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Mid-Term Review of the FAO-GEF Project
***"Integrated natural resources management
in drought-prone and salt-affected
agricultural production landscapes in
Central Asia and Turkey"***

(CACILM-II)

GCP/SEC/293/GFF
GEF ID 9094

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FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
Subregional Office for Central Asia

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Contents

Acknowledgements.....	v
Acronyms and abbreviations.....	vi
Executive Summary.....	1
1 Introduction.....	15
1.1 Purposes of the review.....	15
1.2 Notes on conducting this MTR remotely under COVID-19.....	15
1.3 Intended users of the review report.....	15
1.4 Scope and objective of the review.....	16
1.5 Methodology.....	17
1.6 Limitations and Constraints.....	19
1.7 Structure of the report.....	20
2 Background and context of the project.....	21
2.1 Context of the project.....	21
2.2 Theory of change.....	23
3 Key findings.....	26
3.1 Relevance.....	26
3.2 Effectiveness.....	34
3.3 Efficiency.....	50
3.4 Sustainability.....	54
3.5 Factors Affecting Performance.....	61
3.6 Cross-cutting Dimensions.....	77
4 Lessons learned.....	82
5 Conclusions and Recommendations.....	83
5.1 Conclusions.....	83
5.2 Recommendations.....	87
Appendices.....	95
Appendix 1. Terms of reference.....	95
Appendix 2. Review Matrix.....	124
Appendix 3. List of documents consulted.....	135
Appendix 4. Interview Protocol.....	141
Appendix 5. List of women and men interviewed.....	143
Appendix 6. Rating Guidance.....	150
Appendix 7. Pledge of Ethical Conduct in Evaluation.....	152
Appendix 8. Gender Responsiveness.....	153
Appendix 9. List of Project Sites and Site Location Maps.....	156
Appendix 10. Project expected results and planned activities.....	160
Appendix 11. FAO-GEF co-financing table.....	174
Appendix 12. List of Performance Indicators.....	175
Appendix 13. GEF 7 Core Indicators.....	180
Appendix 14. Field Visits Summary.....	185
Appendix 15. Gender Analysis.....	223

Boxes, figures, and tables

Figures

Figure 1: CACILM-II Theory of Change.....	25
Figure 2: The CD Framework in FAO	58
Figure 3: Project Expenditures Per Component and per Year.....	69
Figure 4: Three level of gender analysis	154
Figure 5: Gender analysis at socio – economic context (FAO SEAGA, 2003).....	154
Figure 6: Key Policies that the Project Contributes on Gender Equality	224
Figure 7: Reduce of unbalanced power relations between women.....	224

Tables

Table 1: Rating Table.....	12
Table 2: Progress Made Toward Outcome 1.1.....	35
Table 3: Progress Made Toward Outcome 1.2.....	36
Table 4: Progress Made Toward Outcome 2.1.....	39
Table 5: Progress Made Toward Outcome 2.2.....	41
Table 6: Progress Made Toward Outcome 3.1.....	43
Table 7: Progress Made Toward Outcome 3.2.....	46
Table 8: Progress Made Toward Outcome 4.1.....	48
Table 9: FAO-GEF Project Funds Utilization per Component.....	67
Table 10: FAO-GEF Project Funds Utilization per Country.....	68
Table 11: Co-financing Status.....	69
Table 12: Recommendations.....	87

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Acronyms and abbreviations

AD	Adaptation Fund
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AKIS	Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems
AWP	Annual Work Plan
BH	Budget Holder
BP	Boundary Partner
CA	Central Asia
CACILM	Central Asia Countries Initiative for Land Management
CAREC	Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation
CD	Capacity Development
CEO	Chief Executing Officer
COP	Conference Of Parties
CSA	Climate-Smart Agriculture
DRM	Drought Risk Management
ELD	Economic of Land Degradation
ESS	Environment and Social Safeguards
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFS	Farmer Field School
FLO	Funding Liaison Officer
FP	Focal Point
FPMIS	Field Project Management Information System
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GHG	Greenhouse Gases
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
ICSD	Inter-states Commission on Sustainable Development
ICARDA	International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas
ICBA	International Centre for Biosaline Agriculture
INRM	Integrated Natural Resources Management
IsDB	Islamic Development Bank
KAZ	Kazakhstan
KM	Knowledge Management
KYR	Kyrgyzstan
LDN	Land Degradation Neutrality
LOA	Letter Of Agreement
LTO	Lead Technical Officer
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NPM	National Project Manager
OM	Outcome Mapping
PES	Payment for Ecosystem Services
PIF	Project Information Form
PIR	Project Implementation Review
PMU	Project Management Unit
PPR	Project Progress Report

PSC	Project Steering Committee
RAPTA	Resilience Adaptation Pathways and Transformation Approach
RCC	Regional CACILM Council
RPC	Regional Project Coordinator
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEC	Subregional Office for Central Asia
SHARP	Self-evaluation and Holistic Assessment of climate Resilience of farmers and Pastoralists
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound
SO	Strategic Objective
STAR	System for Transparent Allocation of Resources
TJK	Tajikistan
TKM	Turkmenistan
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USD	United States Dollar
UZB	Uzbekistan
WOCAT	World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies

Executive Summary

Introduction

1. The Central Asian (CA) region, which includes Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, is an arid to semi-arid region, where 58% of the population of 69,5 million is dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods. Demographic trends, rising demand for energy and food, economic development, environmental degradation, and climate change are increasing pressure on all the region's finite common property resources (e.g., water, soil, and forestry).
2. The causes of land degradation in the region are multiple, complex, and vary across these countries, but are largely attributed to over-exploitation and deterioration of the natural resource base, particularly through inefficient irrigation and unsustainable agricultural and grazing practices; and poor irrigation practices and degraded infrastructure have largely contributed to the salinization and/or waterlogging of irrigated lands. These significant environmental stressors on agricultural lands are leading to declining productivity of agro-ecosystems and reduced livelihood security in production landscapes.
3. The adoption of an integrated landscape management approach and Integrated Natural Resources Management (INRM) in Central Asian countries with the support of Turkey should help stabilize or reverse the adverse trends of land degradation and climate change. However, this approach had been hampered by a set of four general barriers:
 - Inadequate sharing of knowledge at regional level and lack of evidence-based decision-making.
 - Inadequate integration of resilience into policy and decision-making.
 - Absence of strategy for scaling up of INRM.
 - Weak technical and functional capacities of institutions, agricultural extension, and advisory services.
4. The FAO – GEF funded project “*Integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agricultural production landscapes in Central Asia and Turkey*” CACILM-II), GCP/SEC/293/GFF and GEF ID 9094, is a response to these barriers. The CACILM-II project was planned to be a 5-year project; the implementation started on October 16, 2017 (EOD). The project is funded by a GEF grant of US\$10.9M and a pledged total co-financing of about US\$64.9M from recipient countries. Its interventions focus on a range of representative agro-ecosystems and landscapes in Central Asia and Turkey where impacts of climate change are already leading to more droughts and problems with soil salinity. The aim of CACILM-II is to scale up sustainable management practices that minimize pressures and negative impacts on natural resources to reduce risks and vulnerability and, enhance capacity of rural communities to cope with or adapt to drought and salinity. It is to be achieved through multi-country collaboration and partnership to foster the implementation of cost-effective INRM, focusing on drought-prone and salt-affected production landscapes; integration of resilience into policy, legal and institutional frameworks for integrated natural resources management (INRM); and upscaling climate-smart agricultural practices in drought-prone and/or salt-affected production landscapes
5. The objective of this Mid-Term Review (MTR) – which was conducted from February to June 2021 and 19 months before its end date (NTE) - was to review the progress made towards the achievement of outcomes in accordance with the full project document and

CEO endorsement and identify corrective actions if necessary. The MTR assessed the project from its concept and design to current and potential results. It explored the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, factors affecting performance, and cross-cutting dimensions; identified lessons and suggests recommendations for improving the achievement of targets set at the formulation stage.

6. Gender sensitive and social inclusion review tools were developed for the MTR in accordance with FAO and GEF guidance to gather information from different types of stakeholders and different levels of management: a review matrix was developed based on the scope of the review to identify all review questions; the theory of change of the project was reviewed and updated; a documentation review was conducted; an interview protocol was developed and 138 interviews (48 women and 90 men) were conducted; National Consultants from the MTR Team conducted field visits in CA countries; project achievements were rated according to the guidance provided in the TORs and finally, the findings of this review were triangulated through the concept of "*multiple lines of evidence*".
7. One limitation of this evaluation was the fact that the MTR was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in an MTR conducted remotely and in person. Interviews with the participation of the MTR Team Leader were conducted mostly online through video calls when possible or audio when the internet bandwidth was limited. Other interviews conducted by the MTR Team Members were done either online or in person when it was possible; including field visits in demonstration areas. Despite that online interviews are not as efficient as face-to-face interviews, the Review Team was able to collect evaluative evidence and triangulate the collected information to ascertain how well the project will meet its expected targets. Additionally, to mitigate the limitations of conducting most of the review online, the MTR Team met regularly online to design the review process, identify stakeholders to be interviewed, share initial findings, and review the outcomes of this review.

Main findings

8. The main findings of the MTR are presented below grouped by key review questions.

Question 1 - Relevance: How does the project relate to the main objectives and strategies of the GEF, FAO and of recipient countries to scale up integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes?

Finding 1.1: The project is well aligned with all five programs of the GEF-6 land degradation strategy, with the GEF-7 LDN target, and with the five strategic objectives of the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework, as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular SDG-15 and its related target 15.3, but also to improve living conditions of affected populations; and to enhance ecosystems services.

Finding 1.2: The project was well aligned with the FAO strategic objectives when it was formulated, particularly its SO1- *Contribute to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition*, SO2- *Make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable*, SO3- *Reduce rural poverty*, and SO5- *Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises*. It is also aligned with the recently developed *Strategic Framework 2022-2031*, which focuses on *four betters* and twenty programme priority areas (PPAs). The project is particularly aligned with PPAs under the *better environment* and *better life*.

Finding 1.3: The project is highly relevant for the 6 participating countries. Its objective is to scale up integrated natural resources management (INRM) in drought prone and salt affected agricultural production landscapes in the recipient countries. It provides SLM technologies and knowledge to directly address drought and salinity issues. It is a clear response to national priorities of recipient countries.

Finding 1.4: One indicator/target of the project to measure the achievement of its objective is 665,294 women and men (beneficiaries) with improved food security by the end of the project. It is one indicator/target out of 3 to measure how the project is progressing towards its objective. It is an ambitious indicator/target, but unfortunately limited information has been reported so far in progress reports (PIRs). Field supported activities are reaching out to women and men and some numbers are reported under corresponding activities; however, due to limited availability of socio-economic data, it is not possible to assess the project impact in improving income and food security of women and men (beneficiaries).

Finding 1.5: A coherent approach between the project and other relevant initiatives was well articulated in the project document with the anticipated cooperation and participation of key related international partners in the implementation of the project. However, the participation of these partners has not happened yet, including several partners which pledged co-financing budgets at the formulation stage.

Question 2 – Effectiveness: What is the progress made towards the objective and expected outcomes of the project?

Finding 2.1: The project was progressing satisfactorily until the impact of COVID-19, which negatively affected the implementation of the project activities. Overall, the achievements under most outcomes were in line with expectations. However, since COVID-19, it forced the Project Implementation Team to work from home, focusing mostly on online meetings and webinars. It certainly contributed to a slowdown of field activities. In the meantime, the MTR Team noted that within the context of COVID-19 emergency response, the project supported additional tangible activities in targeted communities such as seed distribution, greenhouses, small machineries, etc., which have had positive socio-economic impacts on targeted communities. Finally, the visibility of the participation of Turkey in project activities through progress reports is poor and it needs to be improved to acknowledge the contributions of Turkey by sharing its knowledge and experience through training events, seminars, and workshops.

Expected Outcome 1.1: *Enhanced knowledge of the costs of land degradation and benefits of INRM, drought preparedness and biosaline agriculture to national economies and the region as a whole informs policy and investment decisions at all levels, including NAP processes.*

The project is progressing towards what is expected under this outcome that is better knowledge of the costs of land degradation and INRM benefits as well as of drought preparedness and biosaline agriculture to better inform policy and investment decisions. Key achievements so far include: (i) the fact that the project was accepted in an advisory role with the ICSD. The project is "at the table" to participate to regional dialogues focusing on the development of SLM/INRM policies; (ii) a harmonized methodology on ELD and valuation of ecosystems adapted to CA countries is now ready to be used; and (iii) incentives to scale up INRM were identified.

Expected Outcome 1.2: *Enhanced interstate dialogue, multi-country collaboration and information sharing to promote investment for INRM scaling up.*

The development of the knowledge platform is underway, however, there is still a lot to accomplish before it becomes an online platform. Additionally, the plan was to “*build on existing databases and knowledge sources*”. However, the collaboration with other existing databases has not planned out as planned, except with WOCAT, which is the key organization contracted by the project to develop this knowledge platform. In the meantime, the MTR Team found that little interest in such a platform exists in Central Asia.

Expected Outcome 2.1: *Resilience integrated across natural resources management (NRM) sectors and production landscapes.*

This outcome is about integrating resilience principles into related investment plans, policies, legislation, and programmes. So far, the project supported the completion of baseline analyses of national policies and institutional frameworks; contributed to the revision of some National Action Programmes (NAP); produced some land degradation, salinity and drought vulnerability maps; used the SHARP tool to assess the resilience of agro-ecosystems using portable devices, such as iPads, to address the needs of smallholder farmers and pastoralists (both men and women); and, finally, the project conducted a series of meetings and consultations to strengthen intersectoral collaboration and coordination mechanisms.

Expected Outcome 2.2: *Incentives for climate-smart agriculture in place at national and sub-national levels.*

This outcome is about increasing the number of public and private sector entities supporting smallholder farmers in scaling up best practices and adoption of self-reliant approaches for managing climate variability and change; and also, to strengthen value chains for agricultural products. So far, the project supported the analysis of incentive mechanisms to scale up SLM practices in all five CA countries. It also selected “Boundary Partners (BP)” to support smallholder farmers to scale up CSA/SLM/INRM practices in all five CA countries. The project also supported the analysis of agro-pastoral value chains in Kazakhstan; conducted CSA training as well as a study on incentives for climate-friendly agriculture in Kyrgyzstan; supported the formation of 8 initiative groups, field training on drought and salt resistant crops cultivation and a study on the development of safflower and almond value chain in Tajikistan; constructed 2 irrigation nurseries and 3 water reservoirs in remote villages to support local value chains in Turkmenistan; and conducted a cost-benefit analysis for 5 SLM practices, studied the value chain development of conservation agriculture practices and developed and submitted recommendations for strengthening value chains on pistachio in Uzbekistan.

Expected Outcome 3.1: *Upscaling of a proactive drought risk management (DRM) approach and innovative integrated natural resources management (INRM) technologies in selected production landscapes / land use systems (e.g. pastoral, agro-sylvo-pastoral, tree-based, irrigated, rainfed, home gardens).*

Activities implemented under this outcome are part of the strategy of the project to demonstrate new approaches and technologies to improve the management and the risk of natural resources affected by drought. The implementation in each country varies in the type of activities to be implemented and scope due mostly to the difference in budget available in each country. It

includes the formulation of 2 multi-stakeholder district pasture plans in Kazakhstan; support to the Kyrgyzgiprozem Institute to digitize land use maps in Kyrgyzstan; 2 land-use plan in Kamashi district and one pasture management plan in Guzar district in Uzbekistan; developed training curricula and delivered training events on DRM and INRM approaches in all five CA countries; introduced SLM practices in crop production on 55ha in Kazakhstan, supported pasture committees to incorporate CSA approaches and technologies into pasture management plans in Kyrgyzstan; promoted soil and water conservation practices to 8 farmer groups in Tajikistan; established forest nurseries in Nohur and Karakum in Turkmenistan; and established demonstration sites for scaling up 10 drought tolerant crops and seed production in Kashkadarya region, including a drip irrigation system for 11,221ha of cotton, a pasture rotation plan (84,000ha) for Guzor district to increase productivity and improve seasonal herd migration, and over 500,000 seedlings delivered to the "Million fruit trees" initiative in Uzbekistan.

Expected Outcome 3.2: *Adaptation and scaling up of technologies and approaches for management of salt-affected production landscapes (e.g. irrigated, pastoral, agro-sylvo-pastoral, tree-based, home gardens).*

Activities implemented under this outcome is to demonstrate how to better manage/plan the risks of salinity in watershed and catchment areas, how to disseminate salinity mitigation approaches and technologies and demonstrate new practices to combat salinization. Similar to the previous outcome, the type of activities implemented, and their scope vary among CA countries due also to budget differences among countries. It includes the production and distribution of guidelines on salinity management in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan; establishment of project demonstration sites in 3 provinces, including field baseline and needs assessment activities, and technical guidelines on CC adaptation measures in Turkmenistan; set up collaboration agreements with the Kazakh Institute of Soil Science and Agro-chemistry, National Agrarian Scientific and Education Center, and Kazakh Rice Production to conduct demonstration to upscale relevant SLM and INRM technologies work on 60 ha of salt-affected areas in Almaty, Turkestan, and Kyzylorda regions; conducted webinars on salinity management, biosaline agriculture, mapping of salt-affected soils, and on gender equality in Kazakhstan; established 5 demonstration sites for drought and salt tolerant crops (quinoa, amaranth, sorghum, millet, etc.) in Tajikistan; established partnerships with various institutions (Agriculture University, Agriculture Institute, Union of Industrialist and Entrepreneurs, UNDP projects) for enhancing salinity management approaches and technologies in Turkmenistan; produced guidelines on seed production of salt tolerant crops and conservation agriculture technologies in Uzbekistan; initiated demonstration of the production of licorice as biological measures to reduce soil salinity on 5 ha at project pilot site in Gurbansoltan eje district in Turkmenistan; and planted salinity tolerant crops' varieties on 1,300 ha in project sites in Kashkadarya and Bukhara provinces in Uzbekistan.

Expected Outcome 4.1: *Project implementation based on adaptive results-based management, monitoring, and reporting for enhanced impact and visibility.*

The project is well monitored, and progress is well reported; PIRs and PPRs are produced timely and according to FAO and GEF guidance. The project is equipped with an *M&E Plan* to measure the performance of the project, a *Communication and Outreach Plan 2020 and Project Visibility Strategy* to communicate SLM/INRM knowledge throughout Central Asia, and a regional *Gender Mainstreaming and Social Inclusion Strategy* to ensure that gender is well considered throughout the implementation of the project.

Question 3 - Efficiency: Has the project been implemented efficiently, cost-effectively and in-line with international and national norms and standards?

Finding 3.1: After a slow startup phase, a skilled Project Implementation Team has finally found its way to successfully mobilize project resources and deliver results in a cost-effective way. Resources are allocated prudently, and the Team has been using a variety of management tools to get the job done by adapting what is needed to be done with what is possible to do while maintaining adherence to the overall project design and timeline. The flexibility of the implementation has been particularly critical to adapt to the many organizational and staff changes within CA governments that happened since the start of the project.

Finding 3.2: Technical expertise from FAO, technical partners and the international and national consulting industry is being used efficiently and on an as-needed basis. It provides the project with a broad range of expertise and competencies when it is needed.

Finding 3.3: There is a good balance in utilizing local and international expertise with 90% of all contracts signed with national consultants and 10% with international consultants. It is an efficient way to further develop local expertise in SLM/INRM, while at the same time, bringing “state-of-the-art” knowledge to the region, resulting in customized best practices to be implemented in the region.

Question 4 - Sustainability: To what extent are there financial, institutional, social-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?

Finding 4.1: The project document contains a concise and complete strategy formulating how project achievements will be sustained over the long-term. However, this strategy is also a good evidence demonstrating the ambitious scope of the project.

Finding 4.2: The strategy formulated in the project document to meet the assumptions made for the financial sustainability of project achievements is not convincing. It says that by mainstreaming integrated approaches to drought risk management and salinity control into country sector budgets it will contribute to financial sustainability of project interventions. While it is a valid approach, the chance of increasing country sector budgets is traditionally a difficult area to be achieved and no indication at this point indicates a progress in this direction.

Finding 4.3: Socio-economic benefits are expected to contribute to the social sustainability of project results achieved in demonstration areas supported by the project. The strategy is contained to beneficiaries in demonstration sites supported by the project under outcome 3, which could represent a total of over 1M women and men.

Finding 4.4: Institutional and governance risks to sustainability was not mentioned in the risk analysis to sustainability in the project document. Yet, it is one of the most critical risk areas when it comes to the sustainability of project achievements. It was part of assumptions made at the formulation stage and the project needs to ensure these assumptions stay valid by investing more on institutionalizing project achievements.

Finding 4.5: No environmental risks to sustainability were identified. By focusing on drought risk management and soil salinity management practices, it should minimize pressures and negative impacts on natural resources and have a medium and long-term positive environmental impact over natural resources in the project demonstration areas, rendering these arid ecosystems more sustainable over the long-term.

Finding 4.6: The project approach to develop the required capacities necessary to produce the desired changes focuses mostly on increasing the skills and knowledge of individuals. A more holistic approach improving structures, mechanisms, and procedures of related institutions and developing a favorable enabling environment would increase the sustainability of project achievements.

Finding 4.7: The new SLM/INRM technologies introduced by the project are being properly documented using the WOCAT tools and methods, which should contribute to their long-term sustainability. However, the vetting/endorsement of these new technologies by agricultural authorities would also increase their chances to be sustained.

Finding 4.8: The project was designed as an example of cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary approach to address drought and salinity problems in drylands through INRM and across Central Asia. It is a project with an ambitious catalytic role and replication strategy to upscale project achievements throughout Central Asia. A greater focus on sustainability and replicability of project achievements is needed to identify realistic measures to secure these achievements.

Question 5 – Factors Affecting Performance: To what extent are there financial, institutional, social-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?

Finding 5.1: By design, this is an ambitious project with a broad scope covering the entire region of Central Asia with 5 different governments and five very different budgets to achieve the expected results in each country. There is a danger for the project to “*be spread too thin*” and not develop all the required capacities to ensure the long-term sustainability of all project achievements.

Finding 5.2a: Managing and administering the project is complex with a long and cumbersome “*chain of command*”. The project has 5 offices with a total staff plus part/full-time experts of 33 people (8 women and 25 men). The good interaction among project staff and FAO staff in country offices, in the Subregional office, and at headquarters, led to find a way to make it work efficiently despite the complex management and administration setup.

Finding 5.2b: This is a project that is efficiently implemented and executed by FAO with an adequate separation of these two functions within the agency. However, it is also a project somewhat too FAO centric – FAO is alone in the “*driver seat!*” – and the PSC, with the participation of UNCCD and GEF focal points from each country, is not enough to engage a broader range of key stakeholders and national partner organizations, which is affecting the country ownership of the project and over the long-term will affect its effectiveness.

Finding 5.2c: A good list of six risks has been identified to monitor the project risks. Their status is reported annually in PIRs and all six risks rated as low in the 2020 PIR except as substantial for the risk linked to the impact of COVID-19. However, when considering the findings of this MTR, two risks should be rated as medium and concerning developing sufficient capacities and having a catalytic effect.

Finding 5.3a: As of end of February 2021, the project disbursements are only 38% of the GEF grant versus 68% of the elapsed time, due mostly to a slow start of the implementation of project activities and the impact of COVID-19 since early 2020. In term of disbursements, components 1 and 3 are more advanced with 35% and 44% of their respective budgets disbursed. In the meantime, the project management budget is already disbursed by 87%. The rate of disbursements per country varies a lot from only 12% in Turkmenistan to 89% in Kyrgyzstan.

When considering the remaining GEF grant of over USD 6.75M, it is highly unlikely that it will be disbursed during the remaining 19 months of implementation. This financial situation supports the proposal for a no-cost time extension.

Finding 5.3b: The co-financing figures as of end of 2020 confirm the relevance and interest of CA countries to focus on land degradation and climate change with increases of investments allocated to these issues. Cases in point are the large, unexpected increases in co-financing from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, due partially to new programmes focusing on soil/land management and integrated natural resources management.

Finding 5.4: National CACILM Boards were retained as national steering committees for the project but they have not functioned as anticipated; resulting in a limited engagement of partners and stakeholders in each country and by extension limited country ownership. The approach has been changed to create national inter-agency working groups but it is still a work in progress and some of these working groups have not met yet; though good progress has been made in Uzbekistan and to some extent in Kyrgyzstan. Nevertheless, these working groups should play a greater role in engaging stakeholders in each country and have a stronger link with the PSC and the overall decision-making process of the project.

Finding 5.5: the project has been effective in communicating and promoting its key messages and results. It has a communication, information, and promotion strategy in place to guide its activities in this area and so far, it resulted in good outreach metrics such as the publishing of 322 articles in Central Asia media, the regular sending of materials to 159 media outlets, project stories promoted on social media and a quarterly newsletter "*Dialogue*" sent to a project compiled mailing list of 600 subscribers throughout Central Asia.

Finding 5.6a: Overall, the M&E function of the project is satisfactory. The project has been investing resources to monitor the progress made by the project, including the monitoring of *Boundary Partners* in each country to be a link between government agencies and land users. A set of 11 mostly SMART indicators are used to monitor/measure the progress made by the project at the outcome level. It is recommended to use the three indicators which were identified at the outset to measure the progress at the objective level.

Finding 5.6b: In the PIR 2020, the ratings given for the progress towards expected outcomes 1.1, 1.2 and 2.1 were *Highly Satisfactory (HS)*. Based on the findings of this MTR, these ratings are too optimistic and were revised to *Satisfactory (S)*; similar to other outcomes 2.2, 3.1 and 3.2. The rating for outcome 4.1 is HS which is consistent with the quality of the M&E function of the project. It is a *Satisfactory* project, with the potential to become highly satisfactory if the project is able to increase the engagement of national stakeholders and their appropriation of project results.

Question 6 – Cross-cutting Dimensions: To what extent cross cutting issues have been considered in the formulation and implementation of the project?

Finding 6.1: Gender considerations have been taken into account in the formulation and implementation of the project. The approach is in line with FAO and GEF Gender Equality Strategies but more integration with UNFCCC and UNCCD gender equality action plans is recommended. Gender considerations are mostly taken into account through the implementation of demonstration areas with the support of *Boundary and Strategic Partners*. However, so far, measuring the progress on how women and men are impacted by the project

in term of improved income and improved food security is limited. No socio-economic analysis, including gender issues, has been done so far, to measure this progress.

Finding 6.2: According to the 9 environmental and social safeguard risks, the project was assessed as a low-risk project with no or minimal potential negative environmental and/or social impacts, and it still is a low-risk project at the time of the MTR. In the meantime, the project needs to be screened with the updated GEF policy on ESS (2019).

Conclusions

Conclusion 1 - Relevance. The project is well aligned with GEF, UNCCD and FAO objectives, including with the recently developed FAO *Strategic Framework 2022-2031*, which focuses on *four betters*. The focus of the project on drought risk and soil salinity management is highly relevant for the 6 participating countries and is a direct response to national priorities.

Conclusion 2 - Effectiveness. The project has made good progress; however, since early 2020, the pace of delivery of project activities has been affected by the pandemic COVID-19 and it is still early to be able to assess the full impact on the delivery of the project.

Conclusion 3 - Effectiveness. Under the first component, the project has made significant progress in fostering an effective delivery of INRM through multi-country collaboration and partnership.

Conclusion 4 - Effectiveness. Under the second component, progress was made towards integrating resilience into policy, legal and institutional frameworks for INRM and demonstrate incentives for CSA.

Conclusion 5 - Effectiveness. Under the third component, CSA practices are being demonstrated in drought prone and salt affected production landscapes.

Conclusion 6 - Efficiency. After a slow startup phase, a skilled Project Implementation Team has finally found its way to successfully mobilize project resources and deliver results in a cost-effective way.

Conclusion 7 - Sustainability. The concise sustainability strategy described in the project document is more evidence demonstrating the ambitious scope of the project and achievements may not be sustainable.

Conclusion 8 – Factors Affecting Performance. It is an ambitious project with a broad scope addressing four key barriers, covering the entire region of Central Asia with 5 different governments and five very different budgets. There is a danger for the project to "*be spread too thin*".

Conclusion 9 – Factors Affecting Performance. It is a complex project to manage and administer with a cumbersome "*chain of command*". Nevertheless, a good interaction for implementing and executing the project among project staff and FAO staff in country offices, in the Subregional office, and at headquarters, led to find a way to make it work efficiently despite the complex management and administration setup.

Conclusion 10 – Factors Affecting Performance. This is a project that is efficiently implemented but it is also a project somewhat too FAO centric - FAO is alone in the "*driver seat!*" – and the PSC, with the participation of UNCCD and GEF focal points from each country, is not enough to engage a broader range of key stakeholders and national partner organizations, which is affecting the country ownership of the project and over the long-term will affect its effectiveness.

Conclusion 11 – Factors Affecting Performance. To the end of February 2021, project disbursements are low with only 38% of the GEF grant expended versus 68% of the elapsed time, due mostly to a slow start of the implementation of project activities and the impact of COVID-19 since early 2020. It is highly unlikely that the remaining GEF grant of over USD 6.75M will be disbursed over the remaining 19 months of implementation. In the meantime, actual co-financing amounts are higher than anticipated with an actual amount as of end of 2020 being about 3 times the amounts pledged at the formulation stage.

Conclusion 12 – Factors Affecting Performance. National CACILM Boards were retained as national steering committees for the project in each country, however, they have not worked. The project is now setting up national inter-agency working groups but it is still a work in progress and some of these working groups have not met yet. It has resulted in a limited engagement of national partners and stakeholders in the implementation of the project as well as a limited country ownership of the project; except in Uzbekistan.

Conclusion 13 – Factors Affecting Performance. The project has been very effective in communicating and promoting its key messages and results.

Conclusion 14 – Factors Affecting Performance. The Team has been investing resources to monitor the progress made by the project at the country level. Overall, a set of 11 mostly SMART indicators are used to measure the performance of the project at the outcome level. It is recommended to use the three indicators which were identified at the outset to measure the progress at the objective level.

Conclusion 15 – Cross-Cutting Dimensions. Gender considerations are in line with FAO and GEF Gender Equality Strategies. They have been taken into account in the formulation and implementation of the project. However, it also found that no socio-economic analysis, including gender issues, has been done so far. Therefore, no progress can be reported against key indicators measuring how women and men are impacted by results of the project in term of improved income and improved food security.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. As the project is entering its remaining phase of 19 months, it is needed to measure the performance of the project towards its objective (to PMU, FAO and PSC).

Recommendation 2. The role of National Inter-Agency Working Groups in the implementation of the project needs to be strengthened as a mechanism to engage national stakeholders, including a focus on the institutionalization of project achievements in each country (to PMU, FAO, PSC and NSCs).

Recommendation 3. To extend the project for up to 2 years (a no-cost extension), however, the final decision should be made only after conducting a financial analysis/work

plans to identify scope, costs, and timing of activities to be implemented with the remaining country budgets (status of each STAR budget allocation) and how to finance the regional component and the project management costs (to PMU, FAO and PSC).

Recommendation 4. To conduct a survey assessing the socio-economic benefits after the introduction of new technologies and best practices and how they improve food security and income for women and men in demonstration areas (to PMU, FAO, and PSC).

Recommendation 5. To hire a Turkey-based part time NPM for the remaining period of the project (to PMU, FAO, and PSC).

Recommendation 6. The activities supported by Turkey need to be more visible, particularly in progress reports and in communication products (to PMU, FAO and PSC).

Recommendation 7. To continue to support governments in strengthening their rural advisory services (extension services) (to PMU, FAO and PSC).

Recommendation 8. To increase the cooperation with CAREC to find synergies between the 2 initiatives – particularly their project funded by UNCCD - when seeking to institutionalize SLM technologies and approaches in Central Asia (to PMU, FAO, and PSC).

Recommendation 9. The project needs to reach out to international and regional partners seeking more cooperation and possibly collaboration in close relation with national governments (to PMU and PSC).

Recommendation 10. To conduct capacity assessments of key relevant organizations using the FAO Strategy on capacity development in order to identify capacity gaps, particularly at the institutional level and to develop a plan of actions focusing on the institutionalization of project achievements (to PMU, FAO, and PSC).

Recommendation 11. Hoping that the interest in webinars lasts, to continue to deliver SLM/INRM knowledge through webinars and focusing more on practical implementation mechanisms of these measures as a cost-effective way to engage a maximum number of stakeholders throughout Central Asia (to PMU).

Recommendation 12. To develop a project exit strategy to identify what is needed to be done to secure the sustainability of project achievements but also importantly to maximize the replication/upscaling of results from demonstration areas (to PMU, FAO and PSC).

Recommendation 13. To review the list of activities remaining to be implemented and, where possible, prioritize what is critical to be done and focus on the institutionalization of current achievements (to PMU, FAO, and PSC).

Recommendation 14. To screen the project against the updated GEF policy on Environmental and Social Safeguard (to PMU and FAO).

Recommendation 15. To increase synergies and knowledge sharing among policymakers, researchers, regional/local administrations, and farmers/land users (beneficiaries) through "*field-days*" in demonstration areas (pandemic allowing) (to PMU).

Recommendation 16. To promote CSA and SLM knowledge platform at national level through cost-effective webinars (to PMU).

Recommendation 17. To implement gender recommendations issued from the gender analysis (to PMU, FAO).

Recommendation 18. To introduce the 3 GEF-7 core indicators in the Results Framework of the project (to PMU, FAO, and PSC).

MTE Ratings

9. Below is the rating table as requested in the TORs. It includes the required performance criteria rated as per the rating scales presented in Appendix 6 of this report. Supportive information is also provided throughout this report in the respective sections referenced in the comments column.

Table 1: Rating Table

GEF criteria/sub-criteria	Rating	Summary comments
A. STRATEGIC RELEVANCE		
A1. Overall strategic relevance	HS	See Section 3.1
A1.1. Alignment with GEF and FAO strategic priorities	HS	See Sub-questions 1.1 & 1.2
A1.2. Relevance to national, regional, and global priorities and beneficiary needs	HS	See Sub-questions 1.3 & 1.4
A1.3. Complementarity with existing interventions	S	See Sub-question 1.5
B. EFFECTIVENESS		
B1. Overall assessment of project results	S	See Section 3.2
B1.1 Delivery of project outputs	S	
B1.2 Progress towards outcomes and project objectives	S	See Sub-question 2.1
- Outcome 1.1	S	See Sub-question 2.1
- Outcome 1.2	S	See Sub-question 2.1
- Outcome 2.1	S	See Sub-question 2.1
- Outcome 2.2	S	See Sub-question 2.1
- Outcome 3.1	S	See Sub-question 2.1
- Outcome 3.2	S	See Sub-question 2.1
- Outcome 4.1	HS	See Sub-question 2.1
- Overall rating of progress towards achieving objectives/ outcomes	S	See Section 3.2
B1.3 Likelihood of impact	Not rated	
C. EFFICIENCY		
C1. Efficiency	S	See Section 3.3
D. SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT OUTCOMES		
D1. Overall likelihood of risks to sustainability	ML	See Section 3.4
D1.1. Financial risks	ML	See Sub-question 4.2
D1.2. Socio-political risks	L	See Sub-question 4.3
D1.3. Institutional and governance risks	ML	See Sub-question 4.4
D1.4. Environmental risks	L	See Sub-question 4.5

GEF criteria/sub-criteria	Rating	Summary comments
D2. Catalysis and replication	MS	See Sub-question 4.8
E. FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE		
E1. Project design and readiness	MS	See Sub-question 5.1
E2. Quality of project implementation	S	See Sub-question 5.2
E2.1 Quality of project implementation by FAO (LTO, PTF, etc.)	S	See Sub-question 5.2
E2.1 Project oversight (PSC, project working group, etc.)	MS	See Sub-question 5.4
E3. Quality of project execution	S	See Sub-question 5.2
E3.1 Project execution and management (PMU and BH performance, administration, staffing, etc.)	S	See Sub-question 5.2
E4. Financial management and co-financing	HS	See Sub-question 5.3
E5. Project partnerships and stakeholder engagement	MS	See Sub-question 5.4
E6. Communication, knowledge management and knowledge products	HS	See Sub-question 5.5
E7. Overall quality of M&E	S	See Sub-question 5.6
E7.1 M&E design	S	See Sub-question 5.6
E7.2 M&E plan implementation (including financial and human resources)	S	See Sub-question 5.6
E8. Overall assessment of factors affecting performance	S	See Section 3.5
F. CROSS-CUTTING CONCERNS		
F1. Gender and other equity dimensions	MS	See Sub-question 6.1
F2. Human rights issues	Not rated	
F2. Environmental and social safeguards	S	See Sub-question 6.2
Overall project rating	S	

Paragraphs for the GEF Portal

Stakeholder Engagement

- Project Stakeholders were identified during the formulation of the project, including their anticipated roles in implementing the project. Since the start of the implementation, no further stakeholder engagement action plan has been prepared. Instead, it was anticipated that setting up national steering committees in each country, using National CACILM Boards, would provide a platform for their engagement. However, so far these national coordination mechanisms have not functioned as anticipated; resulting in a limited engagement of partners and stakeholders in each country and by extension limited country ownership. In the meantime, in demonstration areas, stakeholders are well engaged with an expected number of 665,294 women and men benefitting from project activities to improve their food security. However, this indicator has not been monitored yet, preventing project managers to measure the on-going impact of the project. Regarding the environmental and social safeguards (ESS), the project was assessed against the 9 environmental and social safeguard risks as a low-risk project with no or minimal potential negative environmental and/or social impacts and it still is a low-risk project at the MTR.

Gender-responsive measures

- A basic gender analysis was conducted during the formulation of the project, followed by the recent development of a *Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy (GESI)* to guide, and

strengthen the promotion of gender equality in INRM throughout Central Asia. The approach is in line with FAO and GEF Gender Equality Strategies but more integration with UNFCCC and UNCCD gender equality action plans is needed. Gender considerations are mostly taken into account through the implementation of demonstration areas with the support of *Boundary* and *Strategic Partners* in each country. However, the fact that no socio-economic analysis, including gender analysis, has been done since the start of the implementation, no progress can be reported against key indicators measuring how women and men are impacted by results of the project in term of improved income and improved food security.

Knowledge activities/products

12. Knowledge management and knowledge/information sharing are parts of the core of the strategy of the CACILM-II project. The aim of the first component of the project is to enhance knowledge of the costs of land degradation and benefits of INRM, drought preparedness and biosaline agriculture to national economies and the region as a whole, in order to inform policy and investment decisions at all levels. This component is also about enhancing interstate dialogue, multi-country collaboration and information sharing to promote investment for scaling up INRM. The project is a response to address four key barriers including an *"inadequate sharing of knowledge at regional level and lack of evidence-based decision-making."* So far, the project has delivered a harmonized methodology on Economics of Land Degradation (ELD) and valuation of ecosystem services adapted to the conditions of CA countries; identified incentives to scale up INRM for each country; a fully completed functional version of the SLM knowledge management platform; developed and translated into Russian language the WOCAT inventory of SLM practices and technologies and provided national partners with template to collect best SLM practices from the CA region; and knowledge was shared with national experts and decision-makers of CA on CBP tools, mapping instruments on watershed management, SLM and soil organic carbon mapping, and on LD trends to assess impacts on ecosystem services. The project was also accepted in an advisory role of the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development (ICSD) to bring SLM/INRM knowledge into the development of SLM/INRM policies and of strategic recommendations on ELD/VES policies in CA.

1 Introduction

1.1 Purposes of the review

13. This Mid-Term Review (MTR) - a requirement of FAO & GEF procedures - was initiated by the FAO Sub-regional Office for Central Asia as the Budget Holding unit and as the GEF Implementing Agency in close coordination with the FAO-GEF Coordination Unit at FAO Headquarters. This review provides an in-depth assessment of project achievements and recommendations for the remaining implementation and execution of the project and for other similar GEF-financed projects in the region and worldwide.

1.2 Notes on conducting this MTR remotely under COVID-19

14. This assignment was conducted during the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic; the defining global health crisis of our time and the greatest challenge we have faced since World War Two. We are in uncharted territory and without knowing when normality will return.
15. Regarding the assignment at hand, the FAO Budget Holder (BH) and Government Partners decided to proceed with the MTR following FAO and local guidelines with regards to precautions against the spread of COVID19. The MTR Team, composed of a Team Leader and six National Consultants, conducted the assignment in a way to minimize epidemiologic risks. A key priority was safety; no stakeholders, consultants or FAO staff were put in harm's way.
16. The Team Leader led the team remotely from his home in Ottawa, Canada using communication tools such as email, Skype, Zoom and other convenient electronic tools. National Consultants were responsible to conduct interviews face-to-face when possible or by using communication tools such as phone, Skype, Zoom or other means; following current government guidelines to minimize epidemiologic risks. Each interview was prepared by the MTR Team, using the review matrix and the interview protocol. Key questions to collect relevant evaluative evidence were identified and adapted for each interview. As much as possible, the Team Leader participated remotely to these interviews.
17. In addition, where permitted, National Consultants were involved into direct observations through visits of project sites (*see Appendix 14*). These field visits were opportunities to witness project impacts on beneficiaries. Observations made during these visits were documented in short (point form) reports accompanied by photos where possible.

1.3 Intended users of the review report

18. This MTR provides managers at FAO and at National Authorities in the six countries with an assessment of the progress made towards achieving the expected outcomes and targets and with corrective actions where necessary. The MTR also includes recommendations for more effectively and efficiently replicating successful project initiatives or for filling gaps not covered by the project. The primary intended users

of this MTR are the project key stakeholders, which include the Budget Holder (BH), the designated MTR Manager, the Project Regional Coordinator, the National Managers (6), the national project counterparts, the Project Task Force (PTF) members including the Funding Liaison Officer (FLO) and the Lead Technical Officer (LTO), the Project Steering Committee (PSC) members, the GEF, UNCCD and other stakeholders. Overall, the MTR provides a basis for accountability, improvement, and clarification for these intended users.

1.4 Scope and objective of the review

19. The objective of this Mid-Term Review (MTR) was to review the progress made towards achievement of outcomes in accordance with the full project document and CEO endorsement and identify corrective actions if necessary. The MTR assessed the project from its concept and design to current and potential results. More specifically, the review:
 - Review the efficiency and timeliness of project implementation, including start-up delays
 - Analyze effectiveness of implementation and partnership arrangements
 - Review the coherence of the logical framework, including end of project targets
 - Analyze whether the project is on track with respect to achieving the expected results
 - Identify issues/risks requiring decisions and corrective actions
 - Highlight technical achievements by country and at regional level and lessons learned so far about project design, implementation, execution, and management, including at different levels inside FAO
 - Propose any mid-course corrections and/or adjustments to the Work Plan as necessary
 - Assess the impact of COVID-19 on the implementation of the project and recommend corrective measures.
20. Based on the assessment/review, the MTR identified recommendations, which will be instrumental for adapting the project to the current development context in targeted countries.
21. Following the guidance established by FAO and GEF, the following review criteria were covered by this MTR:
 - *Relevance*: analyze the extent to which the project's design and intended results are consistent with local, national, sub-regional and regional environmental and development priorities, and policies and to GEF and FAO strategic priorities and objectives as well as the countries involved in the project.
 - *Effectiveness*: assess project results to date including the overall quality of project outputs, progress towards achieving project outcomes and objectives, and a brief assessment of the likelihood of longer-term impacts resulting from the project.
 - *Efficiency*: evaluate cost-effectiveness of the project and timeliness of activities.
 - *Sustainability*: assess risks to sustainability such as financial risk, socio-political risk, institutional risk, and environmental risk, as well as assess potential replicability and catalytic role of the project results.

- *Factors Affecting Performance*: assess key factors potentially affecting the performance and the delivery of the project; including project design and readiness for implementation; project execution; project implementation, including supervision by FAO; financial management and mobilization of expected co-financing; project partnerships and stakeholder involvement; communication, public awareness, and knowledge management; and application of an M&E system. Additionally, the impact of COVID-19 will be assessed.
- *Cross-cutting dimensions*: consider gender, local groups and indigenous people concerns and human rights, including the review of the environmental and social safeguards (ESS) risk classification and risk-mitigation provisions identified during the project's formulation stage.

1.5 Methodology

22. The methodology that was used to conduct this MTR complies with the FAO and GEF guidelines as reflected in the "*Guide for planning and conducting mid-term reviews of FAO-GEF projects and programmes*¹".

Overall Approach

23. The MTR was conducted in accordance with the FAO and GEF guidance, rules, and procedures. It was undertaken in-line with GEF principles, which are: *independence, impartiality, transparency, disclosure, ethical, partnership, competencies/capacities, credibility, and utility*. It considered the two GEF objectives at the project level: (i) promote accountability for the achievement of GEF objectives; including the global environmental benefits; and (ii) promote learning, feedback and knowledge sharing on results and lessons learned among the GEF and its partners.
24. The MTR Team developed gender sensitive and social inclusion review tools in accordance with FAO and GEF policies to ensure an effective project review. The review was conducted, and findings were reported around the six review criteria presented above.
25. Regarding gender as a cross-cutting dimension of the project, the MTR Team conducted a gender analysis to obtain gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation data. This analysis was also used to understand gender differentials in project activities, the level of gender awareness among project stakeholders, and the level of participation of women and men in decision-making processes. The framework to conduct this gender analysis is presented in Appendix 8. The findings of the gender analysis were based on contextual analysis and reported on micro, meso and macro levels (*SEAGA Approach*).
26. In addition to the FAO and GEF guidance for project review, the MTR Team also applied to this mandate its knowledge of review methodologies and approaches and its expertise in global environmental issues. It also applied several methodological principles such as (i) *Validity of information*: multiple measures and sources were sought out to ensure that results are accurate and valid; (ii) *Integrity*: Any issue with

¹ <http://www.fao.org/3/ca7788en/ca7788en.pdf>

respect to conflict of interest, lack of professional conduct or misrepresentation were immediately referred to the client; and (iii) *Respect and anonymity*: All participants had the right to provide information in confidence.

27. Finally, the MTR Team applied the "*UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation*". It conducted review activities with integrity, accountability, respect, and beneficence. The MTR Team pledged to discuss and apply these ethical guidelines and to adopt the associated ethical behaviors. (See *Appendix 7: Signed "Pledge of Ethical Conduct in Evaluation"*). This MTR clearly contributes to learning and accountability and the MTR Team has personal and professional integrity and was guided by propriety in the conduct of its business.

Review Instruments

28. The MTR provides evidence-based information that is credible, reliable, and useful. Information was mined from project documents, as secondary information, and as primary information obtained through data-gathering activities conducted for this review; most prominently key informant interviews and, where permitted, observations through site visits. Using several review tools and gathering information from different types of stakeholders at different levels of management, the information collected was triangulated² through the concept of "*multiple lines of evidence*" to validate findings. To conduct this review, the following review instruments were used:

Review Matrix: A review matrix was developed based on the review scope presented in the TOR (see *Appendix 1*), the project log-frame and the review of key project documents (see *Appendix 2*). This matrix is structured along the review criteria (6) and includes all review questions. It provided overall directions for the review and was used as a basis for interviewing people and reviewing project documents.

Documentation Review: The MTR Team reviewed documents related to the project. In addition to be a main source of information, documents collected were also used as preparation for interviewing stakeholders. A list of documents was identified during the start-up phase and further searches were done through the web and contacts for this MTR (see *Appendix 3*).

Interview Protocol: Based on the review matrix, an interview protocol was developed (see *Appendix 4*) to solicit information from stakeholders. As part of the participatory approach, the MTR Team ensured that all parties viewed this tool as balanced, unbiased, and structured.

List of Stakeholders to be Interviewed: A list of stakeholders to be interviewed was constituted during the preparatory phase of this MTR by the MTR Team and the MTR Manager, ensuring that it represents all stakeholders. On this basis, dates and time

² *Triangulation*: The use of three or more theories, sources or types of information to verify and substantiate an assessment. By combining multiple data sources, methods, analyses or theories, evaluators seek to overcome the bias that inevitably comes from single informants, single methods, single observations or single theories. (DFID, *Guidance on Evaluation and Review for DFID Staff*, London. 2005).

slots for interviews were planned in advance with the objective of ensuring a broad scan of stakeholders' views during the data collection phase of the MTR.

Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted using the interview protocol adapted for each interview. A total of 138 interviews (48 women and 90 men) were interviewed for this MTR; mostly remotely using Zoom or other communication platforms with some follow up using emails when needed (see Appendix 5). Confidentiality was guaranteed to interviewees and findings are incorporated in this report.

Field Visits and Direct Observations: As per the TORs, visits to project sites were conducted by National Consultants where COVID-19 regulations allowed (see Appendix 14). It allowed the MTR Team to have direct primary sources of information from the field and project end-users (beneficiaries). It gave opportunities to the MTR Team to observe project achievements and obtain views from stakeholders and beneficiaries at the national but also at local levels.

Achievement Rating: The MTR Team rated project achievements according to the guidance provided in the TORs; using the GEF rating guidance and as requested in the TORs (see Appendix 6).

1.6 Limitations and Constraints

29. The approach for this mid-term review is based on a total planned level of effort for the MTR Team of 220 days. It comprises the effort to initiate and plan the assignment, finalize the methodology, collect documents, interview FAO and project staff, service providers, key stakeholders and beneficiaries, collect other evaluative evidence through field visits to project sites where the project support activities (following COVID-19 guidelines), and synthesize the findings of this review in an MTR report. Within the context of these resources, the MTR Team was able to conduct a detailed assessment of actual results against expected results and successfully ascertains whether the project has been progressing well towards its expected outcomes - as laid down in the project design document - and whether the project initiatives are, or are likely to be, sustainable after completion of the project. The MTR Team also made recommendations that may be useful for the remaining implementation period and to reinforce the long-term sustainability of project achievements. Finally, it also includes lessons learned and best practices, which could be further taken into consideration during the development and implementation of other similar GEF projects in the region and elsewhere in the world.
30. Due to COVID-19, this MTR was conducted remotely and in person. Interviews with the participation of the MTR Team Leader were conducted mostly online through video calls when possible or audio when the internet bandwidth was limited. Other interviews conducted by the MTR Team Members were done either online or in person when it was possible. Despite that online interviews are not as efficient as face-to-face interviews, the MTR Team was able to collect evaluative evidence and triangulate the collected information to ascertain how well the project will meet its expected targets. Additionally, to mitigate the limitations of conducting most of the review online, the MTR Team met regularly online to design the review process,

identify stakeholders to be interviewed, share initial findings, and review the outcomes of this review.

1.7 Structure of the report

31. This mid-term review report documents the achievements of the project and includes five chapters. Chapter 1 briefly describes the objective, scope, methodology, review users and limitations of the review; Chapter 2 presents the background and context of the project as well as the theory of change of the project; Chapter 3 presents the MTR findings, structured according to the six key review criteria; Chapter 4 presents the lessons learned and conclusions and recommendations can be found in chapter 5, and relevant appendices are found at the back end of the report.

2 Background and context of the project

32. This section presents the developmental context in which the project was formulated and its theory of change to provide an overall understanding of the project, including its logic and results chain.

2.1 Context of the project³

33. The Central Asian (CA) region, which includes Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, is an arid to semi-arid region, where 58% of the population of 69,5 million is dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods. The major agro-ecological regions include irrigated cropland, rainfed cropland, pastures, steppes, and mountains. It is a region with a very high pressure on its water resources, mostly due to high water withdrawals for irrigated agriculture, deteriorating water quality, and uneven distribution of water resources. Demographic trends, rising demand for energy and food, economic development, environmental degradation, and climate change are increasing pressure on all the region's finite common property resources (e.g., water, soil, and forestry). The recent Kyrgyz-Tajik border conflict, which was triggered by a water resource access dispute⁴ is a daunting example of the environmental risk in the region.
34. Central Asia is one of the world's most vulnerable regions to current climate variability and to the impacts of future climate change. Climate change signals also demonstrate significant differences in different climate regions across Turkey. Temperature projections indicate that average temperatures in the region by the end of the 21st century will tend to be 2-6 C degrees higher than the average temperatures experienced in 20th century. The precipitation patterns by the end of the 21st century, in comparison to current precipitation, also indicate seasonal and regional differences. Indeed, trends over the last few decades indicate that these predicted changes are already being experienced in CA countries, and current climate variability is already adversely impacting agricultural and rural development.
35. The causes of land degradation in the region are multiple, complex, and vary across these countries, but are largely attributed to over-exploitation and deterioration of the natural resource base, particularly through inefficient irrigation and unsustainable agricultural and grazing practices (e.g. mono-cropping of cotton, inappropriate use of fertilizers and pesticides, inadequate soil management, overgrazing of pastoral lands), aggravated by increased frequency and intensity of climate related disasters (e.g. droughts, floods and landslides). Poor irrigation practices and degraded infrastructure have largely contributed to the salinization and/or waterlogging of irrigated lands. Fires, deforestation, and mining have also severely affected the degradation of natural resources and impacted land use in CA.

³ This section is a summary on the project with information from the project document.

⁴ <https://www.france24.com/en/asia-pacific/20210430-kyrgyzstan-says-a-dozen-killed-thousands-displaced-after-tajikistan-border-clash> and <https://www.rferl.org/a/kyrgyzstan-tajikistan-border-fighting-perceptions/31237942.html>

36. These significant environmental stressors on agricultural lands are leading to declining productivity of agro-ecosystems and reduced livelihood security in production landscapes. As a result, the region faces serious challenges with the need to feed a growing population in an environment with increasingly limited water resources and highly variable climatic conditions.
37. The adoption of an integrated landscape management approach and Integrated Natural Resources Management (INRM) in the Central Asian Countries and Turkey should help stabilize or reverse the adverse trends of land degradation and climate change. However, the absence of multi-country cooperation for the socio-economic development of the Aral Sea Basin has led to fragmented national and regional policies, with risks of increasing competition over natural resources while worsening their degradation. Overall, the project formulation team found that several barriers were hampering the implementation and scaling up of integrated and sustainable natural resource management practices. The analysis of threats and barriers in each country resulted in the identification of four general barriers; there are:
 - Inadequate sharing of knowledge at regional level and lack of evidence-based decision-making.
 - Inadequate integration of resilience into policy and decision-making.
 - Absence of strategy for scaling up of INRM.
 - Weak technical and functional capacities of institutions, agricultural extension, and advisory services.
38. This project is a response to these barriers. Its interventions focus on a range of representative agro-ecosystems and landscapes in Central Asia and Turkey where impacts of climate change are already leading to more droughts and problems with soil salinity. It is the first regional FAO GEF project in the Central Asia Region which builds on the CACILM-1 programme. This programme was implemented from 2006-2016, funded by the Asian Development Bank, with the aim of establishing the Central Asian Initiative for Land Management (CACILM), a multi-country and donor partnership to support the development and implementation of national level programmatic frameworks for more comprehensive and integrated approaches to sustainable land management in the region.
39. The aim of CACILM-II is to scale up sustainable management practices that minimize pressures and negative impacts on natural resources to reduce risks and vulnerability and, enhance capacity of rural communities to cope with or adapt to drought and salinity. The objective of the project is to "*scale up integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes in Central Asia and Turkey*". It will be achieved through the implementation of 4 components and 7 expected outcomes (*see list of project sites and maps, and more detailed project expected results in Appendices 9 & 10*):

Component 1 - Multi-country collaboration and partnership to foster the implementation of cost-effective INRM, focusing on drought-prone and salt-affected production landscapes

- **Outcome 1.1:** Enhanced knowledge of the costs of land degradation and benefits of INRM, drought preparedness and biosaline agriculture to national economies

and the region as a whole informs policy and investment decisions at all levels, including NAP processes

- **Outcome 1.2:** Enhanced interstate dialogue, multi-country collaboration and information sharing to promote investment for INRM scaling up

Component 2 - Integration of resilience into policy, legal and institutional frameworks for integrated natural resources management (INRM),

- **Outcome 2.1:** Resilience integrated across natural resources management (NRM) sectors and production landscapes
- **Outcome 2.2:** Incentives for CSA in place at national and sub-national levels

Component 3 - Upscaling of climate-smart agricultural practices in drought-prone and/or salt-affected production landscapes.

- **Outcome 3.1:** Upscaling of a proactive drought risk management (DRM) approach and innovative integrated natural resources management (INRM) technologies in selected production landscapes / land use systems (e.g., pastoral, agro-sylvo-pastoral, tree-based, irrigated, rainfed, home gardens).
- **Outcome 3.2:** Adaptation and scaling up of technologies and approaches for management of salt-affected production landscapes (e.g., irrigated, pastoral, agro-sylvo-pastoral, tree-based, home gardens)

Component 4 - Monitoring and evaluation and adaptive learning.

- **Outcome 4.1:** Project implementation based on adaptive results-based management, monitoring, and reporting for enhanced impact and visibility

40. The CACILM-II project was planned to be a 5-year project. The project is funded by a GEF grant of US\$10.9M and a pledged total co-financing of about US\$64.9M from the recipient countries, FAO, and other Partners. The GEF grant includes country-based STAR allocations showing large differences among the 6 recipient countries (Kazakhstan: 16.6% of the GEF grant; Kyrgyzstan: 1.7%; Tajikistan: 2.5%; Turkey: 1.6%; Turkmenistan: 24.7%; Uzbekistan: 37.4% and Regional: 15.6%). The project was endorsed by GEF in March 2017 and the implementation started in Oct 2017. However, the signing of the project document by most country was delayed with Turkmenistan being the last country to sign and register the project as of Aug. 2020.

2.2 Theory of change⁵

41. The MTR Team reviewed and tested the logic of the results-chain, the assumptions made at the outset of the project, and the impact drivers and intermediate states produced by the project. The theory of change diagram presented below shows the logic and the coherence behind this project strategy.
42. The objective and expected outcomes of the project will be achieved through mechanisms and capacity development activities for overcoming barriers identified

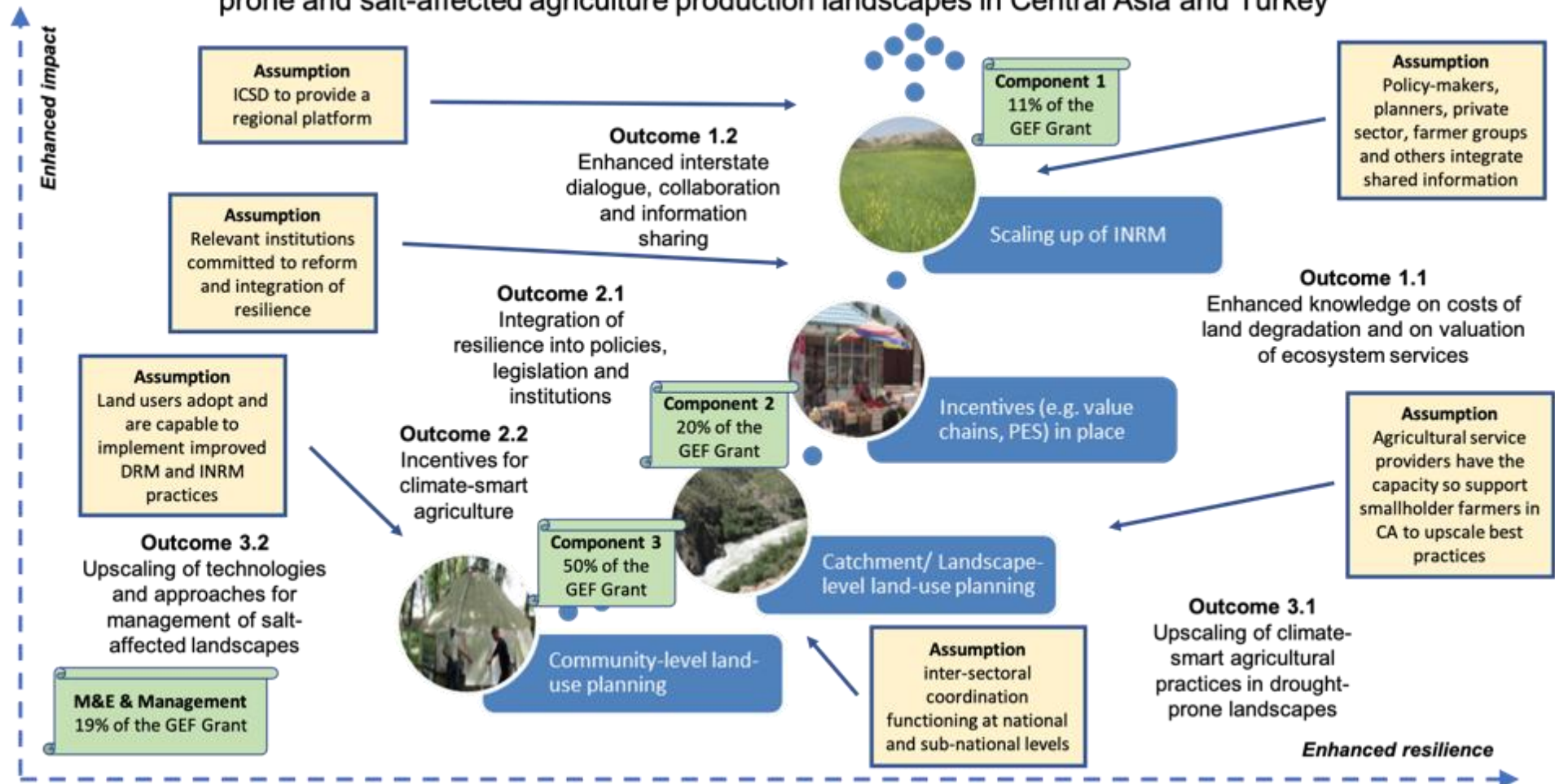
⁵ GEF Evaluation Office definition of the Theory of Change: A theory-based evaluation tool that maps out the logical sequence of means-ends linkages underlying a project and thereby makes explicit both the expected results of the project and the actions or strategies that will lead to the achievement of results (OPS4, *Progress Toward Impact - The ROfI Handbook: Towards Enhancing the Impacts of Environmental Projects – Methodological Paper #2*).

during the formulation of the project and presented above. As presented in the theory of change diagram below, the aim is to scale up sustainable management practices that minimize pressures and negative impacts on natural resources. It is anticipated that these practices will reduce risks and vulnerability and, enhance capacity to cope with or adapt to drought and salinity.

43. Under the second component (expected outcome 2.1 & 2.2) and third component (expected outcome 3.1 & 3.2), the adoption of integrated landscape management approaches and INRM practices should help stabilize and even reverse trends of soil salinization, reduce erosion, improve water capture and retention, increase the sequestration of carbon, and reduce loss of agrobiodiversity, thereby reducing the desertification trend in terms of extent and severity. 70% of the GEF grant is allocated to activities under these two components. In the meantime, under component 1 the project focuses on enhancing dialogue, collaboration and sharing information at the regional level with a budget allocation of 11% of the GEF grant.
44. Reaching the objective and the related expected outcomes is about changing the current methods, approaches, and practices of land management. It requires that land users (farmers but also other land users) change the way they manage the land. INRM methods, approaches and practices need to be developed, disseminated, and used. Moreover, policymakers need to integrate the INRM concept in the development of new policies, strategies, and legislation while land users, including farmers and rural communities, need to change their land use practices.
45. As indicated on the updated theory of change diagram (*see Figure 1*), a set of assumptions were formulated at the outset of the project as critical for the success of the project. The anticipated changes also require drivers for change for the project to succeed. The MTR Team noted that it was indicated in the project document that key determinants, and characteristics of the production landscapes in Central Asia affected by drought and salinity were not fully identified during the formulation of the project and were to be further developed by the project under the outcome 2.1.
46. Nevertheless, a key driver for this project is the "*urgency*" that is felt by land users and governments in CA to act upon. Land degradation and desertification is a growing reality throughout CA and climate variability is already adversely impacting agricultural and rural development. Indicators are showing that in production landscapes, the productivity of agro-systems is declining, and livelihood security is reduced. The region faces serious challenges with the need to feed a growing population in an environment with increasingly limited water resources and highly variable climatic conditions. Within this context of "*urgency*", governments in CA focus more on more on how to address this issue. Several drivers were noted by the MTR Team. It includes the UNCCD obligations signed off by CA governments; national priorities emerging from various national policies, laws, strategies, and programmes; a renewed interest in cooperating regionally under the umbrella of ICSD; and global funding mechanisms such as GEF, GCF, AD and IsDB offering grants to address these issues.

Figure 1: CACILM-II Theory of Change

CACILM-II Project Objective: Scale up integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes in Central Asia and Turkey



3 Key findings

47. This section presents the findings of this review, which are based on a desk review of documents, interviews with the project team, FAO staff, GEF Secretariat, key project stakeholders and beneficiaries including country-based project focal points.

3.1 Relevance

Question 1: How does the project relate to the main objectives and strategies of the GEF, FAO and of recipient countries to scale up integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes?

Sub-question 1.1: How is the project relevant to the GEF, and UNCCD objectives?

Finding 1.1: The project is well aligned with all five programs of the GEF-6 land degradation strategy as well as the GEF-7 LDN target and the five strategic objectives of the *UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework*, as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular SDG-15 and its related target 15.3, but also to improve living conditions of affected populations; and to enhance ecosystems services.

48. This project was designed under the GEF-6 cycle (July 2014 – June 2018). It is well aligned with the GEF-6 land degradation strategy. This strategy provides a framework for eligible countries to utilize GEF resources for implementing the UNCCD ten-year strategy⁶. Under the GEF-6 land degradation strategy, GEF funded projects needed not only to acknowledge gender differences but also determine what actions are required to promote both women and men's roles in SLM. This GEF strategy was composed of four objectives and five programmes. The review of these objectives and programmes indicates that the project is well aligned with all of them: Program 1: Agro-ecological intensification; Program 2: SLM for Climate Smart Agriculture; Program 3: Land Management and Restoration; Program 4: Scaling-up Sustainable Land Management through Landscape Approach; and Program 5: Mainstreaming SLM in Development. It can be said that the CACILM-II project is a mini-application of the GEF-6 land degradation strategy in one region of the world.
49. Under the GEF-7 cycle (July 2018 – June 2022), the land degradation programming directions reiterated that *"gender roles have impacts on both farming and livelihood systems, but the contribution of women smallholder farmers often goes unrecognized. Women farmers often have less access to land, decision making processes, labor, credit, information, technology, and extension."* It further said that the *"GEF-7 LD Focal Area strategy will mainstream gender by including 1) practical gender needs – improving the conditions of women through access to resources, services and opportunities, and 2) strategic gender interests – empowering women to take decisions and be better represented in various decision-making bodies."* The GEF-7 land degradation strategy focuses on two objectives:

⁶ 10-year Strategic Plan and Framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018).

- **Objective 1:** Support on the ground implementation of SLM to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN). It is to be delivered through three entry points: Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration Impact Program; Sustainable Forest Management Impact Program; and Sustainable Cities Impact Program. These Impact Program investments need to directly support the implementation of voluntary LDN target at national levels and focus on dryland sustainable landscapes; diversified agro-ecological food production systems; and integrated landscape management and restoration.
 - **Objective 2:** Creating an enabling environment to support voluntary LDN target implementation, including embedding LDN tool into existing planning frameworks and participatory land-use planning, policy work, governance of land tenure, and capacity development.
50. Despite that LDN was not really a strong focus in the design of this project, its expected results are also well aligned with the GEF-7 LDN target that is *"a state whereby the amount and quality of land resources, necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security, remains stable or increases within specified temporal and spatial scales and ecosystems."* The project is part of global actions to achieve the SDG 15 *"Life on Land"*, particularly the target 15.3 on land degradation neutrality (LDN).
51. A key milestone during the design of this project was the gathering of key actors at the UNCCD Conference of Parties 12 (COP-12) in Ankara in October 2015. Countries and donors' representatives met to discuss how to protect and manage land resources sustainably and strive for LDN, as embodied in SDG Target 15.3. The COP participants discussed the LDN as a clear and straightforward target that responds to the immediate challenge, which was to identify how to sustainably intensify the production of food, fuel, and fiber to meet future demand without the further degradation of our finite land resource base.
52. During the conference, key representatives from GEFSEC, UNCCD, FAO, Central Asia (CA) countries and Turkey met to pursue the development of a regional project focusing on land degradation and upscaling SLM technologies in Central Asia. A PIF had been approved in April 2015 and the COP-12 was an opportunity for a convergence of ideas and concepts in formulating such a regional project for Central Asia countries and Turkey, building on achievements of the CACILM-I project. Turkey's participation in the project, with already significant knowledge and experience in combating desertification and land degradation areas, was envisaged mostly as sharing its relevant knowledge and experience with CA countries.
53. Finally, following the *10-year Strategic Plan and Framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018)*, UNCCD developed its *UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework* to achieve the objectives of the Convention and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular SDG-15 and its related target 15.3, but also to improve living conditions of affected populations; and to enhance ecosystems services. Like GEF strategies on land degradation, the project is also well aligned with the five strategic objectives of this strategic framework.

Sub-question 1.2: How is the project relevant to FAO objectives?

Finding 1.2: The project was well aligned with the FAO strategic objectives when it was formulated, particularly its SO1- *Contribute to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition*, SO2- *Make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable*, SO3- *Reduce rural poverty*, and SO5- *Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises*. It is also aligned with the recently developed *Strategic Framework 2022-2031*, which focuses on *four betters* and twenty programme priority areas (PPAs). The project is particularly aligned with PPAs under the *better environment* and *better life*.

54. CACILM-II was fully aligned with FAO's Strategic Objectives (SO) at the time of its formulation. These objectives were part of the 2010-2019 Strategic Framework, which was reviewed in 2013. As described in the project document, the project was particularly aligned with SO1: Contribute to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition; SO2: Increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry, and fisheries in a sustainable manner; SO3: Reduce rural poverty; SO5: Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises.
55. In 2017, FAO reviewed its strategic framework, including its strategic objectives. Consultations found that there were strong and consistent support expressed by the FAO governing bodies during 2015 and 2016 for continuity in the strategic direction of the organization to realize the full impact of the Strategic Framework. As a result, FAO's vision and global goals were not altered during this review. The review identified ten challenges representing the main development problems to face in the near future and slightly altered the SOs. Nevertheless, the project is still well aligned with four out of five SOs: SO1: Contribute to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition; SO2: Make agriculture, forestry, and fisheries more productive and sustainable; SO3: Reduce rural poverty; and SO5: Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises.
56. More recently, FAO developed its current *Strategic Framework 2022-2031* to articulate FAO's vision of a sustainable and food secure world for all, in the context of the *Agenda 2030* for sustainable development. As stated in this framework, it is a shift in FAO's working paradigm to ensure transformational change for more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable agri-food systems. It further states **four betters** representing an organizing principle for how FAO intends to contribute directly to SDG 1, SDG 2, and SDG 10 as well as to supporting achievement of the broader SDG agenda: better production (BP), better nutrition (BN), a better environment (BE), and a better life (BL), leaving no one behind. These *betters* reflect the interconnected economic, social, and environmental dimensions of agri-food systems. FAO will also apply four cross-cutting/cross-sectional "accelerators": (i) technology, (ii) innovation, (iii) data, and (iv) complements (governance, human capital, and institutions) in all its programmatic interventions to accelerate impact while minimizing trade-offs.
57. Under the four *betters*, twenty programme priority areas (PPAs) were identified. The project is well aligned with the PPAs identified under the *better environment*: BE1: Climate change mitigating and adapted agri-food systems; BE2: Bioeconomy for sustainable food and agriculture; and BE3: Biodiversity and ecosystem services for food and agriculture. It is also aligned with the *better life*: BL1: Gender equality and rural women's empowerment as a cross-cutting implementation strategy of the

project, as well as BL5: Resilient agri-food systems and to a lesser degree BL7: Scaling up investment.

Sub-question 1.3: How is the project relevant to recipient countries in scaling up integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes?

Finding 1.3: The project is highly relevant for the 6 participating countries. Its objective is to scale up integrated natural resources management (INRM) in drought prone and salt affected agricultural production landscapes in the recipient countries. It provides SLM technologies and knowledge to directly address drought and salinity issues. It is a clear response to national priorities of recipient countries.

58. The relevance of the project can be seen initially through a ministerial meeting of CA states held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan in 2000 where it was decided to prepare a sub-regional action programme to combat desertification (SRAP/CD - finalized in 2003). Then various meetings and consultations to develop this programme followed. Through the development of this programme, ministers from these countries expressed deep concern in connection with the impact of desertification and drought in Central Asian states and they recognized that land degradation and drought were cross-border threats and that they require joint actions.
59. At this time, a set of priority areas for sub-regional cooperation were agreed; it included: (i) monitoring and evaluation of desertification processes; establishment of an early warning system for drought and drought mitigation; (ii) improvement of water use in agriculture; combating erosion, salinization and swamp formation; (iii) agroforestry and management of forest resources and watersheds; (iv) pasture management; (v) conservation of biodiversity and nature protection; development of eco- and ethno-tourism; and (vi) economic capacity-building of local communities.
60. The formulation of the SRAP/CD led the CA countries in cooperation with the donor community to develop CACILM; a 10-year (2006-2016) multi-country framework programme of activities. It was designed as a follow-up to the Country Pilot Partnership promoted by the GEF-3 Operational Programme-15 and the UNCCD Strategic Partnership, aimed at restoring, maintaining, and enhancing productive functions of land in CA countries. In February 2004, the Global Mechanism convened, with the assistance of ADB, a workshop in Almaty, Kazakhstan, where key elements of a Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management (CACILM) were identified.
61. At national level, the project is also relevant and is part of the responses to address drought and salinity challenges. As it was confirmed through the validation workshops conducted during the PPG phase, each country has its National Action Programme (NAP) to implement the UNCCD obligations and, over time, they also developed national policy and legislation agendas to address these challenges.
62. Kazakhstan developed its *State Programme for the Development of its Agro-industrial Sector (2017-2021)* and its *Strategic Development Plan of Kazakhstan until 2025*. In Kyrgyzstan, the government developed the *National Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2018-2040* and the *Concept and Programme for the Development*

of a Green Economy, which put land degradation among the top environmental priorities to be addressed. It also developed a State Program for the development of irrigation of the Kyrgyz Republic (2017-2026), which states that 90% of food production is produced on irrigated land. This state program provides for the construction of irrigation infrastructure (irrigation facilities and reservoirs) to provide rural residents with new irrigated land for the cultivation of agricultural products, which, in turn, should improve the socio-economic situation of these communities, ensure the development of regions, and also contribute to addressing food security and poverty alleviation in Kyrgyzstan.

63. Turkmenistan developed a *State Programme for the Development of Agro-industrial Complex (2019-2025)* and updated its *National Climate Change Strategy (2019)*, which are used as a basis for the formulation and implementation of related policies and addressing issues of drought, salinization, and its effects. Tajikistan developed its *National Action Plan on Climate Change Mitigation* and its *National Development Strategy 2016-2030*. Uzbekistan developed a strong policy/legislation environment to strengthen its agriculture sector including pasture management, rain fed agriculture, sustainable livestock, sustainable forests, extension services, etc. A key policy is its *Agriculture Development Strategies (2020-2030)*. Finally, Turkey has been contributing to this project under its *FAO-Turkey Partnership Programme (FTPP)* established in 2006. So far, Turkey has contributed about USD 20M to this programme. The programme focuses on achieving food security and combatting rural poverty in countries of the Caucasus and the Central Asia subregion through projects operated at the national, multi-country, and subregional level. It has supported countries in food security, food safety, rural development, natural resources management, animal, and plant genetic resources.

Sub-question 1.4: Does the Project address the needs of target beneficiaries?

Finding 1.4: One indicator/target of the project to measure the achievement of its objective is 665,294 women and men (beneficiaries) with improved food security by the end of implementation of the project. It is one indicator/target out of 3 to measure how the project is progressing towards its objective. It is an ambitious indicator/target, but unfortunately limited information has been reported so far in progress reports (PIRs). Field supported activities are reaching out to women and men and some numbers are reported under corresponding activities; however, due to limited availability of socio-economic data, it is not possible to assess the project impact in improving income and food security of women and men (beneficiaries).

64. One indicator to measure the performance of the project against its objective is the number of women and men with improved food security with the target of "665,294 beneficiaries, including 331,783 women, in pastoral, agro-sylvo-pastoral, tree-based, irrigated and, rainfed demonstration areas, and 2,661,380 people in upscaling areas, including 1,473,713 women⁷". This is a high number of beneficiaries indicating a clear strategy for this project to reach out to many women and men and to improve their

⁷ No breakdown between direct and indirect beneficiaries and no distribution per country were given in the project document.

food security in targeted geographical areas throughout CA countries. Furthermore, under outcome 3.1 and 3.2, the project is also to improve income of women and men with the targets of 169,755 people benefiting from improved practices implemented under outcome 3.1 and 162,892 people from improved practices under outcome 3.2.

65. Unfortunately, despite this ambitious target, which are part of three targets to measure the performance of the project in achieving its objective, so far, no assessment has been reported in annual progress reports (PIRs). As a result, the strategy is there to reach out to women and men but, at the time of the MTR, assessing how well the project address the needs of target beneficiaries cannot be measured yet.
66. In the meantime, it is true that the project has been supporting the implementation of numerous field activities (*more under section 3.2*) which are, in fact, targeting women and men living in these areas. Nevertheless, it needs to be monitored/analyzed to be able to assess the overall impact of the project on women and men; particularly to assess the overall number of women and men with improved food security. It was identified as one of three indicators to monitor the progress toward the objective and it is needed.
67. Based on the information available at the time of this MTR and the field visits conducted by the MTR Team (*see Appendix 14*), overall field activities are happening as planned and they certainly engage women and men in project supported activities. Participation to these field activities is encouraged, including the consideration of gender roles, and ensuring the integration of gender and social inclusion in all these activities.

Sub-question 1.5: How is the coherence between the project and other relevant interventions?

Finding 1.5: A coherent approach between the project and other relevant initiatives was well articulated in the project document with the anticipated cooperation and participation of key related international partners in the implementation of the project. However, the participation of these partners has not happened yet, including several partners which pledged co-financing budgets at the formulation stage.

68. This project has not been developed in isolation. It is part of several regional initiatives seeking to address the issues of desertification, drought, and salinity. According to the project document, CACILM-II was formulated in full accordance with the objectives of the CACILM initiative, which was operating in five countries of Central Asia. CACILM (also called CACILM-I) was originally conceived as a 10-year (2006-2016), multi-country framework programme of activities and a follow-up of the Country Pilot Partnership promoted by the GEF-3 Operational Programme-15 and the UNCCD Strategic Partnership, aimed at restoring, maintaining, and enhancing productive functions of land in the CA countries. This initiative was supported mostly by GEF and GIZ and implemented by several international partners such as ADB, UNDP, ICARDA, WB and the Global Mechanism of UNCCD. At the launch of this initiative in 2006, it was announced that the portfolio of projects under CACILM-I could reach a total amount of \$1.3B with the participation of multiple donors.

69. Despite that this first CACILM initiative involved many international development partners supporting CA countries, the perceptions of its achievements are a mixed bag of points of view. Interviews conducted for this MTR indicates that this first phase of CACILM was perceived as a failure by some and with some success by others. A review of this initiative⁸ - funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) - was conducted in 2010. Several findings are worth mentioning for this review:

- *High promises raising high expectations*: when CACILM was launched, it was broadly presented as a US\$1.3 billion over 10 years, which raised many expectations internationally, particularly in Central Asia when it was estimated that it will probably only reach about 30 per cent by 2016.
- *Moving targets*: CACILM has changed its priorities, moving away from a programme focusing largely on sustainable land management in agriculture, to focus on watershed management and climate-change resilience activities in Central Asia.
- *Delays and cancellations*: some CACILM projects (both national and multi-country) have been delayed by several years.
- *Limited information, visibility, and interaction*: major regional processes, initiatives, programmes, and investment projects seem to have limited the visibility of CACILM or it was hampered by limited information and slow, complicated procedures.
- *Impact on the ground is slight so far*: It has been generally very difficult to measure the 'impact' of a specific initiative on the ground, to determine 'whether the land feels the difference'.
- *The CACILM partnership is very dependent on international (donor) funding priorities and availability*: It is basically less country driven than might be desired
- *Information and communication*: output from the regional 'commons' (information system, knowledge management, sustainable land management research, capacity building) is patchy, invisible and often inaccessible to international and local users

70. This same review also made several recommendations:

- *Maintain high ambitions but stay in touch with reality*: Reality checks are necessary. It is preferable for large-scale programmes to remain modest. More work should be done at the farm and/or local level.
- *Adjust the programme to suit shifting priorities*: external priorities change, and climate change has become a reality in Central Asia too.
- *Work on visibility, information, and synergy*: The priority should be to generate information for decision-making and to set up a local information system targeting a non-technical audience. Greater visibility is needed with more tightly targeted branding and awareness campaigns, using mass-media resources,

⁸ Otto Simonett and Viktor Novikov, Zoï Environment Network, December 22, 2010, *Land Degradation and Desertification in Central Asia: CACILM Analysis of the existing situation and recommendations for the future - Summary and Conclusions for Partners*.

festivals, and media tours, as well as Aarhus environmental information centers and NGOs.

- *Stronger organization rooted in existing structure:* CACILM has the long-term ambition to strengthen institutions addressing land degradation in Central Asia. Without this basis, any solutions to problems will be unsustainable.

71. These findings and recommendations are all good lessons learned. To some extent, some of them were considered during the formulation of this project. The strategy of this project includes SMART indicators to monitor its progress, a finite budget and seeks to have some impacts on the ground through field activities in all CA countries. Through good communications, the project was able to enhance its visibility throughout Central Asia. However, this project may also face a similar reality that it is very dependent on the GEF grant that is implemented and executed by FAO with a limited country-driven approach (*see also sub-question 5.4*).
72. In addition, other initiatives focusing on similar issues have been implemented and more is coming. GEF and the Adaptation Fund are funding several projects in the region focusing on land degradation and implemented by UNDP. The Green Climate Fund is also funding such initiatives.
73. CAREC has been implementing a project in CA to *Pilot Regional Approaches for Combating Sand and Dust Storms and Drought*. It is funded by UNCCD with a budget of 588,000€. CAREC is to work with the UNCCD Focal Points in each country as well as with the Appointed National Institutions. The project expected deliverables include: national working groups; national kick-off meetings coordinated; vulnerability maps produced; comprehensive national sand and dust storm plan developed; and regional mid-term strategy for sand and dust storm management compiled. The MTR Team noted that CAREC and this project do not really work together, yet these deliverables are closely related. It is recommended to increase the cooperation with CAREC to find synergies between the 2 initiatives when seeking to institutionalize SLM technologies and approaches in Central Asia.
74. GIZ is also much involved in addressing land degradation issues in Central Asia. It has over 12 years of practical experience in land-use management systems. In 2019, it completed the Regional Programme "*Sustainable and Climate Sensitive Land Use for Economic Development in Central Asia (2016-2019)*". Among activities implemented in the region, it included a regional platform on land-use systems. It was developed using K-link open-source software to avoid licensing fees. The platform was developed by the GIZ project but without being able to find a regional or national host, the platform does not exist anymore.
75. In 2019, GIZ developed its conceptual framework for *Integrative Land Use Management Approaches (ILUMA)*. The concept is based upon the understanding of landscapes as ecosystems comprising environmental, human, cultural, technical, and institutional dimensions. Negative impacts of land-use changes are conceived as the result of complex interactions between these different dimensions. ILUMA thus addresses not just key challenges of land use management – which are related to desertification, land degradation, or climate change adaptation – but also those challenges related to peoples' behaviors, cultures, interests and conflicts, environmental management, sector policies, and organizational development, as

well as technical solutions to prevalent problems. Within this context GLZ has just started (March 2021) a new regional project “*Integrative and Climate-Sensitive Land Use in Central Asia*”.

76. Despite the numerous initiatives implemented, underway and being planned and funded by the international development donor community to support CA countries in addressing land degradation issues, there is limited cooperation among all these initiatives. A good example are strategies to develop a regional platform on SLM knowledge. Several initiatives already attempted to develop such platforms; they only existed during the lifetime of these externally funded projects. Once these projects are ending, these platforms disappear and limited to no lessons seem to be learn.
77. The MTR Team found that the coherence between these initiatives exists in project documents; however, the cooperation to implement activities jointly is more limited and less coherent. It is the case of this project. A coherent approach was well articulated in the project document with the anticipated participation of most key related international partners in the implementation of the project. However, interviews conducted by the MTR Team found that this participation has been limited so far. It is recommended that the project reach out these organizations and seek more cooperation in close relation with national governments.

3.2 Effectiveness

Question 2: What is the progress made towards the objective and expected outcomes of the project?

Sub-question 2.1: How is the project effective in achieving its expected outcomes?

Finding 2.1: The project was progressing satisfactorily until the impact of COVID-19, which negatively affected the implementation of the project activities. Overall, the achievements under most outcomes were in line with expectations. However, since COVID-19, it forced the Project Implementation Team to work from home, focusing mostly on online meetings and webinars. It certainly contributed to a slowdown of field activities. In the meantime, the MTR Team noted that within the context of COVID-19 emergency response, the project supported additional tangible activities in targeted communities such as seed distribution, greenhouses, small machineries, etc., which have had positive socio-economic impacts on targeted communities. Finally, the visibility of the participation of Turkey in project activities through progress reports is poor and it needs to be improved to acknowledge the contributions of Turkey by sharing its knowledge and experience through training events, seminars, and workshops.

78. As it was discussed in section 2, the aim of the project is to scale up sustainable land management practices that minimize pressures and negative impacts on natural resources. It is anticipated that these practices will reduce risks and vulnerability and, enhance capacity to cope with or adapt to drought and salinity. It is to be achieved through four project components: one regional component focusing on multi-country collaboration and partnership to foster the effective delivery of INRM with two expected outcomes; a second component seeking the integration of resilience into policy, legal and institutional frameworks for INRM with two expected outcomes;

a third component to upscale climate-smart agricultural practices in selected drought prone and/or salt affected production landscapes with two outcomes; and a fourth M&E component to determine whether integrated approaches to natural resources management have a positive impact on ecosystem services and resilience, and livelihoods and food security with one expected outcome.

79. The MTR Team reviewed the progress made by the project towards its seven expected outcomes, from its inception to the time of this MTR. It consisted mostly of the review of progress reports, interviews with FAO and project staff as well as with service providers and importantly with stakeholders and beneficiaries through field visits. Below is a summary of the progress made so far against expected outcomes and targets identified at the outset of the project.

Expected Outcome 1.1: Enhanced knowledge of the costs of land degradation and benefits of INRM, drought preparedness and biosaline agriculture to national economies and the region as a whole informs policy and investment decisions at all levels, including NAP processes.

Table 2: Progress Made Toward Outcome 1.1

Indicators / Targets	Progress Made
<p>1. Information on the costs of DLDD and benefits of INRM (ELD) informs at least one national policy in each country</p> <p><u>Target (End of project):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic of Land Degradation (ELD) for Central Asia informs INRM policies in 5 CA countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAO CACILM-2 project was accepted in an advisory role of the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development (ICSD) to develop SLM/INRM policies and to produce strategic recommendations on ELD/VES policies in Central Asia Produced a harmonized methodology on Economics of Land Degradation (ELD) and valuation of ecosystem services, adapted to the conditions of CA countries. It is now being consulted by CA governments Identified incentives to scale up INRM for each country Knowledge was shared with national experts and decision-makers of Central Asia and the participation of WOCAT on Carbon Benefit Project tools, mapping instruments on Watershed management, SLM and Soil Organic Carbon mapping, and on LD trends to assess impacts on ecosystem services, to analyze benefits of SLM/INRM/IWRM technologies and to monitor/ report on LDN and SDG 15.3.1 indicators. Need assessments for development of agro-meteorology services, drought and salinity management, Land degradation and SLM practices were conducted in the region to identify key bottlenecks and to develop regional roadmap for further capacity development in these areas. Conducted baseline assessment of Rural Advisory Services (RAS) and policy recommendations developed in 4 countries, except TJK, which was postponed due to COVID-19. It includes good progress in UZB in supporting the development of a National Roadmap and Strategy on Agriculture Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS), which was endorsed at high government level.

Source: Adapted from PIR-2020 and PPR-2020

80. The strategy under this outcome is to use the Economics of Land Degradation (ELD) methodology to link the benefits of SLM to decision making through a multi-level approach for quantitative assessment of the economic benefits derived from adopting sustainable land management practices. Better knowledge of the costs of land degradation will increase the awareness in the region of the total value of land and its related ecosystem services. It will allow CA countries to assess the economic losses caused by drought and salinity problems in various agricultural production

landscapes/land use systems in demonstration areas, while at the same time, assess the value of economic benefits of INRM, drought risk management and biosaline agriculture. This expected result will be achieved through the following outputs:

- Harmonized approach across countries for valuation of ecosystem services at various scales.
- Identification of incentives to scale up INRM

81. The review of achievements indicates that the project is progressing towards what is expected under this outcome that is better knowledge of the costs of land degradation and INRM benefits as well as of drought preparedness and biosaline agriculture to better inform policy and investment decisions. Some key achievements so far include: (i) the fact that the project was accepted in an advisory role with the ICSD. The project is "at the table" to participate to regional dialogues focusing on the development of SLM/INRM policies; (ii) a harmonized methodology on ELD and valuation of ecosystems adapted to CA countries is now ready to be used; and (iii) incentives to scale up INRM were identified.
82. It is also worth noting that the project has also conducted several need assessments of systems and practices across CA countries to identify bottlenecks and develop a regional roadmap to address these bottlenecks and develop the required capacities. It includes the agro-meteorology services, existing land management practices as well as drought and salinity management approaches and particularly the rural advisory services currently existing throughout CA.
83. Despite that weak agricultural extension and advisory services were one of the four barriers stated as a justification of this project, the MTR Team noted that the project strategy - as detailed in the project document - has a limited focus on strengthening extension services; yet it is key to reach land users. The fact that the project conducted the assessments of extension services in all CA countries is a good step towards improving the link between policy makers and land users. The MTR Team noted the good progress in Uzbekistan in supporting the development of a National Roadmap and Strategy on Agriculture Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS)⁹, which was endorsed at high government level.

Expected Outcome 1.2: Enhanced interstate dialogue, multi-country collaboration and information sharing to promote investment for INRM scaling up, focusing on drought prone and/or salinity affected production landscapes.

Table 3: Progress Made Toward Outcome 1.2

Indicators	Progress Made
2. Sustainable mechanism for regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully completed a functional version of the knowledge management platform and available for publishing. The technical works on content management is progressing jointly with WOCAT global SLM database team.

⁹ The term Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) is used to describe the whole knowledge exchange system: the ways people and organizations interact within a country or a region. AKIS can include farming practice, businesses, authorities, research, etc.

Indicators	Progress Made
<p>collaboration in place</p> <p>3. Decentralized KM system functioning</p> <p>4. Regional INRM/SLM community of practice</p> <p><u>Target (End of project):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CACILM-2 management structures and a decentralized KM platform functioning and sustainable • Regional INRM/SLM community of practice supports science-practitioners-policy/ decision makers dialogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed and translated into Russian language the WOCAT inventory for documentation of SLM practices and technologies and provided national partners with template to collect best SLM practices from the CA region. • Met with key national partners, GEF and UNCCD/UNFCCC focal points in all CA countries to exchange information and discuss multi-country partnership • Soil salinity maps were prepared for 1 entire province (Zhambyl) covering 6 project sites at the farm-level in KAZ, and soil salinity maps for the Talaa-Bulak district in KYR. Soil salinity map for 1 demonstration site in UZB is in progress. Produced a drought vulnerability map for a project site (one province/oblast) in KAZ using the CDI tool; and a drought vulnerability map in UZB using the DI tool. For other countries, the data collection is ongoing. Also developed 2 pasture degradation maps of project sites in KAZ. • Knowledge shared – including regional online webinars due to the COVID-19 - with national experts and decision-makers from the region on advanced tools and methods for monitoring / assessing impacts of land degradation on ecosystem services in 5 CA countries, including drought management, SLM, CO2 balance, SLM mapping, (ASIS, Collect Earth, EWS/RDM, QGIS, QM mapping) watershed management, trends earth, carbon benefits project tool, biosaline agriculture. • Developed a regional plan on Farmer Field School (FFS) implementation • Published outreach materials and news releases regularly and received by 159 online and offline media resources in 5 countries. • Published 322 articles in Central Asian media. Project stories were also actively promoted through the social media – Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. • Developed and published a project brochure, website, and newsletter series (1st and 2nd quarterly newsletters “Dialogue”) to raise awareness of regional partners on project activities and achievements and to enhance the visibility of the project. • Produced and disseminated video materials on basic principles of food processing, storage, marketing, climate-smart agriculture, SLM, IWRM and other topics to smallholders in the region. • Launched a National Campaign on “Planting Million Fruit Trees” during the International High-Level Conference on the Aral Sea (25-26 October 2019) jointly with the Ministry of Agriculture of UZB, the State Committee on Environment Protection of UZB (national GEF FP), the State Forestry Committee of UZB (national UNCCD FP), and the UN Resident Coordinator in UZB. • Developed knowledge products and publications, jointly with ICBA and other project partners, on salinity management technologies, baseline assessment on early warning system/drought risk management, overview of best biological approaches to address soil and water salinity in CA, monitoring of ecosystem service in marginal environments, policy brief on salinity management and manuals for salinity management, etc. • Conducted regional review of early warning systems, agrometeorology services and drought risk management to develop policy recommendations.

Source: Adapted from PIR-2020 and PPR-2020

84. The strategy under this outcome is to provide stakeholder organizations with information and communication technology tools for enhancing cooperation and developing organizational capacities, aiming to build networked institutional memories and INRM/SLM communities of practice. The implementation of activities will be done through a four-pronged approach: cooperation and competition

between participants; resilience; flexibility; and interoperability. This expected result will be achieved through the following outputs:

- Multi-country platform for knowledge consolidation and harmonization on INRM/SLM to support national advisory and climate information services, including early warning systems
- Multi-scale and participatory approaches in place for assessing land degradation and SLM trends, and for assessing/monitoring impacts of management practices on ecosystem services, biodiversity, and livelihoods (vulnerability)
- Targeted knowledge and communication products prepared for wide dissemination on the multiple benefits of INRM in selected production landscapes

85. The review of achievements under this outcome indicates some differences among the three-pronged implementation approach under this outcome. The development of the knowledge platform is underway, however, there is still a lot to accomplish before it becomes an online platform. Additionally, the plan was to *"build on existing databases and knowledge sources"*. Similar to observations made on the progress towards outcome 1.1 above, the collaboration with other existing databases has not taken place, except with WOCAT, which is the key organization contracted by the project to develop this knowledge platform. The MTR Team noted that the implementation strategy to develop this platform detailed in the project document was a clear and typical strategy to develop - step-by-step - an information management system. However, so far, no *"anchor points"* in CA countries have emerged to lead this SLM knowledge platform. Furthermore, interviews conducted by the MTR Team revealed little interest in such a platform.
86. Under this output, it is mentioned in the project document that during the formulation of the project, 28 platforms on SLM/INRM were identified. One of them was the K-Link platform developed with the support of GIZ. It was anticipated that this platform would be hosted by CAREC at the end of its development and that furthermore, this project would work together with CAREC to further develop it. However, it did not happen as planned; meetings and consultations were conducted with the GIZ team on maintaining the K-Link platform. It resulted in abandoning the transfer of K-link to the project due mostly to the budget needs which were considered too high (transfer and maintenance costs were estimated to be about € 200,000) for CAILM project to maintain it, and further sustainability was under question too. These expenses were unplanned in the project budget too. As other past platform development attempts, K-Link was left unused after the end of the GIZ project and became obsolete.
87. Overall, based on interviews conducted for this MTR, collaborations with several international partners that were anticipated in the project document have not panned out as planned. It included the plan to collaborate with ICARDA as a lead role in implementing ELD, with GIZ to further develop the K-Link platform to be used as the basis to develop a regional database, with (www.cacilm.org) to be used as a functioning knowledge platform on SLM technologies and practices, with Dryland Systems CRP to use their innovation platform and data management and other CGIAR research programs that are being implemented in Central Asia.

88. Some attempts to develop some of these collaborations were noted by the MTR Team; particularly in 2018 and 2019. However, most of these early discussions did not pan out as anticipated. In the case of ICARDA, the organization when though organizational, financial and staff changes in the Central Asian office based in Tashkent, Uzbekistan and a letter of agreement was never finalized. Instead, an international expert was hired to develop the ELD methodology. Regarding CAREC, GIZ and WOCAT, there were put in competition to develop a knowledge platform as planned in the project strategy. The review of the K-LINK platform (developed by GIZ) was proven to be unsustainable, and after analysis of other existing platforms, the project selected WOCAT as the best service provider to develop a regional knowledge management platform on SLM. A letter of agreement was, then, signed between WOCAT and the project.
89. Regarding the development of tools and methods for monitoring and assessing land degradation and trends in SLM with a special focus on drought risk and salinity management, knowledge was shared through workshops and webinars, and drought vulnerability and soil salinity maps are being developed.
90. Finally, the dissemination of communication products on the cost and benefits of INRM in selection production landscapes is well underway. The table above presents an extensive list of communication products disseminated, including 322 articles, press releases sent to 159 online and offline media resources throughout CA countries, and videos sent to smallholders in the region.

Expected Outcome 2.1: Resilience integrated across natural resources management (NRM) sectors and production landscapes.

Table 4: Progress Made Toward Outcome 2.1

Indicators	Progress Made
<p>5. Resilience principles integrated into national agricultural, water resources management and environmental plans and investment frameworks, policies, and programs</p> <p><u>Target (End of project):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resilience integrated into key national policy frameworks and productive sectors in all CA countries using the RAPTA approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted baseline analyses of national policies and institutional frameworks regarding integration of sustainability and resilience factors in 5 countries and developed key policy recommendations for integration of resilience factors in RD policies, including the use of the RAPTA approach in Kazakhstan. Completed baseline studies on early warning system, drought risk management and agro-meteorological services in all 5 CA countries. Used SHARP baseline assessments to analyze community resilience and vulnerability towards CC variabilities in pilot districts in all 5 CA countries. Conducted SHARP survey at project demonstration sites in all CA countries and submitted to the HQ SHARP team for analysis. National trainings on Aqua Crop, EX-ACT, WOCAT were held in KAZ, KYR, TJK and UZB. Held a series of SLM/INRM meetings with national partners in all 5 CA countries to strengthen intersectoral collaboration and joint activities. National working groups on SLM/INRM were established in all five CA countries with support of national partner agencies. Schedule meetings postponed due to COVID-19. KAZ: Produced a map of drought vulnerability (Kostanay Oblast); developed 1 map of soil organic carbon stock (1 province – Zhambyl) This map was uploaded to the newly established and publicly available geo-portal; one virtual round table was conducted on 22 December 2020 on integrating resilience into pasture resources management

Indicators	Progress Made
	<p>with the participation of key stakeholders (2020); and the project team has been supporting the Government in elaborating the Concept and National Project on Development of Agriculture for 2022-2026 in terms of sustainable land management.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KYR: Updated the National Action Plan to Combat Desertification, which was reviewed and approved by the national experts working group; collected Earth training was held; conducted 3 round tables with national partners: two consultations were conducted in Kochkor district on intersectoral cooperation and interaction, and on regulation to establish a commission at the district level; one round table at the national level. • TJK: The Inter-sectoral technical working group expressed its interest to work with CACILM2 on LDN. • TKM: Held one round table on <i>"Joint cooperation and exchange of experience in combating desertification and restoring degraded land"</i> and one working meeting with national agencies on <i>"Strengthening legal planning in the field of INRM and SLM"</i>. • UZB: Produced a map of drought vulnerability (Kamashi district); the State Forestry Committee of UZB, as Focal Point of the UNCCD organized jointly two meetings with the project team.

Source: Adapted from PIR-2020 and PPR-2020

91. The strategy under this outcome is to use a decentralized approach to integration that will be promoted across governance levels as well as sectors, using the RAPTA¹⁰ Guidelines. It will include several steps including the development of a multi-stakeholder engagement plan, the description of key socio-ecological systems in CA, the assessment of resilience systems and needs for adaptation and/or transformation, the identification of the most appropriate implementation pathways and actions, and the integration of changes into the legal, institutional, and planning system. This expected result will be achieved through the following outputs:

- Review of national policies, legal and institutional frameworks, and their application at different governance levels with the view to identify gaps and potential opportunities for managing transformations
- Formulation, review or update of national drought policies, strategies, and guidelines for drought preparedness planning
- Participatory resilience assessment and mapping, and livelihood diagnostics (i.e., SHARP) to support evidence-based decision-making
- Strengthening of inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms at national level, including mainstreaming of NAPs into national sector budget allocations and investment processes for INRM scaling up.

92. The review of achievements indicates that the project is progressing well towards what is expected under this outcome that is to integrate resilience principles into related investment plans, policies, legislation, and programmes. So far, the project

¹⁰ The Resilience, Adaptation Pathways and Transformation Approach (RAPTA) has been developed to design, implement, and evaluate interventions for achieving sustainability goals within highly uncertain and rapidly changing decision contexts. It was developed by the Commonwealth Scientific Industrial and Research Organisation (CSIRO) on behalf of the GEF-STAP.

supported the completion of baseline analyses of national policies and institutional frameworks; contributed to the revision of some National Action Programmes (NAP); produced some drought vulnerability maps; used the SHARP tool to assess the resilience of agro-ecosystems using portable devices, such as tablets, to address the needs of smallholder farmers and pastoralists (both men and women); and, finally, the project conducted a series of meetings and consultations to strengthen intersectoral collaboration and coordination mechanisms.

93. The latter point is also a critical point for strengthening the project presence in each country. National working groups on SLM/INRM were established in all CA countries. There are critical instruments for promoting SLM/INRM in each country. There are also tasked with the responsibility to oversee the project workplans and achievements. It is recommended to reinforce this role, including endorsing the annual work plans and focusing on the institutionalization of project achievements in each country.

Expected Outcome 2.2: Incentives for climate-smart agriculture in place at national and sub-national levels.

Table 5: Progress Made Toward Outcome 2.2

Indicators	Progress Made
<p>6. Number and types of incentives supporting smallholder farmers to scale up best practices</p> <p><u>Target (End of project):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 10 different types of incentive mechanisms supporting smallholder farmers to scale up best practices in place in CA countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted analysis of incentive mechanisms to scale up SLM practices in the 5 CA countries. Using the Outcome Mapping (OM) methodology selected Boundary Partners (BP) to support smallholder farmers to scale up CSA/SLM/INRM practices in all CA countries: 3 BP in Kazakhstan; BP "Camp Alatau" in Kyrgyzstan; BP Bonuvoni Khatlon (Women's group) in Tajikistan; 2 BP in Turkmenistan; and 3 Strategic Partners in Uzbekistan. Conducted the first assessment on OM with BP in all CA countries. Progress made by the BP is assessed semi-annually during workshops, using the progress marker index (progress score). KAZ: identified and analyzed agro-pastoral value chains, including required project interventions for the sustainable development of value chains; and conducted a cost-benefit analysis of SLM technologies. KYR: Conducted CSA training at national and subnational levels. Camp Alatau conducted a study on "<i>incentives for climate-friendly agriculture at the national and subnational levels</i>" to strengthen efficient use of resources and value chains for food and feed production. Purchased seeds of climate-resistant forage crops varieties, diesel fuel and fertilizers for 1,067 farmers (539 of them women). Completed the delivery of seeds (sainfoin, corn, Alfalfa, wheat), distributed diesel fuel and delivered fertilizers to vulnerable farmers. TJK: Supported the formation of 8 initiative groups, including 206 women farmers in 4 targeted districts, and conducted field trainings on drought- and salt-resistant crops cultivation. Completed and submitted a study on the development of a safflower and almond value chain. TKM: Constructed 2 irrigation nurseries in project sites and 3 water reservoirs (sardops) for remote villages in Karakum project sites to support local value chains. UZB: Conducted a cost-benefit analysis for 5 SLM practices. Completed a study on the value chain development with conservation agriculture practices. Developed and submitted recommendations for strengthening value chains on pistachio.

Indicators	Progress Made
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the COVID-19 emergency situation, the project shifted a portion of the regional component budget to national emergency response actions in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to provide immediate support to vulnerable rural smallholders and farmers in the project sites on value chain development in livestock production, procurement of drought- and salt-resistant seeds, fertilizers, home-garden tools for processing, and greenhouses, capacity development in producing food under drought conditions and to improve family income and nutrition. These activities also strengthened the multi-country collaboration of the project in the region. • Under the COVID-19 emergency situation, the project also supported the provision of 34 greenhouses, 31 water pumps, 10 two-wheel tractors, 10 tonnes of fertilizer, and 30 thousand seedlings in Uzbekistan.

Source: Adapted from PIR-2020 and PPR-2020

94. The strategy under this outcome is to establish incentives at national level, and increased involvement of the public sector, community-based organizations (CBOs), and the private sector for integrating and harmonizing food and feed value chain approaches with landscape-based management approaches to INRM. The project supports the selection of drought resistant crop species and salt tolerant crop species for drought prone and salt affected production landscapes, adoption of water saving technologies for high-value crops as well as the establishment of related supply chains (from seed multiplication to distribution, from manufacturers to suppliers to retailers of water saving technologies). This expected result will be achieved through the following outputs:
- Increase in public and private sector (at least 5 different types of enterprises) supporting smallholder farmers to scale up best practices and adoption of self-reliant approaches for managing climate variability and change.
 - At least 5 resource use efficient and biodiversity friendly food and feed value-chains strengthened
95. The review of achievements indicates that the project is progressing towards what is expected under this outcome that is to increase the number of public and private sector entities supporting smallholder farmers in scaling up best practices and adoption of self-reliant approaches for managing climate variability and change; and also to strengthen value chains for products such as organic cotton, quinoa, pistachios and almonds, organic fruits and vegetables, and medicinal plants, as well as dairy products, including rural crafts as a way to diversity income and improve local livelihoods.
96. By design, it was anticipated that the project will promote collaboration with micro-lending and micro-financing organizations to improve access to credit for farmers and pastoralists in all countries. However, this approach has changed with the decision to apply an Outcome Mapping (OM) approach to monitor the project's progress and ensuring that required capacities are in place for sustaining project

achievements. Using this approach, the project has selected “Boundary Partners (BPs)”¹¹ to support smallholder farmers in scaling up CSA/SLM/INRM.

97. This approach is a valid one but also conceptually a limited one in Central Asia. This is an approach that is mostly (though not only) used for supporting non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in linking project implementation strategies with beneficiaries to affect change. There are NGOs throughout CA but not in great numbers and with limited partnerships and/or collaboration agreements with government institutions. Developing the capacities of these BPs is a valid approach to strengthen a mechanism to link the project intent and the anticipated thousands of beneficiaries; however, the project may run out of time before any real sizable changes can be observed at the level of beneficiaries. In the meantime, there are no other faster ways to reach out to these thousands of beneficiaries. Current extension services – when they exist - do not have the required capacities to undertake this.
98. The MTR Team also noted that under this outcome a budget shift from the regional component 1 to this component 2 was decided as a COVID-19 emergency support to provide immediate support to vulnerable rural smallholders and farmers in the project sites in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan on value chain development in line with the project strategy.

Expected Outcome 3.1: Upscaling a proactive drought risk management (DRM) approach and innovative integrated natural resources management (INRM) technologies in selected production landscapes / land use systems.

Table 6: Progress Made Toward Outcome 3.1

Indicators	Progress Made
7. Improved DRM approaches and INRM technologies/best practices applied on xx ha 8. Number of people (#) with improved income (at least 25%) from improved practices <u>Target (End of project):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 375 165 ha 169,755 people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established project sites in all 5 CA countries to demonstrate and up-scale DRM, SLM and INRM approaches. <p><i>Land-use plans for selected production landscapes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> KAZ: Ongoing formulation of two multi-stakeholder pasture plans for Petrovsk rural district, Karagandy Oblast, and Talapsky rural district, Almaty Oblast. Conducted detailed review of pasture management plans and surveys with end-users to identify existing problems and reflect gender equality. KYR: Supported the Kyrgyzgiprozem Institute (TA and equipment) to digitize land use maps covering the entire country, which are stored in a single database. TJK: Ongoing preparation of training materials for FFS for chickpea, sorgho, millet, and quinoa. Conducted regular monitoring of FFSs in 8 communities. Conducted monitoring of safflower planted fields. TKM: Analyzed local needs and priorities for implementing innovative INRM practices. UZB: Produced 2 land-use plans in Kamashi district of Kashkadrya province and Bukhara district of Bukhara province.

¹¹ [Outcomemapping.ca](#): Boundary Partners are those individuals or groups that contribute to and are part of your vision, and which the project or program can communicate with and affect change in.

Indicators	Progress Made
	<p><i>Advisory service providers to enhance skills of stakeholders for wide adoption of proactive risk management approach and drought mitigation technologies:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KAZ: Developed training curricula on DRM and INRM approaches. Developed and conducted 5 national training events and 4 field workshops on DRM/INRM approaches, including one on gender equality. In total 254 people participated, including 130 women (51%). Produced 3 training manuals on different DRM technologies (pasture management, resource-saving technologies, and organic agriculture) and 2 awareness-raising video in Rus and Kaz on drought and conservation agriculture. • KYR: Developed training curricula on DRM and INRM approaches. Held 6 training events, seminars, and round tables on "Improving agricultural Value Chains for SLM" in Kochkor district. Supported the revision and adoption of the UNCCD NAP at national level. Series of national round tables on "Improving intersectoral cooperation" in the field of INRM at local level in Kochkor district and in Bishkek. Conducted a field workshop on "Soil and Water Conservation Technologies" in Kochkor district. In total 128 people participated, including 23 women (18%). • TJK: Conducted 6 national training events on DRM/INRM approaches: drought-resistant crops cultivation technologies, institutional capacity development, integrated pest management, filling applications to get access to matching grants, how to establish seedling nursery and how to use video training materials on fruits processing, agroforestry, and drip irrigation. In total 1,422 people participated, including 787 women (55%). • TKM: Conducted 4 trainings and seminars on project introduction, on INRM and SLM best practices in Karakum district and in Nohur district. Webinar on the analysis of national plans and programs, country strategies, legal and institutional frameworks in the field of INRM and SLM and recommendations for integration of drought risk management, resilience factors into INRM and SLM government instruments. In total 116 people participated, including 37 women (32%). • UZB: Conducted comprehensive assessment and prepared a capacity-building plan for 3 scientific centers in UZB to promote extension and agro-consulting services for scaling up INRM/SLM practices. Developed and published training curricula with 3 different DRM and INRM approaches. Conducted six training events on INRM approaches and four online training courses on conservation agriculture practices, including crop rotation, and crop residue management. Organized webinar series on no-till seeder use to manage crop residue retention. Field-training course on using no-till drill and laser leveler in Bukhara province and in Qarshi province. In total 326 people participated, including 49 women (15%). <p><i>Innovative drought mitigation technologies in selected production landscapes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KAZ: Introduced SLM practices on crop production on 55 ha which yielded 26 tonnes of drought resistant seeds and pasture management plans on 127,630 ha. Delivered 2 seed treaters and approximately 4 tones of drought- and salt-resistant seeds to project sites. Established a collection seed nursery of salt- and drought resistant crops. • KYR: Supported Pasture Committees to incorporate new CSA approaches and technologies into pasture management plans. Improved pasture management plans with the introduction of CSA technologies for 5 Ayil Aimaks with a total area of 282,781 ha (mainly pastures). • TJK: Promoted soil and water conservation practices (e.g., zero till, agroforestry etc.) to 8 farmer groups on at least 200 ha. Organized a Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop on "Soil and water conservation measures" for 31 specialists of Boundary Partner and active farmers. Planted

Indicators	Progress Made
	<p>salt-resistant and drought tolerant plants such as safflower, quinoa, pearl millet in 5 demonstration plots at project sites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TKM: Established forest and sand nurseries at project pilot sites in Nohur and Karakum for growing drought-tolerant species. Constructed three sardops (water reservoir) for local schools of remote villages in Central Karakums to collect and store rainwater. Procured and planted 1,000 drought resistant trees seedlings (juniper, carcase, and almond) for reforestation in Nohur. • UZB: Established demonstration sites for scaling up 10 drought tolerant crops and seed production in Kashkadarya region. Adoption of conservation agriculture practices on 300ha in Kashkadarya region. Implemented a drip irrigation system for 11,221ha of cotton. Developed a pasture rotation plan (84,000ha) for Guzgor district to increase productivity and improve seasonal herd migration. Delivered over 500,000 seedlings, rootstocks, and cuttings to the "Million fruit trees" initiative.

Source: Adapted from PIR-2020 and PPR-2020

99. The strategy under this outcome is to incorporate drought risk management into agricultural, rural and food security strategies through dissemination of appropriate technologies, support to incentive measures to use land and water resources more rationally and through effective involvement of local communities to ensure sustainability as well as building interfaces between the government, community leaders and civil society organizations. This expected result will be achieved through the following outputs:

- At least 2 multi-stakeholder land-use plans for selected production landscapes per country
- At least 2 specialized institutions / advisory service providers per country with increased capacities to enhance skills of stakeholders for wide adoption of proactive risk management approach and drought mitigation technologies
- Upscaling of 5-6 innovative drought mitigation technologies in selected production landscapes on 239,500 ha of land (at least 15 drought-tolerant species and 5 habitats, xx tCO₂e, 15 % crop water productivity / irrigation efficiency)

100. The review of achievements indicates that the project is progressing well towards what is expected under this outcome that is to scale up a proactive drought risk management (DRM) approach and innovative INRM technologies in selected production landscapes/land use systems, through the development of multi-stakeholder land-use plans, capacity development of advisory service providers, and implementation of innovative drought mitigation and INRM technologies.

101. Activities implemented under this outcome are part of the strategy of the project to demonstrate new approaches and technologies to improve the management and the risk of natural resources affected by drought. The review of these activities also indicates that the implementation in each country varies in the type of activities to be implemented and scope due mostly to the difference in budget per country.

Expected Outcome 3.2: Adaptation and scaling up of technologies and approaches for management of salt-affected production landscapes (e.g., irrigated, pastoral, agro-silvo-pastoral, tree-based, home gardens).

Table 7: Progress Made Toward Outcome 3.2

Indicators	Progress Made
<p>9. Improved salinity management and INRM technologies /best practices applied on XX ha</p> <p>10. Number of people (#) with improved income (at least 25%) from improved practices</p> <p><u>Target (End of project):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 215 605 ha • 162,892 people 	<p><i>Guidelines for development of catchment salinity management plans:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produced and distributed guidelines on salinity management in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. • Established project demonstration sites in 3 provinces, conducted field baseline and needs assessment activities, and drafted technical guidelines on CC adaptation measures. Published and distributed brochures/flyers on best INRM/SLM practices (pasture management, drip irrigation, salinity management, etc.) in Turkmenistan. <p><i>Advisory service providers to enhance skills of stakeholders for wide adoption of salinity mitigation approaches and technologies:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KAZ: Conducted 5 regional and national webinars on salinity management, biosaline agriculture, mapping of salt-affected soils, and on gender equality. In addition, 5 field workshops on salinity management conducted in 4 different sites. In total, 192 people participated, including 81 women (42%). • TJK: Conducted trainings on drought and salt tolerant cropping technologies: established 5 demonstration sites for drought and salt tolerant crops (quinoa, amaranth, sorghum, millet, etc.) on 1ha. Planned to prepare a salinization plan at the target group level (with Hydromet). Developed training materials to deliver second round of training on "Leadership and gender" in 8 groups of farmers. Purchased and distributed 3 tons of drought-resistant crops and 1 tons of legumes. Conducted trainings on Increasing water carrying capacity of soil through applying organic fertilizers. In total 346 people participated, including 146 women (42%). • TKM: Established partnerships with various institutions (Agriculture University, Agriculture Institute, Union of Industrialist and Entrepreneurs, UNDP projects) for enhancing salinity management approaches and technologies. • UZB: Produced guidelines on seed production of drought tolerant crops and conservation agriculture technologies; developed FFS Concept and Master plan (handbook); prepared infographics on salinity management; established demonstration sites; and planted 15 salt tolerant crops, including 5 seeds production. held six workshops for 200+ specialists and farmers on conservation agriculture, seed production and agroforestry issues. Developed and published training curricula with 3 different DRM and INRM approaches. Conducted field trainings on applying mobile salinity measurement equipment EM-38 - 11 people participated, including 2 women (18%). <p><i>Best practices for combating salinization, while ensuring biodiversity conservation and sustainable land use:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KAZ: Set up collaboration agreements with the Kazakh Institute of Soil Science and Agro-chemistry; National Agrarian Scientific and Education Center, and Kazakh Rice Production to conduct demonstration work on 55 ha of salt-affected areas and to upscale relevant SLM and INRM technologies at project sites in Almaty, Turkestan, and Kyzylorda regions. Introduced 3-4 practices for combatting salinization on 45 ha. completed the registration of the conductometer and PH meter and equipment delivered to project sites; • TJK: Finalized technical specifications for procurement of seeds, equipment (hand seeders, light traps) and fencing materials. Submitted request for the establishment of demonstration plots.

Indicators	Progress Made
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TKM: Initiated demonstration of the production of licorice as biological measures to reduce soil salinity on 5 ha at project pilot site in Gurbansoltan eje district. • UZB: Prepared salinity management guidelines with description of INRM technologies. Planted salinity tolerant crops' varieties on 1,300 ha in project sites in Kashkadarya and Bukhara provinces. Delivered a total of 45.6 tons of seeds of drought and salinity resistant varieties of winter wheat and barley to elite seeds producing farmers.

Source: Adapted from PIR-2020 and PPR-2020

102. The strategy under this outcome is to develop biosaline agriculture to sustainably increase the productivity of marginal lands, support farmers' adaptation to climate change, and to reduce levels of greenhouse gases. Innovative biosaline agriculture practices have been implemented in all CA countries, yet they remain largely unknown at national and regional levels. This expected result will be achieved through the following outputs:

- Guidelines for development of catchment salinity management plans developed and piloted in each country (except Kyrgyzstan) for sustainable and biodiverse aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems
- At least 2 specialized institutions / advisory service providers per country (except Kyrgyzstan) with increased capacities to enhance skills of stakeholders for wide adoption of salinity mitigation approaches and technologies
- Upscaling of 5-6 best practices for combating salinization, while ensuring biodiversity conservation and sustainable use on 95,500 ha of land (at least 15 salt-tolerant species, xx tCO₂e, 15% crop water productivity / irrigation efficiency (except Kyrgyzstan)

103. The review of achievements indicates that the project is progressing well towards what is expected under this outcome that is to scale up technologies and approaches for the management of salt-affected production landscapes, through the development of guidelines for watershed/catchment salinity management plans, capacity development of advisory service providers for the wide adoption of salinity mitigation approaches and technologies, and implementation of best practices for combating salinization.

104. This outcome is similar to the previous outcome 3.1 which focuses on drought risk management; this one (3.2) focuses on combatting soil salinity. Activities implemented under this outcome is to demonstrate how to better manage/plan the risks of salinity in watershed and catchment areas, how to disseminate salinity mitigation approaches and technologies and demonstrate new practices to combat salinization. Similar to the previous outcome, the type of activities implemented, and their scope vary among CA countries due also to budget differences among countries.

105. In the meantime, the use of the scale up concept for activities implemented under this outcome but also under outcomes 2.2, and 3.1 is somewhat misleading. Scaling up is often understood as taking successful projects, programs, or policies and expanding, adapting, and sustaining them in different ways over time for greater

development impact. In this case, the project interventions are more demonstrating the benefits of new CSA/SLM/INRM approaches and new technologies in pilot areas. Ultimately, these demonstrations should be monitored, assessed, and documented near the end of the project, and then, promoted/scaled up at the national level to be replicated.

Expected Outcome 4.1: Project implementation based on adaptive results-based management, monitoring, and reporting for enhanced impact and visibility.

Table 8: Progress Made Toward Outcome 4.1

Indicators	Progress Made
<p>11. M&E system is in place to support adaptive results-based management and monitoring of upscaling resulting from the project</p> <p><u>Target (End of project):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project delivers expected results and shares best practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed an M&E Plan and M&E Framework for the project. Identified project strategic and boundary partners to develop outcome mapping to better monitor progress and to ensure project sustainability. Modified the project log frame to reflect targets/indicators at national level in 5 countries and at regional level without changing the overall project design (outcomes, outputs). Produced regular progress reports A “<i>Gender and Social Inclusion Mainstreaming Strategy for 2020-2022</i>” for the project was developed and being implemented. A <i>Communication and Outreach Plan 2020 and Project Visibility Strategy</i> were developed and being implemented. Developed a roadmap for scaling up of SLM/INRM technologies in all CA countries: at least 2-3 technologies were selected in each country in close collaboration with national partners. Developed baseline reports on carbon stock changes (CO₂) and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions for CA countries using the CBP tool. The results of CO₂ and GHG emissions for each CA countries are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kazakhstan - Total incremental difference (Expected Carbon and Greenhouse Gas Benefit) for the report period: -309 t CO₂e over 5 years, area reported on: 18ha Kyrgyzstan - Total incremental difference for the report period: -394 t CO₂e over 5 years, area reported on: 170ha. Tajikistan - Total incremental difference for the report period: -9511 t CO₂e over 3 years, area reported on: 1,674ha. Turkmenistan - Total incremental difference for the report period: -193656 t CO₂e over 4 years, area reported on: 21,000ha. Uzbekistan - Total incremental difference for the report period: -358918 t CO₂e over 3 years, area reported on: 73,237ha. The CBP tool show that the total volume of avoided GHG emissions from the project demonstration sites with application of SLM practices in 20 years projection will be equal to 3.5 mln tons of CO₂e. Due to COVID-19 most project activities since early 2020 have been postponed; hence delaying the implementation of the project.

Source: Adapted from PIR-2020 and PPR-2020

106. The strategy under this outcome is to contribute to the GEF portfolio monitoring by learning from national resilience assessments and INRM demonstration activities on the ground, leading to adaptation and further improvement of tools and methodologies and inform GEF's SLM portfolio monitoring, GEF tracking tools, and resilience assessment tools. This expected result will be achieved through the following outputs:
- M&E system established to measure project progress and impacts in terms of multiple global environmental benefits (GEBs), social and economic benefits
 - Midterm review and final evaluations carried out and reports available
107. Overall, the project is well monitored, and progress is well reported. The project is equipped with an *M&E Plan* to measure the performance of the project, a *Communication and Outreach Plan 2020 and Project Visibility Strategy* to communicate SLM/INRM knowledge throughout Central Asia, and a regional "*Gender Mainstreaming and Social Inclusion*" strategy to ensure that gender is considered throughout the implementation of the project.
108. Reviewing the M&E system in place, the MTR Team found that one part is missing when reporting progress. The Project Implementation Team does not report progress against the objective of the project with its three indicators and corresponding targets to measure the performance of the project at this level. These three indicators are particularly important; they provide critical information for assessing the contribution of the project towards the intended Global Environmental Benefits (GEB). These indicators include the total area (ha) of drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes under sustainable management practices; the number of women and men with improved food security; and the GHG emissions avoided or reduced (tons CO₂e). The MTR Team noted that the result of CO₂ and GHG emissions in each county has been assessed using the CBP tool and reported in the progress report under outcome 4.1. It is recommended that progress reporting includes progress against these three objectives to measure the overall performance of the project.
109. In conclusion the project has been progressing satisfactorily. However, COVID-19 has impacted its implementation for over a year now. It forced the Project Implementation Team to work from home, therefore, focusing mostly on online meetings and webinars. It certainly contributed to a slowdown of field activities, which is confirmed by a slowdown of disbursements: as of end of February 2021, the project has disbursed only 38% of the GEF grant versus an elapsed time of 68%. In the meantime, the MTR Team noted that due to COVID-19, the project supported additional tangible activities in targeted communities such as seed distribution, greenhouses, small machineries, etc., which have had a positive socio-economic impact on the targeted communities.
110. The MTR Team also noted that capacity building that is a key factor for the success of this project is mostly viewed as training, which is the transfer of skills and knowledge. This approach is too narrow, and much more is needed to develop the capacity of a system to change the way drought risk is managed and soil salinity

management is practiced. The project is required to focus more on institutions to improve organizational procedures, mechanisms, and structures, and to ensure that the enabling environment (policies and laws) are adequately supporting the implementation of new CSA/SLM/INRM approaches and technologies. It is recommended to review the existing capacities, identify the gaps, and recommend a plan of actions to address these gaps related to drought risk management and soil salinity management.

111. Finally, the MTR Team reviewed the participation of Turkey in the project. Turkey was a key partner at the time of the formulation of the project. Turkey had been very active in combating desertification, land degradation and drought, and mitigating climate change, through both national and international projects. It had gained significant experience on drought risk management with the establishment of the "*Flood and Drought Management Planning Department*" for the coordination of drought preparedness and response operations by relevant institutions, drafting of the national drought action plan and initiation of drought management plans for each watershed in the country. It had also completed salinity maps and established in-field sensor-based irrigation systems for effective salinity management and monitoring. At the formulation stage, the participation of Turkey was seen as sharing its relevant knowledge and experience and supporting capacity development on drought risk management, salinity management and economics of land degradation.
112. A review of the two PIRs (2019 & 2020) produced so far confirms that Turkey has been more of a service provider to CA countries than a beneficiary of financial support to improve its management of drought risks and soil salinity. The fact of not being a beneficiary resulted in a poor visibility of Turkey in project reports (PIRs and PPRs). Nevertheless, Turkey has been a key player for the implementation of activities in supporting numerous training events, seminars, and workshops. It is recommended to increase the visibility of Turkey's supported activities in progress reports but also in other project communication products.

3.3 Efficiency

Question 3: Has the project been implemented efficiently, cost-effectively and in-line with international and national norms and standards?

Sub-question 3.1: To what extent has the project been successful in using available resources to deliver results efficiently, cost-effectively, and in a timely manner?

Finding 3.1: After a slow startup phase, a skilled Project Implementation Team has finally found its way to successfully mobilize project resources and deliver results in a cost-effective way. Resources are allocated prudently, and the Team has been using a variety of management tools to get the job done by adapting what is needed to be done with what is possible to do while maintaining adherence to the overall project design and timeline. The flexibility of the implementation has been particularly critical to adapt to the many organizational and staff changes within CA governments that happened since the start of the project.

113. Based on the analysis conducted for this review, after a slow start, the efficiency of the project is now satisfactory. The Project Implementation Team allocates prudently

project resources, including the search for maximizing the co-financing of project activities. An efficient Project Implementation Team follows FAO procedures for implementing GEF-funded projects and uses adaptive management to secure project deliverables while maintaining adherence to the overall project design. The project is well monitored to measure its progress and progress reports are produced timely. The MTR Team also noted the efforts made by the implementation team to engage stakeholders throughout Central Asia. Overall, it is noted that the management and execution of this project has a lot of *"moving parts"*; the management and the execution of the CACILM-II project is a complex affair!

114. Nevertheless, the MTR Team also noted the difficulties faced by the project during its first one to two years of implementation. During this initial period of implementation, the difficulties to put in place the required administrative procedures greatly affected the procurement of goods and services and affected the overall efficiency of the project for this period. It also included a decision-making process too centralized at FAO, resulting in too much micro-management, lack of overall trust and limited workflows.
115. These delays are confirmed by a slow disbursement during the project's first and second year of implementation whereby, disbursements represented only 21% of the original budget for 2018 and 50% for 2019. This start-up phase of the project was slow and as some interviewees said, *"the project was going nowhere!"* It resulted in FAO management to review the issues in the second half of 2019 and with a few changes, including a return - as of January 1, 2020 - of the LTO who had been involved in the design of this project, the set-up of the project management structure, mechanisms and procedures were quickly finalized, including clear roles and responsibilities and clear lines of authority, and as one interviewee said, *"the implementation took off!"* In 2020, the project doubled the number of experts hired and disbursed 88% of the initial budget for 2020, which also was three times the amount of expenses disbursed when compared to 2019.
116. One additional issue, which contributed to delaying the start-up of the project, is the time it took for CA countries to approve the project document and launch the project. Following the approval of the project by GEF on March 16, 2017, recipient countries approved the project as follows: Uzbekistan on July 14, 2017; Turkey on July 26, 2017; Kyrgyzstan on February 19, 2018; Kazakhstan on February 21, 2018; Tajikistan in 2018; and Turkmenistan on August 11, 2019. In addition, inception workshops were, therefore, late: Kyrgyzstan on May 19, 2016; Uzbekistan on May 17, 2018; Tajikistan on May 31, 2018; Turkmenistan on June 28, 2018; and Kazakhstan on August 3, 2018.
117. These delays in approving and launching the project in the five CA countries certainly contributed to the overall delay in implementing the overall project, which was originally planned for the period 2017-2021. Within this context, it is worthwhile to mention the situation of the project in Turkmenistan. Following the already late approval of the project on August 11, 2019, all international development projects in the country need also to be registered before their full implementation can start. This project was finally registered and ready to start only in August 2020. Additionally, since no FAO office are in the country, the mobilization of resources is still an issue and contributes to more implementation delays. One way to mobilize the project resources has been to use the UNDP Country Office in Turkmenistan but it has not

been effective. The UNDP Country Office is a small office with limited human resources and cannot provide timely services to mobilize the CACILM-II project resources. Finally, one more additional hurdle faced by the project is the exchange rate, which renders most project expenditures very expensive when using the official exchange rate.

118. Overall, after considering all the above, when the project was finally on the “right track” for an efficient and effective implementation, it was also the time when COVID-19 hit the region. At the time of the MTR, it is already over a year that Central Asia – and the rest of the world - is affected by this pandemic and it is still difficult to assess the full impact on the project since it is still going on at the time of this MTR.
119. The Project Implementation Team has been using a variety of management tools to get the job done: adaptive management, flexibility, team approach, consensus building, innovation, communication, partnerships, etc. It allows the Team to adapt what is needed to be done with what is possible to do while maintaining as much as possible the overall timeline of the implementation. The flexibility of the implementation has been particularly critical to adapt to organizational reform/reorganizing and staff turnover. Since the start of the project, many changes organizational and staff changes happened. One excellent example of adaptive management is the adaptation to the project to pursue its implementation under the COVID-19 regulations. Forced to work online from home, the Project Implementation Team was able to switch its planned workshops to online webinars. It resulted in a much larger audiences for each event from all over Central Asia. In almost all cases it gave access to some participants to these events, who would not have had a chance to participate in person. From a project point of view, it was also much more cost effective to run webinars when compared to in-person workshops. It is still too early to fully determine if this interest through webinars will last but it is recommended that the project continue to deliver SLM/INRM knowledge through this channel as a cost-effective way to engage a maximum number of stakeholders throughout Central Asia.
120. The efficiency of the project was also the result of a skilled implementation team including experts and consultants, which was confirmed by several interviewees conducted for this MTR. At the time of the MTR, the project is implemented by a staff plus part/full-time experts of 33 people (8 women and 25 men – 14 full time and 19 part time); regional office: 10 staff; Kazakhstan: 5 staff; Kyrgyzstan: 1 staff; Tajikistan: 4 staff; Turkmenistan: 7 staff; and Uzbekistan: 6 staff; and no project staff in Turkey.
121. The MTR Team also noted the hiring of National Project Managers (NPMs). These positions are critical for the project; they act as “*anchor points*” of the project in each country. They are “*on the ground*” to establish relationships with stakeholders and over the longer-term partnerships to implement activities supported by the project. They also contribute to a greater visibility of the project overall. In the meantime, no NPM are based in Turkey, which is lacking project visibility. It is recommended to hire a Turkey-based part time NPM for the remaining period of the project.
122. As a regional project, it also includes a good setup in each country for supporting the implementation of project activities. The project has 5 offices, 4 national offices each located in the capital of each CA recipient country and 1 regional project office

based in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The project offices in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan are partly funded from the project GEF grant and partly from FAO country offices. The regional and Turkmenistan project offices are provided by the governments and the office in Uzbekistan is shared with the FAO country office. Equipment and utilities are funded by the GEF grant, including internet services. Communication such as mobile phone charges are paid individually by each project staff.

Sub-question 3.2: To what extent is the project making best use of available technical expertise from FAO as well as from other providers such as WOCAT?

Finding 3.2: Technical expertise from FAO, technical partners and the international and national consulting industry is being used efficiently and on an as-needed basis. It provides the project with a broad range of expertise and competencies when it is needed.

123. The project has been benefitting from the recognized in-house technical expertise of FAO to address issues of drought risk and soil salinity management. As the global agency focusing on agriculture, FAO has a large body of knowledge on these technical areas. Moreover, the fact that GEF-funded projects implemented by FAO are well integrated within the corresponding departments of the agency, it gives the project access to FAO experts on an as-needed basis. Additionally, a large team of FAO staff is involved in implementing and monitoring this project. It provides an extensive set of "*checks and balances*" to the project to come up with the best solutions to be implemented but also to review/comment on annual work plans, progress reports and other key reports such as the "*Gender and Social Inclusion Mainstreaming Strategy for 2020-2022*" and the "*Communication and Outreach Plan 2020 and Project Visibility Strategy*".
124. In addition to the technical expertise of FAO, the Project Implementation Team has also access to other service providers to assemble the required expertise needed to implement project activities. It includes an organization such as WOCAT, which has been contracted through a Letter of Agreement (LOA) to develop the regional knowledge platform on SLM/INRM¹². It is also the same approach with Wageningen Economic Research (WUR) - Institute of Agricultural Economics from the Netherlands, which is specialized in agriculture advisory services research. Through LOAs with these international organizations, the project has access to "top-notch" expertise, including through sub-contractors such as the case with the agreement with WOCAT. In addition, the project is hiring international and national consultants on the same basis to provide ad-hoc expertise when it is not available in-house within

¹² A first LOA was signed between FAO and WOCAT on December 7, 2018, with a budget not to exceed USD 35,000 to deliver: (i) WOCAT tools and methods adapted to the needs and use in CACILM-2 project (e.g. inventory table); (ii) Inventory of good land management practices in drought-prone and salt-affected agricultural production landscapes in Central Asia developed with CACILM-2 country partners; and (iii) Regional workshop carried out to train stakeholders from the CACILM-2 countries in the WOCAT SLM/INRM Technologies and Approaches Questionnaires and Database. A second LOA was signed on March 4, 2020, with a budget not to exceed USD 80,800. Under this LOA, WOCAT is to contribute in improving the capacity and the decision-making process of recipient countries to mainstream and upscale SLM and to combat land degradation in drought-prone and salt-affected agricultural production landscapes in Central Asia. The specific objective of the service is to support development of the CACILM-II project's regional knowledge platform and to capacitate stakeholders on the project in the use of WOCAT tools for SLM, watershed management, assessing and reporting on land degradation, and methods to assess balance of carbon sequestration.

FAO and needed to implement project activities. The MTR Team found that technical expertise has been efficiently used by the project, bringing the expertise on an as-needed basis.

Sub-question 3.3: Does the project efficiently utilize local capacity in implementation?

Finding 3.3: There is a good balance in utilizing local and international expertise with 90% of all contracts signed with national consultants and 10% with international consultants. It is an efficient way to further develop local expertise in SLM/INRM, while at the same time, bringing "state-of-the-art" knowledge to the region, resulting in customized best practices to be implemented in the region.

125. The Project Implementation Team has been using both international and national consultants to bring external expertise to the project when needed to secure a quality implementation of interventions. In term of sourcing and contracting experts, the Project Implementation Team tries as much as possible to hire experts locally in each CA countries. When local experts cannot be found, the project launches a recruitment process to source regional and/or international consultants/experts. So far, the project has contracted a total of 90 consultants/experts including 81 national consultants and 9 international consultants or 10% of the total hires. This figure indicates a good level of expertise in Central Asia. Moreover, by efficiently utilizing this capacity and to bring international expertise when needed, the project has contributed to raising the level of this regional expertise in SLM/INRM. Through the hiring of ad-hoc experts, the project has also contributed to a high level of knowledge transfer on SLM/INRM to Central Asia, outside the boundaries of the project.
126. This mixed approach to rely on national and international expertise is also appreciated by stakeholders. On one hand it further develops the local capacities and on the other hand the hiring of international experts are opportunities to bring "state-of-the-art" knowledge to the region. Together, local and international experts can then "bridge" this transferred knowledge with local languages, practices and customs known by national experts, and allow the development of customized international best practices adapted to the region.

3.4 Sustainability

Question 4: To what extent are there financial, institutional, social-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?

Sub-question 4.1: Are sustainability issues adequately integrated in project design?

Finding 4.1: The project document contains a concise and complete strategy formulating how project achievements will be sustained over the long-term. However, this strategy is also a good evidence demonstrating the ambitious scope of the project.

127. Section 5 of the project document is about sustainability of results. As per GEF and FAO guidance, it covers social, environmental, financial, and economic, capacities developed, appropriateness of technology introduced and replicability and scaling-up aspects. The review indicates that it is a concise (1.5 pages) and complete strategy formulating how project achievements will be sustained over the long-term.

However, in the meantime, this strategy is also a good evidence demonstrating the ambitious scope of the project. Yes, it supports the overall objective of the project, but two key questions here are “is it feasible?” and “what will happen if not?” The discussions under the following sub-questions in this section 3.4 provide more details on the assessment of this sustainability strategy.

128. Based on the review conducted by the MTR Team, it is recommended that the Project Implementation Team focus on the sustainability and replicability of project achievements during the remaining implementation period of the project. It should include the formulation of an exit strategy/plan, which will help to “crystalize” what is needed to sustain the project achievements over the long-term.

Sub-question 4.2: Are there any financial risks to sustainability?

Finding 4.2: The strategy formulated in the project document to meet the assumptions made for the financial sustainability of project achievements is not convincing. It says that by mainstreaming integrated approaches to drought risk management and salinity control into country sector budgets it will contribute to financial sustainability of project interventions. While it is a valid approach, the chance of increasing country sector budgets is traditionally a difficult area to be achieved and no indication at this point indicates a progress in this direction.

129. The strategy for the financial sustainability of project interventions is an ambitious one and it is doubtful that it will happen before the end of the project. It says that by mainstreaming integrated approaches to drought risk management and salinity control into country sector budgets it will contribute to financial sustainability of project interventions. Also, by increasing access to finance for dryland agriculture through mechanisms such as micro-lending, as well as introduction of incentives, such as tax reductions, PES, etc. will also contribute to economic sustainability. Moreover, by strengthening food and feed value chains, it can contribute to guidelines for certification of selected crops, animal, wildlife, fish, etc., which in the long-term will promote improved access to high-value markets as well as sustainable use of dryland ecosystems in Central Asia and Turkey. Finally, the creation of a ‘knowledge market’ for agricultural service providers will contribute to the sustainability of the INRM/SLM knowledge management platform that will be established by the project.
130. In essence all these measures are true and would ensure – even guarantee - the financial sustainability of project achievements. However, how much of this is feasible, particularly during the remaining life of the project? If it is not completed during the project lifetime, who will ensure the continuation of these necessary changes? A more modest strategy to mitigate the financial risks is recommended and be included in the recommended exit strategy/plan.

Sub-question 4.3: Are there any sociopolitical risks to sustainability?

Finding 4.3: Socio-economic benefits are expected to contribute to the social sustainability of project results achieved in demonstration areas supported by the project. The strategy is contained to beneficiaries in demonstration sites supported by the project under outcome 3, which could represent a total of over 1M women and men.

131. The social sustainability strategy of project achievements is more contained. It is viewed mostly through socio-economic benefits that will be achieved through activities in demonstration sites supported by the project in all five CA countries. It is assumed that livelihoods of land users (beneficiaries) in the demonstration areas would benefit from improved drought risk and soil salinity management, and their food security and nutrition would also improve with a focus on ecosystem services that would support agricultural production. The strategy also includes a particular focus on women-headed households in pilot sites and that special attention will be given to assessing the impacts of land degradation on vulnerable groups such as female-headed households.
132. This is a valid strategy to ensure the social sustainability of project achievements. Beneficiaries are involved in the implementation of field activities and ultimately should benefit from these new measures. Moreover, the more involved they are the more benefits they should get from these demonstrations.

Sub-question 4.4: Are there any institutional and governance (including the enabling environment) risks to sustainability?

Finding 4.4: Institutional and governance risks to sustainability was not mentioned in the risk analysis to sustainability in the project document. Yet, it is one of the most critical risk areas when it comes to the sustainability of project achievements. It was part of assumptions made at the formulation stage and the project needs to ensure these assumptions stay valid by focusing more on institutionalizing project achievements.

133. As discussed in section 2 and 3.1 earlier in this report, the project is to address a set of 4 barriers preventing the adoption and implementation of an INRM approach in CA countries to help stabilize or reverse the adverse trends of land degradation and climate change. Moreover, the project is also well aligned with national policies, strategies, and programmes in CA countries seeking to address drought and soil salinity challenges. Under outcome 2.1, the project intervenes at country level to review and improve the enabling environment (legislation and/or policy frameworks) related to drought risk management and soil salinity management.
134. From an institutional and governance point of view, another important area is the strengthening of extension services. As discussed earlier in section 3.2, the project strategy does not have a strong focus on this area; yet it is key to reach land users. It is part of the answer to reach-out millions of land users throughout Central Asia. The project has already done an assessment of existing extension services in four CA countries (Tajikistan was postponed due to COVID-19) and developed recommendations in this area. The project is also strengthening "*Boundary Partners*"¹³ as a link to transfer knowledge to land users, which could be considered as part of national extension service systems.

¹³ As described under the sub-question 5.6, the project has used an Outcome Mapping approach to monitor the project, including the selection of *Boundary Partners* as key organizations for transferring new SLM/INRM technologies to land users. It also developed a framework to assess/monitor the progress of these Boundary Partners in developing their

135. Despite that institutional and governance risks to sustainability is not mentioned in the project document, it is one of the most critical risk areas when considering the nature of the project. It was part of assumptions made at the formulation stage such as relevant institutions stay committed to reform and integrate resilience; inter-sectoral coordination functioning at national and sub-national levels; etc. Through these assumptions, it is anticipated that the government will continue in this direction in the foreseeable future and that project achievements will be institutionalized at some points and furthermore be scaled-up throughout Central Asia.
136. In order to maximize the sustainability of project achievements, it is recommended that the project focuses on the institutionalization and governance of its achievements during the remaining period of implementation. It includes continuing to support governments in strengthening their advisory services. It also includes assessing the support to "*Boundary Partners*", learn lessons and identify best practices. In this area, the project should support the institutionalization of the best extension practices to sustain an "*outreach model*" promoting SLM/INRM measures to farmers, dekhans and small land plot owners throughout Central Asia.

Sub-question 4.5: Are there any environmental risks to sustainability?

Finding 4.5: No environmental risks to sustainability were identified. By focusing on drought risk management and soil salinity management practices, it should minimize pressures and negative impacts on natural resources and have a medium and long-term positive environmental impact over natural resources in the project demonstration areas, rendering these arid ecosystems more sustainable over the long-term.

137. Regarding the environmental risks to sustainability, the project mitigation strategy was that, by linking the experiences in Central Asia with the expertise of Turkey in SLM and INRM in similar types of agro-ecosystems, it would ensure that best practices on salinity control and drought risk management would be more widely adopted across drylands. It would also ensure that practices for INRM that generate multiple global environmental and socio-economic benefits would be taken to scale.
138. The review did not find any environmental risks to the sustainability of project outcomes. The project focuses on drought risk management and soil salinity management. It supports the implementation of sustainable land management practices that minimize pressures and negative impacts on natural resources. Ultimately, the objective of the project that is "*to scale up integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes in Central Asia and Turkey*" should have – at a minimum - a medium and long-term positive environmental impact over natural resources in the demonstration areas. The implementation of SLM/INRM measures should render the management of these arid ecosystems more sustainable over the long-term, including the reclaim of saline soils productivity.

own capacities and their sustainability over the long term. It is a good framework to measure progress, however what is also needed are capacity development plans for institutionalizing project achievements.

Sub-question 4.6: Are there any issues with the sustainability of capacities developed?

Finding 4.6: The project approach to develop the required capacities necessary to produce the desired changes focuses mostly on increasing the skills and knowledge of individuals. A more holistic approach to improve structures, mechanisms, and procedures of related institutions and to develop a favorable enabling environment would increase the sustainability of project achievements.

139. As stated in the sustainability strategy of the project, capacity development is at the core of the upscaling strategy of climate smart-agricultural practices, and it should ensure its sustainability. However, this strategy is similar to the one for mitigating the financial risks to sustainability. In theory, the proposed measures would certainly ensure the sustainability of capacities developed with the support of the project. However, it is not clear how these measures would be feasible or would succeed: strengthening institutional capacities within countries through project management arrangements is questionable; establishing a knowledge hub to ensure knowledge management and dissemination across CA countries and Turkey by a competent regional center would be very challenging, including its sustainability; and establishing national multi-agency coordination platforms that will have close links with communities through outreach and dissemination systems would be difficult to setup and to sustain in the current context in Central Asia.
140. In addition, the MTR Team also noted that capacity development that is a key factor for the success of this project is mostly viewed as a training mechanism focusing on the transfer of skills and knowledge. So far, the project has delivered numerous training events, seminars, workshops, etc. with the addition of knowledge transfers through communication products such as press releases, articles, flyers, brochures, etc. Under COVID-19, the Project Implementation Team organized a series of online webinars, which turned out being a great success with high attendance from participants from all over Central Asia. Overall, since its outset, the project has delivered almost 30 such events, including about 50% in a webinar format and delivered in 2020, and a total participation of 793 participants (36% women and 64% men).
141. The delivery of these events is commendable. However, the MTR Team found that it is doubtful that this approach for developing capacities in introducing new CSA/SLM practices is sufficient to produce the desired changes. It requires a broader approach to develop full capacities and produce the desired changes that is to change agricultural practices in drought and soil salinity affected land. In addition to increasing skills and knowledge of people, it also requires focusing on institutions to improve organizational procedures, mechanisms, and structures, and to ensure that the enabling environment (policies and laws) are adequately supporting the implementation of new CSA/SLM/INRM approaches and technologies.
142. A more holistic approach to develop capacities of related institutions and to develop a favorable enabling environment is needed. Within this context,



Figure 2: The CD Framework in FAO

the MTR Team reviewed the FAO *Corporate Strategy on Capacity Development*¹⁴ (2010). It has three interlinked dimensions: individuals, organizations and enabling environment. Capacity development often involves enhancing the skills and knowledge of individuals, whose outputs greatly relies on the performance of organizations in which they work. Moreover, the effectiveness of these organizations is largely influenced by the enabling environment within which they operate.

143. It is recognized that a country reaches its development goals by strengthening its individuals and organizations while creating an enabling legal and policy environment. Within this context, in addition to training relevant people, project activities also need to focus on improving the structures, mechanisms and procedures of institutions such as job descriptions of staff, organizational structure for sustainable land management and land use, educational curricula, etc. Finally, for these capacities to be sustained, it also needs to be in a context of a favorable enabling environment; that is appropriate policies and laws as well as adequate institutional framework to assure law and policies enforcement. This is only when all these pieces are coming together that the desired change may occur and should be sustained. It is recommended to use this guidance on capacity development to help the project in developing a more likely sustainability strategy; including a broad review of existing capacities, identification of capacity gaps and a recommended plan of actions to address these gaps related to drought risk management and soil salinity management.

Sub-question 4.7: Are there any issues with technologies introduced by the project?

Finding 4.7: The new SLM/INRM technologies introduced by the project are being properly documented using the WOCAT tools and methods, which should contribute to their long-term sustainability. However, the vetting/endorsement of these new technologies by agricultural authorities would also increase their chance to be sustained.

144. The strategy of the project is to introduce SLM/INRM best practices as new technologies such as integrated land and water management and agroforestry conservation agriculture in demonstration areas in five CA countries. To ensure the sustainability of these new technologies, the strategy is to document them using existing WOCAT tools and methods. It is also a way to assess their environmental and socio-economic sustainability and appropriateness for different types of land-use systems and socio-economic contexts. Finally, to ensure that these technologies will be sustained over the long-term, their selection will be undertaken in close consultation with local stakeholders, including local communities and individual farmers, NGOs.
145. These measures should contribute to the long-term sustainability of these technologies. However, this approach has also some limitations. Documenting these best practices through WOCAT is good to standardize these practices; however, the format is not appropriate for land users. They require to be translated into local languages, with appropriate diagrams and described in layman's terms to be

¹⁴ <http://www.fao.org/capacity-development/en/>

applicable by land users. Additionally, these best practices should also be reviewed by the corresponding agricultural institutions and where possible to be officialized.

146. In the meantime, the MTR Team noted that the identification of *Boundary Partners* in each country should contribute to the long-term sustainability of these new introduced technologies, including the replication/scaling up throughout CA.

Sub-question 4.8: Will project achievements be catalytic and replicable?

Finding 4.8: The project was designed as an example of cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary approach to address drought and salinity problems in drylands through INRM and across Central Asia. It is an ambitious project with an ambitious catalytic role and replication strategy to upscale project achievements throughout Central Asia. A greater focus on sustainability and replicability of project achievements is needed to identify realistic measures to secure these achievements.

147. The strategy of the project to play a catalytic role and to upscale new technologies introduced by the project is based on the establishment of a regional multi-agency coordination mechanism which will help ensuring replication and scaling up. Furthermore, the approach to upscaling was to be embedded within national operational strategies for upscaling through support to policy and institutional reform across sectors. It was also anticipated that replication would be driven by spontaneous adoption and replication, by individuals and communities participating in INRM practices, of viable and effective best practices. Finally, the adaptation of technologies to local realities and enhancement of their resilience via experimentation and innovation by the beneficiaries themselves would also help sustain adoption and replication. As per its strategy, the project was designed as an example of cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary approach to addressing drought and salinity problems in drylands through integrated natural resources management.
148. This is a valid strategy for ensuring the project plays a catalytic role and its achievements to be upscaled. However, as discussed under the sub-question 4.1, it also confirms how ambitious this project was when it was formulated. The tasks to establish a Central Asian multi-agency coordination mechanism to help ensuring replication and scaling up of project achievements is somewhat unrealistic in the given timeframe. This is similar with the strategy to embed the upscaling approach in five national operational strategies. Overall, the strategy for upscaling project achievements is a very challenging proposition, which among other things would require a tremendous level of political will across Central Asia.
149. In the meantime, the other elements of this strategy are more feasible. Anticipating that the INRM practices would be replicated through spontaneous adoption by individuals and communities around demonstration areas should occur, assuming that these new measures are viable, adapted to local realities and possibly enhanced by the beneficiaries themselves. Based on the findings of this review, the project so far focuses on introducing new SLM/INRM technologies/best practices in demonstration areas. As recommended above in this section, it is critical that the project develop an exit strategy/plan to identify what is needed to be done to secure the sustainability of project achievements but also importantly to maximize the

replication/upscaling of the results from the demonstration areas, including good assessments of these demonstration areas.

3.5 Factors Affecting Performance

Question 5: Are there factors affecting negatively and/or positively the performance of the project?

Sub-question 5.1: What is the adequacy of the project design for delivering the expected outcomes?

Finding 5.1: By design this is an ambitious project with a broad scope covering the entire region of Central Asia with 5 different governments and five very different budgets to achieve the expected results in each country. There is a danger for the project to “*be spread too thin*” and not develop all the required capacities to ensure the long-term sustainability of all project achievements.

150. As discussed under the sub-question 1.1, a key milestone to conceptualize this project was a gathering of key actors at the UNCCD Conference of Parties 12 (COP-12) in Ankara in October 2015. Following the approval of the PIF in April 2015, key players (FAO, GEF, UNCCD and CA and Turkish Government Partners) met on the sideline of the COP-12 to converge towards a project strategy focusing on land degradation and upscaling SLM technologies, building on achievements of the CACILM-I project, and with the participation of Turkey, to share its relevant knowledge and experience in combating desertification and land degradation.
151. The formulation phase was completed with a project document that articulates well the strategy to be implemented. A few exchanges between FAO and GEFSEC occurred between the development of the PIF and the final project document. It resulted with a coherent approach, well-structured, logically sequenced, and well written project document, including the anticipated participation of key related international partners in the implementation of the project.
152. However, the review conducted for this MTR including review of key documents, interviews, and observations of field activities, indicates that it is an ambitious project trying to address four key barriers (*see Section 2.1*) over a five-year period in five countries in Central Asia and with very different budgets from country to country. It delivers on many fronts such as Economics of Land Degradation; Valuation of Ecosystem Services; Rural Advisory Services; Early Warning System: climate change related disaster risk management and agro-meteorology services; Community resilience assessment using SHARP tool; Biosalinity technologies; Regional Knowledge Management Platform; Drought and salinity maps; Estimation of CO2 balance where SLM technologies are applied, etc.
153. The review of the adequacy of the design for delivering the expected outcomes indicates the following:
 - a) The project is to deliver 7 expected outcomes over five years in five countries. This is ambitious for one project, particularly when considering the nature of each outcome. Outcome 1.2 includes the development of a regional platform. Several attempts have been done before and none was successful. It is not clear how this

one would succeed; given that there is limited visible political will in CA countries for such a tool. Outcome 2.1 is about improving the enabling environment for drought risk management in five countries, including inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms in these five countries. Under Outcome 2.2, one strategy is to introduce micro-financing for farmers to help them applying new SLM/CSA measures in five countries. Outcome 3.1 and 3.2 is to demonstrate innovative technologies for drought risk management and soil salinity management in five countries. Some of these expected outcomes could be the object of separate projects, particularly when considering that they span over 5 countries.

- b) The project objective is about upscaling INRM in drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes in CA. The review indicates that the use of the upscaling concept as the objective of the project is somewhat misleading. Scaling up is often understood as taking successful projects, programs, or policies and expanding, adapting, and sustaining them in different ways over time for greater development impact. Project interventions such as activities under outcomes 2.2, 3.1 and 3.2, are more demonstrating the benefits of new CSA/SLM/INRM approaches and new technologies in pilot areas. Ultimately, these demonstrations should be monitored, assessed, and documented near the end of the project, and then, for a next phase promoted at the national level to be replicated/scaled up.
- c) The budget allocated by each participating country - from their STAR allocations¹⁵ - varies a lot. It goes from Turkey and Kyrgyzstan with a budget of about USD 180k to Uzbekistan with a budget of over USD 4M (or 22 times larger!). It goes without saying that the expectations of a project with less than USD 200k is very different than expectations with over USD 4M; yet there are all under the same project with the same objective that is to upscale new SLM/CSA technologies / best practices.
- d) The project strategy (*Results Framework*) is very detailed in the project document. It includes one objective, 4 components, 7 outcomes, 19 outputs and over 30 key activities with steps to be implemented; all detailed on 32 pages in the project document. One risks of such detailed strategy is to render the implementation of the project as an activity-based project as opposed to a better results-based implementation focusing on a tighter ùset of expected results to be achieved.
- e) The planned management arrangements for the project are well identified in the project document. FAO is the implementing and executing agency of this GEF-funded project. As such they are fully responsible for implementing the project including acting as the financial and operational executing agency and therefore, holding most of the decision-making authority.

¹⁵ The System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) is a system for allocating resources to countries in a transparent and consistent manner based on global environmental priorities and country capacity, policies and practices relevant to successful implementation of GEF projects. Under the STAR, each eligible country has an indicative allocation –the funding that a country can access for biodiversity, climate change mitigation and land degradation during the four-year cycle. STAR resources within a country are managed by the GEF Operational Focal Point (OFP). The Operational Focal Point is responsible for determining how STAR resources are programmed.

154. Based on this analysis, this is a highly ambitious project with a broad scope covering the entire region of Central Asia with 5 different governments and five very different budgets to achieve the expected results in each country. There is a danger for the project to *"be spread too thin"* and not develop all the required capacities to ensure the long-term sustainability of all project achievements. It is recommended to review the list of activities to be implemented and, where possible, prioritize what is critical to be done, with an emphasis on institutionalizing project achievements to ensure their long-term sustainability.

Sub-question 5.2: What is the performance of the management and administration function of the project?

Finding 5.2a: Managing and administering the project is complex with a long and cumbersome *"chain of command"*. The project has 5 offices with a total staff and part-time and full-time experts of 33 people (8 women and 25 men). The good interaction for implementing and executing the project among project staff and FAO staff in country offices, in the Subregional office, and at headquarters, led to find a way to make it work efficiently despite the complex management and administration setup.

155. The management and administration function of the project is satisfactory, though overall it is a complex affair! The *"chain of command"* is long and cumbersome, but the Project Implementation Team and FAO staff involved in managing and administering the project have developed good relationships and found ways to make it work efficiently. It would be difficult to streamline it further without major reform of the way FAO administer its projects.
156. As discussed under sub-question 3.1, the project is managed and administered by a skilled Project Implementation Team, backstopped by qualified FAO staff. This is a large team of staff plus part/full-time experts of 33 people (8 women and 25 men – 13 full time and 20 part time) based in the regional office: 10 staff; in Kazakhstan office: 5 staff; in Kyrgyzstan office: 1 staff; in Tajikistan office: 4 staff; in Turkmenistan office: 7 staff; and in Uzbekistan office: 6 staff (no project staff are based in Turkey¹⁶). As a regional project, it has a good setup in each country for supporting the implementation of project activities. The project has 5 offices, 4 national offices each located in the capital of each CA recipient country and 1 Regional project office based in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The project offices in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan are partly funded from the project GEF grant and partly from FAO country offices. The Regional and Turkmenistan project offices are provided by the governments and the office in Uzbekistan is shared with the FAO country office. Equipment and utilities are funded by the GEF grant, including internet services. Communication such as mobile phone charges are paid individually by each project staff.
157. A FAO operating unit for the project is based in Ankara, Turkey, within the Sub-regional office for Central Asia (SEC). The Coordinator of SEC is the Budget Holder (BH) for the project. His responsibility is to monitor that project expenditures (actual

¹⁶ In 2018-2019, a National Land and Water Officer based in FAO Ankara office was liaising between the project and the ministry of agriculture in Turkey, a position partly funded by the project.

disbursements) and commitments are within the project document and work plan, both at project and line level. This operating unit – also called SEC field programme unit – support the implementation of the project on behalf of the BH. The unit reviews all requests coming to the BH and provides operational clearance and guidance. It also monitors overall project performance including finances and helps facilitating HR, procurement of goods and services, staff travel, LOA, event management, payments, report submission and other project related activities especially in Kazakhstan Turkey and Turkmenistan. (we also sometimes get involved in operational matters in other countries).

158. Overall, the MTR Team found that communication and collaboration among the Project Implementation Team located across 5 countries and with FAO staff in FAO country offices, FAO sub regional office and at Headquarters is good. Being distant from each other made electronic communications a vital link for managing and administering day-to-day operations. Additionally, once a week, all National Project Managers and the Regional Project Coordinator have a weekly online meeting to update each other. They are also backstopped by a good FAO technical team (SEC, LTO, FLO and GCU) to support the project technically.
159. The review found that the mobilization of resources is somewhat a cumbersome system/approach with key differences among countries. The procurement of goods and services is done by the FAO sub regional office for Central Asia (based in Ankara) for 3 countries (Kazakhstan, Turkey, and Turkmenistan) and through the local FAO country offices for the other 3 countries. In the case of Turkmenistan, procurement of goods and services is also channeled through the UNDP Country Office in Turkmenistan. Overall, the project has procured so far, a total amount of USD 1,275,016 of goods and services with almost 40% of this amount procured for Uzbekistan. Despite this complex approach, the project staff through a good interaction with the FAO sub regional office based in Ankara found ways to make it work efficiently.
160. Regarding annual work plans (AWPs), there are presented results-based that is under each output, budget lines are identified, and a budget allocated where needed. The review of all AWP indicates that each year the actual project disbursements (GEF grant) fall short of meeting the approved annual budgets. In 2018, only 25% of the budget was disbursed, 61% in 2019, and 66% in 2020. The MTR Team did not look into the reason of these differences, but it shows that despite developing AWP, it is not a good benchmarking for assessing how much of the GEF grant will be spent in a particular year.

Finding 5.2b: This is a project that is efficiently implemented and executed by FAO with an adequate separation of these two functions within the agency. However, it is also a project somewhat too FAO centric – FAO is alone in the “driver seat!” – and the PSC, with the participation of UNCCD and GEF focal points from each country, is not enough to engage a broader range of key stakeholders and national partner organizations, which is affecting the country ownership of the project and over the long-term will affect its effectiveness.

161. The project is implemented and executed by FAO. The comparative advantage of FAO for the GEF is its technical capacity and experience in fisheries, forestry, agriculture, and natural resources management. The FAO has a strong experience in

sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity, bioenergy, biosafety, sustainable development in production landscapes, and integrated pest and pesticides management. The GEF-funded CACILM-II project is implemented under the FAO *Direct Execution (DEX)* modality, that is FAO implements and executes the project and provides most of the services to national institutions under the guidance of the Project Steering Committee (PSC).

162. FAO delegates part of the services to be provided to non-profit entities (such as public authorities and non-government organizations) by signing letters of agreement or to commercial entities through service contracts. Under DEX, FAO is accountable from both a technical and fiduciary standpoint for the achievement of all expected project results. The separation of the implementation and execution functions, an important aspect of the GEF minimum fiduciary standards, is ensured at FAO by maintaining the following allocation of roles and responsibilities.
 - The day-to-day management of an FAO-GEF project - an execution function - is the responsibility of the appointed FAO budget holder (BH) and the project management unit (PMU);
 - Technical oversight, project supervision and evaluation are the responsibilities of the FAO technical officer assigned to the project (LTO);
 - The role and responsibilities of the FAO GEF Coordination Unit (FAO GEF CU), as funding liaison unit, and the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) are an implementation function.
163. The review of FAO roles as GEF implementing agency and GEF executing agency indicates an adequate separation of duties and responsibilities between the two functions (implementation and execution). This separation is facilitated by the physical location of each party. The FAO-GEF-CU – the funding liaison unit - is based at FAO Headquarters in Rome; the LTO is based in Geneva, Switzerland at the FAO/UNECE Joint Forestry and Timber Section; and the execution of the project is carried out by a FAO operating unit (SEC field programme unit) located within the Sub-regional office for Central Asia (SEC) in Ankara, Turkey, headed by the Coordinator of SEC as the Budget Holder (BH) for the project and the PMU based in Almaty, Kazakhstan.
164. The MTR Team found that each Party fulfills its respected roles and responsibilities. The FAO-GEF-CU through the FLO (funding liaison officer) and the LTO provide a technical backstopping function to the project through the PTF and also directly to the PMU, while the SEC field programme unit in Ankara provides the PMU with day-to-day operational support to implement activities, including the use of the fpmis to manage and administer the finances of the project.
165. Nevertheless, the project has a complex management and administration function, and as discussed under sub-question 5.4, the involvement of national stakeholders and beneficiaries in the project decision-making process is limited. The result is a project that is efficiently implemented and executed but that is also a project somewhat too FAO centric. The execution of the project is mostly done through the Project Task Force (PTF), which is a FAO coordination body; which has met six times since the start of the project implementation. The PSC met four times (one meeting per year) to review progress made of past periods and work plans for next periods.

However, the PSC process only engages two stakeholders per country: the GEF and UNCCD Focal Points. Over time, this approach has been limited to engage other national stakeholders and national partner organizations, which over the long-term will affect the country ownership of the project and ultimately its effectiveness.

Finding 5.2c: A good list of six risks has been identified to monitor the project risks. Their status is reported annually in PIRs and all six rated as *low* in the 2020 PIR except as *substantial* for the risk linked to the impact of COVID-19. However, when considering the findings of this MTR, two risks should be rated as *medium* and concerning developing sufficient capacities and having a catalytic effect.

166. An initial list of four risks was identified during the formulation stage of the project with their respective mitigation measures. The four risks were rated as low at the time of approval of the project except the second risk rated as low to medium. These risks were reviewed annually, and their status reported in each PIRs. One additional risk was added to the list in 2019 (v. *below*) and another risk in 2020 (vi. *Below*).
 - i. No alignment of views and priorities between institutions and the main beneficiaries of current land and water resource use systems, with limited political support to advance women's and men's equal voice and access to resources and services in rural areas
 - ii. Building of sufficient capacity and capability of existing national and regional institutions and local authorities will take too long to allow project sustainability
 - iii. The catalytic effect of the project on SLM upscaling and investments at regional and national level is limited
 - iv. Climate change impacts on land resources and management systems makes land degradation assessment and INRM/SLM Best Practices knowledge platforms quickly outdated.
 - v. Changing UNCCD/UNFCCC and Government Focal Points.
 - vi. Negative implications of the COVID-19 in the project countries affected the project delivery and implementation speed due to mobility limitations of quarantine and emergency situations. Most of the changes in the workplan occurred in field activities, national trainings, field missions, monitoring missions and meetings with national partners to improve communication and networking. These activities were postponed to Q4-2020 and Q1/Q2-2021.
167. This list of six risks is an adequate list to monitor project risks and report yearly in the PIRs. In the last PIR (2020), these risks were rated as low except the last one regarding the impact of COVID-19 rated as "*substantial*". However, when considering the findings of this MTR, the MTR Team found that 2 risks (ii. and iii.) should be rated as "*medium*". Developing sufficient capacities of national and regional organizations and local authorities is a challenge for the project and the risk exists that if not enough capacities are developed, the sustainability of some project achievements may be limited. Planning a catalytic effect through upscaling SLM technologies and related investments throughout the region is also depending on capacities of national organizations. The more national organizations and their respective staff will be capacitated, the larger the catalytic effect may occur.

Sub-question 5.3: Does the financing of the project perform as anticipated?

Finding 5.3a: As of end of February 2021, the project disbursements are only 38% of the GEF grant versus 68% of the elapsed time due mostly to a slow start of the implementation of project activities and the impact of COVID-19 since early 2020. In term of disbursements, components 1 and 3 are more advanced with 35% and 44% of their respective budgets disbursed. In the meantime, the project management budget is already disbursed by 87%. The rate of disbursements per country varies a lot from only 12% in Turkmenistan to 89% in Kyrgyzstan. When considering the remaining GEF grant of over USD 6.75M, it is highly unlikely that it will be disbursed during the remaining 19 months of implementation. This financial situation supports the proposal for a no-cost time extension.

168. At the time of this MTR, the review of financial records as recorded in the FAO Field Programme Management Information System (FPMIS) indicates that the actual expenditures disbursed against the GEF grant from October 2017 to end of February 2021 represent about 38 percent (USD 4,122,512) of the approved budget of USD 10,874,659 versus an elapsed time of 68 percent (41 months out of 60). The breakdown of project expenditures by component expended so far is presented in the table below.

Table 9: FAO-GEF Project Funds Utilization per Component

Component	Budget (USD)	(%)	Disbursed (USD) ¹⁷	(%)	Disbursed (%)
Component 1	1,242,817	11%	437,979	11%	35%
Component 2	2,152,516	20%	563,018	14%	26%
Component 3	5,378,470	49%	2,339,793	57%	44%
Component 4	1,583,012	15%	329,613	8%	21%
Project Management	517,844	5%	452,109	11%	87%
TOTAL	10,874,659	100%	4,122,512	100%	38%

Source: Financial reports from FAO

169. These financial figures indicate a low disbursement of the GEF grant (38 percent versus an elapsed time of 68 percent). This is low but the MTR Team also find it in line with what happened with the implementation of the project, particularly when considering that the approval of the project in all countries was late, including Turkmenistan, which completed the approval and registration only in August 2020. Additionally, the implementation was further delayed due to the impact of COVID-19 since early 2020.

170. The figures presented in table 9 above also indicate that 35% of the component 1 budget has been expended, 26% of component 2, 44% of component 3, 21% of component 4 and, finally 87% of the project management budget.

171. Considering that this project budget is made up of recipient country GEF STAR allocations, the MTR Team requested a financial report of project expenditures per country. It was noted that this report was not produced by the FPMIS but had to be

¹⁷ Figures for 2021 include January to February 2021.

made manually by FAO staff. The financial figures per country are presented in table 10 below.

Table 10: FAO-GEF Project Funds Utilization per Country

Country	Budget (USD)	%	Disbursed (USD)	(%)	Disbursed (%)	Remaining (USD)
Regional ¹⁸	1,374,094	12%	997,992	24%	74%	356,072
Kazakhstan	1,801,248	17%	852,384	21%	47%	948,864
Kyrgyzstan ¹⁴	350,125	3%	312,664	8%	89%	37,461
Tajikistan ¹⁴	438,946	4%	198,968	5%	45%	239,978
Turkey	178,975	2%	124,462	3%	70%	54,513
Turkmenistan	2,688,464	25%	324,680	8%	12%	2,363,784
Uzbekistan	4,062,907	37%	1,311,432	32%	32%	2,751,475
TOTAL	\$10,874,659	100%	\$4,122,512	100%	38%	\$6,752,147

Source: Financial reports from FAO

172. At the country level, the level of disbursements of the respective STAR allocations varies a lot but these figures are also in line with the scope and progress made by activities supported by the project in each country. According to the table 10 above, the rate of disbursements of each country STAR allocation goes from 12% in Turkmenistan to 89% in Kyrgyzstan for an average of 38%. Overall, there is a remaining budget of USD 6,752,147 (62% of the GEF grant).
173. The figures in table 10 take also into account a decision made in 2020 to fund a COVID-19 emergency support for Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Based on requests from the governments of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to support the most vulnerable and poor farmers through agricultural resources, FAO, as the executing agency, reviewed the status of farmers in demonstration areas of the project in these two countries and decided to meet the most urgent needs of vulnerable farmers. It resulted in the FAO Budget Holder to approve a budget of USD 170k and 170.1k to respectively Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan; amounts reallocated from the project regional component budget. It included the immediate support to vulnerable rural smallholders and farmers in project sites on value chain development in line with the project strategy, such as seed distribution, greenhouses, small machineries, etc., which have had positive socio-economic impacts on targeted communities.
174. The review of the disbursement profile per year is a good indicator reflecting the pace of implementation of this project since its approval in October 2017 (see diagram on the page). Disbursements for the first two years were limited, followed by a higher level of expenditures in 2020. However, 2020 was also affected by the pandemic and despite that a larger amount was disbursed, it is still far from where it

¹⁸ In the context of COVID-19, a decision was taken to provide emergency support to communities engaged in the implementation of project activities in demonstration areas. A budget of \$170,000 was reallocated from the Regional Component to Kyrgyzstan and \$170,100 to Tajikistan.

should be. The total GEF grant of USD 10.9M represents a disbursement average of just below USD 2.2M per year or USD 181,250 per month. Based on the disbursements at the end of February 2021, the monthly average is only USD 100,550 and the remaining GEF grant amount of USD 6,752,147 represents an average of USD 355,380 per month over the next 19 months (March 2021 to September 2022). It goes without saying that the chance of disbursing the entire GEF grant by end of September 2022 is highly unlikely.

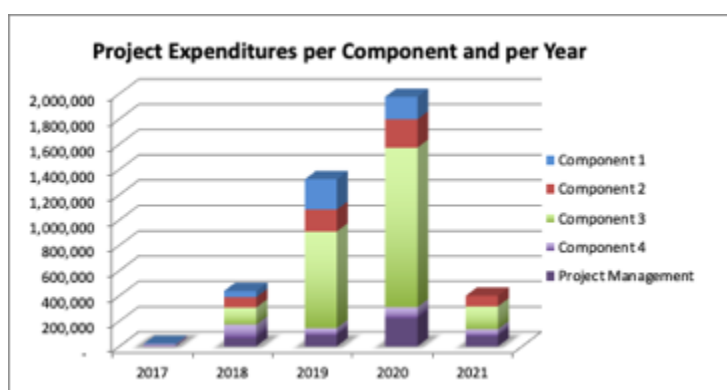


Figure 3: Project Expenditures Per Component and per Year

Partners Co-financing

Finding 5.3b: The co-financing figures as of end of 2020 confirm the relevance and interest of CA countries to focus on land degradation and climate change with increases of investments allocated to these issues. Cases in point are the large, unexpected increases in co-financing from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, due partially to new programmes focusing on soil/land management and integrated natural resources management.

175. Co-financing commitments at the outset of the project totaled the amount of USD 64,885,046 (see table below), which represented about 86 percent of the total amount of the financial resources required in the project document of USD 75,759,705 (GEF grant + co-financing) for the implementation of the project.

Table 11: Co-financing Status

Partners	Type	Co-financing (USD at CEO Endorsement)	%	Actual ¹⁹	% of committed
Ministry of Agriculture of Kazakhstan	In-kind	\$16,640,546	26%	\$52,619,878	316%
Ministry of agriculture, food industry and melioration of Kyrgyzstan	In-kind	-	0%	2,000,000	n/a
Committee of Environmental Protection of Tajikistan	In-kind	1,465,000	2%	500,000	34%
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Turkey	In-kind/Grant	2,000,000	3%	1,030,860	52%
Ministry of Agriculture and Environment Protection of Turkmenistan	In-kind	6,000,000	9%	4,000,000	67%

¹⁹ Figures include 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Partners	Type	Co-financing (USD at CEO Endorsement)	%	Actual ¹⁹	% of committed
Ministry of Water Resources of Uzbekistan	In-kind	23,780,000	37%	123,725,209	520%
ICARDA	In-kind	1,700,000	3%	1,935,000	114%
ICBA	cash and in- kind	560,000	1%	120,800	22%
GIZ	In-kind	909,500	1%	-	0%
ZOI	In-kind	50,000	0%	-	0%
FAO	Cash and in- kind	11,780,000	18%	6,086,707	52%
Total		\$64,885,046	100%	\$192,018,454	301%

Source: Financial reports from FAO and Partners' documents

176. A large amount of this committed co-financing (77 percent – USD 49,885,546) was to come from the 6 participating countries, mostly as in-kind contributions; FAO committed to provide 18 percent (USD 11,780,000) and the international partners a total of USD 3,219,500 or about 5% of the total co-financing committed at the outset of the project. All these commitments were supported by official letters, which were attached to the project document submitted to GEF. A closer look at these figures shows that Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are two major co-financers of this project with respectively 26% and 37% of the total co-financing committed/pledged during the formulation of the project.
177. The Project Implementation Team was able to obtain an update on co-financing from national partners as of end of 2020 (see table 11 above and Appendix 11). These numbers shows that the total amount co-financed to date (end of 2020) is USD 192,018,454 or about 3 times the amount pledge at the formulation stage. The MTR Team also noted that 92% of this amount is from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.
178. Regarding the co-financing contributions from International Partners, as discussed in other parts of this report, they have not collaborated yet with the project, resulting in no co-financing contribution to date. Despite pledges made during the formulation of the project to work together, no joint activities have been implemented yet and the MTR Team did not find any plan to implement joint activities.
179. Based on the review of these co-financing contributions, it confirms the relevance and interest of CA countries to focus on land degradation and climate change. A greater interest from donors/IFIs have resulted in more investments in programmes implemented in the region and focusing on the sustainable natural resources management. Governments have also recognized the risks linked to land degradation and climate change, including negative implications on national food security due to more frequent droughts, unusual freezing seasons or heat waves/ warm winters, uneven precipitation, and floods, etc. Overall, national statistics show that national budgets, donor investments and number of projects have considerably increased in the region during the past 5 years.

180. The large, unexpected increases in co-financing from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are partially explained by specific programmes that were developed and financed over the last few years in these two countries. It includes the *State Programme on Development of Agriculture for 2017-2021* in Kazakhstan, which allocated a large budget for soil/land management related field surveys; and the *State Program to Improve of Irrigated Lands in Uzbekistan*, which allocated additional budgets for all regions of Uzbekistan. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management has been focusing more and more on the integrated management of land resources in dry zones with an increase of projects implemented in this area.
181. The status of co-financing amounts is good news for the project and, more generally, for addressing drought and soil salinity issues in Central Asia. It shows a greater commitment from CA governments to invest in addressing land degradation and climate change, and it is well in line with the disbursement of the GEF grant of this project.

Sub-question 5.4: How partners and stakeholders engaged in implementing the project?

Finding 5.4: National CACILM Boards were retained as national steering committees for the project but they have not functioned as anticipated; resulting in a limited engagement of partners and stakeholders in each country and by extension limited country ownership, except in Uzbekistan. The approach has been changed to create national inter-agency working groups but it is still a work in progress and some of these working groups have not met yet. Nevertheless, they should play a greater role in engaging stakeholders in each country and have a stronger link with the PSC and the overall decision-making process of the project.

182. As described in the project document, a large number of stakeholders were consulted during the preparation/formulation of the project, including at regional, national and local level in demonstration sites. It also includes international and regional organizations and initiatives. From this consultation a list of key actors was identified and documented in the project document with specific roles in implementing the project, including regional institutions, national ministries and agencies, NGOs and CSOs, and private sector farms and enterprises.
183. The implementation of project activities takes place in each country through one of the national partner organizations. The link to the project is mostly through both the national GEF and UNCCD focal points from each country who are members of the Project Steering Committee (PSC).
184. From a project perspective, the engagement of stakeholders is done mostly through two mechanisms: through National Project Managers based in each country to coordinate and engage key stakeholders in implementing project supported activities; and through the PSC and national steering committees.
185. The management arrangements of such regional project are critical for engaging national stakeholders. These arrangements for this project include the selection of the Regional CACILM Council (RCC) which was set up under CACILM-I, as the PSC for this project. It is comprised of the GEF and UNCCD focal points of each participating

countries and FAO. Then, the plan was to use the National CACILM boards as national steering committees at the country level.

186. In theory, these management arrangements should have worked well to engage stakeholders. However, the functioning of these arrangements is not working as it should be; interviews of stakeholders indicate that the project is too top-down. This is also confirmed by design, whereby the project authority and control over project resources are too centralized within FAO away from stakeholders and beneficiaries. The national steering committees should have helped to link the reality on the ground with the management of the project, but it did not work.
187. In order to address this issue, the project has modified the approach and has been in the process of setting up national Inter-agency working groups. It is still a work in progress and some of working groups have not met yet. Additionally, in some countries, focal points who are part of the PSC are not members of these working groups; hence preventing a good communication link between these national committees and the PSC. It is resulting in a limited country ownership of the project. In the meantime, despite the still not-functioning national inter-agency working groups, the MTR Team noted the good partnership between the project and the Ministry of Agriculture in Uzbekistan and between the project and the decentralized units of the Ministry of Agriculture in Kyrgyzstan. It is recommended to reinforce the functioning of these working groups as a mechanism to engage national stakeholders in each country and strengthen the link between these committees and the PSC.
188. Regarding the participation/collaboration with International and regional partners such as WOCAT but also ICARDA, GIZ, CAREC, Bioversity International, and ICBA, relying on their respective expertise and experience to implement jointly some parts of this project. The MTR Team found that so far, not much happened in this area. A small LOA was signed with ICBA, and some work is ongoing with WOCAT to collect SLM best practices and develop the regional platform. The other partners have not been involved in project implementation.

Sub-question 5.5: How effective has the project been in communicating and promoting its key messages and results?

Finding 5.5: the project has been effective in communicating and promoting its key messages and results. It has a communication, information, and promotion strategy in place to guide its activities in this area and so far, it resulted in good outreach metrics such as the publishing of 322 articles in Central Asia media, the regular sending of materials to 159 media outlets, project stories promoted on social media and a quarterly newsletter "Dialogue" sent to a project compiled mailing list of 600 subscribers throughout Central Asia.

189. Communication is a strong area of the project. From the outset of the project, knowledge management and communication have been at the forefront of the implementation of this project. It is part of the project results framework. Under expected outcome 1.2, SLM and CSA knowledge will be made available through a regional platform and communication products prepared and disseminated; under expected outcome 4.1 the project is to disseminate best practices and lessons learnt.

190. In order to implement these communication activities, the project hired a part time *Communication and Outreach Specialist*. In 2020, the project developed a "*Communication, Information and Promotion Strategy for 2020-2022*" with 3 objectives: (i) raise the awareness of the socio-economic aspects of the project; (ii) promote the dissemination of effective agricultural practices and technologies; and (iii) promote changes in the institutional framework and mechanisms for the transition to an effective, sustainable, and integrated use of natural resources for agricultural production throughout Central Asia.
191. So far, the project has been effective in communicating and promoting its key messages and results. It has used workshops and webinars as vehicles to promote SLM technologies and best practices, publication materials, news releases, articles, brochures, newsletters, video materials, national campaign in Uzbekistan, etc. Some metrics include outreach materials sent regularly to 159 offline and online media outlets, 322 articles were published in CA media, project stories have been actively promoted through social media (Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn), and 2 quarterly newsletters "*Dialogue*" were disseminated using a mailing list of over 600 email addresses across Central Asia compiled by the project.

Sub-question 5.6: How does the M&E function contribute to the performance of the project?

Finding 5.6a: Overall, the M&E function of the project is satisfactory. The project has been investing resources to monitor the progress made by the project, including the monitoring of *Boundary Partners* in each country to be a link between government agencies and land users. A set of 11 mostly SMART indicators are used to monitor/measure the progress made by the project at the outcome level and it is recommended to use the three indicators which were identified at the outset to measure the progress at the objective level.

192. A Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan was developed at the formulation stage of the project in accordance with GEF and FAO M&E guidelines and documented in the project document. It defines the responsibilities for M&E, the reporting procedures and schedules, the guidelines for the mid-term and final evaluations, and the indicators to measure the progress of the project. A budget of USD 260k from the GEF grant was allocated to this plan.
193. The MTR Team also noted that the M&E function and its budget were "*embedded*" in the project strategy as component 4. This component is to regularly monitor, assess and evaluate socioeconomic and environmental impacts, to determine whether integrated approaches to natural resources management have a positive impact on ecosystem services and resilience, and livelihoods and food security.
194. A key element of this M&E plan is the list of indicators that is part of the *Results Framework*. It includes a set of 14 indicators – each one with a baseline, a mid-project target and an end of project target - to monitor the performance of the project at the objective and outcome level (see *Appendix 12*). A further set of 31 indicators were identified to monitor the delivery of outputs.
195. The set of 14 indicators did not change since the formulation of the project and have been used to report progress made in the Project Implementation Reports (PIRs).

The MTR Team noted that PIRs do not report progress against the objective, using the 3 performance indicators. These 3 indicators are SMART key indicators to assess the overall progress; the first one is about the area under sustainable management practices; the second one is the number of people with improved food security due to these sustainable management practices; and the third one is the GHG emissions avoided due to these same sustainable management practices. It is recommended to include these in future PIRs to assess the overall performance of the project towards its objective.

196. The MTR Team also noted that output indicators have also been used to report more detailed progress in Project Progress Reports (PPRs). The initial set of 31 indicators to monitor progress at the output level have been slightly altered but not in any significant way: mostly to be more specific.
197. The review of these indicators and targets by the MTR Team reveals that for such a project, it is, overall, an adequate set of – mostly SMART²⁰ - indicators (14+31) to measure the performance of the project. The set of 14 indicators to measure the progress made at the outcome and objective level is relatively simple to track, yet powerful to measure the progress made. However, the review focused on two points related to this set of 14 indicators:
- Three indicators focus on the number of women and men affected positively by the project: number of women and men with improved food security (objective); number of people with improved income from improved DRM practices (outcome 3.1); and the number of people with improved income from improved salinity management (outcome 3.2). Despite being relatively simple, these three indicators could be challenging to measure. As a matter of fact, the MTR Team noted that no measure against these indicators have been reported so far, yet they are a valuable source to measure the outreach of the project and by extension to measure its success. It is recommended that the Project Implementation Team developed a survey to assess the socio-economic benefits of the demonstrations implemented under the outcomes 3.1 & 3.2.
 - These 14 indicators do not really measure the degree of capacities being developed, yet developing capacities is key for sustaining a change of land use practices. This is a limitation of the current M&E framework, however, instead of adding/improving these indicators, it is recommended to focus on reviewing the existing capacities, identify capacity gaps and a plan of actions to address prioritized capacity gaps (*see also sub-question 4.6*).
198. It was also noted that the project hired an international M&E expert to further develop the M&E plan for the project. A review of the set of indicators was done and a focus was on measuring the effectiveness of all training activities, ex ante and ex post, which were viewed as crucial to the success of the project. The drafted plan proposed to implement an Outcome Mapping²¹ approach to monitor the project

²⁰ SMART : Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant or Time bound.

²¹ Outcome Mapping (OM) is a method for planning, monitoring, and evaluating development activities that aim to bring about social change.

progress with the identification of "*Boundary Partners (BP)*" and a focus on monitoring capacity development.

199. Based on this M&E plan, the Project Implementation Team identified "*Boundary Partners*" in each participating country and developed "*outcome journal*" for each BP with a scorecard to assess the progress made over time.
200. In parallel to the development of this M&E plan and the identification and assessment of BPs in each country, the Team also had to address the question of linkages between activities conducted in each country and the project log-frame with its targets. For instance, how to meet/divide for each country some numerical targets set at the project level. It is particularly true for outcome 3.1 and 3.2, whereby both targets are quantitative: numbers (2) of ha applying drought management technologies and salinity management and numbers (2) of people with improved income. It is not clear how to divide these targets among the five CA countries, particularly when considering that the available budget for each country vary a lot. Nevertheless, the Team attempted to design 6 log-frames, one for each CA country and one for the regional component, though the content of each log-frame is still very close to the main one for the project (also called the *Results Framework*).
201. The MTR Team found that the project has certainly been investing resources to monitor and measure the progress made. Monitoring information is also well reported through annual progress reports: three annual Project Progress Reports (PPRs 2018, 2019 & 2020; and two Project Implementation Reviews (PIR 2019 & 2020). These reports follow the FAO and GEF guidance to report project progress. Despite that reporting progress against the objective is not mandatory, it is recommended to measure the progress made at this level to provide a strategic snapshot on how well the project is progressing.
202. Overall, monitoring such project intervening in five countries is complex, which is also compounded by the fact that the project has ambitious targets, short time frame in some countries due to late approval, and very different budgets from one country to the next. The scope is such that the MTR Team found that there is a risk for the Implementation Team to be too busy focusing on mobilizing project resources throughout Central Asia to ensure the delivery of activities and outputs and less focused on the higher-level "*big picture*" that is to reach the expected outcomes. Reporting in the PPRs format is also a way to focus much on outputs and activities delivered. It is normal that day-to-day operations are focusing on delivery; however, monitoring/measuring progress should focus much on higher level results (outcomes) to assess how the project is progressing towards its objective.

Finding 5.6b: In the PIR 2020, the ratings given for the progress towards expected outcomes 1.1, 1.2 and 2.1 were *Highly Satisfactory*. Based on the findings of this MTR, these ratings are too optimistic and were revised to *Satisfactory*; similar to other outcomes 2.2, 3.1 and 3.2. The rating for outcome 4.1 is HS which is consistent with the quality of the M&E function of the project. it is a *Satisfactory* project, with the potential to become highly satisfactory if the project is able to increase the engagement of national stakeholders and their appropriation of project results.

203. The ratings given in these PIRs were also reviewed. In each PIR, ratings are given for each outcome as well as ratings of the overall progress of the project towards meeting its objectives and its implementation progress. The FAO-GEF rating system includes a six-point rating scale to measure progress towards results, and project implementation. Ratings are given by the Project Manager, the Lead Technical Officer, the Budget Holder and the TCI-GEF Funding Liaison Officer. An action plan is provided for all ratings equal or below marginally satisfactory (MS).
204. In the latest PIR 2020 (July 2019 to June 2020), the overall rating of progress towards achieving the objective is Satisfactory (S), the implementation progress was rated as Highly Satisfactory (HS) and the overall risk was rated as Medium, a change from Low in the preceding year due mostly to the impact of COVID-19. Ratings given for each outcome were HS for outcomes 1.1, 1.2, 2.1 and 4.1 and S for outcomes 2.2, 3.1 and 3.2. The overall ratings on the front page of the PIR 2020 are S for both overall rating of progress towards achieving objective/outcomes, and overall implementation progress rating.
205. Based on the review conducted for this MTR, three outcomes (1.1, 1.2, 2.1) were rated as HS in the PIR 2020; this is too optimistic. Based on the findings of this MTR, these ratings cannot be fully justified and a rating of S is more appropriate. As per the rating guidance for Satisfactory, the *"level of outcomes achieved was as expected and/or there were no or minor shortcomings"*. In the meantime, it is true that good progress has been made under these outcomes but achieving these expected outcomes will require more engagement of national stakeholders to appropriate these results and sustain the change of the way land use is managed. Rating of S for outcomes 2.2, 3.1 and 3.2 are consistent with the progress made so far. Similar to the other outcomes above, good progress had been made, however, the challenge remain for making sustainable changes in the way drought risk and soil salinity are managed. Overall, it is certainly a Satisfactory project, which has the potential to be highly satisfactory at the end if the project is able to increase the engagement of national stakeholders and their appropriation of project results.
206. Finally, in the context of the seventh replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund (GEF-7), the GEF Council approved the *Updated Results Architecture for GEF-7* to improve the GEF's ability to capture and report on results. It resulted in the identification of a simplified results framework made up of eleven core indicators and simplified monitoring and reporting requirements but capturing gender results and socio-economic co-benefits.
207. Since the CACILM-II project had been approved prior to June 30, 2018, it needs to shift to GEF core indicators and sub-indicators at the next available opportunity in the project cycle and is no longer required to submit tracking tools. Therefore, the MTR Team reviewed and confirm the new GEF 7 Core Indicator report completed by the Project Implementation Team for this MTR (*see Appendix 13*). Additionally, the MTR Team reviewed how to introduce these GEF 7 core indicators in the current *Results Framework* of the project. Among the list of 11 core indicators only three are relevant for the CACILM-II project:

- #4 Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectares; excluding protected areas) with sub indicator #4.3 Area of landscapes under sustainable land management IN production systems
- #6 Greenhouse gas emissions mitigated (metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent) with sub indicator #6.1 Carbon sequestered or emissions avoided in the AFOLU sector, and #6.2 Emissions avoided.
- #11 Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment

Indicators #4 (and sub-indicator #4.3) and #6 (and sub-indicator 6.1 and 6.2) are already tracked by the current indicators #1 and #3 (see *list of indicators in Appendix 12*). Regarding indicator #11, it is a matter to capture two data points for the indicator #2 that is “*Number of women and men with improved food security*”. One point would be the number of women and men co-benefitting from GEF investments and the second data point the number of women and men with improved food security. It is recommended to introduce the 3 GEF-7 core indicators in the *Results Framework* of the project on the basis described above.

3.6 Cross-cutting Dimensions

Question 6: To what extent cross cutting issues have been considered in the formulation and implementation of the project?

Sub-question 6.1: To what extent were gender considerations taken into account in designing and implementing the project?

Finding 6.1: Gender considerations have been taken into account in the formulation and implementation of the project. The approach is in line with FAO and GEF Gender Equality Strategies but more integration with UNFCCC and UNCCD gender equality action plans is recommended. Gender considerations are mostly taken into account through the implementation of demonstration areas with the support of *Boundary* and *Strategic Partners*. However, so far, measuring the progress on how women and men are impacted by the project in term of improved income and improved food security is limited. No socio-economic analysis, including gender issues, has been done so far, to measure this progress.

208. Within the context of this MTR, FAO decided to expand the review on gender aspects of the project. As described in section 1.5 on the methodology of this review, the MTR Team undertook an extended gender analysis to review this cross-cutting dimension, using the SEAGA approach. Key results are presented below and the report on this analysis can be found in Appendix 15.
209. The formulation of the project considered the GEF and FAO Gender Equality Strategies and is aligned with the GEF gender equality entry points and FAO gender equality objectives identified under the GEF 7 cycle. The main gender targets of the CACILM II Project are to improve access, use, and control of resources for women, including land, water, forest, and fisheries in the context of INRM and their active participation in the decision-making process.
210. Regarding the UNFCCC and UNCCD regional and national gender equality instruments, the MTR Team found that there is a need to better integrate and

disseminate UNFCCC and UNCCD gender equality action plans into project activities. It would contribute to strengthen the promotion of gender equality in INRM throughout Central Asia and to be a “catalyst of environmental progress for countries engaged in LDN target-setting²²”.

211. Furthermore, the MTR Team found that gender issues were not integrated enough in regional activities of the project. Yet, it is important to emphasize that mainstreaming gender issues into regional activities with the involvement of Turkey, which has an extended experience in this area would be an additional catalyst to promote gender equality in Central Asia.
212. As detailed in the CACILM II *Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy (GESI)*, field activities are mainly conducted through *Boundary* and *Strategic Partners*. However, most LOAs with these partners were signed before the involvement of the gender team in 2020, almost two years after the start of project implementation. No baseline gender analysis was conducted at the time, and, therefore, a gender equality agenda was not included in these LOAs signed before the involvement of the gender team in 2020, such as outreach plan, gender reporting mechanisms and, overall, use the powerbroker role of these partners with communities involved in demonstration areas.
213. In December 2020, the project gender team conducted a fruitful online training event for stakeholders in Kazakhstan. This training event was prepared based on a “needs” and “awareness” analysis conducted in October 2020, which was crucial in meeting expectations of stakeholders. This kind of awareness trainings should be continuous, prioritized, and disseminated to other countries as soon as possible. Online trainings would save time and effort in the pandemic period.
214. The impact of this training was seen through a gender-targeted interview conducted by the MTR Team. One *Boundary Partner* representative was able to clearly express the needs and make concrete solutions on what could be done in their region. The project needs to focus on these *Boundary* and *Strategic Partners* as gatekeepers and key informants in demonstration areas. Overall, the intervention of the gender team can be seen in project activities, which have a more gender focus. All LOAs signed in 2021 include gender considerations.
215. Due to a lack of baseline data, the project has limited information about legal, cultural, or religious constraints on women’s participation in the decision-making processes and more generally on existing gender power dynamics in Central Asia.
216. The main strategy for the project to reach women and men in demonstration areas is through the involvement of the *Boundary* and *Strategic Partners* as well as through the Project Implementation Team, which oversee activities of these partners in

²² UNCCD Gender Action Plan as a mechanism for improving the living conditions of affected populations : first experiences and the way forward (https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2019-01/ICCD_CRIC%2817%29_CRP.1-1900678E.pdf)

demonstration areas. However, this process has been interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

217. As stated in the GESI Strategy, gender issues have been mainstreamed into AWPAs and reported in progress reports by an experienced gender team. However, due to a late startup of the gender team and the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, current gender targets differ for each country. For example, the level of participation to training events is ranging from 15% to 55% of women.
218. Additionally, the project has, so far, not conducted any socio-economic analysis including gender issues. Without such knowledge, it is difficult, if not impossible, to measure how women and men are impacted by results of the project. The *Results Framework* includes 3 indicators related to how women and men are impacted by results of the project (see *Appendix 12*). Indicator #2 measures how many women and men benefit from improved food security due to project interventions; and indicators #28 and #35 measure how many women and men have their incomes improved due to the implementation of DRM and salt-affected best practices. To be able to observe any changes for these indicators, a baseline and subsequent studies/surveys would be needed, including qualitative and quantitative data.
219. Related to this, the gender-targeted interviews revealed that one main indicator to report on by the *Boundary Partners* is the number of women and men benefiting from their interventions. There is a need to go beyond this and assess how women and men are impacted in demonstration areas in terms of income and food security.
220. Gender-disaggregated data based on a strong baseline would provide valuable information for decision makers to take corrective actions and prepare gender – responsive UNCCD reporting process. It goes without saying that indicators should go beyond the number of beneficiaries.
221. Finally, a dedicated budget allocated to gender-related work would provide better resources to achieve gender equality objectives. As a cross-cutting area, there is a need to prioritize and allocate a budget for mainstreaming gender targeted activities. According to the *Capacity Building Plan for 2020*, USD 17,000 were planned for gender-related activities. When compared with the overall project budget, there is a need for a larger dedicated budget to gender targeted activities.
222. Based on the review of how gender considerations were taken into account by the project, a series of recommendations to strengthen the gender approach includes:
 - Conduct a socio-economic survey, including gender issues, in line with GEF recommendation in this area.
 - Revise the monitoring mechanism to measure the performance of the project in line with the survey's findings.
 - Conduct more stakeholders needs analyses, including *Boundary* and *Strategic Partners*, to be used when designing gender equality training events.
 - Prepare stakeholder engagement plans to ensure women's equal participation in project supported activities.
 - Dedicate and approve specific budget for gender related activities.

- Involve Turkey's expertise in mainstreaming gender in the agricultural sector, including its extended experience in developing capacities in gender sensitive rural advisory services.
- Provide more visibility of UNFCCC and UNCCD gender action plans and gender equality objective on the project and ensure their connection with GEF and FAO strategies.
- Continued the close coordination on gender matters among National Project Managers, field personnel, gender team, and *Boundary and Strategic Partners*.

Sub-question 6.2: To what extent have environmental and socio-economic concerns been taken into consideration in the design and implementation of the project?

Finding 6.2: According to the 9 environmental and social safeguard risks, the project was assessed as a low-risk project with no or minimal potential negative environmental and/or social impacts, and it still is a low-risk project at the MTR. In the meantime, the project needs to be screened with the updated GEF policy on ESS (2019).

223. At the time of the formulation of the project, a full environmental and social screening was done for each project outcome that raised a potential risk according to FAO's Environmental and Social Guidelines as well as the GEF's Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards. This screening identified three risks: (i) would this project aim at improving an irrigation scheme (without expansion)? (ii) would this project affect water quality; and (iii) would this project establish or manage planted forests? The assessed risk levels for all three risks were rated as low. Furthermore, the assessment was concluded with the plan that the project will undertake monitoring and evaluation (M&E) at the site, district/oblast, and national levels of ecological, social, and economic variables. This assessment was documented in the project document in section 3 Feasibility and Annex 7. Following this assessment, a *Risk Classification Certification Form* was completed by the FAO-LTO confirming the Low rating and was attached to the project document as Annex 9.
224. Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) risks have also been reviewed every year and reported in the PIRs. No change to the risk classification rated low was reported in both PIRs (2019 & 2020).
225. The MTR Team reviewed the ratings provided in the *Project Environmental and Social (E&S) Screening Checklist* against the findings of this MTR and concluded that no changes were observed. When considering the 9 ESS, it is still a "low risk" project.
226. In the meantime, the GEF updated its Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards (June 2019). The updated policy has now nine *Minimum Standards* for agency policies, procedures, systems, and capabilities related to identifying and addressing Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts in projects and programs:
 - a) Environmental and Social Assessment, Management and Monitoring;
 - b) Accountability, Grievance and Conflict Resolution;
 - c) Biodiversity Conservation and the Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources;
 - d) Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement;
 - e) Indigenous Peoples;

- f) Cultural Heritage;
- g) Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention;
- h) Labor and Working Conditions; and
- i) Community Health, Safety and Security.

It is recommended that the project be screened against the updated GEF policy on ESS.

4 Lessons learned

- This type of project needs to have a communication outcome embedded in the *Results Framework* to clearly have a focus on the need to share, disseminate relevant information throughout the intervention areas and broadly in the region with similar conditions.
- In-country-based National Project Managers (NPMs) are critical to anchor a regional project into national realities, including their communication role between the project and national stakeholders.
- Regional projects with very different budget allocations per country are not conducive for developing good regional cooperation and collaboration among national partners.
- Limited budget for one country can stimulate creativity/innovation, thus increasing efficiency of project implementation.
- Country (national) ownership is key for the appropriation of project achievements and the success of regional projects including the long-term sustainability of these achievements.
- Due to their multiplicity, it is difficult to keep all key national partners/beneficiaries engaged in a regional project and up to date on the overall project (its strategy and its progress).
- In order to produce a change in the way natural resources are managed, it is critical to assess the socio-economic benefits of this change for the users of these resources, which will play a critical role in the sustainability of the change.
- Changing agricultural practices is a gradual process whereby farmers need to build confidence that these new measures have socio-economic benefits.
- Implementing a gender agenda on such project requires more consistent on-the-ground adaptation to local realities to be effective.
- Social mobilization to engage stakeholders and beneficiaries is key for the success of demonstrations of new agricultural measures, then, their proper assessments and sharing as appropriate.
- Establishing national knowledge platforms is the first step before these platforms can be network together at regional level.
- Such project should have a clear inception phase, using this opportunity to review and to adapt the project strategy, the M&E plan, and the stakeholder engagement plan to each country of intervention.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1 - Relevance. The project is well aligned with GEF, UNCCD and FAO objectives, including with the recently developed FAO *Strategic Framework 2022-2031*, which focuses on *four betters*. The focus of the project on drought risk and soil salinity management is highly relevant for the 6 participating countries and is a direct response to national priorities.

227. The objective of the project that is to scale up INRM in drought prone and salt affected agricultural production landscapes in recipient countries project is highly relevant for the 6 participating countries. It provides CSA and SLM technologies and knowledge to directly address drought and salinity issues. It is a clear response to national priorities of recipient countries. It is an ambitious project strategy with numerous activities to be implemented but the question remains as to how sustainable some of these activities will be. Additionally, despite that a coherent approach between the project and other relevant initiatives was well articulated in the project document with the anticipated cooperation and collaboration in implementing some activities, it has not happened yet.

Conclusion 2 - Effectiveness. The project has made good progress; however, since early 2020, the pace of delivery of project activities has been affected by the pandemic COVID-19 and it is still early to be able to assess the full impact on the delivery of the project.

228. The project was progressing satisfactorily in line with expectations until the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has impacted the implementation of the project for over a year now. It forced the Project Implementation Team to work from home, focusing mostly on online meetings and webinars and slowing down of field activities. In the meantime, the project is well monitored, and progress is well reported. The project is now equipped with an M&E Plan to measure the performance of the project, a *Communication and Outreach Plan 2020 and Project Visibility Strategy* to communicate SLM/INRM knowledge throughout Central Asia, and a regional Gender Mainstreaming and Social Inclusion strategy to ensure that gender is well considered throughout the implementation of the project.

Conclusion 3 - Effectiveness. Under the first component, the project has made significant progress in fostering an effective delivery of INRM through multi-country collaboration and partnership.

229. A key achievement so far is that the project has been accepted in an advisory role with the ICSD. The project is “*at the table*” to participate to regional dialogues focusing on the development of SLM/INRM policies. It also developed a harmonized methodology on ELD and valuation of ecosystems adapted to CA countries, that is now ready to be used. The project also identified incentives to scale up INRM, and finally the development of a CSA/SLM/INRM knowledge platform is underway, though no host has been identified yet.

Conclusion 4 - Effectiveness. Under the second component, progress was made towards integrating resilience into policy, legal and institutional frameworks for INRM and demonstrate incentives for CSA.

230. The project supported the completion of baseline analyses of national policies and institutional frameworks; contributed to the revision of some UNCCD National Action Plans (NAP); produced some drought vulnerability maps; used the SHARP tool to assess the resilience of agro-ecosystems; and conducted a series of meetings and consultations to strengthen intersectoral collaboration and coordination mechanisms. It also assessed some agro-pastoral value chains and identified "Boundary Partners" in each country, to be the conduit for supporting smallholder farmers in implementing CSA practices. Finally, under the COVID-19 emergency situation an ad-hoc decision was made to shift part of the regional component budget to finance emergency response actions in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan providing immediate support to vulnerable rural smallholders and farmers in the project sites such as value chain development in livestock production, procurement of drought- and salt-resistant seeds, fertilizers, home-garden tools for processing, and greenhouses, capacity development in producing food under drought conditions and to improve family income and nutrition.

Conclusion 5 - Effectiveness. Under the third component, CSA practices are being demonstrated in drought prone and salt affected production landscapes.

231. The project has been focusing on the development of land-use plans for selected production landscapes throughout Central Asia, such as a multi-stakeholder pasture plans for 2 districts in Kazakhstan and a pasture management plan for one district in Uzbekistan. It produced guidelines on salinity management in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. It also supported several training events to strengthen knowledge on the management of drought risk and soil salinity. Finally, the project is demonstrating drought mitigation technologies and best practices in combating salinization in selected production landscapes in the five CA countries.

Conclusion 6 - Efficiency. After a slow startup phase, a skilled Project Implementation Team has finally found its way to successfully mobilize project resources and deliver results in a cost-effective way.

232. Project resources are allocated prudently, and the Team has been using a variety of management tools to get the job done by adapting what is needed to be done with what is possible to do while maintaining adherence to the overall project design and timeline. The flexibility of the implementation has been particularly critical to adapt to the many organizational and staff changes that happened with stakeholders since the start of the project. Technical expertise from FAO, technical partners and the international and national consulting industry is being used efficiently and on an as-needed basis. It provides the project with a broad range of expertise and competencies when it is needed. Finally, there is a good balance in utilizing local and international expertise to further develop local expertise in SLM/INRM, while at the same time, bringing "state-of-the-art" knowledge to the region.

Conclusion 7 - Sustainability. The concise sustainability strategy described in the project document is more evidence demonstrating the ambitious scope of the project and achievements may not be sustainable.

233. On one hand it is true that socio-economic benefits achieved in demonstration areas should contribute to the social sustainability of project results, which could benefit a total of over 1M women and men. However, on the other hand, the assumptions made for the financial sustainability of project achievements are not convincing. Among the anticipated measures was that integrated approaches to drought risk management and salinity control would be mainstreamed into country sector budgets. It is a valid and one of the best measures to financially sustain the introduction of these new measures but how feasible it is. Additionally, institutional and governance risks to sustainability was not mentioned, yet it is one of the most critical risk areas when it comes to the sustainability of project achievements. The project needs to focus more on institutionalizing project achievements. Related to this, there is a need for a more holistic approach to develop capacities beyond supporting training events (skills and knowledge). The change sought by the project also necessitates the need to improve structures, mechanisms, and procedures of related institutions and to develop a favorable enabling environment. Overall, a greater focus on sustainability and replicability of project achievements is needed to identify realistic measures for the long-term sustainability of these achievements.

Conclusion 8 – Factors Affecting Performance. It is an ambitious project with a broad scope addressing four key barriers, covering the entire region of Central Asia with 5 different governments and five very different budgets. There is a danger for the project to *"be spread too thin"*.

234. In addition to its geographical scope, the project delivers on many fronts such as Economics of Land Degradation; Valuation of Ecosystem Services; Rural Advisory Services; Early Warning System: climate change related disaster risk management and agro-meteorology services; Community resilience assessment using SHARP tool; Biosalinity technologies; Regional Knowledge Management Platform; Drought and salinity maps; Estimation of CO₂ balance where SLM technologies are applied using the Carbon Benefits Tool, etc. The risk is to try to do it all and not being able to develop the minimal capacities required for achievements to be sustained.

Conclusion 9 – Factors Affecting Performance. It is a complex project to manage and administer with a cumbersome *"chain of command"*. Nevertheless, a good interaction for implementing and executing the project among project staff and FAO staff in country offices, in the Subregional office, and at headquarters, led to find a way to make it work efficiently despite the complex management and administration setup.

235. Managing and administering the project is complex with a long and cumbersome *"chain of command"*. The project has 5 offices and a total staff plus part/full-time experts of 33 people (8 women and 25 men) and, with a good interaction among project staff and FAO staff, they found a way to make it work efficiently.

Conclusion 10 – Factors Affecting Performance. This is a project that is efficiently implemented and executed but it is also a project somewhat too FAO centric - FAO is

alone in the "*driver seat!*" - and the PSC, with the participation of UNCCD and GEF focal points from each country, is not enough to engage a broader range of key stakeholders and national partner organizations, which is affecting the country ownership of the project and over the long-term will affect its effectiveness.

236. The project is implemented and executed by FAO, it has a complex management and administration function, and the involvement of national stakeholders and beneficiaries in the project decision-making process is limited. The result is a project that is efficiently implemented but that is also a project somewhat too FAO centric whereby national focal points, key stakeholders and national partner organizations are not engaged enough, preventing a good effective country ownership.

Conclusion 11 – Factors Affecting Performance. To the end of February 2021, project disbursements are low with only 38% of the GEF grant expended versus 68% of the elapsed time, due mostly to a slow start of the implementation of project activities and the impact of COVID-19 since early 2020. It is highly unlikely that the remaining GEF grant of over USD 6.75M will be disbursed over the remaining 19 months of implementation. In the meantime, actual co-financing amounts are higher than anticipated with an actual amount as of end of 2020 being about 3 times the amounts pledged at the formulation stage.

237. Disbursements per component are about 35% of component 1 budget, 26% of component 2, 44% of component 3, 21% of component 4 and 87% of the project management budget. Expenditures per country are also unequal. They vary from 12% of the budget for Turkmenistan to 89% for Kyrgyzstan. Based on the disbursement profile so far, it is highly unlikely that the entire GEF grant will be disbursed by the end of the project in September 2022. In the meantime, the good co-financing figures confirm the relevance and interest of CA countries to focus on land degradation and climate change with increases of investments allocated to these issues. Cases in point are the large, unexpected increases in co-financing from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, due partially to new programmes focusing on soil/land management and integrated natural resources management. This financial situation would support the proposal for a no-cost time extension.

Conclusion 12 – Factors Affecting Performance. After 41 months of implementation, the project is still trying to set up a type of national coordination mechanism to oversee the implementation of the project in each country. So far, it resulted in a limited engagement of national partners and stakeholders in the implementation of the project and by extension a limited country ownership of the project; though good progress has been made in this area in Uzbekistan and to some extent in Kyrgyzstan.

238. The engagement of stakeholders is done mostly through two mechanisms: through National Project Managers based in each country to coordinate and engage key stakeholders in implementing project supported activities; and through the PSC and national inter-agency working groups. The latter should play a greater role in engaging stakeholders in each country and have a stronger link with the PSC and the overall decision-making process of the project.

Conclusion 13 – Factors Affecting Performance. The project has been very effective in communicating and promoting its key messages and results.

239. It has a communication, information, and promotion strategy in place to guide its activities in this area and so far, it resulted in good outreach metrics such as the publishing of 322 articles, the regular sending of materials to 159 media outlets, project stories promoted on social media and a quarterly newsletter "*Dialogue*" sent to a project compiled mailing list of 600 subscribers throughout Central Asia.

Conclusion 14 – Factors Affecting Performance. The Team has been investing resources to monitor the progress made by the project at the country level. Overall, a set of 11 mostly SMART indicators are used to measure the performance of the project at the outcome level. It is recommended to use the three indicators which were identified at the outset to measure the progress at the objective level.

240. A Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan was developed at the formulation stage. A budget of USD 260k from the GEF grant was allocated to this plan. Furthermore, the M&E function and its budget were "*embedded*" in the project strategy as component 4 to regularly monitor, assess, and evaluate socioeconomic and environmental impacts of project interventions, and to determine whether integrated approaches to natural resources management have a positive impact on ecosystem services and resilience, and livelihoods and food security. The project has also endorsed an outcome mapping approach to monitor the project progress with the identification of "*Boundary Partners (BP)*" and a focus on monitoring capacity development.

Conclusion 15 – Cross-Cutting Dimensions. Gender considerations are in line with FAO and GEF Gender Equality Strategies. They have been taken into account in the formulation and implementation of the project. However, it also found that no socio-economic analysis, including gender issues, has been done so far. Therefore, no progress can be reported against key indicators measuring how women and men are impacted by results of the project in term of improved income and improved food security.

5.2 Recommendations

241. As discussed throughout this MTR report, the project has an ambitious strategy with a large number of activities to be implemented in a relatively short timeframe and limited budget. Therefore, the MTR recommends that a more strategic approach is taken, focusing on where the project can have the most impact in the remaining time. The recommendations presented in the table below are suggested in this context.

Table 12: Recommendations

Rec #	Rationale for recommendation	Recommendation	Responsibility	Timing/dates for actions
R.1	Currently, progress reports do not measure the performance of the implementation in reaching the project objective, yet three indicators and their corresponding targets to measure the performance of the project at this level exist. Together they would provide critical information for assessing the contribution of the project towards the intended Global Environmental Benefits (GEB) through tracking the total area (ha) of drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture	As the project is entering its remaining phase of 19 months, measuring the performance of the project towards its objective is needed.	PMU, FAO and PSC	Next PIR-2021

Rec #	Rationale for recommendation	Recommendation	Responsibility	Timing/dates for actions
	production landscapes under sustainable management practices; the number of women and men with improved food security due to these new measures; and the GHG emissions avoided or reduced (tons CO ₂ e) after the implementation of these new measures.			
R.2	The original plan was to use the national CACILM boards as National Steering Committees at the country level as a link between the project management and the reality on the ground in each country. However, the functioning of these arrangements did not work. A new approach is to set up national inter-agency working groups, but it is still a work in progress, and some have not met yet. Nevertheless, there are critical instruments for promoting SLM/INRM technologies and best practices in each country, engaging national stakeholders, and contributing to a greater country ownership of the project. They should also play a key role in institutionalizing project achievements in each country.	The role of National Inter-Agency Working Groups in the implementation of the project needs to be strengthened as a mechanism to engage national stakeholders, including a focus on the institutionalization of project achievements in each country	PMU, FAO, PSC and NSCs	ASAP
R.3	<p>The current NTE (not to exceed) ending date of the project is October 2022. A request for a no-cost time extension was discussed in the PIR 2020 to postpone the NTE to December 2023, on the basis that the project agreement in Turkmenistan was finally signed on August 12, 2019, but the national registration process was only finalized in August 2020. Therefore, the start to implement the project in Turkmenistan was delayed by 34 months from the “official” starting date of October 2017. In other countries, the actual date of the start of implementation started only around May-June 2018. Overall, the start of the implementation of activities in countries was delayed. This request to postpone the NTE in the PIR 2020 was only discussed and no decision was made, pending the result of this MTR.</p> <p>As the implementation of the project started to move swiftly in early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic hampered the progress and a lot of activities were postponed, pending for better days to restart these activities. At the time of the MTR, it is still not clear as to when a certain normalcy of operations will return. Additionally, the project has had to face several changes such as the political changes in Kazakhstan with the Presidential election, government staff turnover at key ministries, reform of the institutional framework, delayed appointment of the UNCCD and GEF focal points, etc. These changes have negatively affected the timing of project implementation, particularly in Kazakhstan over the period 2018 and 2019.</p>	To extend the project for up to 2 years (a no-cost time extension), however, the final decision should be made only after conducting a financial analysis/work plans to identify scope, costs, and timing of activities to be implemented with the remaining country budgets and how to finance the regional component and the project management costs	PMU, FAO and PSC	To be submitted to the next PSC meeting

Rec #	Rationale for recommendation	Recommendation	Responsibility	Timing/dates for actions
	<p>From a finance point of view, at the time of the MTR, the project has spent 38% of the GEF grant versus 68% of its elapsed time with a start date of October 2017. The project has, therefore, underspent since its start and has the financial resources for a no-cost time extension. A 2-year no-cost time extension to end in December 2024, is recommended to complete key elements of the project and time to reinforce the sustainability of its achievements. Adding 24 months to the lifetime of the project would still give the project a monthly disbursement average of USD 157,030, which would be higher than the current monthly average of USD 100,550.</p> <p>However, extending the timeline of the project raises two important points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The status of the STAR allocation in each country varies a lot in term of percentage and available dollars in each country. The variance goes from Turkmenistan with a budget utilization of only 12% of its STAR allocation representing a remaining budget of over USD 2.4M to Kyrgyzstan, which has used almost all of its budget including the COVID-19 emergency response budget. • The budget of the regional component is already consumed by 73% and the project management budget by 87%. Adding 24 months of operations would undoubtedly overspend these 2 budgets. <p>Before this recommendation can be made, a complete financial analysis of the project is needed in order to identify the scope, the costs, and the timeframe of activities, which could be implemented in each recipient country and how to finance the regional component as well as the project management costs.</p>			
R.4	<p>Three indicators focus on the number of women and men affected positively by the project: number of women and men with improved food security (objective level); number of people with improved income from improved DRM practices; and the number of people with improved income from improved salinity management. The indicator at the objective level is one of 3 indicators to measure the success of this project. It goes without saying that this information is crucial for assessing the impact of this project. So far, no measure against these indicators have been reported. Measuring improved income and/or</p>	<p>To conduct a survey assessing the socio-economic benefits after the introduction of new technologies and best practices and how they improve income and food security for women and men in demonstration areas</p>	<p>PMU, FAO, and PSC</p>	<p>2nd semester of 2021</p>

Rec #	Rationale for recommendation	Recommendation	Responsibility	Timing/dates for actions
	improve food security is challenging but critical to the project when considering its strategy.			
R.5	These NPM positions are critical for the project; they act as "anchor points" of the project in each country. They are "on the ground" to establish relationships with stakeholders and partnerships to implement activities supported by the project. They also contribute to a greater visibility of the project overall. Hiring a part time NPM will focus on developing a work plan to implement activities as anticipated in the project document, and to increase the involvement of Turkish expertise in the implementation of field activities throughout Central Asia.	To hire a Turkey-based part time NPM for the remaining period of the project	PMU, FAO, and PSC	Decision at next PSC meeting
R.6.	Turkey has been more of a service provider to CA countries than a beneficiary of GEF financial support to improve its management of drought risks and soil salinity. It resulted in a poor visibility of Turkey in project reports and communication products, despite being a key player for the organization of numerous training events, seminars, and workshops.	The activities supported by Turkey need to be more visible, particularly in progress reports and in communication products	PMU, FAO and PSC	Next PIR-2021
R.7	Extension services are a critical link between government policies and strategies and women and men farmers. In the case of this project, which is about to change land use practices, such services are crucial to reach out to all these farmers and more generally to all land users. They will play an important role in sustaining project achievements and particularly to replicate these achievements throughout Central Asia. The project has undertaken to conduct national extension services assessment to identify the current capacity in this area and what is needed to strengthen this area. The project has also identified " <i>Boundary Partners</i> " and is supporting the development of their capacity to provide such services. As a critical area, the project should support the institutionalization of the best extension practices to sustain an "outreach model" promoting SLM/INRM measures to farmers, dekhani farmers and small land plot owners throughout Central Asia.	To continue to support governments in strengthening their rural advisory services (extension services)	PMU, FAO and PSC	Next AWP
R.8	CAREC has been implementing a project in CA to Pilot Regional Approaches for Combating Sand and Dust Storms and Drought. It is funded by UNCCD with a budget of 588,000€. CAREC is to work with the UNCCD Focal Points as well as with the UNCCD Appointed National Institutions in each country. The project expected deliverables include: national working groups; national kick-off meetings coordinated; vulnerability maps	To increase the cooperation with CAREC to find synergies between the 2 initiatives, particularly with the project funded by UNCCD, when seeking to	PMU, FAO, and PSC	2 nd semester of 2021

Rec #	Rationale for recommendation	Recommendation	Responsibility	Timing/dates for actions
	produced; comprehensive national sand and dust storm plan developed; and regional mid-term strategy for sand and dust storm management compiled. These deliverables are closely related with some deliverables of this CACILM-II project.	institutionalize SLM technologies and approaches in Central Asia		
R.9	A coherent approach was well articulated in the project document with the anticipated participation of most key related international and regional partners in the implementation of the project. However, since the start of the implementation of the project, the cooperation and collaboration among these initiatives and the project has been limited; yet there is much to gain in working together on these types of issues.	The project needs to reach out to international and regional partners seeking more cooperation and possibly collaboration in close relation with national governments	PMU and PSC	Prior to next PSC meeting
R.10	Capacity development is a key factor for the success of this project; however, it is mostly viewed by the project as training, which is the transfer of skills and knowledge. This approach is too narrow, and much more is needed to develop the capacity of a system to change the way drought risk is managed and soil salinity management is practiced. In addition to the training of people, organizational procedures, mechanisms, and structures, need to be improved, and the related enabling environment (policies and laws) need to adequately support the implementation of new CSA/SLM/INRM approaches and technologies. This is only when all these pieces are coming together that the desired change may occur and should be sustained. As the project need to focus on the institutionalization of project achievements, capacity assessments of relevant organizations/institutions would provide the project with capacity gaps and a plan of actions to address the most critical gaps related to drought risk management and soil salinity management.	To conduct capacity assessments of key relevant organizations using the FAO Strategy on capacity development in order to identify capacity gaps, particularly at the institutional level and to develop a plan of actions focusing on the institutionalization of project achievements.	PMU, FAO, and PSC	2 nd semester of 2021
R.11	In the context of COVID-19 regulations, project staff were forced to adapt and work online from home. The delivery mode of all planned workshops and training events were changed to online webinar format. It resulted in much larger audiences for each event connecting from all over Central Asia, giving access of this knowledge to some participants who would not have had the chance to participate in person. It also resulted in a much more cost-effective way to run webinars when compared to in-person workshops.	Hoping that the interest in webinars lasts, to continue to deliver SLM/INRM knowledge through webinars and focusing more on practical implementation mechanisms of these measures as a cost-effective way to engage a maximum number of stakeholders	PMU	Remaining period of implementation

Rec #	Rationale for recommendation	Recommendation	Responsibility	Timing/dates for actions
		throughout Central Asia.		
R.12	<p>This is an ambitious project and to sustain its achievements, it is critical to plan early the exit of the project to ensure that socio-economic and financial risks as well as required capacities and appropriateness of new technologies and best practices introduced are mitigated. The stated sustainability strategy in the project document reveals some shortcomings. Securing the financial sustainability of project interventions by mainstreaming the measures in country sector budgets is a valid measure but barely feasible in the remaining timeframe. Institutional and governance sustainability was not part of the strategy; yet there are critical elements for the long-term sustainability of project achievements. They require organizational capacities to be developed. Finally, it was anticipated that the planned catalytic role and the upscaling of new technologies and best practices would be replicated through spontaneous adoption by individuals and communities around demonstration areas. It is a valid strategy if these new measures are viable and adapted to local realities but also a limited scaling up approach.</p> <p>An exit strategy with a plan of action is needed to identify what is needed to be done to secure the sustainability of project achievements but also importantly to maximize the replication/upscaling of results from demonstration areas. In particular, it should include a more "modest" strategy to mitigate financial risks, a roadmap to strengthen advisory services in each country, including the role of "Boundary Partners", and a strong focus on the institutionalization of achievements. This strategy should be regularly updated as the project approaches its end and include results, best practices and lessons learned from the demonstration areas.</p>	To develop a project exit strategy to identify what is needed to be done to secure the sustainability of project achievements but also importantly to maximize the replication/upscaling of results from the demonstration areas.	PMU, FAO and PSC	2 nd semester of 2021
R.13	<p>This is an ambitious project with a broad scope covering the entire region of Central Asia with 5 different governments and five very different budgets to achieve the expected results in each country, and with limited country ownership due particularly to a limited involvement of national stakeholders in project decision-making. There is a danger for the project to "be spread too thin" and not develop all the required capacities to ensure the long-term sustainability of all project achievements. There is a need to consolidate achievements by supporting the development of required capacities; particularly to institutionalize</p>	To review the list of activities remaining to be implemented and, where possible, prioritize what is critical to be done and focus on the institutionalization of current achievements.	PMU, FAO, and PSC	Before next AWP

Rec #	Rationale for recommendation	Recommendation	Responsibility	Timing/dates for actions
	some of these achievements to ensure their long-term sustainability.			
R.14	The GEF has updated its Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS June 2019). The updated policy has now nine Minimum Standards for agency policies, procedures, systems, and capabilities related to identifying and addressing Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts in projects and programs. All GEF funded projects need now to use this updated ESS.	To screen the project against the updated GEF policy on Environmental and Social Safeguard.	PMU and FAO	Prior to next PIR-2021
R.15	Now that activities have taken place in demonstration areas, including innovative technologies and CSA/SLM best practices, it is time to focus more on knowledge sharing, seeking synergies among all stakeholders and to learn from each other. It is recommended to increase knowledge sharing and establish a stronger link between local stakeholders (including beneficiaries), district level stakeholders, researchers, and policy makers at national level. It is suggested to organize "field days" with the participation of government representatives from national, district and local levels, researchers, farmers/communities, and private sector to review ongoing demonstrations and seek a greater understanding between land users and policy makers.	To increase synergies and knowledge sharing among policy makers, researchers, regional/local administrations, and farmers/land users (beneficiaries) through "field-days" in demonstration areas (pandemic allowing).	PMU	Remaining period of implementation
R.16	Numerous attempts to set up regional knowledge platforms have come and go. Several international and regional partners have tried to set up such an instrument. They exist during the lifetime of these projects and then vanish. Additionally, for unknown reason, there is limited cooperation/collaboration among partners. Additionally, from a country-based point of view, there is still a limited interest in such an instrument. In order to develop a platform that will be used and sustain, the first step is to create some demand for this information. It is recommended to promote the concept of knowledge platform through cost-effective webinars throughout the region, involving potential users such as policymakers, researchers, extensionists, etc.	To promote CSA and SLM knowledge platform at national level through cost-effective webinars.	PMU	Remaining period of implementation
R.17	The MTR Team undertook an extended gender analysis to review this cross-cutting dimension. It found that gender considerations have been taken into account in the formulation and implementation of the project and the approach is aligned with FAO and GEF Gender Equality Strategies. However, it also found that no socio-economic analysis, including gender issues, has been done so far. Therefore, no progress can be	To implement gender recommendations issued from the gender analysis.	PMU, FAO	Start 2 nd semester of 2021

Rec #	Rationale for recommendation	Recommendation	Responsibility	Timing/dates for actions
	<p>reported against key indicators measuring how women and men are impacted by results of the project in term of improved income and improved food security. From this analysis a set of gender related recommendations has been identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a socio-economic survey, including gender issues, in line with GEF recommendation in this area (see also recommendation #4) • Revise the monitoring mechanism to measure the performance of the project in line with the survey's findings. • Conduct more stakeholders needs analyses, including Boundary and Strategic Partners, to be used when designing gender equality training events. • Prepare stakeholder engagement plans to ensure women's equal participation in project supported activities. • Dedicate and approve specific budget for gender related activities. • Involve Turkey's expertise in mainstreaming gender in the agricultural sector, including its extended experience in developing capacities in gender sensitive rural advisory services. • Provide more visibility of UNFCCC and UNCCD gender action plans and gender equality objective on the project and ensure their connection with GEF and FAO strategies. • Continued the close coordination on gender matters among National Project Managers, field personnel, gender team, and Boundary and Strategic Partners. 			
R.18	<p>Among the list of GEF 7 core indicators (11) only three are relevant for the CACILM-II project: indicators #4 (and sub-indicator #4.3); #6 (and sub-indicator 6.1 and 6.2); and #11. Indicators #4 and #6 are already tracked by the current indicators #1 and #3. Regarding indicator #11, it is a matter to capture two data points for the indicator #2 that is "Number of women and men with improved food security". One point would be the number of women and men co-benefitting from GEF investments and the second data point the number of women and men with improved food security. It is recommended to introduce the 3 GEF-7 core indicators in the Results Framework of the project on the basis described above.</p>	<p>To introduce the 3 GEF-7 core indicators in the Results Framework of the project.</p>	PMU, FAO, PSC	Next PSC meeting

Appendices

Appendix 1. Terms of reference

Terms of Reference for the Mid-Term Review

**Integrated natural resources
management in drought-prone and
salt-affected agricultural production
landscapes in Central Asia and
Turkey (CACILM-2) Project**

**GCP/SEC/293/GFF
GEF ID 9094**

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
Subregional Office for Central Asia
January 2021

Acronyms and abbreviations

BH	Budget holder
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FLO	Funding Liaison Officer
FPMIS	Field Project Management Information System
FAO-GEF CU	FAO GEF Coordination Unit
LTO	Lead technical officer
LTU	Lead technical unit
MTR	Mid-term Review
RPC	Regional Project Coordinator
NPC	National Project Coordinator
PIR	Project Implementation Review
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PTF	Project Task Force
RM	Mid Term Review Manager
RO	Regional office
SO	FAO Strategic Objective
SRO	Sub-regional office
ToC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference

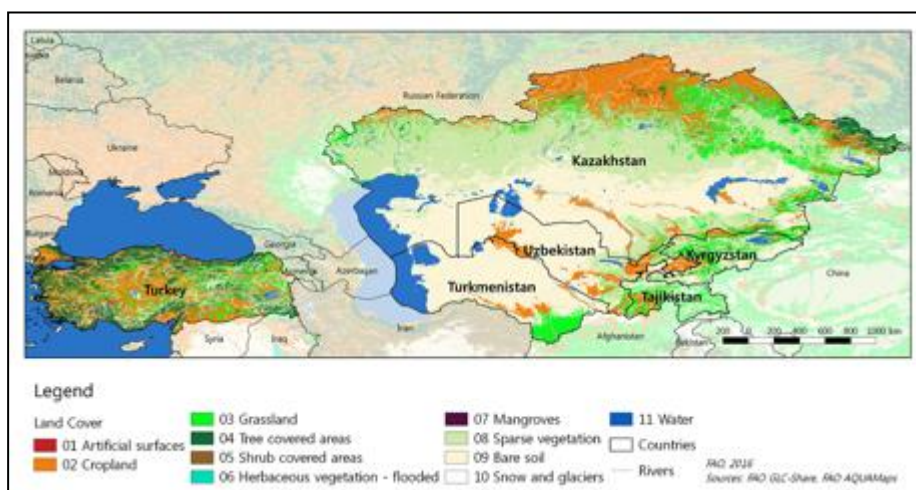
1 Background and context of the project

1. The FAO-GEF subregional project GCP/SEC/293/GFF "***Integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agricultural production landscapes in Central Asia and Turkey (CACILM-2)***" GEF Project ID: 9094, is a five-year intervention of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF – Funded through GEF6) in the Central Asia and Turkey. It is the first regional FAO GEF project in the Central Asia Region which builds on the CACILM-1 Program, implemented from 2006-2016, aimed at establishing the Central Asian Initiative for Land Management (CACILM), a multi-country and donor partnership to support the development and implementation of national level programmatic frameworks for more comprehensive and integrated approaches to sustainable land management in the region.
2. The overall objective of the Project is to scale up integrated natural resources management (INRM) in drought prone and salt affected agricultural production landscapes in the Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) and Turkey. This will be done through scaling up of sustainable management practices that minimize pressures and negative impacts on natural resources that reduce risks and vulnerability and, enhance capacity of rural communities to cope with or adapt to drought and salinity.
3. The causes of land degradation in the region are multiple, complex, and vary across these countries, but are largely attributed to over-exploitation and deterioration of the natural resource base, particularly through inefficient irrigation and unsustainable agricultural and grazing practices (e.g. mono-cropping of cotton, inappropriate use of fertilizers and pesticides, inadequate soil management, overgrazing of pastoral lands), aggravated by increased frequency and intensity of climate related disasters (e.g. droughts, floods and landslides). Poor irrigation practices and degraded infrastructure have largely contributed to the salinization and/or waterlogging of irrigated lands. Fires, deforestation, and mining have also severely affected the degradation of natural resources and impacted land use in CA. These significant environmental stressors on agricultural lands are leading to declining productivity of agro-ecosystems and reduced livelihood security in production landscapes.
4. Central Asia is a region with a very high pressure on its water resources, mostly due to high water withdrawals for irrigated agriculture, deteriorating water quality, and uneven distribution of water resources. Demographic trends, rising demand for energy and food, economic development, environmental degradation and climate change are increasing pressure on all the region's finite common property resources (e.g. water, soil and forestry). The absence of multi-country cooperation for the socio-economic development of the Aral Sea Basin leads to fragmented national and regional policies, with risks of increasing competition over natural resources while worsening their degradation, and lack of exchange of knowledge and experiences within and outside the region that impedes the scaling up of integrated and sustainable natural resource management practices. These challenges are coupled with lack of evidence-based decision-making processes, inadequate integration of resilience into policy and decision-making, absence of strategy for scaling up of INRM, weak technical and functional capacities of institutions, agricultural extension and advisory services. as well as inadequate knowledge and experience sharing of at regional level.
5. Project addresses these challenges and barriers to contribute to achievement of the sustainable natural resources management in the region.

1.1 Description of project, objectives and components

6. The Central Asian region, which includes Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, is an arid to semi-arid region, where 58% of the population of 69,5 million is dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods. The major agro-ecological regions include irrigated cropland, rainfed cropland, pastures, steppes and mountains. The region faces serious challenges with the need to feed a growing population in an environment with increasingly limited water resources and highly variable climatic conditions. Climate change projections, indicating trends towards desertification with increased drought hazard and increased salinity of soils and water resources, will result in land degradation and directly impact agricultural productivity. Adoption of an integrated landscape management approach and Integrated Natural Resources Management in the Central Asian Countries and Turkey should help stabilize or reverse the adverse trends of land degradation and climate change.
7. Central Asia (Figure 1) is one of the world's most vulnerable regions to current climate variability and to the impacts of future climate change. Climate change signals also demonstrate significant differences in different climate regions across Turkey. Temperature projections indicate that average temperatures in the region by the end of 21st century will tend to be 2-6 degrees C higher than the average temperatures experienced in 20th century. The precipitation patterns by the end of 21st century, in comparison to current precipitation, also indicate seasonal and regional differences. Indeed, trends over the last few decades indicate that these predicted changes are already being experienced in CA countries, and current climate variability is already adversely impacting agricultural development. The sites selected for the CACILM-2 project represent a range of representative agro-ecosystems and landscapes in Central Asia and Turkey where impacts of climate change are already leading to more droughts and problems with soil salinity.

Figure 1: Map of project areas in Central Asia and Turkey.



8. The Project "Integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agricultural production landscapes in Central Asia and Turkey" (CACILM-2) started on October 2017 and is expected to run until October 2022. It is being implemented by FAO in Central Asian Countries and Turkey in executing partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture of Kazakhstan, Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of Kazakhstan, Ministry of Agriculture, Food Industry and Melioration of Kyrgyzstan, State Committee for Environment Protection of Tajikistan, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Turkey, Ministry of Agriculture and Environment Protection of Turkmenistan, Ministry of Agriculture of Uzbekistan, State Committee of Forestry of Uzbekistan and Centre for Hydro-meteorological Services of Uzbekistan.

9. Total project funding over the five-year period is USD 75,759,705, of which 14.4% is provided by GEF (USD 10,874,659) and 85.6% is co-financing from central and district governments, FAO, ICBA, ICARDA, GIZ, and ZOI (USD 64,885,046). Regional CACILM Council (RCC) will act as the project steering committee and will be comprised of the GEF Focal Points and UNCCD Focal Points from all five CA countries and Turkey as well as FAO, represented by the FAO Lead Technical Officer.
10. The project ***"Integrated Natural Resources Management In Drought-Prone and Salt-Affected Agricultural Production Landscapes in Central Asia and Turkey"*** (CACILM-2) aims to scale up integrated natural resources management (INRM) through scaling up of sustainable management practices that minimize pressures and negative impacts on natural resources that reduce risks and vulnerability and, enhance capacity of rural communities to cope with or adapt to drought and salinity. In particular, adoption of integrated landscape management approaches and INRM practices should help stabilize and even reverse trends of soil salinization, reduce erosion, improve water capture and retention, increase the sequestration of carbon, and reduce loss of agrobiodiversity, thereby reducing the desertification trend in terms of extent and severity. The project is structured as a program with one multi-country component addressing shared priorities at multi-county level (Component 1), two components at national level ensuring national implementation in selected production landscapes/land use systems (Component 2 and Component 3), and one M&E component (Component 4). The needs of disadvantaged groups, gender and age issues will be given consideration throughout the Project's implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and are reflected in the Project design.
11. **Component 1: Multi-country collaboration and partnership to foster the effective delivery of INRM.** This multi-country component is bringing together all target groups of the Central Asia region and Turkey under the auspices of ICSD and IFAS and provides a platform for INRM/SLM Strategic dialogue – involves establishment of communities of practice with political and decision-making representatives of Central Asian countries. It garners strategic support for INRM/SLM at the regional and national levels and ensures integrated implementation by countries of international obligations under various international and regional conventions (UNCCD, UNCBD, UNFCCC, Convention on SD in CA) and initiatives on issues related to SLM and climate change.

Enhanced synergies of INRM/SLM interventions in the region are expected to broaden the CACILM program partnership and to involve strengthening of synergies of INRM/SLM support from CA countries, donors, NGOs, civil society and the private sector across the region. It supports links and collaboration with the global Knowledge Management platform of the DS-SLM project, the Eurasia Soil Partnership, and other international partners, forums and processes, with a view to developing a multi-country process and program, with the participation of other regional and international development agencies aimed at the restoration of degraded lands in Central Asia and Turkey.

Exchange of knowledge, information and data – is essential not only for monitoring of trends, but it provides inputs for further interventions on scaling up and out of best practices, assists in distribution of results of the interventions in understandable language and provides the assurance that approaches are technically feasible and accepted by the countries. The component establishes an efficient multi-country SLM/INRM knowledge management platform that supports knowledge sharing at the regional level, and provides practitioners across the region with guidelines, advisory services and knowledge products for harmonized planning and scaling up of SLM/INRM for a wider range of land uses.

International expertise on salinity control and drought risk management shall be mobilized for this purpose as well.

Project strives to introduce concepts of valuation of ecosystem services (VES), economic of land degradation (ELD), and other country specific approaches on key ecosystem services. It includes gender aspects and addresses social costs for livelihoods disaggregated by sex and other relevant social determinants of INRM available for the main land-use systems in Central Asia. Project identifies relevant online and offline knowledge sharing platforms to raise knowledge and awareness on gender, social and social protection issues related to INRM/SLM of project staff and implementing partners.

12. **Component 2: Integration of resilience into policy, legal and institutional frameworks for INRM.** This component supports Governments of Central Asian countries to integrate resilience into policy, legal and institutional framework for INRM, to support scaling up and adoption of climate-smart agriculture practices along the most appropriate impact pathways, leading to enhanced management of resilience, adaptation and transitions in production systems and landscapes in the medium and long term. The GEF/STAP Resilience-Adaptation-Transformation-Assessment (RAPTA) tool provides an overarching framework to integrate resilience into INRM and helps with identifying controlling variables and thresholds in drought prone and salinity affected production systems. It also helps identifying possible interventions and policy options to enhance resilience, adapt or transform agro-ecosystems depending on the circumstances. It also combines support to adoption of drought planning processes that go beyond the traditional crises management approach.

This component also strengthens inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms on INRM/SLM at national level, including mainstreaming of NAPs into national budget sector allocation and investment processes, to enable the incorporation of climate change and variability considerations and align existing financial contributions in the land management and agricultural sectors to support uptake of INRM/SLM practices. It also supports the development of incentives for climate-smart agriculture at national and sub-national levels.

13. **Component 3: Upscaling of climate-smart agricultural practices in drought prone and/or salt affected production landscapes.** This component focuses on scaling up INRM and SLM practices on-the-ground that generate both socio-economic benefits to local communities and global environmental benefits. The scaling up is based on multi-stakeholder land-use plans with targeted investment for selected agricultural production landscapes/land use systems (e.g. pastoral, agro-sylvo-pastoral, tree-based, irrigated/small oases production, rainfed land and home gardens), as well as guidelines for the development/piloting of watershed/catchment salinity management plans including *inter alia* hydrological regulations and identification of promising species/habitats for sustainable and biodiverse aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. Enhancing coordination at the landscape level facilitates the integrated management of production systems and the natural resources and ecosystem functions that underpin the delivery and resilience of ecosystem services underpinning all sectors. Scaling up is based on effective extension /advisory services for enhancing skills of a wide range of stakeholders at all levels for wide adoption of innovative approaches for drought and salinity mitigation and INRM / SLM technologies that contribute to food and nutritional security. The component not only considers increasing technical capacities of extension/advisory service providers of institutions but also the functional capacities (e.g. knowledge, partnership, communication, responsiveness to gender and other social inequalities, and implementation capacities,

including resource mobilization) of the related institutions to promote sustainable transformations in the agriculture sector.

The component contributes to increased area under INRM / SLM in drought-prone and /or salt-affected production landscapes. It supports increasing irrigation efficiency and reversing the salinization trends in irrigated areas, while increasing the value of marginal waters and soils for alternative livelihood systems. It also supports diversification of crops (e.g. drought tolerant crops, salt-tolerant crops and halophytes) for providing necessary adaptability and resilience. It ensures adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices that simultaneously enhances resilience to climate change, while mitigating its impacts through increasing carbon sequestration below and above ground (e.g. conservation agriculture, integration of fodder crops in crop rotation), and enhancing reliability of production and productivity per unit of land, as well as in terms of water, labour and energy. Project support includes home gardens on selected agricultural production landscapes and land use systems to ensure potential impacts of the project on household food security/nutrition and to increase women's access to knowledge.

14. **Component 4: Monitoring and evaluation.** To determine whether integrated approaches to natural resources management have a positive impact on ecosystem services and resilience, and livelihoods and food security, they need to be monitored, assessed and evaluated for their socio-economic and environmental impacts. The project therefore undertakes monitoring and evaluation of both implementation progress and project impacts. Evaluation and monitoring methods are gender-sensitive and data and indicators are sex-disaggregated to the extent possible.
15. The Project will generate global environmental benefits in the Land Degradation as well as Climate Change focal areas, which will be underpinned by socio-economic benefits to local communities at the selected Project sites. Key benefits are summarized in the table below:

Table 1. Global and socio-economic benefits of the project

Global Environmental Benefits	
Indicator	Target
Land under integrated management (ha) ²³	298 254 ha of demo areas 2 590 770 ha of upscaling area
GHG emissions avoided or reduced (tons CO _{2e})	Demo areas: 8.65 million tons CO _{2e} over a 20 years capitalization phase; or 29.0 tons CO _{2e} per hectare ²⁴ Upscaling area: 69.7 million tons CO _{2e} ; or 26.9 tons CO _{2e} per hectare
Area with improved irrigation efficiency (ha)	146 050 ha of demo area 1 215 605 of upscaling area
Socio-economic benefits	
Indicator	Target

²³ This indicator refers to areas under land use plans that take an INRM approach.

²⁴ According to the GEF CC-M Tracking tool, for LULUCF projects, lifetime length is defined to be 20 years, unless a different number of years is deemed appropriate.

Beneficiaries in pastoral, agro-sylvo-pastoral, tree-based, irrigated and, rainfed systems	665 294 people in demo areas 2 661 380 people in upscaling areas
Improvement in incomes from INRM (disaggregated by gender)	25%

1.2 Project stakeholders and their role

A large number of stakeholders were consulted during the preparation of the Project, both at regional, national and local levels, including at the Project sites. Building on CACILM-1 results and achievements, national partners welcomed the continued participation and support from international and regional organizations and initiatives, such as CAREC, GIZ, ICARDA, ICBA, Bioversity International, SIC, UCA, WOCAT, ZOI, EASP, GWP, as well as ICSD and IFAS.

The following stakeholders have been identified as key actors in the Project:

Table 3. List of the Project Stakeholders

Key stakeholders (disaggregated as appropriate) ²⁵	What is their role in the project?	What is the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the MTR?	Priority for MTR (1-3) ²⁶	How and when should they be involved in the MTR?
1. Active stakeholders with direct responsibility for the project, e.g. FAO, executing partners				
World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT)	Project partner, works on SLM/INRM global database	Project team cooperates with WOCAT on CD for SLM/INRM scaling up	1	During MTR
International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA)	Project partner, focuses on addressing salinity issues in the CA region.	Delivered project outputs on CD for salinity management. To discuss potential areas for collaboration at regional level	2	During MTR
International Platform for Dryland Research and Education	Project partner, focuses on addressing LD issues in the CA region.	Discuss potential areas for synergy and collaboration at regional level	1	During MTR
Department of Land Cadastre under the Ministry of Digital Development, Innovation and Aerospace Industry of Kazakhstan. State Corporation "Government for Citizens"	Introduces various mapping tools in KAZ, has national outreach scale	Has mapping tools, where salinity and drought indicators can be integrated in KAZ	2	During MTR

²⁵ Include the names of relevant individuals, if known, and be as specific as possible

²⁶ 1 = essential; 2 = desirable; 3 = if time and resources allow

Key stakeholders (disaggregated as appropriate)²⁵	What is their role in the project?	What is the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the MTR?	Priority for MTR (1-3)²⁶	How and when should they be involved in the MTR?
National Agrarian Science and Education Centre (NASEC)	Upscaling of DRM and SM technologies and approaches	Strong partner for CD and to establish Extension centers on INRM and SLM	1	During MTR
Kazakh Research Institute of Soil Science and Agrochemistry after U.U.Uspanov	Specializes on introduction of sustainable soil management practices for ameliorating salt-affected soils at the project sites.	Discuss scaling-up SLM and SM practices in KAZ	1	During MTR
Kazakh Research Institute of Livestock and Fodder Production	Project partner, focuses on addressing livestock and pastoral production issues in KAZ	Discuss potential areas for synergy and collaboration	1	During MTR
Kazakh Research Institute of Rice Production	Project partner, focuses on addressing salinity issues in KAZ.	Discuss scaling-up SLM and SM practices in KAZ	1	During MTR
State design Institute for land management - Kyrgyzgiprozem	-Digitalization of land use maps for the country. Introduction of new mapping tools	Discuss potential areas for collaboration and scaling up SLM	1	During MTR
NGO CAMP Alatoo	Implements project activities on SLM and SPM	Discuss scaling-up SLM practices in KGR	1	During MTR
Agency on Hydrometeorology, Committee on Environmental Protection under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan	Potential partner for applying FAO tools on drought vulnerability mapping and crop water requirements estimation	Discuss potential areas for synergy and collaboration	2	During MTR
Soil Institute under Tajik Academy of Agricultural Science	Supports dissemination of drought and salt resistant crops and technologies	Discuss CD and prospects for SLM scaling-up in TJK	1	During MTR
The National Institute of Deserts, Flora and Fauna, Turkmenistan	Supports implementation of project activities in TKM, CD and knowledge dissemination on SLM	Discuss CD and prospects for SLM scaling-up in TKM	1	During MTR
Tashkent state agrarian university	Project partner in CD and development of	Discuss CD and updating curricula on SLM/INRM	1	During MTR

Key stakeholders (disaggregated as appropriate) ²⁵	What is their role in the project?	What is the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the MTR?	Priority for MTR (1-3) ²⁶	How and when should they be involved in the MTR?
	Extension service in UZB			
Agricultural Economics Research Institute	Project partner in value chain development and CD in UZB	Discuss future prospects for synergy and collaboration	2	During MTR
Kashkadarya Branch of Scientific Research Institute of Grain and Legume Crops	Project partner, conducts field demo works on SLM/INRM technologies and drought-resistant crops production in UZB	Discuss CD and prospects for SLM scaling-up in UZB	1	During MTR
Bukhara branch of Tashkent institute of irrigation and agricultural mechanization engineers.	Project partner, conducts field demo works on SLM/INRM technologies and salt-resistant crops production in UZB	Discuss CD and prospects for SLM scaling-up in UZB	1	During MTR
UzGIP (Research institute for land and water infrastructure projects)	Specialized in demonstration of land melioration and salinity management activities at project sites in UZB	Discuss CD and prospects for SLM scaling-up in UZB	2	During MTR
2. Active stakeholders with authority to make decisions on the project, e.g. members of the PSC				
Country Focal points for GEF, UNCCD and UNFCCC	Members of the Project Steering Committee.	Discussing potential SLM/INRM scaling up strategies in each country	1	Inception phase
The Ministry of Agriculture of Kazakhstan	Key implementing partner in KAZ, responsible for use of agricultural lands, water management and forests	Discuss policies and strategies on INRM/SLM; ensuring inter-sectoral interaction	1	During MTR
Committee for Land Resources Management of the MoA of Kazakhstan	Key partner on development of salinity and drought vulnerability maps at national level	Discuss state policies and strategies for SLM/DRM scaling up, inter-agency interaction	1	During MTR
The Ministry of Agriculture and Reclamation (MAR) and its specialized Department on Water Management and Reclamation, Kyrgyzstan	Project's key implementation partner in KRG; the project cooperates with the Ministry on developing and updating national strategies and policies on	Discuss state policies and strategies for SLM/DRM scaling up, inter-agency interaction	1	During MTR

Key stakeholders (disaggregated as appropriate) ²⁵	What is their role in the project?	What is the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the MTR?	Priority for MTR (1-3) ²⁶	How and when should they be involved in the MTR?
	INRM/SLM; and on ensuring intersectoral collaboration between organizations at landscape level in KRG			
The State Agency on Environment Protection and Forestry Kyrgyzstan	Monitoring and coordinating the implementation of environmental legislation related to forest and pasture management	Discuss state policies and strategies for SLM/SPM scaling up, inter-agency interaction	1	During MTR
Committee on Environmental Protection under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan (CEP)	Project's implementing partner in TJK; FP for UNFCCC, UNCCD and GEF activities in TJK.	Discuss state policies and strategies for SLM/INRM scaling up, inter-agency interaction	1	During MTR
Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Tajikistan	Supports the dissemination of the drought resistant species of trees, the activities planned with specialized nursery of MoA in TJK	Discussing potential SLM/INRM scaling up strategies in TJK	1	During MTR
The Ministry of Agriculture and Environment Protection of Turkmenistan	Project's implementing partner in TKM; FP for UNFCCC, UNCCD and GEF activities in TKM.	Discuss state policies and strategies for SLM/INRM scaling up, inter-agency interaction	1	During MTR
The State Committee on Water Economy of Turkmenistan	Important project partner agency; Conducts the introduction and dissemination of innovative water-saving and drought-resistant technologies to mitigate the effects of climate change and drought;	Discuss state policies and strategies for SLM/INRM scaling up, inter-agency interaction	1	During MTR
Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Uzbekistan	Key project implementing partner in UZB; National	Discuss state policies and strategies for SLM/INRM scaling up, inter-agency interaction	1	During MTR

Key stakeholders (disaggregated as appropriate) ²⁵	What is their role in the project?	What is the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the MTR?	Priority for MTR (1-3) ²⁶	How and when should they be involved in the MTR?
	coordinator of FAO activities in UZB			
Ministry of Water resources the Republic of Uzbekistan	Important project partner agency; Conducts the introduction and dissemination of innovative water-saving and drought-resistant technologies in UZB	Discuss state policies and strategies for SLM/INRM scaling up, inter-agency interaction	1	During MTR
Uzbek Center for Hydro-meteorological services	National Focal Point for UNFCCC. Supports national activities on Agro-meteo services.	Discuss collaboration on development of drought vulnerability and climate forecast services for agriculture sector	2	During MTR
State Committee on Land Resources, Geodesy, Cartography and the State Cadaster of Uzbekistan	Supports the project activities on GIS mapping, land use change and monitoring, land-use maps, and cartography.	Discuss potential areas for synergy and collaboration in UZB	2	During MTR
State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Ecology and Environmental Protection	National GEF FP. Coordinates and reports national activities on biodiversity, climate change and land degradation	Participates in the national campaign "Planting Million Fruit Trees". Discussing potential SLM scaling-up and inter-agency collaboration in UZB	2	During MTR
3. Secondary stakeholders (only indirectly or temporarily affected)				
Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development (ICSD)	The ICSD provides the political support at multi-country level and promotes sustainable agricultural practices in the region.	Discuss potential areas for synergy and collaboration at regional level	2	During MTR
UNCCD Secretariat	Supports partnership with UNCCD and other relevant conventions, strengthen the science-policy interface on SLM for guiding policy reforms and evidence-based investments.	Discuss potential areas for synergy and collaboration at regional level, and project's SLM/INRM scaling up strategies	2	Inception phase

Key stakeholders (disaggregated as appropriate)²⁵	What is their role in the project?	What is the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the MTR?	Priority for MTR (1-3)²⁶	How and when should they be involved in the MTR?
German Development Cooperation Agency (GIZ)	Development partner, has regional programs on similar thematic areas	Important partner for synergy and collaboration to scale-up SLM at regional level	2	Inception phase
Wageningen Research Center (WUR)	Supports development of national Extension Service strategy in UZB	Currently develops Agriculture knowledge innovation system together with the project team and national partners in UZB	2	Inception phase
Central Asia Regional Environmental Center (CAREC)	A regional platform for cooperation on environmental rehabilitation	Discuss potential areas for collaboration on scaling-up SLM/INRM practices	2	During MTR
4. Stakeholders at grassroots level who benefit directly or indirectly from the intervention (gender disaggregated where possible)				
Association of individual entrepreneurs and legal entities "Kazakhstan growers union"	Works on land use plans development at project sites in KAZ	SLM plans will be implemented under the project	2	During MTR
Public Organization "Women of Khatlon"	The joint activities implemented to distribute drip irrigation systems and arrange a ToT workshop to apply water use efficiency technologies	Discuss potential areas for collaboration on scaling-up SLM practices	2	During MTR
The Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs of Turkmenistan	Conducts the implementation of sustainable food and supply chains in light of climate change and increasing drought - agribusiness development with the most efficient and profitable production	Discuss potential areas for collaboration on scaling-up SLM practices	2	During MTR
Republican Association "Uzbek qorakuli"	Supports the project activities on development of sustainable pasture management plans and land rehabilitation.	Discuss potential areas for collaboration on scaling-up SLM practices	2	During MTR

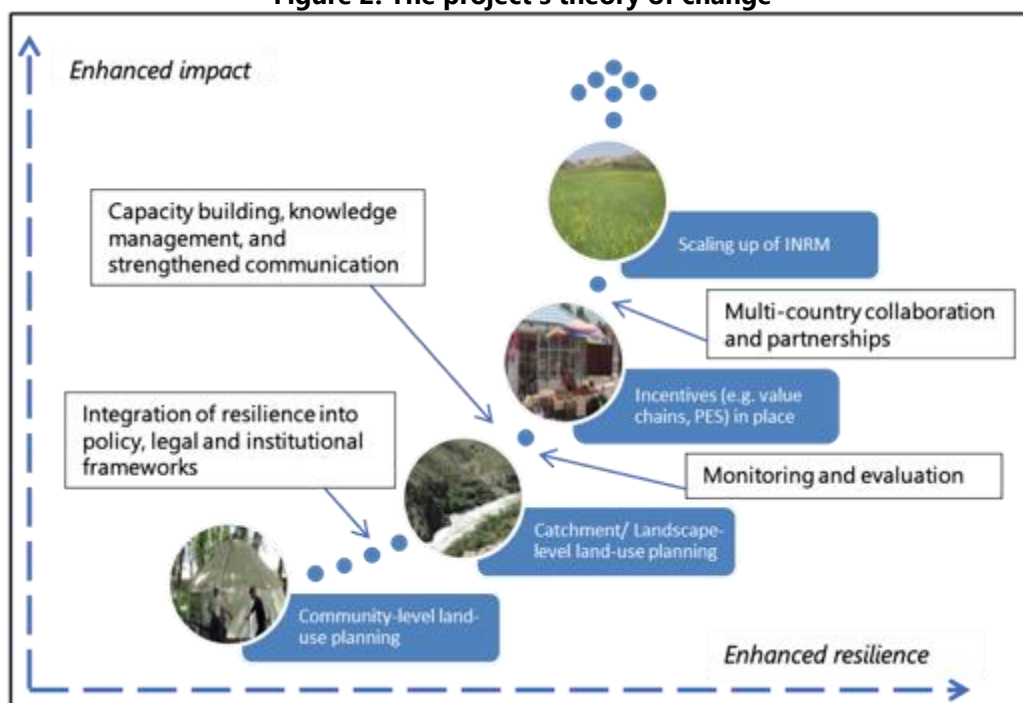
Key stakeholders (disaggregated as appropriate) ²⁵	What is their role in the project?	What is the reason for their inclusion in or exclusion from the MTR?	Priority for MTR (1-3) ²⁶	How and when should they be involved in the MTR?
NGO "Innovations and scientific research Cluster on sustainable development"	Activities are implemented under LoA. Service provider is specialized in water use efficiency for irrigation.	Discuss potential areas for collaboration on scaling-up IWRM practices	2	During MTR
5. Stakeholders at grassroots level who do not benefit from the intervention (gender disaggregated where possible)				
6. Other interest groups that are not participating directly in the intervention, e.g. development agencies working in the area, civil-society organizations				
International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA)	Focuses on agriculture R4D and CD in drylands	Discuss potential areas for collaboration on scaling-up SLM practices	3	During MTR
Biodiversity International	Focuses on R4D and CD in agricultural biodiversity	Discuss potential areas for collaboration on scaling-up SLM practices	3	During MTR
University of Central Asia (UCA)	UCA's mission is to promote the social and economic development of Central Asia	Discuss research programs and collaboration on SLM-INRM	3	During MTR

16. In order to implement the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion strategy, the CACILM 2 project will continue strengthening partnerships with various stakeholders advocating for gender equality. The project is maintaining communications with UN Gender Team Groups and intend to contribute to the International Day of Rural Women (15 October) and other thematic campaigns and events. The mapping of new partners working on gender, social inclusion and social protection issues, among national and international institutions was conducted.

1.3 Theory of change

17. The overall objective of the Project is to scale up integrated natural resources management (INRM) in drought prone and salt affected agricultural production landscapes in the Central Asian countries and Turkey. This will be done, through mechanisms for overcoming the current barriers to scale up sustainable management practices that minimize pressures and negative impacts on natural resources that reduce risks and vulnerability and, enhance capacity to cope with or adapt to drought and salinity. In particular, adoption of integrated landscape management approaches and INRM practices should help stabilize and even reverse trends of soil salinization, reduce erosion, improve water capture and retention, increase the sequestration of carbon, and reduce loss of agrobiodiversity, thereby reducing the desertification trend in terms of extent and severity. How the project aims to achieve this objective is illustrated by the Theory of Change (Figure 2).

Figure 2. The project's theory of change



1.4 Implementation progress and main challenges faced to date

18. As of July 2020, the FAO-GEF Project Implementation Report (PIR) showed that the overall project implementation progress is satisfactory. Under the leadership of Regional Program Coordinator (RPC), the project team was strengthened by hiring core technical experts and support staff at regional and national levels. The team speeded up the project delivery by producing key knowledge products and technical reports, processed procurement of major items, facilitated staff recruitments and signed all planned LoAs, although the major part of field demo activities and field missions were postponed due to the COVID-19.
19. The project team also improved the project's visibility and communication with regional media, developed gender mainstreaming strategy, produced M&E Framework, strengthened regional dialogue and multi-country partnership with key Government partners and stakeholders, continued capacity development activities on SLM/INRM using online tools and implemented field demo works to the extent possible. The procurement, recruitment and LoAs were completed by 90% as planned in the AWP-2020. About 50% of the field activities and missions were postponed due to the COVID-19. The project delivery reached \$4 mln USD, which is 37% of the total budget.
20. About 50% of the project activities on procurement, field missions, training events and field demo activities were postponed due to the COVID-19, which affected all 6 project countries. Some delays in project implementation in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan occurred in 2019 due to the external political factors: reorganization of partner ministries, high-level staff changes, new UNCCD and GEF FPs appointments in KAZ, TJK, TKM and UZB. As well as long approval of the project agreement in TKM (August 2019), followed by national project registration procedures in TKM. However, the project implementation speed has been increased considerably in all project countries in 2020.

2 MTR purpose and scope

21. According to the GEF requirements, the MTR was planned in the project document to be carried out when the Project reached the halfway point of its implementation period or when 50% budget was delivered. The MTR was originally planned in September 2020, however, due to the COVID-19 situation in all project countries, it was postponed to February 2021. The objective of the MTR is to review progress and effectiveness of the project implementation in terms of achieving the project outcomes and outputs.
22. The MTR will be instrumental to critically review the project's end-project targets and strategic trajectory of the project implementation, and support its fine-tuning to adapt and to address the present development priorities and political circumstances in the project countries. This is due to the fact that the Project Document had been developed in 2015-2016, while the project's scale-up targets were set too ambitious. Since then the political content, national strategies and organizational structures had been reformed at key ministries in all Central Asian countries. The MTR will also support the project team to revisit the project's regional partnership / cooperation strategy with the current regional and international development agencies and national partners: majority of the development agencies listed in the Project Document either reformed its financial, institutional and organizational structures, or adjusted priorities and reduced number of staff in the CA region.
23. The MTR also aims to identify potential high risks that may hamper the achievement of the project targets; assess progress towards the objectives (outcome and outputs); and, recommend specific strategies to improve the project implementation. The MTR process will be organized virtually due to the COVID-19 related travel restrictions in the project countries: the MTR team (international Team Leader and National Consultants in each country), will involve regional, national stakeholders and project partners for the MTR data collection through virtual interviews and online meetings. Findings and recommendations of this MTR will be instrumental for adapting to the current development context in the project countries and to update the overall project design, regional partnership approach and execution strategy for the remaining period of the project.
24. Although the project was endorsed by GEF CEO on March 2017, in fact the project inception period was on May-August 2018 in 6 project countries. There were further project implementation delays in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan due to internal political and organizational changes in the key partner ministries. Due to this fact, the MTR team will be requested to review the current project progress and to advise on potential extension of the project implementation period for one year or more, considering the available project budget for the amendment period.

Box 1: Main purpose and intended users of the MTR

Purpose		Intended User
Accountability: to respond to the information needs and interests of policy makers and other actors with decision-making	Inform decision making	GEF and other donors
	Provide accountability	GCU and FAO management
		Govt National Partners

Purpose		Intended User
Improvement: Project improvement and organisational development provides valuable information for managers or others responsible for the regular project operations	Improve project	Project Management, PMU, PTF, GCU, PSC
Enlightenment: In-depth understanding and contextualised the project/program and its practices Normally caters to the information needs and interest of program staff and sometimes participants	Contribute to knowledge	GCU, FAO staff and future developers and implementers

25. Mid-term review aims to assess the status of the Project in terms of its achievements and challenges, while developing corrective actions to ensure that the Project will be on track in achieving its desired results within the remaining period. As such, the MTR process will involve the project task force and the project management unit, country and technical teams, and main beneficiaries and stakeholders of the project at regional and national stakeholders. They will also be the main users of the mid-term review report and will specifically benefit from the findings and recommendations on how to further improve the project design to address the current national priorities and development context and the implementation of activities.
26. The *primary intended users* of the project MTR are the stakeholders that will actually use the findings of the MTR. This includes the Budget Holder (BH) and designated MTR Manager (RM), Project's Regional Coordinator and National Managers (PMU), national project counterparts, Project Task Force (PTF) including the Funding Liaison Officer (FLO) and the Lead Technical Officer (LTO), Project Steering Committee (PSC) members, GEF, UNCCD and other stakeholders. The BH/RM, the PMU and the PTF should seek to elaborate the purpose of the MTR in a consultative manner, in collaboration with all primary intended users, including identifying how they intend to use the MTR results. However, it should be noted that the utility of the MTR and related products may vary by stakeholder and the BH/RM and PTF will need to negotiate and reach overall agreement among the primary intended users on the main purpose or purposes of MTR, and its intended use.
27. The MTR will look at the achieved results at output level against the project indicators, identify the challenges and issues and analyse the potentials risks for attaining the target outcomes within the remaining time frame. To support the analysis of results achievement, the processes included and followed by the Project and the procedures that have been established will also be explored. The time frame of the MTR will cover 4 months, from February to May 2021. All the four project components will be included in the MTR.
28. Considering the COVID-19 pandemic related travel restrictions in the project countries, the meetings will be arranged virtually between the project stakeholders, partners, beneficiaries and the MTR team. The Team Leader will participate in the virtual meetings to the extent possible, where needed. Interview methods will be used to collect first-hand information

and to triangulate with other findings. The secondary information will be collected through documents.

3 MTR objectives and key questions

3.1 MTR Objectives

1. The main objective of the MTR is to assess the relevance of the project activities and outputs with the current development context and national priorities in the project countries, to review its progress in achieving outcomes, the cost-effectiveness and efficiency, the strategy for stakeholder engagement and regional/national partnerships, the likelihood of sustainability and potential for long-term impact, the high risk factors that affected its performance and delivery to date, to advise on potential extension of the project implementation period, as well as examining cross-cutting dimensions such as gender and equity concerns.
2. The MTR will follow the MTR Guide for FAO-GEF projects and take into account the following GEF evaluation criteria:

- A. **Relevance:** analyse the extent to which the project's design and intended results are consistent with local, national, sub-regional and regional environmental and development priorities and policies and to GEF and FAO strategic priorities and objectives as well as the countries involved in the project;
- B. **Effectiveness:** assessment of project results to date including the overall quality of project outputs, progress towards achieving project outcomes and objectives, and a brief assessment of the likelihood of longer-term impacts resulting from the project;
- C. **Efficiency:** evaluate the cost-effectiveness of the project and timeliness of activities;
- D. **Sustainability** of Project Outcomes, including assessment of the overall likelihood of risks to sustainability from Financial risk, Socio-political risk, Institutional risk, Environmental risk, as well as separate consideration of Replicability and Catalytic Role;
- E. **Factors affecting the performance** and delivery of the project results are:
 - project design and readiness for implementation (e.g. sufficient partner capacity to begin operations, changes in context between formulation and operational start);
 - project execution, including project management (execution modality as well as the involvement of counterparts and different stakeholders);
 - project implementation, including supervision by FAO (BH, LTO and FLO), backstopping, and general PTF input;
 - financial management and mobilization of expected co-financing;
 - project partnerships and stakeholder involvement (including the degree of ownership of project results by stakeholders), political support from government, institutional support from operating partners (such as regional branches of agricultural extension services or forestry authorities);
 - communication, public awareness and knowledge management; and
 - application of an M&E system, including M&E design, implementation and budget.
- F. **Cross-cutting dimensions**, considerations such as gender, indigenous-peoples and minority-group concerns and human rights; the environmental and social safeguards

applied to a project require, among other things, a review of the Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) risk classification and risk-mitigation provisions identified at the project's formulation stage.²⁷

3.2 MTR questions

29. MTR questions should be included in this section, with the questions corresponding to one or more GEF evaluation criteria drawing on the draft ToC. In assessing these criteria, the MTR gathers evidence through the use of questions. MTR questions should be based on the project objectives and on the ToC. Questions should be sufficiently broad but at the same time help focus the MTR, telling a comprehensive story by presenting the MTR's main findings. MTR questions must be agreed upon by the BH/RM and principal stakeholders and refined in consultation with the MTR team.
30. Depending on the size of the MTR, each question can be divided into sub-questions, creating a MTR Matrix²⁸. The MTR team is responsible for developing the evaluation matrix. Example questions for each of the criteria listed above are given in Box 2.

Box 2 – Examples of MTR questions

1.Relevance (rating required)	Are the project outcomes congruent with the GEF focal areas/operational program strategies, FAO Countries or Subregional priorities, countries priorities and beneficiaries need Has there been any change in the relevance of the project since its design, such as new national policies, plans or programs that affect the relevance of the project objectives and goals? If so, are there any changes that need to be made to the project to make it more relevant?
2. Effectiveness Achievement of project results (rating required)	(Delivery of results) To what extent has the project delivered on its outputs, outcomes, and objectives, and what, if any, wider results has the project had at regional and global levels to date? Were there any unintended results? Is there any evidence of environmental stress reduction and environmental status change (reflecting Global Environmental Benefits), or any change in policy/legal/regulatory framework? To what extent can the attainment of results be attributed to the GEF-funded component? (Likelihood of impact) Are there any barriers or other risks that may prevent future progress towards and the eventual achievement of the project's intended longer-term impacts, and what can be done to improve the likely achievement of positive impacts from the project? To what extent may the progress towards long-term impact be attributed to the project?

²⁷ FAO applies an online screening system during the project design phase. This is mandatory, even if the project was approved before FAO adopted the GEF Policy on Agency Minimum Standards on Environmental and Social Safeguards (GEF, 2011) in February 2015, as FAO had already applied the Environmental Impact Assessment Guidelines in 2011 (FAO, 2012a) to screen and rate the risks of every FAO project. Consequently, the MTR team should review and confirm the ESS assessments and risk status at mid-term and any changes suggested, if needed. The most recent GEF guidance can be found in GEF (2019b). A GEF project should not cause any harm to the environment or to any stakeholder and, where applicable, will take measures to prevent and/or mitigate any adverse effects.

²⁸ See Annex X of the MTR Guidance Document for a MTR Matrix template.

3.Efficiency (rating required)	<p>To what extent has the project been implemented efficiently, cost-effectively, and management been able to adapt to any changing conditions to improve the efficiency of project implementation?</p> <p>To what extent has the project built on existing agreements, initiatives, data sources, synergies, complementarities with other projects and partnerships, etc, and avoid duplication of similar activities of other groups?</p> <p>Is the project cost-effective? How does the project cost/time versus output/outcomes equation compare to that of similar projects?</p>
4.Sustainability (rating required)	<p>(Sustainability) What is the likelihood that the project results will continue to be useful or will remain after the end of the project? What are the key risks that may affect the sustainability of the project results and benefits (consider financial, socio-economic, institutional and governance, and environmental)?</p> <p>(Replication and catalysis) What project results, lessons and experiences generated by the project have been replicated (experiences are repeated and lessons applied in different geographic areas) or scaled up (experiences are repeated and lessons applied in the same geographic area but on a much larger scale and funded by other sources), or are likely to be in the near future?</p>
5.Factors affecting progress (rating required)	<p>(Project design) Is the project design appropriate for delivering the expected outcomes? Is the project's logic coherent and clear? To what extent are the project's objectives and components, clear, practical and feasible within the timeframe?</p> <p>(Project execution and management) To what extent did the execution agency effectively discharged its role and responsibilities related to the management and administration of the project? What have been the main challenges in relation to the management and administration of the project? How well have risks been identified and managed? What changes are needed to improve delivery in the second half of the project?</p> <p>(Financial management and Co-financing) What have been the challenges related to the financial management of the project? To what extent has the pledged co-financing been delivered, and has there been any additional leveraged co-financing provided since implementation began? How has any short fall in co-financing or materialization of greater than expected co-financing affected project results?</p> <p>(Project oversight, implementation role) To what extent has FAO delivered on project identification, concept preparation, appraisal, preparation, approval and start-up, oversight and supervision?</p> <p>(Partnerships and stakeholder engagement) Have other actors, such as civil society, indigenous population or private sector, been sufficiently involved in project design and implementation, and what has been the effect of their involvement/non-involvement on the project results? What are strengths and challenges of the project's partnerships?</p> <p>(Communication and knowledge management) How effective has the project been in communicating and promoting its key messages and results to partners, stakeholders and a general audience? How can this be improved?</p> <p>(M&E design) Is the M&E plan practical and sufficient?</p> <p>(M&E implementation) Does the M&E system operate as per the M&E plan? Has information been gathered in a systematic manner, using</p>

	appropriate methodologies? To what extent has information generated by the M&E system during project implementation been used to adapt and improve project planning and execution, achievement of outcomes and ensure sustainability? How can the M&E system be improved?
6. Cross-cutting dimensions	<p>(Gender and minority groups) To what extent were gender considerations taken into account in designing and implementing the project? Has the project been designed and implemented in a manner that ensures gender equitable participation and benefits?</p> <p>(Environmental and social safeguards) To what extent were environmental and social concerns taken into consideration in the design and implementation of the project?</p>

4 Methodology

31. The MTR will adhere to the UNEG Norms & Standards (UNEG, 2016) and align with the FAO–GEF MTR Guide and annexes detailing methodological guidelines and practices. The MTR will adopt a consultative and transparent approach, keeping internal and external stakeholders informed throughout the MTR process. The evidence and information gathered will be triangulated to underpin its validity and analysis and to support its conclusions and recommendations.
32. Taken into account the travel limitations imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, this MTR will be undertaken remotely to minimize epidemiologic risks. As safety is a key priority, no stakeholders, consultants or project staff will be put in harm's way. In this context, International lead consultant will work remotely from his home-office doing a desk review of project documents which will be supported by remote semi-structured interviews using communication tools such as email, Skype, Zoom, WhatsApp and other convenient electronic tools. Hired National consultants on MTR will be responsible to conduct interviews face-to-face (if authorized) or by using tools such as phone, Skype, Zoom or other means, following guidelines that are in place locally. The MTR Team Leader will join the virtual meetings and interviews as agreed or required. To aid the interview process of different stakeholders, the MTR team will produce a detailed evaluation matrix in which indicators and judgement criteria will be identified in relation to the MTR's main questions.
33. The use of videos, photos, etc. is encouraged and is part of collecting MTR evidence. All collected data (including photos/videos) will be remotely shared with the MTR Team Leader. Where it is technically possible and relevant, the National consultants will organize field video-calls from project sites to help International consultant to observe directly relevant project outputs and activities on the ground. Observations made during these visits accompanied by photos and short videos should be also documented in the MTR reports.
34. The main MTR tools and methods will include the following:
 - A desk-review of existing project documentation and reports (see below the standard list). The MTR team will propose the project's Theory of Change (ToC) after the desk-review. The ToC will outline the multiple linkages between the project objectives, outputs and outcomes to the national goals, and will support the evaluation process.
 - Remote semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including representatives of FAO project taskforce members, PSC members, the operational partners, key national consultants, important service providers, etc. Alternatively, where stakeholders cannot be interviewed due to restrictions relating to the Covid-19 pandemic, an online questionnaire will be applied. The first draft of the MTR report will be developed based

on the desk-review and the interviews and will be shared with FAO and national partners for comments.

- Field visit – in case the COVID-19 situation allows - to the project sites (will be carried out to verify project implementation and results in the field and to collect feedback from local partners. Face-to-face interviews and meetings will be carried out during the field visits. If the field visits cannot be conducted, virtual visits will be organized with support of the national consultants and the project teams in the countries will provide videos, photographs and other relevant evidence from the field to enable a proper assessment of achievement. The MTR report will be updated accordingly to support/adjust its main findings and finalise its conclusions and recommendations after the field visit.
35. Final decisions about the specific design and methodology for the MTR should emerge from consultations between the project team, the MTR consultants and key stakeholders on what is appropriate and feasible in order to meet the MTR's purpose and objectives and answer the MTR's questions.

5 Roles and responsibilities

36. The **Budget Holder** (BH) is accountable for the MTR process and report and is responsible for the initiation, management and finalization of the MTR. An **MTR Manager** (RM) has been designated to act on his behalf.
37. With the assistance of the project's **Lead Technical officer (LTO)** and the **GEF Coordination Unit (FAO-GEF CU) – FLO and MTR focal point** and guidance from this document, the BH/RM is responsible for the drafting and finalization of the ToR. This TOR should be based on document review, discussions with PTF and if possible, a face-to-face meeting with LTO to get a good understanding of the project. The BH/RM is also responsible for the identification of the MTR team members, briefs the MTR team on the MTR methodology and process, and takes the lead in organising the MTR virtual missions. The BH/RM review the draft and final MTR reports, along with the GCU's MTR focal point for Quality Assurance purposes in terms of presentation, compliance with the ToR and timely delivery, quality, clarity and soundness of evidence provided and of the analysis supporting conclusions and recommendations in the MTR report.
38. The FAO-GEF **CU** will appoint a focal point to provide technical backstopping through the MTR process, including guidance and punctual support to the BH/RM and MTR Team on technical issues related to GEF and the MTR. This can also include support in identifying potential MTR team members²⁹, participation in interview panels, and briefing the MTR team on the MTR process, relevant methodology and tools. The GCU also follows up with the BH to ensure the timely preparation of the Management Response.
39. The RM appointed by the BH, is responsible for initiating the MTR process and supporting the MTR team during its work. The BH and RM are required to participate in meetings with the MTR team, where required, make available information and documentation as necessary, and comment on the TOR and report. Involvement of different members of the PTF will depend on respective roles and participation in the project. The BH is also

²⁹ The BH/RM should be responsible for the administrative procedures related to the ET's recruitment.

responsible for leading and coordinating the preparation of the FAO Management Response and the associated Follow-up Report to the MTR, supported in this task by the LTO and other members of the PTF. Further details on the Management Response and the Follow-up Report are provided in the MTR Guidance Document.

40. The **National Project Coordinators (NPC)** shall facilitate the participation of Government partners in the MTR process and supports the PMU to ensure good communication on the MTR across Government. The Project Steering Committee (PSC) facilitates Government and other partner and stakeholder participation in the MTR process.
41. The **MTR Team** is responsible for further developing and applying the MTR methodology, producing a brief MTR inception report, conducting the MTR, and for producing the MTR report. All team members will participate in briefing and debriefing virtual meetings, discussions, virtual field visits, and will contribute to the MTR with written inputs to both the draft and final versions of the MTR report (the MTR Team Leader has overall responsibility for delivering the MTR report). The MTR team will agree with the GCU MTR focal point on the outline of the report early in the MTR process, based on the template provided in Annex 12 of the MTR Guidance Document. The MTR Team is free to expand the scope, criteria, questions and issues listed above, as well as develop its own MTR tools and framework, within time and resources available and based on discussions with the BH/RM, consults the BH and PTF where necessary. The MTR Team Leader is fully responsible for the MTR report, which may not reflect the views of the Government or of FAO. Although an MTR report is not subject to technical clearance by FAO, the BH/RM and GCU do provide Quality Assurance of all MTR reports.
42. The MTR Team Leader guides and coordinates the MTR Team members in their specific work, **discusses** their findings, conclusions and recommendations and leads on the preparation of the draft and the final report, consolidating the inputs from the team members with his/her own work.
43. **More** detailed guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the key individuals and groups involved with the MTR is given in the main MTR Guidance Document.

6 MTR team composition and profile

44. The specific skills, competencies and characteristics needed in the MTR team specific to the MTR and the expected structure and composition of the ET, including roles and responsibilities of the MTR Team members, are set out in the attached ToRs for the individual consultants.
45. The project will involve one MTR Team Leader (an International consultant with regional GEF projects experience) and six national MTR consultants to support data collection in each of the project country in Central Asia.
46. The MTR consultants should have been independent from any organizations that have been involved in designing, executing or advising any aspect of the project that is the subject of the MTR.

7 MTR products (deliverables)

47. This section describes the key MTR products the MTR team will be accountable for producing. At the minimum, these products should include:

- a. MTR inception report. An inception report should be prepared by the MTR team before beginning the fully-fledged data collection exercise that details the MTR Team's understanding of what is being assessed and why. It serves as a map and reference in planning and conducting an MTR. It also serves as a useful tool for summarizing and visually presenting the MTR design and methodology for discussions with stakeholders. It details the GEF evaluation criteria/questions that the MTR seeks to answer (in the form of a MTR Matrix); data sources and data collection methods; analysis tools or methods appropriate for each data source and data collection method; and the standard or measure by which each question will be evaluated. The inception report should include a proposed schedule of tasks, activities and deliverables, designating a team member with the lead responsibility for each task or product.
- b. Draft MTR report. The project team, BH/RM, GCU and key stakeholders in the MTR should review the draft MTR report to ensure accuracy and that it meets the required quality criteria through two rounds of review, one internal to the project and FAO followed by review by key external partners and stakeholders.
- c. Final MTR report. This should include an executive summary and be written in English. Supporting data and analysis should be annexed to the report when considered important to complement the main report. Translations in other languages of the Organization, if required, will be FAO's responsibility. Further guidance on the development of the MTR report is given in the MTR Guidance Document and annexes.
- d. **A draft two-page summary** of key findings, lessons, recommendations and messages from the MTR report, to be reviewed by the RM and PMU. The summary will be disseminated to the wider public for general information on the project's results and performance to date. This can be posted as a briefing paper on the project's website but more creative and innovative multimedia approaches, such as video, photos, sound recordings, social media, short stories (for suitable cases or country studies), infographics or even comic or cartoon format, may be more effective depending on the circumstances.
- e. Participation in knowledge sharing events, e.g. stakeholder debriefings, if relevant.

8 MTR timeframe

48. This section lists and describes all tasks and deliverables and associated roles and responsibilities of the key MTR individuals and groups, indicating for each the due date or time-frame (e.g. briefings, draft report, final report), as well as who is responsible for its completion.

Task	When (recommended)	Duration	Responsibility
TOR preparation	3 months before MTR		BH/RM, LTO, FLO and GCU MTR focal point
ToR finalization	1.2 months before MTR		BH/RM,

Team identification	1-2 months before MTR		BH/RM, LTO, FLO and GCU MTR focal point
Team recruitment	1 month before MTR		BH
Data collection arrangements and organization of the agenda/travel itinerary in each country for possible field mission of national consultants	1 month before MTR		BH/RM, project team and MTR Team
Reading background documentation	2 weeks before MTR virtual meetings		MTR Team for preparation of the MTR
Briefing of MTR Team	1 week before MTR virtual meetings		BH/RM, when necessary supported by PTF and GCU
MTR inception Report	Before the MTR virtual meetings		MTR team
Clearance of the MTR inception report	Before the MTR virtual meetings		BH/RM and the GCU MTR focal point
MTR virtual meetings – confirmation of interviews, meetings and visits (by NCs)	3-4 weeks		MTR Team with support of PMU
Production of first draft for circulation	3 weeks after field data collection		MTR Team
Circulation and review of first (zero) draft	1 week to 10 days		BH/RM, PMU, GCU MTR focal point, LTO for comments and quality control (organized by BH/RM)
Production of second draft	1 week		MTR Team
Circulation of second draft	1 week to 10 days		BH/RM and key external stakeholders (organized by BH/RM)
Production of final report	1 week		MTR team
Management Response (MR)	1 month after the Final report is issued		BH
Follow-up report in PPR or PIR	6 months after the MR is issued		BH

49. Agenda of MTR virtual meetings with the project countries (Feb - May 2021)

Date	Time	Name and Designation	Venue
KAZAKHSTAN (15-20 February 2021)			
Day 1		Meeting with FAO Kazakhstan Office	Zoom/Skype
		Meeting with Chairman of National Agrarian Science and Educational Centre (NASEC)	
Day 2		Meeting with Head of the Department on State Land Cadaster of the Committee for	

Date	Time	Name and Designation	Venue
		Land Resources Management of the MoA of Kazakhstan	
		Meeting with NGO "Kazakhstan Growers Union"	
Day 3		Meeting with the farmer in Astrakhanski raion	NC visits the project site
		Virtual visit to demo site in Kyzylorda oblast	
Day 4		Meeting with Institute of Rice Production	Zoom/Skype
		Virtual visit to demo-site 2 in Zhalagash raion (by NC)	NC visits the project site
		Virtual visit demo site 3 in Karmakshy raion	
Day 5		Wrap up meeting with national project team	Zoom/Skype
KYRGYZSTAN (20-23 February 2021)			
Day 1		Meeting with FAOKG	Zoom/Skype
		Meeting with Camp Alattoo	
Day 2		Meeting with Kyrgyzgiprozem	
		Meeting with the Ministry of agriculture (National coordinator of the project - Kerimaliev)	
Day 3		Virtual visit to the project site - Kochkor district meeting with the district state Administration	NC visits Kochkor district
		Virtual meeting with the District Department of agricultural development	
		Virtual meeting with the heads of pilot Aiyl Aimaks (municipalities)	
Day 4		Virtual meeting with participation of the heads of Pasture committees and pilot farms	NC visits Kochkor district
		Virtual meetings with the heads of pilot Aiyl Aimaks with the participation of the heads of Pasture Committees and pilot farms	
		Wrap-up meeting with the project team	Zoom/Skype
TAJIKISTAN (24-26 February 2021)			
		Meeting with FAO Representative	Zoom/Skype
		Meeting with UNFCCD FP	
		Meeting with key project staff members.	
Day 2		Virtual field visit to project targeted districts	NC visits the project site
		Meeting with Farmer Groups, presenting project activities	Zoom/Skype
Day 3		Meeting with project boundary partner	
		Debriefing and wrap-up	
TURKMENISTAN (1-3 March 2021)			
Day 1		Meeting with project team	Zoom/Skype
		Meeting with National Project Coordinator	
		Meeting with UNFCCD FP	
Day 2		Meeting with project partners (Ministry of agriculture and environment protection).	

Date	Time	Name and Designation	Venue
		Meeting with the State Committee on water economy	
		Meeting with National Institute of deserts, flora and fauna, National Parliament, etc.	
		Field visit to project pilot site in Nohur (mountainous).	NC visits the project site
		Virtual meeting at Karakum site.	
		Meeting with farmers and observing project activities	
Day 3		Wrap-up and debriefing with project staff.	Zoom/Skype
UZBEKISTAN (4-5 March 2021)			
Day 1		Meeting with FAO country office, briefing and discussion about the project	Zoom/Skype
		Meeting at the Ministry of Agriculture	
		Meeting at the State Committee of Forestry	
Day 2		Virtual visit to the demo-site in Qamashi district of Qashqadarya region	NC travels to the site
		Visit of the "Oltinboyev yery" farm in Qamashi district	
		Meeting at the Qashqadarya branch of Research Institute of Grain and Legume Crops	
Day 3		Meeting at the Bukhara branch of Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers	Zoom/Skype
		Virtual visit to the Demo-site of the Bukhara branch of Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers	NC visits the site + Zoom/Skype
		Virtual visit to the Bukhara branch Forestry farm or private farm in Romiton district	NC visits the site + Zoom/Skype
Day 4		Wrap-up meeting with the national project team	Zoom/Skype
TURKEY (8-10 March 2021)			
Day 2		Wrap-up meeting with LTO, RPC and project team	Zoom/Skype
		Wrap-up meeting with the project BH	

Annexes

Annexes can be used to provide additional detail about MTR background and requirements to facilitate the work of MTR consultants. Some examples include:

1. *Project Results Framework and Theory of Change*: Provides more detailed information on the project being assessed.
2. *Key stakeholders and partners (Stakeholder Mapping)*: A preliminary list of key stakeholders and other individuals who should be consulted, together with an indication of their affiliation and relevance for the MTR and their contact information. This annex can also suggest sites to be visited.

3. *FAO-GEF Project MTR report outline including the GEF rating table.* This is available as Annex 12 in the MTR Guidance Document.
4. *Documents to be consulted:* A list of important documents and webpages that the MTR Team should read at the outset of the MTR and before finalizing its design and the inception report. A list of key documents to be included in the 'project information package' is given below.
5. List of documents required for the MTR are available at SharePoint Microsoft at https://unfao.sharepoint.com/:f/s/FAOSEC/EtjO12AinrdMqpPRdJ0qDmoBF_DZD4imsx9A0CprQilCw?e=DDGx3a

Documents to be provided to the MTR Team ('project information package')

1. Project Identification Form (PIF)
2. Comments received from GEF Secretariat, the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) and the GEF Council members on the project's design and FAO's responses
3. FAO Concept Note, and FAO Project Review Committee report
4. Request for GEF CEO Endorsement
5. FAO-GEF Project Preparation Grant (PPG) document³⁰
6. Project Document
7. Project Inception Report
8. Six-monthly FAO project progress reports (PPR)
9. Annual work plans and budgets (including budget revisions)
10. All annual GEF Project Implementation Review (PIR) reports³¹
11. Any documentation detailing any changes to the project framework and project components, e.g. changes to outcomes and outputs as originally designed
12. List of stakeholders
13. List of project sites and site location maps (for planning the mission itineraries and fieldwork)
14. Execution Agreements in case under Operational Partners Implementation Modality (OPIM) and letters of Agreement (LoA)
15. Relevant technical, backstopping, and project supervision mission reports, including Back to the Office Reports (BTOR) of relevant project and FAO staff, including any reports on technical support provided by FAO HQ or regional office staff
16. Minutes of the meetings of the Project Steering Committee (PSC), FAO Project Task Force (PTF) and other relevant meetings
17. Any Environmental and Social Safeguards analysis and mitigation plan produced during project design period and online records on FPMIS
18. Any awareness raising and communications materials produced by the project, such as brochures, leaflets, presentations given at meeting, address of project website, etc.
19. FAO policy documents e.g. related to FAO Strategic Objectives and Gender
20. All other monitoring reports prepared by the project
21. Finalized GEF focal area Tracking Tools (TT) at CEO endorsement and updated TT at midterm for GEF-5 projects or review of contribution to GEF-7 core indicators (retrofitted) for GEF-6 projects, and GEF-7 core indicators for GEF-7 approved projects
22. Financial management information including: an up-to-date co-financing table;

³⁰ Applicable to full-sized projects, medium-sized projects, and projects under Programs for which Project Preparation Grant (PPG) was approved by the GEF.

³¹ A Project Progress Report (PPR) is an FAO requirement, due every six month, with deadlines on 31 July for a reporting period from 1 January to 30 June, and on 31 January for a reporting period from 1 July to 31 December every year. The Project Implementation Report (PIR) is a GEF requirement, due every year (usually from July) until project closure for projects that have been under implementation for one year or longer.

summary report on the project's financial management and expenditures to date; a summary of any financial revisions made to the project and their purpose; and copies of any completed audits for comment (as appropriate).

23. GEF Gender Policy, GEF Gender Implementation Strategy, GEF Guidelines on Gender Equality, and GEF Guide to advance Gender Equality in GEF projects and Programs

The following documents should also be made available to the MTR team as requested

24. FAO Country/Countries Programme Framework document; FAO Guide to the Project Cycle; FAO Environment and Social Management Guidelines and Policy; FAO Policy on Gender Equity; Guide to mainstreaming gender in FAO's Project Cycle; and Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) Manual

In the case of Programmes

25. CEO endorsement/approval of Child Projects under the Program
26. Program Framework Document (PFD) and Child Projects titles or concepts

Appendix 2. Review Matrix

The review matrix below served as a general guide for the review. It provided directions for the MTR; particularly for the collect of relevant data. It was used as a basis for interviewing people and reviewing project documents. It also provided a basis for structuring the review report as a whole.

Key Questions	Sub-Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
Review criteria: Strategic Relevance - <i>How does the project relate to the main objectives and strategies of the GEF, FAO and of recipient countries to scale up integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes?</i>				
<i>How is the project relevant to the GEF objectives?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the Project support the related strategic priorities of the GEF? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of coherence between project objectives and those of the GEF 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents GEF policies and strategies GEF web sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents analyses Interviews with GEF officials and other partners
<i>How is the project relevant to the UNCCD and UNFCCC objectives?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the Project support the related strategic priorities of the UNCCD and UNFCCC? What regional & international commitments/agreements did the project contribute to? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of coherence between project objectives and those of the UNCCD and of the UNFCCC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents UNCCD, UNFCCC policies and strategies UNCCD, UNFCCC web sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents analyses Interviews with UNCCD and UNFCCC officials and other partners
<i>How is the project relevant to FAO objectives?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the project support the objectives and strategies of FAO in this sector, including its regional and country programmes and initiatives? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of a clear relationship between project objectives and objectives and strategies of FAO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents FAO strategies and programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents analyses Interviews with FAO officials and other partners
<i>How is the project relevant to recipient countries in scaling up integrated natural resources management in</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project follow the government's stated priorities? How does the project scale up integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes Does the project address the identified problem? How country-driven is the Project? Does the Project adequately take into account national realities, both in terms of institutional framework and programming, in its design and its implementation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree to which the project scale up integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes Degree of coherence between the project and national priorities, policies and strategies; particularly related to scale up integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes Appreciation from national stakeholders with respect to adequacy of project design and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents National policies, strategies and programmes Key governments officials and other partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents analyses Interviews with government officials and other partners

Key Questions	Sub-Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
<i>drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent were national partners involved in the design of the Project? ▪ Are there contradictions between the different projects' objectives of Partners? ▪ Has there been any change in the relevance of the project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ implementation to national realities and existing capacities? ▪ Level of involvement of government officials and other partners into the project ▪ Coherence between needs expressed by national stakeholders and FAO criteria 		
<i>Does the project address the needs of target beneficiaries?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How does the project support the needs of target stakeholders / beneficiaries? ▪ Is the implementation of the project being inclusive of all relevant Stakeholders? ▪ Are local beneficiaries and stakeholders adequately involved in project formulation and implementation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strength of the link between project expected results and the needs of target beneficiaries ▪ Degree of involvement and inclusiveness of beneficiaries and stakeholders in project design and implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Beneficiaries and stakeholders ▪ Needs assessment studies ▪ Project documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document analysis ▪ Interviews with beneficiaries and stakeholders
<i>How is the coherence between the project and other relevant interventions?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is the project coherent in terms of areas of focus and targeting of key activities within the context of other donors' strategies? ▪ How does GEF help to fill gaps (or give additional stimulus) that are crucial but are not covered by other donors? ▪ To what extent interventions undertaken by different donor's support (or undermine) the objective of the project? ▪ Is there any overlap (or not) between the project and other similar interventions in CA countries and Turkey which are implemented by other donors? If any, to what extent efforts are being made to minimize/eliminate them? ▪ Are the design and implementation of similar interventions implemented by other donors harmonized and coordinated to avoid duplication of effort? In what ways? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Degree to which the project was coherent and complementary to other donors programming ▪ List of programs and funds in which future developments, ideas and partnerships of the project are eligible? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Other Donors' policies and programming documents ▪ Other Donor representatives ▪ Project documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Documents analyses ▪ Interviews with other Donors
<i>Future directions for similar projects</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What lessons have been learnt and what changes could have been made to the project in order to strengthen the alignment between the project and Partners' priorities and areas of focus? ▪ How could the project better target and address priorities and development challenges of targeted stakeholders/beneficiaries? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data collected throughout review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data analysis
Review criteria: Effectiveness – What is the progress made towards the objective and expected outcomes of the project?				
<i>How is the project effective in achieving its</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How is the project being effective in achieving its expected outcomes? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New methodologies, skills and knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documents ▪ Key stakeholders including FAO, Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Documents analysis ▪ Meetings with main Project Partners

Key Questions	Sub-Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
<i>expected outcomes?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Outcome 1.1: Enhanced knowledge of the costs of land degradation and benefits of INRM, drought preparedness and biosaline agriculture to national economies and the region as a whole informs policy and investment decisions at all levels, including NAP processes ○ Outcome 1.2: Enhanced interstate dialogue, multi-country collaboration and information sharing to promote investment for INRM scaling up ○ Outcome 2.1: Resilience integrated across natural resources management (NRM) sectors and production landscapes ○ Outcome 2.2: Incentives for climate-smart agriculture in place at national and sub-national levels ○ Outcome 3.1: Upscaling of a proactive drought risk management (DRM) approach and innovative integrated natural resources management (INRM) technologies in selected production landscapes / land use systems (e.g. pastoral, agro-sylvo-pastoral, tree-based, irrigated, rainfed, home gardens). ○ Outcome 3.2: Adaptation and scaling up of technologies and approaches for management of salt-affected production landscapes (e.g. irrigated, pastoral, agro-sylvo-pastoral, tree-based, home gardens) ○ Outcome 4.1: Project implementation based on adaptive results-based management, monitoring, and reporting for enhanced impact and visibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Will the project achieve its objective that is to "<i>Scale up integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes in Central Asia and Turkey</i>" including the intended GEBs? ■ Are there any qualitative and quantitative evidence on environmental stress reduction and environmental status change? ■ How is the project addressing barriers to INRM identified through the development of this project? ■ Is the project strategy feasible within the timeframe of the project? ■ Does (or will) the project catalyzes unintended beneficial development effects? ■ Are environmental and social safeguards appropriately addressed in the project implementation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Change in capacity for scaling up integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes ■ Change in capacity for awareness raising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stakeholder involvement and government awareness ○ Change in local stakeholder behavior ■ Change in capacity in policy making and planning for scaling up integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policy reform ○ Legislation/regulation change ○ Development of national and local strategies and plans ■ Change in capacity in implementation and enforcement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Design and implementation of risk assessments ○ Implementation of national and local strategies and action plans through adequate institutional frameworks and their maintenance ○ Monitoring, evaluation and promotion of pilots ■ Change in capacity in mobilizing resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Leverage of resources ○ Human resources ○ Appropriate practices ○ Mobilization of advisory services ■ Changes to the quantity and strength of barriers identified at the outset of the project ■ Gender disaggregated data in project documents 	<p>Team, Representatives of governments and other Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Research findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Interviews with project beneficiaries

Key Questions	Sub-Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
Future directions for similar projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What lessons have been learnt for the project to achieve its outcomes? What changes could have been made (if any) to the formulation of the project in order to improve the achievement of project's expected results? How could the project be more effective in achieving its results? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collected throughout review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis
Review criteria: Efficiency – Has the project been implemented efficiently, cost-effectively and in-line with international and national norms and standards?				
<i>To what extent is the project making best use of the GEF grant and co-financing from national partners?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is adaptive management used or needed to ensure efficient resource use? Is the implementation in line with the timeline of the project? Does the <i>Project Results Framework</i> and work plans and any changes made to them used as management tools during implementation? Are the accounting and financial systems in place adequate for project management and producing accurate and timely financial information? Are progress reports and PIRs produced accurately, timely and responded to reporting requirements including adaptive management changes? Is project implementation as cost effective as originally proposed (planned vs. actual) Are financial resources utilized efficiently? Could financial resources have been used more efficiently? Is the leveraging of funds (co-financing) happened as planned? How is RBM used during project implementation? Is the project decision-making effective? Does the government provide continuous strategic directions to the project's formulation and execution? Have these directions provided by the government guided activities and outcomes of the project? How has the project been impacted by COVID-19? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability and quality of financial and progress reports Timeliness and adequacy of reporting provided Level of discrepancy between planned and utilized financial expenditures Planned vs. actual funds leveraged Cost in view of results achieved compared to costs of similar projects from other organizations Adequacy of project choices in view of existing context, infrastructure and cost Quality of RBM reporting (progress reporting, monitoring and evaluation) Occurrence of change in project formulation/ implementation approach (i.e. restructuring) when needed to improve project efficiency Cost associated with delivery mechanism and management structure compare to alternatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations FAO, Representatives of governments and Project Staff Beneficiaries and Project partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Key Interviews
<i>To what extent is the project</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the technical, operational and administrative support provided by FAO efficient? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provenance of technical expertise used by the project Type of technical expertise used by the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations Consultancies TORs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Key Interviews with FAO/WOCAT Project

Key Questions	Sub-Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
<i>making best use of available technical expertise from FAO as well as from other providers such as WOCAT?</i>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAO, Representatives of governments. and Project Staff Beneficiaries and Project Partners 	staff and key Stakeholders
<i>How efficient are partnership arrangements for the project?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are governments engaged? How do governments demonstrate their ownership of the project? Did governments provide counterparts to the project? To what extent partnerships/linkages between institutions/ organizations are encouraged and supported? Which partnerships/linkages are facilitated? Which one can be considered sustainable? What is the level of efficiency of cooperation and collaboration arrangements? (between local actors, FAO and relevant governments entities) Adequacy of the project management arrangement, including the composition and functioning of the PSC? Which methods were successful or not and why? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific activities conducted to support the development of cooperative arrangements between partners, Examples of supported partnerships Evidence that particular partnerships/linkages will be sustained Types/quality of partnership cooperation methods utilized Activities of the PSC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations Project Partners FAO, Representatives of governments and Project Staff Stakeholders/ Beneficiaries PSC meetings minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews
<i>Does the project efficiently utilize local capacity in implementation?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has an appropriate balance struck between utilization of international expertise as well as local capacity? Does the project support mutual benefits through sharing of knowledge and experiences, training, technology transfer among developing countries? Did the project take into account local capacity in formulation and implementation of the project? Was there an effective collaboration with scientific institutions with competence in INRM in drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes in CA Countries and Turkey? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of total expertise utilized taken from CA Countries and Turkey Number/quality of analyses done to assess local capacity potential and absorptive capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations FAO, Project Team and Project partners Stakeholders/ Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews
Future directions for similar projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What lessons can be learnt from the project on efficiency? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collected throughout review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis

Key Questions	Sub-Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How could the project have more efficiently addressed its key priorities (in terms of management structures and procedures, partnerships arrangements etc.)? What changes could have been made (if any) to the project in order to improve its efficiency? 			
Review criteria: Factors Affecting Performance - Are there factors affecting negatively and/or positively the performance of the project?				
<i>Adequacy of the project design for delivering the expected outcomes?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were GEF criteria for project identification adequate in view of actual needs? Was the project sourced through a demand-driven approach? Is the project's logic coherent and clear? To what extent are the project's objective and components, clear, practical and feasible within the timeframe? Is there a direct and strong link between project expected results (<i>Project Results Framework</i>) and the project design (in terms of project components, choice of partners, structure, delivery mechanism, scope, budget, use of resources etc.)? Are assumptions made during the formulation of the project still valid? Is the length of the project conducive to achieve project outcomes? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of coherence between project expected results and internal project design logic Level of coherence between project design and project implementation approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project document Key project stakeholders Stakeholders involved in the formulation of the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Key Interviews
<i>What is the performance of the management and administration function of the project?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent did the execution agency effectively discharge its role and responsibilities related to the management and administration of the project? What have been the main challenges in relation to the management and administration of the project? How is the supervision by FAO (BH, LTO, FLO) in term of backstopping the project? What changes are needed to improve delivery in the second half of the project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roles and responsibilities as anticipated in the project document Content of communications between FAO/project and implementing partners Challenges related to the execution of the project and reported in progress reports Disbursement profile Procurement processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project document Progress reports Key project stakeholders FAO Staff Project team PTF and PSC meeting minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Key interviews
<i>Does the financing of the project perform as anticipated?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What have been the challenges related to the financial management of the project? To what extent has the pledged co-financing been delivered, and has there been any additional leveraged co-financing provided since implementation began? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial management system of the project Co-financing pledges and reported Project financial reports AWPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project document Progress reports Communications between the project and co-financers FAO Staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Key interviews

Key Questions	Sub-Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How has any short fall in co-financing or materialization of greater than expected co-financing affected project results? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project team 	
<i>How partners and stakeholders engaged in implementing the project?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have other actors, such as civil society, indigenous population or private sector, been sufficiently involved in project design and implementation, and what has been the effect of their involvement/non-involvement on the project results? What are the strengths and challenges of the project's partnerships? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example of project partnerships Degree of stakeholder involvement in the implementation of the project Degree of ownership of project results by stakeholders Example of political support from government Type of institutional support from operating partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project document Progress reports Stakeholders engagement plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Key Interviews
<i>How effective has the project been in communicating and promoting its key messages and results?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How effective has the project been in communicating and promoting its key messages and results to partners, stakeholders and a general audience? How can this be improved? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and quality of communications/promotions Types of media used Accessibility and dissemination methods Degree of coherence between the communication strategy and communication activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication strategy Communication products Websites Social media pages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Key Interviews Media analysis
<i>How does the M&E function contribute to the performance of the project?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the M&E plan practical and sufficient? Does the M&E system operate as per the M&E plan? Has information been gathered in a systematic manner, using appropriate methodologies? How adequate is the M&E framework? Does it measure well the performance of the project? How SMART are indicators & targets? To what extent has information generated by the M&E system during project implementation been used to adapt and improve project planning and execution, achievement of outcomes and ensure sustainability? How can the M&E system be improved? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and quality of indicators Adequacy of M&E plan and implementation of the project Quality of progress reported Cost-effectiveness of the M&E function of the project Existence, quality and use of M&E, feedback and dissemination mechanism to share findings, lessons learned and recommendation on effectiveness of project design. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> M&E plan Project document Progress reports M&E reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Key Interviews
Review criteria: Sustainability - To what extent are there financial, institutional, social-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?				

Key Questions	Sub-Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
<i>Are sustainability issues adequately integrated in project design?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were sustainability issues integrated into the formulation and implementation of the project? Does the project employ governments implementing and/or monitoring systems? Are governments involved in the sustainability strategy for project components? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence/Quality of sustainability strategy Evidence/Quality of steps taken to address sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations FAO, project staff and project Partners Stakeholders/Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews
<i>Did the project adequately address financial and economic sustainability issues?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the project adequately address financial and economic sustainability issues? Are the recurrent costs (if any) after project completion sustainable? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level and source of future financial support to be provided to relevant sectors and activities after project end? Evidence of commitments from international partners, governments or other stakeholders to financially support relevant sectors of activities after project end Level of recurrent costs after completion of project and funding sources for those recurrent costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations FAO, project staff and project Partners Stakeholders/Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews
<i>Organizations arrangements and continuation of activities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are results of efforts made during the project implementation period well assimilated by organizations and their internal systems and procedures? Is there evidence that project partners will continue their activities beyond project support? Has there been a buy-in process, or was there no need to sell the project and buy support? What degree is there of local ownership of initiatives and results? Are appropriate 'champions' being identified and/or supported? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree to which project activities and results have been taken over by local counterparts or institutions/ organizations Level of financial support to be provided to relevant sectors and activities by in-country actors after project end Number/quality of champions identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations FAO, project staff and project Partners Stakeholders/Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews
<i>Enabling environment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are laws, policies and frameworks addressed through the project, in order to address sustainability of key initiatives and reforms? Are the necessary related capacities for lawmaking and enforcement built? What is the level of political commitment to build on results of the project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efforts to support the development of relevant laws and policies State of enforcement and law-making capacity Evidence of commitment by the political class through speeches, enactment of laws and resource allocation to priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations FAO, project staff and project Partners Stakeholders/Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews
<i>Institutional and individual</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the capacity in place at the national and sub-national levels adequate to ensure sustainability of results achieved to date? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elements in place in those different management functions, at appropriate levels (national and sub-national levels) in terms of adequate structures, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations FAO, Project staff and project Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Documentation review

Key Questions	Sub-Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
<i>capacity development</i>		strategies, systems, skills, incentives and interrelationships with other key actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders/ Beneficiaries Capacity assessments available, if any 	
<i>Social and political sustainability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the project contribute to key building blocks for social and political sustainability? Did the project contribute to local Stakeholders' acceptance of new practices? To what extent are there socio - economic risks to sustaining long - term project results? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example of contributions to sustainable political and social change with regard to scaling up integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes in CA Countries and Turkey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations FAO, project staff and project Partners Stakeholders/ Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Documentation review
<i>Replication</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were project activities and results replicated elsewhere or scaled up? What was the project contribution to replication in scaling up integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes in CA Countries and Turkey? Does the project have a catalytic role? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number/quality of replicated initiatives Number/quality of replicated innovative initiatives Volume of additional investment leveraged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other donor programming documents Stakeholders/ Beneficiaries FAO, project staff and project Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews
<i>Challenges to sustainability of the project</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the main challenges that may hinder sustainability of efforts? Have any of these been addressed through project management? What could be the possible measures to further contribute to the sustainability of efforts achieved with the project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges in view of building blocks of sustainability as presented above Recent changes which may present new challenges to the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations Stakeholders/ Beneficiaries FAO, project staff and project Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews
<i>Future directions for the project</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which areas/arrangements under the project show the strongest potential for lasting long-term results? What are the key challenges and obstacles to the sustainability of results of project initiatives that must be directly and quickly addressed? Are national decision-making institutions (Parliament, Government etc.) ready to improve their measures to scale up integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes in CA Countries and Turkey? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collected throughout review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis

Review criteria: Cross Cutting Issues - To what extent cross cutting issues have been considered in the formulation and implementation of the project?

Key Questions	Sub-Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
<i>To what extent were gender considerations taken into account in designing and implementing the project?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Were gender issues incorporated in the project design? ▪ Does the project mainstream gender considerations into its implementation? Inclusion of women beneficiaries in training activities, benefits to women, etc.? Specific activities targeted for involving women? What efforts were made? ▪ Has the project been designed and implemented in a manner that ensures gender equitable participation and benefits? ▪ What contribution has the project made to meeting GEF and FAO's gender equality objectives? ▪ What are the wider impacts/changes the project is achieving in relation to women and men? ▪ What impact is the project having on women and men, as well as on their gendered power dynamic? ▪ Are there any legal, cultural, or religious constraints on women's participation in the project? ▪ Does the monitoring and evaluation strategy consider women and men separately? ▪ Have indicators been developed to measure how women and men are impacted by the activities and results? ▪ Are partner organizations aware of and trained to address gender inequalities among beneficiaries? ▪ What adaptive management measures are recommended to improve gender mainstreaming and the project's work? ▪ To what extent do women fully participate in project decision-making processes and frameworks? To what extent are their voices heard and do decisions reflect their concerns? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Degree and quality of incorporation of gender in the strategy of the project ▪ Degree and quality of incorporation of gender in the AWP's and progress reports ▪ Degree and quality of incorporation of gender in project implementation and operation including budgetary issues. ▪ Example of activities that include gender mainstreaming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project document ▪ Gender assessment & strategy ▪ Progress reports ▪ Country-based gender policies/strategies/baseline statistics ▪ Operational documents including ToRs, and project budget ▪ M&E Plan ▪ Meeting minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Documents analysis ▪ Interviews ▪ Field work, where necessary
<i>To what extent have environmental and socio-economic concerns been taken into consideration in the design and</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Was the project environmental and social screening checklist completed? ▪ Was the Environmental and Social Risk Assessment completed during the formulation of the project? ▪ Have the environmental and social safeguards changed since the outset of the project? If yes in what ways? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ratings and information reported in the project document ▪ Progress as reported in progress reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Risk classification certification form ▪ Environmental and social screening checklist ▪ Progress reports ▪ M&E Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Documents analysis ▪ Interviews

Key Questions	Sub-Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
<i>implementation of the project?</i>				
<i>How is risk and risk mitigation being managed?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well are risks and assumptions being managed? What is the quality of risk mitigation strategies developed? Are they sufficient? Are there clear strategies for risk mitigation related with long-term sustainability of the project? Are there unforeseen issues that are negatively affecting project implementation and progress towards objectives? What are the risks due to COVID-19? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completeness of risk identification and assumptions during project planning Quality of existing information systems in place to identify emerging risks and other issues? Quality of risk mitigations strategies developed and followed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk log Project documents and evaluations FAO, Project Staff and Project Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews

Appendix 3. List of documents consulted

ADB, April 2006, *CACILM Multicountry Partnership Framework – Project Document*

ADB, December 2004, *Project Development Facility Block B (PDF-B) Proposal to the GEF for the Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management*

ADB, May 2004, *Program Concept for Pipeline Entry for the GEF for Central Asian Countries Initiatives for Land Management*

ADB, *The Global Mechanism*, June 2003, *Tajikistan: Issues and Approaches to Combat Desertification – Discussion Draft*

Anna Tengberg, Cryton Zazu & Hanan Seid, December 2019, *WOCAT – External Evaluation Report*

Antonio Cardesa-Salzmann, 2014, *Combating Desertification in Central Asia: Finding New Ways to Regional Stability through Environmental Stability?*

CACILM-II, 2020, *Gender and Social Inclusion Mainstreaming Strategy Action Plan*

CACILM-II, *Action Plan for Capacity Building on quality Farmers Field School programme development within context of FAO Regional Project CACILM2*

CACILM-II, *AWPs, BTORs, finances and co-financing reports, Inception reports, LOAs, Presentations per country, list of procured items and services, concept notes, project document, PIF, PPG documents, progress reports (PIRs, PPRs, RBM reports), outcome mapping documents per country, PSC meetings minutes, PTF meetings minutes, country-based working groups documents*

CACILM-II, *CACILM-II Communication Plan for 2020 Revised due to COVID-19*

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Appendix 4. Interview Protocol

Note: This is a guide for interviewers and a simplified version of the review matrix. Not all questions will be asked to each interviewee; it is a reminder for interviewers about the type of information required to complete the review exercise and a guide to prepare semi-structured interviews.

I. RELEVANCE - *How does the project relate to the main objectives and strategies of the GEF, FAO and of recipient countries to scale up integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes?*

- I.1. How is the project relevant to the GEF objectives?
- I.2. How is the project relevant to the UNCCD and UNFCCC objectives?
- I.3. How is the project relevant to FAO objectives?
- I.4. How is the project relevant to recipient countries in scaling up integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes?
- I.5. Does the project address the needs of target beneficiaries?
- I.6. How is the coherence between the project and other relevant interventions?

Future directions for similar projects

- I.7. What lessons have been learnt and what changes could have been made to the project in order to strengthen the alignment between the project and the Partners' priorities and areas of focus?
- I.8. How could the project better target and address priorities and development challenges of targeted stakeholders/beneficiaries?

II. EFFECTIVENESS – *What is the progress made towards the objective and expected outcomes of the project?*

- II.1. How is the Project effective in progressing towards its expected outcomes?
 - 1.1: Enhanced knowledge of the costs of land degradation and benefits of INRM, drought preparedness and biosaline agriculture to national economies and the region as a whole informs policy and investment decisions at all levels, including NAP processes
 - 1.2: Enhanced interstate dialogue, multi-country collaboration and information sharing to promote investment for INRM scaling up
 - 2.1: Resilience integrated across natural resources management (NRM) sectors and production landscapes
 - 2.2: Incentives for climate-smart agriculture in place at national and sub-national levels
 - 3.1: Upscaling of a proactive drought risk management (DRM) approach and innovative integrated natural resources management (INRM) technologies in selected production landscapes / land use systems (e.g. pastoral, agro-sylvo-pastoral, tree-based, irrigated, rainfed, home gardens).
 - 3.2: Adaptation and scaling up of technologies and approaches for management of salt-affected production landscapes (e.g. irrigated, pastoral, agro-sylvo-pastoral, tree-based, home gardens)
 - 4.1: Project implementation based on adaptive results-based management, monitoring, and reporting for enhanced impact and visibility
- II.2. Will the project achieve its objective that is to "*Scale up integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes in CA and Turkey*" included the intended GEBs?
- II.3. Does (or will) the project catalyze unintended beneficial development effects?

Future directions for similar projects

- II.4. What lessons have been learnt for the project to achieve its outcomes?
- II.5. What changes could have been made (if any) to the design of the project in order to improve the achievement of project' expected results?
- II.6. How could the project be more effective in achieving its results?

III. EFFICIENCY - *Has the project been implemented efficiently, cost-effectively and in-line with international and national norms and standards?*

- III.1. How is adaptive management used or needed to ensure efficient resource use?
- III.2. Are the project logical framework and work plans and any changes made to them used as management tools during implementation?
- III.3. Are accounting and financial systems in place adequate for project management and producing accurate and timely financial information?
- III.4. Are progress reports and PIRs produced accurately, timely and responding to reporting requirements including adaptive management changes?

- III.5. Is project implementation as cost effective as originally proposed (planned vs. actual)
- III.6. Is the leveraging of funds (co-financing) happening as planned?
- III.7. Are financial resources utilized efficiently? Could financial resources be used more efficiently?
- III.8. How is RBM used during project implementation?
- III.9. Is the technical, operational and administrative support provided by FAO efficient?
- III.10. To what extent are partnerships/linkages between institutions/organizations encouraged and supported?
- III.11. Which partnerships/linkages are facilitated? Which one can be considered sustainable?
- III.12. What is the level of efficiency of cooperation and collaboration arrangements? (between local actors, FAO/GEF and relevant government entities)
- III.13. Adequacy of the project management arrangement, including the composition and functioning of the PSC?
- III.14. Is an appropriate balance struck between utilization of international expertise as well as local capacity?
- III.15. Did the project take into account local capacity in design and implementation of the project?
- III.16. How has the project been impacted by COVID-19?

Future directions for the project

- III.17. What lessons can be learnt from the project on efficiency?
- III.18. How could the project have more efficiently addressed its key priorities (in terms of management structures and procedures, partnerships arrangements, etc.)?

IV. Factors Affecting Performance – *Are there factors affecting negatively and/or positively the performance of the project?*

- IV.1. Adequacy of the project design for delivering the expected outcomes?
- IV.2. What is the performance of the management and administration function of the project?
- IV.3. Does the financing of the project perform as anticipated?
- IV.4. How partners and stakeholders engaged in implementing the project?
- IV.5. How effective has the project been in communicating and promoting its key messages and results?
- IV.6. How does the M&E function contribute to the performance of the project?

V. SUSTAINABILITY - *Are initiatives and results of the project allowing for continued benefits?*

- V.1. Are sustainability issues adequately integrated in project design?
- V.2. Does the project adequately address financial and economic sustainability issues?
- V.3. Is there evidence that project partners will continue their activities beyond project support?
- V.4. Are laws, policies and frameworks being addressed through the project, in order to address sustainability of key initiatives and reforms?
- V.5. Is the capacity in place at national and local levels adequate to ensure sustainability of results achieved to date?
- V.6. Does the project contribute to key building blocks for social and political sustainability?
- V.7. Are project activities and results being replicated elsewhere?
- V.8. What are the main challenges that may hinder sustainability of efforts?

Future directions for the project

- V.9. Which areas/arrangements under the project show the strongest potential for lasting long-term results?
- V.10. What are the key challenges and obstacles to the sustainability of results of project initiatives that must be directly and quickly addressed?

VI. Cross Cutting Issues - *To what extent cross cutting issues have been considered in the formulation and implementation of the project?*

- VI.1. Has the project been designed and implemented in a manner that ensures gender equitable participation and benefits?
- VI.2. What contribution has the project made to meeting GEF and FAO's gender equality objectives?
- VI.3. Have environmental and social concerns been taken into consideration in the design and implementation?
- VI.4. How is risk and risk mitigation being managed?

Appendix 5. List of women and men interviewed

Name	Position	Organization
Regional Institutions, International Consultants/Partners, FAO Staff		
Dr. Akmal Akramkhanov	Senior Officer, Researcher	ICARDA
Ms. Akmaral Sman	Gender & Livelihood Specialist	Project Team
Ms. Anna Tengberg	Consultant (project design)	Consultant
Mr. Aziz Karimov	Head of ICBA for Central Asia	ICBA
Mr. Bakhtiyor Pulatov	Director of Scientific Information Center of the ICSD (National Secretariat)	ICSD
Ms. Barbara Fang	FAO-GEF Knowledge Management	FAO
Ms. Eleanor Milne	Consultant	WOCAT
Mr Ekrem Yazici	Lead Technical Officer (LTO)	FAO Team
Mr. Felix Beck	Former Advisor for Regional Program for Sustainable and Climate Sensitive Land Use for Economic Development in Central Asia	GIZ
Mr. Feras Ziadat		FAO
Mr. Geert Rhebergen	International M&E Specialist	Project Team (Consultant)
Ms. Geneviève Braun	Programme Officer	FAO-GEF
Ms. Güher Sungur	Field Programme Support and Monitoring Officer & MTR Manager	FAO
Mr. Hanspeter Liniger	Partner to the project	WOCAT
Mr. Hernan Gonzalez	Funding Liaison Officer (FLO)	FAO
Ms. Ingrid Teich Mr. Cesar Garcia	Consultants	WOCAT
Ms. Irina Bermirzayeva	Manager of CAMPS4ASB project	CAREC
Ms. Jamal Annagylyjova	Regional Liaison Officer, Central and Eastern Europe	UNCCD Secretariat, Bonn
Ms. Kristina Toderich	Professor on salinity management in drylands (former ICBA Head in Central Asia / International Consultant)	International Platform for Dryland Research and Education, Tottori University, Japan
Ms. Ludmila Kiktenko	Programme Manager	CAREC
Dr. Makhmud Shaumarov	Regional Project Coordinator	Project Team
Ms. Naoko Sakai	International Field Programme and Operations Specialist	FAO Team
Ms. Nil Darilmaz	Programme Associate	FAO Team
Ms. Olga Grebennikova	Communication & Outreach Specialist	Project Team
Ms. Rima Mekdaschi	Partner to the project	WOCAT
Ms. Sara Marjani	(first) Lead Technical Officer (LTO)	FAO

Name	Position	Organization
Mr. Sorboni Karimzoda	M&E Specialist	Project Team
Mr. Ulrich Apel	Design and GEF strategies	GEF Secretariat
Ms. Umutai Dauletova	Gender Mainstreaming and Social Inclusion Specialist	FAO SEC
Mr. Zafar Makhmudov	Executive Director	CAREC
KAZAKHSTAN		
Mr. Alexander Nazarenko	Farmer (beneficiary)	Almaty Region
Ms Gulsim Baiymbetova	Research Secretary	Kazakh Research Institute of Rice Production
Ms Kulyash Iskandarova	Head of Department of International Cooperation and Innovations (project partner)	Kazakh Research Institute of Livestock and Fodder Production
Ms Laura Tokhetova	Senior Researcher	Kazakh Research Institute of Rice Production
Mr. Marat Uzbayev	Head of the Division	Committee for Land Resources Management of the Ministry of Agriculture Head of the Department on Land Cadaster
Ms Marya Ibrayeva	Head of the Department of Soil Fertility and Biology (project partner)	Kazakh Research Institute of Soil Science and Agrochemistry after U.U. Uspanov
Mr Nurbol Appazov	Director (project partner)	Kazakh Research Institute of Rice Production
Ms Nurgul Meldebekova	Head of the Department of Pasture Management (project partner)	Kazakh Research Institute of Livestock and Fodder Production
Mr. Toleu Yeraliyev	Farmer (beneficiary)	Kyzylorda Region
Mr. Turmakhan Zhanabayev	Senior Specialist of the Department of Land Cadaster	State Corporation "Government for Citizens" (Department of Land Cadaster) of the Ministry of Digital Development, Innovation and Aerospace Industry of Kazakhstan
Mr. Viktor Aslanov	Chair (project partner)	Association of individual entrepreneurs and legal entities "Kazakhstan growers union"
Mr. Yerkin Bekzhanov, Mr Aset Tokhtamisov	Farmer (beneficiary and partner)	Kyzylorda Region
Mr. Yerzhan Sugralin	Farmer (beneficiary)	Kyzylorda Region
Mr. Zhanuzak Baimanov	Head of the Knowledge Dissemination Center (project partner)	Kazakh Research Institute of Rice Production
Mr. Zhasulan Serikov	Head of Agricultural Division (project partner)	Regional Chamber of Entrepreneurs of Kyzylorda region
KYRGYZSTAN		
Ms. Aliya Ibraimova	Director	Public Foundation "Kemp Alatoo"
Mr. Abdybek Asanaliev	Member of the UNCCD Expert Working Group Project partner	Kyrgyz National Agrarian University

Name	Position	Organization
		Doctor of agricultural Sciences Agricultural Consultant's Services
Mr. Azamat Shamiev	Member of the UNCCD Working Group of Experts, Assistant to the Deputy Minister of Agriculture. Leading Specialist of International Cooperation Department, Project partner	Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Rural development
Mr. Azhibekov Bilimbek	Project coordinator, Implementing agent	NGO CAMP Alatoo,
Ms. Baglan Salykmambetova	Head of International Cooperation Department, Project partner	State Agency for Environment Protection under the Ministry of Emergencies
Mr Bakyt Yrsaliev	Deputy Director, project participant	State Forest Agency under the Ministry of Agriculture
Mr. Bolot Sadykov	Farmer, Beneficiary	Kara-Suu Local Community, Kochkor district
Ms. Gulnaz Kaseeva	Expert on value chains	NGO CAMP Alatoo
Ms. Gulnur Koichumanova	Head of the GIS Department of Kyrgyzgiprozem-Project partner	State enterprise "State design Institute for land management "Kyrgyzgiprozem"»
Mr. Iskender Baihazarov	Expert on land resources	NGO CAMP Alatoo
Mr. Jenish Alybaev	Project partner	Kochkor district ARIS representative
Mr. Koichumanov Erkinbek	GIS specialist, Implementing agent	NGO CAMP Alatoo
Ms. Lyubov Sharlaeva	Head of the GIS group	State enterprise "State design Institute for land management "Kyrgyzgiprozem"»
Ms. Makhabat Abdilova	Leader of the women's initiative group, Farmer, Beneficiary	Ak-Kyia Aiyl Aimak Kochkor district Women's Initiative Group
Mr. Malik Bekenov	Expert on Climate Change Adaptation in the Pasture Department, Member of the UNCCD Working Group of Experts, Project partner	Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Rural development
Mr. Matraim Jusupov	National Project Manager	KYR CACILM-II Project Team
Mr. Nurgazy Kazybekov	Leading Specialist of the Food Industry Department Branch Division. Project partner	Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Rural development
Ms. Rakhat Zhanuzakova	GIS specialist, Kyrgyzgiprozem-Project partner	State enterprise "State design Institute for land management "Kyrgyzgiprozem"»
Mr. Rakhatbek Israilov	Head of the District Department of Agricultural Development of the Kochkor district (Project Site beneficiary)	State Administration of Kochkor district of Naryn Province
Ms. Stalbek Kyzy Baktykan	Chief Specialist of International Cooperation Department, Project partner	Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Rural development

Name	Position	Organization
Mr. Urmat Omurbekov	Chairman, Project site beneficiary	Cholpon Aiyl Aimak Pasture Users ' Association,, Kochkor district
Mr. Tilek Konokbaev	Farmer, Beneficiary	Kochkor Aiyl Aimak, Kochkor district
TAJIKISTAN		
Mr Abduqodir Mavlodod	UNCCD Focal Point, deputy Chairman of CEP	Committee for Environmental Protection under Government of Tajikistan (CEP)
Mr. Daler Domullodzhanov	National Project Manager	TAK CACILM-II Project Team
Ms. Firuza	National Consultant Mobilizer / FFS Expert	CACILM-II Project Team
Ms Gulbahor Maksudkhojaeva	Chair	Public Organisation (PO) "Women of Khatlon"
Ms. Gulniso Nekushoeva	Consultant	WOCAT
Mr. Khujanazar Sokiev	Community leader/farmer	Yovon district, Naryn jamoat, Oksangloh village
Ms. Maksudkhojaeva Gulbahor	Director	Public Organization Bonuvoni Khatlon
Ms. Manzura Khojaeva	Community leader/farmer	Vakhsh district, Rudaki jamoat, Dusti village
Mr. Marufqul Mahkamov	Project agronomist	CACILM-II Project Team
Ms. Nilufar Nazirova	Officer in charge	Department of international relation of the Committee for Environmental Protection under Government of TJK
Mr. Oleg Guchgeldiyev	FAO Representative & Project Design	FAO
Mr. Suhrob Sherov	Community leader/farmer	Jomi district, Iftikhor jamoat, Obi Oshik village
TURKEY		
Ms. Aysegul Selisik	Assistant FAO Representative, Turkey	FAO Team
Mr. Bayram Hopur	Expert - Design and Implementation	FAO SEC (Former) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
Mr. Bülent Sönmez, Ph.D.	Head of Department, Soil and Water Resources Management, General Directorate of Agricultural Research and Policies – Implementation (TAGEM)	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
Ms. Derya Polat	Head of Department, General Directorate of Combating Desertification and Erosion - Administration	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
Ms. Elmas Yaramış	Implementation (CACILM-II Focal Point)	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
Mr. Fatih Berber	International Agricultural Training Center (UTEM), International Desertification Trainings - Implementation	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

Name	Position	Organization
Ms. Mediha Haliloğlu	Division Director, General Directorate of Combating Desertification and Erosion - Implementation	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
Ms. Özge İmamoğlu	Head of Department, International Institutions, General Directorate of European Union and Foreign Relations - Administration	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
Ms. Sevinç Madenoğlu	Researcher, General Directorate of Agricultural Research and Policies (TAGEM) – Design and Implementation	FAO SEC (Former) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
TURKMENISTAN		
Mr. Annamuhammet Annamuhammedov	Project partner	Community members of project pilot site in Nohur
Mr. Babageldi Kurbanov	Head of Department of Agricultural Land Reclamation	Turkmen Agricultural Institute, MAEPT
Mr. Bayrammyrat Durdyev	Project partner	National Institute of deserts, flora and fauna of MAEPT
Mr. Berdi Berdiyev	Head of Department for International ecological cooperation and projects of MAEPT, FAO national Correspondent in Turkmenistan, GEF Operating Focal Point	Ministry of Agriculture and Environment Protection of Turkmenistan
Mr. Ishanberdi Lollyev	Project partner	Community members of project pilot site in Karakum
Mr. Mergen Yusupov	National Project Coordinator	Ministry of Agriculture and Environment Protection of Turkmenistan
Dr. Muhammet Durikov	National Focal Point UNCCD	Director of the research center of the Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development
Mr. Rahmanberdi Hanekov	National Project Manager	TKM CACILM-2 Project Team
Ms. Roza Berkelieva	Chief Specialist	Institute "Tukmensuvylymtaslama" (former Giprowdhoz), State Committee of Water Management of Turkmenistan (project partner)
Mr. Oraz Durdyev	Senior Lecturer, Agricultural Melioration Department	Turkmen Agricultural University Named after S.A. Niyazov, MAEPT
Ms. Orazmukhamedova Makhym	Head of the Scientific, Technical and International Department	Hydrometeorological Center of the Hydrometeorology Service, MAEPT
Ms. Roza Berkelieva	Chief Specialist of the Institute "Tukmensuvylymtaslama"	State Committee of Water Management of Turkmenistan
UZBEKISTAN		
Mr. Abduaziz Abduvosikov	Vice Rector, Deputy head of department	Tashkent state agrarian university
Mr. Abduvokhid Zakhadullaev Mr. Khojimurot Talipov	Head of department Deputy head of department	State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Forestry

Name	Position	Organization
Mr. Alisher Qurbanov	Head	GIZ office in Nukus
Mr. Alisher Shukurov Mr. Isroiljon Kholmiraev	Advisor to the Minister Head of Department, National coordinator of the project CACILM-2	Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Uzbekistan
Mr. Asqar Javadov	Chairman	Bukhara Region Agricultural department
Mr. Ayabbergen Tolybayev	Head	Karakalpakstan Branch of M.Mirzaev Horticulture Research Institute in Kegeyli district
Mr. Botir Togaev	Governor	Kamashi district
Mr. Davlatyor Ashirov	Head	“Sarkopli Xalimaxon” farm in Beruniy district
Ms. Dilrabo Kodirova	Professor	Department of Agrochemistry and soil sciences of the Tashkent state agrarian university (partner organization), doctor of biological sciences.
Mr. George Beers	International Consultant	Wageningen Economic Research (WUR) - Institute of Agricultural Economics
Mr. Haydarov Bekmurod	Director	Gallyaral Branch of Research Institute of Cereals and Legume
Mr. Ilyos Niyozov	Head	“Niyoz Niozov” farm in Bukhara district
Mr. Ilyosjon Fozilov	Head of Department of Ministry and Director of Cluster	Ministry of Water resources the Republic of Uzbekistan , "Non- governmental non-profit institution "Innovations and scientific research Cluster on sustainable development"
Mr. Isomiddin Majidov	Head	Qamashi forestry farm
Mr. Jahongir Tolipov	Head of department	State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Ecology and Environmental Protection
Mr. Muaffar Javqiev	Head (Beneficiary)	Small greenhouse beneficiary family
Ms. Muhabbat Boboyeva	Head (Beneficiary)	Small greenhouse owner family, Turkon Makhalla community, Bukhara district, Bukhara region.
Mr. Nozim Asqarov	Acting director	Research Institute for Agricultural Economics and Food Sector
Mr. Otabek Ismatov	Head	Guzor Karakul Sheep breeding farm
Mr. Oybek Amanov Mr. Diyor Jo'rayev	Director Deputy Director	Kashkadarya Branch of Scientific Research Institute of Grain and Legume Crops
Mr. Oybek Kakhramonov	Director	Bukhara Scientific and Production center for seed

Name	Position	Organization
		production of desert-pasture plants
Mr. Rashid Muhammadiev	Deputy chairman	Agricultural department of Kashqadarya Region
Ms. Roqqiya Sharipova	Household Head (Beneficiary)	Small greenhouse. Robotikalmok Makhalla community, Bukhara district, Bukhara region.
Mr. Rustam Khojiev	Head	Bukhara Region Forestry Department
Mr. Shamshodbek Kholmurodov	Head	The group on small and medium-sized enterprises and householders of the Bukhara district
Mr. Shavkat Bekmirzayev	Deputy Governor	Kamashi district of Kashqadarya province
Prof. Shavkat Imomov (Mr.) Mr. Anvar Juraev	Director Head of Department	Bukhara branch of Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers
Mr. Shavkat Shodiev	Head	Head “Zarafshon” farm in Romiton district
Mr. Sherzod Oltinboev	Head	Farm “Oltinboev yeri”
Prof. Shukhrat Bobomurodov (Mr)	Director	Research Institute for Soil Sciences and Agro-chemistry (former division of State Committee on Land Resources Geodesics, Cartography and the State Cadaster)
Mr. Shukurbek Toshev	Deputy Governor	Bukhara district
Mr. Tojiddin Rahimov	Deputy Governor	Kamashi district

138 people interviewed (48 women and 90 men)

Appendix 6. Rating Guidance

Most review criteria will be rated on a six-point scale, as follows: highly satisfactory (HS); satisfactory (S); moderately satisfactory (MS); moderately unsatisfactory (MU); unsatisfactory (U); highly unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability and the likelihood of impact are rated from likely (L) down to highly unlikely (HU).

The MTR Team will also compare their (independently derived) ratings with those of the most recent GEF project implementation review (PIR) and describe any significant discrepancies.

Rating scheme

Ratings will be given following the explanations below.

Rating	Description
Highly satisfactory (HS)	<i>Level of outcomes achieved clearly exceeds expectations and/or there were no shortcomings</i>
Satisfactory (S)	<i>Level of outcomes achieved was as expected and/or there were no or minor shortcomings</i>
Moderately satisfactory (MS)	<i>Level of outcomes achieved more or less as expected and/or there were moderate shortcomings</i>
Moderately unsatisfactory (MU)	<i>Level of outcomes achieved somewhat lower than expected and/or there were significant shortcomings</i>
Unsatisfactory (U)	<i>Level of outcomes achieved substantially lower than expected and/or there were major shortcomings</i>
Highly unsatisfactory (HU)	<i>Only a negligible level of outcomes achieved and/or there were severe shortcomings</i>
Unable to assess (UA)	<i>The available information does not allow an assessment of the level of outcome achievements</i>

The overall rating of project outcomes should be based on performance on the criteria of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. The calculation of the overall outcome rating will consider all three criteria, of which relevance and effectiveness are critical. The relevance rating will determine whether the overall outcome rating is in the unsatisfactory range (MU to HU = unsatisfactory range). If the relevance rating is unsatisfactory, the overall outcome will be unsatisfactory as well. However, where the relevance rating is satisfactory (HS to MS), the overall outcome rating could, depending on its effectiveness and efficiency rating, be either satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

Factors affecting performance (assess each element separately; M&E is treated differently)

Rating	Description
Highly satisfactory (HS)	There were no shortcomings and quality of design and readiness/project implementation/project execution/co-financing/partnerships and stakeholder engagement/communication and knowledge management and results exceeded expectations.
Satisfactory (S)	There were no or minor shortcomings and quality of design and readiness/project implementation/project execution/co-financing/partnerships and stakeholder engagement/communication and knowledge management and results meet expectations.
Moderately satisfactory (MS)	There were some shortcomings and quality of design and readiness/project implementation/project execution/co-financing/partnerships and stakeholder engagement/communication and knowledge management and results more or less meet expectations.
Moderately unsatisfactory (MU)	There were significant shortcomings and quality of design and readiness/project implementation/project execution/co-financing/partnerships and stakeholder engagement/communication and knowledge management and results were somewhat lower than expected.
Unsatisfactory (U)	There were major shortcomings and quality of design and readiness/project implementation/project execution/co-financing/partnerships and stakeholder engagement/communication and knowledge management and results were substantially lower than expected.
Highly unsatisfactory (HU)	There were severe shortcomings in quality of design and readiness/project implementation/project execution/co-financing/partnerships and stakeholder engagement/communication and knowledge management.

Rating	Description
Unable to assess (UA)	The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of design and readiness/project implementation/project execution/co-financing/partnerships and stakeholder engagement/communication and knowledge management.


Monitoring and evaluation design or implementation ratings *(Overall M&E design, design and implementation assessed separately)*

Rating	Description
Highly satisfactory (HS)	There were no shortcomings and quality of M&E design or M&E implementation exceeded expectations.
Satisfactory (S)	There were no or minor shortcomings and quality of M&E design or M&E implementation meets expectations.
Moderately satisfactory (MS)	There were some shortcomings and quality of M&E design or M&E implementation more or less meets expectations.
Moderately unsatisfactory (MU)	There were significant shortcomings and quality of M&E design or M&E implementation somewhat lower than expected.
Unsatisfactory (U)	There were major shortcomings and quality of M&E design or M&E implementation substantially lower than expected.
Highly unsatisfactory (HU)	There were severe shortcomings in M&E design or M&E implementation.
Unable to assess (UA)	The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of M&E design or M&E implementation.

Sustainability


Rating	Description
Likely (L)	There is little or no risk to sustainability.
Moderately likely (ML)	There are moderate risks to sustainability.
Moderately unlikely (MU)	There are significant risks to sustainability.
Unlikely (U)	There are severe risks to sustainability.
Unable to assess (UA)	Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability.

Appendix 7. Pledge of Ethical Conduct in Evaluation




ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATION

PLEDGE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT IN EVALUATION




By signing this pledge, we hereby commit to discussing and applying the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation and to adopting the associated ethical behaviors.

 **INTEGRITY**


I will actively adhere to the moral values and professional standards of evaluation practice as outlined in the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation and following the values of the United Nations. Specifically, I will be:

- **Honest and truthful** in my communication and actions.
- **Professional**, engaging in credible and trustworthy behavior, along-side competence, commitment and ongoing reflective practice.
- **Independent, impartial and incorruptible**.

 **ACCOUNTABILITY**


I will be answerable for all decisions made and actions taken and responsible for honouring commitments, without qualification or exception; I will report potential or actual harms observed. Specifically, I will be:

- **Transparent** regarding evaluation purpose and actions taken, establishing trust and increasing accountability for performance to the public, particularly those populations affected by the evaluation.
- **Responsive** as questions or events arise, adapting plans as required and referring to appropriate channels where corruption, fraud, sexual exploitation or abuse or other misconduct or waste of resources is identified.
- **Responsible** for meeting the evaluation purpose and for actions taken and for ensuring redress and recognition as needed.

 **RESPECT**

I will engage with all stakeholders of an evaluation in a way that honours their dignity, well-being, personal agency and characteristics. Specifically, I will ensure:








- **Access** to the evaluation process and products by all relevant stakeholders – whether power- less or powerful – with due attention to factors that could impede access such as sex, gender, race, language, country of origin, LGBTQ status, age, background, religion, ethnicity and ability.
- **Meaningful participation and equitable treatment** of all relevant stakeholders in the evaluation processes, from design to dissemination. This includes engaging various stakeholders, particularly affected people, so they can actively inform the evaluation approach and products rather than being solely a subject of data collection.
- **Fair representation** of different voices and perspectives in evaluation products (reports, webinars, etc.).

 **BENEFICENCE**

I will strive to do good for people and planet while minimizing harm arising from evaluation as an intervention. Specifically, I will ensure:

- **Explicit and ongoing consideration of risks and benefits** from evaluation processes.
- **Maximum benefits** at systemic (including environmental), organizational and programmatic levels.
- **No harm**. I will not proceed where harm cannot be mitigated.
- **Evaluation makes an overall positive contribution** to human and natural systems and the mission of the United Nations.

We commit to playing our part in ensuring that evaluations are conducted according to the Charter of the United Nations and the ethical requirements laid down above and contained within the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation. When this is not possible, we will report the situation to our supervisor, designated focal points or channels and will actively seek an appropriate response.

Mar. 1, 2021	Mar. 1, 2021	Mar. 1, 2021	Mar. 1, 2021	Mar. 1, 2021	Mar. 1, 2021	Mar. 1, 2021
Jean Joseph Bellamy	Madina Mussayeva	Aleksandr Temirbekov	Mirzomurod Samiev	Royshen Ishangulyyev	Elcin Berber	Umid Nazarkulov
						

Appendix 8. Gender Responsiveness

As mentioned in the project document, the project is consistent with GEF Policy on Gender Mainstreaming (PL/SD/02) and FAO gender policies. Specifically, the project will contribute to four of the five objectives of the FAO gender policy:

1. Women participate equally with men as decision-makers in rural institutions and in shaping laws, policies and programs.
2. Women and men have equal access to and control over decent employment and income, land and other productive resources.
3. Women and men have equal access to goods and services for agricultural development to markets
4. Women's work burden is reduced by 20% through improved technologies, services and infrastructure

Special actions have been carried out with the aim of promoting gender equality including inclusion of women, women's access to knowledge, gender mainstreamed management arrangements. As mentioned in the project document gender targets under each Component are structured as follows:

	Gender targets
Component 1	Multi-country collaborative work will include partnerships with regional, national and local organizations that are engaged in works to support rural women, through policy-making or direct support.
Component 2	Effort will be made to bridge the gap between existing national gender equality policy and strategy, legal and institutional frameworks on INRM through an approach to resilience that takes gender differences into consideration
Component 3	During the process of up-scaling climate-smart agricultural practices, attention will be given to ensuring women's equal participation in local planning processes, the selection of innovative approaches that are accessible to women as well as men, and measures to remove any impediments that female farmers may face in accessing advisory and extension services.
Component 4	Gender sensitive indicators have been chosen for each project outcome / outputs and fully incorporated into the M&E system.

Table 1: Gender targets under each component of the Project.

There are also gender-related indicators, risks and social sustainability instruments identified in the project document. Gender issues will be handled as a cross – cutting issue during MTR process and a gender analysis will be mainly conducted to obtain gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation data. Additionally, gender analysis will be carried out to understand gender differentials in project activities, the level of gender awareness among project stakeholders, the level of participation of women and men in decision-making process. The analysis will be carried out as a separate supplementary action during MTR process.

Developed by FAO in 1993, the Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA) approach is based on analyzing socio-economic patterns and participatory identification of women's and men's priorities and potentials. The tool help clarify the division of labor within a community, including divisions by gender and other social characteristics and facilitate the understanding of resource use and control, as well as participation in community institutions (ILO 2009). In line with the FAO SEAGA approach, gender analysis will be conducted from the field level (micro), intermediate level (meso), and policy and plan level (macro).

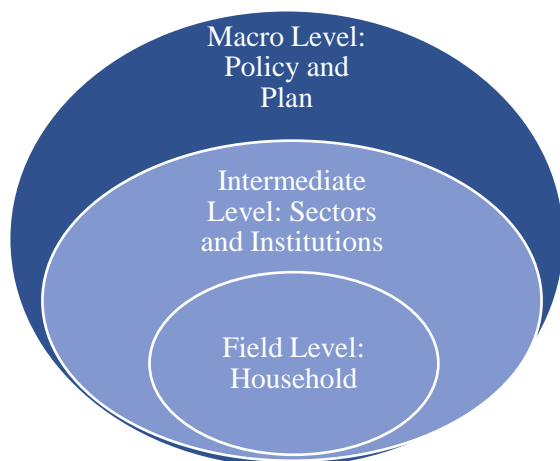


Figure 4: Three level of gender analysis

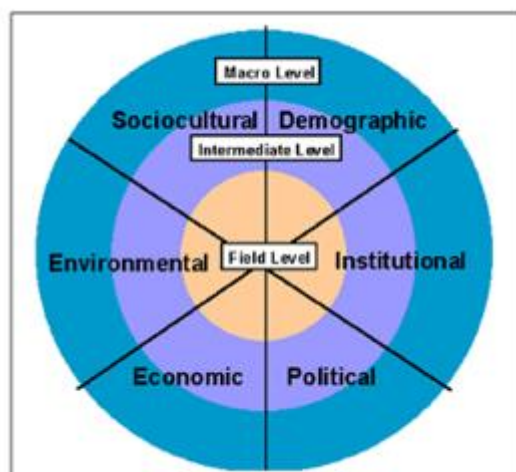


Figure 5: Gender analysis at socio – economic context (FAO SEAGA, 2003)

Macro Level: Policies and Plans. Both international and national, economic, and social, including trade and finance policies and national development plans.

Intermediate Level: Sectors and Institutions. Sectoral level and associated organizations and institutions. Focuses on structures. The links between the macro and field levels.

Field Level: Households. Focuses on people, including women and men as individuals, socioeconomic differences among households and communities as a whole.

Gender analysis will be conducted during desk review, online interviews, and fieldwork (where possible). Research questions which are presented in the table below will be asked during the MTR process. The analysis will be holistic – based and specific questions will be identified during the process:

	Research Question (Generic - More detailed information can be found in Annex 4: MTR Matrix)	Desk Review	Interviews (FAO and Stakeholders)	Field Work (Where possible)
Macro Level	Have the needs, priorities and constraints of both women and men been taken into consideration during the design and implementation?	√	√	√
	Is there any a new policy document or strategy designed with the aim of promoting gender equality in INRM?	√	√	

	Research Question (Generic - More detailed information can be found in Annex 4: MTR Matrix)	Desk Review	Interviews (FAO and Stakeholders)	Field Work (Where possible)
	Are there any completed or ongoing projects on gender and INRM in the country?	√	√	
	What is the level of awareness on gender issues among stakeholders and the project team?	√	√	
	Monitoring and evaluation mechanism is gender – sensitive or not?	√	√	
Intermediate Level	Are there any collaborations built with women NGOs or farmer organizations?	√	√	
	What kind of added – value technology promoted by the project?	√	√	
	Which institutions or partnerships are in charge of promoting women in the INRM related issues?	√	√	
Micro Level	Does the intervention promote women's and men's equitable access to and control over productive resources and services?	√	√	√
	Does the intervention foster their equal participation in institutions and decision – making processes?	√	√	√

Qualitative data and desk review sources will be examined through contextual analysis concerning research questions. Analyzed data will be interpreted considering the context of gender assessment.

Gender Sensitive MTR Implementation

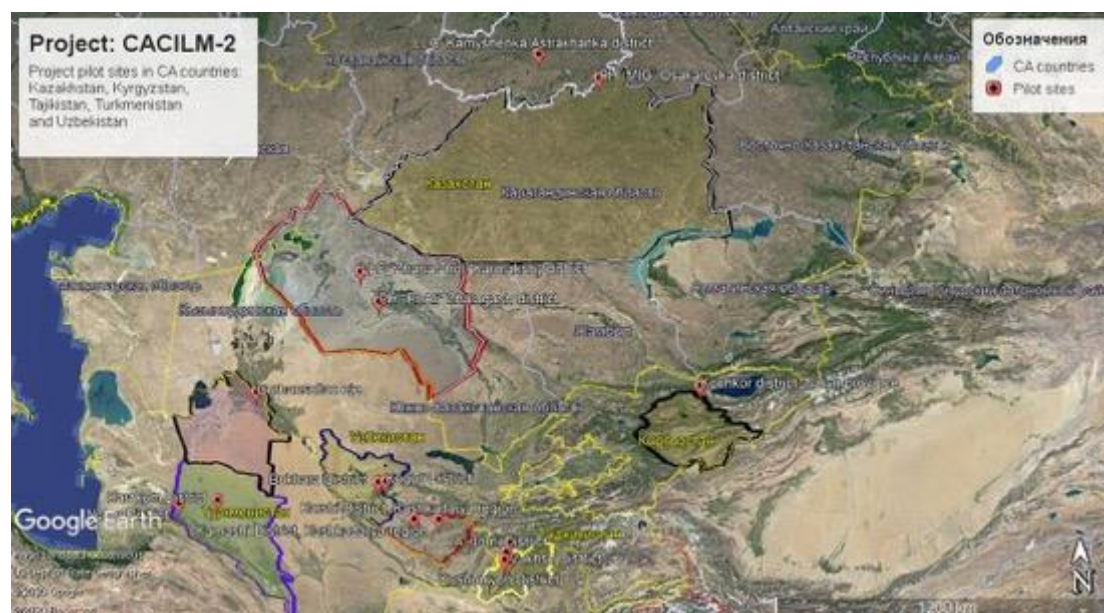
- ✓ To ensure a gender-responsive MTR implementation, specific activities have been designed and will be conducted during the process:
- ✓ Gender briefings to the MTR team
- ✓ Gender balanced MTR team (where possible)
- ✓ Design of the methodology of gender analysis and gender-responsive interview questions
- ✓ Collection of sex-disaggregated data
- ✓ A specific gender section in the MTR report
- ✓ Inclusive stakeholder engagement
- ✓ Gender balanced interviewees (where possible)
- ✓ Gender sensitive language used during interviews and reporting.

Appendix 9. List of Project Sites and Site Location Maps

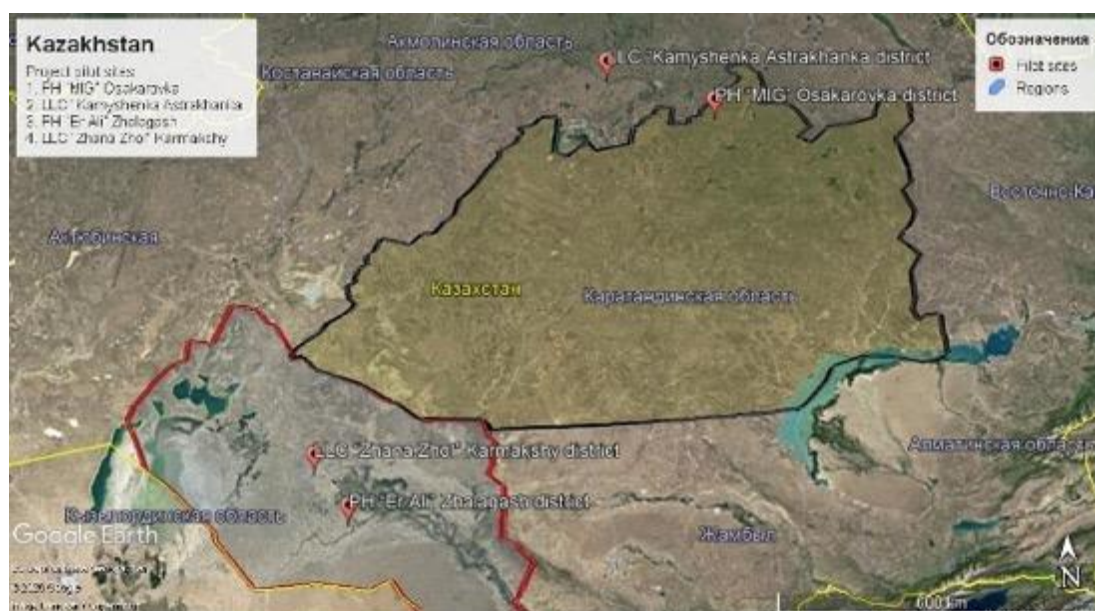
Project: Integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agricultural production landscapes in Central Asia and Turkey (CACILM-2)

Kazakhstan	
List of project sites	GPS coordinate
PH "MIG" Osakarovka district, Karaganda region	50.56°N, 72.72°E
LLC "Kamyshenka Astrakhanka district, Akmola oblast	51.27°N, 70.18°E
PH "Er Ali" Zhalagash district, Kyzylorda oblast	44.57°N, 64.05°E
LLC "Zhana Zhol" Karmakshy district Kyzylorda oblast	45.34°N, 63.29°E
Kyrgyzstan	
Kochkor district, Naryn province	42°13'N; 75°45'E
Tajikistan	
Yavan district, Khatlon Region	38°14'12.01"N; 68°54'2.39"E
A.Jomi district, Khatlon Region	37°57'37.08"N; 68°45'1.19"E
Vakhsh district, Khatlon Region	37°42'10.40"N; 68°50'51.80"E
Kushoniyon district, Khatlon Region	37°45'10.20"N; 68°41'23.89"E
Turkmenistan	
Nohur, Ahal Region	38°28'20.9"N 57°01'49.0"E
Karakum, Ahal Region	38°45'39.4"N 58°29'44.1"E
Gurbansoltan eje, Dashoguz Region	41°52'15.4"N 59°38'37.2"E
Uzbekistan	
Kamashi District, Kashkadarya Region	38°49'55.1"N 66°26'22.5"E
Karshi District, Kashkadarya Region	38°48'29.2"N 65°34'50.2"E
Bukhara District, Bukhara Region	39°45'36.2"N 64°18'02.6"E
Kogon District, Bukhara Region	39°47'46.9"N 64°34'05.4"E

CACILM-2 MAPS OF PILOT SITE



Kazakhstan



Kyrgyzstan



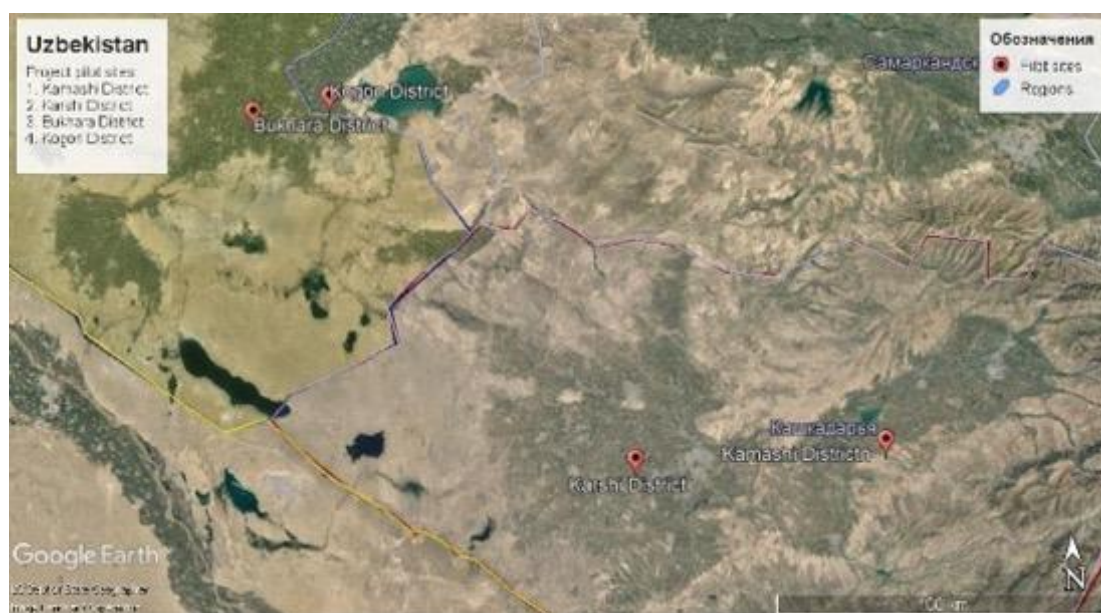
Tajikistan



Turkmenistan



Uzbekistan



Appendix 10. Project expected results and planned activities

The table below was compiled from the list of expected results and planned activities as anticipated in the project document. It will be used during the assignment by the Review Team as a succinct summary of what is expected from this project. Progress made against these expected results and expected targets will be assessed during this review and reported in the MTR report.

Project Objective: *Scale up integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes in Central Asia and Turkey.*

Expected Outcome	Budget per Component	Expected Outputs and Indicative Activities	Progress at MTR	MTR Comments
Component 1 – multi-country collaboration and partnership to foster the implementation of cost-effective INRM, focusing on drought-prone and salt-affected production landscapes.				
Outcome 1.1: Enhanced knowledge of the costs of land degradation and benefits of INRM, drought preparedness and biosaline agriculture to national economies and the region as a whole informs policy and investment decisions at all levels, including NAP processes	GEF: \$1,242,817 (11.4%)	Output 1.1.1 Harmonized approach across countries for valuation of ecosystem services at various scales. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a unified internationally accepted methodology agreed among all countries of the region. • Results of analysis summarized in the country studies as well as in the regional report under project “ELD in Central Asia” implemented by ICARDA in cooperation with ELD Secretariat and GIZ FLERMONCECA project • Development of the regional database facilitated by K-Link and linked to the following platforms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Functioning Knowledge Platform (www.cacilm.org) aimed at collection, sharing, development, and promotion of SLM technologies and practices that help to adapt to changing environmental conditions. ○ Innovation Platform and Data Managements through (www.drylandsystems.cgiar.org) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAO CACILM-2 project was accepted in an advisory role of the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development (ICSD) to develop SLM/INRM policies and to produce strategic recommendations on ELD/VES policies in Central Asia • Produced a harmonized methodology on Economics of Land Degradation (ELD) and valuation of ecosystem services, adapted to the conditions of CA countries. It is now being consulted by CA governments • Identified incentives to scale up INRM for each country • Knowledge was shared with national experts and decision-makers of Central Asia and the participation of WOCAT on Carbon Benefit Project tools, mapping instruments on Watershed management, SLM and Soil Organic Carbon mapping, and on LD trends to assess impacts on ecosystem services, to analyze benefits of SLM/INRM/IWRM technologies and to monitor/ report on LDN and SDG 15.3.1 indicators. • Need assessments for development of agro-meteorology services, extension system and rural advisory services, drought and salinity management, Land degradation and SLM practices were conducted in the region to identify key bottlenecks and to 	<i>Satisfactory</i> progress so far and well on its way to be completed by project end, including the invitation from ICSD to be an advisor to the commission on SLM/INRM matters.

Expected Outcome	Budget per Component	Expected Outputs and Indicative Activities	Progress at MTR	MTR Comments
		<p>established in the framework of Dryland Systems CRP and other CGIAR Research Programs implemented in Central Asia.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity building and training at national and regional levels. <p>Output 1.1.2 Identification of incentives to scale up INRM (e.g., PES schemes).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop country-specific recommendations for introduction of incentives for the transfer of agricultural production to the more sustainable climate-smart agricultural (CSA) practices both at the national and the local (farmer's) level. At national level, recommendations will specifically be aimed at the development of tools for the specific project areas, including (but not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> KAZ: introducing the CSA principles to financial schemes of the agricultural support KYG: development of proposal for green banking finance based on transfer to CSA TAJ: development of proposals for subsidizing the introduction of CSA activities and practices among farmers TKM: development of justifications and methods for the switch to less input depended agriculture in the specific project areas UZB: the same as in TKM Turkey's experiences will be used in the development of incentives for scaling up of INRM practices through regional training, exchange visits and capacity building. 	<p>develop regional roadmap for further capacity development in these areas.</p>	
Outcome 1.2: Enhanced interstate dialogue,		Output 1.2.1. Multi-country platform for knowledge consolidation and harmonization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully completed a functional version of the knowledge management platform and available for publishing. The 	<i>Satisfactory</i> progress so far. Knowledge on SLM/INRM best

Expected Outcome	Budget per Component	Expected Outputs and Indicative Activities	Progress at MTR	MTR Comments
multi-country collaboration and information sharing to promote investment for INRM scaling up		<p>on INRM/SLM to support national advisory and climate information services, including early warning systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational and Informational needs assessment Information management system Information sharing and Orchestration of existing platforms <p>Output 1.2.2. Multi-scale and participatory approaches in place for assessing land degradation and SLM trends, and for assessing/monitoring impacts of management practices on ecosystem services, biodiversity, and livelihoods (vulnerability)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land-use /management systems (LUS) will be characterized and mapped at sub-national level A national training/ assessment workshop (5 workshops) will be organized to build capacity of key sectors/stakeholders A multidisciplinary team will be set up and trained in each priority/demonstration area to conduct local field diagnostic and DPSIR analysis, to assess and document INRM/SLM best practices on the ground. The data on INRM/SLM practices will be uploaded in relevant national, regional and global databases (such as the global WOCAT database) and linked to the Multi-country Knowledge Platform and shared through K-link. <p>Output 1.2.3: Targeted knowledge and communication products prepared for wide</p>	<p>technical works on content management is progressing jointly with WOCAT global SLM database team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed and translated into Russian language the WOCAT inventory for documentation of SLM practices and technologies and provided national partners with template to collect best SLM practices from the CA region. Met with key national partners, GEF and UNCCD/UNFCCC focal points in all CA countries to exchange information and discuss multi-country partnership Soil salinity map was prepared for 1 entire province (Zhambyl) in KAZ and for the Talaa-Bulak district in KYR. Soil salinity map for 1 demonstration site in UZB is in progress. Drought vulnerability maps for project sites in KAZ using CDI tool and drought vulnerability map in UZB using DI tool were produced. For other countries, the data collection is ongoing. Conducted baseline assessment of Rural Advisory Services (RAS) and policy recommendations developed in 4 countries, except TJK, which was postponed due to COVID-19 Knowledge shared - including regional online webinars due to the COVID-19 - with national experts and decision-makers from the region on advanced tools and methods for monitoring / assessing impacts of land degradation on ecosystem services in 5 CA countries, including drought management, SLM, CO2 balance, SLM mapping, (ASIS, Collect Earth, EWS/RDM, QGIS, QM mapping) watershed management, trends earth, carbon benefits project tool, biosaline agriculture. Developed a regional plan on Farmer Field School (FFS) implementation Published outreach materials and news releases regularly and received by 159 online and offline media resources in 5 countries. Published 322 articles in Central Asian media. Project stories were also actively promoted through the social media - Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Developed and published a project brochure, website, and newsletter series (1st and 2nd quarterly newsletters "Dialogue") 	practices and lessons learned have been accumulated by the project through demonstration areas and it is being disseminated through a strong communication strategy. A first step in developing a knowledge management platform has been done. However, installing a full SLM knowledge platform by the project is the main challenge for the remaining implementation period.

Expected Outcome	Budget per Component	Expected Outputs and Indicative Activities	Progress at MTR	MTR Comments
		dissemination on the multiple benefits of INRM in selected production landscapes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a regional communication and outreach plan • Develop knowledge and communication products in the area of drought risk and salinity management • Disseminate these products via the enhanced K-Link system • Turkey to contribute its own publications, communication and extension services documents which could be applicable to CA countries • Turkey to share its communication-extension service documents in the field of INRM/SLM. 	<p>to raise awareness of regional partners on project activities and achievements and to enhance the visibility of the project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produced and disseminated video materials on basic principles of food processing, storage, marketing, climate-smart agriculture, SLM, IWRM and other topics to smallholders in the region. • Launched a National Campaign on "Planting Million Fruit Trees" during the International High-Level Conference on the Aral Sea (25-26 October 2019) jointly with the Ministry of Agriculture of UZB, the State Committee on Environment Protection of UZB (national GEF FP), the State Forestry Committee of UZB (national UNCCD FP), and the UN Resident Coordinator in UZB. • Developed knowledge products and publications, jointly with ICBA and other project partners, on salinity management technologies, baseline assessment on early warning system/drought risk management, overview of best biological approaches to address soil and water salinity in CA, monitoring of ecosystem service in marginal environments, policy brief on salinity management and manuals for salinity management, etc. • Conducted regional review of early warning systems, agrometeorology services and drought risk management to develop policy recommendations. 	
Component 2 – Integration of resilience into policy, legal and institutional frameworks for integrated natural resources management (INRM).				
Outcome 2.1: Resilience integrated across natural resources management (NRM) sectors and production landscapes	GEF: \$2,152,516 (19.8%)	Output 2.1.1. Review of national policies, legal and institutional frameworks and their application at different governance levels with the view to identify gaps and potential opportunities for managing transformations Output 2.1.2. Formulation, review or update of national drought policies, strategies and guidelines for drought preparedness planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulation, review or update of national drought policies, strategies and guidelines for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted baseline analyses of national policies and institutional frameworks regarding integration of sustainability and resilience factors in 5 countries and developed key policy recommendations for integration of resilience factors in RD policies • Completed baseline studies on early warning system, drought risk management and agro-meteorological services in all 5 CA countries. 	<i>Satisfactory progress so far under this outcome with the use of the FAO SHARP tool to assess the resilience of farmers and pastoralists to climate change, and the support to CA governments to integrate resilience factors in their policy/legal frameworks, including the update of NAPs.</i>

Expected Outcome	Budget per Component	Expected Outputs and Indicative Activities	Progress at MTR	MTR Comments
		<p>preparedness plans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening monitoring and early warning systems <p>Output 2.1.3. Participatory resilience assessment and mapping, and livelihood diagnostics (i.e. SHARP) to support evidence-based decision-making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the Self-evaluation and Holistic Assessment of Climate Resilience of farmers and Pastoralists (SHARP) to assess the resilience of agro-ecosystems on the basis of 13 indicators disaggregated by agricultural practices using portable devices. <p>Outputs 2.1.4. Strengthening of inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms at national level, including mainstreaming of NAPs into national sector budget allocations and investment processes for INRM scaling up (informed by Component 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish national CACILM boards that will also act as national steering committees for the project. They will consist of important stakeholders and decision-makers from all relevant sectors, such as environment, agriculture, livestock and water resources management, and be chaired by national UNCCD focal points. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used SHARP baseline assessments to analyze community resilience and vulnerability towards CC variabilities in pilot districts in all 5 CA countries. Conducted SHARP survey at project demonstration sites in all CA countries and submitted to the HQ SHARP team for analysis. Updated the National Action Plan to Combat Desertification in KYR, which was reviewed and approved by the national experts working group National trainings on Aqua Crop, EX-ACT, WOCAT were held in KAZ, KYR, TJK and UZB. Collect Earth training was held in KYR. Produced 2 maps of drought vulnerability in Kazakhstan (Kostanay Oblast) and in Uzbekistan (Kamashi district). Held a series of SLM/INRM meetings with national partners in all 5 CA countries to strengthen intersectoral collaboration and joint activities. Conducted 3 round tables with national partners in KYR: two consultations were conducted in Kochkor district on intersectoral cooperation and interaction, and on regulation to establish a commission at the district level; one round table at the national level. National working groups on SLM/INRM were established in KAZ, KYR, TJK and UZB with support of national partner agencies. Schedule meetings postponed due to COVID-19. The Inter-sectoral technical working group in Tajikistan expressed its interest to work with CACILM2 on LDN. Held one round table on <i>"Joint cooperation and exchange of experience in combating desertification and restoring degraded land"</i> and one working meeting with national agencies on <i>"Strengthening legal planning in the field of INRM and SLM"</i> in Turkmenistan. The State Forestry Committee of UZB, as Focal Point of the UNCCD organized jointly two meetings with the project team. 	

Expected Outcome	Budget per Component	Expected Outputs and Indicative Activities	Progress at MTR	MTR Comments
Outcome 2.2: Incentives for climate-smart agriculture in place at national and sub-national levels		<p>Output 2.2.1. Increase in public and private sector (at least 5 different types of enterprises) supporting smallholder farmers to scale up best practices and adoption of self-reliant approaches for managing climate variability and change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote collaboration with micro-lending and micro-financing organizations to improve access to credit for farmers and pastoralists in all countries. <p>Output 2.2.2. At least 5 resource use efficient and biodiversity friendly food and feed value-chains strengthened</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support to strengthen value chains for products such as organic cotton, quinoa, pistachios and almonds, organic fruits and vegetables, and medicinal plants, as well as dairy products Turkey to share its extensive experiences with pistachio value chains and other agroforestry products. Support also to rural crafts as a way to diversify income through off-farm activity (wool; felt; basketry; raw silk; etc.) as part of value chains critical for the well-being of rural communities and peoples (mostly women); including support to improve processing of products, and to establish agricultural cooperatives and women's groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted analysis of incentive mechanisms to scale up SLM practices in the 5 CA countries. Using the Outcome Mapping (OM) methodology selected Boundary Partners (BP) to support smallholder farmers to scale up CSA/SLM/INRM practices in all CA countries: 3 BP in Kazakhstan; BP "Camp Alatau" in Kyrgyzstan; BP Bonuvoni Khatlon (Women's group) in Tajikistan; 2 BP in Turkmenistan; and 3 Strategic Partners in Uzbekistan. Conducted the first assessment on OM with BP in all CA countries. Progress made by the BP is assessed semi-annually during workshops, using the progress marker index (progress score). KAZ: identified and analyzed agro-pastoral value chains, including required project interventions for the sustainable development of value chains. KYR: Conducted CSA training at national and subnational levels. Camp Alatau conducted a study on "incentives for climate-friendly agriculture at the national and subnational levels" to strengthen efficient use of resources and value chains for food and feed production. Purchased seeds of climate-resistant forage crops varieties, diesel fuel and fertilizers for 1,067 farmers (539 of them women). Completed the delivery of seeds (sainfoin, corn, Alfalfa, wheat), distributed diesel fuel and delivered fertilizers to vulnerable farmers. TJK: Supported the formation of 8 initiative groups, including 206 women farmers in 4 targeted districts, and conducted field trainings on drought- and salt-resistant crops cultivation. Completed and submitted a study on the development of a safflower and almond value chain. TKM: Constructed 2 irrigation nurseries in project sites and 3 water reservoirs (sardops) for remote villages in Karakum project sites to support local value chains. UZB: Conducted a cost-benefit analysis for 5 SLM practices. Completed a study on the value chain development with conservation agriculture practices. Developed and submitted recommendations for strengthening value chains on pistachio. 	Progress so far to demonstrate incentive mechanisms supporting smallholder farmers in scaling up SLM best practices is <i>Satisfactory</i> . It includes the use of " <i>Boundary Partners</i> " to be a link with smallholder farmers to implement government policies. It also includes the COVID-19 emergency response to the Kyrgyz and Tajik's government requests to provide immediate support to vulnerable rural smallholders and farmers in the project sites on value chain development in livestock production, procurement of drought- and salt-resistant seeds, fertilizers, home-garden tools for processing, and greenhouses.

Expected Outcome	Budget per Component	Expected Outputs and Indicative Activities	Progress at MTR	MTR Comments
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due to the COVID-19 emergency situation, the project shifted a portion of the regional component budget to national emergency response actions in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to provide immediate support to vulnerable rural smallholders and farmers in the project sites on value chain development in livestock production, procurement of drought- and salt-resistant seeds, fertilizers, home-garden tools for processing, and greenhouses, capacity development in producing food under drought conditions and to improve family income and nutrition. These activities also strengthened the multi-country collaboration of the project in the region. 	
Component 3 – Upscaling of climate-smart agricultural practices in drought-prone and/or salt-affected production landscapes.				
Outcome 3.1: Upscaling of a proactive drought risk management (DRM) approach and innovative integrated natural resources management (INRM) technologies in selected production landscapes / land use systems (e.g. pastoral, agro-sylvo-pastoral, tree-based, irrigated, rainfed, home gardens).	GEF: \$5,378,470 (49.5%)	Output 3.1.1. At least 2 multi-stakeholder land-use plans for selected production landscapes per country Output 3.1.2. At least 2 specialized institutions / advisory service providers per country with increased capacities to enhance skills of stakeholders for wide adoption of proactive risk management approach and drought mitigation technologies Output 3.1.3. Upscaling of 5-6 innovative drought mitigation technologies in selected production landscapes on 239,500 ha of land (at least 15 drought-tolerant species and 5 habitats, xx tCO₂e, 15 % crop water productivity / irrigation efficiency)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established project sites in all 5 CA countries to demonstrate and up-scale DRM, SLM and INRM approaches. <p><u>Land-use plans for selected production landscapes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> KAZ: Ongoing formulation of two multi-stakeholder pasture plans for Petrovsk rural district, Karagandy Oblast, and Talapsky rural district, Almaty Oblast. Conducted detailed review of pasture management plans and surveys with end-users to identify existing problems and reflect gender equality. KYR: Supported the Kyrgyzgiprozem Institute (TA and equipment) to digitize land use maps covering the entire country, which are stored in a single database. TJK: Ongoing preparation of training materials for FFS for chickpea, sorgho, millet, and quinoa. Conducted regular monitoring of FFSs in 8 communities. Conducted monitoring of safflower planted fields. TKM: Analyzed local needs and priorities for implementing innovative INRM practices. UZB: Produced 2 land-use plan in Kamashi district and one pasture management plan in Guzar district. Developed and submitted to the agricultural department of the respective 	<i>Satisfactory progress under this outcome to develop land use management plans addressing drought risks management and to implement drought risk management technologies in demonstration areas for farmers and pastoralists.</i>

Expected Outcome	Budget per Component	Expected Outputs and Indicative Activities	Progress at MTR	MTR Comments
			<p>districts multi-stakeholder land use plans for Kamashi and Bukhara districts.</p> <p><u>Advisory service providers to enhance skills of stakeholders for wide adoption of proactive risk management approach and drought mitigation technologies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KAZ: Developed training curricula on DRM and INRM approaches. Developed and conducted 5 national training events and 4 field workshops on DRM/INRM approaches, including one on gender equality. In total 254 people participated, including 130 women (51%). • KYR: Developed training curricula on DRM and INRM approaches. Held 6 training events, seminars, and round tables on "Improving agricultural Value Chains for SLM" in Kochkor district. Supported the revision and adoption of the UNCCD NAP at national level. Series of national round tables on "Improving intersectoral cooperation" in the field of INRM at local level in Kochkor district and in Bishkek. Conducted a field workshop on "Soil and Water Conservation Technologies" in Kochkor district. In total 128 people participated, including 23 women (18%). • TJK: Conducted 6 national training events on DRM/INRM approaches: drought-resistant crops cultivation technologies, institutional capacity development, integrated pest management, filling applications to get access to matching grants, how to establish seedling nursery and how to use video training materials on fruits processing, agroforestry, and drip irrigation. In total 1,422 people participated, including 787 women (55%). • TKM: Conducted 4 trainings and seminars on project introduction, on INRM and SLM best practices in Karakum district and in Nohur district. Webinar on the analysis of national plans and programs, country strategies, legal and institutional frameworks in the field of INRM and SLM and recommendations for integration of drought risk management, resilience factors into INRM and SLM government instruments. In total 116 people participated, including 37 women (32%). 	

Expected Outcome	Budget per Component	Expected Outputs and Indicative Activities	Progress at MTR	MTR Comments
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UZB: Conducted comprehensive assessment and prepared a capacity-building plan for 3 scientific centers in UZB to promote extension and agro-consulting services for scaling up INRM/SLM practices. Developed and published training curricula with 3 different DRM and INRM approaches. Conducted six training events on INRM approaches including two online training courses on conservation agriculture practices in Uzbekistan, including crop rotation, crop residue management. Organized webinar series on no-till seeder use to manage crop residue retention. Field-training course on using no-till drill and laser leveler in Bukhara province and in Qarshi province. In total 326 people participated, including 49 women (15%). <p><u>Innovative drought mitigation technologies in selected production landscapes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KAZ: Introduced SLM practices on crop production on 55 ha and pasture management plans on 127,630 ha. Completed the registration of the conductometer and PH meter and equipment delivered to project sites. • KYR: Supported Pasture Committees to incorporate new CSA approaches and technologies into pasture management plans. Improved pasture management plans with the introduction of CSA technologies for 5 Ayil Aimaks with a total area of 282,781 ha (mainly pastures). • TJK: Promoted soil and water conservation practices (e.g., zero till, agroforestry etc.) to 8 farmer groups on at least 200 ha. Organized a Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop on "Soil and water conservation measures" for 31 specialists of Boundary Partner and active farmers. Planted salt-resistant and drought tolerant plants such as safflower, quinoa, pearl millet in 5 demonstration plots at project sites. • TKM: Established forest and sand nurseries at project pilot sites in Nohur and Karakum for growing drought-tolerant species. Constructed three sardops (water reservoir) for local schools of remote villages in Central Karakums to collect and store rainwater. Procured and planted 1,000 drought resistant trees 	

Expected Outcome	Budget per Component	Expected Outputs and Indicative Activities	Progress at MTR	MTR Comments
			<p>seedlings (juniper, carcase, and almond) for reforestation in Nohur.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UZB: Established demonstration sites for scaling up 10 drought tolerant crops and seed production in Kashkadarya region. Adoption of conservation agriculture practices on 300ha in Kashkadarya region. implemented a drip irrigation system for 11,221ha of cotton. Developed a pasture rotation plan (84,000ha) for Guzor district to increase productivity and improve seasonal herd migration. Delivered over 500,000 seedlings to the "Million fruit trees" initiative. 	
<p>Outcome 3.2: Adaptation and scaling up of technologies and approaches for management of salt-affected production landscapes (e.g. irrigated, pastoral, agro-sylvo-pastoral, tree-based, home gardens)</p>		<p>Output 3.2.1. Guidelines for development of catchment salinity management plans developed and piloted in each country (except Kyrgyzstan) for sustainable and biodiverse aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems</p> <p>Output 3.2.2. At least 2 specialized institutions / advisory service providers per country (except Kyrgyzstan) with increased capacities to enhance skills of stakeholders for wide adoption of salinity mitigation approaches and technologies</p> <p>Output 3.2.3. Upscaling of 5-6 best practices for combating salinization, while ensuring biodiversity conservation and sustainable use on 95,500 ha of land (at least 15 salt-tolerant species, xx tCO₂e, 15% crop water productivity / irrigation efficiency (except Kyrgyzstan)</p>	<p><u>Guidelines for development of catchment salinity management plans:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produced and distributed guidelines on salinity management in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. • Established project demonstration sites in 3 provinces, conducted field baseline and needs assessment activities, and drafted technical guidelines on CC adaptation measures. Published and distributed brochures/flyers on best INRM/SLM practices (pasture management, drip irrigation, salinity management, etc.) in Turkmenistan. <p><u>Advisory service providers to enhance skills of stakeholders for wide adoption of salinity mitigation approaches and technologies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KAZ: Conducted webinars on salinity management, biosaline agriculture, mapping of salt-affected soils, and on gender equality. In addition, 4 field workshops on salinity management conducted in 4 different sites. In total, 192 people participated, including 81 women (42%). • TJK: Conducted trainings on drought and salt tolerant cropping technologies: established 5 demonstration sites for drought and salt tolerant crops (quinoa, amaranth, sorghum, millet, etc.) on 1ha. Planned to prepare a salinization plan at the target group level (with Hydromet). Developed training materials to deliver second round of training on "Leadership and gender" in 8 groups 	<p>Similar to expected outcome 3.1, <i>Satisfactory</i> progress under this outcome focusing on salt-affected landscapes, including the development of guidelines for salt-affected landscapes, the support to advisory service providers to disseminate salinity mitigation approaches and technologies, and implementation of best practice to combat salinization in demonstration areas.</p>

Expected Outcome	Budget per Component	Expected Outputs and Indicative Activities	Progress at MTR	MTR Comments
			<p>of farmers. Purchased and distributed 3 tons of drought-resistant crops and 1 tons of legumes. Conducted trainings on Increasing water carrying capacity of soil through applying organic fertilizers. In total 346 people participated, including 146 women (42%).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TKM: Established partnerships with various institutions (Agriculture University, Agriculture Institute, Union of Industrialist and Entrepreneurs, UNDP projects) for enhancing salinity management approaches and technologies. • UZB: Produced guidelines on seed production of drought tolerant crops and conservation agriculture technologies; developed FFS Concept and Master plan (handbook); prepared infographics on salinity management; established demonstration sites; and planted 15 salt tolerant crops, including 5 seeds production. held six workshops for 200+ specialists and farmers on conservation agriculture, seed production and agroforestry issues. Developed and published training curricula with 3 different DRM and INRM approaches. Conducted field trainings on applying mobile salinity measurement equipment EM-38 - 11 people participated, including 2 women (18%). <p><u>Best practices for combating salinization, while ensuring biodiversity conservation and sustainable land use:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KAZ: Set up collaboration agreements with the Kazakh Institute of Soil Science and Agro-chemistry, National Agrarian Scientific and Education Center, and Kazakh Rice Production to conduct demonstration work on 60 ha of salt-affected areas and to upscale relevant SLM and INRM technologies at project sites in Almaty, Turkestan, and Kyzylorda regions. Introduced 3-4 practices for combatting salinization on 45 ha. • TJK: Finalized technical specifications for procurement of seeds, equipment (hand seeders, light traps) and fencing materials. Submitted request for the establishment of demonstration plots. • TKM: Initiated demonstration of the production of licorice as biological measures to reduce soil salinity on 5 ha at project pilot site in Gurbansoltan eje district. 	

Expected Outcome	Budget per Component	Expected Outputs and Indicative Activities	Progress at MTR	MTR Comments
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UZB: Prepared salinity management guidelines with description of INRM technologies. Planted salinity tolerant crops' varieties on 1,300 ha in project sites in Kashkadarya and Bukhara provinces. Delivered a total of 45.6 tons of seeds of drought and salinity resistant varieties of winter wheat and barley to elite seeds producing farmers. 	
Component 4 – Monitoring and evaluation and adaptive learning.				
Outcome 4.1: Project implementation based on adaptive results-based management, monitoring, and reporting for enhanced impact and visibility	GEF: \$1,583,012 (14.6%)	Output 4.1.1: M&E system established to measure project progress and impacts in terms of multiple global environmental benefits (GEBs), social and economic benefits Output 4.1.2: Midterm review and final evaluations carried out and reports available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed an M&E Plan and M&E Framework for the project. • Identified project strategic and boundary partners to develop outcome mapping to better monitor progress and to ensure project sustainability. • Modified the project log frame to reflect targets/indicators at national level in 5 countries and at regional level without changing the overall project design (outcomes, outputs). • Produced regular progress reports • A "Gender and Social Inclusion Mainstreaming Strategy for 2020-2022" for the project was developed and being implemented. • A Communication and Outreach Plan 2020 and Project Visibility Strategy were developed and being implemented. • Developed a roadmap for scaling up of SLM/INRM technologies in all CA countries: at least 2-3 technologies were selected in each country in close collaboration with national partners. • Developed baseline reports on carbon stock changes (CO₂) and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions for CA countries using the CBP tool. The results of CO₂ and GHG emissions for each CA countries are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Kazakhstan - Total incremental difference (Expected Carbon and Greenhouse Gas Benefit) for the report period: -309 t CO₂e over 5 years, area reported on: 18ha ○ Kyrgyzstan - Total incremental difference for the report period: -394 t CO₂e over 5 years, area reported on: 170ha. ○ Tajikistan - Total incremental difference for the report period: -9511 t CO₂e over 3 years, area reported on: 	<i>Satisfactory</i> progress so far in monitoring and reporting the progress of the project, including a worthwhile effort in measuring the progress in each country.

Expected Outcome	Budget per Component	Expected Outputs and Indicative Activities	Progress at MTR	MTR Comments
			<p>1,674ha.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Turkmenistan - Total incremental difference for the report period: -193656 t CO2e over 4 years, area reported on: 21,000ha. ○ Uzbekistan - Total incremental difference for the report period: -358918 t CO2e over 3 years, area reported on: 73,237ha. • The CBP tool show that the total volume of avoided GHG emissions from the project demonstration sites with application of SLM practices in 20 years projection will be equal to 3.5 mln tons of CO2e. • Due to COVID-19 most project activities since early 2020 have been postponed; hence delaying the implementation of the project. 	
Project Management	GEF: \$517,844 (5.0%)			
Total Financing	GEF: \$10,874,659 + CO-FINANCING: \$64,885,046 = <u>TOTAL: \$75,759,705</u>			

Source: Project Document

Indicator assessment key

Green = Achieved	Yellow = On target to be achieved	Red = Not on target to be achieved
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The System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) is an instrument used by the GEF Secretariat to allocate resources in an indicative way to its eligible countries for a particular replenishment period. The GEF grant of USD 10,874,659 to finance this project is an aggregate of STAR allocations for the 6 countries participating in the project. These allocations are specifically distributed to Components 2 and 3 to directly support national activities in the respective country. The table below provides details of these allocations:

Country	Focal Area	GEF-STAR Allocation (USD)	%	Co-financing (USD)
Kazakhstan	CC	900,624	16.6%	16,640,546
	LD	900,624		
Kyrgyzstan	LD	180,125	1.7%	
Tajikistan	LD	268,846	2.5%	1,465,000
Turkey	LD	178,975	1.6%	2,000,000
Turkmenistan	LD	2,688,464	24.7%	6,000,000
Uzbekistan	CC	2,607,483	37.4%	23,780,000
	LD	1,455,424		
Regional		1,694,094	15.6%	
FAO				11,780,000
International Partners				3,219,500
Total GEF Grant		USD 10,874,659	100%	64,885,046

Appendix 11. FAO-GEF co-financing table

Name of the Co-financer	Co-financer type	Type of co-financing	Co-financing at project start (Amount confirmed at GEF CEO endorsement/approval by the project design team) (USD)			Materialized Co-financing at project mid-term (Confirmed by the MTR Team) (USD)		
			In-kind	Cash	Total	In-kind	Cash	Total
Ministry of Agriculture of Kazakhstan	Government	In-kind	\$16,640,546		\$16,640,546	\$52,619,878		\$52,619,878
Ministry of agriculture, food industry and melioration of Kyrgyzstan	Government	In-kind	-		-	2,000,000		2,000,000
Committee of Environmental Protection of Tajikistan	Government	In-kind	1,465,000		1,465,000	500,000		500,000
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Turkey	Government	In-kind/Grant	900,000	1,100,000	2,000,000	1,030,860		1,030,860
Ministry of Agriculture and Environment Protection of Turkmenistan	Government	In-kind	6,000,000		6,000,000	4,000,000		4,000,000
Ministry of Water Resources of Uzbekistan	Government	In-kind	23,780,000		23,780,000	123,725,209		123,725,209
ICARDA	Partner	in-kind	1,700,000		1,700,000	1,935,000		1,935,000
ICBA	Partner	cash and in-kind	560,000		560,000	120,800		120,800
GIZ	Partner	In-kind	909,500		909,500	-		-
ZOI	Partner	In-kind	50,000		50,000	-		-
FAO	Impl./Exec. Agency	Cash and in-kind	11,780,000		11,780,000	6,086,707		6,086,707
Grand Total (in USD)			\$63,785,046	\$1,100,000	\$64,885,046	\$192,018,454		\$192,018,454

Appendix 12. List of Performance Indicators

Expected Results	Indicators	Targets
Project Objective: Scale up integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes in Central Asia and Turkey	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Area (ha) of drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes under sustainable management practices 2. Number of women and men with improved food security 3. GHG emissions avoided or reduced (tons CO₂e) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 298 254 ha of demonstration areas under integrated management upscaled to 2 590 770 ha land • 665 294 beneficiaries, including 331 783 women, in pastoral, agro-sylvo-pastoral, tree-based, irrigated and, rainfed demonstration areas, and 2 661 380 people in upscaling areas, including 1 473 713 women • 8.6 million tons CO₂e
Outcome 1.1 – Enhanced knowledge of the costs of land degradation and benefits of INRM, drought preparedness and biosaline agriculture to national economies and the region as a whole informs policy and investment decisions at all levels, including NAP processes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Information on the costs of DLDD and benefits of INRM (ELD) informs at least one national policy in each country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELD for Central Asia informs INRM policies in 5 CA countries
Output 1.1.1: Harmonized approach across countries for valuation of ecosystem services at various scales.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Harmonized approach for valuation of ecosystem services for CA available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harmonized approach developed and published
Output 1.1.2: Identification of incentives to scale up INRM	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. X number of incentives relevant to CA identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 different incentives relevant to CA identified
Outcome 1.2 – Enhanced interstate dialogue, multi-country collaboration and information sharing to promote investment for INRM scaling up	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Sustainable mechanism for regional collaboration in place 8. Decentralized KM system functioning 9. Regional INRM/SLM community of practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CACILM-2 management structures and a decentralised KM platform functioning and sustainable. • Regional INRM/SLM community of practice supports

Expected Results	Indicators	Targets
		science-practitioners-policy/decision makers dialogue
Output 1.2.1: Multi-country platform for knowledge consolidation and harmonization on INRM/SLM to support national advisory and climate information services, including early warning systems	10. Decentralized KM system with central orchestrator in place and technically functioning 11. Number of institutions that are using the distributed knowledge platform 12. Regional INRM/SLM community of practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KM platform support national advisory and climate information services, and supports policy and decision-making processes in CA
Output 1.2.2: Multi-scale and participatory approaches in place for assessing land degradation and SLM trends, and for assessing/monitoring impacts of management practices on ecosystem services, biodiversity, and livelihoods (vulnerability)	13. The latest tools and methods for monitoring and assessing land degradation and trends in INRM/SLM available to CA countries and used in assessing the economics of DLDD and INRM 14. Number of persons in key institutions per country using assessment and best practices tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools for DLDD/INRM assessment used for assessing impacts on ecosystem services
Output 1.2.3: Targeted knowledge and communication products prepared for wide dissemination on the multiple benefits of INRM in selected production landscapes	15. Communication and outreach plan 16. Project newsletters and other outreach materials, such as audio-visuals, social media, and project website uploads, developed and made available 17. Knowledge market created for INRM/SLM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 7 Newsletters published and available on project website and in social media • At least three audio-visuals developed • Resources mobilised through the establishment of a knowledge market for INRM/SLM
Outcome 2.1 – Resilience integrated across natural resources management (NRM) sectors and production landscapes	18. Resilience principles integrated into national agricultural, water resources management and environmental plans and investment frameworks, policies, and programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resilience integrated into key national policy frameworks and productive sectors in all CA countries using the RAPTA approach.
Output 2.1.1: Review of national policies, legal and institutional frameworks and their application at different governance levels with the view to identify gaps and	19. National policy reviews/gap analysis for integration of resilience/sustainability factors available in 5 CA countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All CA countries have completed policy reviews and gap analysis for integration of

Expected Results	Indicators	Targets
potential opportunities for managing transformations		resilience/sustainability factors in RD policies
Output 2.1.2: Formulation, review or update of national drought policies, strategies and guidelines for drought preparedness planning	20. Policy recommendations for updating national drought policies/strategies available in 5 CA countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 5 new and/or updated national drought policies, strategies and guidelines produced and submitted
Output 2.1.3: Participatory resilience assessment and mapping, and livelihood diagnostics (i.e. SHARP) to support evidence-based decision-making	21. Resilience assessment using SHARP tool conducted at project demonstration sites and reports available in 5 CA countries to support evidence-based decision-making 22. Drought vulnerability maps improved and available in 5 CA countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 SHARP assessments produced to support evidence-based decision-making 5 maps of drought vulnerability produced and available in 5 CA countries
Output 2.1.4: Strengthening of inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms at national level, including mainstreaming of NAPs into national sector budget allocations and investment processes for INRM scaling up	23. National CACILM Boards (NCBs) renewed and include participants from Land, Water, Forest, Finance, Investment etc. sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 NCBs with a minimum of 3 sectors participating in place and functioning
Outcome 2.2 – Incentives for climate-smart agriculture in place at national and sub-national levels	24. Number and types of incentives supporting smallholder farmers to scale up best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 10 different types incentive mechanisms supporting smallholder farmers to scale up best practices in place in CA countries
Output 2.2.1: Increase in public and private sector (at least 5 different types of enterprises) supporting smallholder farmers to scale up best practices and adoption of self-reliant approaches for managing climate variability and change	25. Partnership established with private, civil, and public sector organizations in 5 CA countries to support smallholder farmers to scale up CSA / SLM / INRM practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 5 different types of enterprises support smallholder farmers to scale up CSA / SLM / INRM best practices
Output 2.2.2: At least 5 resource use efficient and biodiversity friendly food and feed value-chains strengthened	26. Number of agriculture value chains improved using INRM/SLM/CSA practices in CA countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 5 agriculture value-chains improved using INRM/SLM/CSA

Expected Results	Indicators	Targets
		practices in CA countries (e.g. almond-pistachio, forage-livestock, fruit trees, pulses)
Outcome 3.1 – Upscaling of a proactive drought risk management (DRM) approach and innovative integrated natural resources management (INRM) technologies in selected production landscapes / land use systems (e.g. pastoral, agro-sylvo-pastoral, tree-based, irrigated, rainfed, home gardens)	27. Improved DRM approaches and INRM technologies/best practices applied on xx ha 28. Number of people (#) with improved income (at least 25%) from improved practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 375 165 ha • 169,755 (Optional to add, "... for demonstration areas, 785,941 for upscaling areas")
Output 3.1.1: At least 2 multi-stakeholder land-use plans for selected production landscapes per country	29. Two multi-stakeholder land-use plans formulated and submitted for approval in each CA country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 10 multi-stakeholder land-use plans produced
Output 3.1.2: At least 2 specialized institutions / advisory service providers per country with increased capacities to enhance skills of stakeholders for wide adoption of proactive risk management approach and drought mitigation technologies	30. Number of different kinds of DRM and INRM approaches included in the training curricula 31. Number of national and regional-level training events and workshops support by the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training curricula with at least 10 different DRM and INRM approaches produced • 10 national/regional-level trainings on DRM/INRM approaches conducted
Output 3.1.3: Upscaling of 5-6 innovative drought mitigation technologies in selected production landscapes on 239,500 ha of land (at least 15 drought-tolerant species and 5 habitats, xx tCO ₂ e, 15 % crop water productivity / irrigation efficiency)	32. Number of best DRM & INRM practices implemented in selected production landscapes in each CA country 33. Land area (hectares) with drought mitigation tools and technologies introduced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 5 multi-stakeholder land use plans and 6 DRM and INRM technologies applied • 239 500 ha
Outcome 3.2 – Adaptation and scaling up of technologies and approaches for management of salt-affected production landscapes (e.g. irrigated, pastoral, agro-sylvo-pastoral, tree-based, home gardens)	34. Improved salinity management and INRM technologies/best practices applied on XX ha 35. Number of people (#) with improved income (at least 25%) from improved practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 215 605 ha • 162,892 (Optional to add, "... for demonstration areas, 694,749 for upscaling areas")
Output 3.2.1: Guidelines for development of catchment salinity management plans developed and piloted in each country (except	36. Number of guidelines on salinity management developed in CA countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 guidelines (Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and

Expected Results	Indicators	Targets
Kyrgyzstan) for sustainable and biodiverse aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems		Uzbekistan) produced
Output 3.2.2: At least 2 specialized institutions / advisory service providers per country (except Kyrgyzstan) with increased capacities to enhance skills of stakeholders for wide adoption of salinity mitigation approaches and technologies	37. Number of salinity management and INRM approaches included in the training curricula in CA countries 38. Number of national and regional-level training events on salinity management and INRM approached supported by the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training curricula with at least 10 different salinity management and INRM approaches produced • 10 national/regional-level trainings on salinity management and INRM approaches conducted
Output 3.2.3: Upscaling of 5-6 best practices for combating salinization, while ensuring biodiversity conservation and sustainable use on 95,500 ha of land (at least 15 salt-tolerant species, xx tCO ₂ e, 15% crop water productivity / irrigation efficiency (except Kyrgyzstan)	39. Number of salinity management plans and INRM practices implemented in selected production landscapes in each CA country 40. Land area (hectares) under salinity management plans introduced in CA countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 5 catchment salinity management plans and 5 INRM technologies applied • 95 500 ha
Outcome 4.1 – Project implementation based on adaptive results-based management, monitoring, and reporting for enhanced impact and visibility	41. M&E system is in place to support adaptive results-based management and monitoring of upscaling resulting from the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project delivers expected results and shares best practices
Output 4.1.1: &E system established to measure project progress and impacts in terms of multiple global environmental benefits (GEBs), social and economic benefits	42. Baseline and targets for global project indicators refined 43. Annual project implementation review (PIR) reports submitted to GEF Secretariat and accepted 44. Six-month project progress reports submitted and accepted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project M&E system delivers expected reports and informs project management
Output 4.1.2: Midterm review and final evaluations carried out and reports available	45. Mid-term and final evaluation reports submitted and accepted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final evaluation report submitted and accepted

Source: Project Document and PIRs

Appendix 13. GEF 7 Core Indicators

GEF 7 Core Indicator Worksheet

Annex B

Core Indicator 1	Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use					<i>(Hectares)</i>
		<i>Hectares (1.1+1.2)</i>				
		<i>Expected</i>		<i>Achieved</i>		
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	
Indicator 1.1	Terrestrial protected areas newly created					
Name of Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN category	Hectares			
			<i>Expected</i>		<i>Achieved</i>	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
		(select)				
		(select)				
		Sum				
Indicator 1.2	Terrestrial protected areas under improved management effectiveness					
Name of Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN category	Hectares	METT Score (Scale 1-3)		
				<i>Expected</i>		<i>Achieved</i>
				PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR TE
		(select)				
		(select)				
		Sum				
Core Indicator 2	Marine protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use					<i>(Hectares)</i>
		<i>Hectares (2.1+2.2)</i>				
		<i>Expected</i>		<i>Achieved</i>		
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	
Indicator 2.1	Marine protected areas newly created					
Name of Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN category	Hectares			
			<i>Expected</i>		<i>Achieved</i>	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
		(select)				
		(select)				
		Sum				
Indicator 2.2	Marine protected areas under improved management effectiveness					
Name of Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN category	Hectares	METT Score (Scale 1-3)		
				<i>Expected</i>		<i>Achieved</i>
				PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR TE
		(select)				
		(select)				
		Sum				
Core Indicator 3	Area of land restored					<i>(Hectares)</i>
		<i>Hectares (3.1+3.2+3.3+3.4)</i>				
		<i>Expected</i>		<i>Achieved</i>		
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	
Indicator 3.1	Area of degraded agricultural land restored					
			Hectares			
			<i>Expected</i>		<i>Achieved</i>	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE

Indicator 3.2	Area of forest and forest land restored					
			Hectares			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 3.3	Area of natural grass and shrublands restored					
			Hectares			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 3.4	Area of wetlands (including estuaries, mangroves) restored					
			Hectares			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Core Indicator 4	Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectares; excluding protected areas)					(Hectares)
			Hectares (4.1+4.2+4.3+4.4)			
			Expected		Expected	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
			335,000	298,254	496,228	
Indicator 4.1	Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity					
			Hectares			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 4.2	Area of landscapes that meet national or international third-party certification that incorporates biodiversity considerations					
Third party certification:			Hectares			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 4.3	Area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems					
			Hectares			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
			335,000	298,254	496,228	
Indicator 4.4	Area of High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) loss avoided					
			Hectares			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Core Indicator 5	Area of marine habitat under improved practices to benefit biodiversity					(Hectares)
Indicator 5.1	Number of fisheries that meet national or international third-party certification that incorporates biodiversity considerations					
Third party certification:			Number			
			Expected		Achieved	

		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 5.2	Number of large marine ecosystems (LMEs) with reduced pollution and hypoxial				
		Number			
		Expected		Achieved	
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Core Indicator 6	Greenhouse gas emission mitigated				(Tons)
		Tons (6.1+6.2)			
		Entered		Entered	
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
	Expected CO2e (direct)	4,000,000	8,653,773	3,507,530	
	Expected CO2e (indirect)	0	69,700,000	0	
Indicator 6.1	Carbon sequestered or emissions avoided in the AFOLU sector				
		Tons			
		Entered		Entered	
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
	Expected CO2e (direct)	4,000,000	8,653,773	3,507,530	
	Expected CO2e (indirect)	0	69,700,000	0	
	Anticipated Year		2037	2038 (20 years 2018-2038)	
Indicator 6.2	Emissions avoided				
		Hectares			
		Expected		Achieved	
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
	Expected CO2e (direct)	335,000(ha)	298,254(ha)	96,099(ha)	
	Expected CO2e (indirect)	0	2,590,770(ha)	0	
	Anticipated Year		2037	2038	
Indicator 6.3	Energy saved				
		MJ			
		Expected		Achieved	
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 6.4	Increase in installed renewable energy capacity per technology				
		Capacity (MW)			
		Expected		Achieved	
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
	(select)				
	(select)				
Core Indicator 7	Number of shared water ecosystems (fresh or marine) under new or improved cooperative management				(Number)
Indicator 7.1	Level of Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis and Strategic Action Program (TDA/SAP) formulation and implementation				
		Rating (scale 1-4)			
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 7.2	Level of Regional Legal Agreements and Regional Management Institutions to support its implementation				
		Rating (scale 1-4)			
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE

Indicator 7.3	Level of National/Local reforms and active participation of Inter-Ministerial Committees					
		Shared water ecosystem	Rating (scale 1-4)			
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 7.4	Level of engagement in IWLEARN through participation and delivery of key products					
		Shared water ecosystem	Rating (scale 1-4)			
			Rating		Rating	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Core Indicator 8	Globally over-exploited fisheries Moved to more sustainable levels					(Tons)
			Metric Tons			
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Core Indicator 9	Reduction, disposal/destruction, phase out, elimination and avoidance of chemicals of global concern and their waste in the environment and in processes, materials and products					(Tons)
			Metric Tons (9.1+9.2+9.3)			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	PIF stage	MTR	TE
Indicator 9.1	Solid and liquid Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and POPs containing materials and products removed or disposed					
	POPs type		Metric Tons			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
	(select)	(select)	(select)			
	(select)	(select)	(select)			
	(select)	(select)	(select)			
Indicator 9.2	Quantity of mercury reduced					
			Metric Tons			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 9.3	Number of countries with legislation and policy implemented to control chemicals and waste					
			Number of Countries			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 9.4	Number of low-chemical/non-chemical systems implemented particularly in food production, manufacturing and cities					
		Technology	Number			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Core Indicator 10	Reduction, avoidance of emissions of POPs to air from point and non-point sources					(Grams)
Indicator 10.1	Number of countries with legislation and policy implemented to control emissions of POPs to air					
			Number of Countries			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE



Indicator 10.2	Number of emission control technologies/practices implemented					
			Number			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 10.3	Number of countries with legislation and policy implemented to control chemicals and waste					
			Number of Countries			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Core Indicator 11	Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment					(Number)
					Number Achieved	
					MTR	TE
				Female	741,855 out of which 74,145 are direct	
				Male	690,417 out of which 88,941 are direct	
				Total	1,432,272 out of which 163,086 are direct	



Appendix 14. Field Visits Summary



A summary of field visits conducted by National Consultants is presented below.

FIELD VISITS SUMMARY IN KAZAKHSTAN

- Field trips to two project pilot sites took place in Kyzylorda and Almaty regions from April 8 to April 14, 2021.

Date	Activity	Description/Photo
08.04.	Trip to Kyzylorda oblast, meeting and interviewing key researchers of the Institute	<p>Meeting with and taking interviews from the researchers from the Kazakh Research Institute of Rice Production (Project partner) involved in the implementation of scaling-up the recommended activities and practices on cultivation of salt and drought tolerant crops, introduction of crop diversification and practices to improve and maintain soil quality, multiplication of seeds of fodder crops as Sorghum and others.</p>  <p><i>Seeds of Sorghum received by the Institute for multiplication and dissemination among local farmers.</i></p>
08.04.	<p>Interviews with the Mr Nurbol Appazov, Director</p> <p>Mr. Zhanuzak Baimanov, Head of the Knowledge Dissemination Center</p> <p>Ms Gulsim Baiymbetova, Research Secretary</p>	<p>Major conclusions of the interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project activities are well aligned with the national and regional priorities in the fields of crop production and environmental protection; - Crop diversification should be introduced gradually in order to have enough time for changing the mindset of the farmers, who have been cultivating rice for the years; - Salt and drought tolerant crops have to be introduced based on the findings obtained from the results of the on-farm practices of crop production; - Trainings based on the farmer to farmer approach should be a key strategy in scaling-up Project activities; - Natural and climatic conditions of the region should be always kept in mind while designing Project activities; - Cost-benefit analysis of the Project activities should be conducted in close cooperation with the researchers of the Institute and farmers. 
09.04.	Interview with the farmer brothers Arystan and Yerzhan Syrgalins	<p>Major conclusions of the interview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approach to sustainable agriculture development should be given more priority while designing trainings both for the farmers and researchers; - Trainings should also involve representatives of consumers. Overall, consumers' awareness on food products quality should be improved; - Farmers need practical information on preventing soil salinity; - Local seed production needs better support; - Incentives on improving food quality through reduced and responsible pest and weed control need more attention and support (could be government support and consumers with high awareness will create a market, i.e. real demand for the

		quality food products).
12.04.	Ms Kulyash Iskandarova, Head of Department of International Cooperation and Innovations	<p>She is responsible for the overall coordination of collaboration with the Project and implementing its activities including signing of Letters of Agreement and financial operations between the Institute and the Project.</p> <p>Major conclusion of the interview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Activities implemented by the Project had been discussed with the Institute before launching collaborative partnership with the Institute. This provided a good mutual understanding of the objectives and capacities of the Institute as well as alignment with the national strategic plans in the fields of improvement and development of the fodder crops base in Kazakhstan; - Trainings provided by the Project are highly relevant for the current needs of the farmers and researchers. In future more focus should be given to the practical issues as agronomic pros and cons of recommended seeds, their marketability and cost effectiveness of seeds and fodder production; - Operational issues as signing the Letter of Agreement is recommended to take place at the end of the year preceding the next vegetation season in order not to lose time to start field/cropping activities according to the agronomic schedule. 
12.04.	Ms Nurgul Meldebekova, Head of the Department of Pasture Management	<p>She is responsible for the activities on selecting and recommending fodder crops proved to be efficient for the farmers based on the research and experimental activities. Major conclusion of the interview:</p> <p>Project activities are highly relevant to current plans of the Institute and needs of farmers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More farmers including the smallholders should be involved in the Project activities as trainings, webinars, etc; - Project support in communicating political issues as long-term government support in capacity building both, farmers and researchers including students is highly needed; - Project design and management in regard to the start of the field works needs to be improved; - Socio-economic and financial assessment of the different fodder crops cultivation is highly needed. 
13.04.	Trip to Almaty oblast, meeting and interviewing key researchers of the Institute involved in the implementation of Project activities on scaling-up	Meeting with and taking interviews from the researchers from the Kazakh Research Institute of Fodder and Livestock Production (Project partner).

	fodder crops seeds production	<p>Major objective of the collaboration between the Project and the Institute is to: 1) disseminate knowledge about drought and salt tolerant fodder crops, 2) scaling up practices of cultivation of fodder crops proved to be suitable for the farmers from the financial and agronomic perspectives, and 3) production, multiplication and introduction in the practice of seeds.</p> <p><i>Experimental site of the Institute in Almaty oblast, Kazakhstan</i></p> <p>The Institute planted fodder crops as Sainfoin (<i>Onobrychis</i>), wheatgrass (<i>Agropyron</i>), feathergrass (<i>Stipa</i>), Kochia grass (<i>Kochia</i>), couch grass (<i>Elymus L.</i>) planted on the experimental sites of the Institute. Starting from the 2021 seeds are planted on the lands of the farmers participating in the Project activities relating to knowledge dissemination and scaling-up of fodder crops seeds production.</p> 
13-14.04.	Interviews with the researchers implementing practical works on seeds multiplication	<p>Interviews with the researchers working in the field to plant and cultivate seeds of the fodder crops were taken to identify practical issues as perspectives of scaling-up of seeds and fodder crops production. Major conclusion of the interviews with the group of the researchers of the Institute:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fodder crops e.g. as Sainfoin and feather grass are not widely known among farmers; <p><i>Discussing scaling-up perspectives of the fodder crops seeds with the researcher</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More practical trainings containing proofs of certain fodder crops varieties benefits obtained from the real farm conditions should be organized and delivered to the farmers; - Climate conditions as natural rainfall amount is not enough for a good vegetation cover in the pasture lands; - Involvement of the private sector for the wider dissemination of activities on improving vegetation cover of pasture lands needs to be considered and discussed with the private sector representatives (farmers, who has financial resources and motivation to improve pastures. Here, the issues of land ownership were stressed as an important factor to motivate farmers to invest on land quality improvement). 
14.04.	Ms Bakhyt Ainebekova, Senior Researcher, Agronomist	<p>She is responsible for coordination and implementation of field activities as soil preparation, sowing, irrigation, weed and pest control, harvesting, and post-harvest activities.</p> <p>Major conclusions of the interview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More involvement of the smallholders from all the regions of the south and south-eastern part of the country; - Focus on practical trainings both for farmers and researchers - Sharing more information on climate related issues and orienting fodder crops varieties selection taking into account climate conditions; - Improving knowledge management considering existing capacities of the researchers and farmers; - Trainings should be more focused on improving practical capacities of farmers.

FIELD VISITS SUMMARY IN KYRGYZSTAN

- One two days long field visit to the Kochkor district of the Naryn Province was undertaken during the MTR process in Kyrgyzstan on 23-24 March 2021.
- This district is located in the northern-central part of Kyrgyzstan, 196 km from the capital Bishkek. The district area is 5,868 square kilometers (2,266 sq mi), and its resident population was 67,363 in 2020. In total, Kochkor District includes 32 settlements in 11 rural communities (*aiyl aimak*). Each rural community comprises one or several villages. The administrative center of the district is Kochkor village with the population of 11,373 people. The region has a mild climate and the land between the mountain ridges, which is ideal for agriculture. Today Kochkor is well known for its livestock breeding of sheep, cattle and horses. Horses here are valuable animals providing the Kyrgyz with meat and kymys (smoked milk), as well as a mode of transport. However, in recent decade crop farming, mainly of potatoes also spread over the locality. However, animal husbandry remains the main economic activity and source of rural population livelihoods.

Date	Activity	Description/Photo
23/03	The meeting in the Kochkor District State Administration Office with the local project partners	<p>Interview with the local project partners:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Head of the District Department of Agricultural Development of the Kochkor State Administration Mr. Rakhatbek Israilov and 2) Kochkor District Agency for Rural Investment and Cooperation representative Mr. Urmat Omurbekov.   <p>Upon the request of both interviewees, one joint interview was organized. Summing up the note of the conversation the following could be mentioned:</p> <p><u>Relevance:</u> The project is aligned to the district development strategy. The level of appraisal is satisfactory.</p> <p><u>Efficiency:</u> The approach applied by the CAMP Alatau, when beneficiaries were supported after trainings and participatory debates, not as a gift but a</p>

		<p>part of a SLM / Climate Change Adaptation project was right. Estimated as Highly Satisfactory/ <u>Effectiveness:</u> The capacity development events were of great interest and the received knowledge are useful. The estimate is satisfactory. <u>Sustainability:</u></p>
23/03	<p>The visit to the future demonstration field in the Tendik village and the meeting with the famer beneficiary on the site.</p>	<p>Interview with the local farmer beneficiary Mr. Tynchtyk Dzhumagulov, who received high quality seeds of barley (Getman) variety and alfalfa (Belek variety). He will establish 2 demonstration fields in the middle mountains- 1 ha of barley and 1 ha of alfalfa. He has enough land for this. He used this land to grow potatoes, and he knows that it is good to do crop species rotation to preserve soil fertility. The project supported this. It is too early to plough land (middle or close to the end of April). He is going to experiment on the demonstration field one part will be sowed with barley, another with alfalfa and one part with mixture of both seeds. He agreed with local Self-Government and other farmers of Tendik commune they will come to see the yield to learn. He also agreed to contribute to organization of a community seed fund. It will be no bad if budget allows the project will support also social infrastructure in target places (drinking water supply in Tendik).</p>  
23/03 /	<p>The trip to and the visit to the future demonstration field in the Kara-Suu local community and the meeting with the famer beneficiary on the site.</p>	<p>Mr. Bolot Sadykov was an active participant of the project event, conducted in the project site. He received the seeds of the Getman variety barley to establish 1 ha of a highland demonstration field in Kara-Suu local commune. The soil here is stonier and the vegetation season will start later, in May.</p>  

		Mr Sadykov is also a deputy of Kara-Suu Rural Council (local parliament) and he told that the project is supporting the regular area of any local community development agenda on promoting sustainable agriculture production for better livelihoods.
23/03 /	Trip to Cholpon local community to meet the Chair of the Community Pasture Users Union – the project beneficiary	<p>Mr. Urmat Omurbekov the Chair of the Pasture Users ' Union of the Cholpon Aiyl Aimak (Local Community) was one the project beneficiaries who was supported to develop the Pasture Management Plan. He is a well-known proponent of the sustainable pasture management. This Pasture Committee is known for its good practice of pasturelands rotation, in order to support natural regeneration of grass species. Pasture Management plan for Cholpon Local Community was complemented with the adaptation project on water distribution facility to irrigate field with forage crops within climate change context.</p> 
24/03	Trip to Ak-Kyia local community to the Leader of the women's initiative group, Farmer, Beneficiary	<p>Ms. Makhabat Abdilova Local Community Women's Initiative Group,</p> 
24/03	Trip to the Kochkor River Water Intake Facility	Since irrigation water supply to this drylands in Kochkor District was highlighted by all the interviewees as a major problem during the vegetation period and one of the main focus during the second stage of the project implementation the trip to the Water Intake Facility was undertaken also to see the planned project site there too.



The conversation was about the opportunity to establish a demonstration apricot/apple orchard with a water efficient system of irrigation (drip) near this hydraulic facility.

FIELD VISITS SUMMARY IN TAJIKISTAN



FGD conducted with women members of the faming group in Vakhsh district

April 07-09, 2021

Background

The project duration is for the period of March 2017-December 2021.

The project “Integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agricultural production landscapes in Central Asia and Turkey (CACILM-2)” seeks to scale up integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agriculture production landscapes in Central Asia and Turkey. This will be achieved through developing and implementing mechanisms that (i) minimize pressures and negative impacts on natural resources, (ii) reduce risks and vulnerability, and (iii) enhance capacity to cope with or adapt to drought and salinity. In particular, adoption of integrated landscape management approaches and INRM practices should help stabilize and even reverse trends of soil salinization, reduce erosion, improve water capture and retention, increase the sequestration of carbon, and reduce loss of agrobiodiversity, thereby reducing the desertification trend in terms of extent and severity.

Priority area B. Sustainable management of natural resources and improved resilience to climate change.

Output 2.1. strengthening the policy-enabling environment along with strategies and investment programmes to combat land degradation, with emphasis on a landscape approach, and taking gender-equality aspects into consideration.

The schedule of the project site visits was planned and agreed with with Mr. Daler Domulozhonov, National Project Manager for the travel and meeting arrangements. Mr. Marufqul Mahkamov, Consultant Agronomist on SLM and FFS has accompanied the MTR consultant to the field.

Table 1. List of project sites visited for interviews and FGDs

No.	District	Jamoat/village	Beneficiary	Meeting structure	Date
1	Yovon	Dahana	Mr. Abdurahim Sayfov	Interviews & FGD	April 8
2			Mr. Ilhom Rahimov		
3			Ms. Sarviniso Qurbonova		
4			Ms. Shoir Mirzoeva		
5		Norin	Mr. Khujanazar Soqiev	Interview	
6	A.Jomi	Mushkrud	Mr. Yusupov Safarmahmad	Interview	April 8
7			Ms. Niyozova Nurbi	Interview	
9		Obi Oshik	Farmers Group meeting	FGD	April 10
10	Vakhsh	Dusti	Ms. Manzura Khojaeva	Interview	April 9
13			Farmers Group /FFS	FGD	
14	Kushoniyon	Sarvati Istiqlol	Mr. Mansur Mirakov, and	Interview /FGD	April 9
15			Mr. Zoirsho Mahmadaliev		
16			Ms. Khiromon Qurbonova		

- Interviews conducted with the project beneficiaries (See table 1)
- Focus Groups discussion were held with the participation of women and men among the sampled farming groups, set up within the frame of the project.

Summary of Interviews & FGD

Six interviews and four focus group discussions were conducted in the villages, selected for the field trips. The interviews and FGDs were conducted with the participation of members of farmer groups, who were mainly involved in the project and participated in trainings through the FFS. Sampled selected volunteer participants were provided with drought and salt tolerant crops to demonstrate the crop management and share their knowledge and learnings with other farmer participants. Accordingly, farmers have been trained to manage delivered crops, which require less water and can be grown on rainfed land. The interviewees have reported of the safflower as the best required crop for the rainfed and salinized lands.



In addition, FGDs reported the healthiest and best quality cooking oil they obtained from safflower. "This year we did not buy cooking oil and now we prefer safflower oil over the regular vegetable oils (cotton and sunflower) we bought before.

According to the FGDs reports the irrigation remains as a main challenge for the farmers in all the target districts, particularly in Yovon and A. Jomi districts.

Ms. Nurbi Niyozova, a farmer from Jomi district has 4.5 ha of irrigated lands. She has reported of irrigation challenges her farm face to access water timely. The deficit of irrigation always harms the expected yield of the crops planted, says Nurbi. The lack and poor irrigation access made me to plant the safflower seeds-drought resistant crop received from the project, within my irrigated land and have received good yield-1.5 MT per ha. The main challenge for the



Ms. Nurbi Niyozova, a farm group member near her newly harvested radish

management of the safflower remains the access to oil mill, for which we have to truck the seeds and travel to the district center and other places where oil mill is available, the cost of which does not cover the expenses we make.

Replication of the safflower plantation has been reported by Mr. Abduqayum Sayfov the Deputy of Jamoat from Yovon district. The farmers who has been supported with the seeds of safflower through the project, are supporting the other two neighbouring farmers with the 20 kg of seeds for each. So the replication is going on and more farmers who interest to buy the seeds of safflower.

In 2020, 150 farmers were supported with the seeds and the number of interested farmers to run the same business has doubled. 300 more farmers have planted safflower for the year of 2021.

Key findings

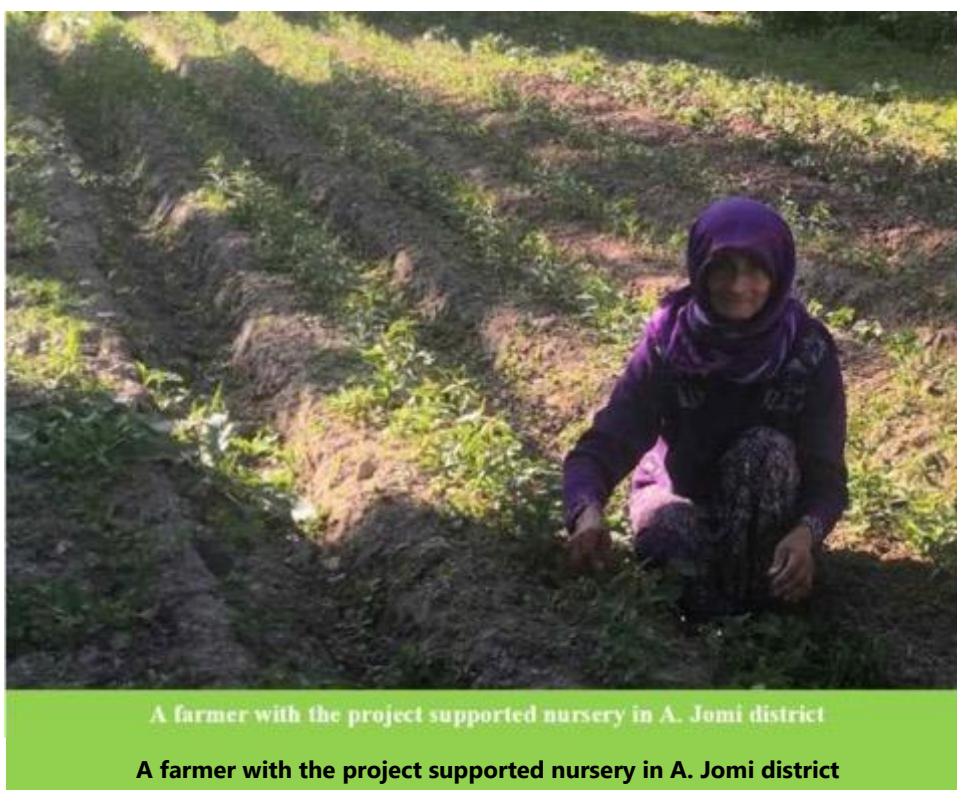
- The project's partnership with national Institution of Soil management has been reported in the villages to test the land quality on salinity and degradation. In Jomi district the land salinity level was reported as 7%, says Mr. Safarmamad Yusupov, a member of the farming group.
- The seeds of safflower and mung beans-drought and salt resistance plants have been distributed in all the four target districts for the women smallholder farmers members of the farming groups to demonstrate the best practices on SLM and contribution to the households' food security.
- The interviews conducted in all four target districts with the project participants have revealed the capacity-building events arranged and run for the project participants, as the key and beneficial component of the project. Women members of the farming groups have shown interest to attend more training on the SLM and the product value chain.

Conclusions

- The outputs of conducted interviews and Focus Group Discussions report of the project meeting the DAC criteria
- The interviews and FGDs held in the project target communities have reminded the importance of the capacity-building events, the participants have been through on SLM.
- The FFS has been reported as a useful platform/school for the knowledge and sharing the best practices the farmers use on land management, including land productivity and IPM.
- The FFS is an ideal and appropriate source to demonstrate and share the best practices published at WOCAT.

Recommendations

- The project team to review the FFS approach based on the needs of the famers and project outcome indicators.
- Strengthen the project collaboration with agriculture universities in the local and national level to introduce and enhance the extension services in the project target districts and the region.
- Project to plan the involvement and collaboration with the private sector to address the need of the communities in accessing oil mill. This may impact the replication of the safflower – drought and salt resistant crop cultivation in the region and thus to contribute and improve the households' food security.
- Enable rural small holder farmers to benefit from the best practices described and published at WOCAT, through the FFS and media.



FIELD VISITS SUMMARY IN TURKMENISTAN

Only two from three pilot project sites have been visited. One of them could not be visited due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Location Name	Location Coordinates	Area (ha)	Total Households	Male Population	Female Population	Total Population
Nohur (mountainous area)	38°28'20.9"N 57°01'49.0"E	100 (without pasture)	1,440	4,950	6,050	11,000
Karakum (desert area)	38°45'39.4"N 58°29'44.1"E	466473	2,805	8,482	8,734	17,216
Gurbansoltan eje (irrigated area)	41°52'15.4"N 59°38'37.2"E	7300	2,968	8,592	8,169	16,761
Total Beneficiaries						44,977

Note: Coordinates collected from "Google Earth"

Moments and photos from Nohur (mountainous area):

Nohur Visit 19.03.2021

Interview with Gurban Abdyrahmanov who is local expert of Nohur pilot project site



Interview with community member of Nohur pilot project site



Interview with community members of Nohur pilot project site, including Mr. Annamuhmet Annamammedov



They are explaining experience and practices from previous project



Visit to Nursery which supported by CACILM-II



Visit to outcomes from previous projects. They take care of each contribution and it insures the sustainability







Karakum Visit 26.03.2021

Interview with Ishanberdi Lollyyev who Chairman of the farmer union "Yerbent"



Interview with Kakabay Baysahedov who is local expert of Karakum pilot project site and with local community members



Visit of Nursery which supported by CACILM-II



Visit to outcomes from previous projects. They take care of each contribution and it insures the sustainability



FIELD VISITS SUMMARY IN UZBEKISTAN

Bukhara Scientific and Production center for seed production of desert-pasture plants. Oybek Kakhramonov, head of the center.

The center has a national significance with subdivisions in some regions of Uzbekistan. It is a division of the Republican Association "Karakulchilik". Created in 2018.



Main objective: to promote the increase of desert pasture productivity by increasing the feed capacity of pastures through the development of seed production of desert forage plants.

Objectives: to increase the yield and types of forage plants through the development of primary seed production, to combat the degradation of pastures.

The project delivered 180 kg of seeds (Izen, Zhitnyak, Exparcet, Chogon, Teresken, Keyreuk, Shuvak) for the creation of primary seed nurseries:.

Together with the project, the center expects to increase the seed potential through the creation of 6 nurseries in various districts on 25 hectares. By increasing the seed potential, they intend to expand in the near future by 100 hectares and enrich 1000 hectares of pastures in 4 regions. Currently, more than 40 % of pastures are subject to a high degree of degradation.

The relevance of cooperation is expressed in the following documents:

PP-3603 of 14.03.2018 ON MEASURES TO ACCELERATE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE KARAKUL INDUSTRY.

"4. The main tasks of the Center are to determine:

- creation of scientific and applied bases for the intensification of feed production in steppe areas, organization of primary seed production of promising varieties of steppe forage plants;
- introduction of advanced agrotechnical measures in areas for growing seeds of steppe fodder crops, providing these areas with high-quality seeds and increasing the volume of seed harvesting;
- selection of varieties that meet the natural and climatic conditions of pastures, accelerated increase in the harvesting of their seeds;
- identification and restoration of degraded pastures, organization of planting of steppe forage crops to increase their productivity;

- delivery of seeds of forage crops at the request of farms specializing in karakul farming”.

PP-4817 of 02.09.2020 ON THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SERICULTURE AND KARAKUL BREEDING

“About the development of laboratories and experimental sites at the center.

PP-4576 of 02.09.2020 ON ADDITIONAL MEASURES OF STATE SUPPORT FOR THE LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY

Allocation of pastures. It is necessary to increase the yield and safety of pastures with the assistance of the center. Subsidies are allocated.

Close cooperation with karakul-growing clusters, which give orders for planting and growing forage plants in pasture areas.

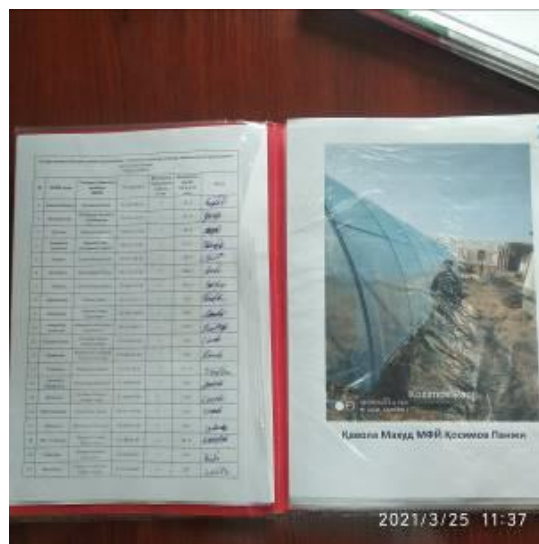
They offer cooperation with the project on the creation of rotary plots for determining the feed capacity of pastures and the study of various forage plants. We need the help of the project.

At the moment, there is no memo with FAO on cooperation. Seeds were delivered through the project. It will be good if even more assistance is provided, especially in the research area: laboratories, the scientific potential of employees.

Problems with the science lab, it's not there. There is an intention to return about 15 thousand hectares to the use.”

The leadership of the group on small and medium-sized enterprises and householders of the Bukhara district. Shamshod Kholmurodov.

The head of the group particularly noted the assistance of the project in the district for the supply of seeds and fertilizers during the pandemic for the population. In addition, a significant contribution of the project is the supply of motor cultivators and pumps, with the help of which local groups have been established that provide land cultivation and water supply services for particularly needy segments of the population.



5 tillers were provided. 4 for the population to provide for 120 families, 1 for local forestry. 17 pumps are provided, each of which is used to provide for 20 to 25 families.

On the part of the project, 20 greenhouses were built, which are used by the population on the plots of households, each greenhouse with a size of 1 ha. The project provides consulting services for the cultivation and marketing of plants in greenhouses. Short courses were conducted individually with each greenhouse recipient. The sales markets located nearby in the city of Bukhara allow you to effectively sell products. The greenhouse management parameters recommended by the project allow you to earn a significant income, which is equal to the above-average annual income per employee in the district. This project event helped to raise awareness of greenhouse management in the areas of private farms, and as a result, the district administration implemented measures to expand the use of greenhouses in the households of the population. With the involvement of additional funds from the district administration, another 400 greenhouses were created using the experience of the project.



A special social effect, since the district has a high unemployment rate.

Thus, the activities in cooperation with the project contribute to solving the issues of the decision of the governor of the Bukhara region on the development of the Bukhara region, and also correspond to the tasks set in the minutes of the meeting with the President of the country.

Planned:

Conduct training seminars for the population in May 2021. Increase the number of minitechnics. 40 hectares of land have been allocated, for which an application for seeds has been submitted and the project is expected to help with agrotechnical measures.

The opportunity to study foreign experience with a trip to countries with developed agriculture and get acquainted with the issues of solving problems of land degradation.

It is necessary to increase the level of cooperation with the branch of the Institute of Irrigation for the preparation and dissemination of methodological materials.

The experience of individual greenhouse farms can be included in the graduation papers of graduates of the institute.

Toshev Shukurbek, Deputy Governor of Bukhara district.

As a result of the project's activities, issues of income, unemployment and social welfare are resolved. Special emphasis is placed on the low-income segments of the population, with a focus on women and young people.



In the area, it would be good for householders to assist in the purchase of mini equipment for families, seeds and fertilizers.

Expectations from the project activities are promising and the effect is high. 85 % of the resulting crop is sold in local markets, and 15-20 % is left for the personal consumption of families.

A holder of small greenhouse in "Turkon" local community council in Bukhara district to talk about status of planted crops. During the interview Ms. Boboyeva Muhabbat, talked the work done in the greenhouse so far and she said that we have already sold some dill and parcel in the local market. Dill is an annual herb in the celery family Apiaceae and it can be regrown several times within in a year. Its leaves and seeds are used as herb or spice for flavouring food. Parsley is a species of flowering plant in the family Apiaceae and it can be used for salad in local diet. She is happy to receive the small greenhouse and if there will be opportunity, she can build another small green house at own expenses. She says that this was a great support to my family in the most difficult period of the global fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Director of the Bukhara branch of Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers.

The main task is to improve the country's food supply capacity, which the institute is working on with FAO.

It is necessary to further test and implement effective technologies and proposals that have already been developed within the institute together with the project.



With the FAO, work is being carried out on water-saving technologies on 2.3 hectares of the educational farm. Based on the results, methodological manuals are prepared. A 121-page report has been prepared, including articles.

Trainings for district governors of the Bukhara region on new resource-saving technologies were organized.

The project provided the institute with a seeder, a laser leveler and an M-38 device for determining the composition of soils in the field.

Of particular importance is the employment of young teachers of the institute in the field farm school as an extension service. 6 young teachers were trained in Tashkent and in the training sessions of the project experts in Bukhara. Now they conduct field consultations for farmers with field visits.



Within the framework of cooperation with the project, there are 3 masters and 10 bachelors.

Planned:

- development of seed demo plots with the project;
- joint implementation of a seed drill for desert forage plants developed within the framework of the Irrigation Institute;
- development of mechanization of desert forage crops.

Forestry department of Bukhara Region, Rustam Khojiev, head

It was particularly noted that the activities of many projects stop after the end of the project. Fortunately, this project has good prospects. Special attention should be paid to the fact that the project has delivered 100 thousand cuttings of a good grape variety, which are currently planted in different forestry enterprises with a total area of 50 hectares. In addition, the project conducted training seminars for forestry employees on agricultural techniques for growing grapes.

This is a new activity that has not been done before. In total, it is planned to expand the area to 420 hectares and further distribute the plantings to the population with subsequent consulting services. The project also supplied a tillerblock, which allows testing new methods of tillage for growing grapes. Out of 100 thousand cuttings, 80% have already taken root. From the successful cuttings, it is planned to distribute two saplings per family of the population. A total of 10,000 families will receive grape saplings for growing on household plots.

The Forestry Department is actively working to raise awareness of the project's activities in cooperation with it. Albums with photos and descriptions of each plot where the grapes are grown together with the project have been prepared.

In addition, it was noted that the forestry department of the Bukhara region is planting saxaul on 96 thousand hectares of desert territories. The view was expressed that it would be appropriate for the project to participate in these activities. The government has allocated more than 1.5 billion UZ Soums for these events.



Farm "Niyaz niyazov" located in Bukhara district

The farm is provided with no-till zero tillage seeder. Demonstrative work of the project on 5 hectares. Other farmers on the territory of 200 hectares have already taken advantage of the possibilities of sowing this method. Interest is high. While seminars on familiarization with the equipment were held, it is planned to widely inform the surrounding farmers about the environmental and economic benefits of zero-tillage, through additional training seminars, field days, etc.



Observations are being made on the adaptation of this method of growing cereals and legumes. Important are the advantages of uniform seeding and the change of the usual seeding for the Bukhara region, which consists in double seeding of seeds in a cross-step. The project demonstrates the advantages of the new method over this traditionally used method.

Mr. Ilyos Niyozov, chairman of the Niyoz Niyoz farm said that within the framework of the project demonstration sites have been established to introduce new crop management technologies in order to ensure the efficient use of land and water resources, increase productivity of crop yields of agricultural crops, sustainable management salt affected agricultural production landscapes saline agricultural areas lands in in my farm. He mentioned about no-till drill and laser land leveling device which were brought under the project. Using the no-till can help to save fuel and decrease production cost in the farm. Laser leveling device which is important land is leveled using laser-equipped drag buckets to create a constant slope 0 to 0.2% and will be improved water coverage and plant population could be reduced by up 40%. Productivity of agricultural crops increases up to 30%.

Shermat's farm located in Bukhara district

New varieties of wheat that are resistant to drought have been planted. Active work on agricultural techniques for growing new varieties of wheat. Wheat seeds were delivered. About 80 hectares of arable land of the farm are involved in project activities. Also, the farms around will participate in the dissemination of knowledge and awareness of wheat cultivation. The expected wheat yield is up to 80 c/ha.

Mr. Shermat, chairman of the farm is dealing work with rye and mungbean seed production. The CACILM-2 project has already provided seeds of mungbean and rye to the farm. As a result, last year the farm is already produced more than 10 tons of seeds of mungbean and sold in the local market to the farmers and households as seed. Field performance of rye is satisfactory conditions despite late planting. Farmer also using no-till planter in his farm. No-till winter wheat field



performance is excellent conditions and expected wheat grain yield is about 7-8 tonnes per ha.

Zarafshon Farm in Romitan district

The farm is a livestock sector farm, cooperation with the project is carried out on testing and growing new varieties of alfalfa, sunflower and corn. Basically, work is underway to obtain seeds and distribute them to the local population. The head of the farm has extensive experience and has authority among the population and farmers. This type of activity is important for increasing the possibility of keeping animals in stable conditions based on intensive fattening or dairy farming, thereby reducing the need for pastures.



During the interview Mr. Shavkat Shodiev head of the farm talked about seeds of salt tolerant alfalfa, sunflower and sugar beet varieties in his farm which were provided by the project in 2020 year. The seeds of the mentioned crops were distributed among farmers in the district in order to increase area of salt tolerant crops. Mr. Shodiev was very happy to be partner of the project in the province.

Head of the agricultural department of the Bukhara Region, Askar Zhavodov

He gave a good review of the project's activities in the region, and was well informed. The main attention was paid to the allocation of more than 50 hectares of abandoned land for young people in the Bukhara region. Therefore, it is advisable an assistance of the project in installing pumping equipment to ensure irrigation of these territories.

Kashkadarya region

Karakul farm Guzar, Otabek Ismatov, Director of the farm

The main problem to be solved together with the project is to increase the yield of pastures and water sheep.

Together with the project, a number of desert pasture forage plants have been sown and are being grown. The project delivered 450 kg of seeds of pasture forage plants, which are grown on 30 hectares of pasture protected areas. Create own seed fund.

In Guzor Karakul Sheep Breeding Farm of Guzor district where the CACILM-2 project supported to organize seed production of pasture plants and prepared pasture management plan.

Water is scarce, and through the creation of wells, the farm intends to solve the problem of watering. At the moment, the project has organized measures to assess the availability of groundwater, hydraulic exploration on the territory of the farm, thus preparing recommendations for the placement of wells for watering animals.

The farm has pasture lands of 86,371 hectares and the number of the main flock of sheep is more than 35 thousand heads. The entire farm employs 150 people, operating in 5 departments. The farm has sufficient equipment and has no



problems with the infrastructure. In addition, the farm has 1,200 hectares of rain-fed and 45 irrigated arable land. At the moment, the farm uses 200 hectares of land for crop production, which is also difficult in conditions of water shortage. Therefore, cooperation within the framework of the project on the cultivation of forage plants is important. More scientific approaches are needed.

The main areas for cooperation are to improve the use of wells. It is possible to create conditions for its own processing of wool, which will strengthen the economic condition of the enterprise. Implementation of measures to create capacities for processing and harvesting feed in granular form to provide the population with feed resources for the stable keeping of animals in private subsidiary farms.

Kamashi forest entity, Isomiddin Majidov, director

At the moment of cooperation with the project, 200 kg of pistachio seeds have been received, which are planted on 2500 hectares. This action is consistent with the decision of the khokim of the Kamashy district No. 93/01 of January 12, 2019 on the allocation of land territories for growing pistachios for the Kamashi forestry.

In addition, 70 thousand juniper seedlings were obtained from the Bobotag forestry, which should be planted on 1180 hectares.



The farm also works with the UNDP Snow Leopard project, which provides for the creation of forest tree nurseries, assists with the supply of a large tractor with a trailer and a fence for a 2-hectare nursery. The farm uses the activities of this project with the FAO project.

Within the framework of the FAO project, two nurseries of one hectare each were created, in which Zaravshan juniper and Crimean pine are grown, and a tillerblock was installed for caring for plants in nurseries. The problem is created by the lack of a stable water supply, which makes it necessary to purchase a pipe for a 2-kilometer water supply distance. Seedlings from these nurseries are intended for further planting on the territory of 28.5 thousand hectares.

On the part of the forestry sector, the issues of nature conservation and land degradation are actively promoted among the population, since the main problem is the uncontrolled grazing of animals in the pastures of the forestry and the territories bordering it.

In the future, it will be important to conduct training seminars on growing pistachios. In addition, it is important to hold seminars and field days to raise awareness among the population and decision-makers on how to address land degradation through afforestation and forest conservation. The increase in minitechnics will help to expand the possibilities of working in mountain conditions.

Muzafar Zhavkaev, greenhouse household farming.

As part of the project's activities, greenhouses were created for representatives of the population in the fight against COVID-19. This event creates an opportunity to provide families with food and receive additional income from the sale of products grown in greenhouses. The greenhouses are constructed as stable structures that were built by a firm hired by the FAO project. The size of each greenhouse is 1 ha, the total cost of the construction is about 700 US dollars. To date, the owner of the greenhouse receives up to 20 US dollars a day in the season, and considers this activity very profitable. All its actions are coordinated with the FAO project consultants, which is a major factor in its success.





It should be noted that even visually there is a significant order in the greenhouse area, looking in accordance with the standards of the GAP. In addition, the owner intends to invest additional funds in the creation of a greenhouse with heating capabilities in the winter. There are questions of combining this intention with the issues of climate change and fuel supply. It is possible to solve this intention through the creation of heating through alternative energy sources.

In general, 14 similar greenhouses have been created in the Kamashy district, 6 of which are in this mahalla "Badakhshan". In general, there are about 60 greenhouses in the mahalla among 920 families. It is important that the greenhouses that were installed with the help of the project showed sustainability and the consultations of the project experts increased the efficiency of the use of greenhouses. In general, the project allocated 100 thousand US dollars for greenhouse farms.

Further research is needed on the possibilities of increasing food and household income through the development of greenhouse and greenhouse farms, which is in line with government decisions. Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PP-4246 20.03.2019 "On measures for the further development of horticulture and greenhouse farming in the Republic of Uzbekistan".

Deputy Mayor of Kamashy district Tozhiddin Rakhimov

He paid special attention to the assistance of the project within the framework of the government's food supply program. The activities of the project help to increase the yield of agricultural crops. In the district, the issues of seed production for major crops such as cotton and cereals are relatively resolved. It is important to develop seed production for food crops that need to be updated and increased. The FAO project is an incentive for the development of social and economic support for the population. Important importance is attached to the planned measures to support the irrigation system on 50 hectares of land allocated to the population of the district. The project intends to assist in the installation of a pump to supply water from the river.



It was emphasized that the concentration of project activities in one area is an advantage for achieving the project's goals for the development of agricultural production. It is very important that the FAO project first conducts a study of the state of the land, and then conducts work on the selection of seeds and recommends agrotechnical measures.

Kamashi district is a fruit and vegetable area and is developing an export orientation. In this regard, it is important to create a seed base and support the investment department, which will ensure the safety of the necessary amount of seeds by controlling the consumption and sale of agricultural products. Also, the results of cooperation with the FAO project will allow determining the placement and timing of planting plants, the orientation of products for export.

The district is home to about 275,000 people. Of these, 213 thousand live in rural areas. Most of this population contains livestock, a significant part of which is grazed on pastures. Therefore, the law on pastures, adopted in 2019, is very important, which makes it possible to create associations of pasture users for the joint management of pastures. This question would be interesting for further cooperation with the project. It is also important to introduce water-saving technologies, and especially drip irrigation in the territories of households.

Oltinboev Yeri farm, Sherzod Oltinbayev

On the territory of this farm, various methods of growing desert forage plants and tree crops are being tested using various methods of adaptation to land degradation factors. Methods of growing trees with the help of devices for collecting and preserving moisture in the root part of the plant are being tested.



Mr. Shrezod Oltinboev, head of the farm gave full information about the project demonstration site. Particularly, he said that in this site, several demonstrations on seed isles, alley cropping, and drip irrigation were conducted. The team has monitored field performance of the trees and crops and discussed status of demonstration site, field performance of wheat, barley, almond, grape and Red date including seed isles, water saving technologies, drip irrigation and waterbox implementation, and alley cropping. The farm owner is happy to work with the project as he got good wheat grain yield using drought tolerant winter wheat variety Qayroqtosh and is ready for future collaboration.

Of particular interest is the testing of the island method for creating plots with the preservation of pasture plants for further dispersal of seeds by wind. At the moment, the experiment is based on typical plants under these conditions. It is expected that the cultivation of other more drought-tolerant and high-yielding forage plants in similar areas will increase the potential of pastures through the dispersion of their seeds.

Kashkadarya branch of Research Institute of Cereals and Legume Crops

Oybek Amanov, Director

Divor Zhuraev, Deputy Director

This is the third year of cooperation with the FAO project. In the first year, the cooperation consisted of conducting seminars within the framework of zero-tillage technologies. In 2019, work was carried out with farmers to plant new varieties of peas for the second harvest after the wheat harvest.



In 2020, we increased the testing of a wider range of agricultural crops. In general, the practice of growing repeated crops on 120 hectares of irrigated land has expanded. Demonstration fields were created for 8 main agricultural crops. Technologies are being introduced with the use of hydrogel, the study of soil composition, etc.

A demonstration of growing new varieties of corn and sunflower is being held on rain-fed lands.



An important contribution of the FAO project is the development and dissemination of the institute's scientific achievements among farmers and dehkan farms. Adapted and improved seeds are distributed through field days, and the sustainability of further seed use and the correctness of agricultural cultivation techniques is achieved through the implementation of the project activities for the organization of a field farm school. Members of this field farm school are young scientists of the institute, who carry out field trips on the territory of farms and conduct consultations on various stages of agricultural technology for growing crops directly on the ground. Due to the pandemic, the number of field trips was not large, but despite this, 4 training seminars were held within the framework of the farmers ' field school.



Support for the project in the development of zero tillage technology was also provided through the purchase of a seed drill with direct sowing of seeds of various leguminous crops. This planter has great advantages in sowing compared to other analogues used in the country. With its help, you can carry out sowing on 2000 hectares per month. The advantages of this technology are being studied and materials are being prepared for distribution to a wide range of farmers and recommendations are being prepared for the government.

Within the framework of cooperation with the project, the composition of the soil at the local level was previously studied. The Institute also conducted a soil analysis for the pilot areas of the project in the Bukhara region. The total amount of the service was 70 million UZ Soums.

The Institute also participates in the program of the Government of the country to create a scientific advisory service to support agriculture. Cooperation is being established with the AKIS service, whose regional office is located in the Kamashi district.

The Institute intends to continue to cooperate with the project on working with farmers. Further distribute the manuals and recommendations. To date, every quarter the collaboration with the project is covered on local and national television.

The Institute represents the FAO project in the region. The Institute has 150 hectares of irrigated and 120 hectares of rain-fed land, employs 60 scientists, of which 25 employees are doctoral students, 4 professors and 16 candidates of science. Many employees have knowledge of English and are familiar with the experience of foreign countries.

Karakalpakstan. Sarcoply Halimahon farm. The head is Davleter Ashirov.

The farm was recently established in 2019. The manager is experienced and has extensive experience in processing vegetables and fruits.

He came to the project through the Khokimiyat (district administration), and he has big plans. He has high expectations from working with the project, and most importantly, he improves his knowledge and skills.



The farm has 85 hectares of agricultural land, of which 8 hectares are under wheat. With the help of the project, it creates vineyards and orchards on an area of 35 hectares in 2020 and 42 hectares in 2021. At the moment, the project has received 10 thousand seedlings of grapes and 20 thousand seedlings of fruit trees, on the basis of which nurseries have been created for the propagation of seedlings for sale to the population and other entities in the district. All seedlings are prepared and delivered from the Mirzayev Institute of Fruit Growing and Viticulture.

Further distribution of seedlings will be delivered on a commercial basis. The first sales will begin in two years, at the end of 2022.

The main problem is irrigation water. At the moment, this problem is solved through access to the irrigation channel that runs next to the farm.

The main purpose of the farm is to create gardens and vineyards with drip irrigation on 23 hectares of irrigation area. The cost per hectare is about 17 million UZ Soums. The farmer himself received a loan of 700 million UZ Soums at 14 % per annum. At the moment, the farmer will generate revenue by growing melons in the aisles.

The land samples were first carried out with the assistance of the project and the Research Institute of Fruit Growing and Viticulture.

It is necessary to raise awareness of the environmental significance of the activities carried out, including training on the development of skills in growing woody fruit crops, both among farmers and among the population.

The farmer expressed his gratitude for the assistance of the project not only for the acquisition of planting material, but also for the opportunity to develop skills and increase knowledge through the consultations and methodological materials provided by the project.

Karakalpak Branch of the Mirzayev Research Institute of Fruit Growing and Viticulture.

At the experimental sites of the institute's branch, saplings of fruit trees are also being prepared for participation in the UN initiative in Uzbekistan "*One Million Fruit Trees*". To implement this event, the project jointly grows about 20 thousand grafted seedlings of

fruit trees. A special feature of this event at the Institute is that it uses a drip irrigation system used as part of the experimental activities of the Institute. This institute has extensive experience in the cultivation of highly productive varieties of fruit trees and a widespread network of seedling preparation throughout the country. On the other hand, important importance is attached to the possibility of spreading seedlings of fruit trees among the population.

In the Karakalpakstan Branch of M.Mirzaev Horticulture Research Institute in Kegeyli district we met Alisher Qurbanov and Ayabbergen Tolybayev. Dr. Ayabbergen said that within the framework of one million tree initiative the project demonstration sites have been established for propagating a proper rootstock in local conditions. Starting from this year, we will organize trainings for farmers in Beruniy district as we have already produced trees in 2020. We have also bench graft consists of two parts rootstock and a scion (apple variety) attached together. The bench graft is planted in spring of 2020 and is ready for selling in this year.



Mr. Alisher Qurbanov, Head GIS office in Nukus. He informed about Memorandum of Understanding between the Representation of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Uzbekistan, the 'Sustainable Economic Development in selected Regions of Uzbekistan' Programme of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH Uzbekistan, Horticulture and Greenhouses Development Agency hereinafter referred to as Agency and the Institute of horticulture and vine making named after M.Mirzaev. The MoU lays out the responsibilities and requirements of the four parties concerning technical cooperation within the following Project: Integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agricultural production landscapes in Central Asia and Turkey ('CACILM2'), supported by the Global Environmental Facilities (GEF).



FAO is responsible for:

- (a) the overall management of the project,
- (b) provision of rootstocks, bench grafts and 2-year-old trees, cuttings, and grapevine
- (c) deployment of a nursery specialist to train the technical staff of the selected nurseries on:

- I. different types of fruit tree budding systems.

- II. Fruit tree nursery management systems.

- (d) FAO and GIZ shall consult together on technical matters within areas of mutual competence and shall, on request and within the limits of their own financial resources, provide technical advice to each other on matters within their respective technical competences

- (e) FAO will co-operate with GIZ in organizing trainings for strengthening the capacities of the staff of M.Mirzayev institute Kegeyli branch, including the farmers in the project pilot area on a cost sharing basis.

GIZ is responsible to:

- (a) in cooperation with its project implementing partner, M.Mirzayev institute Kegeyli branch, provide enough land within the premises of the existing demonstration orchard.

- (b) support FAO to organize trainings and workshops in Kegeyli and Beruniy districts with the deployment of technical specialists.

- (c) support FAO to coordinate the project activities through its Regional office, based in Nukus.

- (d) GIZ and FAO shall consult together on technical matters within areas of mutual competence and shall, on request and within the limits of their own financial resources, provide technical advice to each other on matters within their respective technical competences.

Appendix 15. Gender Analysis

Gender Considerations in Designing and Implementing the Project

A gender analysis was conducted to obtain gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation data and understand gender differentials in project activities, the level of gender awareness among project stakeholders, and the level of participation of women and men in the decision-making process.

Gender issues in the MTR process are handled based on two-fold approaches. One is gender issues in project management, and the second is gender issues in project design and implementation considering the impact. The second aspect of the analysis was based on FAO's SEAGA approach analyzing socio-economic patterns and participatory identification of women's and men's priorities and potentials.

Methodological approach explained in the Appendix 8 of the MTR report. The findings are structured as follows:

Has the project contributed to meeting GEF and FAO's gender equality objectives?

The project document is consistent with GEF Policy on Gender Equality (PL/SD/02, 2018) and FAO Policy on Gender Equality (2014). During the project implementation, new policies have come into effect by GEF and FAO. In November 2017, the GEF adopted a new Policy on Gender Equality (GEF/C.53/04) (GEF, 2017b). The policy introduces new principles and requirements to mainstream gender in designing, implementing and evaluating GEF programs and projects³².

A new GEF Policy on Gender Equality based on three areas: contributing to equal access to and control of natural resources of women and men, improving the participation and decision-making of women in natural resource governance, targeting socio-economic benefits and services for women. The policy adopted two-track approaches: Promote gender-responsive approaches and results across all GEF programs and projects and efforts to leverage strategic entry points (related to the GEF-7 programming strategy) linked to targeted programs and projects help achieve global environmental benefits and catalyze system change.

In this context, a total of six entry points were identified in project implementation. Entry points overlap with the gender targets identified as per each component in the project document:

GEF Gender Equality Entry Points	Gender Targets Identified As Per Each Project Component ³³
Supporting women's improved access, use, and control of resources, including land, water, forest, and fisheries.	Component 2: Effort will be made to bridge the gap between existing national gender equality policy and strategy, legal and institutional frameworks on INRM through an approach to resilience that takes gender differences into consideration.

³² GEF Gender Implementation Strategy, 2018:1

³³ Unofficial classification by the Consultant.

GEF Gender Equality Entry Points	Gender Targets Identified As Per Each Project Component³³
Enhancing women's participation and role in natural resources decision-making processes, with women as agents of change at all levels.	Component 2: Effort will be made to bridge the gap between existing national gender equality policy and strategy, legal and institutional frameworks on INRM through an approach to resilience that takes gender differences into consideration.
Targeting women as specific beneficiaries.	Component 3: During the process of up-scaling climate-smart agricultural practices, attention will be given to ensuring women's equal participation in local planning processes, the selection of innovative approaches that are accessible to women as well as men, and measures to remove any impediments that female farmers may face in accessing advisory and extension services.
Investing in women's skills and capacity	Component 3: During the process of up-scaling climate-smart agricultural practices, attention will be given to ensuring women's equal participation in local planning processes, the selection of innovative approaches that are accessible to women as well as men, and measures to remove any impediments that female farmers may face in accessing advisory and extension services.
Encourage gender mainstreaming efforts that are guided by the COPs in activities linked to the conventions for which the GEF serves as a financial mechanism.	Component 1: Gender Target: Multi-country collaborative work will include partnerships with regional, national and local organizations that are engaged in works to support rural women through policy-making or direct support.
Seek targeted collaboration around knowledge and analytical efforts	Component 1: Gender Target: Multi-country collaborative work will include partnerships with regional, national and local organizations that are engaged in works to support rural women through policy-making or direct support. Component 4: Gender-sensitive indicators have been chosen for each project outcome/outputs and fully incorporated into the M&E system.

The FAO Policy on Gender Equality was updated in 2019 to align with the most recent international frameworks and commitments³⁴. The policy's goal is to achieve equality between women and men in sustainable agriculture and rural development to eliminate hunger and poverty. In order to achieve this goal, a total of four objectives guide FAO's work. These objectives are as follows. They also overlap with the gender targets set as per each Project component:

FAO Policy on Gender Equality - 2020	FAO Policy on Gender Equality - 2012	Gender Targets Identified As Per Each Project Component³⁵
1. Women and men have equal voice and decision-making power in rural institutions and organizations to shape relevant legal	1. Women participate equally with men as decision-makers in rural institutions and in shaping laws, policies, and programs.	Component 1: Gender Target: Multi-country collaborative work will include partnerships with regional, national and local organizations that are engaged in works to support rural women through policy-making or direct support.

³⁴ FAO Policy on Gender Equality (2020-2030), 2020: 2

³⁵ Unofficial comparison by the Consultant.

FAO Policy on Gender Equality - 2020	FAO Policy on Gender Equality - 2012	Gender Targets Identified As Per Each Project Component ³⁵
frameworks, policies, and programmes		Component 2: Effort will be made to bridge the gap between existing national gender equality policy and strategy, legal and institutional frameworks on INRM through an approach to resilience that takes gender differences into consideration.
2. Women and men have equal rights, access to and control over natural and productive resources to contribute to and benefit from sustainable agriculture and rural development.	2. Women and men have equal access to and control over decent employment and income, land and other productive resources.	Component 3: During the process of up-scaling climate-smart agricultural practices, attention will be given to ensuring women's equal participation in local planning processes, the selection of innovative approaches that are accessible to women as well as men, and measures to remove any impediments that female farmers may face in accessing advisory and extension services.
3. Women and men have equal rights and access to services, markets and decent work and equal control over the resulting income and benefits.	3. Women and men have equal access to goods and services for agricultural development to markets	Component 3: During the process of up-scaling climate-smart agricultural practices, attention will be given to ensuring women's equal participation in local planning processes, the selection of innovative approaches that are accessible to women as well as men, and measures to remove any impediments that female farmers may face in accessing advisory and extension services.
4. Women's work burden is reduced by enhancing their access to technologies, practices and infrastructure and by promoting an equitable distribution of responsibilities, including at household level.	4. Women's work burden is reduced by 20% through improved technologies, services, and infrastructure.	Component 3: During the process of up-scaling climate-smart agricultural practices, attention will be given to ensuring women's equal participation in local planning processes, the selection of innovative approaches that are accessible to women as well as men, and measures to remove any impediments that female farmers may face in accessing advisory and extension services. Component 4: Gender sensitive indicators have been chosen for each project outcome / outputs and fully incorporated into the M&E system.

What are the wider impacts/changes the project is achieving in relation to women and men?

Gender disaggregated field data would enable decision-makers to analyze the situation and initiate well-planned actions.

CEDAW Article 14, UNFCCC and UNCCD are major instruments as well as GEF and FAO gender equality policies to promote gender equality in INRM issues in regional and global context. In addition, each Central Asia country also has its national gender and social inclusion strategy. Women's equal access to knowledge, technology, resource, and decision-making process key vulnerabilities in the context of INRM issues. These vulnerabilities well-explained in the project document. Through the project, women are expected to generate their income, improve their socio-economic situation and increase their knowledge and awareness of their agricultural activities. All components would

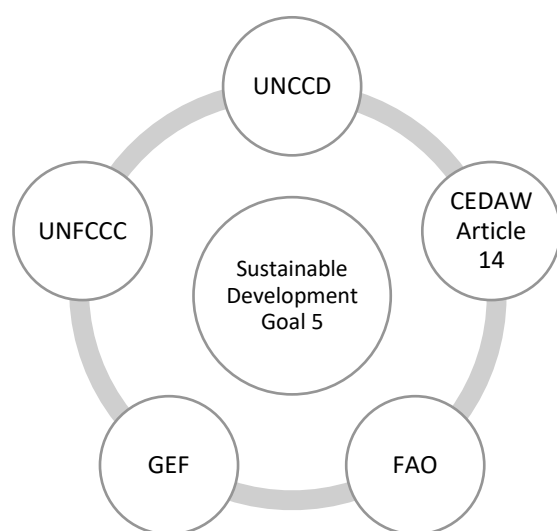


Figure 6: Key Policies that the Project Contributes on Gender Equality

contribute to achieving the results and providing on-the-ground data, which are valuable for policy-making.

To increase the wider effects, there is a need to promote gender efforts in the regional context. Gender issues are not handled at the regional level. It is strongly emphasized that incorporating gender issues in regional activities and Turkey's active involvement in the Gender and Social Inclusion Mainstreaming Strategy would be crucial. Turkey conducted important gender-responsive projects in the agriculture sector in collaboration with FAO SEC. On

the other side, Turkey's co-financing activities are not gender-disaggregated, and there is also a need to establish gender-sensitive monitoring mechanism.

Is there any new policy document or strategy designed to promote gender equality in INRM?

Gender and Social Inclusion Mainstreaming Strategy for CACILM 2 were prepared in 2020 after a Regional Gender, and Social Expert was on board. Based on a practical assessment as mentioned in the Expert's ToR, the strategy includes background information about global statistics, women's vulnerability in the agriculture sector, and brief information about current challenges faced in the context of the project. The importance of gender-disaggregated data, and strong communication between partners and stakeholders were emphasized in the GESI Strategy.

The responsibility to ensure the implementation of this gender and social inclusion mainstreaming strategy is the Regional Program Coordinator for CACILM 2 project, the Regional Gender and Livelihood Expert, and all National Project Managers in the five project countries. The International Gender Specialist is providing technical backstopping. Main activities based on six areas mentioned below³⁶:

³⁶ Gender and Social Inclusion Mainstreaming Strategy for CACILM 2

Building the capacity of the FAO project staff: The aim is to affect the project staff's attitudes, values, and knowledge of gender equality, gender roles, and responsibilities of women and men and addressing any misconceptions they might have

Awareness and dedicated time & commitments of the National Project Managers and field experts are critical to promote gender equality in CACILM II.

about the relevance of gender issues to the CACILM 2 project.³⁷ Gender induction sections for newly recruited staff, monitoring of obligatory e-learning course on gender equality in FAO's work, capacity building activities for Gender Focal Points (NPM), and encouraging project staff in various events. Activities such as need analysis, training, and post-training evaluations conducted to increase gender issues among the project team are satisfactory. , The gender team provides continuous support to raise awareness and capacity building for the project staff, including experts.

Building the capacity of key partners: The aim is to provide information on analyzing, and using sex-disaggregated data in policy analysis, program, project planning, and evaluation. There will be a focus on the provision of informative sessions on the importance of gender and social inclusion mainstreaming by providing awareness-raising and education on gender, social inclusion, and social protection issues related to integrated natural resources management through the dissemination of knowledge, trainings, and awareness-raising events, development of communication and knowledge materials—one capacity-building event was conducted for the key partners in Kazakhstan in December 2020. Similar activities should be conducted for other countries as earlier as possible.

Finally, a dedicated budget allocated to gender-related work would provide better resources to achieve gender equality objectives. As a cross-cutting area, there is a need to prioritize and allocate a budget for mainstreaming gender targeted activities. According to the Capacity Building Plan for 2020, USD 17,000 were planned for gender-related activities. When compared with the overall project budget, there is a need for a larger dedicated budget to gender targeted activities.

Mainstreaming gender in all outcomes of the project: Gender issues mainstreamed well, and comprehensive actions were identified at the output and outcome level. Officially, the actions are reflected and disseminated through official annual work plans for each country. These actions should be more visible and a summarized information reflected in the main progress table (Section 1 and 2) in PIR reports. In addition, there is a need to give more detail about each gender mainstreamed and gender core activities such as:

- Why this activity conducted?, What was the gap or need?
- What actions conducted?
- What kind of findings obtained?
- What recommendations made?
- What will be the next step?

Gender sensitive language should be considered throughout the project.

³⁷ Gender and Social Inclusion Mainstreaming Strategy for CACILM 2

On the other hand, the gender team involves reviewing key reports and documents such as BPs and SPs progress reports, policy reviews, outcome mapping, and LoAs. As mentioned above, detailed activities should be given in PIR reports.

The importance of the gender team to review and conduct a final check regarding gender gender-sensitive language in the project's deliverables and documentation, including PIRs, is essential. Final reviews of the project deliverables should be conducted by the gender team as much as possible.

Implementation of the Strategy through external partnerships: There are two strategies underlined to strengthen partnerships with various stakeholders:

1. Mapping new partners and engaging mapped partners with specific actions; and
2. Creating solid partnerships with UN Gender Team Groups and country communications groups.

Specific efforts should be linked to these activities. After the mobilization of the gender team, a quick-impact stakeholder mapping was conducted with the participation of national project managers. Strategy, methodology, and detailed mapping

exercise not only with the contribution of the managers but all beneficiaries, including local people and organizations, should be conducted. In line with the findings of the mapping exercise, it would be effective if prior and secondary stakeholders identified according to their interest and power on the issue.

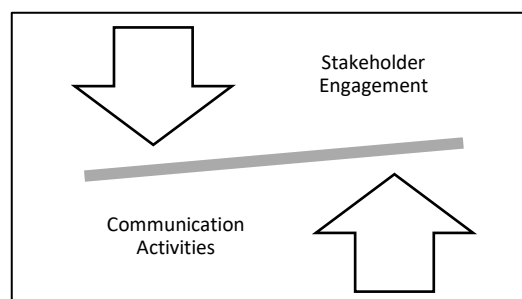
There is a need to conduct stakeholder mapping (including potential stakeholders, as well) and prepare a stakeholder engagement plan.

The establishment of sustainable and concrete partnership opportunities, including international organizations and national institutions, is needed. Findings of the gender activities in the context of INRW should be disseminated to increase global environment benefits at a broader scale.

Communications and visibility: A communication strategy and action plan were prepared after the mobilization of the Communication expert at the beginning of 2020. The activities are mainly based on articles, success stories, and other online tools. Early involvement in communication activities is crucial to reach beneficiaries at the field level, and activities should be based on stakeholder engagement activities. Below findings are identified:

A specific outreach strategy is needed to reach out rural women especially those living in remote areas. Women NGOs and women farmer groups can be also counted as the main target group of the outreach strategy.

- Key messages and target groups are missing.
- Unclear dates for each activity.
- No specific outreach strategy for rural women and men.
- No updated version of the Communication Action Plan in the GESI strategy.



A specific involvement of women NGOs and women farmer groups as target groups and innovative and online tools (such as proposed Regional Platform, SMSs) to reach more women during the pandemic period are essential.

There is no information about local communities' participation in the decision-making process. Community members should be identified as stakeholders.

GIS mapping is recommended to pin existing and potential stakeholders in line with their priorities.

Communication and Outreach Expert and Gender Team have been involved in the middle of project implementation. Stakeholder analysis should be based on a methodology, and a stakeholder engagement plan is needed.

Ensuring a gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation framework: The GESI Strategy linked with a specific indicator identified in the project document, which is the number of women and men. The project will ensure the equal participation of women and men from relevant public institutions by providing, where applicable, that at least 30 percent participation of either sex following UN standards for any initiative organized under the CACILM 2 project³⁸. Overall, the project has reached this target so far. However, more action should be taken to increase women's participation in each country. For example, the number of women (28) benefited from the trainings compared with men (248) is too low in Uzbekistan.

Detailed findings on the M&E system from a gender perspective presented in the MTR report. In sum, there is a clear need to update the monitoring and evaluation framework, including gender-specific indicators to be identified in line with the findings of socio-economic analysis, including gender analysis. Below issues (but not limited to) should be considered.

- Demographic information (women and men)
- Time management (women and men)
- Gender roles in the agriculture sector (women and men)
- Cultural and other constraints that hinder women's participation (women)
- Identification of women informants in the region (women)
- Training and technology needs (women and men)

GIS mapping is recommended to reflect socio-economic baseline information and to identify socio-economic change.

As mentioned in paragraph 81 of the MTR report, the Outcome Mapping (OM) approach monitor the project's progress and ensure that required capacities are in

Some examples of gender equality indicators (not limited to) (ADB, *Tool Kit on Gender Equality Results and Indicators*, 2018):

- Percentage of women in leadership
- Number of women with access to natural resources.
- Percentage of the market controlled by women-led businesses
- Increased in number of women in decision-making.
- Increased in number of women in improved food security.
- Decrease in inequalities related to access to funds between genders.

³⁸ Gender and Social Inclusion Mainstreaming Strategy for CACILM 2

place to maintain the project achievements. Using this approach, the project has selected “Boundary Partners (BPs)” to support smallholder farmers in scaling up CSA/SLM/INRM. There is missing information on how women’s engagement is achieved and what extent their needs are reflected in these processes.

Due to a large-scale regional project, innovative tools such as GIS mapping can identify socio-economic change.

Are there any completed or ongoing projects on gender and INRM in the country?

There are a set of projects conducted to empower women in INRM. Some of them are listed as follows:

Implementing Agency	Project	Level	Status
The World Bank	Central Asia Knowledge Network	Regional	Ongoing
The UN Women	Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028	Regional	Ongoing
The United Nations Development Programme	The Central Asian Women Leaders’ Caucus	Regional	Ongoing
Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)	“Women, Water Management and Conflict Prevention – Phase II	Regional	Ongoing
Central Asia Program (CAP)	Women and Water in Central Asia and South Asia	Regional	Completed
Women for Water Partnership	Women for Water Network	Regional	Completed
Gender and Water Network (GWANET)	Gender and Water in Central Asia	Regional	Completed

Similar projects should be screened and involved in stakeholder analysis.

Have the needs, priorities, and constraints of both women and men been considered during the design and implementation?

No gender analyses were conducted during the design and the first two years of project implementation. CACILM Gender and Social Inclusion Mainstreaming Strategy have come into force in 2020. It covers a brief situation analysis of policies, current status, and women’s vulnerabilities in INRM issues based on reference documents such as country gender assessments valuable. It is not clear to identify the background and need analysis of the activities such as training topics and grant schemes. „Obviously the needs, preferences, and recommendations of women and men, especially in pilot sites, should be identified with the participation of boundary partners and field personnel as soon as possible. In addition, the impacts of Covid-19 on women in the agricultural sector should be considered.

- Most of the Farm are registered on women's name but are run by men.
- Women's knowledge of agriculture is low.
- There are still very few women agronomists in rural areas.
- Women's economic rights are low.
- Women do not have the capital or resources to do and run their business in agriculture.
- Women have little access to agricultural grants provided by MFIs (Micro Finance Institutions) and other banks.
- FFS for women are very few the number of which has to be increased.

...Some constraints that hinder women's empowerment, expressed by an interviewee.

A stakeholder engagement plan would promote women's involvement in gender analysis which is critical, and it should include information days, recommendation mechanism, and online tools to increase their participation.

What impact is the project having on women and men and their gendered power dynamics?

The project aims to ensure women and men with improved food security by the end of implementation. This target divides two sections at the outcome level. These are the number of people with improved income from improved DRM practices (outcome 3.1); and the number of people with improved income from improved salinity management (outcome 3.2).

.... in this project, it would be good to mobilize and train more women agronomists, to organize grants to women's groups in cash or provision of equipment/machinery ... to organize training on the use of agricultural machinery for women ... to organize and support agricultural service groups at the expense of unemployed women in rural areas and so on....

Recommendations made by an interviewee for a better implementation.

Improved food security has socio-economic impacts on women and plays a role in reducing imbalanced power dynamics with men. Secure access to food would result from wide-

ranging positive effects in socio-economic life. These are (not limited to):

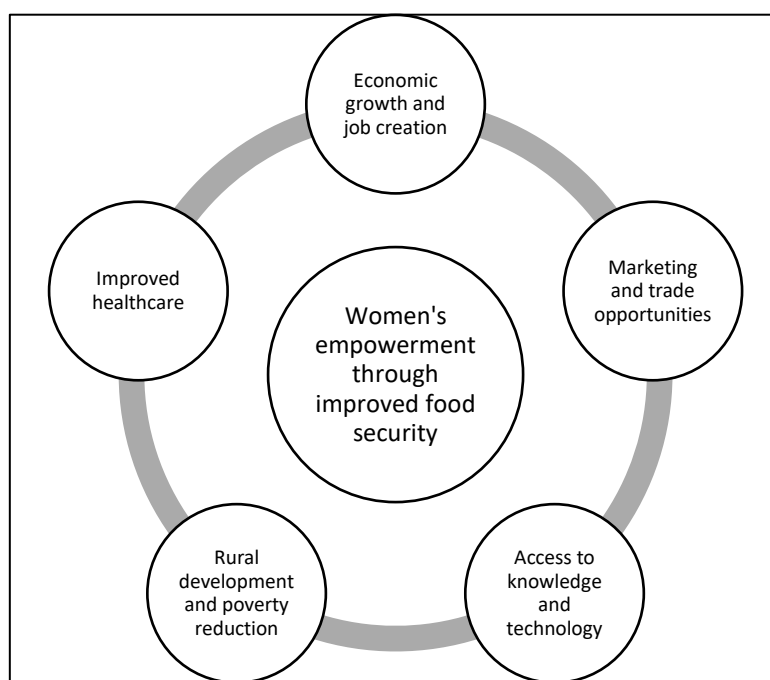


Figure 7: Reduce of unbalanced power relations between women and men through improved food security

As mentioned in the MTR report, the fact that no socio-economic analysis, including gender issues, has been done so far, no progress can be reported against key indicators measuring how women and men are impacted by the project's results in terms of improved income and improved food security.

It is strongly emphasized that key issues and baseline not only quantitative but ,also qualitative indicators should be identified through a gender analysis and impacts in the M&E mechanism. Boundary partners' involvement would be crucial to collect the data in a short period.

Microfinance channel – modified as grant schemes during project implementation – is one of the critical instruments to increase women's access to financial resources. Grant schemes under Component 2.2 give priority to the women farmers. However, more protective measures are needed to empower women. With minor adjustments such as applying quota,

flexible grant timing, specified outreach plan intended to rural communities, consideration of women's needs while designing eligible grant areas, the participation and benefits for women would be more effective and more robust.

How does the project engage with women and girls?

Boundary and strategic partners play an essential role in engaging with women and girls at the field level. Although the project team leads these partners' activities, more actions are needed. Reporting requirements and feedback systems should be more gender mainstreamed, and capacity building of these partners on gender issues is needed to be prioritized and continuously supported by the gender team. Although official involvement of Central Asian Countries differs, the gender team – in close collaboration with the national project managers and field experts should mobilize and contact the partners in all countries simultaneously. In this context, the mobilization of field experts is critical. Recruitment and mobilization of the field experts need to be completed as soon as possible. Women's involvement in rural advisory services (RAS) is identified as needed by the project management and baseline studies conducted. Turkey and the FAO SEC had valuable experience on gender-responsive extension services. Especially women extension agents' interaction with the women farmers and gender-sensitive extension services are crucial to promote women's empowerment. It is not clear whether the RAS baseline study was conducted from a gender perspective or not.

How is risk and risk mitigation being managed?

A quick situation analysis was conducted while preparing the CACILM Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy, but neither risks nor assumptions were reflected in the Strategy document. Women may face difficulties engaging in activities such as extreme climate conditions, farming accidents, and cultural barriers, including patriarchal attitudes or gender-based violence. In addition, the Covid-19 fact is a health and economic-related risk itself. Detailed assumptions for the smooth implementation of gender activities and a risk assessment should be designed and based on FAO Environmental and Social Screening Checklist as an annex of FAO Environmental and Social Management Guideline³⁹ to identify the current situation.

A special attention should be given on women's deepened vulnerabilities and needs during the pandemic period.

Are there any collaborations built with women NGOs or farmer organizations?

Field activities are mainly achieved with the contribution of the Boundary Partners (BP), as mentioned in Table 5 of the MTR report: 3 BP in Kazakhstan; BP "Camp Alatoo" in Kyrgyzstan; BP Bonuvoni Khatlon (Women's group) in Tajikistan; 2 BP in Turkmenistan; and 3 Strategic Partners in Uzbekistan. Progress made by the BP is assessed semi-annually during workshops, using the progress marker index. BP's activity reports do not include detailed information about women's progress, existing problems and needs. As mentioned above,

BPs and SPs should be representative, comprehensive and reflect women's voice in the field level.

³⁹ <http://www.fao.org/3/i4413e/i4413e.pdf>

BPs are valuable sources to collect data from the field. In this sense, the capacity building of the members of the BPs is essential.

The number of women NGOs is only one (Bonuvoni Khatlon) in BPs and SPs. To increase women's participation in the decision-making process and consider their problems and needs, more women NGOs should involve in the implementation. A comprehensive list of women NGOs and women groups is missing. They should be identified through a stakeholder mapping exercise.

Are partner organizations aware of and trained to address gender inequalities among beneficiaries?

A comprehensive awareness training on gender issues conducted in December 2020 in Kazakhstan. The training was based on a needs analysis conducted among partner organizations. Results and impact of the training were measured by the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategies. Gender-related trainings for partner organizations in other countries should be prioritized and initiated as soon as possible to reflect the results of gender awareness. It is also recommended that awareness trainings on gender issues should not be one-time action. They should be continuous.