



Terminal Evaluation

GEF Project ID: 4835; PIMS No. 4732

Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of the Achara Region's Protected Areas



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Terminal Evaluation Opening Page:

UNDP/GEF Project Title:	Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of the Achara Region's Protected Areas
GEF Project ID No:	4835 (Atlas Project ID: 00076819)
UNDP Project ID No:	00088000
UNDP PIMS ID	4732
Evaluation Time Frame:	16 September – 31 December 2018
Date of Evaluation Report:	20 January (draft), 28 February 2019 (final)
Region and Countries included in the Project:	Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Georgia
GEF Focal Area:	Biodiversity (GEF-5)
GEF Focal Area Objectives:	SO-1, SP-3 Strengthening Terrestrial Protected Areas
Implementing Agency:	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Implementation Modality:	National Implementation
Implementing Partner:	Agency for Protected Areas (Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture)
Other Responsible Parties:	Autonomous Republic of Achara, Georgia Khelvachauri Municipality
GEF Project Grant:	US\$ 1,283,636*
Implementing Agency:	US\$ 40,000*
Co-Financing:	US\$
Total Project Cost:	13,358,142*
ProDoc signed:	US\$
Operational Closure:	14,998,778*
	9 June 2014 (i.e. project start)
	9 June 2018 (planned), 31 December 2018 (actual)
Evaluation Team Members:	Michael J.B. Green and Giorgi Shubitidze

*At project endorsement.

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Executive Summary

Project Summary

Project Title:	Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of the Achara Region's Protected Areas			
GEF Project ID:	4835		At Endorsement (US\$)	At Completion (US\$)
UNDP Project ID:	88000	GEF financing:	1,283,636	1,270,812
Country:	Georgia	IA/EA own:	40,000	40,258
Region:	Eastern Europe and Central Asia	Government:	10,791,079	46,167,698
Focal Area:	Biodiversity	*Other	2,567,063	2,454,416
FA Objectives, (OP/SP):	SO-1, SP-3 Strengthening Terrestrial Protected Areas	Total co-financing:	13,358,142	48,622,114
Executing Agency:	Agency for Protected Areas, Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture	Total Project Cost:	14,998,778	49,933,184
Other Partners involved:	Achara Autonomous Republic, Georgia Khelvachauri Municipality	ProDoc Signature: (date project began)	09 June 2014	
		Closing Date:	09 June 2018 (proposed)	31 Dec 2018 (actual)

Note: Total expenditures based upon figures to 31 December 2018.

***Other** comprises: CNF, KFW, WWF.

Project Description

The project was designed to establish a regional protected areas estate in the Autonomous Republic of Achara (ARA) that can effectively ensure the conservation and sustainable use of globally important Colchic Temperate Rain Forests of the Lesser Caucasus Mountain Range of South West Georgia. The area is a refugium for humid Pliocene flora, having a high proportion of endemic fauna and narrow-ranged (locally endemic) flora. It is also a well-known bottleneck for migratory birds. Such is the importance of Georgia's Colchic Forest that it is being nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List as a natural site.

The project's objective was: "to enhance the management effectiveness, biogeographically coverage, and connectivity of Protected Areas to conserve forest ecosystems in the Achara Region" by the end of the four year implementation period, which was extended by a further six months. It was addressed through two interrelated outcomes that were intended to generate a flow of benefits at global, national and local levels for:

- ✓ Protected Area coverage within the Achara Region increased from 30,469 ha to 39,202 ha.
- ✓ Increased national and Achara Protected Area coverage of Colchic Temperate Rain Forest by at least 1% and 5%, respectively.
- ✓ Capacity development indicator score for protected area system increased for systemic from 14% to >20%, Institutional from 21% to >29% and Individual from 9% to >13%.
- ✓ Management effectiveness for Kintrishi PA Complex increased from 58% to 67% for the State Reserve and from 58% to >63% for the Protected Landscape, Mtirala NP from 68%

to >73% and Machakhela NP from 11% to 71%, as measured by the GEF Monitoring Effectiveness Tracking Took (METT).

Conclusions

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS/STRENGTHS

The project has achieved a very Satisfactory result, meeting or exceeding all of its targets in the SRF at objective and outcome levels. Technically, the current status of Achara's PAs coverage has increased from 30,469 ha (baseline) to 37,802 ha, which is marginally less than the target of 39,202 ha following the realignment of the boundaries of Machakhela NP (area reduced from 8,733 ha to 7,305 ha). However, the target is expected to be exceeded with the designation of the proposed Machakhela Protected Landscape (4,295 ha), which comprises the inhabited lower valleys of Machakhela Gorge that abut Machakhela NP.

This adaptive management initiative of the project is exemplary. It transforms the planned addition of a new Machakhela PL to the region's PAs network into a more holistic and integrated PAs complex approach, which better meets the needs of 'Parks and People' through having a greater diversity of options in the management toolbox that reflect the governance models of both national park and protected landscape. The latter model will enable local livelihood needs to be addressed in a more sustainable manner than envisaged in the ProDoc. Such an outcome will also provide both a challenge and an opportunity for a novel form of governance to be piloted under the Municipality, Khelvachauri. There are many other examples of adaptive management introduced by the project, one of which was an MTR recommendation to adopt SMART (Spatial Monitoring & Reporting Tool) for patrolling purposes. Training in SMART was concluded late in 2018 and it will be important to ensure that it is fully applied post-project.

Strong ownership at all levels of government, national, regional and municipal, and among the communities residing in and around the PAs has been a key ingredient of the project's overall success; together with the solid working relationship between the Implementing Agency (UNDP) and Implementing Partner/Executing Agency (APA); and the technical competence, efficiency and commitment of the PMU in facilitating the delivery of project outputs in a well-coordinated, cost-effective and cohesive manner under the oversight of a responsive PEB that has met regularly and fulfilled its role with diligence.

The strong ownership is reflected in the US\$ 13.7 million committed in co-financing from national, regional and municipal governments, much of which was used to improve vehicular access to the NPs and infrastructural facilities for park staff and visitors, as well as other donors working in the target PAs. This tenfold leverage of the GEF/UNDP grant (US\$ 1.3 million) was a significant achievement in itself that increased further during project implementation in the case of APA (over US\$ 440,000) and ARA (some US\$ 35 million of additional expenditure of which the co-financing element is unknown - not disaggregated).

Strong coordinating mechanisms and partnerships are another ingredient of this project's success, albeit some need further strengthening. They include the following initiatives:

- ✓ *Technical Coordinating Group:* As planned and designed in the ProDoc, TCG was established post project inception to ensure coordination between the different donors investing in Colchic Forests and maximize opportunities for synergies. TCG proved crucial, as anticipated, in ensuring that the donor community knew about each other's investments, activities and work plans. This enabled the project to fine-tune its own work

plan, in relation to time-frames and budgets, deploy consultants most effectively in relation to training and capacity building activities, and be mindful of potential stakeholder fatigue when scheduling activities. The Group met once or twice a year and comprised: APA, CNF, EU Twinning Project, UNDP-GEF Achara PAs Project, KfW Support Program for Protected Areas (SPPA) with GFA Consulting Group, Eco-corridor Programme in the Caucasus and WWF Caucasus Programme. [Sections 3.1.8, 3.2.2]

- ✓ *PA Friends Associations:* Two of these were established under Output 1.2 provisions for constructive involvement of local communities in PA planning and co-management, the first for Kintrishi PA complex with KfW co-financing (SSPA project) and a second for Mtirala and Machakhela by the GEF project in August 2016 to support the two NPs and their respective buffer (support) zones. Key initiatives supported by the GEF project include: establishing Community Rangers in both NPs and Junior Rangers in Machakhela, working with municipalities on tourism and waste management, and supporting Eco-Clubs in schools. This Friends Association has proved very effective in securing the trust of local communities and NP staff in working together, as well as raising the profile of these two NPs among visitors, tourism operators and businesses more widely in Batumi.

✗ There remain significant shortcomings with Mtirala and Machakhela National Parks Friends Association that need to be addressed in the immediate future. They include: future funding, which is not assured post the GEF project³⁶; and review and consolidation of its role in the support and governance of the two NPs. The Association also needs to anticipate opportunities for change, given the proposed designation of Machakhela Protected Landscape and on-going review of PAs policy and legislation. [Section 4.3]

- ✓ *PA Advisory Councils* were established in 2017 for Mtirala and Machakhela, with 10 and 13 members, respectively. They replaced the former Scientific Advisory Councils, which were felt to be too science-focused and lacked representation from local communities and municipalities. These shortcomings have now been largely addressed but the Councils have yet to become fully functional. Feedback, both from PA Administrations and their stakeholders, suggests that their role needs to be clarified, with clear ToRs, and capacities strengthened in order for them to become dynamic forces for change, modernizing the way in which PAs carry out their business.

✗ Currently, in the case of some PA Administrations, meetings with Advisory Councils are held irregularly and at the decision of the Director; they tend to be narrowly focused on NP interests and matters of conflict between the PA and its resident/nearby communities; and they lack structure and a proper framework that is tied into the management plan and annual work plan or equivalent. Mutual accountability between the PA and its Advisory Council has yet to be realized. [Sections 3.2.2, 3.3.3]

A wide range of quality feasibility studies, assessments, strategies, plans and other studies has been completed by competent consultants procured by the project. This material provides a wealth of knowledge on the values of the natural capital and ecosystem services within Achara's network of protected Colchic Forests, along with guidance on their conservation management and sustainable use. Notable is the *Assessment of the Ajara Protected Areas' Ecosystem Service Values and Benefits*, and its companion, *Options for Generating Sustainable Revenues for the Target PAs and for Local Communities*, which

perhaps for the first time highlight the wider economic importance of Colchic forests in addition to their nature conservation values. Other examples include: *Machakhela National Park Management Plan (2017-2023)*, *Ajara Protected Areas Sustainable Tourism Strategy*, a set of *Tourism Development Strategies and Action Plans* for each of the target PAs (Kintrishi, Mtirala and Machakhela) and a *Pilot Route in Machakhela National Park* that is of recreational interest to visitors while safeguarding the area's natural and cultural heritage.

The *in situ* presence and action-oriented, tangible results have been an outstanding strength of the project, particularly among the communities and also municipalities. It is abundantly clear from the TE field visits that the project has a high, respected profile for facilitating and demonstrating change that can be sustained in ways that improve the environment and/or livelihoods. Under Output 2.3, which focused on establishing operational capacity within Machakhela NP, for example, the project supported the NP Administration to renovate its office and a visitor centre; built capacity in management plan implementation, GIS and monitoring; outsourced the development of a Tourism Strategy & Action Plan and funded the development of tourist trails. Project actions in the Support Zone, now proposed as a Protected Landscape, included: a participatory process to develop a *Support Zone Community Action Plan*, 4 infrastructure projects cost shared with the community (bus-stop shelter, water supply infrastructure and a service centre for funerals, training/capacity building in agriculture, forest management, greenhouses, tourism services and supporting the establishment of 9 cooperatives for bee-keeping, hazelnut cleaning, hay production and a vehicle for transporting produce to markets. Reduction in fuel wood demand by use of alternatives (hazelnut shells, solar, briquettes) was piloted in 16 households and replicated in 65 households the following year (2018).

The fact that Achara's Colchic Forests are being nominated for World Heritage listing in early 2019 is an accolade for all those project stakeholders in government, NGOs, communities and academia who have contributed their expertise and support to this opportunity to raise the profile of this property's globally significant biodiversity¹. It is also timely with respect to the end of the GEF project as the heightened awareness of the importance of Colchic Forests will help to maintain the momentum generated by the project to conserve this natural heritage and safeguard its ecosystem services for the benefit of the local communities, visitors and society at large.

Further credit is due to the project for planning its Exit Strategy from the beginning of 2018, one year up front, to help ensure that its achievements in terms of capacities developed, mechanisms and processes initiated, bodies set up and new funds generated are sustained and institutionalised as appropriate.

MAIN SHORTCOMINGS

¹ At the time of finalizing this report in February 2019, it is noted that the nomination for World Heritage listing included just Mtirala and Kintrishi PAs. While this may be disappointing for many Machakhela stakeholders, they should know that (i) the process of evaluating the nomination is only just begun and IUCN, adviser to the World Heritage Committee on natural heritage, could recommend that the government be asked to consider including a core fragment of Machakhela's Colchic Forest in the nomination; and (ii) World Heritage sites can always be extended, subject to meeting such criteria as adding 'universal value' and/or increasing connectivity and integrity.

✗ **Existing PA policy and legislation** is a significant, over-arching constraint that has limited the project's achievements. This was identified as a moderate risk in the ProDoc where it is stated in the table on page 44: 'Current institutions show limited support for "de-concentration" [of] management authority to PA Administrations or to changes needed to improve PA management cost-effectiveness.' This risk features in the SRF for which the assumption is that 'APA will allow sufficient "de-concentration" of management to allow more adaptive management.' Clearly this has not happened for whatever reasons, although the current legislation that is now over 20 years old is acknowledged to be a barrier, but the fundamental point highlighted in the ProDoc is that a prerequisite for PA Administrations to successfully implement their management plans is the ability to apply adaptive management. Failure to adapt management in response to implementation realities will compromise both the effectiveness to achieve planned objectives and the cost efficiency of PA actions. PA Administrations currently face two barriers to being able to apply adaptive management: a) they lack the capacity, experience and confidence to adapt management in response to changing conditions; and b) they lack the opportunity to do so due to the current highly centralized nature of management planning and operations in Georgia.¹

While the project has been able to address barrier (a) to some extent through training and other forms of capacity building, barrier (b) persists and PA Administrations continue to have little or no autonomy, with no decision-making powers delegated to them or their board and no direct access to or control over their budgets. This is crippling effective and efficient PA management and undermining the value and potential of other investments in individual PAs and the PA network as a whole. [Section 4.3]

✗ **Project Design - Strategic Results Framework** is weak on a number of accounts:

✗ Outcomes 1 and 2 are not clearly differentiated. Ostensibly, Outcome 1 covers the enhancement of effective management of Kintrishi and Mtirala, while Outcome 2 is focused on increasing functional connectivity by expanding the system with the addition of functional Machakhela NP. In all other respects inputs to and outputs from the two Outcomes are much the same; and the increase in functional connectivity under Outcome 2 is somewhat disingenuous: it is no more than a stepping stone to reduce the gap between two fragments of Colchic Forest. The opportunity to close the 6 km gap through appropriate sustainable land management and/or habitat recovery practices appears not to have been explored.

✗ While baseline indicators adequately cover the project objective, their alignment with outcomes is inconsistent and in two cases there is major overlap between Objective and Outcome 2 indicators. Moreover, Component 1 is monitored by just two indicators, both of which focus on the same Output 1.1 (enforcement) and are somewhat duplicative. However, the bigger issue is that the other two outputs on community involvement in PAs co-management and financial sustainability of PAs are not tracked at all. [Sections 2.4, 3.1.1]

¹ **Note:** APA comments that "This paragraph is not clear for me. I don't think that PA policy and legislation is main challenge for the administrations." Refer to response to this comment in **Annex 9**.

✗ The risks and assumptions articulated in the ProDoc are not clearly integrated with the SRF, indeed several are absent; and, maybe as a consequence, their subsequent systematic review and reporting during project implementation appears weak, undermining the fact that they were well managed. [Section 3.1.2]

Evaluation Ratings

Based on this evaluation of the overall results achieved, the project is rated as **Satisfactory**. Detailed ratings are tabulated below and evidence is cross-referenced to the relevant sections of this TE report.

Criteria	Rating	Comments
Monitoring and Evaluation (using 6-point satisfaction scale)		
Overall quality of M&E	S	Overall, M&E is satisfactory, based on the higher of the two ratings for design at entry and implementation. Project-level M&E systems were considered in the MTR to be 'satisfactory' but no account was taken of the design framework and budget for the M&E Plan in the ProDoc, both of which impacted on M&E implementation in terms of SMARTNESS (lack of) and resources (inadequate). [Further details in Section 3.2.5]
M&E design at entry	MS	<p><input type="checkbox"/> M&E Plan in the ProDoc was reasonably extensive, with a comprehensive framework of monitoring activities. Baseline information was compiled, including status of indicators at project start and GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) for PAs.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Only US\$ 43,000, little more than 3% of the GEF grant, were indicatively allocated for the M&E Plan, with no provision for technical review of the SRF and M&E during project inception and none for an independent external evaluator to undertake a MTR. Instead, an internal MTR was planned, undertaken by the CO and UNDP-GEF Regional Coordinating Unit. Apart from lacking independence, this option is totally unrealistic time-wise.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Design of SRF has some weaknesses: overlapping indicators, insufficient indicator coverage of Outcome 1 scope, inadequacies in effectively monitoring illicit activities and their enforcement.</p> <p>[Further details in Sections 2.4 and 3.1.1 and 3.2.5]</p>
M&E Plan implementation	S	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) contained feedback from key stakeholders and provided summaries of project performance. Supported by more frequent progress reports and strategic prioritizing of future activities by the CTA with each mission; and by PMU's quarterly reports.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Project Executive Board (PEB) met regularly, bi-annually, and was well represented and attended at senior levels by key implementing partners.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Technical Coordination Group (TCG), set up by project, provided an effective platform to share progress and work plans among other partners investing in Achara's PAs. Synergies created and duplication avoided.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> UNDP Capacity Scorecard and GEF METT for PAs were diligently and competently completed on schedule for MTR and TE.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> MTR recommendations were thoroughly reviewed and responded to; with appropriate measures taken (e.g. promoting protected landscape designation for Machakhela; introducing SMART patrolling across Achara's Colchic Forest PAs; and reviewing need for no cost extension in Nov. 2017.</p>

		<p><input type="checkbox"/> SRF reviewed during inception phase but no initiative taken to address some obvious design weaknesses, nor in response to MTR concerns about measuring illegal activities and using conviction rates instead.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Risks and assumptions articulated in ProDoc were not clearly integrated with SRF. Maybe as a consequence, their subsequent systematic review and reporting appears weak, undermining the fact that they were well managed.</p> <p>[Further details in Sections 3.2.5]</p>
IA & EA Execution (using 6-point satisfaction scale)		
Overall quality of project implementation /execution	S	<p>Overall satisfactory quality of IA & EA execution is undoubtedly a reflection of the good, solid relations existing between the Implementing Agency (UNDP) and its Implementing Partner (APA) and the excellent technical and facilitative role realised by PMU in its engagement with a wide range of partners and other stakeholders to secure their trust and participation in the project. The other important ingredient to this satisfactory result is the high calibre of the consultants procured for the project, for which evidence is based on one-one interviews by the evaluators, review of a selection of their reports and the traction and resonance that their recommendations have found with many of the project's stakeholders.</p> <p>[Further details in Sections 3.2.6]</p>
Implementing Agency execution (UNDP)	HS	<p><input type="checkbox"/> UNDP's wealth of experience in biodiversity projects in Georgia and globally alongside their favourable standing with the Government of Georgia as a respected advocacy partner is a strong comparative advantage.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> UNDP CO provided regular, solid support to the project, including: active participation in PEB's bi-annual meetings in Batumi; close working relationship with its Implementing Partner (APA); oversight of PMU; and assistance with procurement, logistics, and financial reporting.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The absence of any personnel changes in UNDP's Energy & Environment Unit, responsible for the project's quality assurance, was hugely beneficial to building and maintaining a strong and dynamic working relationship with PMU and implementing partners.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> PMU remained intact and consistent throughout the implementation period, with no change in managerial or advisory personnel from start to finish. This was a significant benefit that, combined with the Project Manager being a well respected individual from Achara with experience of working for the regional government, undoubtedly contributed to the close working relations established with PA administrations, municipalities and communities residing in the project area.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> All of the SRF targets have been met or exceeded by end of project, GEF grant has been expended in a timely and cost-effective manner, and an Exit Strategy (first drafted at the end of 2017) has been rolled out and revised in an adaptive manner during the course the project's final year.</p> <p>Fundamentally, execution of this project has been extremely well facilitated by PMU – with care, timeliness, sound science and commitment that has secured support from many of its stakeholders and, most likely, won some hearts and souls too.</p>
Executing Agency execution (Lead Implementing Partner – APA)	S	<p><input type="checkbox"/> High level of ownership and participation among key officials from APA and its regional partners that was consistent throughout the implementation phase, notable being the PEB meetings chaired by APA.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> PA Administrations in the target sites worked closely with PMU and, as beneficiaries of many of the project activities, contributed to the delivery of a large number of outputs.</p>

		<p>Note: Stakeholders attributed occasional delays in implementation to APA's centralized management of PAs and lack of devolved powers for PA Administrations. APA's initial refusal to accept the zonation plan for Machakhela produced by Ilia State University, which took a month or so to resolve according to the MTR, was more about misunderstandings and lack of a well-planned participatory process than delay per se.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Frequent changes in staff at APA: notably its Chairman changed 6 times and the NPD 4 times during the project, which affects stability of relationships and impacts on implementation decision-making (delays). Turn-over of PA Administration staff is high among rangers¹ and attributed to low salaries, which is why salaries within selected PAs (NPs) are supplemented by Caucasus Nature Fund (CNF).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> A key assumptions in the SRF: "That APA will allow sufficient 'de-concentration' of management to allow more adaptive management... " has proved to be elusive for APA to realize during the life of the project, particularly with respect to enabling PA Administrations to become more financially sustainable as that requires a degree of independence and autonomy that is currently beyond existing policies and legislation. This <i>status quo</i> has constrained the delivery of Output 1.3 (sustainable financing for PAs) and Output 2.2 (civil society and community engagement in the governance of PAs).² [Further details in Sections 3.2.6 and 3.3.3]</p>
Outcomes (using 6-point satisfaction scale)		
Overall quality of project outcomes	S	<p>The project has met with considerable success in the attainment of its Objective, which is rated as Satisfactory, as evident from the following:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> A 24% increase (7,333 ha) in the coverage of PAs in Achara, from 30,469 ha to 37,802. While this does not currently meet the target of 39,202 ha, the target will be exceeded by 2,895 ha with the designation of the proposed Machakhela Protected Landscape. Thus, the total PAs coverage in Achara is planned to become 42,097 ha. Thus, the extent of the national PAs network will have increased from the baseline of 10.7% of the country to over 12%, exceeding the project's target of 11.7%.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> More importantly, the deployment of the protected landscape model should ensure that pressures on Machakhela's Colchic Forest will be addressed in ways that take into account communities' livelihood needs using more sustainable land use practices and other alternatives as demonstrated during the project. The proposed Protected Landscape is supported by local communities, which represents a tremendous change in their attitudes as a result of specific project interventions, such as the participatory review of Machakhela NP boundaries and development of a Support Zone Community Action Plan under Outputs 2.1 and 2.3, respectively.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The increase in extent of the PAs network in ARA has also been mirrored by substantive development in capacity, with targets at PA system (20%),</p>

¹ **Note:** As commented by APA there was relative stability at PA Administration Director level, with no changes in Kintrishi or Mtirala and only one change in Machakhela during the project period.

² APA comments: "In regard to the point it should be stressed that at the current stage, the mentioned parks have no enough facilities/infrastructure or resources/possibilities to generate own revenues that will be enable them to work independently. Due to this fact APA is obliged to use budget or own revenues generated by other parks for maintaining these parks. Without centralization these parks won't be able to cover at least its operational costs." The view of the Evaluators is that devolved powers can and should be divorced from the funding issue, which clearly does need to be managed centrally by APA, as in the case of many national parks around the world. In such cases, the NP is given a budget and empowered to deliver the management plan in a transparent and accountable manner, without continual recourse to central government for approvals. Often such NPs have their own Boards to which its director reports.[Also see **Annex 9**]

		<p>institutional (29%) and individual levels (13%) greatly exceeded (71%, 65% and 54%, respectively).</p> <p>□ Similarly, the effectiveness with which PAs are managed in ARA's Colchic Forests has also increased significantly and met or exceeded METT targets of 73% for Mtirala NP (73%), 67% for Kintrishi SR (69%), 63% for Kintrishi PL (65%) and 71% for Machakhela NP (80%).</p> <p>□ Strong ownership at all levels of government, national, regional and municipal, and among the communities residing in and around the PAs has been crucial to the overall achievement of the project objective, together with the technical competence, efficiency and commitment of the PMU facilitating the delivery of project outputs in a well-coordinated and cohesive manner under the oversight of a responsive PEB that has met regularly and fulfilled its role with diligence.</p> <p>□ The fact that this achievement has been delivered with a grant of little more than US\$ 1.3 million is a credit to all stakeholders involved in the project, particularly cofinancing partners whose contributions are estimated to exceed the GEF grant by at least tenfold (Section 3.2.4).</p> <p>Achievement of Outcome 1 is rated as Satisfactory, reflecting the excellent cooperation and collaboration between the various donor funded projects, coordinated via the TCG to ensure that the respective investments were effectively dispersed, with minimal duplication of resources and maximum leverage of co-financing from the GEF grant.</p> <p>Achievement of Outcome 2 is rated as Highly Satisfactory. Excellent progress was achieved with the designation of Machakhela NP in Year 2 (2015) and subsequent review and demarcation of the boundary resulted in the excision of some 1,400 ha in order to address major concerns of local communities whose access and rights to fuelwood and land for cultivation had been overlooked. The project was able to address this unforeseen challenge by securing the support of Machakhela's communities in realizing its value as a potential asset for their long-term benefit in terms of ecosystems services provisioning (NTFPs, clean water, ecotourism, production of organic foods etc). The outcome of this adaptive management is a proposal to designate the Support Zone as a Protected Landscape.</p> <p>[Further details in Sections 3.3.1]</p>
Relevance	R	<p>The project is globally important with respect to conserving Colchic Forest, a feature of the Caucasus Eco-region that is among the world's 34 biologically richest and most endangered terrestrial ecosystems and currently proposed for inscription on the World Heritage List.</p> <p>It is aligned with GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Objective 1 to: improve sustainability of PAs, thereby contributing to the CBD 2011-2020 Strategic Plan, its Programme of Work on PAs (PoWPA) and its Aichi Targets (see Section 2.3 for more details).</p> <p>Nationally, it is aligned with the National Environment Action Plan (2012-2016), National Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan 2005 – since replaced by the 2014 NBSAP, and the 2012 Ecoregion Plan for Caucasus.</p> <p>The project contributed to achieving the 2011-2015 UNDP Georgia Country Programme Outcome 3.2.1: Sustainable practices and instruments for the management of chemicals and natural resources ...; and it continues to be relevant to the 2016-2020 UNDP Country Program for Georgia. This is important, not only because the project spans two Country Programmes but also in the wake of its six-month extension to December 2018. [Further details in Sections 2.3 and 3.3.2]</p>

<i>Effectiveness</i>	S	<p>The project objective has been achieved in terms of enhancing the biogeographical coverage of PAs to conserve Colchic Forest in the Achara Region and, to the extent of reducing the distance between fragments of such forest ('stepping stones') from 13 km to 6 km, connectivity has been enhanced.</p> <p>Management effectiveness has also been enhanced, principally under Outcome 1, with METT targets realized and in most cases exceeded for the 4 target PAs. Outcome 2 was focused predominantly on Machakhela NP, enabling it to begin to function effectively as a PA through drawing up its boundaries and planning its management, all of which was undertaken in a participatory manner with local communities and other stakeholders. [Further details in Section 3.3.3]</p>
<i>Efficiency</i>	HS	<p>Overall, the project results have been delivered in a highly cost effective manner, particularly given the relatively small GEF grant of US\$ 1.3 million in relation to the wide range of outputs delivered across three Colchic Forests (target areas) in collaboration with several other donors, the tenfold plus co-financing leverage of additional financial support towards the establishing and management of PAs, including improved access to them for potentially sustainable tourism benefits. Also, considered is the six-month extension at no extra cost and critical with respect to delivering consensus on the proposed Protected Landscape that emerged as the adaptive management solution to the future management of the inhabited lower valleys of Machakhela Gorge. [</p> <p>[Further details in Section 3.3.3]</p>
Sustainability (using 4-point likelihood scale)		
Overall likelihood of sustainability	ML	<p>Under GEF criteria, each sustainability dimension is critical, so the overall ranking cannot be higher than the lowest one. The four dimensions of sustainability are rated below, with evidence provided alongside.</p>
<i>Financial resources</i>	ML	<p>The risk of government failing to commit sufficient financial support to new PAs planning and management, resulting in a shortfall that PAs are unable to finance, is rated <u>high</u> in the ProDoc. The assumption cited in the SRF is that government will gazette Machakhela NP and meet the full management costs. This high risk has been reduced, albeit sustainable funding of PAs will remain an issue for as long as APA maintains, rather than delegates, its authority over PA budgets and management, as discussed in Section 3.2.1.</p> <p>Considerable country ownership of this project has been demonstrated at national, regional and municipal levels, which is also reflected in the co-financing secured from each of these levels, all of which is evidence to suggest that the proposed Machakhela Protected Landscape is likely to benefit from regional and municipal funds not available to NPs if its management is passed to Khelvachauri Municipality. Meanwhile, Machakhela NP, with its recently revised boundaries, will receive additional funding for staff salaries from CNF as from 2019. Project initiatives, such as creating NP Friends Associations, provide a mechanism for increasing PA resources that is independent of the current legislative restrictions imposed on PA Administrations. Also, PA policy and legislation is currently under review as part of a GIZ-funded project that is expected to help modernise the current institutional approach to PAs. Thus, the prognosis for financial sustainability is deemed to be Moderately Likely.</p>
<i>Socio-economic</i>	ML	<p>Conflicts and misunderstandings among public and private sector partners, NGOs and resource users are identified in the ProDoc as a <u>moderate risk</u> that undermines socio-economic sustainability. Much has been achieved by the project, particularly in Machakhela Gorge, to engage communities in participatory processes and initiatives, such a review of the NP boundary, management planning, Mtirala & Machakhela NPs Friends Association (including its Community Rangers and Junior Rangers programmes), cooperatives for honey</p>

		<p>and fuel (from hazelnut shells) production and handicrafts, to raise their awareness of the importance and value of their natural heritage and support its conservation, as a means of enhancing and securing their own livelihoods.</p> <p>The MTR raises concerns about the small scale of these interventions but they are intended as demonstrations for replicating and mainstreaming, as appropriate and the next step of planning for the future vision and its realisation is underway. The revision of Machakhela NP's boundaries and development of a 6-year management plan (including its zonation), together with the consensus in support of the proposed Machakhela PL are clear evidence of the trust and support gained from communities and other stakeholders living, working or having other interests in this area. Both of these initiatives, to conserve biodiversity and secure ecosystems services for public benefits, are closely integrated within a PAs complex that serves to protect biodiversity within the NP and buffer it from threats and pressures by means of the PL in which land and water resources are protected from pollutants and used sustainably in the interests of local livelihoods and visitors wishing to enjoy the natural beauty, historic heritage and local culture of Machakhela Gorge.</p> <p>Other initiatives are also being considered, such as the inclusion of Machakhela (or part of it) in the nomination of Colchic Forests for inscription on the World Heritage List; and the establishment of one or more villages and their landscapes as destinations for cultural tourism heritage – all of which will contribute to the socio-economy of the area. More immediate economic opportunities include ecologically sustainable forms of tourism, with an emphasis on 'quiet' enjoyment, and the emerging Local Action Groups (LAGs) programme due to be implemented by Achara's Ministry of Agriculture.</p> <p>The Protected Landscape approach paves the way for socio-economic revival within the lower valleys of Machakhela, provided adequate planning in terms of resource use and safeguards are in place to ensure that the natural, cultural and historic resources are not eroded. Socio-economic sustainability is Moderately Likely, increasing to Likely once Machakhela PL is designated.</p>
<i>Institutional framework and governance</i>	MU	<p>The fact that current institutions show limited support for "de-concentration" [of] management authority to PA administrations or to changes needed to improve PA management cost-effectiveness is identified as a <u>moderate risk</u>. The assumption in the ProDoc that APA would delegate more authority to PAs to allow more adaptive management proved to be over-optimistic, although there has been some progress regarding stakeholder involvement in PA governance (see Section 3.2.2).</p> <p>Another constraint identified in the MTR and this TE is the high turnover of staff within APA, both at senior levels (e.g. NPD in the case of this project) and within PA Administrations, especially among the rangers (due to their low salaries), all of which fosters instability and undermines working relationships.</p> <p>This situation deemed likely to remain Moderately Unsustainable until such time as the PA policy and legislation is revised, enabling APA to decentralise its operations and provide more autonomy to PA Administrations.</p>
<i>Environmental</i>	L	<p>The resilience of ecosystems and their biological and physical integrity are identified in the ProDoc as being <u>moderately at risk</u> from the incremental impacts of climate change. As highlighted in the MTR, despite the project's focus on enhancing management effectiveness and PAs coverage, climate changes poses a significant risk to the conservation of Colchic Forests that are expected to shift to higher altitudes in the later part of the 21st century, resulting in an expansion of invasive species and loss of species with specialised habitat requirements.</p>

		Other concerns are: the limited science available to inform management and, even when it is available, the likelihood of it being ignored or rejected, as in the case of the zonation plan produced by Ilia State University (Section 3.2.6); and the hostile political environment in which the likes of APA are operating in the face of powerful sectors, such as the Ministry of Energy with its controversial hydroelectric installation in Machakhela Gorge. On balance, the benefits accrued as a result of implementation are likely to be sustained post-project, provided Machakhela PL is designated realised.
Impact (using 3-point impact scale)		
<i>Environmental status improvement</i>	S	The project is likely to have had a significant positive impact on the ecological status of Colchic Forest (increase in extent of protection) and at least a minimal reduction in stress on ecological systems in Colchic Forest (improved management effectiveness), even if mostly with respect to the operationalization of Machakhela NP, which covers a significant area totalling 7,333.18 ha (19.3% of ARA's protected Colchic Forest). [Further details in Sections 3.3.8]
<i>Environmental stress reduction</i>	M	
<i>Progress towards stress/status change</i>	N/A	
Overall Project Results (using 6-point satisfaction scale)	S	

Satisfaction scale: Highly Satisfactory, Satisfactory, Moderately Satisfactory, Moderately Unsatisfactory, Unsatisfactory, Highly Unsatisfactory

Relevance scale: Relevant; Not Relevant

Sustainability scale: Likely, Moderately Likely, Moderately Unlikely, Unlikely

Impact scale: Significant, Minimal, Negligible

Recommendations

***Note:** Lead agencies are indicated in square brackets for each recommendation*

1. [UNDP] In general, now that the project's Technical Coordination Group is over, it is proposed that an appropriate way of taking forward some of the recommendations below would be to bring them to the attention of the Technical Coordination platform that UNDP facilitates on behalf of the donor community. This could provide an appropriate opportunity to consider further how some of these actions might be institutionalized/resourced.

In practice, a relatively small amount of grant aid may be sufficient to leverage additional co-financing sufficient to address most of the recommendation and thereby ensure that the momentum generated by the project is strategically channelled/mainstreamed in the right directions among interested parties (budget holders) and not left to dissipate in a vacuum. If this recommendation gains traction, national and regional governments (as appropriate) should be invited to consider cofinancing given their strong interest in Colchic Forest.

ACTIONS TO FOLLOW UP OR REINFORCE INITIAL BENEFITS FROM THE PROJECT

2. [UNDP] Proposed Machakhela Protected Landscape: Fundamentally most important is to designate the Lower Valleys of Machakhela Gorge as a protected landscape during the early part of 2019, in line with the extensive research, consultation and consensus generated by the project during the latter part of its term. UNDP is well placed to continue to follow up with national and regional governments, as appropriate, through its Czech-funded initiative that is supported the development of a management plan for the proposed Machakhela Protected Landscape. If technical problems are delaying the designation of this Protected Landscape, it may be appropriate to explore whether or not technical assistance would be welcomed by government and, if so, whether or not the Czech Government would be amenable to extending their present support in order to maintain the momentum and realize this objective, to which so many stakeholders in government (national, regional, municipal and PA Administrations), among the communities in Machakhela and donors have contributed.

A further consideration, assuming that the designation and establishment of Machakhela PL will be realised: it is strongly recommended that a coordinating mechanism be established between the NP and PL, particularly given that the two PAs will be under different management bodies, APA and Khelvachauri Municipality, respectively. Additionally, it would be appropriate to set up a stakeholder forum for the Machakhela Gorge that would embrace the interests of all those living and working in the PAs and the respective sectors of local, regional and national government involved in their administration and servicing their needs (health, education, welfare, energy, environment, agriculture, waste, tourism etc.). This would also be beneficial for the long-term future, should stakeholders ever it appropriate to nominate the Gorge for Biosphere Reserve status (see **Recommendation 10**). These actions could be followed up in the event of any extension to the Czech support.

3. [UNDP] Staff retention and continuity within APA is an issue that impacted on the project and is likely to remain so in the immediate future. Some measures are in place to increase staff salaries annually until they are comparable with those in other government sectors. Additionally, in agreement with APA, for some years CNF has been supplementing

staff salaries within NP Administrations to help counter the seepage of rangers and other staff seeking better salaries. UNDP is well placed among these partners to strongly advocate, as necessary, that:

- a. CNF makes available the salary supplement for Machakhela NP Administration; and
- b. attractive financial provisions be made available for recruiting staff to manage the Machakhela PL. This may require special provisions as management will be under the authority of Khelvachauri Municipality.

4. [APA and PA Administrations, ARA and Municipalities] Sustainable Tourism Development Strategies and Action Plans have been prepared for each of the project's target PAs, with due consideration given to safeguarding their natural and cultural heritage. It is recommended that these are implemented in a coordinated manner, using the Achara Tourism Advisory Council or other appropriate regional body, to raise the profile these Strategies and Action Plans within the tourism sector (e.g. National Tourism Administration, Department of Tourism and Resorts A.R., Adjara Tourism Product Development Agency) and facilitate their collaboration with APA, PA Administrations and their respective Advisory Councils and Friends Associations, to realize these Strategies and Action Plans in a manner that is:

- a. aligned with Achara's regional sustainable tourism development plan(s);
- b. Integrated with the respective PA management plans;
- c. in the case of Machakhela, aligned with the cultural village/ semi-natural landscape concept that is under development by Achara A.R. Government; and
- d. subject to stringent social and environmental safeguard procedures that should now be in place in ARA following recent investments at national and regional levels¹.

It is also recommended, given the tremendous amount of valuable and interesting information provided in the *Ajara Protected Areas Sustainable Tourism Strategy* and in the *Tourism Development Strategy and Action Plan* for each target PA, that:

- e. The contents (text, maps and images) be reviewed and transformed into a visitor guide to Achara's Protected Colchi Forests and/or a series of shorter guides and maps for each of the three PA complexes.² The latter could be done simply and quickly using the web;

¹ According to the ProDoc, the Government and ARA were investing US\$ 12.5 million and US\$ 3 million, respectively, during the project period in biodiversity management outside PAs, including EIA to ensure biodiversity is included in development plans. At that time the Ministry of Environment's Ecological Expertise and Inspection Department was investing US\$ 100,000 annually in support of EIA. r

² The project has already disseminated and published some of this material, available as maps and brochures from the tourism sector and via the Internet. Project information is held by UNDP Georgia (<http://www.ge.undp.org/content/georgia/en/home/projects/ajara-protected-areas.html>) and a limited amount of visitor information is available via APA (<http://apa.gov.ge/en/protected-areas/cattestone/mtiralas-erovnuli-parkis-administracia>), though the site for Machakhela is under development and the ecotourism trails and guides for Kintrishi and Mtirala are poor by comparison with the information and maps in the Sustainable Tourism Strategies for Mtirala and Kintrishi. Mtirala and Machakhela Friends Association also has a website (<http://mmpafa.ge>) that would benefit from some of this material. Language is also an issue for foreign nationals visiting Georgia, as most PAs information accessible via the web is only in Georgian.

and maybe facilitated by the respective Friends Associations in collaboration with the PA Administrations.)

5. [APA and PA Administrations] Sustainable agricultural development is very much on the agenda of ARA's Ministry of Agriculture, which will be promoting its 'spatial clusters' programme in and around PAs. The Ministry's goal is for all produce to be organic within the next three years. Along with tourism, it is strongly recommended that APA proactively engage with Achara's agricultural sector as it is timely and the door is wide open. This may also prove to be an area that the Friends Associations can explore and ultimately help to facilitate and promote in terms of organic produce and its marketing and agri-tourism.

6. Mtirala and Machakhela National Parks Friends Association is in its formative and somewhat vulnerable stage. Having demonstrated its value to the PA Administrations and local communities through various initiatives in a number of quarters, in the absence of the project's continuing support it now needs to consolidate its charter or comparable legal instrument in terms of clearly defining its role, scope of activities, membership, modus operandi and relationship with its respective PA Administrations. Then it needs to determine its strategy over the next few years, including financial sustainability for which an assessment was completed in November 2018. Assuming that this work is in hand, one outstanding and one new action are recommended to help reduce the Association's current vulnerability and strengthen its profile and role, as follows:

- a. The Association needs a voice within the PA governance system and, in the current context, it would be most appropriate for it to be a PA Advisory Council member.
- b. The Association needs to be able to engage readily with the Municipality, particularly in the case of Machakhela, proposed for designation as a protected landscape and, therefore, due to come under its delegated authority. Likewise, PAs need to work closely with their respective municipalities on a wide range of issues, be it tourism, water and waste management, access (roads) and more – all of which have a greater or lesser relevance to the Friends Association. Thus, there is a rationale for establishing a small platform that brings together the PA, Friends Association and Municipality on a regular base (maybe quarterly).

The above two recommendations could equally apply to other Friends Associations. Meanwhile, the initiative could be trialed in Machakhela.

The above two recommendations could equally apply to other Friends Associations. Meanwhile, the initiative could be trialed in Machakhela.

7. [APA and PA Administrations] Training in SMART patrolling, a recommendation adopted from the MTR was completed only in November 2018; hence, it will be important to ensure that SMART is introduced and training reinforced early in 2019, and then consolidated and reviewed collectively by the PA Administrations in Achara in order to identify, share and apply lessons learnt from their experiences.

PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE DIRECTIONS UNDERLINING MAIN OBJECTIVES

8. APA] Protected Areas policy and legislation: It is all too apparent from this project that the on-going review of PAs policy and the 1996 legislation under the IBiS project is welcome,

if not overdue. Until such time as APA is able to de-centralise its current operations and delegate powers to its PA Administrations to manage their respective PAs, including financial resources, the outcomes of this and other PA projects will not be fully realised. Thus, it is important that APA participates whole-heartedly in the review, which includes the forest sector, to ensure that the revised policies and legislation fully addresses the short-comings experienced by its PA Administrations and stakeholders, including local communities address. Where possible and appropriate, it is recommended that some of the proposed changes be piloted with immediate effect within one of more of the proposed Colchic Forest PAs nominated for World Heritage status in order to demonstrate that government is being proactive in strengthening its management effectiveness and efficiency. This action will also better inform the outcomes of the policy review.

9. [UNDP to advise, APA to follow up with Forestry Agency] Increasing connectivity of Colchic Forest fragments further, to address the remaining 6 km gap in protected forest cover between Machakhela NP and Mtirala/Kintrishi PA Complex, would seem to be an obvious further step to take in order to expand the integrity of protected Colchic Forest, especially given its global value in the light of the recent nomination of Mtirala and Kintrishi for World Heritage listing.

Most of this 6 km gap is under the Forestry Agency so it would be appropriate to highlight its importance in the local forestry 10-year plan and ensure appropriate protection and other management measures are prescribed. The main barrier to connectivity is the highway but this applies principally to mammals and not forest..

10. [APA and PA Administrations, ARA and Municipalities] UNESCO Biosphere Reserve model is something that was examined during the assessment of what might be the most appropriate PA designation for the Support Zone that is now proposed as Machakhela Protected Landscape. While not a priority, which is to consolidate the establishment and management of the Machakhela NP/PL Complex, the Biosphere Reserve approach¹ is potentially pertinent to this Complex and may well prove to be a highly appropriate model to consider over the longer term, beyond which there would also be the opportunity to establish a transboundary Biosphere Reserve with Jamili Biosphere Reserve abutting the border with Turkey. Clearly, the Turkish authorities have no current interest in such a venture despite the project's significant investment in time and energy to engage with them. This may change at some time in the future, so the recommendation is simply to note the bigger picture and continue to explore options as opportunities arise.

¹ The biosphere reserve concept addresses the need to reconcile preservation of biodiversity within protected areas, often at a level larger than a single ecosystem, with the human development needs of the local and wider community. As such it represents an innovative approach to conservation: *"Biosphere reserves are much like laboratories where new and optimal practices to manage nature and human activities are tested and demonstrated. They outpace traditional confined conservation zones, combining core protected areas with zones where sustainable development is fostered by local dwellers and enterprises. Their governance systems are often highly innovative. In some cases, new legislation can be introduced."*

In accordance with the *Statutory Framework of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves: Individual biosphere reserves remain under the sovereign jurisdiction of the States where they are situated. Under the present Statutory Framework, States take the measures which they deem necessary according to their national legislation.* (Article 2.3)

Abbreviations and Acronyms

UN Operational Rates of Exchange on 1 December 2018: Georgian Lari (GEL) : USD = 2.702

ARA	The Autonomous Republic of Achara in Georgia has its own parliament and legislative system, established after the collapse of the Soviet Union and Georgia's independence (1991). Note: Transliterated of the Georgian name for this region is officially Adjara but other spellings exist, including Achara that has been adopted in the UNDP-GEF Project Document.
APA	Agency for Protected Areas
APR	Annual Progress Report
AWP	Annual Work Plan
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CEO	Chief Executive Officer (refers to GEF)
CNF	Caucasus Nature Fund
CPAP	Country Programme Action Plan
ECPC	Eco-regional Conservation Plan for the Caucasus
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EOP	End of Project (usually in the context of targets for indicators).
EU	European Union
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEL	Georgian Lari (currency)
GIS	Geographical Information System
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
ha	Hectares
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MoEP	Ministry of Environment Protection (merged with Agriculture in December 2017)
MoEPA	Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture
MTR	Midterm Review
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation.
NIM	National Implementation Modality
NP	National Park
NPD	National Project Director.
NTFP	Non Timber Forest Product
PA(s)	Protected Area(s)
PEB	Project Executive Board
PIF	Project Identification Form
PIR	Project Implementation Review
PM	Project Manager
PMU	Project Management Unit
PPG	Project Preparation Grant
ProDoc	Project Document
RTA	(UNDP) Regional Technical Adviser
SR	State Reserve
SRF	Strategic Results Framework
TCB	Technical Coordination Group
TE	Terminal Evaluation
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDP CO	UNDP Country Office
UNDP-GEF RTC	UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Centre (based in Istanbul)
USD	United States dollar
USDol	United States Department of Interior
WWF	Worldwide Fund for Nature

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose of Terminal Evaluation

Terminal evaluation (TE) is an integral part of the UNDP/GEF project cycle⁸. Its purpose is to provide a comprehensive and systematic account of the performance of the completed project by assessing its design, process of implementation, achievements (outputs, outcomes, impacts and their sustainability) against project objectives endorsed by the GEF (including any agreed changes in the objectives during project implementation) and any other results. Performance is measured by means of the indicators in the project's Strategic Results Framework (SRF) and relevant GEF tracking tools.

Terminal evaluation has four complementary purposes:

- ✓ To promote accountability and transparency, and to assess and disclose levels of project accomplishments.
- ✓ To capture and synthesize lessons that may help improve the selection, design and implementation of future GEF activities, as well as to suggest recommendations of replication of project successes.
- ✓ To provide feedback on issues that are recurrent across the portfolio and need attention, and on improvements regarding previously identified issues.
- ✓ To contribute to the GEF Evaluation Office databases for aggregation, analysis and reporting on effectiveness of GEF operations in achieving global environmental benefits and on the quality of monitoring and evaluation across the GEF system.

1.2. Evaluation Scope and Methodology

TE is an evidence-based assessment of the project concept and design, its implementation and its outputs, outcomes and impacts as documented in the Annual Progress Reviews (APRs), Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) and the SRF and associated tracking tools that provide indicators and targets for measuring success in implementation. It relies primarily on: interviews with stakeholders who have been involved in the design, implementation and oversight of the project; review of relevant documents; and observations made during visits to project demonstration sites.

The overall approach and methodology of the evaluation follows the relevant sections of the Terms of Reference (ToR) for this TE (**Annex 1**), which are based on the *UNDP Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations* . . .⁹

The evaluation was conducted in line with the UN Ethical Guidelines for Evaluators by one international and one national consultant, both of whom have signed the Evaluation Consultant Code of Conduct Agreement Form (**Annex 2**). This is designed to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individuals interviewed and assures independent, fair and evidence-based reporting. The evaluation included the following activities:

- ✓ A TE mission was carried out from 18 to 30 October 2018; for which the itinerary, schedule of meetings and stakeholders met are compiled in **Annex 3**.

⁸ *The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy 2010*, Evaluation Document November 2010, No. 4. 32 pp.

⁹ *Project-Level Evaluation: Guidance for conducting terminal evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects*, UNDP Evaluation Office, New York, 2012. 53 pp.

- ✓ The evaluators spent a full day in Tbilisi (18 October) meeting with the Implementing Partner, Agency for Protected Areas (APA), and other key partners before proceeding to the Achara Autonomous Republic of Georgia to meet with a wide range of stakeholders and visit the three project sites, Kintrishi, Mtirala and Machakhela national parks (**Figure 1**). A summary of the field visits is presented in **Annex 4**.
- ✓ The week (21-27 October) in Achara concluded with stakeholders being debriefed by the evaluators on the initial TE findings (26 October). Further debriefings were held with UNDP Country Office (CO) and APA after returning to Tbilisi on 28 October.
- ✓ The evaluators completed a desk review of relevant sources of information, such as the project document, project progress and Mid-Term Review (MTR) reports, financial reports and key project deliverables, as listed in **Annex 5**.

The SRF was reviewed to assess the attainment of the project's objective and outcomes, having been first self-assessed by the Project Manager and Chief Technical Advisor (**Annex 6**). Similarly, project outputs were self-assessed by the Project Management Unit (PMU) and reviewed by the evaluators (**Annex 7**). The latter provided valuable additional details that better informed the assessment of project outcomes.

As a data collection and analysis tool, an evaluation matrix was adapted from the preliminary set of questions included in the ToR (see **Annex 8**). Evidence gathered during the fact-finding phase of the evaluation was cross-checked between as many sources as practicable, in order to validate the findings.

The project objective and outcomes were rated by means of their respective performance indicators using a 6-point satisfaction scale, while also taking into account delivery of the respective outputs. Other aspects of performance, such as effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and sustainability, were rated according to the scales shown in **Table 1.1**.

Table 1.1 Ratings and their scales for different evaluation criteria¹⁰

Outcomes, Effectiveness, Efficiency, M&E, I&E Execution	Sustainability ¹¹	Relevance
6. Highly Satisfactory (HS): no shortcomings 5. Satisfactory (S): minor shortcomings 4. Moderately Satisfactory (MS): moderate shortcomings 3. Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): significant shortcomings 2. Unsatisfactory (U): major shortcomings 1. Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): severe shortcomings	4. Likely (L): negligible risks to sustainability 3. Moderately Likely (ML): moderate risks 2. Moderately Unlikely (MU): significant risks 1. Unlikely (U): severe risks	2. Relevant (R) 1. Not relevant (NR)
	Additional ratings if relevant	Impact
	Not Applicable (N/A) Unable to Assess (U/A)	3. Significant (S) 2. Minimal (M) 1. Negligible (N)

¹⁰ Refer to *Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-Financed Projects*, UNDP Evaluation Office (2012) for full definitions of 'satisfactory', 'likelihood' and 'impact' scales.

¹¹ Sustainability concerns the extent to which environmental, social and economic benefits are likely to continue after GEF/external assistance has ended

UNDP CO was provided with a draft report in mid-January 2019 to share with the Implementing Agency and UNDP Regional Office. The report was subsequently finalised after receiving feedback in late February, for which the audit trail can be found in **Annex 9**.

1.3. Structure of the Evaluation Report

The structure of this report follows the ToR for this TE (**Annex 1**), which reflects the *UNDP Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations* . . .⁹. The project is described and its duration, main stakeholders, and immediate and development objectives are outlined in **Section 2**. The evaluation findings in **Section 3** are broken down into three sub-sections: Project Design/Formulation, Project Implementation and Project Results.

Project formulation is evaluated with respect to: clarity and practicability of the project's objective and components; extent to which project outcomes were designed according to SMART criteria¹²; whether or not capacities of executing agencies were sufficiently taken into account; partnership arrangements and the extent to which they were negotiated prior to project approval; and the assumptions and risks taken into account during project design.

Project implementation is examined with respect to adaptive management, an important indicator of the abilities of the implementing agency and partners to proactively modify the project's design in response to using the SRF as an M&E tool. The effectiveness of partnerships and degree of involvement of stakeholders are also evaluated. Project finance is assessed in terms of timely disbursement of GEF and other grants; and the degree of committed co-financing that materialized, as well as any additional financing leveraged during implementation. Cost-effectiveness is evaluated by analyzing how planned activities met or exceeded expected outcomes within the designed timeframe, and whether an appropriate level of due diligence was maintained in managing project funds.

The quality of execution by both the implementing agency and the lead implementing partner (executing agency) is also evaluated and rated, taking into account the sufficiency of focus on results, level of support provided, quality of risk management and the candor and realism reflected in the annual reports. The M&E system is evaluated and rated with respect to its appropriateness and delivery (e.g., compliance with progress and financial reporting requirements, adaptive measures taken in line with M&E findings, and management response to the MTR recommendations).

In GEF terms, **project results** include direct project outputs, short- to medium-term outcomes, and longer-term impact, including global environmental benefits, replication efforts, and local effects. The main focus is at the outcome level as most UNDP-supported GEF-financed projects are expected to achieve anticipated outcomes by project closure, while recognizing that global environmental benefits are difficult to discern within the life of a project and measuring outputs is insufficient to capture project effectiveness.

Project outcomes are evaluated and rated according to: *relevance* (i.e. alignment with local and national priorities, GEF Operational Program etc.); *effectiveness* in (likelihood of) achievement of objective; and *efficiency* in terms of cost-effective delivery of resources. Country ownership, mainstreaming (with other UNDP priorities), sustainability (also rated),

¹²Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound, as defined in the UNDP Guidance for TEs (2012).

catalytic role, and impact are also evaluated. **Impact** is assessed in terms of verifiable improvements in ecological status and in stress on ecological systems.

Conclusions are presented in **Section 4**, together with **recommendations** for reinforcing and following up on initial project benefits. The report concludes with a review of **good practices and lessons learned** for consideration in other GEF and UNDP interventions.

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1. Project Start and Duration

Key project dates are listed below:

PIF approval:	07 June 2012 ¹³
PPG approval:	20 April 2012
GEF CEO Endorsement:	13 November 2013
UNDP Project Document signed:	09 June 2014
National Project Manager appointed	01 October 2014
Administrative/Finance Assistant appointed	10 November 2014
Project inception Workshop:	12 December 2014
Midterm review:	June – October 2016
Project completion (original)	09 June 2018
Project completion (actual)	31 December 2018
Terminal evaluation	October – January 2019

The UNDP-supported, GEF-financed project entitled: “*Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of the Achara Region’s Protected Areas*,” hereafter referred to as the project, it was approved on 7 June 2012, drawing USD 1,283,636 from the biodiversity focal area under the GEF-5 STAR allocation over a period of four years and a further USD 40,000 from UNDP TRAC. The Project Document was signed two years later, on 9 June 2014, and the Inception Workshop held in December of that year. Planned closure was 9 June 2018 but, following the recommendations of the MTR ending in October 2016, the project was extended by 6 months and 21 days to 31 December 2018.

The project was designed to enhance the management effectiveness, biogeographical coverage and connectivity of protected areas in the Autonomous Republic of Achara (ARA), Georgia, thereby enhancing the conservation of the globally unique Colchic Forests (temperate rainforest). The area is a refugium for humid Pliocene flora, having a high proportion of endemic fauna and narrow-ranged (locally endemic) flora. It is also a well-known bottle-neck for migratory birds.

An overriding rationale of the project has been to support government in planning and managing the recently gazetted Machakhela National Park, which forms the last link in a chain of four protected areas established to conserve the region’s Colchic forests (i.e. Kintrishi, Mtirala and Machakhela in Georgia and Jamili in Turkey), as shown in **Figure 2.1**.

As noted in the MTR, there has been increasing emphasis on protected areas in Georgia, following APA’s establishment in 2007 and a drive for nature and adventure tourism. In the context of Achara Autonomous Republic, the relatively pristine forests in the upper valleys of

¹³The PIF was approved by GEF Council on 7 June 2012, not 21 March 2012 as incorrectly cited in the MTR report (p. 20).

Machakhela National Park on the border with Turkey can be attributed to the military presence during Soviet Union times, as well as the steepness of the topography. Currently, the ecological integrity of these remaining Colchic forests is threatened by the proximity of Batumi, leading to significant exploitation of natural resources, especially timber, and the replacement of beech woodlands with alder. Such is the importance of Colchic forests and Colchic mires, nearby Mtirala, that they are being nominated for World Heritage status.



Figure 2.1 The three project sites (Kintrishi, Mtirala and Machakhela national parks) in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazeti, Georgia

2.2. Problems that the Project Sought to Address

Kintrishi and Tsiskara State Reserves were the first protected areas (PAs) to be created in Abkhazeti during the Soviet era in 1969. The region has received little attention from national and international biodiversity conservation initiatives, with the exception of Kobuleti¹⁴, since the Soviet Union collapse and initial independence of Georgia in 1991: a period marked by an economic crisis and geopolitical instability that negatively impacted the financing and management of the PAs system.

The project document analyses the increasing pressures on Georgia's PAs system within this context and identifies the overriding threats to be:

- i. Overexploitation of biological resources. [SEP]

¹⁴ Ispani Mire (770 ha) is listed as an internationally important wetland under the Ramsar Convention since 1997. It comprises Kobuleti Nature Reserve (331.25 ha) and Kobuleti Managed Reserve (438.75), designated in 1998 under the national Law on the System of Protected Territories (1996).

- ii. Destruction and fragmentation of habitats, coupled with the disruption of hydrological functions. ^[L]_[SEP]
- iii. Threats to biodiversity posed by climate change. ^[L]_[SEP]

Further to these threats and their drivers, the barriers to effective management of the PAs are identified as:

- i. Poor participation in the management of PAs. ^[L]_[SEP]
- ii. Financial sustainability of PAs. ^[L]_[SEP]
- iii. The application of management plans, including adaptive management. ^[L]_[SEP]
- iv. Biogeographical deficiencies of the PAs system. ^[L]_[SEP]

One of the overriding rationales, promoted as an objective by APA, was to develop Machakhela NP, gazetted in 2012, from a “paper park” into a functional, effectively managed PA.

2.3. Immediate and Development Objectives of the Project

The project **goal**, as defined in the ProDoc is: “to establish a regional PA estate that can effectively ensure the conservation and sustainabl[e] use of the globally important Colchic Temperate Rain Forests of the Lesser Caucasus Mountain Range in South West Georgia.”

Its **objective** is; “to enhance the management effectiveness, biogeographical[ly] coverage, and connectivity of Protected Areas to conserve forest ecosystems in the Achara Region.”

The project is aligned with GEF **Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Objective 1** to: *improve sustainability of PAs*, thereby contributing to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) **2011-2020 Strategic Plan**, its **Programme of Work on PAs (PoWPA)** and its **Aichi Targets**. PoWPA includes: expanding and strengthening PA systems at regional, national and international (transboundary) levels; improving PA planning and management in participatory ways that secure involvement from local communities and other stakeholders through innovative types of PA governance; and promoting equity and benefit sharing among such parties.

In particular, the project contributes to **CBD Strategic Goal C**: *to improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity*, **specifically Aichi Target 11** with respect to increasing the coverage, connectivity and effective management of the PA system in a region (Achara) of high biodiversity importance (Colchic Forest) and significant ecosystem services.

In order to achieve the project objective and address the threats and underlying barriers to effective management of Achara's PAs (**Section 2.2**), project interventions were organised into two outcomes:

Outcome 1: Enhancement of PA management effectiveness in the Achara Region.

Outcome 2: PA system expansion to increase functional connectivity of PAs in the West Lesser Caucasus.

It should be noted that the objective and outcomes are different to those presented in the Project Identification Form (PIF), which focus on the long-term financial sustainability and effective management of a subset of Georgia's PAs network rather than specifically on Achara's Colchic forests. Thus, while the concept remained largely intact, there were

significant changes to the project's structure and selection of demonstration sites during its subsequent development, none of which is mentioned in the Project Document (ProDoc).

2.4. Baseline Indicators Established

Baseline indicators were established during project formulation, with clearly defined end of project targets as documented in the SRF (**Annex 6**). These did not change during project inception: the SRF remained unaltered. The following baseline indicators were established with respect to the **project's objective** during the design phase:

1. Protected Area Coverage within the Achara Region increased
2. Increased national and Achara PA Coverage of the Colchic Temperate Rain Forest by at least 1% and 5% respectively
3. Capacity development indicator score for protected area system increased
4. Management effectiveness for Kintrishi PA Complex, Mtirala NP and Machakhela NP measured by the METT.

These are reasonably comprehensive in their coverage of the overall objective that embraces expanding Achara's PAS network, along with strengthening capacity, effective management and financial sustainability, all of which are interdependent.

In the case of **Outcome 1**, which is focused on enhanced management effectiveness, the two indicators focus on monitoring illegal activities by different means and, arguably, could have been integrated into a single indicator. Moreover, other important aspects of this outcome, such as the involvement of local communities in planning and management (**Output 1.2**) and long-term financial sustainability (**Output 1.3**), are taken into account.

Outcome 2 concerns expansion of the PA system in the West Lesser Caucasus to increase functional connectivity, particularly with respect to Colchic Forest. The first two indicators focus on expansion of the PA network and reduced distances between PAs, essentially repeating what is covered under the objective indicators. This reflects weak design during project formulation that could have been smartened¹² (even removed) at mid-term.

The other three indicators concern infrastructural investment, demarcation of boundaries and zonation, and local communities' involvement in the governance, planning and management of PAs. While reasonable in design, these indicators seem to be as relevant to Outcome 1 as to Outcome 2, which suggests a lack of clear differentiation between the two outcomes. Most probably, some of this confused rationale stems from the PIF.

2.5. Main Stakeholders

Key stakeholders and their respective roles are summarised in **Table 2.1**, based primarily on information in the ProDoc from where further details of these parties and other important sectors can be found, such as agriculture (Ministry of Agriculture, ARA), tourism (Adjara Tourism Product Development Agency) hydropower (Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources) and culture (Ministry of Culture) No further consideration was given to stakeholders in the Inception Report.

As noted in the MTR, the project has a complex array of stakeholders with different tiers of government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), communities and cooperatives, as well as the many other donors providing financial and technical assistance. The project has two formal structures to help inform and coordinate stakeholder interests: the Project

Executive Board (PEB), which is considered in **Section 3.1.8**; and the Technical Coordination Group (TCG), which is briefly explained in **Table 2.1**. Other coordinating initiatives include the Advisory Councils and Friends Associations set up by NPs (see **Section 3.2.2**).

Table 2.1 Key stakeholders and their roles in project implementation as planned in ProDoc

Stakeholders	Description, Mandate and Roles in Project Implementation
Agency of Protected Areas (APA), Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture (MoEPA)	APA is the agency established in 2008 with responsibility for Georgia's PAs. It was under the Ministry of Environment Protection, which merged with agriculture in December 2017 to become MEPA. Role: Implementing Partner with overall responsible for delivery of project.
Department of Agricultural Development and Agro-Service Center under Ministry of Agriculture of Achara	The department is implementing different agricultural and rural development projects including small grant support programs in the rural areas of Achara. Project supported some small grant community and agricultural development for the population living around the villages of the NP administrations.
Administrations of Mtirala NP, Machakhela NP and Kintrishi PA complex (Kintrishi State Reserve and Protected Landscape)	These Administrations are responsible to APA for the planning and management of their respective PAs. Administration is centralised with essentially no autonomy provided to individual PAs under prevailing law. PA Role: Primary beneficiaries of the project, responsible for implementing activities relevant to their mandate with support facilitated by PMU.
Municipalities of Kobuleti, Khelvachauri and Keda	Government bodies mandated to deliver public services at municipality level. Role: Key partners in strengthening local governance and ownership through delivery of infrastructure, such as roads, and services in support of socio-economic activities. Particularly close cooperation established with Khelvachauri Municipality, given that the project focused on Machakhela NP and its surrounding villages that fall this municipality.
Kobuleti, Khelvachauri and Keda Forestry Administrations of Achara Forestry Agency	Responsible for protection and management of National Forest within Achara. Role: Key partners responsible for management of forests in areas adjacent to NPs, particularly in respect of access to forest resources by local communities.
Local communities living within and adjacent to PAs, and supporting local Associations, Cooperatives and NGOs	High dependence on forest resources and, therefore, very vulnerable to loss or reduction in rights of access to such resources. Need to participate directly in planning and management of PAs to ensure their livelihood needs addressed. Role: Primary beneficiaries supported technically and financially by project to develop more sustainable and/or alternative livelihoods through cooperative and other approaches.
Caucasus Nature Fund (CNF), European Union (EU), KFW, US Department of Interior (Dol), WWF	Range of funding partners concerned about the conservation of Colchic Forest in Achara. Their activities are coordinated via a Technical Coordination Group (TCG), in which all participate including this project. Roles: CNF is a trust fund (supported by GEF and others) that contributes directly by supplementing the salaries of rangers in Mtirala NP, which also receives co-financing from the EU. KFW supports activities in Kintrishi PA. WWF previously supported Mtirala and, along with US Dol, has interests in supporting transboundary activities with Jamili Biosphere Reserve in Turkey.

2.6. Expected Results

The Government of Georgia requested GEF support for this project to remove existing barriers in an incremental manner to develop a viable, representative and effectively managed PA-approach to conserve biodiversity in the Achara region, focusing on the globally important Colchic Temperate Rain Forests of the Lesser Caucasus Mountains in South West Georgia. The requested investment is strategically targeted on operationalizing the newly established Machakhela NP, while also contributing to the enhancement of sustainable management in

Mtirala NP and KIntrishi PAs complex, including the role of local communities in PA governance and long-term viable financing of these PAs.

The expected results under the project's two Outcomes (**Section 2.3**) include six Outputs, shown in **Table 2.2**.

Table 2.2 Project outcomes and outputs, as specified in the Project Document

Outcome 1	Enhancement of PA Management Effectiveness in the Achara Region
Output 1.1	Enforcement and surveillance system strengthened in Kintrishi Protected Areas and Mtirala NP
Output 1.2	Reduced threats at source by constructive involvement of local communities in planning and co-management arrangements within the governance framework of 2 newly established community-based organizations
Output 1.3	Future financial needs of the Kintrishi and Mtirala PAs addressed by developing mechanisms to generate finances on the scale needed to address emerging long term pressures on biodiversity
Outcome 2	PA System Expansion to Increase Functional Connectivity of PAs in the West Lesser Caucasus
Output 2.1	Functional establishment of a new IUCN Category II PA of 8,733 ha in the Machakhela Valley
Output 2.2	Public-Civil Society-Community PA Planning and Management Governance Board established and provided with a legal basis to manage the proposed Machakhela National Park
Output 2.3	Established operational capacity at Machakhela National Park

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Project Design / Formulation

The project is closely aligned with GEF *Biodiversity Strategy* and contributes directly to the CBD *2011-2020 Strategic Plan*, as elaborated in **Section 2.3**. Moreover, this is consistent with Georgia's Fourth National Report to the CBD¹⁵, in which high priority is given to establishing and managing a system of PAs whose ecological integrity is maintained from threats of habitat degradation and unsustainable levels of extraction of natural resources.

The project is in line with the Ecoregional Conservation Plan for the Caucasus to establish a PA network across this ecoregion through collaborative management among all stakeholders, from national governments, NGOs and local communities. It also supports Georgia's National Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan (2005), National Environmental Action Plan (2012-2016) and National Tourism Development & Investment Strategy that promotes the conservation of natural and cultural heritage through sustainable tourism.

3.1.1. Analysis of Strategic Results Framework

As noted in the MTR (**para. 34**), the project design is appropriate for achieving the project Objective, despite a number of weaknesses that relate to a lack of clear differentiation between Outcomes 1 and 2, especially with regard to the inconsistent alignment of some of their respective indicators and outputs as mentioned in **Section 2.4**. There is also some duplication or overlap between indicators, doubtless arising from this lack of differentiation.

The majority of indicators are assessed as being SMART, as shown in **Table 3.1**. Exceptions are indicators 1.1 and 1.2 with respect to their measurability, achievability and/or relevance:

- As commented in the MTR (**Table 2**), measuring illegal activities and enforcement success is problematic and some projects have turned towards using conviction rates.

¹⁵ Framework Report on Georgia's Biodiversity, 2009

In this project, the low incidence and quantity of illegal offtake suggests that their relevance is minimal; furthermore, small changes involving low numbers of incidents and small quantities are likely to be statistically insignificant and, therefore, unreliable as indicators. There are other questions about the robustness of the sampling, which is not described in any of the available documentation. Given difficulties of access, how was the NP stratified and was sampling adequate to generate estimates between 0 and 11 m³ of illegally harvested forest products in Mtirala NP and Kintrishi PA complex? The felling of just a few mature trees could generate 10.78 m³ of firewood,

Table 3.1 Analysis of indicators with respect to their SMARTness

No.	Indicator	Target	SMARTness				
			Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Relevant	Time-bound
Project Objective: To enhance the management effectiveness, biogeographically coverage and connectivity of Protected Areas to conserve forest ecosystems in the Achara Region							
Obj.1	Protected Area Coverage within the Achara Region increased	39,202 ha.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Obj.2	Increased national and Achara PA coverage of the Colchic Temperate Rain Forest by at least 1% and 5% respectively	Nationally: 11.7% Achara: 20%	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Obj.3	Capacity development indicator score for protected area system	Systemic: >20% Institutional: >29% Individual: >13%	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Obj.4	Management effectiveness for Kintrishi PA Complex, Mtirala NP and Machakhela NP measured by METT scorecard	Mtirala NP METT score:> 73% Kintrishi State Reserve METT score: > 67% Kintrishi Protected Landscape METT score:> 63% Machakhela NP METT score:71%	Y	Y	y	Y	Y
Outcome 1: Enhanced PA Management Effectiveness in the Achara Region							
1.1	No net increase in the illegal harvesting of wood and non wood forest products	Mtirala NP: < 7.82 m³. Kintrishi PA Complex: 0 m³.	Y	?	?	?	Y
1.2	Reduction or no increase in illegal activity measured by % of patrols resulting in arrests or fines ¹⁶	Mtirala NP: 1.3% or less Kintrishi PA Complex: 0.37% or less	Y	Y	Y	?	Y
Outcome 2: PA System Expanded to increase functional connectivity of PAs in the West Lesser Caucasus							
2.1	Extent (ha) of area surveyed, and formally proclaimed and managed as Machakhela National Park (IUCN Cat II)	Machakhela National Park covering 8,733 ha by yr 2	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2.2	Distance between the Mtirala/Kintrishi PA Complex and the nearest Forest Habitat PA	Less than 6 km to Machakhela NP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2.3	Necessary infrastructure investment is made by APA and Achara authorities to establish effective management of the NP	Approx. 120,000 USD	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2.4	Machakhela NP boundaries and zonation decided and participatory management plan in existence	Clearly defined and consensually agreed boundaries and zones by yr 2	Y	Y	y	Y	Y

¹⁶ This measures records of illegal activity incidents as a proportion of patrol effort.

No.	Indicator	Target	SMARTness				
			Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Relevant	Time-bound
		Consensually agreed Management plan exists by yr 3					
2.5	Level of involvement of communities in the management and governance of the NP	Public-Civil Society-Community PA Planning and Management Governance Board established with proper representation and involvement of local communities in the planning and management of the Machakhela NP (by year 2)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

for example, and yet this estimate is for all illegally harvested forest products from the entire Mtirala NP, which covers 15,699 ha. If this really is a meaningful estimate, it is of little consequence, compared to the annual forest production.

- Indicator 1.2 may be more meaningful than Indicator 1.1 in terms of what is being measured, so arguably this duplication could have been avoided. Instead, other important aspects of management under Outcome 1, such as community involvement in planning and management, and financial sustainability should have been monitored.

In fact, community involvement and financial stability are monitored by various indicators under Outcome 2 (**Table 3.1**), albeit specifically with reference to Machakhela NP. However, in design terms, this is something of a mismatch with Outcome 2, which supposedly concerns the PA sub-system as a whole (Colchic Forest) and its functionality. This lack of integrated design in the SRF has already been identified and concluded in **Section 2.4**.

The design is complemented by the inclusion of management tools widely adopted for monitoring UNDP-GEF biodiversity projects, specifically the UNDP Capacity Development Scorecard and the GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) in this project.

3.1.2. Assumptions and risks

Five risks are identified in the ProDoc, of which only two actually feature as risks in the SRF and a third is highlighted as a risk to environmental sustainability (**Table 3.2**). No changes were made to the SRF risks and assumptions, nor were any additional risks identified in the Inception Report.

Table 3.2 Risks identified in the Project Document (pp. 43-45)

Risks (preceded by Category)	Risk Rating	TE Comments
POLITICAL: The Government fails to commit sufficient financial support to new protected area's planning and operations, and protected areas are unable to finance the subsequent shortfall.	High	Features in SRF; the assumption is that government will gazette Machakhela NP and meet PAs' full management costs.
POLITICAL: Conflicts and misunderstanding among public institutions, private sector partners, NGOs and resource users undermine partnership approaches and implementation of cooperative governance arrangements.	Moderate	Does not feature in SRF or elsewhere in ProDoc, other than risk assessment table (p. 43).

POLITICAL: Current institutions show limited support for “de-concentration” ¹⁷ [of] management authority to PA administrations or to changes needed to improve PA management cost-effectiveness.	Moderate	Features in SRF; the assumption is that APA will delegate more authority to PAs to allow more adaptive management.
ENVIRONMENTAL: Ecosystems are not sufficiently resilient and their biological and physical integrity is incrementally compromised by the effects of global and regional climate change.	Moderate	Does not feature in SRF but climate change identified as risk to environmental sustainability.
STRATEGIC: Current institutions have inadequate capacity or resources to manage protected areas.	Low	Does not feature in SRF or elsewhere in ProDoc, other than risk assessment table (p. 45).

During project implementation, the high rating accorded to the risk¹⁸ of Government failing: *“to commit sufficient financial support to new protected area’s planning and operations, and protected areas are unable to finance the subsequent shortfall”* was considered in the 2016 PIR and measures were identified to mitigate short-falls in financing, such as representation of local communities on the management board of the proposed Machakhela NP and engagement with private sector and NGO partners. The MTR does not make any specific reference to these risks identified in the ProDoc; rather it focuses specifically on the risks to post-project sustainability.

3.1.3. Lessons from other relevant projects incorporated into project design

Mention has already been made of Georgia’s Fourth National Report to the CBD and the Ecoregional Conservation Plan for the Caucasus, along with other national strategies and plans (**Section 3.1**), that have underpinned the project’s design.

Reference to the PIF indicates that the project design takes into account lessons learned from GEF projects that established the enabling framework for strengthening the financial sustainability of Georgia’s PAs system, specifically the World Bank-GEF *Georgia: Protected Areas Development Project*, UNDP-GEF *Catalyzing Financial Sustainability of Georgia’s Protected Areas System* and UNDP-GEF *Ensuring Sufficiency and Predictability of Revenues for Georgia’s Protected Areas System*.

A further attribute of this project has been its anticipation of the need for a Technical Coordination Group in order to share experiences, develop synergies and avoid duplication with other ongoing investments in establishing and strengthening the management of all protected Colchic forests in ARA, supported by donors such as CNF, EU and WWF in Mtirala NP and KFW in Kintrishi PA complex. This initiative is considered further in **Section 3.3.7**.

3.1.4. Planned stakeholder participation

The main stakeholders are identified **Table 2.1** and, as further elaborated in **Section 2.5**, the project design included two formal structures to coordinate stakeholder interests: the PEB and TCG, both of which should meet quarterly.

Stakeholder participation is fundamental to this project’s design: in the case of Outcome 1 it concerns strengthening the capacity of the full spectrum of stakeholders to manage existing

¹⁷ “De-concentration” is the accepted term used in Georgia to refer to decentralization (devolution of resources and management control from centre to regional, district, field levels).

¹⁸ Note that this ‘high’ risk was marked as ‘moderate’ in the Atlas risk log.

PAs (Mtirala and Kintrishi); and in Outcome 2 it relates to engaging relevant stakeholders in creating and managing a new PA (Machakhela NP). Planned initiatives include:

- ✓ Involving local communities and PA staff in the collection of biodiversity and management effectiveness data and their sharing via an information system.
- ✓ Involving local communities in planning and co-management arrangements through the establishment of community-based organizations (CBOs) to represent community interests on PA management boards in matters related to livelihoods in areas buffering PAs, such as fuel wood and NTFPs collection, livestock grazing, improved agriculture/horticulture, bee-keeping and community-based ecotourism.
- ✓ In the case of Machakhela, it was planned to establish a Public - Civil Society – Community Planning & Management Board and, more specifically, to involve local communities in defining management zones for the NP.

During project implementation, CBOs did not gain much traction and were replaced by PA Friends Associations. Further details of these and other planned initiatives can be found in the Stakeholder Involvement Plan (Section IV, Part III of the ProDoc); and their implementation is evaluated in **Section 3.2.2**.

3.1.5. Replication approach

The design of the project has an inherent replication dimension, as explained above in **Section 3.1.3**, whereby lessons learned can be shared via the TCG and applied across other PAs in ARA, or more widely across Georgia's PAs system. Examples of how this replication approach has been applied are considered in **Section 3.3.7**.

Provision is made in the ProDoc for best practices and lessons learned to be documented, along with guidelines to facilitate their wider replication and upscaling. Such plans include financial provision for such information to be published and disseminated in printed and digital format. Refer to **Section 3.3.7** for further details about the project's catalytic role.

3.1.6. UNDP comparative advantage

The comparative advantage of UNDP in the design and implementation of the Project is not described in the ProDoc.

Clearly, UNDP has extensive experience of working in Georgia that dates back to 1999 in the case of its GEF portfolio of seven biodiversity projects to date. Several of these relate to the establishment and strengthening of Georgia's PAs system under GEF-4 and GEF-5 (this project), resulting in UNDP's favourable standing within the Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture (MEPA) and its Agency for Protected Areas, formed in 2008.

3.1.7. Linkages between project and other interventions

There are strong linkages between this project and interventions led by other donors, such as CNF, EU, KFW, US DoI and WWF, with respect to Colchic Forests. Some of these linkages have already been described in **Section 3.1.3**.

It is also important to note that all of these ongoing interventions have contributed valuable knowledge and information to the dossier that will be submitted by Government to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre early in 2019, nominating Georgia's Colchic Forests for inscription on the World Heritage List of natural properties.

3.1.8. Management arrangements

The project is designed in accordance with the National Implementation Modality (NIM), the Implementing Partner being APA on behalf of the Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture (MoEPA). Planned management arrangements are illustrated in the organizational chart shown in **Figure 3.1**. The governance structure is based on the new rules for results-based management introduced by UNDP at the time of project formulation, comprising:

- ✓ Project Executive Board (PEB) – chaired by the National Project Director (NPD), who is nominated by APA and appointed by the Ministry (Executing Agency), and a membership comprising the Senior Supplier (UNDP as the Implementing Agency) and the Senior Beneficiaries (comprising representatives of national and local government as well as CBOs).¹⁹
- ✓ Project Assurance – independent oversight and monitoring of the project provided by UNDP.
- ✓ Project Support – provided by a Project Management Unit (PMU), which is responsible for project execution through working with partners and hiring consultants for specific works and services as needed. PMU also services the needs of the PEB. The Project Manager (PM) is supported by a part-time Chief Technical Advisor (CTA), National Technical Coordinator (NTC) and part-time Administration & Finance Assistant.

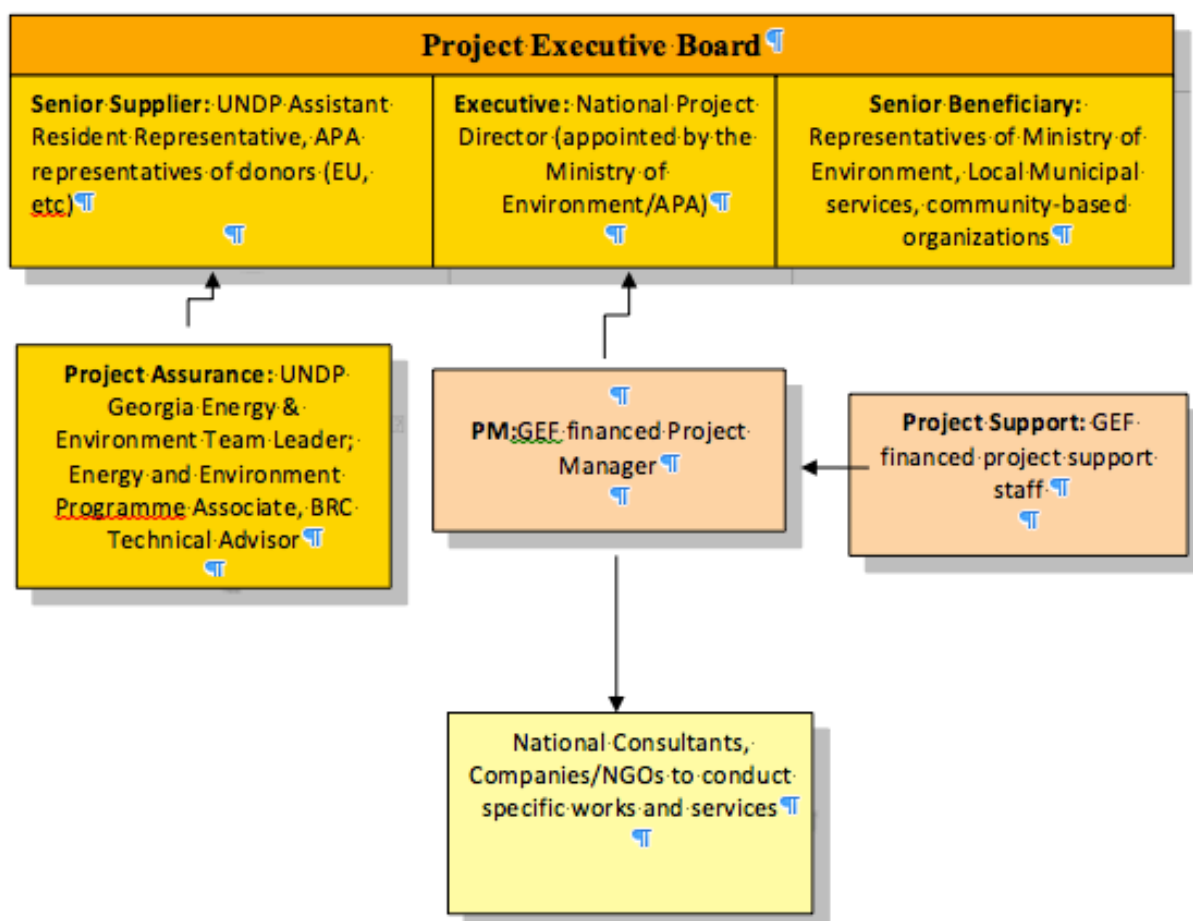


Figure 3.1 Project organizational structure as planned in the Project Document. Note that the Ministry of Environment has since merged with Agriculture to become MoEPA.

¹⁹ Board members comprise: APA, UNDP, Directors of the three NPs, KfW and WWF, with consultants invited as needed.

These planned measures were put in place during project inception, with the exception of the NTC appointment due to the lack of suitable applicants. In the case of the CTA, a temporary international Inception Phase Advisor was recruited to expedite start up.

The TCG was also set up during project inception to ensure coordination between the different donors investing in Colchic Forests and maximize opportunities for synergies. This Group met four times (twice in 2015, once in 2016 and again in 2018) and comprised: APA, CNF, EU Twinning Project²⁰, UNDP and GEF Achara PAs Project, KfW Support Program for Protected Areas (SPPA)²⁰ with GFA Consulting Group, Eco-corridor Programme in the Caucasus and WWF Caucasus Programme (see **MTR, Annex 4** for full details).

Following project inception, the Inception Phase Advisor was appointed as CTA on a part-time basis for the duration of the project; and the NTC post was decided to be unnecessary. Subsequently, towards mid-term, a technical consultant was hired to support the PM.

3.2. Project Implementation

3.2.1. Adaptive management

The project has demonstrated considerable initiative in its execution of the ProDoc, enabling the PA administrations responsible for much of ARA's remaining Colchic Forests to achieve much more in terms of participatory engagement with their stakeholders in such matters as governance, planning and management of PAs than would have been otherwise possible, given the centralized approach that continues to be applied by APA – to the extent that PA directors do not even manage their own budgets on account of prevailing laws and protocols. One of the key assumptions in the SRF is: "That APA will allow sufficient 'de-concentration' of management to allow more adaptive management. " It is this institutional straight-jacket approach, whereby PA administrations have little or no devolved powers, that stifles initiative, enthusiasm and commitment among those who actually manage PAs²¹. This will continue to be a challenge beyond the project's duration but is being picked up by the GIZ IBIS project (Integrated Biodiversity Management in the South Caucasus, 2015-2019) that is supporting PA policy development prior to revision of PA legislation.

Such a scenario is currently being played out at macro-level in Machakhela²². A sense of disappointment is reported in the MTR about the institutional reluctance to protect the entire area under the 1996 *Law on the System of Protected Territories*, with the lower valleys designated as Protected Landscape²³, falling under the jurisdiction of the municipality, and the proclaimed NP remaining as such (subject to the various agreed boundary amendments regarding access to agricultural lands). An expectation was for the whole area to be jointly or co-managed by APA and Khelvachauri Municipality, perhaps under the auspices of a single Advisory Board. However, this also requires agreement with Achara Forestry Agency, who currently have jurisdiction over state forest in the lower valleys, expertise to manage them and a certain accountability to meet communities' fuel wood needs. Such expertise does not

²⁰ The EU Twinning project "*Strengthening Management of Protected Areas of Georgia*", ended in 2015, developed the management plan for Mtirala NP. KfW is focused on Kintrishi PAs.

²¹ It is appreciated that part of the rationale for such centralization has been to counter corrupt practices, commonplace a decade ago during the formative years of APA. Transparent budgeting and accountability to partners and stakeholders in the planning and implementation of PA management plans have to be among the ways forward for APA to pilot.

²² The total area of Machakhela Gorge is 12,718 hectares, of which Machakhela NP covers 7,327 ha and the rest (5391 ha) comprises a residential support zone to the NP that is managed by Khelvachauri Municipality and Achara Forest Agency.

²³ Lower valleys harbour some of Machakhela's most important biodiversity in terms of riparian and floodplain woodlands.

exist within the Municipality nor, indeed, within APA but the necessary capacity can be developed. Kintrishi Protected Landscape, designated in 2007, is a case in point that is managed by APA²⁴.

The PAs legislation currently mandates APA to manage PAs but in the case of protected landscapes it should collaborate with the respective municipalities because APA has no jurisdiction over residential areas. In practice, Khelvachauri Municipality would allocate funds for Machakhela's management if it became a protected landscape.

At the time of the MTR, the future designation of the lower valleys was very much in dispute, hence the concerns expressed in the MTR. Following further extensive research (technical and legal) and engagement with partners and other stakeholders, especially communities, a considerable degree of consensus had been generated by late 2017 to apply the protected landscape model²⁵. The current scenario is that the Machakhela PL will be managed by Khelvachauri Municipality and the NP by APA. Achara Forestry Agency is familiar with this management option, having attended all of the project's discussions on this matter, including practical discussions on how to manage the forests.

This scenario is being progressed further, with the formulation of a management plan for the proposed Machakhela Protected Landscape,²⁶ now scheduled to start early in 2019 as part of the project's exit strategy. Arguably, this is the project's most significant example of adapting its implementation of the ProDoc to the prevailing situation; and it will have been a major achievement once realized, as anticipated by mid-2019.

Other good examples of adaptive management, reflecting changes to project design and outputs, include:

- ✓ The project was effectively and efficiently running within six months, having established a PMU and hired an IC to technically support and expedite the inception phase, delivered the Inception Workshop and finalized the Inception Report (December 2014), recruited the same IC to continue part-time as CTA, established the TCG²⁷ and positively decided not to invest in a technical coordinator. This set the tone and pace for subsequent delivery of the ProDoc, aided by: the technical competence and commitment of PMU and its Board members, who met quarterly²⁸; and the continuity of key players (PM, CTA and UNDP project portfolio holder), who remained in place throughout the project's duration, including its six-month extension.
- ✓ The establishment of CBOs was planned to be a key mechanism for involving local stakeholders in project implementation (**Section 3.1.4**). In practice, this did not gain much traction and, instead, the project focused on establishing the Mtirala and Machakhela National Parks Friends Association in August 2016 to support the two NPs and their respective buffer (support) zones. Key initiatives include the establishing of Community Rangers in both NPs and Junior Rangers in Machakhela, working with municipalities on waste management and tourism, and working with Eco-Clubs in schools. This Friends Association has proved very effective in securing the trust of local communities and NP staff in working together, as well as

²⁴ Note that Kintrishi Strict Nature Reserve is in the process of being designated as a NP, with the former PL becoming its 'traditional use zone'. The only other protected landscape in Georgia is Tusheti (established in 2003), which is managed by Akhmeta Municipality, but its context is sufficiently different to that of Machakhela to be a useful model.

²⁵ Refer to M. Kavtarishvili (November 2017). *Management Options for the Machakhela National Park Support Zone*.

²⁶ This is supported under the Czech UNDP Partnership.

²⁷ 1st Meeting held on 27 March 2015.

²⁸ Meeting quarterly is an uncommon and welcome feature of this project, as such UNDP-GEF project board meetings tend to be held half-yearly or in some cases just annually.

raising the profile of these two NPs among visitors, tourism operators and businesses more widely in Batumi.

3.2.2. Partnership arrangements

The lead implementing partner was APA, based on the NIM, with the full cooperation of relevant government sector agencies and municipalities within ARA providing technical and financial support. Protected Area administrations for Kintrishi, Mtirala and Machakhela and their respective local communities were the main beneficiaries and, therefore, were delivering many of the project outputs, facilitated and supported by PMU and consultants (mostly national and a few international) recruited for specific technical services.

The TCG established by the project proved crucial, as anticipated (**Section 3.1.8**), in ensuring that the donor community knew what about each others' investments, activities and work plans. This enabled the project to fine-tune its own work plan, in relation to time-frames and budgets, deploy consultants most effectively in relation to training events and capacity building activities, and be mindful of potential stakeholder fatigue when scheduling activities.

Other important partnerships that emerged during implementation was the Friends Association for Mtirala and Machakhela NPs and the PA Advisory Councils. Reference has already been made to the former (**Section 3.2.1**). The latter were established for Mtirala and Machakhela in 2017 comprising 10 and 13 members, respectively. These new councils replaced the former Scientific Advisory Councils in the case of Mtirala and other NPs elsewhere in Georgia, which were felt to be too science-focused²⁹ and lacked representation from local communities and municipalities. While these shortcomings have now been addressed to a significant extent, feedback from both NP administrations and their stakeholders suggests that their role needs to be clarified, with clear ToRs, and capacities strengthened in order for them to become dynamic forces for changing/modernizing the way in which PAs carry out their business.

Currently, Advisory Councils meet irregularly, as and when requested by the respective PA Administrations, agendas are NP-centric and attendance is not always good. Such shortcomings are indicative of the mixed messages from APA and its NP Administrations, that: NPs are for nature and not to be used by people, including tourists; tourists should be encouraged to visit NPs, as this generates much needed revenue, but they should be limited to visiting the buffer/support zones; and the main role of rangers is to stop illegal activities. What seems to be fundamentally lacking in the awareness raising is the 'Parks for People' principle: only by being able to 'quietly enjoy' the natural beauty of PAs will societies continue to support their conservation. Arguably, it is this principle that should underpin the role of the Advisory Councils – advising on how quiet enjoyment might be reconciled with safeguarding natural heritage both within PAs and their adjoining buffer areas, beginning with pilots and then upscaling and/or replicating as appropriate. Another important part of the role concerns the improvement of local livelihoods through sustainable harvesting of natural resources and other alternatives within the buffer/support zones.

3.2.3. Feedback from M&E activities used for adaptive management

The M&E framework is outlined in the ProDoc (Part IV pp. 52-57), with a budget allocation of US\$ 43,000. This comprises: Inception Workshop and Report, Annual Project Report (APR) for

²⁹ The scientific role may be duplicated since APA has a large scientific board, which reviews technical inputs from each PA.

UNDP and annual Project Implementation Report (PIR) for GEF, Quarterly Progress Reports and Combined Delivery Reports for UNDP (including, updated issues, risks and lessons learned logs), independent Mid-Term Review and Terminal Evaluation, audit, Terminal Report (with lessons learned) and visits to field sites. The framework remains unchanged in the Inception Report, as does the SRF.

The SRF provides a results-based methodology for monitoring progress against targets, using a suite of supposedly SMART indicators that track the project's objective and outcomes. Baselines for all of the indicators had been established prior to project onset and updated at mid- and end of term.

PEB provided the main decision-making mechanism used for adaptive management. The Board met regularly in Batumi every six months throughout the four and a half years of implementation. Review of the meeting minutes indicates that participation by senior officials from APA, UNDP, PA Administrations in ARA, Achara regional government and municipalities was consistently good, progress was reported, plans shared, issues constructively discussed and, as appropriate, decisions taken. Matters arising from previous meetings, by way of following up on earlier decisions and agreed actions, would be an appropriate addition to the agenda structure to help ensure continuity between meetings.

The TCG served as a regional coordinating vehicle to share and fine-tune work plans and implementation of activities, sometimes resulting in pragmatic adaptive management of schedules, logistics and resource allocation. This was particularly true in the initial years.

The MTR provides a critical opportunity for adapting management, given its scope, depth of analysis and independence. In this case, the MTR concluded that: "... the project is broadly on track and should make a good contribution to the conservation of globally important biodiversity." All aspects of the project were rated as 'satisfactory' (i.e. project objective and outcomes, project implementation and adaptive management, and sustainability³⁰). The 12 most critical recommendations were summarized, while other suggestions were distributed throughout the report. Management responded comprehensively to a total of 17 recommendations³¹, many of which lacked specificity (e.g. Work to seek mechanisms that will enhance the likelihood of achieving sustainability) or were somewhat simplistic (e.g. Keep implementation efficient and effective: there is much to do and only 20 months of project life remaining!). Only a few of these recommendations led to significant adaptive management, such as patrolling with SMART (Spatial Monitoring & Reporting Tool). This technology has now been introduced by the project for NPs to apply.

3.2.4. Project finance

The total budget in the ProDoc is US\$ 14,998,778, of which US\$ 1,283,636 (8.6%) is grant-aided by GEF, US\$ 40,000 (0.3%) is TRAC funding (grant) from UNDP and the rest is co-financing from national and regional governments, US\$ 10,791,079 (71.9%), and other sources, US\$ 2,884,063 (19.2%) (**Table 3.3**).

Pledged funds did not change significantly during the intervening 13 months between CEO endorsement and completion of the project inception period, the only apparent change being

³⁰ Sustainability was incorrectly rated using the 6 point scale for satisfaction, whereas the 4 point scale for likelihood of sustainability should have been used.

³¹ Refer to Evaluation Resource Center for management response to MTR recommendations at <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/managementresponses/detail/8509>.

a slight reduction of \$995 in APA's contribution (**Table 3.3**) but this is thought to have been a clerical error in the Inception Report. The significant point is that the small GEF grant of just under US\$ 1.3 million leveraged tenfold in co-financing (almost US\$ 13.7 million).

Table 3.3 Budget status by fund source at project endorsement, start, mid-term and end

Fund source	Fund type	Fund status at CEO endorsement (US\$) ¹	Fund status at inception (US\$) ²	Funds used by mid-term (US\$) ³	Funds used by end (US\$) ⁴
GEF	Grant	1,283,636	1,283,636	534,138	1,246,528
UNDP	Grant (TRAC)	40,000	40,000	No info	No info
Subtotal	Grant	1,323,636	1,323,636	534,138	1,246,528
APA	Co-finance	1,395,490	*1,394,495	405,507	1,838,523
AR Achara	Co-finance	7,638,036	7,638,036	** (41,897,589)	** (43,416,588)
Khelvachauri M.	Co-finance	1,757,553	1,757,553	512,587	912,587
KfW	Co-finance	2,317,063	2,317,063	292,196	1,614,716
US DoI	Co-finance	40,000	40,000	0	0
UNDP	Co-finance	110,000	110,000	No info	No info
WWF	Co-finance	100,000	100,000	135,000	535,500
CNF	Co-finance	317,000	317,000	116,271	304,200
Subtotal	Co-finance	13,675,142	13,674,147	43,359,149	48,622,114
Total		14,998,778	14,997,783	43,893,288	49,868,642

Sources: ¹Project Document (11-2013); ²Inception Report (12-2014); ³MTR (11-2016); ⁴UNDP (08-11-2018)

* US\$ 1,394,495, taken from the Inception Report appears to be incorrect (typing error), as it does not agree with the CEO Endorsement amount

** These amounts submitted to PMU by regional government are disaggregated and exaggerate the cofinancing element relative to this project.

The distribution of the GEF grant, UNDP TRAC funds and co-financing shown in **Table 3.4** indicates that whereas most (60%) of the GEF funds are allocated to Outcome 2, which is focused specifically on designating Machakhela NP and establishing its functionality, only 30% of the co-financing was allocated to Outcome 2 and the bulk (over 65%) went to Outcome 1. This worked well as donor agencies were active in all three PA complexes and the TCG was able to align their technical support accordingly.

By mid-term over 40% (US\$ 534,138) of the GEF/UNDP grants had been spent; and, apparently, over US\$ 44 million in co-financing, threefold what had been pledged (**Table 3.3**). However, as noted in the MTR, this is exaggerated as it has not been possible to disaggregate the data provided by ARA, who state in their co-financing letter that it would provide figures for the implementation of "various socio-economic and infrastructure projects in Khelvachauri and Kobuleti municipalities" irrespective of whether there was any relevance with PAs, local communities within the vicinity of PAs or infrastructure development within or immediately surrounding the PAs. A conservative estimate of actual co-financing spent by mid-term would be US\$ 9.1 million (66% of pledged co-finance), based on using the figure of US\$ 7,638,036 pledged by ARA, rather than their 2016 submission of US\$ 41,897,589 to PMU.

By 8 November 2018, less than two months prior to project closure, 94% (US\$ 1,246,528) of the GEF/UNDP grants had been spent, along with most of the pledged funds (**Table 3.3**). Contributions from APA, ARA and WWF were well in excess of their respective pledges; CNF was just about on track; and Khelvachauri Municipality and KfW were within 52% and 70%,

respectively, of their pledged commitments. The only co-financing that did not materialize was from US Department of Interior. Their co-financing letter was prepared in May 2013 but their project ended in summer 2014, about the time that this project commenced.

Table 3.4 Allocation of UNDP/GEF grant and co-finance as per ProDoc by component

Project Component	GEF/UNDP Grant % of Total	Source	Co-finance (US\$)
Outcome 1. Enhancement of PA Management Effectiveness in the Achara Region	382,273 (28.9%)	Agency PA	1,395,490 (10.2%)
		Achara Autonomous Republic	7,638,036 (56.0%)
		CNF	317,000 (02.3%)
Outcome 2. PA System Expanded to Increase Functional Connectivity of PAs in West Lesser Caucasus	789,997 (59.7%)	Municipality of Kvelvachauri, Achara Autonomous Republic	1,757,553 (12.9%)
		KfW	2,317,063 (17.0%)
		WWF	100,000 (00.7%)
Project Management	151,366 (11.4%)	UNDP	110,000 (00.8%)
Total	1,323,636 (100%)	Total	USD 13,635,142 (100%)

Annual expenditure by outcome and project management costs is summarized in **Table 3.5** and compared with the budget originally planned in the ProDoc and subsequent Annual Work Plans during implementation. ProDoc data are absent for 2018 because project duration was designed to be four years. Also, note that total workplan budget (110% in Table 3.4) exceeds the ProDoc budget simply because it is revised annually, whereas the latter remains unchanged.

Table 3.5 Annual expenditure (US\$) of GEF grant by project outcomes and management

Years	2014	%	2015	%	2016	%	2017	%	2018*	%	Total	%
Outcome-1 Enhanced PA management effectiveness in Achara Region												
ProDoc Budget	58,447	4%	157,200	12%	98,820	7%	67,806	5%	n/a	0%	382,273	29%
Annual Work Plan	19,642	1%	111,600	8%	118,609	9%	89,500	7%	57,391	4%	396,742	30%
Expended	13,380	1%	137,954	10%	107,332	8%	47,456	4%	25,610	2%	331,732	25%
Outcome-2 PA system expanded to increase functional connectivity of PAs in West Lesser Caucasus												
ProDoc Budget	143,200	11%	266,067	20%	166,400	13%	214,330	16%	n/a	0%	789,997	60%
Annual Work Plan	17,000	1%	251,170	19%	269,362	20%	221,989	17%	106,874	8%	866,395	65%
Expended	9,598	1%	180,548	14%	195,496	15%	264,761	20%	109,488	8%	759,890	57%
Project Management												
ProDoc Budget	36,350	3%	40,310	3%	34,750	3%	39,956	3%	n/a	0%	151,366	11%
Annual Work Plan	4,800	0%	52,110	4%	45,974	3%	31,017	2%	65,504	5%	199,406	15%
Expended	18,465	1%	59,404	4%	45,435	3%	15,055	1%	16,548	1%	154,906	12%
Annual Total	2014		2015		2016		2017		2018		Total	
ProDoc Budget	237,997	18%	463,577	35%	299,970	23%	322,092	24%	n/a	0%	1,323,636	100%
Annual Work Plan	41,442	3%	414,880	31%	433,945	33%	342,506	26%	229,769	17%	1,462,543	110%
Expended	41,442	3%	377,905	29%	348,264	26%	327,271	25%	151,646	11%	1,246,528	94%

*Data for 2018 incomplete for November and December.

Overall, the structure of the budget was maintained, with about 30 % allocated to Outcome 1 (25% recorded by early November 2018) and 60% to Outcome 2 (57% recorded by early

November 2018). Project management has exceeded the 11% planned budget (12% by early November 2018). Most important to project success is timely dispersal of funds and this is shown in **Figure 3.2**, using annual cumulative expenditures expressed as a percentage of the total GEF/UNDP budget. Key points to note are:

- ✓ Total expenditure was negligible (3%) in 2014, compared to the expectation of 18%, and was primarily concerned with project inception once the ProDoc had been signed in June.
- ✓ Thereafter, expenditure picked up rapidly and mirrored ProDoc and annual work plans quite well, with most budgets for Outcomes 1 and 2 expended by 2016 and 2017, respectively.
- ✓ Management costs have proved to be higher than planned and this will have been exacerbated to some extent by the six month 'no cost' project extension.
- ✓ In summary, these data indicate clearly that financial management of the project has been sound: by sticking to the overall framework of the budget and maintaining an increasing rate of expenditure to achieve 83% expenditure by the end of the penultimate year (i.e. 2017).

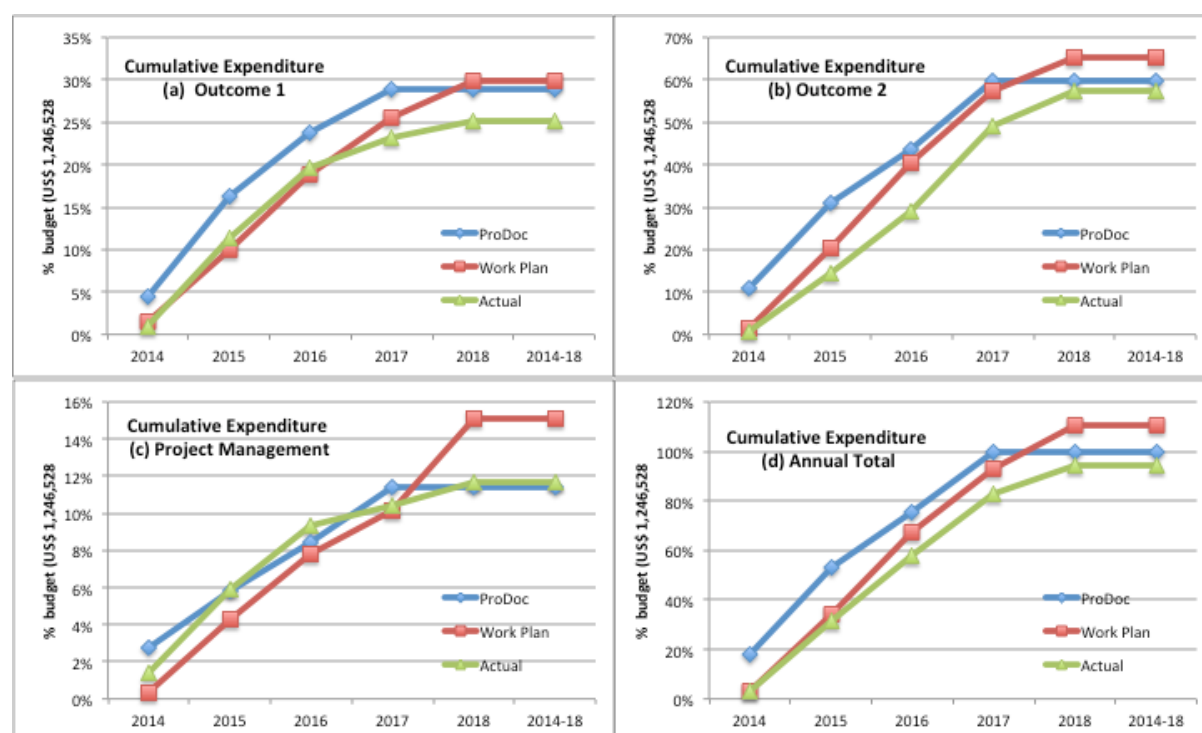


Figure 3.2 Cumulative expenditure of the project budget by outcome, using data from Table 3.4.

3.2.5. Monitoring & Evaluation: design at entry and implementation*

Overall Quality of Monitoring & Evaluation is rated as: Satisfactory

Overall, monitoring and evaluation is rated as satisfactory based on the higher of the two ratings for design at entry and implementation, for which supporting evidence is provided below. In the MTR, project-level monitoring and evaluation systems were considered to be 'satisfactory' but little account is taken of the design framework and budget for the M&E Plan, both of which impacted on implementation in terms of SMARTNESS (lack of) and resources (inadequate).

Monitoring & Evaluation design at entry is rated as: Moderately Satisfactory

Supporting evidence:

- ☐ The M&E Plan in the ProDoc was reasonably extensive, with a comprehensive framework of monitoring activities.
- ☐ Baseline information was compiled, including the status of indicators at project start and the completion of the GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) for PAs.
- ☐ Only US\$ 43,000, little more than 3% of the GEF grant, were indicatively allocated for the M&E Plan, with no provision for technical review of the SRF and M&E during project inception and none for an independent external evaluator to undertake the MTR. Instead, an internal MTR was planned, undertaken by the CO and UNDP_GEF Regional Coordinating Unit. Apart from the lack of independence, this option is totally unrealistic as UNDP staff in country and regional offices just do not have the quality and quantity of time necessary to undertake such tasks. A related second lesson is that given the option of only being able to afford one rather than two reviews/evaluations, it would have been more appropriate to prioritise the MTR over the TE as the MTR does provide the opportunity (time) to recommend radical changes necessary to bring a project in difficulty back on track. In both of the above cases, additional consultant services were procured for technically advising on project inception and for the MTR.
- ☐ The design of the SRF had some weaknesses from an M&E perspective, particularly in relation to effectively monitoring illicit activities and their enforcement (see Sections 2.4 and 3.1.1).

Implementation of Monitoring & Evaluation Plan is rated as: Satisfactory

Supporting evidence:

- ✓ PIR reports contained feedback from key stakeholders and provided summaries of project performance. These were underpinned by more frequent reporting on implementation progress and strategic prioritizing of future activities by the CTA on completing each mission; and by PMU's quarterly reports.
- ✓ Project Executive Board met regularly, bi-annually, and was well represented and attended at senior levels by key implementing partners.
- ✓ TCG, established by the project, provided an effective platform to share progress and work plans among other partners investing in Achara's PAs, thereby creating synergies and avoiding duplication of activities and scheduling of events having the same or similar stakeholder base.
- ✓ GEF METT for PAs was diligently and competently completed on schedule for MTR and TE.
- ✓ MTR recommendations were thoroughly reviewed and responded to; with appropriate measures taken as in the case of pushing forward the protected landscape designation in Machakhela; introducing SMART patrolling across Achara's Colchic Forest PAs; and reviewing the need for no cost extension in November 2017³¹.
- ✗ SRF work was reviewed during the inception phase but no initiative was taken to address some obvious weaknesses, such as duplication, nor in response to the MTR's concerns about measuring illegal activities and using conviction rates instead.
- ✗ Risks and assumptions articulated in the ProDoc were not clearly integrated with the SRF. Maybe as a consequence, their subsequent systematic review and reporting appears weak, undermining the fact that they were well managed.

3.2.6. Implementing Agency (IA) and Implementing Partner (Executing Agency-EA) execution*, coordination and operational issues

Overall Quality of Implementing Agency and Implementing Partner execution: Satisfactory

The overall satisfactory quality of project execution is undoubtedly a reflection of the good, solid relations existing between the Implementing Agency (UNDP) and its Implementing Partner (APA) and the excellent technical and facilitative role realised by PMU in its engagement with a wide range of partners and other stakeholders to secure their trust and participation in the project. The other important ingredient to this satisfactory execution of the project has been the high calibre of the consultants procured by PMU, for which the evidence is based on one-one interviews by the evaluators, review of a selection of their reports and the traction and resonance that their recommendations have found with many of project's stakeholders.

Fundamentally, this project has been extremely well executed – with care, timeliness, sound science and commitment that has secured the support of many of its stakeholders and, most probably, won some hearts and souls too.

Quality of Implementing Agency (UNDP) execution is rated as: Highly Satisfactory

Supporting Evidence:

- ✓ UNDP's wealth of experience on biodiversity projects in Georgia and globally and their favourable standing with the Government of Georgia as a respected advocacy partner is a strong comparative advantage.
- ✓ UNDP CO provided regular support to the project, including: active participation in PEB's bi-annual meetings in Batumi; close working relationship with its Implementing Partner (APA); oversight of PMU; and assistance with procurement, logistics, and financial reporting.
- ✓ The absence of any personnel changes in UNDP's Energy & Environment Unit, responsible for the project's quality assurance, was hugely beneficial to building a strong and dynamic working relationship with PMU and implementing partners.
- ✓ PMU remained intact and consistent throughout the implementation period, with no change in managerial or advisory personnel from start to finish. This was a significant benefit that, combined with the fact that the Project Manager was a well respected individual from the project area with experience of working for the regional government, undoubtedly contributed to the close working relations established with PA administrations, municipalities and communities residing in the project area.
- ✓ Establishment of the Technical Coordinating Group (TCG) early on in project implementation provide invaluable in coordinating plans and activities among the several ongoing PA projects ARA, as well as exchanging information and sharing lessons learned from respective initiatives.

Quality of Implementing Partner (APA) execution is rated as: Satisfactory

Supporting Evidence:

- ✓ High level of ownership and participation among key officials from APA and its regional partners that was consistent throughout the implementation phase, notable being the PEB meetings chaired by APA.
- ✓ PA Administrations in the target sites worked closely with PMU and, as beneficiaries of many of the project activities, contributed to the delivery of a large number of outputs.
- ✗ Occasional delays in implementation attributed to APA, such as its initial refusal to accept the zonation plan for Machakhela produced by Ilia State University. This was resolved a month or so later, as reported in the MTR.
- ✗ Frequent changes in staff at APA: notably the NPD changed 6 times during the 4.5 years of implementation, which affects stability of relationships and impacts on decision-making

(delays) by the project. High turn-over of PA Administration staff attributed to low salaries. This is why salaries within selected PAs (NPs) are supplemented by CNF.

- ✗ One of the key assumptions in the SRF: “That APA will allow sufficient ‘de-concentration’ of management to allow more adaptive management... ” has proved to be elusive for APA and its implementing partners, particularly with respect to enabling PAs to become more financially sustainable as that requires a degree of independence and autonomy that is currently beyond existing policies and legislation. Such ‘adaptive management’ is also needed with respect to governance in order for Machakhela Support Zone to be designated a Protected Landscape. This is also considered further in relation to management effectiveness (Section 3.3.6).

3.3. Project Results

3.3.1. Overall Results (Attainment of Objective)*

Evaluation of the overall results is informed by more detailed critiques of the SRF in **Annex 6** and the project's outputs in **Annex 7**, both of which should be consulted to benefit from a comprehensive appreciation of the projects achievements, challenges and short-comings.

Attainment of the Project Objective is rated as: Satisfactory

Project Objective: *To enhance the management effectiveness, biogeographically coverage, and connectivity of Protected Areas to conserve forest ecosystems in the Achara Region (by December 2018)*

The project has met with considerable success in achieving its objective, as indicated by:

- ✓ A 24% increase (7,333 ha) in the coverage of PAs in Achara, from 30,469 ha to 37,802. While this does not currently meet the target of 39,202 ha, the target will be exceeded by 2,895 ha with the designation of the proposed Machakhela Protected Landscape. Thus, the total PAs coverage in Achara would become 42,097 ha.
 - As and when this is achieved, albeit post-project, the extent of the national PAs network will have increased from the project's baseline of 10.7% of the country to over 12%, exceeding the project's target of 11.7%.
 - More importantly, the deployment of the protected landscape model should ensure that pressures on Machakhela's Colchic Forest will be addressed in ways that take into account communities' livelihood needs using more sustainable land use practices and other alternatives as demonstrated during the project. The proposed Protected Landscape is supported by local communities, which represents a tremendous change in their attitudes as a result of specific project interventions, such as the participatory review of Machakhela NP boundaries and development of a *Support Zone Community Action Plan* under Outputs 2.1 and 2.3, respectively.
- ✓ The increase in extent of the PAs network in ARA has also been mirrored by substantive development in capacity, with targets at PA system (20%), institutional (29%) and individual levels (13%) greatly exceeded (71%, 65% and 54%, respectively).
- ✓ Similarly, the effectiveness with which PAs are managed in ARA's Colchic Forests has also increased significantly and met or exceeded METT targets of 73% for Mtirala NP (73%), 67% for Kintrishi SR (69%), 63% for Kintrishi PL (65%) and 71% for Machakhela NP (80%).
- ✓ Strong ownership at all levels of government, national, regional and municipal, and among the communities residing in and around the PAs has been crucial to the overall achievement of the project objective, together with the technical competence, efficiency and commitment

of the PMU facilitating the delivery of project outputs in a well-coordinated and cohesive manner under the oversight of a responsive PEB that has met regularly and fulfilled its role with diligence.

- ✓ The fact that this achievement has been delivered with a grant of little more than US\$ 1.3 million is a credit to all stakeholders involved in the project, particularly cofinancing partners whose contributions are estimated to exceed the GEF grant by at least tenfold (**Section 3.2.4**).
- ✗ Shortcomings are identified in the respective Outcomes below, relating to governance and financial sustainability issues in respect of the revamped PA Advisory Councils and the PA Friends Associations.

Overall achievement is rated as **Satisfactory**, meaning that the project had only minor shortcomings in the achievement of its objective in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency.

Outcome 1: Enhanced PA management effectiveness in the Achara Region

Indicative budget in project document: US\$ 382,273

Actual cost incurred on this outcome: US\$ 331,732 (to 08-11-2018, planned US\$ 396,742)

As previously elaborated in **Section 2.4**, the two indicators in the SRF for Outcome 1 are inadequate, focusing only on enforcement measures to counter illegal activities, and do not consider out important aspects of effective management delivered under Output 1.2 (threat reduction through engagement with local communities in planning and management) and Output 1.3 (development of sustainable financing mechanisms for Kintrishi and Mtirala PAs). They are also somewhat duplicative, using different methods for the same issue. What is clear, however, is that illegal harvesting is not a serious issue and targets have been met, if the method is robust and relatively small differences between monitoring results are statistically valid.

Evidence in **Annex 7** indicates that management effectiveness has improved with respect to reducing threats at source by involving local communities in the governance of Colchic Forests through the establishment of two Friends Associations, one for Kintrishi led by KfW and the second for Mtirala and Machakhela by this GEF project. Sustainable resource use has also been supported in buffer zones through the coordinated efforts of this project, EU twinning and KfW projects, for example bee-keeping for honey production and a hazelnut cleaning machine to use the waste (shells) for fuel.

In respect of promoting the sustainable financing of PAs, ecosystem services valued, a tourism strategy has been developed and the Friends Associations have been exploring options by way of volunteer ranger services.

These and other investments in training and capacity development are reflected in the UNDP Capacity Development Scorecard and METT results, for which targets have been exceeded in all cases as discussed above under the project's objective.

Disbursement of funds allocated for Outcome 1 is also on track and aligned closely to what was planned in the ProDoc.

Achievement of Outcome 1 is rated as **Satisfactory**. This achievement is very much a reflection of the excellent cooperation and collaboration between the various donor funded projects, coordinated via the TCG. This coordination ensured that the respective investments

were effectively dispersed, with minimal duplication of resources and maximum leverage of co-financing from the GEF grant.

Outcome 2: PA System expanded to increase functional connectivity of PAs in the West Lesser Caucasus

Indicative budget in project document: US\$ 789,997

Actual cost incurred on this outcome: US\$ 759,890 (to 08-11-2018, planned US\$ 866,395)

Outcome 2 specifically concerns the expansion of the PAs network to include Colchic forest in the Machakhela Gorge by designating the area as a NP. Functional connectivity is somewhat misleading, as the proposed NP is not contiguous with other existing PAs in ARA, but that is a design rather than implementation issue that is picked up in the recommendations (**Section 4.2**).

Excellent progress was achieved with the designation of Machakhela as a NP and meeting the target of 8,733 ha by Year 2 (2015). However, subsequent demarcation of the boundary resulted in the excision of some 1,400 ha in order to address major concerns of local communities whose access and rights to fuelwood and land for cultivation had been overlooked. Thus, the project had a major unforeseen challenge to address from its outset - to secure the support of the Machakhela's communities to realize its value as a potential asset for their long-term benefit in terms of ecosystems services provisioning (NTFPs, clean water, ecotourism, production of organic foods etc).

This was achieved with remarkable success through a whole range of interventions including:

- development of a NP management plan in a participatory manner involving the communities and other stakeholders, establishing an Advisory Council on which communities are represented and creating the Mtirala and Machakhela Friends Association under which community ranger and junior ranger voluntary services have been established (Output 2.2);
- infrastructural investments to improve road access and facilities (NP administration office and visitor centre), supporting a wide range of community interests such as training in agriculture, traditional folk music, provision of a waste collecting vehicle imported from Germany, establishing cooperatives (e.g. beekeeping, hazelnut cleaning machinery); development of sustainable approaches to tourism (e.g. traditional arts and crafts, inventorying cultural and historic sites, developing hiking trails, publicity materials); and reducing conflict with wildlife by deployment of electric fencing around farmers' fields/orchards and insurance schemes (Output 2.3); and, most importantly,
- undertaking a consultative review of the best options for systematically protecting the Machakhela Support Zone that buffers Machakhela in a way that maintains the landscape for conservation and sustainable production purposes. It is this adaptive management approach to project implementation that has led to the designation of the proposed Machakhela Protected Landscape.

These interventions, about which further details can be found in **Annex 7**, were crucial to the delivery of a consensually agreed Machakhela NP management plan.

Disbursement of funds allocated for Outcome 2 is on track and aligned closely to what was planned in the ProDoc.

Achievement of Outcome 2 is, accordingly, rated as **Highly Satisfactory**.

3.3.2. Relevance*

Extent to which objectives of interventions are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners' and donors' policies.

Relevance is rated as: Relevant

The project is globally important with respect to conserving Colchic Forest, a feature of the Caucasus Eco-region that is among the world's 34 biologically richest and most endangered terrestrial ecosystems and currently proposed for inscription on the World Heritage List.

It is aligned with GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Objective 1 to: *improve sustainability of PAs*, thereby contributing to the CBD 2011-2020 Strategic Plan, its Programme of Work on PAs (PoWPA) and its Aichi Targets (see **Section 2.3** for more details).

Nationally, the project is aligned with the National Environment Action Plan (2012-2016), National Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan 2005 – since replaced by the 2014 NBSAP, and the 2012 Ecoregion Plan for the Caucasus. Further details can be found in the ProDoc and, in the case of the latest NBSAP (2014), National Target C.4 is particularly relevant: *By 2020, at least 12% of the country's terrestrial and inland water areas and 2.5 % of marine areas are covered by protected areas*. Important elements of National Target C.4 include: representativeness of the PA network, international recognition via such conventions as Ramsar and World Heritage, UNESCO's Man & Biosphere Programme for biosphere reserves, management effectiveness, participation with local communities and the private sector, and transboundary cooperation, all of which feature in this project.

The project contributes directly to achieving the 2011-2015 UNDP Country Programme Outcome 3.2.1: *Sustainable practices and instruments for the management of chemicals and natural resources, including land, water and biological resources demonstrated at pilot areas and up-scaled at national and/or transboundary levels*; for which the output is: *Financial and operational sustainability of protected areas increased*.

The project continues to be relevant to the 2016-2020 UNDP Country Program for Georgia under the fourth programme priority to contribute to United Nations Partnership for Sustainable Development Outcome 8: *Communities enjoy greater resilience through enhanced institutional and legislative systems for environmental protection, sustainable management of natural resources and disaster risk reduction*", and UNDP Strategic Plan Outcomes 5 and 6. This is important, not only because the project spans two Country Programmes but also in the wake of its six-month extension to December 2018.

3.3.3. Effectiveness & Efficiency*

Effectiveness: extent to which development intervention's objectives achieved, or expected to be achieved.

Effectiveness is rated as: Satisfactory

Supporting Evidence (refer to Annexes 6 and 7 for more details):

- ✓ The project objective has been achieved in terms of enhancing the **biogeographical coverage** of PAs to conserve Colchic Forest in the Achara Region and, to the extent of reducing the distance between fragments of such forest ('stepping stones') from 13 km to 6 km, **connectivity** has been enhanced.
- ✓ **Management effectiveness** has also been enhanced, principally under Outcome 1, with METT targets realized and in most cases exceeded for the 4 target PAs. Outcome 2 was focused

predominantly on Machakhela NP, enabling it to begin to function effectively as a PA through drawing up its boundaries and planning its management, all of which was undertaken in a participatory manner with local communities and other stakeholders.

- ✓ Although the target for designating Machakhela as a 8,733ha NP was met in 2015, the area was reduced to 7,333.18 ha following the boundary review in order to address community livelihood needs for fuelwood and agricultural land. The ensuing debate about an appropriate PA model for managing the lower populated valleys in Machakhela has led to the proposed Machakhela Protected Landscape that, once designated, will not only exceed the original target in terms of PA coverage but also address local livelihood needs in a more sustainable manner than envisaged in the ProDoc. This is a **potential post-project coup** that is likely to be realized sometime in 2019.
- ✗ **PA Administrations:** There remains a fundamental issue that the national PAs network continues to be highly centralized with respect to planning and delivery of management within individual PAs. As highlighted in the ProDoc: *"... an important prerequisite for PA Administrations to successfully implement management planning is the ability to apply adaptive management. A plan is just a systematic basis for trying to achieve desired objectives and ... will require changes and refinements in order ... to successfully achieve the desired management objectives set out in plans. Failure to adapt management in response to implementation realities will compromise both the effectiveness to achieve planned objectives and the cost efficiency of PA actions. However, currently PA Administrations face two barriers to being able to apply adaptive management a) they lack the capacity, experience and confidence to adapt management in response to changing conditions b) they lack the opportunity due to the current highly centralization nature of management planning and operations in Georgia."* While the project has been able to address barrier (a) to some extent through training and other forms of capacity building, barrier (b) persists and PA Administrations continue to have little or no autonomy, with no delegated powers or decision-making board for their own PA and no direct access and control over their respective budgets. This is crippling effective and efficient management and undermining the value and potential of other investments in individual PAs and the PA network as a whole.
- ✗ Unsurprisingly, therefore, are several shortcomings with initiatives introduced by the project because these are part of a change process concerning the autonomy of PA administrations and governance of PAs, requiring time to be piloted, monitored, reviewed and refined. A key example is participatory management involving the local community and other stakeholders, which has improved significantly but requires further attention as outlined below.

 - **Engaging local communities in PA governance:** The former PA Scientific Advisory Committees, which were focused purely on the science necessary to inform ecological management and had become all but defunct, were replaced by Advisory Councils that include a much wider range of stakeholders including committee representatives. Observations suggest that these have yet to become fully functional. In the case of some PA Administrations, meetings are held irregularly and at the decision of the Director; they tend to be narrowly focused on NP interests and matters of conflict between the PA and its resident/nearby communities; and they lack structure and a proper framework that is tied into the management plan and annual work plan or equivalent. Mutual accountability between the PA and its Advisory Council has yet to be realized.
 - **Friends Associations:** Similarly, two of these have been established recently, initially one for Kintrishi by KfW under the SSPA project and, more recently, a second for Mtirala and Machakhela under the GEF project. The latter has made some good progress, as reported in **Sections 3.2.1** and **3.2.2**, but it has yet to become embedded in the governance of the two PAs, including membership on the respective Advisory Councils, and their long-term continuation is not yet assured in financial sustainability terms.

Efficiency: cost effectiveness of delivery of results

Efficiency is rated as: **Highly Satisfactory**

Supporting Evidence (refer to Section 3.2.4 for more details):

- ✓ The total co-financing contribution leveraged by the GEF grant was over tenfold (nearly US\$ 15 million) in the ProDoc. This has increased from US\$ 7.6 million to potentially US\$ 43.4 million during implementation on account of large investments in infrastructure by ARA. APA also increased its co-financing from US\$ 1.4 million to US\$ 1.8 million during implementation. ARA has not provided any breakdown of the additional co-financing but it is known that not all qualifies as co-financing in terms of relating directly to the development objective of this GEF project. Nonetheless, strong financial ownership has been shown by national, regional and local government - APA, ARA and Khelvachauri Municipality (**Table 3.3**).
- ✓ Good coordination between donors has contributed significantly to cost effective implementation, facilitated by the TCG that was established by the project (**Section 3.1.8**).
- ✓ The budget has been monitored carefully, ensuring that disbursement of the GEF funds did not become unduly delayed post inception phase, as evident from **Figure 3.2**. Although the total budget was reported as only 40% spent at the time of the MTR mission (September 2016), 58% had been spent by the end of 2016 (**Table 3.5**). The project was on track for disbursing the entire budget by project closure (December 2018).
- ✓ Overall, the project results have been delivered in a highly cost effective manner, particularly given the relatively small GEF grant of US\$ 1.4 million in relation to the wide range of outputs delivered across three Colchic Forests (target areas) in collaboration with several other donors, the tenfold plus co-financing leverage of additional financial support towards the establishing and management of PAs, including improved access to them for potentially sustainable tourism benefits. Also, considered is the six-month extension at no extra cost and critical with respect to delivering consensus on the proposed Protected Landscape that emerged as the adaptive management solution to the future management of the inhabited lower valleys of Machakhela Gorge.
- ✗ Note that the limited monitoring of co-financing was identified in the MTR, which recommended that up-to-date records be maintained. A database for so doing was completed by mid-2017 but its subsequent regular and systematic updating was postponed to December 2018 due to other project extension priorities. Hence, such data were not available for TE purposes.

3.3.4. Country Ownership

Relevance of the project to national development and environmental agendas, recipient country commitment, and regional and international agreements where applicable.

Supporting Evidence:

- ✓ As a Party to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Georgia is committed to implement the Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA) that includes many activities applicable to the GEF project, such as: promoting participation of indigenous and local communities; strengthening collaboration across national boundaries; site-based participatory planning; effective management; and capacity needs assessment and capacity building. (Refer to other details in **Section 2.3.**)
- ✓ The 4th National Framework Report on Georgia's Biodiversity (2009) confirms the high priority placed by government on creating and managing a system of PAs to conserve

biodiversity *in situ* , while reocognising that the greatest threats to the ecological integrity of PAs is habitat destruction/degradation and the extensive extraction of biological resources.

- ✓ Relevant country representatives, including governmental officials at national and regional levels, civil society representatives and academic professionals have been actively involved in the project.
- ✓ At least US\$ 11 million of leveraged resources were contributed by national, regional and municipal government, and potentially much more from ARA (see **Table 3.3**).
- ✗ In some respects, APA's current PA policy and legislation contradicts what government is trying to achieve through this project, which is a financially sustainable network of effectively managed PAs that are representative of Georgia's biodiversity. The contradiction arises from APA's centralized institutional structure that limits devolvment of powers to its PA administrations and lacks provisions for stakeholders to engage in planning and management processes. (Refer to **Section 3.2.1** for details.)

3.3.5. Mainstreaming

Extent to which project successfully mainstreamed other UNDP priorities, including poverty alleviation, improved governance, prevention/recovery from natural disasters and women's empowerment.

The project objective conforms specifically with Outcome 3.2 of the UNDP Georgia Country Programme for 2011-2015: *Underlying disaster risk factors are reduced, focusing on sustainable environmental and natural resource management* and its respective outputs:

- **3.2.1** Sustainable practices and instruments for the management of chemicals and natural resources, including land, water and biological resources demonstrated at pilot areas and up-scaled at national and/or trans- boundary levels;
- **3.2.2.** System, institutional and staff level capacities enhanced for implementation of national environmental commitments and major international agreements on climate change, biodiversity, land degradation and chemicals; and
- **3.2.5** Financial and operational sustainability of protected areas increased

It also contributes to mainstreaming the two other priorities, democratic development and poverty alleviation, in the Country Programme that are identified under UNDAF. Some examples of Country Programme outputs to which the project has contributed by way of improving governance through participatory processes and demonstrating best practices in sustainable management of natural resources include:

- **1.1.3. Value added chains targeting the poor are developed in rural areas** - e.g. waste from hazelnuts (i.e. shells) used for fuel as an alternative to firewood; honey production (essentially organic, from natural forest) by small cooperatives; and wine traditionally produced from Ilia's Wine Cellar [<https://www.facebook.com/Iliawinecellar/>].
- **1.2.3. Employment generation schemes tested and developed, targeting vulnerable population, including IDPs, people with disabilities, rural women and youth** – e.g. establishment of cooperatives in communities residing within or nearby PAs; establishment of volunteer community rangers and junior ranger programmes (work experience that provides competitive edge for future employment).
- **2.2.2. Capacities of local and regional authorities strengthened to plan, deliver and monitor public services locally** – e.g. technical assistance provided to PA Administrations, regional

government agencies and municipalities in natural resource management, ecotourism, sustainable financing and waste management. [SEP]

- **2.4.2. NGOs and CSOs at local level empowered to participate in the decision making and agenda setting** - e.g. establishment of PA Friends Associations and representation of communities on PA Advisory Councils.
- **2.5.1. Efficiency and effectiveness of government and public institutions enhanced contribute to the Country's development** – increased efficiency of NP Administrations.

The Project did not have a specific gender objective but it should be noted that women were represented among the key stakeholders, including UNDP and APA representatives, other implementing partners, PEB, TCG and Friends Association members, community-based cooperatives and consultants.

As previously mentioned in **Section 3.3.5**, the project continues to be relevant to the 2016-2020 UNDP Country Program for Georgia.

3.3.6. Sustainability*

Extent to which environmental, financial and social benefits are likely to continue, within or outside the project domain, after GEF assistance/external assistance has ended.

The overall Likelihood of Sustainability is rated as: Moderately Likely

Sustainability is generally considered to be the likelihood of continued benefits after the GEF funding ends. Under GEF criteria, each sustainability dimension is critical, so the overall ranking cannot be higher than the lowest one. The four dimensions of sustainability are rated in **Table 3.6**, with evidence provided alongside.

Table 3.6 Sustainability ratings

Criteria	Rating	Comments
Sustainability (using 4-point likelihood scale)		
Overall likelihood of risks to sustainability ³²	ML	Under GEF criteria, each sustainability dimension is critical, so the overall ranking cannot be higher than the lowest one. The four dimensions of sustainability are rated below, with evidence provided alongside.
<i>Financial resources</i>	ML	The risk of government failing to commit sufficient financial support to new PAs planning and management, resulting in a shortfall that PAs are unable to finance, is rated high in the ProDoc. The assumption cited in the SRF is that government will gazette Machakhela NP and meet the full management costs. This high risk has been reduced, albeit sustainable funding of PAs will remain an issue for as long as APA maintains, rather than delegates, its authority over PA budgets and management, as discussed in Section 3.2.1 . Considerable country ownership of this project has been demonstrated at national, regional and municipal levels, which is also reflected in the co-financing secured from each of these levels, all of which is evidence to suggest that the proposed Machakhela Protected Landscape will benefit from regional and

³² The 2012 Guidance for conducting terminal evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects states in the Rating Project Performance table (p. 30): Overall likelihood of risks to sustainability. This is misleading as it is the likelihood of sustainability which is supposed to be assessed, not the likelihood of the risk occurring! This is evident in Table 1 (p. 25) where sustainability ratings are defined: for example 'Likely' is defined as 'negligible risks to sustainability' and, at the other end of the scale, 'Unlikely' is defined as 'severe risks'. **Note:** This has been brought to the attention of UNDP HQ Evaluation Office and It will be addressed in the revised TE Guidance due later in 2019.

		municipal funds not available to NPs, once its management is passed to Khelvachauri Municipality in accordance with 1996 Law on the System of Protected Territories. Meanwhile, Machakhela NP, with its recently revised boundaries, will receive additional funding for staff salaries from CNF as from 2019. Project initiatives, such as creating NP Friends Associations, provide a mechanism for increasing PA resources that is independent of the current legislative restrictions imposed on PA Administrations. Also, PA policy and legislation is currently under review as part of a GIZ-funded project that is expected to help modernise the current institutional approach to PAs. Thus, the prognosis for financial sustainability is deemed to be Moderately Likely .
<i>Socio-economic</i>	ML	<p>Conflicts and misunderstandings among public and private sector partners, NGOs and resource users are identified in the ProDoc as a <u>moderate risk</u> that undermines socio-economic sustainability. Much has been achieved by the project, particularly in Machakhela Gorge, to engage communities in participatory processes and initiatives, such a review of the NP boundary, management planning, Mtirala & Machakhela NPs Friends Association (including its Community Rangers and Junior Rangers programmes), cooperatives for honey and fuel (from hazelnut shells) production and handicrafts, to raise their awareness of the importance and value of their natural heritage and support its conservation, as a means of enhancing and securing their own livelihoods.</p> <p>The MTR raises concerns about the small scale of these interventions but they are intended as demonstrations for replicating and mainstreaming, as appropriate and the next step of planning for the future vision and its realisation is underway. The revision of Machakhela NP's boundaries and development of a 6-year management plan (including its zonation), together with the consensus in support of the proposed Machakhela PL are clear evidence of the trust and support gained from communities and other stakeholders living, working or having other interests in this area. Both of these initiatives, to conserve biodiversity and secure ecosystems services for public benefits, are closely integrated within a PAs complex that serves to protect biodiversity within the NP and buffer it from threats and pressures by means of the PL in which land and water resources are protected from pollutants and used sustainably in the interests of local livelihoods and visitors wishing to enjoy the natural beauty, historic heritage and local culture of Machakhela Gorge.</p> <p>Other initiatives are also being considered, such as the inclusion of Machakhela (or part of it) in the nomination of Colchic Forests for inscription on the World Heritage List; and the establishment of one or more villages and their landscapes as destinations for cultural tourism heritage – all of which will contribute to the socio-economy of the area. More immediate economic opportunities include ecologically sustainable forms of tourism, with an emphasis on 'quiet' enjoyment, and the emerging Local Action Groups (LAGs) programme due to be implemented by Achara's Ministry of Agriculture.</p> <p>The Protected Landscape approach paves the way for socio-economic revival within the lower valleys of Machakhela, provided adequate planning in terms of resource use and safeguards are in place to ensure that the natural, cultural and historic resources are not eroded. Socio-economic sustainability is Moderately Likely, increasing to Likely once Machakhela PL is legally designated.</p>
<i>Institutional framework and governance</i>	MU	The fact that current institutions show limited support for "de-concentration" ³³ [of] management authority to PA administrations or to changes needed to improve PA management cost-effectiveness is identified as a <u>moderate risk</u> . The assumption in the ProDoc that APA would delegate more authority to PAs to allow more adaptive management proved to be over-optimistic, although there has been

³³ "De-concentration" is the accepted term used in Georgia to refer to decentralization (devolution of resources and management control from centre to regional, district, field levels).

		<p>some progress regarding stakeholder involvement in PA governance (see Sections 3.2.2).</p> <p>Another constraint identified in the MTR and this TE is the high turnover of staff within APA, both at senior levels (e.g. NPD in the case of this project) and within PA Administrations, especially among the rangers (due to their low salaries), all of which fosters instability and undermines working relationships.</p> <p>This situation deemed likely to remain Moderately Unsustainable until such time as the PA policy and legislation is revised, enabling APA to decentralise its operations and provide more autonomy to PA Administrations.</p>
<i>Environmental</i>	L	<p>The resilience of ecosystems and their biological and physical integrity are identified in the ProDoc as being <u>moderately at risk</u> from the incremental impacts of climate change. As highlighted in the MTR, despite the project's focus on enhancing management effectiveness and PAs coverage, climate changes poses a significant risk to the conservation of Colchic Forests that are expected to shift to higher altitudes in the later part of the 21st century, resulting in an expansion of invasive species and loss of species with specialised habitat requirements.</p> <p>Other concerns are: the limited science available to inform management and, even when it is available, the likelihood of it being ignored or rejected, as in the case of the zonation plan produced by Ilia State University (Section 3.2.6); and the hostile political environment in which the likes of APA are operating in the face of powerful sectors, such as the Ministry of Energy with its controversial hydroelectric installation in Machakhela Gorge.</p> <p>On balance, the benefits accrued as a result of implementation are likely to be sustained post-project, provided the designation of Machakhela PL is realised.</p>

Satisfaction scale: Highly Satisfactory, Satisfactory, Moderately Satisfactory, Moderately Unsatisfactory, Unsatisfactory, Highly Unsatisfactory

Relevance scale: Relevant; Not Relevant

Sustainability scale: Likely, Moderately Likely, Moderately Unlikely, Unlikely

Impact scale: Significant, Minimal, Negligible

3.3.7. Catalytic Role

Extent to which the project has demonstrated: a) production of a public good, b) demonstration, c) replication, and d) scaling up.

The catalytic role of the project has been immense, as evident from a quick scan of the many project outputs documented in **Annex 7**. As mentioned in **Section 3.1.5**, the project was designed with demonstrations, best practices, replication and scaling up very much in mind through the establishment of the TCG as a platform for sharing experiences among other projects in Achara to learn lessons, maximise synergies and avoid duplication.

Furthermore, as noted in **Section 3.1.5**, financial provision is made in the ProDoc for the fruits of this catalytic role to be documented and disseminated for their wider replication and upscaling. Examples include the following:

- **Public good:** wide range of training provided to PA Administration staff in response to capacity needs assessment for development of enforcement capacity (Output 1.1); cost-sharing of four infrastructures with local communities – bus stop shelter, water supply, ritual service centre for arrangement of funerals; training for villages residents in agriculture, forest management, greenhouses, local marketing; and support to folk music choir.
- Piloting fuelwood alternatives in 16 households (11 with hazelnut shells, 5 with solar) and 1 school (hazelnut shells, briquette, solar water heaters). Replicated in 2018 with another 65 households (60 with hazelnut shells, 5 with solar). Hazelnut shells upscaled to within WWF forestry activities to establish eco-corridor in Khulo District.

- Electric fence piloted to protect orchards and cultivations from marauding bears and wild boar.
- Procurement of a suitably sized waste collection truck from Germany for Khelvachauri Municipality to use in Machakhela Gorge, where remote villages are only accessible via narrow, mountain roads. This initiative has been shared with municipalities in Samegrelo and Zemo Svaneti Region, who are now seeking support from ADB and EU funded projects³⁴.
- Modifying the role and structure of the all but defunct PA Scientific Advisory Committees to provide a mechanism for local communities to be involved in PA governance and management.
- Establishing Friends Associations to support PA management through a range of initiatives, including the recruitment of 'junior' and 'community' rangers for such purposes as raising awareness, monitoring and patrolling.
- Applying the Protected Landscape approach to governance piloted in Kintrishi PA complex in 2007 to the lower valley of Machakhela, which is inhabited and provides a protective buffer to the largely intact Colchic forests in the higher valleys. Elsewhere in Georgia, the Protected Landscape approach has been used only in Tusheti.

3.3.8. Impact

Extent to which project has demonstrated: a) verifiable improvement in ecological status b) verifiable reductions in stress on ecological systems; or, through specified process indicators, demonstrated that progress is being made towards achievement of ecological improvement and/or stress reduction.

Impact on ecological status is rated as: likely to be Significant

Impact on stress of ecological systems is rated as: likely to be at least Minimal

Assessment of impact is concerned with actual or anticipated, positive or negative changes in global environmental benefit, while also taking into account sustainable development impacts including changed livelihoods.

The global benefit of this project is extending the PAs coverage and connectivity of Georgia's unique Colchic Forest (temperate rainforest), which is restricted to ARA and Jamili adjacent to the border in Turkey, and enhancing its effective management.

Targets for the four Objective indicators and one Outcome 2 indicator, regarding connectivity, have been achieved and in many cases exceeded with respect to: increased PA coverage of Colchic Forest³⁵; increased capacity at PA system (systemic), PA Administration (institutional) and PA personnel (individual) levels; and increased connectivity between Mtirala/Kintrishi PA complex and Jamili Biosphere Reserve in Turkey (**Annex 6**). However, none of these indicators tangibly verify improvement in ecological status or reduction in stress, other than the increase in extent of protected Colchic forest based on the ecological premise that more forest fragments are better than fewer ones and bigger are better than smaller ones.

The only other tangible evidence available is from the Outcome 1 monitoring of illegal harvesting of wood and non-wood forest products, and of illegal activities encountered while on patrol in Mtirala and Kintrishi NPs. Both of these indicators show a reduction, respectively, in quantities of illegally harvested forest products and encounters with illegal activities. However, there are potential concerns about the methodologies, their limitations and, in the case of the illegal harvesting, the amounts involved are so small (less than 10 m³) that this

³⁴Refer to: Black Sea Eco Academy (November 2018), *Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of Achara Region's Protected Areas: Final Report*.

³⁵ It is assumed that the proposed Machakhela Protected Landscape will be designated in 2019, in which case the planned targets will be exceeded.

raises questions about the adequacy of the sampling method. Further details can be found in **Annex 6**.

There is plenty of other evidence to suggest that stress on Colchic Forest in the three NPs in Achara, particularly the new Machakhela NP, should have been reduced at least minimally due to significant improvements in management effectiveness as a result of such activities as: boundary demarcation, excluding areas traditionally accessed by villagers for firewood and other resource uses; formulation of management and operational plans; adequate training and equipping of NP staff for enforcement work; raised awareness and understanding of NP values by local communities and their engagement in NP planning and management; and creation of community and junior ranger programmes (**refer to METT**).

On the other hand, impacts from the recent hydroelectric installation, increased visitor use and climate change may have offset the positive benefits of improved management effectiveness.

From a livelihood perspective, again there is no baseline against which to measure socio-economic improvements but certainly many of the project interventions under Output 2.3 (**refer to Annex 7**) have resulted in improved livelihoods at cooperative and individual levels, judging by the positive attitudes towards the project and NP Administrations observed by the evaluators and their direct feedback during interviews. The establishment of Machakhela NP and related project support towards income generation and tourism has had raised the area's profile, resulting in initial economic benefits accruing to some community members. The potential for replicating and upscaling such economic benefits is more widely recognized and understood as a result of the diverse range of demonstrations.

Suffice to conclude from the above evidence and considerations that the project is likely to have had a significant positive impact on the ecological status of Colchic Forest (increase in extent of protection) and at least a minimal reduction in stress on ecological systems in Colchic Forest (improved management effectiveness), even if mostly with respect to the operationalization of Machakhela NP, which covers a significant area totalling 7,333.18 ha (19.3% of ARA's protected Colchic Forest).

4. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS

4.1. Conclusions

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS/STRENGTHS

The project has achieved a very Satisfactory result, meeting or exceeding all of its targets in the SRF at objective and outcome levels. Technically, the current status of Achara's PAs coverage has increased from 30,469 ha (baseline) to 37,802 ha, which is marginally less than the target of 39,202 ha following the realignment of the boundaries of Machakhela NP (area reduced from 8,733 ha to 7,305 ha). However, the target is expected to be exceeded with the designation of the proposed Machakhela Protected Landscape (4,295 ha), which comprises the inhabited lower valleys of Machakhela Gorge that abut Machakhela NP.

This adaptive management initiative of the project is exemplary. It transforms the planned addition of a new Machakhela PL to the region's PA network into a more holistic and integrated PAs complex approach, which better meets the needs of 'Parks and People' through having a greater diversity of options in the management toolbox that reflect the

governance models of both national parks and protected landscape. The latter model will enable local livelihood needs to be addressed in a more sustainable manner than envisaged in the ProDoc. Such an outcome will also provide both a challenge and an opportunity for a novel form of governance to be piloted under the Municipality, Khelvachauri. There are many other examples of adaptive management introduced by the project, one of which was an MTR recommendation to adopt SMART (Spatial Monitoring & Reporting Tool) for patrolling purposes. Training in SMART was concluded late in 2018 and it will be important to ensure that it is fully applied post-project.

Strong ownership at all levels of government, national, regional and municipal, and among the communities residing in and around the PAs has been a key ingredient of the project's overall success; together with the solid working relationship between the Implementing Agency (UNDP) and Implementing Partner/Executing Agency (APA); and the technical competence, efficiency and commitment of the PMU in facilitating the delivery of project outputs in a well-coordinated, cost-effective and cohesive manner under the oversight of a responsive PEB that has met regularly and fulfilled its role with diligence.

The strong ownership is reflected in the US\$ 13.7 million committed in co-financing from national, regional and municipal governments, much of which was used to improve vehicular access to the NPs and infrastructural facilities for park staff and visitors, as well as other donors working in the target PAs. This tenfold leverage of the GEF/UNDP grant (US\$ 1.3 million) was a significant achievement in itself that increased further during project implementation in the case of APA (over US\$ 440,000) and ARA (some US\$ 35 million of additional expenditure of which the co-financing element is unknown - not disaggregated).

Strong coordinating mechanisms and partnerships are another ingredient of this project's success, albeit some need further strengthening. They include the following initiatives:

- ✓ *Technical Coordinating Group:* As planned and designed in the ProDoc, TCG was established post project inception to ensure coordination between the different donors investing in Colchic Forests and maximize opportunities for synergies. TCG proved crucial, as anticipated, in ensuring that the donor community knew about each others' investments, activities and work plans. This enabled the project to fine-tune its own work plan, in relation to time-frames and budgets, deploy consultants most effectively in relation to training and capacity building activities, and be mindful of potential stakeholder fatigue when scheduling activities. The Group met once or twice a year and comprised: APA, CNF, EU Twinning Project, UNDP-GEF Achara PAs Project, KfW Support Program for Protected Areas (SPPA) with GFA Consulting Group, Eco-corridor Programme in the Caucasus and WWF Caucasus Programme. [Sections 3.1.8, 3.2.2]
- ✓ *PA Friends Associations:* Two of these were established under Output 1.2 provisions for constructive involvement of local communities in PA planning and co-management, the first for Kintrishi PA complex with KfW co-financing (SSPA project) and a second for Mtirala and Machakhela by the GEF project in August 2016 to support the two NPs and their respective buffer (support) zones. Key initiatives include: establishing Community Rangers in both NPs and Junior Rangers in Machakhela, working with municipalities on tourism and waste management, and supporting Eco-Clubs in schools. This Friends Association has proved very effective in securing the trust of local communities and NP staff in working together, as well as raising the profile of these two NPs among visitors, tourism operators and businesses more widely in Batumi.

✗ There remain significant shortcomings with Mtirala and Machakhela National Parks Friends Association that need to be addressed in the immediate future. They include: future funding, which is not assured post the GEF project³⁶; and review and consolidation of its role in the support and governance of the two NPs. The Association also needs to anticipate opportunities for change, given the proposed designation of Machakhela Protected Landscape and on-going review of PAs policy and legislation. [Section 4.3]

✓ *PA Advisory Councils* were established in 2017 for Mtirala and Machakhela, with 10 and 13 members, respectively. They replaced the former Scientific Advisory Councils, which were felt to be too science-focused and lacked representation from local communities and municipalities. These shortcomings have now been largely addressed but the Councils have yet to become fully functional. Feedback, both from PA Administrations and their stakeholders, suggests that their role needs to be clarified, with clear ToRs, and capacities strengthened in order for them to become dynamic forces for change, modernizing the way in which PAs carry out their business.

✗ Currently, in the case of some PA Administrations, meetings with Advisory Councils are held irregularly and at the decision of the Director; they tend to be narrowly focused on NP interests and matters of conflict between the PA and its resident/nearby communities; and they lack structure and a proper framework that is tied into the management plan and annual work plan or equivalent. Mutual accountability between the PA and its Advisory Council has yet to be realized. [Sections 3.2.2, 3.3.3]

A wide range of quality feasibility studies, assessments, strategies, plans and other studies has been completed by competent consultants procured by the project. This material provides a wealth of knowledge on the values of the natural capital and ecosystem services within Achara's network of protected Colchic Forests, along with guidance on their conservation management and sustainable use. Notable is the *Assessment of the Ajara Protected Areas' Ecosystem Service Values and Benefits*, and its companion, *Options for Generating Sustainable Revenues for the Target PAs and for Local Communities*, which perhaps for the first time highlight the wider economic importance of Colchic forests in addition to their nature conservation values. Other examples include: *Machakhela National Park Management Plan (2017-2023)*, *Ajara Protected Areas Sustainable Tourism Strategy*, a set of *Tourism Development Strategies and Action Plans* for each of the target PAs (Kintrishi, Mtirala and Machakhela) and a *Pilot Route in Machakhela National Park* of recreational interest to visitors while safeguarding the area's natural and cultural heritage.

The *in situ* presence and action-oriented, tangible results of the project have been an outstanding strength of the project, particularly among the communities and also municipalities. It is abundantly clear from the TE field visits that the project has a high, respected profile for facilitating and demonstrating change that can be sustained in ways that improve the environment and/or livelihoods. Under Output 2.3, which focused on establishing operational capacity within Machakhela NP, for example, the project supported the NP Administration to renovate its office and a visitor centre; built capacity in management plan implementation, GIS and monitoring; outsourced the development of a Tourism Strategy & Action Plan and funded the development of tourist trails. Project actions in the Support

³⁶ Significant efforts were made by the project to address the post-project financial sustainability of this Friends Association, including the hiring of a consultant to come up with a strategy. The consultant's final report (21 November 2018) has not been seen by the Evaluators.

Zone, now proposed as a Protected Landscape, included: a participatory process to develop a *Support Zone Community Action Plan*, 4 infrastructure projects cost shared with the community (bus-stop shelter, water supply infrastructure and a service centre for funerals, training/capacity building in agriculture, forest management, greenhouses, tourism services and supporting the establishment of 14 cooperatives for bee-keeping, hazelnut cleaning, hay production and a vehicle for transporting produce to markets. Reduction in fuel wood demand by use of alternatives (hazelnut shells, solar, briquettes) was piloted in 16 households and replicated in 65 households the following year (2018).

The fact that Achara's Colchic Forests are being nominated for World Heritage listing in early 2019 is an accolade for all those project stakeholders in government, NGOs, communities and academia who have contributed their expertise and support to this opportunity to raise the profile of this property's globally significant biodiversity³⁷. It is also timely with respect to the end of the GEF project as the heightened awareness of the importance of Colchic Forests will help to maintain the momentum generated by the project to conserve this natural heritage and safeguard its ecosystem services for the benefit of the local communities, visitors and society at large.

Further credit is due to the project for planning its Exit Strategy from the beginning of 2018, one year up front, to help ensure that its achievements in terms of capacities developed, mechanisms and processes initiated, bodies set up and new funds generated are sustained and institutionalised as appropriate.

MAIN SHORTCOMINGS

✗ Existing PA policy and legislation is a significant, over-arching constraint that has limited the project's achievements. This was identified as a moderate risk in the ProDoc where it is stated in the table on page 44: 'Current institutions show limited support for "de-concentration" [of] management authority to PA Administrations or to changes needed to improve PA management cost-effectiveness.' This risk features in the SRF for which the assumption is that 'APA will allow sufficient "de-concentration" of management to allow more adaptive management.' Clearly this has not happened for whatever reasons, although the current legislation that is now over 20 years old is acknowledged to be a barrier, but the fundamental point highlighted in the ProDoc is that a prerequisite for PA Administrations to successfully implement their management plans is the ability to apply adaptive management. Failure to adapt management in response to implementation realities will compromise both the effectiveness to achieve planned objectives and the cost efficiency of PA actions. PA Administrations currently face two barriers to being able to apply adaptive management: a) they lack the capacity, experience and confidence to adapt management in response to changing conditions; and b) they lack the opportunity to do so due to the current highly centralized nature of management planning and operations in Georgia³⁸.

³⁷ At the time of finalizing this report in February 2019, it is noted that the nomination for World Heritage listing included just Mtirala and Kintrishi PAs. While this may be disappointing for many Machakhela stakeholders, they should know that (i) the process of evaluating the nomination is only just begun and IUCN, adviser to the World Heritage Committee on natural heritage, could recommend that the government be asked to consider including a core fragment of Machakhela's Colchic Forest in the nomination; and (ii) World Heritage sites can always be extended, subject to meeting such criteria as adding 'universal value' and/or increasing connectivity and integrity.

³⁸ **Note:** APA comments that "This paragraph is not clear for me. I don't think that PA policy and legislation is main challenge for the administrations." Refer to response to this comment in **Annex 9**.

While the project has been able to address barrier (a) to some extent through training and other forms of capacity building, barrier (b) persists and PA Administrations continue to have little or no autonomy, with no decision-making powers delegated to them or their board and no direct access to or control over their budgets. This is crippling effective and efficient PA management and undermining the value and potential of other investments in individual PAs and the PA network as a whole. [Section 4.3]

✗ **Project Design - Strategic Results Framework** is weak on a number of accounts:

✗ Outcomes 1 and 2 are not clearly differentiated. Ostensibly, Outcome 1 covers the enhancement of effective management of Kintrishi and Mtirala, while Outcome 2 is focused on increasing functional connectivity by expanding the system with the addition of functional Machakhela NP. In all other respects inputs to and outputs from the two Outcomes are much the same; and the increase in functional connectivity under Outcome 2 is somewhat disingenuous: it is no more than a stepping stone to reduce the gap between two fragments of Colchic Forest. The opportunity to close the 6 km gap through appropriate sustainable land management and/or habitat recovery practices appears not to have been explored.

✗ While baseline indicators adequately cover the project objective, their alignment with outcomes is inconsistent and in two cases there is major overlap between Objective and Outcome 2 indicators. Moreover, Component 1 is monitored by just two indicators, both of which focus on the same Output 1.1 (enforcement) and are somewhat duplicative. However, the bigger issue is that the other two outputs on community involvement in PAs co-management and financial sustainability of PAs are not tracked at all. [Sections 2.4, 3.1.1]

✗ The risks and assumptions articulated in the ProDoc are not clearly integrated with the SRF, indeed several are absent; and, maybe as a consequence, their subsequent systematic review and reporting during project implementation appears weak, undermining the fact that they were well managed. [Section 3.1.2]

4.2. Recommendations

Note: Lead agencies are indicated in square brackets for each recommendation

1. [UNDP] In general, now that the project's Technical Coordination Group is over, it is proposed that an appropriate way of taking forward some of the recommendations below would be to bring them to the attention of the Technical Coordination platform that UNDP facilitates on behalf of the donor community. This could provide an appropriate opportunity to consider further how some of these actions might be institutionalized/resourced.

In practice, a relatively small amount of grant aid may be sufficient to leverage additional co-financing sufficient to address most of the recommendation and thereby ensure that the momentum generated by the project is strategically channelled/mainstreamed in the right directions among interested parties (budget holders) and not left to dissipate in a vacuum. If this recommendation gains traction, national and regional governments (as appropriate) should be invited to consider cofinancing given their strong interest in Colchic Forest.

ACTIONS TO FOLLOW UP OR REINFORCE INITIAL BENEFITS FROM THE PROJECT

2. [UNDP] Proposed Machakhela Protected Landscape: Fundamentally most important is to designate the Lower Valleys of Machakhela Gorge as a protected landscape during the early part of 2019, in line with the extensive research, consultation and consensus generated by the project during the latter part of its term. UNDP is well placed to continue to follow up with national and regional governments, as appropriate, through its Czech-funded initiative that is supported the development of a management plan for the proposed Machakhela Protected Landscape. If technical problems are delaying the designation of this Protected Landscape, it may be appropriate to explore whether or not technical assistance would be welcomed by government and, if so, whether or not the Czech Government would be amenable to extending their present support in order to maintain the momentum and realize this objective, to which so many stakeholders in government (national, regional, municipal and PA Administrations), among the communities in Machakhela and donors have contributed.

A further consideration, assuming that the designation and establishment of Machakhela PL will be realised: it is strongly recommended that a coordinating mechanism be established between the NP and PL, particularly given that the two PAs will be under different management bodies, APA and Khelvachauri Municipality, respectively. Additionally, it would be appropriate to set up a stakeholder forum for the Machakhela Gorge that would embrace the interests of all those living and working in the PAs and the respective sectors of local, regional and national government involved in their administration and servicing their needs (health, education, welfare, energy, environment, agriculture, waste, tourism etc.). This would also be beneficial for the long-term future, should stakeholders ever it appropriate to nominate the Gorge for Biosphere Reserve status (see **Recommendation 10**). These actions could be followed up in the event of any extension to the Czech support.

3. [UNDP] Staff retention and continuity within APA is an issue that impacted on the project and is likely to remain so in the immediate future. Some measures are in place to increase staff salaries annually until they are comparable with those in other government sectors. Additionally, in agreement with APA, for some years CNF has been supplementing staff salaries within NP Administrations to help counter the seepage of rangers and other staff seeking better salaries. UNDP is well placed among these partners to strongly advocate, as necessary, that:

- a. CNF makes available the salary supplement for Machakhela NP Administration; and
- b. attractive financial provisions be made available for recruiting staff to manage the Machakhela PL. This may require special provisions as management will be under the authority of Khelvachauri Municipality.

4. [APA and PA Administrations, ARA and Municipalities] Sustainable Tourism Development Strategies and Action Plans have been prepared for each of the project's target PAs, with due consideration given to safeguarding their natural and cultural heritage. It is recommended that these are implemented in a coordinated manner, using the Achara Tourism Advisory Council or other appropriate regional body, to raise the profile these Strategies and Action Plans within the tourism sector (e.g. National Tourism Administration, Department of Tourism and Resorts A.R., Adjara Tourism Product Development Agency) and facilitate their collaboration with APA, PA Administrations and their respective Advisory Councils and Friends Associations, to realize these Strategies and Action Plans in a manner that is:

- a. aligned with Achara's regional sustainable tourism development plan(s);
- b. Integrated with the respective PA management plans;
- c. in the case of Machakhela, aligned with the cultural village/ semi-natural landscape concept that is under development by Achara A.R. Government; and
- d. subject to stringent social and environmental safeguard procedures that should now be in place in ARA following recent investments at national and regional levels³⁹.

It is also recommended, given the tremendous amount of valuable and interesting information provided in the *Ajara Protected Areas Sustainable Tourism Strategy* and in the *Tourism Development Strategy and Action Plan* for each target PA, that:

- e. The contents (text, maps and images) be reviewed and transformed into a visitor guide to Achara's Protected Colchi Forests and/or a series of shorter guides and maps for each of the three PA complexes.⁴⁰ The latter could be done simply and quickly using the web; and maybe facilitated by the respective Friends Associations in collaboration with the PA Administrations.)

5. [APA and PA Administrations] Sustainable agricultural development is very much on the agenda of ARA's Ministry of Agriculture, which will be promoting its 'spatial clusters' programme in and around PAs. The Ministry's goal is for all produce to be organic within the next three years. Along with tourism, it is strongly recommended that APA proactively engage with Achara's agricultural sector as it is timely and the door is wide open. This may also prove to be an area that the Friends Associations can explore and ultimately help to facilitate and promote in terms of organic produce and its marketing and agri-tourism.

6. [APA and PA Administration, Municipality] Mtirala and Machakhela National Parks Friends Association is in its formative and somewhat vulnerable stage. Having demonstrated its value to the PA Administrations and local communities through various initiatives in a number of quarters, in the absence of the project's continuing support it now needs to consolidate its charter or comparable legal instrument in terms of clearly defining its role, scope of activities, membership, modus operandi and relationship with its respective PA Administrations. Then it needs to determine its strategy over the next few years, including financial sustainability for which an assessment was completed in November 2018. Assuming that this work is in hand, one outstanding and one new action are recommended to help reduce the Association's current vulnerability and strengthen its profile and role, as follows:

- a. The Association needs a voice within the PA governance system and, in the current context, it would be most appropriate for it to be a PA Advisory Council member.

³⁹ According to the ProDoc, the Government and ARA were investing US\$ 12.5 million and US\$ 3 million, respectively, during the project period in biodiversity management outside PAs, including EIA to ensure biodiversity is included in development plans. At that time the Ministry of Environment's Ecological Expertise and Inspection Department was investing US\$ 100,000 annually in support of EIA. r

⁴⁰ The project has already disseminated and published some of this material, available as maps and brochures from the tourism sector and via the Internet. Project information is held by UNDP Georgia (<http://www.ge.undp.org/content/georgia/en/home/projects/ajara-protected-areas.html>) and a limited amount of visitor information is available via APA (<http://apa.gov.ge/en/protected-areas/cattestone/mtiralas-erovnulli-parkis-administracia>), though the site for Machakhela is under development and the ecotourism trails and guides for Kintrishi and Mtirala are poor by comparison with the information and maps in the Sustainable Tourism Strategies for Mtirala and Kintrishi. Mtirala and Machakhela Friends Association also has a website (<http://mmpafa.ge>) that would benefit from some of this material. Language is also an issue for foreign nationals visiting Georgia, as most PAs information accessible via the web is only in Georgian.

- b. The Association needs to be able to engage readily with the Municipality, particularly in the case of Machakhela, proposed for designation as a protected landscape and, therefore, due to come under its delegated authority. Likewise, PAs need to work closely with their respective municipalities on a wide range of issues, be it tourism, water and waste management, access (roads) and more – all of which have a greater or lesser relevance to the Friends Association. Thus, there is a rationale for establishing a small platform that brings together the PA, Friends Association and Municipality on a regular base (maybe quarterly).

The above two recommendations could equally apply to other Friends Associations. Meanwhile, the initiative could be trialed in Machakhela.

7. [APA and PA Administrations] Training in SMART patrolling, a recommendation adopted from the MTR was completed only in November 2018; hence, it will be important to ensure that SMART is introduced and training reinforced early in 2019, and then consolidated and reviewed collectively by the PA Administrations in Achara in order to identify, share and apply lessons learnt from their experiences.

PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE DIRECTIONS UNDERLINING MAIN OBJECTIVES

8. APA] Protected Areas policy and legislation: It is all too apparent from this project that the on-going review of PAs policy and the 1996 legislation under the IBiS project is welcome, if not overdue. Until such time as APA is able to de-centralise its current operations and delegate powers to its PA Administrations to manage their respective PAs, including financial resources, the outcomes of this and other PA projects will not be fully realised. Thus, it is important that APA participates whole-heartedly in the review, which includes the forest sector, to ensure that the revised policies and legislation fully addresses the short-comings experienced by its PA Administrations and stakeholders, including local communities address. Where possible and appropriate, it is recommended that some of the proposed changes be piloted with immediate effect within one of more of the proposed Colchic Forest PAs nominated for World Heritage status in order to demonstrate that government is being proactive in strengthening its management effectiveness and efficiency. This action will also better inform the outcomes of the policy review.

9. [UNDP to advise, APA to follow up with Forestry Agency] Increasing connectivity of Colchic Forest fragments further, to address the remaining 6 km gap in protected forest cover between Machakhela NP and Mtirala/Kintrishi PA Complex, would seem to be an obvious further step to take in order to expand the integrity of protected Colchic Forest, especially given its global value in the light of the recent nomination of Mtirala and Kintrishi for World Heritage listing.

Most of this 6 km gap is under the Forestry Agency so it would be appropriate to highlight its importance in the local forestry 10-year plan and ensure appropriate protection and other management measures are prescribed. The main barrier to connectivity is the highway but this applies principally to mammals and not forest..

10. [APA and PA Administrations, ARA and Municipalities] UNESCO Biosphere Reserve model is something that was examined during the assessment of what might be the most appropriate PA designation for the Support Zone that is now proposed as Machakhela Protected Landscape. While not a priority, which is to consolidate the establishment and

management of the Machakhela NP/PL Complex, the Biosphere Reserve approach⁴¹ is potentially pertinent to this Complex and may well prove to be a highly appropriate model to consider over the longer term, beyond which there would also be the opportunity to establish a transboundary Biosphere Reserve with Jamili Biosphere Reserve abutting the border with Turkey. Clearly, the Turkish authorities have no current interest in such a venture despite the project's significant investment in time and energy to engage with them. This may change at some time in the future, so the recommendation is simply to note the bigger picture and continue to explore options as opportunities arise.

4.3. Lessons

GOOD PRACTICES

Technical coordination between projects: The TCG served as a regional coordinating vehicle to share and fine-tune work plans and implementation of activities, sometimes resulting in pragmatic adaptive management of schedules, logistics and resource allocation. This was particularly true in the initial years.

This good practice is likely to be applicable to most UNDP-GEF projects and there may well be a leadership role for UNDP to set up and convene such coordinating mechanisms, particularly in cases where that may be tensions and competition between other donors and implementing partners.

As suggested above (Exit Strategy), having such a coordination platform in place can also help projects as they come to an end because it provides an opportunity for other projects still ongoing to pick up on 'unfinished business' if that aligns with their own work plan and can be justified, as well as replication, mainstreaming etc. – in addition to brainstorming and sharing ideas and potential leads within their own respective networks.

UNHELPFUL/ABSENT PRACTICES

Project Executive Board / Steering Committee: Frequency of meetings and their structure, quite apart from the calibre of the Chairperson to facilitate such meetings and the competencies of the membership. In the case of this project, PEB meet twice annually (every six months) which is less than the ideal and UNDP's aspiration/policy, as the Implementing Agency, to hold meetings quarterly.

In the circumstances, it is understandable that PEB met only biannually given that the meetings were held in Batumi, which involved a half-day's travel either way on the part of the IA (UNDP) and IP/EA (APA). On the positive side, it was an excellent decision to hold meetings in the project area as it provides an opportunity for the IA and IP to meet other stakeholders

⁴¹ The biosphere reserve concept addresses the need to reconcile preservation of biodiversity within protected areas, often at a level larger than a single ecosystem, with the human development needs of the local and wider community. As such it represents an innovative approach to conservation: *"Biosphere reserves are much like laboratories where new and optimal practices to manage nature and human activities are tested and demonstrated. They outpace traditional confined conservation zones, combining core protected areas with zones where sustainable development is fostered by local dwellers and enterprises. Their governance systems are often highly innovative. In some cases, new legislation can be introduced."*

In accordance with the *Statutory Framework of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves: Individual biosphere reserves remain under the sovereign jurisdiction of the States where they are situated. Under the present Statutory Framework, States take the measures which they deems necessary according to their national legislation.* (Article 2.3)

and visit demonstration sites, quite apart from showing an interested, committed attitude towards other stakeholders.

Regarding momentum and continuity between meetings, an important ingredient was missing from the PEB minutes and that was 'Matters Arising'. It is common practice for committee meetings to end with a series of actions to be followed up, timeframes and responsible person. This is then reviewed at the beginning of the subsequent meeting under 'Matters Arising' and helps to maintain momentum in project implementation and ensure accountability. Thus the structure of the PEB Agendas would have been improved significantly by having 'Matters Arising' up front and then end with 'Decisions taken by PEB' (evident in some PEB minutes), followed by 'Follow-up Actions' with a date and responsible person earmarked. Such practice should be routine for all projects.

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

Some change is inevitable and, indeed, healthy for the individual and for the organisation. However, frequent changes will inevitably be disruptive and organisations have a responsibility of being prudent with their internal changes, taking steps to minimise impacts on other initiatives.

Similarly, when establishing an executive board/steering committee coordinating platform, working group, task force etc, a project can take steps to request/insist that an organisation's representative has to commit for the duration of their role – and that an alternate representative is either not acceptable to the membership (such as a task force with a very output to deliver within a specific timeframe) or acceptable only in extreme situations. Such measures put in place upfront of establishing such a body can be very effective in ensuring accountability and commitment.

Being on the same page: A situation arose at the time of the MTR whereby a piece of work commissioned by the project, in this case a zonation plan for Machakhela NP prepared by Ilia State University, was initially rejected by APA in favour of the zonation plan in the draft Management Plan. Whatever the dynamics and rights/wrongs of this incident, the bottom line is that it raises eyebrows among the project's stakeholders, quite apart from embarrassing and disempowering those accountable for the delivery of the output and, indeed, the project.

Arguably, the situation should never have arisen in the first place had everyone involved been adequately informed and activities coordinated and agreed up front – where-in lies a lesson! However, given the situation, a more appropriate way forward would have been for APA to request an informal meeting with the PMU and consultant (University) for a technical discussion, rather than them reporting to the MTR team that they would reject Ilia's zonation plan. (And a month or so later, the news was that APA was content with zonation plan, following a meeting with APA and Ilia University, convened by PMU!)

4. ANNEXES

Annex 1: Terms of Reference for Terminal Evaluation

Reference	PIMS 4732
Country	Georgia
Description of the Assignment:	International Consultant for Terminal Evaluation of UNDP-GEF Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of Achara Region's Protected Areas
Project:	PIMS 4732: Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of Achara Region's Protected Areas
Period of Assignment/Services:	25 working days over three months between September 15, 2018 to December 15, 2018
Duty Station:	Home Based with one mission of estimated 10 working days in Batumi and Tbilisi (app. 7 and 3 days respectively)

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 full sized project titled "Expansion and Improved Management of the Achara Region's Protected Areas" (PIMS#4732)

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

PROJECT SUMMARY TABLE

Project Title: Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of the Achara Region's Protected Areas				
GEF Project ID:	4835		<u>at endorsement</u> (Million US\$)	<u>at completion</u> (Million US\$)
UNDP Project ID:	00088000	GEF financing:	1,283,636	tbd
Country:	Georgia	IA/EA own:	40,000	tbd
Region:	Eastern Europe and Central Asia	Government:	10,791,079	tbd
Focal Area:	Biodiversity	Other:	2,567,063	tbd
FA Objectives, (OP/SP):	SO-1, SP-3 Strengthening Terrestrial Protected Areas	Total co-financing:	13,358,142	tbd
Executing Agency:	Agency for Protected Areas, Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture	Total Project Cost:	14,998,778	tbd
Other Partners involved:		ProDoc Signature (date project began):	09 June 2014	
		(Operational) Closing Date:	Proposed: 09 June 2018	Actual: 31 December 2018

OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

The project was designed to: enhance the management effectiveness, biogeographically coverage and connectivity of Protected Areas of the Achara Autonomous Region of Georgia in order to better conserve the globally unique Colchic Forests 1(temperate rainforest). The area is of biodiversity importance because of the

humid Pliocene flora refugium, high proportion of narrow-ranged (local endemic) plants, high percentage of endemic, as a well-known bottle-neck for migratory birds.

The project supported the government to bring about the functional operation of the recently gazetted Machakhela National Park which forms the last link in a chain of 4 protected areas established to conserve the Colchic forests of the region (i.e. Kintrishi, Mtirala and Machakhela in Georgia and Jamili in Turkey).

Additionally, the project helped to build management effectiveness and sustainability of all the protected areas in this chain in Achara and tried to establish transboundary links with the Jamili Biosphere Reserve in Turkey.

It further supported the Georgian Agency for Protected Areas (APA) and the target PA Administrations to improve financial planning, better integrate local communities into protected areas management and build capacity for applying, adaptable and participatory approaches most likely to achieve long term conservation and sustainable local rural livelihoods

The project aims to contribute to this long-term solution through achievement of its goal: *“To establish a regional PA estate that can effectively ensure the conservation and sustainably use of the globally important Colchic Temperate Rain Forests of the Lesser Caucasus Mountain Range in South West Georgia”*. The project objective, in turn, is described as being *“To enhance the management effectiveness, biogeographically coverage, and connectivity of Protected Areas to conserve forest ecosystems in the Achara Region”*.

In order to achieve this objective, the project sort, in turn, to achieve two outcomes with their respective outputs: *Outcome 1: Enhancement of PA Management Effectiveness in the Achara Region* – focusing primarily on Kintrishi Protected Areas and Mtirala National Park with three targeted outputs, and *Outcome 2: PA System Expansion to Increase Functional Connectivity of PAs in the West Lesser Caucasus* also with three targeted outputs.

The project was planned as a four-year project – thus, the projected end of project (EOP) date was 09 June 2018. However, the project requested a 6.5 month “no -cost” extension and the final end date was changed to 31st December 2018.

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 method¹ 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 ([Annex C](#)). 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 Ajara Region, including the following project sites: Machakhella valley and National Park, Mtirala National Park, Kintrishi Protected Areas. Interviews will be held with the following organizations and individuals at a minimum:

Ajara

- Directors and staff of target Protected Area's Administrations (Machakhela NP, Mtirala NP, Kintrishi PA's)

¹ For additional information on methods, see the [Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results](#), Chapter 7, pg. 163

- Khelvachauri Municipality (specifically - Head of the Natural Resources and Agriculture service of the Mayor's office.)
- Mtirala NP and Machakhela NP Friends Association
- Environment Directorate of Ajara, Ajara Government.
- Achara A.R. Government administration - Head of the Department of relation with Administrative Bodies

Tbilisi

- Agency for Protected Areas, Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture
- GEF Operational Focal Point (Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection)
- UNDP Country Office (E&E Team Leader, DRR/Head of Programme)
- Support Programme for Protected Areas (KfW/GFA) – Kintrishi PA partner
- WWF Georgia
- CNF Georgia
- Key National Contractors (Ilia University, Geographic, Black Sea Eco-Academy, Energy Efficiency Centre, NACRES, Georgian Ecotourism Association,
- Key National Consultants (NP Awareness Building – Ramaz Gokhelashvili, Management Options for Machakhela "Support Zone" / Protected Landscape consultant – Marika Kavtarishvili, Friends Association Strategy Consultant – Kakha Bakhtadze; PA governance consultant – Anzor Gogotidze)

Istanbul – UNDP Regional Office – UNDP, GEF Regional Technical Adviser (Skype interview only)

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.¹

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 Georgia. 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 25 days according to the following plan:

Activity	Timing	Completion Date
Preparation	3 days (<i>recommended: 2-4</i>)	01.10.2018
Evaluation Mission	12 days (<i>r: 7-15</i>)	31.10.2018
Draft Evaluation Report	8 days (<i>r: 5-10</i>)	20.11.2018
Final Report	2 days (<i>r: 1-2</i>)	15.12.2018

¹ 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](#)

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 and APA
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, Project Implementing Partner (APA)
Final Report*	Revised report	Within 2 weeks of receiving UNDP and other stakeholder 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.

TEAM COMPOSITION

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

The international evaluator (team leader) must present the following qualifications:

- Proven Technical knowledge in the targeted focal area(s) – Biodiversity conservation and specifically protected areas management (ideally including practical protected areas management experience or experience in projects supporting protected areas establishment/management)
- Minimum 10 years of relevant professional experience
- Knowledge of UNDP and GEF evaluation procedures
- Previous experience with results-based monitoring and evaluation methodologies;
- At least 5 similar tasks completed
- Excellent English is required,

Assets would include:

- Experience of implementing GEF funded or relevant/ similar donor funded biodiversity projects.
- Experience in the CIS region and ideally in Georgia (relevant to Team Leader only)

Corporate competencies:

- Demonstrates integrity by modeling the UN's values and ethical standards,
- Promotes the vision, mission, and strategic goals of UNDP,
- Displays cultural, gender, religion, race, nationality and age sensitivity and adaptability.

Functional competencies:

- Strong interpersonal skills, communication skills and ability to work in a team,
- Ability to plan and organize work, efficiency in meeting commitments, observing deadlines and achieving results,
- Openness to change and ability to receive/integrate feedback,
- Ability to work under pressure and stressful situations,
- Strong analytical, research, reporting and writing abilities.

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

(this payment schedule is indicative, to be filled in by the CO and UNDP GEF Technical Adviser based on their standard procurement procedures)

%	Milestone
10%	After clearance of Inception report by UNDP CO
40%	Following submission and approval of the 1ST draft terminal evaluation report
50%	Following submission and approval (UNDP-CO and UNDP RTA) of the final terminal evaluation report

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applicants are requested to apply online <http://www.ge.undp.org/content/georgia/en/home/operations/jobs.html> by 31.07.2018. 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.

These annexes in the ToR are not included here because most of them appear in this TE Report:

ANNEX A: PROJECT LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

ANNEX B: LIST OF DOCUMENTS TO BE REVIEWED BY THE EVALUATORS

ANNEX C: EVALUATION QUESTIONS

ANNEX D: RATING SCALES

ANNEX E: EVALUATION CONSULTANT CODE OF CONDUCT AND AGREEMENT FORM

ANNEX F: EVALUATION REPORT OUTLINE¹

ANNEX G: EVALUATION REPORT CLEARANCE FORM

¹The Report length should not exceed 40 pages in total (not including annexes).

Annex 2: Evaluation Consultant Code of Conduct Agreement Form¹

Evaluators:

1. Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded
2. Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.
3. Should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They should provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and: respect people's right not to engage. Evaluators must respect people's right to provide information in confidence, and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate individuals, and must balance an evaluation of management functions with this general principle.
4. Sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing while conducting evaluations. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is any doubt about if and how issues should be reported.
5. Should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relations with all stakeholders. In line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality. They should avoid offending the dignity and self-respect of those persons with whom they come in contact in the course of the evaluation. Knowing that evaluation might negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate its purpose and results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.
6. Are responsible for their performance and their product(s). They are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/or oral presentation of study limitations, findings and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form

Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System

Name of Consultants: Zhang Xuemei, Michael J.B. Green

We confirm that we have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.

Signed in Tbilisi, Georgia on 19 October 2018:

Signed in Strumpshaw, UK on 3 October 2018:



Giorgi Shubitidze
National Consultant



Michael J. B. Green
International Consultant, Team Leader

¹ www.unevaluation.org/unegcodeofconduct

Annex 3: Evaluation Mission Itinerary, Schedule of Meetings, Persons Interviewed (18-30 October 2018)

Date	Activity	Persons met, position
18 Oct	International Consultant arrives in Georgia	
Meetings in Tbilisi		
19 Oct 10:00	Meeting: NGO Energy Efficiency Centre (EEC)	Mr. Giorgi Abulashvili – Director of EEC (599974003) Ms. Liana Gharibashvili - Head of Informational-Analytical Department EEC (599548782) Gamrekeli Street, 19, 6 floor (611Room)
14:00	Meeting: Protected Areas Agency	Mr. Toma Dekanoidze - Deputy Chairman of the Agency of Protected Areas Ms. Tamar Khakhishvili – Head of International Relations and Project Management Unit (577150083; takokhakhishvili@gmail.com) Guluas Street N6. Fifth Floor
16:00	Meeting: Transboundary Joint Secretariat	Ms. Lali Tevzadze – National Coordinator in Georgia (591701092) 593448565, 557736919, 557736919 Aleksidze Street 11
18:00	GFA Consulting Group GmbH (KfW Project: Support Program for Protected Areas)	Ms. Eka Kakabadze - National Coordinator (577400325) Tavkhelidze Street 1. IV entrance (15B)
20 Oct 11:00	Meeting: Black Sea Academy and PA Management Consultant	Mr. Kakha Bakhtadze – Expert (599926996)
13:00	Travel to Batumi: field visits and meetings	
21 Oct 11:00	Meeting: Project Manager	Mr. Irakli Goradze -Project Manager
15:00 -19:00	Field visit to meet cooperatives/farmers in Machakhela 1. Cooperative - beekeeping 2. Cooperative - beekeeping 3. Wine producer	1. Giorgi Salvaridze – “Phutkara” 2. Temuri Goradze, Giorgi Basiladze – Chikuneti Village 3. Amiran and Ilia Malakmadze
22 Oct 11:00	Meet: Ministry of Finance and Economy (Adjara Spatial Planning Team)	Mr. Nugzar Dzeladze – Head of The Space Planning and Technical Supervision Department, Ministry of Economy and Finances of Adjara A/R Mr.Sulkhan Mamuchadze – Head of Urban Development Section, Ministry of Economy and Finances of Adjara A/R
13:00	Meeting: Fuelwood Needs Assessment	Mr. Zurab Manvelidze – Botanist/Forestry Expert (involved as a contractor in forestry inventory in Machakhela)
15:00	Meeting: Friends Association for Protected Areas of Mtirala and Machakhela	Ms. Gulnaz Surmanidze – Mtirala and Machakhela National Parks Friends Association Director
17:00	Meeting: Adjara AR Tourism Department	Ms. Tinatin Zoidze – Chairman of Tourist Products Development Agency of Adjara A/R

23 Oct 11:00	Meeting: Environment and Natural Resources Directorate of Adjara AR	Mr. Jemal Nakashidze – Head of Environmental Directorate of Adjara A/R
	13:00 Meeting: Agrarian and Environmental Issues Commission	Mr. Vakhtang Tsuladze, Head of Agrarian and Environmental issues Commission, Supreme Council of The Autonomous Republic of Adjara
	16:00 Meeting: Ministry of Agriculture of Adjara A/R	Mr. Tite Aroshidze - Minister of Agriculture of Adjara A/R
	18:00 Meeting: Mtirala NP Administration	Mr. David Khomeriki – Mtirala NP Director
24 Oct 09:00	Visit: Mtirala NP	
	14:00 Meeting: Kobuleti Municipality	Mr. Zurab Amaglobeli – Head of Economic, Tourism and Investment Department, Kobuleti Municipality Mr. Tamaz Japaridze – Senior Specialist, Economic, Tourism and Investment Department, Kobuleti Municipality
	15:30 Meeting: Kintrishi PA Administration	Mr. Amiran Khinikadze – Director Nana Noghaideli – Visitor Service Specialist Mr. Giorgi Nemsadze – Natural Resources Specialist
	17:30 Visit: Kintrishi National Park	
	19:00 Meeting: Cooperative “Chakhati”	Mr. Nugzar Davitadze - Cooperative Member
	25 Oct 10:00 15:00	Participate in World Natural Heritage nomination workshop for Mtirala, Kintrishi, Machakhela NPs Prepare main findings for debriefing
26 Oct a.m.	Prepare presentation for debriefing	
	16:00-18:00 Debriefing with main stakeholders in Adjara AR	Including Adjara Environmental Directorate, Ministry of Agriculture, Tourist Product Development Agency, Mtirala NP etc. (c. 20 participants – see MTR report)
27 Oct 11:00 13:00 14:00	Meeting: Machakhela NP Administration	Mr. Giorgi Kuridze – Director of Machakhela NP
	Meeting: Khelvachauri Municipality	Mr. Jumber Vardanidze – Mayor of Khelvachauri Municipality
	Field visit: farmers	Ms. Natia Nargevadze – Handicraft producer Mr. Jemal Kakhidze
28 Oct	Travel to Tbilisi: meetings	
29 Oct 9:30 11:00	Meeting: UNDP Country Office	Ms. Nino Antadze – Energy and Environment Team Leader
	Skype: protected landscape consultant	Ms. Marika Kavtarishvili - protected landscape expert

12:00	Meeting: Caucasus Nature Fund	Ms. Tea Barbakadze
14:30	Debriefing with UNDP Country Office and Implementing Partner (APA)	Ms. Nino Antadze – Energy and Environment Team Leader Ms. Tamar Khakhishvili – Head of International Relations and Project Management Unit Ms. Ana Akhalaia - International Relations and Project Management Unit
30 Oct	Departure of International Consultant from Tbilisi	

Annex 4: Summary of Field Visits

During the fieldwork, visits in various sites was conducted. With support of project manager meetings in Machakhela, Mtirala and Kintrishi national parks was organized. Interviews with directors and employees of NPs were conducted. The NP representatives mentioned that capacity building trainings conducted in a frame of the project supported to increase knowledge and capabilities to improve the management of the NPs. Although, very centralized structure of the APA hinders to implement some knowledge's and ideas elaborated based on the trainings on the local level.

As the project mostly was focused on Machakhela NP, more activities and financial resources was contributed in the area. The Machakhela NPs office was renovated with financial support of the project. As the director mentioned based on this support the working conditions of the NP staff was significantly changed. Moreover, in the office in upcoming months the visitor center will be open, which will give more possibility to increase visitors and offer better service. In overall the employees of the supported NPs were satisfied with the activities of the project.

Second area of the project focus was to support rural development in the local population in Machakhela and Kintrishi valley. That also serves the improvement the cooperation between NP administration and the local population. One area of focus was development of the local cooperatives. Evaluation team visited three cooperatives "Akhali Era" in Village Chikuneti (Machakhela valley), cooperative "Futkara" in village Tskhemlara (Machakhela valley), cooperative "Chakhati" around the Kintrishi NP. All cooperatives received small grants for agricultural development. For example, hazelnut shelling machine was supplied for the cooperative "Chakhalti", which significantly decreased human work and improved efficiency of hazelnut producing. Beehives were supplied with other cooperatives and special car to carry beehives was given to the cooperative "Akhali Era". As the members of cooperative informed the car is very useful not only for caring beehives it is also important for the whole community. For example, while the evaluators visited the cooperative member, the neighbor had borrowed the car to carry some language from city Batumi.

Moreover, project supported the communities to elaborate small project for the community development. Each village decided what was necessary for the community. As a result improving of water pipelines, establishing small trade center, installing of public water tap and other small projects was implemented. Despite the small infrastructural improvements the initiative supported to improve cooperation skills and decision making on within the community level.

One of the activities of the project was support tourism development in Machekhela NP and Machakhela valley. As a result training to tourism service development and small grant for the tourism development was developed. For example, project supported farmer Amiran Malakmadze who has wine caller dated 10-12 century. Farmer started to produce wine and visitors in his wine caller is significantly increasing. The case indicates how cultural heritage and sustainable tourism development could be merged. The project supported Natela Nagervadze woman producing handcraft, as a result the beneficiary is participating in different exhibitions, her product is stated in different websites.

Human-wildlife conflict was one of the areas where the project was intervened. In Machakhela valley wild animals (Pig, Bear etc.) are entering and destroying some agricultural lands in the villages. With support of the project eleven farmers got electric fences to fence their land. The intervention insured the security of the agricultural land and give possibility for replication to other farmers.

The implemented projects for rural development successfully supported innovative approaches on the local level. It gave possibility for the local population to be aware on the issues of tourism sustainable development, rural and agricultural development, how the community based projects could be implemented etc. Additionally, improvement of the cooperation between Machakhela NP

administration and local population was one of the main achievement of the project. As a result of project various activities, the locals are aware the advantages of the NP, how it can support to the sustainable tourism development, protect cultural and natural heritage of the valley and positively impact of the social-economic conditions of the local population. Almost all beneficiaries indicated that relation with project staff was excellent. The decisions what kind of projects should be implemented was participatory and all implemented projects were according to the needs of the local population.

Annex 5: List of Information Reviewed

1. Project Identification Form (PIF)
2. UNDP Project Document
3. UNDP Environmental and Social Screening results
4. Project Inception Report
5. Project Implementation Reports (PIRs)
6. Quarterly progress reports and work plans of the various implementation task teams
7. Annual Work Plans
8. Audit reports
9. Finalized GEF focal area Tracking Tools at CEO endorsement, midterm and end of project (i.e. METT)
10. Oversight mission reports by CTA, RTA and others
11. Monitoring reports prepared by the project
12. Mid-Term Review report
13. Minutes of the Project Board Meetings and other meetings
14. Technical consultancy reports
15. All published materials

Documents made available on request:

16. Financial and Administration guidelines used by Project Team
17. Project operational guidelines, manuals and systems
18. UNDP country/countries programme document(s)
19. Project site location maps ☐
20. Training materials ☐
21. News and Awareness materials ☐

Note: Some other information sources cited in text or footnotes.

Annex 6 Template for Reporting Achievement of Results by End of Project – October 2018

Assessment Key:

Green: Achieved **Yellow:** On target to be achieved **Red:** Not on target to be achieved

Notes: (1) The table is extracted from the MTR (see Annex 1) and the additional Columns 6-7 should be filled in by PMU based on its assessment of target status in October 2018 (and whether or not it is likely to be achieved by end of project in December 2018). (2) When updating SRF, please provide relevant data/statistics/information, and indicate in square brackets the source of that information.

Indicator	Baseline Value	Mid-Term Status	MTR Comments	End of Project Target	End of Project Status - PMU	EOP Assessment by PMU	EOP Assessment by Evaluators
Objective: To enhance the management effectiveness, biogeographically coverage and connectivity of Protected Areas to conserve forest ecosystems in the Achara Region							
Protected Area Coverage within the Achara Region increased	30,469 ha	37,774 ha (indicator reduced by 1,428 ha from 1 st PIR level and awaiting final enactment of new boundaries for Machakhela NP)	Progress is satisfactory – even though APA accepted the realigned boundaries with no further negotiation (see para 41 (point 6) for a full discussion)	39,202 ha	37,802.18 ha	Total area of the Machakhela NP territory was reduced in 2015 from original designated 8,733 ha to 7,305 ha as a result of boundary demarcation process organized by the project. This change was in response to the needs of local communities who were consulted during the process of delineation of boundaries (areas included in the original designated NP decree were identified as being actively used by local population for seasonal agriculture). As the areas removed are mainly those already used for agriculture their biodiversity value is not significant. The project is currently supporting an initiative for establishing a new protected area in the Machakhela valley, on territories outside of Machakhela National Park. The area of planned PL is 4295 ha. If established the end of the project target level will be exceeded by around 2900 ha.	This is a very satisfactory result in two respects: 1. The total extent of Achara's protected areas has increased by 7,333 ha (24%), while also accommodating the needs of the local communities through the boundary demarcation process. The latter, totalling 1,400 ha, was allocated for use by local people rather than protection in order to meet original target of 39,202 ha. 2. The proposal to establish the lower valley sides and floor, where most land use activities take place, as a Protected Landscape is a very positive initiative that will promote sustainable land management. The net result will be a more extensive PAs network

							of 42,097 ha than planned, exceeding the target by 2,895 ha.
Increased national and Achara PA Coverage of the Colchic Temperate Rain Forest by at least 1% and 5% respectively	Nationally: 10.7% Achara: 15%	National – 11.3%, Achara 19.3% (indicator reduced from first PIR level)	As above. The indicator is partially redundant because it is implicit in the above indicator.	National: 11.7% Achara: 20%	National: 11.3% Achara: 19.3%	The two coverage targets may not be entirely met by project end. Due to the reduction of Machakhela NP area as a result of boundary demarcation, the national target is off by 0.4% while the Achara PA coverage is off by 0.7% . However, as explained above, if the new PL gets established the % increase of National and Achara PA temperate rainforest will exceed the planned targets.	This result is perfectly satisfactory for the reasons explained above; and in the event of the proposed Protected Landscape being established it is more than 'perfectly satisfactory'. Noting MTR evaluator's comment, these indicators are not only redundant but may not be accurate as degraded areas of former Colchic Temperate Rainforest in Machakhela NP are not taken into account.
Capacity development indicator score for protected area system	Systemic: 14% Institutional: 21% Individual: 9%	Not measured before the MTR (it is expected that an analysis will be carried out at the end of 2016)	Unable to comment	Systemic: >20% Institutional: >29% Individual: >13%	Systemic: 26 (71%) Institutional: 31 (65%) Individual: 13 (54%)	Systemic score: 26 (71%) - The reorganization of national structures plus process of developing a long term national PA policy (with GIZ support) has increased the overall championing of key PA issues. - Staff of all 3 of the Achara Colchic forest PAs (Kintrishi, Mtrala and Machakhela) have received further training on wide range of issues identified as priorities, including: law enforcement, conflict management, effective communication, use of firearms, first aid, biodiversity monitoring, SMART patrolling system etc. Trainings provided by UNDP/GEF project and in Kintrishi also by project partner (KfW SPPA Project) -The PA system has been expanded in Achara by the functional establishment of Machakhela NP and is in process of adding a Protected landscape category of PA that will cover important river habitats not covered by the NP, which is strongly supported by local stakeholders. - Support provided to PAs to improve monitoring planning, equipment and training. Final	Capacity development scores have been greatly exceeded at systemic, institutional and individual levels! The evidence presented is indicative of the huge progress made in developing capacity within Achara's PA system, including important initiatives that strengthen professional and community support for the PA Administrations, such as the establishment of NP Friends Associations and Advisory Councils. Note: 1. These achievements are the cumulative result of the project's close collaboration with EU Twinning, GIZ and SPPA projects in particular.

					<p>introduction of the database system (TRIPLE I) in Kintrishi and Mtirala.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The level of public dialogue and consultation at local level has significantly increased in Achara context, through establishment of the PA's consultative councils and Friends Associations, enabling wider involvement of communities in the management and governance of the protected areas. <p>Institutional score: 31(65%)</p> <p>Change related mainly to functional creation of Machakhela NP and strengthening of Kintrishi and Mtirala NP Administrations (equipment purchase and office refurbishment, etc).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Process of updating the PA Strategy (2016) and development of a long-term PA Policy (ongoing) contributed to increased relevance and inclusiveness of APA strategic planning. - All 3 Colchic forest PAs have well-staffed administrations with clear leadership. - All target PAs have recent management plan or updated plans. - Establishment of Advisory Councils at Mtirala and Machakhela including representatives of NGOs and local communities/ authorities. - APA and PA administrations have shown capacity to adapt to circumstances. For example, Machakhela NP administration is actively involved in organizing the process of bringing hazelnut shell (alternative to fuelwood) into the valley by mobilizing local community and communicating with suppliers and local government. <p>Individual score: 13 (54%)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individuals are reasonably skilled due to trainings undertaken by UNDP/GEF, SPPA and EU Twinning projects (2015). - Many individuals are motivated: creation of new administration for Machakhela, staff trainings, provision of uniforms, infrastructure 	<p>Thus, this indicator also reflects effective synergistic working between different projects but does not focus specifically on the successes of GEF project.</p> <p>2. Advisory Councils replaced the former "Scientific Advisory Councils" in order to introduce local representation and become more consultative. While this is a welcome and important improvement supported by APA, as noted below (Outcome 2), these new Councils have had limited success to date and, in the case of Mtirala, do not meet regularly.</p>
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						<p>and equipment for PA staff, improved communication with local communities, etc, all of which improved motivation and commitment of staff. Salary has increased and all 3 Colchic PAs are getting bonus/salary top up provided by CNF (Machakhela eligible to join this scheme by end 2018).</p> <p>- As a result of trainings, development of local community relations, etc. attitudes of PA administration staff widened and more appropriate</p> <p>- PA Administrations have strong Protection teams that work well with other units in administrations (Natural Resource Specialist and Visitor Specialist) sometimes.</p>	
Management effectiveness for Kintrishi PA Complex, Mtirala NP and Machakhela NP measured by METT scorecard.	Mtirala National Park: 68% Kintrishi State Reserve : 62% Kintrishi Protected Landscape: 58% Machakhela NP: 11%	Mtirala NP: 70% Kintrishi SR: 64% Kintrishi PL: 60% Machakhela NP: 36%	No issues with the indicator although the targets are unrealistic and may not have been as a result of detailed analysis of what could be gained through the project's life. In addition, the project has no significant influence in Kintrishi PAs (cf. other actors such as the KfW-funded project).	Mtirala NP: >73% Kintrishi SR: 67% Kintrishi PL: >63% Machakhela NP: 71%	Mtirala NP: 73% Kintrishi SR: 69% Kintrishi PL: 65% Machakhela NP: 80%	<p>Mtirala: target score of 73 achieved as result of increased capacity (training, equipment, establishment of Advisory Council and investment planning).</p> <p>Both Kintrishi PAs increased based on support provided by KfW SPPA project. Likely two PAs will become one NP in 2018 or 2019</p> <p>The significant change in Machakhela NP METT is a reflection of its change from a "paper" park to a functional entity with trained staff, office, equipment, etc, and a local population that is highly supportive of PA activities.</p>	End of project targets met or exceeded. The modest increases in METT scores for Mtirala and Kintrishi PAs reflect their functional establishment prior to the project and more limited inputs from the project, as per ProDoc design. The huge improvement in METT score, from 11% to 80%, for Machakhela reflects the effective delivery of the project strategy to build the management capacity of this newly established NP.
Outcome 1: Enhanced PA management effectiveness in the Achara Region							

No net increase in the illegal harvesting of wood and non wood forest products	Mtirala NP: 7.82 m ³ Kintrishi PA Complex: 0 m ³	Mtirala NP: 0 m ³ Kintrishi PA Complex: 0.84 m ³ (2015 data)	Measuring illegal activities and success in countering them is problematic and something that is faced by all projects with an emphasis on improving law enforcement. Some projects are now using the conviction rates as a measure. In this project, levels of illegal offtake are relatively low so changes would be difficult to attribute without a deeper understanding of the drivers of change in the data. Therefore, as long as there are no startling changes (and there do not appear to be to date), this should be satisfactory. Finally, as with the METT scores, the project has no significant influence in Kintrishi PAs.	Mtirala NP: < 7.82 m ³ Kintrishi PA Complex: 0 m ³	Mtirala NP: 3.25 m ³ Kintrishi PA complex: 0 m ³	PMU entirely agrees with MTR comment in regard to this indicator. The apparent significant reduction in illegal harvesting in Mtirala should be seen in the light of this comment (i.e. a small reduction from an initial negligible baseline adds up to a significant looking percentage). In reality, illegal harvesting was low to begin with and has been further slightly decreased by increased efforts following the development of the Management and Operational plans by EU Twinning Project and various activities by UNDP/GEF project (training, community rangers programme, provision of additional equipment, etc).	<p>The project has met the targets, with zero illicit harvesting encountered in the Kintrishi PAs complex and a 42% reduction in Mtirala (from 7.82 to 3.25 m³).</p> <p>The baseline level of off-take is negligible, assuming it is based on annual illicit harvesting over the entire PA (confirmed by PMU) and raises further questions about the usefulness of this indicator.</p> <p>Note: The two indicators for Outcome 1 are weak with respect to monitoring management effectiveness, as they focus only on illegal activities and do not address the other two outputs: involvement of local communities and financial sustainability. Moreover, units are far from clear: PMU has confirmed them to be annual m³ over the entire PA.</p>
Reduction or no increase in illegal activity measured by % of patrols resulting in arrests or fines ²	Mtirala NP: 1.3% (12 incidents, 915 patrols) Kintrishi PA Complex: 0.37% (1 incidents, 267 patrols)	Mtirala NP: 0.13% Kintrishi PA Complex: 3% (9 incidents, 302 patrols) (2015 data)		Mtirala NP: 1.3% or less Kintrishi PA Complex: 0.37% or less	Mtirala NP: 0.66% (3 incidents, 450 patrols) Kintrishi PA complex: 0% (0 incidents, 322 patrols)	<p>Hunting is not considered to be an issue and there is no evidence to suggest that illegal fuelwood removal is or ever was significant, given limited access.</p> <p>Note that data on patrols and incidents refer to calendar years. In Mtirala, 900 – 950 patrols are undertaken every year. Accordingly, the benchmark is based on annual data (presumably</p>	<p>The project has met the targets, with a 50% reduction in illegal activities in Mtirala and 100% reduction in Kintrishi PAs complex. Inconsistent trends may reflect weaknesses in method.</p>

¹ Mean illegal extraction recorded between 2008 – 2011 (4 years)

² This measures records of illegal activity incidents as a proportion of patrol effort

						for 2013); and EOP data for 450 patrols/3 incidents covers the 6-month period from January to June 2018.	
Outcome 2: PA System expanded to increase functional connectivity of PAs in the West Lesser Caucasus							
Extent (ha) of area surveyed, and formally proclaimed and managed as Machakhela National Park (IUCN Cat II)	0 ha	7,359.44 ha	See comments on first indicator.	Machakhela National Park covering 8,733 ha by yr 2	7,333.18 ha	Target was achieved in 2015 (yr 2). However by yr 3 of the project, after the demarcation and subsequent changes in the Law on Machakhela NP the area was reduced to ~7,333.18 ha	Target has essentially been met; and will be exceeded once PL is created. Note: This indicator is largely redundant as it is integral to 1 st indicator of Objective (see above).
Distance between the Mtirala/Kintrishi PA Complex and the nearest Forest Habitat PA	13 km to Jamili PA, Turkey	Less than 6 km as reported in 2015	Target achieved. See para 41 (point 8) for discussion on the indicator.	Less than 6 km to Machakhela NP	Target achieved: less than 6 km to Machakhela NP	Target achieved (reported in the 2015 PIR) and the distance between the Mtirala/Kintrishi PA Complex and the nearest Forest Habitat PA is now less than 6 km. The revision of Law on Machakhela PA did not affect this target	Target has been achieved. Note: Indicator is integral to 1 st indicator of Objective (see above), so redundant.
Necessary infrastructure investment is made by APA and Achara authorities to establish effective management of the NP	Zero	Investment of USD 270,000 (Achara government on road rehabilitation) and USD 47,000 (APA on three vehicles)	The indicator specifies infrastructure and it only recently that the Machakhela NP has secured an administration building. Investment in that building has been forthcoming, both from the project and from APA. The Achara government has made significant investment into the road infrastructure in the vicinity of the protected area.	Approx. 120,000 USD	Target exceeded: investment of USD 43.4 million by Achara Government and USD 137,000 by APA	This indicates Achara Government investments on road infrastructure rehabilitation in support zone of 3 PAs; and APA investments on Infrastructure including Machakhela NP administration building and vehicles.	Investments are well beyond the target, with APA supporting renovation of a building for NP administration and Achara AR improving road access to NPs that benefit both local communities and visitors.
Machakhela NP boundaries and zonation decided and participatory management plan in existence	Boundaries only provisionally demarcated and zonation not carried out	The park boundary defined and accepted by APA and submitted to the public registry service. The revised boundary definition awaits enactment	There are no issues with the indicator but both the definition of the park's boundary and the process of zoning the park have had issues <i>although these seem to be almost resolved</i> (as discussed at length in paras 41 (point 7 <i>et seq.</i>)).	Clearly defined and consensually agreed boundaries and zones by yr 2. Consensually agreed Management plan exists by yr 3.	Target achieved	Machakhela NP has clearly defined and agreed boundaries, defined in the Georgian Law about establishment of Machakhela NP: - Boundary markers installed. - Machakhela NP zonation was updated in late 2017 with addition of new strict protection zones. The new zonation and management plan have been approved by the Government of Georgia decree #332 of June 12, 2018.	Target achieved by end of project (June 2018). While this is good progress, given initial resistance and apprehension from local communities, the late delivery has left little/no time for implementation of management plan.

		(expected spring 2017)				- Three zones defined in Machakhela NP are: (1) Traditional Use zone of 4,996.63 ha; (2) Strict Protection zone of 1,542.39 ha; and (3) Managed Protection zone of 794.17 ha.	
Level of involvement of communities in the management and governance of the NP	N/A	PA Advisory Committee under discussion.	The project is on the right track with regard to involvement of communities – starting from the conflict resolution at the outset of the project. Ultimately, once the PA Advisory Committee is functional, along with the Friends Association, the involvement will be enhanced.	Public-Civil Society-Community PA Planning and Management Governance Board established with proper representation and involvement of local communities in the planning and management of the Machakhela NP (by year 2)	Target achieved	NP Advisory Councils with representatives of local communities and local municipalities established for Machakhela and Mtirala NPs in 2017, consisting of 13 and 10 members respectively. Councils convene quarterly. Last meeting of the Machakhela NP Council was organized in June 2018; among issues discussed were: organizing the transportation of hazelnut shells in the valley and establishment of the new IUCN category V PA in the valley – Machakhela Protected Landscape.	Target achieved in 2017, later than planned, but a good result. There is evidence that Advisory Councils are not working as well as intended. (Refer to Section 3.2.2 for further consideration of this issue.)

Annex 7 Template for Reporting Progress in Delivering Outputs – October 2018

Outputs	Evidence-based Achievements (Reported by PMU)	TE Evaluator Comments
Project Objective: To enhance the management effectiveness, biogeographically coverage and connectivity of Protected Areas to conserve forest ecosystems in the Achara Region.		
Outcome 1: Enhanced PA Management Effectiveness in the Achara Region		
1.1: Enforcement and surveillance system strengthened in Kintrishi Protected Areas and Mtirala NP Note: KfW SPPA project active in Kintrishi – based on coordination with them inputs to Kintrishi only in case of filling gaps.	Technical and material capacity of PA staff to implement cost effective enforcement built: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity needs assessment Mtirala NP (see reports x2) Trainings (7 thematic trainings, approx.. 30 people each - see thematic report and individual training reports/materials) Equipment – fieldwork equipment included: Radio transmitters, flashlights, field bags, medical kits (see thematic report, procurement documents) Collaborative monitoring and enforcement system in place and a platform for information sharing established between park authority and the local communities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of options for introducing / testing joint PA/ community monitoring (see consultant report-Ramaz Gokhashvili) Community ranger and Junior ranger programmes tested approach of involving local community in PA management/building awareness (see report of Friends Association - Publication in Georgian) Coordinated addition of Mtirala NP into SPPA project initiative on TRIPLE I information management system (project supplied required computer hardware, SPPA carried out training and trial application together with its own target PAs) – evidence: SPPA project reports, procurement documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
1.2: Reduced threats at source by constructive involvement of local communities in planning and co-management arrangements within the governance framework of 2 newly established community-based organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination with SPPA and EU Twinning projects to avoid duplication/synchronise approaches. Evidence: TCG meeting records, CTA reports Review and analysis of most effective options for CBO /NGO establishment in the actual context of Achara. Evidence: consultant report (Ramaz Gokhelashvili) Support to establishment of CBO for Mtirala (jointly with Machakhela) by NP Directors i.e. Mtirala and Machakhela Friends Association. Evidence: Charter of FA FA Strategy and Sustainable Financing Plan. Evidence: Strategy and Plan document, consultant report Ongoing operational advice and guidance to the FA during initial operations (until November 2018). Evidence: contract of consultant, reports of consultant Support to sustainable resource use in buffer areas - 2 cooperatives in / around Kintrishi, including: hazelnut cleaning machine and 30 functional beehives (all with bee families) Evidence: procurement documents, equipment in-situ Scientific Consultative Council Mtirala NP, 10 members- Evidence: Ministers decision I-525 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note: A. Management plans for Kintrishi and Mtirala developed by other donors (KfW SPPA and EU Twinning, respectively) Standard format for management plans developed under EU Twinning project and officially adopted by APA. B. CBO for Kintrishi established under KfW SPPA project.

Outputs	Evidence-based Achievements (Reported by PMU)	TE Evaluator Comments
<p>1.3: Future financial needs of the Kintrishi and Mtirala PAs addressed by developing mechanisms to generate finances on the scale needed to address emerging long term pressures on biodiversity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ecosystem service valuation report, including review and recommendation of PA financing options. Evidence: report Printing of Ecosystem Services Report (200 copies) and dissemination during project meetings/events. Evidence: printed report Achara PA system Tourism Strategy. Evidence: strategy document Kintrishi PAs and Mtirala NP (and Machakhela NP) Tourism Strategy and Action Plans. Evidence: contractor report and strategy documents <p>Assessment and recommendations on Mtirala investment needs in regard to main entrance point (see pp. 13-19 in: Feasibility Study of Income Generation Projects in Machakhela and Mtirala National Parks)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note: Given the centralized financial control systems in place and that all income generated by PAs (e.g. tourism services, resource use, fines) reverts directly to APA, the assessment concluded that individual PAs do not have sufficient control or delegated powers to develop PA specific Business Plans. Thus, it was decided it would be best to introduce some financial planning into the 3-year OP (including identification of likely funding gaps and opportunities to fill them). This would provide some basis for systematic action and prepare for extension of financial planning as/when APA decentralizes planning by APA.
<p>Outcome 2: PA System Expanded to increase functional connectivity of PAs in the West Lesser Caucasus</p>		
<p>2.1: Functional establishment of a new IUCN Category II PA of 8,733 ha in the Machakhela Valley</p>	<p><i>Transitional / start up support</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness raising and conflict reduction workshops – 2 days training for NP Administration, followed by 3 days community meetings, 5 communities (evidence - see report) Identification of interim office in Machakhela valley, allocation by Municipality, refurbishment of 2 rooms, provision of basic furniture/equipment (evidence: agreement with Municipality, procurement docs) Logistical support – provision of transport to NP Admin. Office for staff (Lada Niva)- evidence: transfer document Priority equipment: fieldwork equipment including: radio transmitters, flashlights, field bags, camera traps, GPSs, desktop and laptop PCs. Evidence: procurement documents, equipment in field. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

Outputs	Evidence-based Achievements (Reported by PMU)	TE Evaluator Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fuelwood allocation specialist provision for ensuring fuelwood allocation for winter 2014/15. Evidence: see report in Georgian only) <p><i>NP legal establishment and baseline data collection</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultative NP Boundary Demarcation - evidence: contractor reports, APA minutes of consultation meeting Tbilisi, updated law of Georgian on Machakhela NP establishment Biodiversity and natural resource inventory of entire Machakhella Valley, including proposed NP zonation Plan (Evidence - see contractor reports, and GIS materials) Mtirala and Machakhela Friends Association established by Directors of NPs and local community representatives. Evidence: FA charter/establishment documents) 	
2.2: Public-Civil Society-Community PA Planning and Management Governance Board established and provided with a legal basis to manage the proposed Machakhela National Park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity building of NP Administration on Management planning – evidence: see training report Machakhela NP 6 year Management Plan developed with involvement of NP Administration and approved - Evidence: Management Plan, Government Decree 223 Initial 3 year Operational Plan (including additional new section on financial planning) - evidence: Operational Plan and spreadsheet, Decision of Chairman APA. Forestry Management Plan for NP (a legal requirement) – evidence: see contractor report, Forestry Management Plan, Ministers approval. Scientific Consultative Council established, 13 members-evidence: Ministers Order I-497 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
2.3: Established operational capacity at Machakhela National Park.	<p><i>Machakhela NP Administration</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renovating NP Administration Office and Visitor Centre (full exterior repairs to building and garden covered by project, interior covered by APA) - evidence: procurement documents, finished building NP Administration Office furniture - evidence: procurement documents, furniture in-situ Training to build capacity to implement MP (combined with training for other NPs – total of 8 training events - see individual training reports for details). Evidence: training reports GIS training for NP Administration (Ilia University) and GIS hardware (computer). Evidence: Ilia reports, computer in-situ, GIS materials Monitoring plan (part of MP) – extra training and technical support provided to NP Administration to strengthen monitoring component of MP – evidence: NACRES report, monitoring component of MP Machakhela NP Tourism Strategy and Action Plan – evidence: Strategy and Action Plan NP tourism development including: development of the tourist routes, marking and installation of signs in the Mtavarangelozhi route. Evidence: copies of printed materials, procurement documents Recommendation for APA on future Investment options and opportunities in Machakhela NP – report. Provision of data (inventory data, GIS materials, draft Zonation Plan) to UNESCO Natural World Heritage site application team (Succow Foundation/APA). Evidence: communications with NWH team, acknowledgement in NWH site documents. <p><i>Support Zone</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participatory developed “Support Zone Community Action Plan” – evidence: BSEA reports, SZ AP 4 infrastructure projects cost-shared with the local communities – water supply infrastructure, a bus-stop, a ritual service centre (arrangement of funerals) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

Outputs	Evidence-based Achievements (Reported by PMU)	TE Evaluator Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A series of activities to benefit local village residents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training in agriculture - Assistance and recommendations in efficient forest management - Assistance in setting up small greenhouses - Assistance in setting up local market-places for selling local produce - Support to the local folk music choir - Waste collection and transportation programme – a waste collecting vehicle will be purchased with 50% cost-sharing from the local government - Support to sustainable resource use co-operatives: 7 cooperatives were supported including: 4 – beekeeping (80 functioning beehives total and a vehicle for transportation), 2 – hazelnut cleaning machinery, 1 – hay production – mini tractor and hay pressing machinery. <p><i>Fuelwood demand reduction</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fuel wood alternatives piloted in 16 households (11 hazelnut, 5 solar) and 1 school (hazelnut shells, briquettes, solar water heaters) and practical feasibility assessed ▪ Replication by 65 households by 2018 (60 hazelnut shells, 5 solar) ▪ Forecast number of families adopting hazelnut fuel by 2021 = 250 families ▪ Forecast volume of fuelwood not used by 2021 = 2,250 m³ (1080 tons) of fuel wood. ▪ Equivalent to approx. 200 trees not used in 2021 (i.e. if continued at this level over 10 years, the equivalent of approx. 2,000 trees not required for fuel) ▪ Awareness and capacity to insulate houses increased by trainings (20 households) ▪ Khelvachuari Municipality included in 2018/19 programme to support low income families with hazelnut shell use ▪ Replication of experience with hazelnut shells within WWF forestry activities (eco-corridor's program) in Khulo district <p>Evidence: Contractor reports, Impact and LL report(draft), NP records, Municipality programme, WWF project reports/plans</p> <p><i>Support Zone Tourism development</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tourism development activities implemented in partnership with the organization “Ecotourism Association of Georgia” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - inventory of the historic and cultural sites in the Machakhela Gorge, - development of tourism services (wine tasting, embroidery house, blacksmith workshop, basket weaving, eco-farms etc.), assistance in opening family guesthouses, - training in tourism services for the residents, popularization of traditional trades. ▪ Assistance in establishing and arranging the hiking tracks in the valley– gastronomic route, Wine presses Route, Dunga waterfall route, ethnographic route. Installation of signs ▪ Assistance in publishing the print, audio and video touristic kits. <p>Evidence: contract reports, in-situ wine tasting venue, embroidery house, basket weaver, etc, existing trails and signs, printed materials/ audio video tourist kits</p> <p><i>Human wildlife conflict reduction</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data on real extent and scope of conflicts between local population and wildlife documented for 1st time in Achara – evidence: NACRES report. 	

Outputs	Evidence-based Achievements (Reported by PMU)	TE Evaluator Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Electric fences practically tested in the field as method of preventing wildlife damage to crops (11 fence systems, 15 households) ▪ Livestock insurance scheme tested – first such test in Georgia (approx. 100 households, 200 cows, in 2 villages) ▪ Livestock Insurance approach being replicated by WWF project in Khulo district ▪ Impact, Lessons Learned and Recommendations report prepared, published and disseminated <p>Evidence: NACRES reports, procurement documents, insurance documents, electric fences in-situ, Impact and Lessons Learned report (pending), WWF project plans/reports</p> <p><i>Machakhela Valley Protected Landscape (NP Support Zone territory)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consultative review of best options for systematic conservation management of Machakhela Support Zone territory – evidence: consultant report ▪ Consensual agreement for establishing a “protected landscape” – evidence: Reports of consultant, records/minutes of consultation meetings. ▪ Documents and materials required to formally submit application to Government to establish a “Protected Landscape” prepared – evidence: draft law on designation and management of the new protected landscape, recommendations to the Municipality on the administration, necessary staffing and approximate budget for the new protected landscape. ▪ Follow-up lobbying and support for Khelvachauri Municipality and Achara Government with submission of Protected Landscape proposal to government. Evidence: Letter from UNDP/minutes of meetings. ▪ On-going support of Czech UNDP Partnership consultant secured for post-project (early 2019). Evidence: application approval/contract ▪ Study tours: Awareness and direct practical experience of NP staff and local stakeholders on practical impact and benefits of protected areas increased through 3 study tours to Tusheti PAs and Kakheti PA (approx. 44 people in total). Evidence: media reports (TV). <p><i>Recording and dissemination of Project Lessons Learned and Recommendations for Future</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Overall summary LL and Recommendations x 1, Thematic LL and recommendations x 6 printed (hard copy, electronic) approx. 200 copies. Evidence: pending ▪ Impact, Lessons Learned and Recommendations terminal workshop (approx. 40 participants). Evidence: pending ▪ Dissemination of LL/recommendations via direct delivery, online publishing, inclusion to suitable GEF, UNDP, other databases - evidence: pending ▪ Transfer of experience and lessons learned by Project Manager as member of national Working Group for Development of National Protected Areas Policy” (supported by GIZ). Evidence: WG meeting minutes, correspondence. <p>Mass media materials/events and publications. Evidence: document copies, links to on-line sources (see lists PIRs)</p>	

Annex 8: Evaluation Matrix

EVALUATION CRITERIA / SUB-CRITERIA	MAIN QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED BY THE EVALUATION	WHAT TO LOOK FOR (INDICATORS)	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION METHODS
RELEVANCE TO GLOBAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES				
1. Alignment of project with GEF global priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the project in line with the GEF Operational Programme and its strategic priorities/ focal area? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BD SO-1, SP-3: Strengthening Terrestrial PAs Areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of alignment between project outputs and the relevant GEF strategic objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant documents UNDP-GEF RTA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review documents Consult with RTA
2. Project design (SRF) addresses identified threats and barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the project reflect the needs of Georgia at national, regional (Achara) and local administrative and community) levels? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project design in response to identified threats and barriers clearly reflected in SRF 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant documents, including Project Document and policy provisions (lack of) for community engagement in SLEM. Stakeholders, including project partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review documents Consult with Project Steering Committee, other stakeholders
EFFECTIVENESS – EXTENT TOWARDS ACHIEVING PROJECT OUTCOMES AND OBJECTIVE, AND OVERALL IMPACT IN REDUCING ENVIRONMENTAL STRESS AND/OR IMPROVING ECOLOGICAL STATUS				
3. Progress towards achievement of Objective, Outcomes and significance of impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent did implementation of project activities meet the planned outcomes and objective? What is (likely to be) impact of project on ecological status of biodiversity (ecosystem services) and sustainable livelihoods? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent of achievement of targets specified in SRF in accordance with SMART indicators Results (quantitative, qualitative) of pilot studies and individual HH case studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PIRs MTE and Management Responses Beneficiaries: line agencies, communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review documents Consultations in the full range of stakeholders (Project Steering Committee, line agencies, village councils, women)
EFFICIENCY OF IMPLEMENTATION, IN LINE WITH INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL NORMS AND STANDARDS				
4. Execution efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has the EA enabled the project to meet its SRF targets on time and within budget? What have been the key challenges to efficient execution and to what extent have these been addressed through adaptive management? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project extensions, cost over-runs Risk management strategy Accountability and ownership among partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme Board, Project Steering Committee minutes Other sources as listed below for IA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review documents Consultations with Programme Board (includes UNDP), Project Steering Committee
5. Implementation efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has the IA implemented the project in line with the annual work plan and met its SRF targets on time and within budget. What have been the key challenges to efficient implementation and to what extent have these been addressed through adaptive management? How have risks been avoided or mitigated? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual work plan Rate of disbursement and liquidation of project funds Timeliness of procurement; capacity and commitment of service providers Coordinating mechanisms at provincial, district and village levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ProDoc, PIRs, Annual Work Plans UNDP CO, PMU, Agency for Protected Areas UNDP/GEF RTA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review documents Consultations with PMU, UNDP, RTA, beneficiaries
SUSTAINABILITY – LIKELIHOOD OF FINANCIAL, INSTITUTIONAL, SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND/OR ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS TO SUSTAINING LONG-TERM PROJECT BENEFITS				
6. Design for Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were interventions designed to have sustainable results that take into account identifiable risks, and did they include an exit strategy? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability Plan/Exit Strategy SRF and changes arising from MTR Examples of adaptive management Arrangements in place for the transition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ProDoc and project design (SRF) PIRs, MTR Project Steering Committee, PMU Prospective heirs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review documents
7. Issues at implementation and corrective measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What issues emerged during implementation as threats to sustainability and how were they addressed? 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review documents
8. Sustainability strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have heirs to project been identified and prepared? 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultations with Project Steering Committee, Project Manager, PMU, RTA, heirs

Annex 9: Audit Trail of Review Comments and Evaluator Responses

Feedback/comments provided in the draft Terminal Evaluation, consolidated in some cases, and responses to them are provided in the table below.

Location	Comment/feedback on draft TE report	Evaluation Team responses and actions taken
	Comments from APA	Responses from Evaluators
See draft TE for location of feedback comments	1. This paragraph seems not so clear, what kind of meetings are meant? If the meetings between the administrations and the advisory councils are meant, this usually takes place.	This refers to the Advisory Councils and the fact that they are not always held regularly and, based on feedback, seem to be scheduled
	2. Is there meant the document elaborated by PMO regarding the income generation potential projects of Machakhela?	The document, <i>Pilot Route in Machakhela National Park</i> is mentioned, along with others, as evidence of some good quality outputs. In this case the pilot route has been carefully designed to enable visitors to appreciate the natural beauty of the landscape without undue disturbance from the better access.
	3. This paragraph is not clear for me. I don't think that PA policy and legislation is main challenge for the administrations.	APA's feedback is included in a footnote to the paragraph (Executive Summary, p. iv) for purposes of transparency but the paragraph remains unchanged because the evaluators disagree with this feedback based on the following accounts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The risk had been identified in the ProDoc, signed off by APA. ii. The issue of decentralisation was also highlighted in the MTR (Section 3.2.2, para 47). iii. Many stakeholders, including PA staff, concurred that the centralised nature of administering PAs is a barrier to efficient and effective management. It is understood that policy for PAs is being reviewed under the GIZ-funded IBIS Project, with a working group tasked to develop a new policy for which the Biodiversity and Forest Policy Department (BFD) has been given the lead. The centralized management of PAs, with directors of PA administrations having few devolved powers, has been recognized by the Working Group as weakness in PAs management and is among the topics being examined.
	4. Before, the zonation was regulated by the Temporary Regulation Rule. The zonation was defining the biodiversity protection aspects as well as the socio-economic aspects. The zonation plan provided by Ilia State University was just taking into account the aspects of strict protection zone, which would cause the conflicts with local communities. So this proposal was from scratch not supported by APA. 5. On the other hand, this was a working process which needed time, so I would not assess it as - a delay.	The point about process is well made and the red cross against the paragraph has been removed and the wording changed. It seems that Ilia University had not taken the local socio-economic context into account, as explained here in APA's feedback. What concerned the Evaluators was the 'tone' of APA's apparent response to the University as reported in the MTR (page 31, para 41.7): <p><i>"APA also informed the MTR team that they were rejecting the zonation plan that was proposed by Ilia State University."</i></p> This has a number of implications: i) it is of some concern that APA would reject a piece of work that involved consultation with the stakeholders on the ground and that was founded on biodiversity parameters, . . . 'Rejecting' is strong language, suggesting that parties may have been upset, frustrated or worse. Whatever, it also raises questions about whether or not the consultant had been adequately briefed, supervised etc. Clearly, according to the MTR, there were misunderstandings. So the lesson is more about designing good processes, which takes more time, than delays as inferred in the draft TE report.
	6. In spite of NPD changes, there was only one change when the territorial administration director-director of Machakhela was advanced. In case of Mtirala and	This feedback has been included as a footnote.

	Kintrishi, there was no change in management.	
	7. Regarding high turnover, it should be mentioned, that, in spite of the fact that in whole APA there was a high turnover of staff, during this 4.5 years period, precisely in the project target parks not so many staff amendment has been occurred. Herewith, these changes have not caused any serious delays in decision-making process.	A number of stakeholders maintained that the high turnover of senior members in APA (i.e. decision-makers) did have some impact on project implementation, given APA's role as Implementing Partner. The text has been clarified to this effect – i.e. delays due to high-turnover of decision-makers rather than of staff in the PAs.
	8. In regard to the point it should be stressed that at the current stage, the mentioned parks have no enough facilities/infrastructure or resources/possibilities to generate own revenues that will be enable them to work independently. Due to this fact APA is obliged to use budget or own revenues generated by other parks for maintaining these parks. Without centralization these parks won't be able to cover at least its operational costs.	There appears to be a misunderstanding with respect to this feedback from APA. Decentralisation does not necessarily mean that the PA has to be financially viable. Many PAs from around the world are financed from the national treasury – for the very same reasons as cited by APA – they are not financially self-sustaining, nor should they necessarily be so. However, they do have devolved powers to use their budget in line with their approved management plan and make decisions in line with national PA law and policy etc. Very often, such PAs, funded by central government, have a Board (comprising members that represent both national and local interests) to which the PA director reports. This type of governance can work extremely well. Thus, it is these devolved powers that are constraining efficient and effective management and this need have nothing to do with the current need to centralise the financing of PAs for the very good reasons stated in APA's feedback. APA's feedback has been included as a footnote, with a brief response from the Evaluators and cross-referenced to this audit trail.
	9. This confusion in the 2012 UNDP-GEF guidelines for TE will be brought to the attention of UNDP HQ,	This matter has been brought to the attention of UNDP's Evaluation Office, since drafting this TE report.
	10. I think it cannot be stated so strictly because out of the four dimensions stated below, SOCIO-ECONOMIC as well as the INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND GOVERNANCE and ENVIRONMENTAL dimensions have quite good achievements, I suppose.	As stated in the text of this TE report: <i>"Under GEF criteria, each sustainability dimension is critical, so the overall ranking cannot be higher than the lowest one."</i> The Evaluators are bound to follow this guidance!
	11. Still until the parks are able to maintain themselves, it's impossible to delegate, state budget is not enough for all 20 administrations without adding own revenues which is generated by other parks.	Refer to comment 7, which is the same issue. The budget can be determined by APA and then awarded to each PA. In so doing, powers (responsibilities) can be devolved/delegated to the PA Director to deliver the outputs for which the funds have been awarded, with transparent and accountable mechanisms in place to monitor expenditures.
	12. I suggest not to state this as determined, since "management is passed" will be a wrong interpretation of what is written in the Law on the System of Protected Territories and still needs to be determined by different state structures.	The text has been revised and reference to the Law has been removed.
	13. I think this is good recommendation in general, but	The compliment is appreciated – thank you. It is highly relevant with respect to future sustainable land use practices being encouraged in the

	does not seem to be relevant for our project.	lower valley that falls outside the national park boundary, especially if local livelihoods are to become increasingly sustainable in terms of impacts on the land and water draining from the valley. Recommendations have been re-arranged and this one now falls under the general ones.
	14. That can not be directly stated like this, because every decision by central office is made in communication with PA. Also the budget is mutually agreed, the first request on what is needed to be done, what infrastructure is needed to be arranged is coming from the PA.	The sentence drafted as: <i>"It is this institutional straight-jacket approach, whereby PA administrations have little or no autonomy because all decisions and approvals are centralized at national level, that stifles initiative, enthusiasm and commitment among those who actually manage PAs."</i> has been changed to: <i>It is this institutional straight-jacket approach, whereby PA administrations have little or no devolved powers, that stifles initiative, enthusiasm and commitment among those who actually manage PAs.</i> Also refer to responses to Comments 3 and 7.
	15. The document is not still elaborated, even draft is not provided at this stage, it's not determined on what it will make emphasis.	Refer to (iv) in the response to Comment 3, which provides an update on the IBIS project and its current progress regarding PA policy development.
	16. Agree, this is the topic to be discussed afterwards.	Good, thank you.
	17. would suggest to give another formulation for the sentence.	The sentence: "The contradictions arises from APAs centralized institutional structure that denies any autonomy to it PAs . . ." has been changed to read: <i>"The contradiction arises from APAs centralized institutional structure that limits devolvement of powers to its PA administrations . . ."</i>
	18. Referring to my up-mentioned comments...	The text has been modified to clarify that this is all above devolving powers to PA administrations. Thus, ". . . and until such time as APA is able to de-centralise its current operations and empower its PA Administrations with the authority and financial resources to manage their respective PAs, the achievements of this and other PA projects will not be fully realised." now reads as: <i>". . . and until such time as APA is able to de-centralise its current operations and delegate powers to its PA Administrations to manage their respective PAs, including financial resources, the achievements of this and other PA projects will not be fully realised."</i> Refer also to previous feedback on Comments 3, 7.
	19.	This additional information has been included.

	UNDP, PMU, CTA	Responses from Evaluators
See draft TE for location of feedback comments	1. I think the ecosystem valuation report, though its findings were not able to be applied in a practical way, was a new approach to understanding the wider economic and development importance of the Colchic forests and potentially a 1st step to better recognizing this in the future – perhaps worth mentioning?	Valid point - reference to this ecosystem valuation report has been added to highlight its significance. p.iii
	2. PMU to comment on reason for this change or discrepancy please. The amount pledged by APA is given as 1,395,490 in Table 6 of MTR, which is presumably taken from p6 of the Inception Report but no reference in the IR is made to APA reducing it cofinancing commitment as recorded in the ProDoc. Maybe IR and MTR are both incorrect?	
	3. I couldn't identify any document/letter that could state or explain the reason for this change. Most likely the (typing) error was made in the IR and then in MTR.	Noted, thank you.

	4. PMU – please indicate where sums in red are allocated – Outcome 1 or Outcome 2.	
	5. NB Table (7 rows with incorrect totals) provided to Giorgi by Irakli but missing UNDP, DoI and CNF cofinancing. MG has reviewed and revised total that are now correct (ie they match those in Table 3.3, column 3.).	
	6. Any reason for this? Cut in funds or resulting from lack of progress with Jamili BR in Turkey?	
	7. The co-financing letter was prepared in May 2013 more than a year before the Achara PA project started and was referring to the 40000\$ funding during the period till summer 2014, when USDO I project was due to finish. So, when Achara PA project started the USDO I project was already (or being) finalized.	This additional informational is helpful and included in the text.
	8. The current Chairman of APA is the 6th one since the project start, however there was period of several months when there was no chairman and its duty was assumed by one of the Deputies. In which case it can be 7 times. The last NPD was 4th.	Thank you for this confirmation; the text has been amended to 6 Chairmen and 4 NPDs.
	9. The amount of GEF grant was 1,283,636 USD so it is about 1.3 million	Corrected, thank you.
	10. Although the future funding can not be guaranteed, I believe the project's efforts to address this issue can be mentioned. I will separately enclose the final report (Nov.21 2018) of the consultant hired to address the future/post-project financial sustainability of the MMFA	This information is included in a footnote.
	11. I am not sure how this is possible given the project has now terminated – some suggestions on how in practice APA and UNDP might implement the recommendations would be helpful.	This and other recommendations has been revised I the light of this feedback.
	12. Unsure of the details of this as there seemed to be mixed ideas about what exactly was to be developed!	
	13. It is still being discussed and under development. So we can leave the wording like this	Wording modified slightly: <i>"Implementation, in the case of Machakhela, is aligned with the cultural village/ semi-natural landscape concept that is under development by Achara A.R. government;"</i>
	14. Most of this 6 km gap is designated Forestry Agency territory so is reasonably secure though perhaps a need to explicitly include something to the local forestry 10 year plan about its importance in this regard and management to reflect. Main barrier is the highway but this is mainly a larger mammal connectivity issue not forest.	This additional informational is helpful and has been incorporated into the recommendation.
	15. I am a confused, maybe I misunderstand something. The Achara PA project PIF (at least the version I have) doesn't mention anything about financial sustainability and effective management of 12 out of 20 priority PA's. ??? I will enclose the 4732 PIF separately.	This paragraph has been deleted from Section 3.1.1 as the evidence (PIF document) from where this information was taken cannot be traced, maybe it was an early version. Certainly, it stacks up with paragraph 35 of the MTR and could have been an early version. Clearly, it is not the approved version.

	16. Question for APA/UNDP or PMU – is this accurate/correct?	
	17. Yes	
	18. Not sure from my notes if this statement is correct - noted during one of our interviews but may have misunderstood?.	
	19. In principle it is correct. Maybe is better to state that Municipality will allocate funds, without specifying the source (be it Achara Govt, National Govt, own income etc).	This advice has been taken and text amended accordingly.
	20. The “community ranger” and “junior ranger” programs were designed and implemented under Achara PA project in Mtirala (both) and Machakhela (Junior rangers only). No such projects were implemented by Kintrishi FA in Kintrishi PA support zone (under KfW SPPA project). The experience that was used from the Kintrishi FA was only related to the process of establishment of FA (structure, charter etc) which was similar to establishment of other FA's under the KfW SPPA project.	Thank you spotting this anomaly. The apparent confusion arises from the words: “Experience from Kintrishi PAs’ Friends Association” – which should have been picked up in the proof reading. They have been deleted.
	21. Were the officially termed councils or boards? Both terms appear to be used!	
	22. Both terms correspond to the Georgian word/definition. However, these structure in English were commonly called “Scientific Advisory Councils”	Noted, thank you.
	23. Or revise the existing instrument under which the Association operates.	
	24. I think this already exists and the strategy document also clarifies the role, scope of activities, etc. The FA is committed to implementing the strategy – so I think much of this recommendation is perhaps unnecessary.	The recommendation has been modified in the light of this feedback.
	25. In brief, the assessment concluded that due to the highly centralized financial control mechanisms in place, and that all income generated (from fines. Resource use or tourism services, etc) reverted directly to APA, individual protected areas did not have sufficient control or delegation of authority to develop PA specific Business Plans. Based on this it was decided the best option would be to introduce some level of financial planning into the 3 year OP (including identification of likely funding gaps and opportunities for filling them) – this would provide some basis for systematic action and build the basics for future extension of financial planning if/when greater decentralization of financing to PAs is implemented by APA.	This additional information has been incorporated into the Annex 7.

Annex 10: Evaluation Report Clearance Form

(to be completed by CO and UNDP GEF Technical Adviser based in the region and included in the final document)

Evaluation Report Reviewed and Cleared by

UNDP Country Office

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

UNDP GEF RTA

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____