p> <p>KFW, German government owned-development bank, invested 500,000 EURs in Samur-Yalama National Park. It accomplished several activities in Samur-Yalama National Park on demarcation, enhancement of the capacity of park's municipality staff, public awareness; preparation of the management plan and new administration building's construction project; purchasing ATV, IT equipment and uniforms for the park's rangers.</p> <p>The project financed by GEF and UNDP allocated 360, 770 USD to support the development of coastal and marine protected areas. In particular, the project financed the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Built 2 outposts and 2 watchtowers in the territory of Gizilagaj Protected Area; - Prepared 4-year strategic management plan for the Gizilagaj Protected Area; - Prepared a financial management plan for the network of coastal and marine protected areas; - Developed 4 business plans for each coastal and marine protected area - Facilitated the proclamation process of Gizilagaj National Park - Purchased IT and monitoring equipment for all coastal and marine protected areas - Conducted financial skill development trainings - Prepared the concept design of the visitor center in newly built Gizilagaj Administration building; 	<i>Partially achieved. The target values were not fully met, but the rationale for these target values is not fully clear. Overall this indicator is not clearly linked to the planned project activities and results.</i>

Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Target	Self-assessment (2018 PIR)	Terminal Evaluation Assessment
			<p>- Conducted study tour to South Africa with the participation of the representative from MENR and Gizilagaj Protected Area;</p> <p>The number of NGOs supporting the development of the coastal and marine protected areas has become 3 during this reporting period.</p> <p>WWF—with CNF financing-- conducted capacity building activities in Shirvan National Park in the amount of 35,000 USD.</p> <p>IDEA managed to accomplish several activities at the coastal and marine protected area sites, especially in Absheron National Park and Gizilagaj Protected Area. During this year, IDEA managed to hold a premiere of a documentary film about the wildlife of Absheron National Park. Filming of a documentary on the wildlife of Gizilagaj Protected Area has already been completed. The premiere date of the film has not been announced yet.</p> <p>Ornithological Society also helped the coastal and marine protected areas to conduct bird counting activities at the coastal and marine protected areas.</p> <p>Despite the fact that the business plans have been prepared there are yet no private companies investing in the coastal and marine protected areas.</p> <p>These 4 business plans have been prepared and presented to MENR this year. The process of developing business plans took much time as plenty of meetings and discussions were held around this topic with the Ministry and Park Managers.</p> <p>MENR is inclined to apply and use the recommendations made in the business plans. However, since the appointment of a new Minister, restructuring plan has been proposed by the Minister and ongoing activities have been temporarily stopped.</p> <p>But the newly appointed Minister puts the development of revenue generation mechanism in his top priority list, therefore, business plans developed by the project is taken seriously and applied considering budget availability.</p> <p>Also, there are yet lot needs to be done in terms of improvement of the infrastructure to attract Private sector to invest in the coastal and marine protected areas. The concession process should be analyzed from legal point of view and other strengths and weakness identified to increase the chances of receiving private investment.</p>	

Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Target	Self-assessment (2018 PIR)	Terminal Evaluation Assessment
			The project provides its support to MENR in this direction by hiring an individual consultant on identifying key steps required to pilot a concession in Gizilagaj Protected Area which will be proclaimed as National Park by the end of the year. Protected Area which will be proclaimed as National Park by the end of the year.	
14. Number of business plans operational in individual marine and coastal national parks	(not set or not applicable)	4	<p>4</p> <p>A financial management plan for the network of coastal and marine protected areas has been prepared and presented to MENR during this reporting period.</p> <p>This financial plan includes 4 business plans prepared for each of the coastal and marine protected areas (Shirvan, Samur-Yalama, Absheron National Parks and Gizilagaj Protected area.</p> <p>Although Gizilagaj Protected Area has not yet been proclaimed as the National Park, the project, in consultation with the Ministry, decided to prepare a business plan for the future Gizilagaj National Park that is expected to be proclaimed in September 2018</p> <p>Since the appointment of the Minister, revenue generation mechanisms in the National Parks have been set as a priority. Taking this into account, the project conducted several meetings with the respective departments in the Ministry and presented the business plans with recommendations on how to generate additional revenues at the coastal and marine protected areas.</p> <p>These recommendations were taken seriously and will be applied by the Ministry. Also, considering the restructuring plan that started at the Ministry, operationalization of the business plans in the coastal and marine protected areas are currently postponed.</p> <p>Due the the budget constraints the project will not be able to allocate funds to the operationalization of the business plans. Government and other donor funding is expected to step in.</p>	Partially achieved. Concur with self-assessment. The business plans were completed, but are not yet operational in the MPAs.
15. Number of indicators of ecosystem health being regularly monitored and used to guide decision-making in marine and coastal protected areas	(not set or not applicable)	>10	<p>20 indicators to measure ecosystem health in each coastal and marine protected area have been proposed by the international consultant.</p> <p>Under this component, an Ecosystem Monitoring Framework has been prepared by the International consultant in consultation with MENR and with the help of local experts.</p> <p>Four ecosystems – terrestrial, freshwater, estuarine and marine - have been selected for the Coastal and Marine Protected Areas.</p>	Partially achieved. Concur with self-assessment. The project developed a monitoring program with more than the required number of indicators. Monitoring of the individual

Description of Indicator	Baseline Level	Target	Self-assessment (2018 PIR)	Terminal Evaluation Assessment
			<p>According to the Ecosystem Monitoring Framework, the following four key attributes for each ecosystem will be monitored in each coastal and marine protected area: habitats; biotic communities; species; and pressures and threats</p> <p>A full set of 20 indicators (9 core indicators) with about 5 indicators per each attribute have been proposed in the Ecosystem Monitoring Framework.</p> <p>Under this activity, the project, in consultation with MENR, plans to hire 4-5 local consultants to help each coastal and marine protected area prepare its Monitoring plan and conduct data collection according to its monitoring plan.</p>	<p><i>parameters has commenced, but due to the short-time available between completion of the monitoring framework and project closure, monitoring has been underway for only a few months prior to project completion, and the monitoring systems may not yet be fully institutionalized in the management of the MPAs.</i></p>

